

(H. B. 2244)

(No. 113-2015)

(Approved July 15, 2015)

AN ACT

To declare May[sic] 20th of each year as the “Luis Palés-Matos Birthday,” in order to recognize and commemorate his contribution to Puerto Rican literature; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Puerto Rico’s literary history has been nurtured by great writers who have left an important legacy that depicts the culture, traditions, and feeling of their time. These men and women devoted their talents to retelling Puerto Rican history through writings, essays, stories, novels, and poems that pay homage to our development as a people. These literary genres allow present generations to relive the experiences of our ancestors, thus providing them with a better understanding of today’s Puerto Rico. A people deserve to know their history.

One of these illustrious writers was *Don* Luis Palés-Matos. He was born in Guayama on May[sic] 20, 1898. His parents were *Don* Vicente Palés-Anés and *Doña* Consuelo Matos-Vicil. Palés-Matos grew up in a family of poets surrounded by literature under the direct influence of his parents. He began writing at the young age of seventeen (17) and completed his first book, *Azaleas*, which is a compilation of poems.

Given his parents financial situation, he had to drop out of high school and find a job. After that, he held several positions such as paralegal, teacher, and public official. His first formal job was in Fajardo’s *El Pueblo* newspaper. There, he met Natividad Suliveres, whom he later married. Afterward, he moved to the city of San Juan, where he worked in several newspapers such as *El Mundo* and *El Imparcial*.

During all this time, he kept on writing. An extraordinary literary legacy for future generations was being born.

Known as the father of Afro-Antillean poetry alongside Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, his Negro poetry has been one of his greatest contributions to the People of Puerto Rico. His most prominent works include: *Palacio de sombras* (1919-1920), *Canciones de la vida media* (1925), and of course, *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (1937). His lyrical work also comprised *Puerta al tiempo en tres voces* and *El llamado*, two poems about a muse that he named Filí Melé. His greatest poetry compilation is found in *Poesía 1915-1956*, published in 1957. In prose, he wrote his autobiography, *Litoral (Reseña de una vida inútil)*, published in 1951.

The work of Palés-Matos has been disseminated in different ways over the years. Most of it has served as basis for theatrical, musical, and television productions. Palés-Matos' influence in contemporary literature to this day is undeniable, for he has often been imitated, but never duplicated. Despite initial criticisms by his peers given the topic on which his work focused, his literary creation constitutes a rich heritage left by this illustrious Puerto Rican to our culture.

In light of the value of his contribution to Puerto Rican literature and his influence on the culture of Guayama and the Island, it is important to recognize him and make his birthday an event worth remembering. As a fine example of our tenacity as a people, his vast contribution to our Island's literary culture should inspire every Puerto Rican.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.— March 20th of each year is hereby declared as the “Luis Palés-Matos Birthday.”

Section 2.— Every year, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, through a proclamation to such effect, shall encourage all Puerto Ricans to remember and pay homage to *Don* Luis Palés-Matos' memory on such day.

Section 3.— The Department of Education, the Municipal Government of Guayama, and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture shall adopt the necessary measures to achieve the purposes of this Act by organizing and holding activities in remembrance of this illustrious Puerto Rican. Likewise, they shall encourage the involvement of private entities in activities that help raise awareness of the life and works of *Don Luis Palés-Matos*.

Section 4.— This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 113-2015 (H. B. 2244)** of the **5th Regular Session** of the **17th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT to declare May[sic] 20th of each year as the “Luis Palés-Matos Birthday,” in order to recognize and commemorate his contribution to Puerto Rican literature; and for other purposes.

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 14th day of November, 2017.

Orlando Pagán-Ramírez
Acting Director