



# FRENTE INDEPENDENTISTA BORICUA



Over the past weeks Frente Independentista Boricua (El Frente), has tasked itself with forging conversations with like-minded independence organizations in Puerto Rico to discuss the current crisis caused by COVID-19 and how it is impacting the Puerto Rican community both in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora. As we moved forward, the conversations gained strength with greater participation from representatives of the following organizations: Jornada: Se Acabaron Las Promesas, Ñin Negrón Movement, the Socialist Front (FS), the Socialist Workers Movement (MST), the National Hostosian Independent Movement (MINH), the PRTP- Macheteros, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and various representatives of El Frente.

Emerging from these efforts is a historic document, ratified by all, which both analyzes and makes demands amidst the current COVID-19 situation both in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora. Among the concerns denounced in the document are ongoing corruption, continued neglect and blatant discrimination. The document also calls for the implementation of specific action items necessary for the well-being of our community during this pandemic. We invite you to read and share this document widely.

With gratitude

*Frente Independentista Boricua*





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## **Independence Organizations in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora issue statements and demands regarding the current COVID-19 situation in Puerto Rico**

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The undersigned organizations congratulate the people of Puerto Rico for once again demonstrating steadfastness and solidarity even in the most challenging moments. Our greatest thanks to all community and grassroots organizations that have taken on the titanic task of providing food and support to the most vulnerable. Thanks to those who have taken the initiative to make masks and safety equipment for the public and hospitals. Thanks to all the workers - doctors and nurses amongst others, who sacrifice themselves daily so that others can stay home. The reality is that the vast majority of our people have assumed a very responsible attitude and commitment to the well-being of all. We emphasize the importance of social distancing and quarantine as part of the process of preventing infection during this health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In New York, the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States, where over a million Puerto Ricans live, working men and women are currently facing the uncertainty of a hospital system - parts of which are on the verge of collapse, and a social and economic system that fosters inequality. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters in exile across the United States face the negligent actions, discriminatory policies, and erratic conduct of the president of the United States and federal and state governments, where corporate interests and profits supersedes the needs of their own people.

As defenders of the right of our people to their free determination and independence, it is essential to affirm, now more than ever, the need for our sovereignty as a people in order to adequately confront this crisis. Once again, the United States government shows its contempt and absolute lack of interest for the needs of the people of Puerto Rico, placing us in a state of absolute vulnerability. This moment shows that only independence guarantees us critical control of our border in the face of events like this. The current crisis shows the pressing need to create a universal health system where health is guaranteed to our population above the desire for profits of insurers, pharmaceutical companies and ongoing corruption of the existing colonial two party political system #PNP-PPD.

Resulting from a process of analysis, dialogue and discussion of the situation between the various organizations, we submit our reflections, proposals and demands to this crisis:

### **Regarding Immediate Social Legislation, we propose:**

A. That a moratorium be approved on the payment of water, electricity, internet, furniture loans, credit cards, health plans, car payments and cell phones for the duration of the curfew and that the repayments be added to the monthly payments for the following year or be reamortized where applicable.

B. That a moratorium on the mortgage payments be approved where people are not obliged to pay the entire amount due at the end of the moratorium term, but instead extend the term of the mortgage in proportion to the moratorium time.





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C. Legislate an amnesty for rent payments for the duration of the curfew.

D. Legislate to guarantee safe working conditions for all employees. In turn, ensure that personal protective equipment required to perform the tasks of the company, industry or trade is paid for by the employer - not deducted from workers' wages.

E. Given the insufficient amount of \$500.00 and the inadequate amount of unemployment insurance payments: Legislate so that an income of \$ 1,200.00 per family unit be disbursed monthly for the duration of the curfew, regardless of whether the person is employed or unemployed.

F. Legislate so that all medical services related to COVID-19, from tests to hospitalization, are completely free for all.

G. Legislate a greater number of sick days, salary insurance and a special paid leave in epidemic cases.

H. Legislate internet access, subsidized for those who need it, given its fundamental role in finding a job, accessing online education and submitting economic assistance requests. We also propose the strengthening of the PREPANET initiative to freely compete in the residential and commercial markets as a public company.

## **We also make the following demands:**

A. The reinstatement of doctors, nurses, therapists, technicians, and all health personnel who have become unemployed by the for-profit prevailing model in the health sector. The helplessness to which health workers have been exposed constitutes an invitation to the continued medical personnel exodus, which will result in a continued deterioration of our already precarious health system. We also demand that all health personnel be guaranteed safe working conditions, including personal protective equipment and COVID-19 test administration. In the event that it is warranted due to an overwhelming number of COVID cases, we demand that the collaboration with other countries with effective and positive outcomes in the fight against COVID-19 be allowed so that global pandemic experts provide Puerto Rico with educational and logistical support, including the entry of international medical brigades such as those from China and Cuba which have helped numerous countries in the face of this pandemic.

B. The implementation of extensive and free COVID-19 tests, contact tracing of confirmed cases, and government transparency in case management.

C. Prioritize the purchase of medical equipment for use in health institutions and in the field.

D. Implement strict controls at airports, so that only residents of Puerto Rico and their families are allowed to enter. Exempted should be support personnel who engage in the production of supplies and equipment, or who provide other essential services in the fight against COVID-19. All arriving persons will be required to have a rapid COVID-19 test conducted and be quarantined for 15 days.

E. Repeal of unjust Labor Reform laws and reinstatement of labor rights taken from workers.

F. Immediately stop the deportation of immigrants in the country. In turn, we demand that all persons currently detained for not being able to post bail pending trial be released under the supervision of the Office of Prosecution Affairs (OSAJ).





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G. That Puerto Rico's reserves of approximately \$14 billion dollars currently allocated for the repayment of the onerous debt be used for the benefit of the people by mitigating the harm caused by this pandemic to the working class, strengthen hospitals, establish the national production of masks and other articles necessary to face this pandemic and create the conditions to strengthen the entire health care system.

H. Eliminate the tuition increase approved by the Governing Board of the University of Puerto Rico to students and laboratory schools.

I. That an executive order be approved providing greater security measures and resources for shelters dedicated to protecting and caring for survivors of gender violence. At the same time, we demand that priority be given to the processing of cases of gender violence over violations of the curfew or quarantine during this health crisis.

J. Immediately end police harassment of our farmers and street vendors of agricultural products. To meet the food needs of our population as a result of the decrease in world food production and disruption of distribution channels due to COVID-19, we demand access to lands for agricultural production, beginning immediately with the distribution of unused public land, with a goal of building a comprehensive and fair Agrarian Reform. Additionally, all the arable land should be made available for the common good, especially the best farming land located in the southern part of the island. This land is currently and illegally being hoarded by multinational biotech companies who do not produce food and in fact make our communities sick.

K. Guarantee a decent wage for agricultural workers by increasing the minimum wage in this sector.

L. Convert the kitchens of the schools and transform them into Collection and Food Processing Centers during this emergency to give support to those who need food.

M. Use all available technological capabilities to ensure effective online education and consider extending the academic semester.

N. The government must utilize its resources to provide food distribution, especially to the most vulnerable.

Finally, we recognize and reiterate that, in these unprecedented times, the entire country must join in promoting social distancing and quarantine. Conversely, this global pandemic must not serve as a justification for police abuse. The government should redirect police efforts and prioritize the people's needs, deterring and educating the population when necessary. We will not accept the government applying its might severely on the poor while showing flexibility and leniency in rich communities and to tourists. The government must act with more severity against employers who force their employees to work without the necessary equipment, beginning with the government itself as an employer.

The evidence shows that the government could do more to combat COVID-19 while guaranteeing a minimum economic base for the people. However, far from rising to the times, the government has immersed itself in acts of corruption, lies and manipulation. The local colonial government must be held accountable for their actions.

Finally, let's get organized, let's strengthen ourselves and let's monitor government actions for the sake of our health and well-being as a people. Acts of protest and social actions that are effective





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in denouncing injustices while responsibly avoiding infections should not be ruled out. We trust and believe in our people and their infinite ability to rise above the fray even under the worst circumstances. We will continue the struggle for social justice, freedom and a dignified future.

**April 16, 2020**

## **Signatory organizations:**

### **Puerto Rican organizations in Puerto Rico**

Comité de solidaridad con Cuba

Frente Socialista de Puerto Rico

Jornada: Se Acabaron Las Promesas

Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano

Movimiento Ñin Negrón

Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores

Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño

Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores y Trabajadoras Puertorriqueños-Macheteros

### **Puerto Rican organizations in the USA**

A Call to Action On Puerto Rico

Frente Independentista Boricua:

- El Comité de NY del Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño
- Junta de NY y NJ del Partido Nacionalista
- Comités de la Resistencia Boricua
- El Grito
- Patria Y Cultura
- Virtual Boricua
- Puerto Rico Me Llama
- Friends of Puerto Rico Initiative
- Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Puertorriqueños - Macheteros

Unión Patriótica Boricua de la Florida Central

***The Boricua Independence Front was established in New York City with the purpose of uniting the patriotic forces in the Puerto Rican diaspora are integrated by the following organizations. Join us!***

Comités de la Resistencia Boricua, El Grito, Friends of Puerto Rico Initiative, Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, NY, Partido Nacionalista, Junta de Nueva York y Nueva Jersey, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Puertorriqueños-Macheteros, Patria y Cultura, Puerto Rico Me Llama y Virtual Boricua, entre otros.

