

Flag/Professor/Flying Nun: Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843-1924) believed in women's rights, the abolition of slavery, and the independence of Puerto Rico. She is considered the first Puerto Rican poetess to receive recognition throughout all of Latin America.

Her father, of Venezuelan descent, founded the Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Law School). Her mother was a descendant of the explorer and first Spanish Governor of Puerto Rico, Juan Ponce de León. Rodríguez de Tió, although home-tutored, was very assertive in her early years. At seventeen, against the strict norm of the time, she broke convention, demanded she be allowed to wear her hair short, did so then, and then, did so throughout her life.

A political activist, writer, and book importer she often wrote articles in the local press against the Spanish regime, as would be tolerated by the regime. In 1867, and then again in 1889, she and her husband were banished from Puerto Rico by the Spanish appointed Governors.

On their first exile they lived in Venezuela and on their second, they moved to New York where she assisted Cuban revolutionaries. Later they moved to Cuba where their home became a gathering point for politicians and intellectuals as well as exiled Puerto Ricans, and where they resided until their respective deaths.

In 1868, inspired by and supporting a quest for Puerto Rico's independence, she wrote the patriotic lyrics to the existing tune of *La Borinquena*. In 1901, she founded and was an elected member to the Cuban Academy of Arts and Letters, and was an inspector of the local school system. She was well known in Cuba for her patriotic poetry about both Puerto Rico and Cuba.

It is believed by some that the design and colors of the Puerto Rican Flag, adopted in 1954, came from her idea of having the same flag as Cuba with the colors reversed. Puerto Rico has honored her memory by naming schools and avenues after her. Lola Rodríguez de Tió is buried in Cuba.

Ana María O'Neill (1894-1981) was an advocate of women's rights, an educator and author. She received her primary and secondary education in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, the town of her birth, and earned her teacher's certificate in 1915 from the Normal School of the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan. After teaching in Puerto Rico she went to New York to continue her education at Columbia University from where she earned her Master's degree in education in 1927.

O'Neill returned to Puerto Rico two years later to become the first female professor in the department of Commerce at the University of Puerto Rico, where she taught until 1951. As a women's rights activist, she urged women to participate in every aspect of civic life and to defend their right to vote.

She earned a diploma as a cooperative leader from the Rochdale Institute of the National School of Cooperativism. She fought for the Cooperative movement in Puerto Rico and was instrumental in the passing of the legislation entitled "The General Law of Cooperative Societies." In 1946 O'Neill founded of the "Cooperative Institute" of the University of Puerto Rico. In 1948, she authored the book "Etica Para la Era Atómica" (Ethics for the Atomic Age) which was acclaimed and recognized with a literary award from Northwestern University.

In 1966, She was honored by the Union of American Women who named her the 1966 "Woman of Puerto Rico." That same year she was recognized by the cooperative establishment of the island and was named "Woman of the Americas." O'Neill authored "Psicologia De LA Comunicacion" (The Psychology of Communication), that was published in 1986, five years after her death.

Marie Teresa Ríos (1917–1999) was born in Brooklyn, of Puerto Rican and Irish heritage. As a child, she displayed an interest in writing. As a young woman in the 1930s, she married Humbert Joseph Versace, a 1933 graduate of West Point with whom she had five children. Their son Rocky Versace, executed by the Viet Cong in 1965, is a Medal of Honor recipient. Another son, Richard Versace, was the first person of Puerto Rican descent to coach an NBA team, the Indian Pacers in 1988-90.

During World War II Ríos drove Army trucks and buses and served as a pilot for the Civil Air Patrol. She wrote and edited for publications such the *Armed Forces Stars & Stripes* and *Gannett*, and for various newspapers internationally in Guam and Germany, and nationally in South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Ríos taught creative writing at the University of Pittsburgh, and was on the staff of Wisconsin's Rhinelander Writers Conference. She wrote under the pen name of "Tere Ríos" and published her first book, *An Angel Grows Up*, in 1957. Her second book, *Brother Angel*, followed in 1963, and her third book, *The Fifteenth Pelican*, in 1965. *The Fifteenth Pelican*, is the book on which the "The Flying Nun" television show was based. The TV series, starring Sally Field, ran between 1968-70.

In 1958, Ríos was named "Wisconsin Writer of the Year." Upon her death, her ashes were buried with her husband at Arlington National Cemetery.

Sources: Wikipedia specific to each woman.