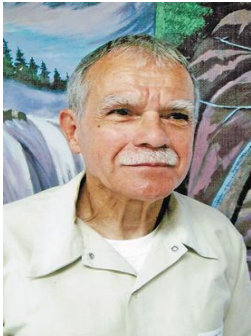


## Letter to Obama, Free Oscar

Escrito por Fernando Cabanillas, MD

Miércoles, 17 de Julio de 2013 01:41 - Última actualización Miércoles, 17 de Julio de 2013 01:48

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«When I read about your recent visit to Mandela's prison cell in Robben Island, South Africa, I couldn't help but think about all the similarities between Mandela and Oscar Lopez Rivera, our Puerto Rican Mandela.»

July 4, 2013

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Dear Mr. Barack Obama:

It is clearly evident that you deeply admire Nelson Mandela. I am also a great admirer of Nelson Mandela whom I had the unique fortune of meeting while lecturing in his country after I was awarded the Silver Medal of the South African Society of Medical Oncology in 1990. In fact, I cherish a great treasure, a picture of me seating right next to him. I proudly display it in my office.

When I read about your recent visit to Mandela's prison cell in Robben Island, South Africa, I couldn't help but think about all the similarities between Mandela and Oscar Lopez Rivera, our Puerto Rican Mandela who has been in USA federal prisons for over 32 years. Did you know they were both convicted of the same crime, seditious conspiracy? They both fought for the liberation of their people. They both personally experienced and fiercely fought against bigotry and racism. They both spent decades confined to a very tiny cell. They both were abused and tortured mentally. They both were able to not only survive constant harassment but yet maintain the capacity to emanate love instead of hate. One difference, however, is that Mr. Mandela was freed after 27 years of imprisonment in South Africa but Oscar is still in jail in USA, now for over 32 straight years. Another difference is that Nelson Mandela was convicted of violently attacking the government of South Africa while Oscar was never accused or convicted of such a crime. Oscar's only "crime" was to belong to an underground group called FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional) which clandestinely advocated for the independence of Puerto Rico just as your father Barack and paternal grandfather, Hussein Onyango Obama did when they participated in the struggle to liberate Kenya from the British empire.

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“The world is grateful for the heroes of Robben Island, who remind us that no shackles or cells can match the strength of the human spirit.” These were your own words when you visited Mandela’s former prison in Robben Island and they could be applied perfectly well to our hero of Terre Haute, Indiana, USA. After 32 years of imprisonment and harassment, his spirit is still as robust and powerful as when he entered that cell in shackles.

The Board of Parole recently evaluated Oscar’s application and their shocking decision, full of hate was: “Parole denied. Let him serve 15 more years. Let him rot in jail”. Oscar is 70 years old and most likely will die in jail unless you grant him a presidential pardon or commute his sentence. This you can do with the simple stroke of a pen.

I urge you to act expediently and free Oscar. Puerto Rico wants him back. His native mountain city of San Sebastián wants him back. Puerto Ricans of all walks of life and political leanings want him back. Religious people from all denominations want him back. Our whole island is screaming to get him back! Thirty two years is much more than enough!

Please do justice to what July 4 stands for, Mr. Obama, FREE OSCAR NOW!

Fernando Cabanillas, MD  
Professor of Medicine  
University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine  
Director Hospital Auxilio Mutuo Cancer Center  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

(Claridad)