

Plena is Protest

Against racism

Ruth Fernandez: And back then, the dances would be played from sundown to sunrise. And there were no Black orchestras going to play, and Mingo tells me, “listen Ruth, we’re going to Condado, but you have to come in early with us because there’s an entry through the back door.” And I went... “have them tell me one sole reason, *one whole reason why I couldn’t go in. Because I’m Black?* Black and so what. So what? And I said, “Mingo, listen, you go ahead. You go in wherever you want. But, I, and going to go in through the front.

I dress like a queen. Really skinny, with a drape dress, a jersey. And I got a black cape, velvet, more jewels than MacArthur. I stayed with some friends of mine. They had a car named Packard. The driver comes in. And then the doorman, they’re more or less like bouncers, he was dressed like a penguin. It seemed like he was shaking, but he didn’t say a word. I only said, “good night.” Now, when I’m in I say, *where am I going, I’ve never been in this hotel.* [laughs] And then a waiter comes in with a tray and I said, “young man, would you have the kindness to tell me where the Whoopie Kids orchestra is playing? He said, “of course, miss.” And I thought, I’m winning the fight, he called me miss, not negrita.

“Go through that door, there’s a gray curtain, behind the gray curtain is the salon where the orchestra is playing.”

[ballroom plena music starts]

[*Fernández:* “Yesterday, you called me, negra... aha, and today, I will speak back. Go and seat in your living room, and your gradnma, where she at? Yesterday, you called me, negra ... hahaha... and today, I will speak back”]

[*chorus:* “And your gradnma, where she at? And your gradnma, where she at? And your gradnma, where she at? And your gradnma, where she at?”]

[*Fernández:* “your color it came out white, and your cheekbones kinda rosey, your lips they’re kind of thin, and your grandma, where she at? Because your girl is blanquita, you take her out on rides, and I just wanna yell out, and your gradnma, where she at?”]

Against state violence, patriarchal abuse of women, trans, and immigrants

Plena Combativa: We are so fed up. We are fed up of the government that assassinates us daily. We’re fed up of the patriarchal violence that ends the lives of women, trans women, and immigrant women. We don’t want one less. We want us all “Free and Dangerous”

[audience cheers and applauds]

[*lead plenera:* “Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this.”]

[*Plena Combativa and crowd*: “Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this.”]

[clap clap]

[*lead plenera*: “I’m singing to the machomen who think that they rule over me. You completely wrong because over my body, I’m the one who decides.”]

[*Plena Combativa*: “Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this.”]

[*lead plenera*: “And just when a woman is killed may her dress not be questioned, let’s point to the machismo of the one who came to attack.”]

[*Plena Combativa*: “Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this. Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this.”]

[*lead plenera*: “And the change is coming now, it’s our turn to fight and to transgress, for the ones who aren’t here, for the living, and the ones that are to come.”]

[*Plena Combativa and other protesters*: “Free and dangerous, Free and dangerous I am, Free and dangerous, for who doesn’t want me like this.”]

Against Colonial Corruption Affecting Public Education

[airy electronic music]

[plena protest chant: “And if they keep abusing, then a strike they will be getting. And if they keep abusing, then a strike they will be getting.”]

Mercedes Martínez- President, Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico: “[Teachers] going to get sick, and their own department will force them to go on leave because the conditions we have, are indignant. We have forty students in Pablo Casals School. You think a teacher can work with forty students in a classroom? We have thirty-four first grade students in the Efraín Sánchez Hidalgo School. We have groups *with fifty* over there in Isidro Sánchez. We have a school in Fajardo that is missing twenty teachers. This, is not guaranteeing children their constitutional right to education.”

Summer 2019, #RickyRenuncia

[*plena protest chorus*: “Onward, and ahead. Onward, and ahead. Onward, and ahead. This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena singer*: Oh yeah, and this people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena protest chorus*: “This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena singer*: “Because we remain firm in the midst of the combat.”]

[*plena protest chorus*: “This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena singer*: “And because you are a pig, we will take you to Guavate”]

[*plena protest chorus*: “This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena singer*: “Messing up with pensions, making a big mess”]

[*plena protest chorus*: “This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena singer*: This people won’t be stopped by no one.”]

[*plena*]

[*a woman chanting from the distance*: “And struggle, struggle, struggle, yeah”]

[*protest crowd*: “Surrender, surrender, surrender, no”]

[pots and pans, güiro, and pandero sounds fade]