

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELO, GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF FORMER GOVERNOR LUIS MUÑOZ-MARIN.

April 30, 1980

With the death of Luis Muñoz-Marín, Puerto Rico, the United States, and the free world have lost one of the pre-eminent political leaders of this century.

Rarely do the children of great men rise to greatness in their own right, especially in the same field of endeavor. More often, the renown of the father proves to be a barrier to success rather than an avenue to achievement. The child is more inclined to feel inhibited than encouraged, and usually pursues a career in an unrelated field.

Luis Muñoz-Marín was the rare exception. Like his father, Luis Muñoz-Rivera, he too achieved prominence as a journalist and as a political leader of immense stature. Luis Muñoz-Marín drew imagination from a loving and sensitive mother, inspiration and judgment from his dynamic father, and invaluable perspective from the childhood experience of growing up both in Puerto Rico and on the U. S. mainland.

Luis Muñoz-Marín did not permit this unique preparation to go to waste. At an early age he became, like his father, an eloquent and persuasive writer. Later, during the dark decade of the 1930's, when Puerto Rico was beset by the Great Depression, Muñoz-Marín thrust himself onto the local political scene, launching a triumphant career which, surpassing even that of his father, would culminate in his becoming the first elected Governor of Puerto Rico in 1948.

During his sixteen years as Governor, Luis Muñoz-Marín was to become the friend and confidant of Presidents, both from the United States and elsewhere in the Hemisphere, honored widely not only for his accomplishments in Puerto Rico, but also for his profound comprehension of the democratic aspirations and cultural values of peoples throughout the Americas.

Instrumental to Luis Muñoz-Marín's ultimate success in public life was his realization and recognition, like Santiago Iglesias-Pantín, that the opportunity of the Puerto Rican worker to overcome poverty is linked inextricably to the individual liberties, the rights, and the opportunities to progress which permanent union with the states of the Union, and our American citizenship, guarantee us.

The life of Luis Muñoz-Marín was long and very full, blessed with the love of his family and crowned with the respect and affection of the Puerto Rican people. His lifetime of tireless public service, the unrelenting purposefulness of his personality, and the serenity and humor of his spirit, will live on always in the memory and in the hearts of our people.

In this moment of solemnity and of sorrow, in which all of our people join together in preparing to bid a final farewell to the mortal remains of Don Luis Muñoz-Marín, we wish to give tangible form to our tribute to the memory of this historic figure. In that spirit, I am proposing that our long-awaited new public park, heretofore known as Las Américas Park, be renamed Luis Muñoz-Marín Park, in memory of the man who worked so hard to retain within the heart of our capital city this oasis of communion with nature.

I ask all Puerto Ricans to unite with us in acclaiming the redesignation of Las Américas Park as Luis Muñoz-Marín Park, effective the day on which the park is inaugurated.

My wife Kate, our whole family, and all the people of Puerto Rico express our deepest sympathy to Doña Inés Mendoza viuda de Muñoz-Marín, and to the bereaved members of Don Luis' family. I have ordered that the flags of Puerto Rico and of the United States be flown at half staff throughout our island for the next seven days, as a symbol of our people's mourning, and Friday, May 2nd, the day on which he is to be laid to rest, has been declared an official day of mourning, with State Government offices to remain closed the entire day.