

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL PUERTO RICAN PARADE OF NYC BESTOWING NATIONAL HERO OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA the title of "PROCER de la LIBERTAD"

The National Puerto Rican Parade of NY has been in existence for 60 years and has represented the Puerto Rican Diaspora, affirming the Puerto Rican identity, history, culture, music and diversity of voices. The National Puerto Rican Parade advocated the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera, a 74 year Puerto Rican political prisoner charged with "seditious conspiracy" who was supported by Puerto Ricans from across the political spectrum and by international religious and human rights leaders, including His Holiness Pope Francis. After almost 36 years in US prison, 12 of which were spent in solitary confinement, President Barack Obama granted Oscar – who despite false claims was neither charged with nor convicted of any activity resulting in death or injury – full executive clemency.

Obama's act followed the advice and previous actions of Presidents Jimmy Carter and William Clinton, in addition to the urgings of dozens of heads of state and peace leaders, from the United Nations Decolonization Committee to South African Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Over the past two years, millions have joined – through petitions, emails, tweets, demonstrations, prayer vigils, and contingents in the Parade – the call to speak with "One Voice for Oscar," proclaiming him "the Nelson Mandela of the Americas."

The National Puerto Rican Parade's choice to confer upon Oscar Lopez Rivera the title of "Procer de la Libertad" is a consequence of this widespread and diverse popular movement. The National Puerto Rican Parade has an indelible right to make such a choice, reflective of the vast majority of sentiment of the Puerto Rican people on the island and in the Diaspora.

We, the undersigned stand by the National Puerto Rican Parade bestowing upon Oscar Lopez Rivera the title of "Procer de la Libertad":

List of organization is in formation: (Add your name/organization) These are examples:

- New York Coordinator to Free Oscar Lopez Rivera
- El Maestro Cultural Center, Inc.
- Professor Ana M. Lopez, Latin American and Caribbean Studies Unit/Humanities Dept, Hostos Community College