

PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS: HIS AIM WAS THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL LIBERATION
OF HIS PATRIA
ANTI-COLONIALIST RAZA WARRIOR

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Forty-five years ago, one of the greatest Raza patriots in history died as a result of torture and poisoning by U.S. government colonial-capitalist agents. On April 21, 1965, his body totally devastated by prison torture, three months after being released from prison, Pedro Albizu Campos died in his homeland of Puerto Rico – “La Isla del Encanto” or as called by its indigenous inhabitants, Borinquén or “land of the valiant people”.

Compa Albizu Campos was the most important Puerto Rican political figure of the 20th century, a National Hero who sacrificed his life for the freedom of his country. He was a writer, political theorist, labor organizer, speaker, and leader of a political party, the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. Because of all these qualities, he was called “El Maestro”.

Throughout most of his life, his aim was to organize the Puerto Rican people to reclaim their cultural history, national symbols (such as the flag), and liberate the nation from United States imperialist occupation. Compa Albizu was one of the first Raza theoreticians of anti-colonial thought and exposition of the contradictions confronting the colonized. As one form of struggle, he promoted the theory and practice of non-collaboration (*retraiamiento*) with the colonial structures. Compa Albizu was also what in Unión del Barrio we call a “Raza Internationalist” (Latin American Internationalist) – someone who believes in the freedom and unity of all Latin American into one powerful and just nation.

Compa Albizu was a nationalist committed to the liberation of Puerto Rico by any means necessary. For fifty years he was of the leading figure in the Puerto Rican independence movement and was president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party from 1930 until his death.

SON OF THE BARRIO AND LEADER OF A NATION

Pedro Albizu Campos, was born on September 12, 1891, in a small, poor Barrio, called Tenerías, in the city Poncé, Puerto Rico. He was born just a few years before the 1898 US invasion of his homeland. Compa Albizu grew up in poverty. His mother was an African worker who died when he was a child and his father a Spanish/Mestizo landowner and government official, who refused to recognize Compa Albizu as his son until later in his life.

Even though he didn’t start school until he was 12 years old, Compa Albizu was of extraordinary intelligence and extremely interest in education. In 1912, Albizu was awarded a

scholarship to study Engineering at the University of Vermont and 1913 he continued his studies at Harvard University. He was one of the first “Latin Americans” to study at Harvard.

Like thousands of colonized people, during World War I Compa Albizu served in the United States Army as a Lieutenant. Puerto Ricans of African descent, such as Compa Albizu, were assigned to the all black units in compliance to the United States military racist segregation laws and regulations of that period. It was in the U.S Army where Albizu saw first hand the racist treatment of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans.

It was these experiences –growing up in poverty, living under direct U.S. military colonial occupation, and military service– that contributed to his political consciousness and development as a warrior against colonialism and for the liberation of Puerto Rico.

DISCIPLINE, COMMITMENT, ORGANIZATION, AND MILITANCY

After the war, in 1919, Albizu returned to Harvard University. He graduated from Harvard University obtaining a Law degree, where he also studied Literature, Philosophy, Chemical Engineering and Military Science. He was fluent in English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Latin and Greek. Compa Albizu further advanced his anti-imperialist ideas through his association with students from other colonies and oppressed nations.

In 1922, Albizu married Laura Meneses, whom he had met at Harvard University. He returned to Puerto Rico after completing law school, turning down government job offers and teaching positions. Already conscious of the need to end the colonial occupation of Puerto Rico, he moved to “La Cantera”, a poor barrio in Ponce, where he began practicing law. Two years later, in 1924, he joined the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and was elected its vice president. Compa Albizu rapidly climbed the ranks of the party, becoming first its international ambassador. Throughout the year of 1927, he traveled to Haiti, Dominican Republic, Peru, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela seeking solidarity for Puerto Rican Independence movement.

On May 11, 1930, Albizu Campos was elected president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. He pushed organization and demanded of its membership discipline, commitment, and militancy. As the party president he declared: “I never believed in numbers, independence will be achieved instead by the intensity of those that devote themselves totally to the nationalist ideal”.

Compa Albizu was central to organizing workers’ strikes and mass demonstrations demanding an end to U.S occupation of Puerto Rico. Because of his activism, he became a target of the colonial forces and was arrested and charged with seditious conspiracy. From the mid-thirties to the early sixties Compa Albizu was in and out of prison, both in the United States and in Puerto Rico –serving a total of 25 years.

In 1932, Albizu was one the first to expose the secret genocidal medical experiments conducted on colonized people. He published an article that exposed a white (Anglo) doctor who, as a medical experiment, was killing Puerto Rican patients by injecting them with live cancer cells. This was an era when the United States government was inflicting African Americans and other non-whites with syphilis and other diseases as part of experimentation and genocide.

DECADE OF MILITANT AND ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST U.S COLONIALISM

The decade of the 1930s saw the Puerto Rican independence movement engaged arm resistance against U.S. military occupation. In 1932 Compa Albizu led a march to the San Juan Capitol building to protest the use of the Puerto Rican flag as a colonial symbol. In 1933, Albizu led a strike against the Puerto Rico Railway and Light and Power Company's illegal acquisition of land. The following year, he represented exploited sugar cane workers against the U.S. sugar industry.

In 1935, the "colonial police, under the command of the colonialist-racist Col. Francis Riggs, killed four Puerto Rican patriots. The incident became known as the Río Piedras massacre. The following year in 1936, a squad of nationalists engaged in "revolutionary justice" and killed the pig-colonialist Col. Riggs. In an attempt to put down the liberation struggle, U.S colonial authorities ordered the arrest of Albizu Campos and several other Nationalists for "seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. Government in Puerto Rico." A guilty verdict by a jury of mostly gringos sent Compa Albizu Campos and the other Nationalist leaders to the Federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. It was during his appeal, in 1937, that a massive pro independence march was held in the Poncé. The police opened fire on the march, killing twenty-one unarmed marchers and bystanders, and wounded 200 others, many of them members of Albizu's Nationalist Party; this became known in history as the "Poncé Massacre".

After serving 10 years in prison, in 1947 Pedro Albizu Campos return to Puerto Rico. Be was soon jailed again after nationalists pro-liberation revolts took place in various Puerto Rican cities and towns in 1950. On November 1, 1950, nationalists Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola attacked the Blair House in Washington, D.C. where president Harry S. Truman had been staying. As a result of these acts of rebellion against colonial rule and oppression, Compa Albizu was arrested at his home after a brief shootout with the police. In retaliation, the colonial authorities had more than 3,000 independence supporters arrested, and Albizu Campos was sentenced to 80 years in prison.

Pardoned in 1953 by the colonial governor, Luis Muñoz Marín, the pardon was revoked the following year (1954) after the historic nationalist attack on the United States House of Representatives, when four Puerto Rican Nationalists, led by Compañera Lolita Lebrón, opened fire from the gallery of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

BECAUSE OF HIS IDEAS AND ACTIONS, HE WAS TORTURED AND TERRORIZED IN PRISON

While in prison, Compa Albizu repeatedly was the subject of human radiation experiments. During this time, the US was experimenting with radiation in the Princesa prison, located in the city of San Juan. He was one of the prisoners to be experimented upon, without consent or warning. Radiation attacks often left him unconscious. Between 1951 and 1953, he suffered six to eight radiation attacks. His skin severely swollen and cracking, Compa Albizu had to protect his head and body with wet towels because of the intense heat caused by the radiation. Complaints by supporters and his doctor that Albizu was slowly being murdered, were met by claims from the U.S. government that Albizu was insane; an attempt to discredit his role as a national leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement.

On November 15, 1964, Albizu was pardoned by then colonial governor Muñoz Marín. He died on April 21, 1965. On that day, La Raza had lost one of its best sons and freedom fighters of all time. More than 75,000 Puerto Ricans carried the remains of his body to the Old San Juan Cemetery and events were held through Latin America to honor his life and contributions towards the liberation of all oppressed people.

For the act of being a revolutionary and fighting for the dignity of his homeland and his people, Compa Albizu was tortured and spent the majority of his adult life in U.S. federal prisons. Albizu's political and militant actions served to improve the conditions for peasants and workers, and with preserving and promoting Puerto Rican nationalism and national symbols.

The formal adoption of the Puerto Rican flag and the continue observance of "El Grito de Lares" (declaration of independence, September 23, 1868), must be credited to the work of Compa Albizu, who as leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, kept national independence of Puerto Rico alive.

AS RAZA INTERNATIONALIST, WE HONOR AND REMEMBER COMPA ALBIZU
Unión del Barrio, just like Compa Albizu, will never accept the United States right to govern in Puerto Rico. Compa Albizu supported the liberation struggles of all Raza and all oppressed people on planet earth. Today there are parks, streets and schools named after him. As Raza activists and revolutionaries, we look to his life as an example and inspiration to continue the struggle for independence and the liberation of Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and all of Latin America and the world.

We close this brief biography of this great Raza warrior with the words of Comandante Ernesto "Che" Guevara: "Albizu Campos is a symbol of the as yet unfree but indomitable Latin America. Years and years of prison, almost unbearable pressures in jail, mental torture, solitude, total isolation from his people and his family, the insolence of the conqueror and its lackeys in the land of his birth — nothing broke his will." (Speech given to the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 1964)

¡QUE VIVA MEXICO Y PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

¡Compañero Maestro Pedro Albizu Campos PRESENTE!