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Ruffians and Revolutionaries: the Development of the Young Lords Organization in Chicago

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RUFFIANS AND REVOLUTIONARIES:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION IN CHICAGO

by

Michael R. Gonzales

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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May 2015

ABSTRACT
RUFFIANS AND REVOLUTIONARIES:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG LORDS MOVEMENT IN CHICAGO

by

Michael R. Gonzales

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Amanda I. Seligman, Ph.D.

The Young Lords began as a street “gang” in the early 1960s in the western Puerto Rican section of Chicago’s Lincoln Park community area. In late 1968, some of the group’s leaders began to embrace radical politics and the Young Lords changed from a social group into a political organization. By examining the various factors that led to the politicization of the group’s leaders and informed their organizing, this thesis works to provide a better understanding of the Young Lords movement. More specifically, this study looks at how local social pressures, traditions of radical organizing, and efforts to forge collective identities all worked to influence the genesis, development, and political ideas of the Young Lords movement. In doing so, it identifies and discusses three major influences upon the group’s political analysis and major activities. First, this thesis demonstrates that Young Lords members were shaped by a history of colonization and resistance to colonial subjugation, both in Puerto Rico and in Chicago. Also, this study shows that the Black Power movement inspired and provided direction for Young Lords leaders. Finally, this thesis demonstrates that the movement against urban renewal projects in Lincoln Park motivated Young Lords members into action, helped define their activism, and became one of the driving causes of their movement.

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Dedicated to Jenny, without whom none of this would have been possible

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE YOUNG LORDS MOVEMENT.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: HARVEST OF EMPIRE.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: “THE REVOLUTION HAS COME”.....	77
CHAPTER FOUR: A RIGHT TO THE CITY.....	111
CONCLUSION.....	137
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	139
APPENDIX: FIGURES.....	153

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Community Areas Mentioned in Text (map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online)	153
Figure 2: Points of Interest in Lincoln Park (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online)	154
Figure 3: Collage of photos from funeral and YLO marches held in honor of Manuel Ramos, printed in the second issue of the YLO newspaper. <i>Y.L.O.</i> , May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	155
Figure 4: Article on the murder of Bruce Johnson and Eugenia Johnson, published in the fall 1969 issue of the YLO newspaper. “You Can’t Kill a Revolution,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , Fall, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	156
Figure 5: Cover of second issue of El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service, published in Milwaukee. Cover, <i>El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service</i> , April 15, 1971. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	157
Figure 6: Points of Interest on Chicago’s West Side and Lincoln Park (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard; basemap provided by ESRI Online).....	158
Figure 7: Article about October 1969 YLO march in honor of Pedro Albizu Campos. “Jibaro Seguro! A Los Yanquis Dale Duro!” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , January 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	159
Figure 8: Cover of January 1970 issue of YLO newspaper. Cover, <i>Y.L.O.</i> , January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	160
Figure 9: “Jibaro mi negro lindo,” from February/March 1970 issue of YLO newspaper. “Jibaro mi negro lindo,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , February/March, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	161
Figure 10: Articles about Chicano struggles featured in the January 1970 YLO newspaper. "Free Los Siete," <i>Y.L.O.</i> , January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)	162
Figure 11: Page three of the first issue of the YLO newspaper, featuring images from the takeover of the 18th district police station. “Latin Power to Latin People,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , March	

19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	163
Figure 12: Article about the occupation of Alcatraz, printed in the January 1970 issue of the YLO newspaper. “Give Alcatraz Back to the Indians,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	164
Figure 13: Front page of the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper, featuring an image and article about the takeover of the 18th district police station. “YLO Takes Over Police Station,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)	165
Figure 14: “BPP Ten Point Platform and Program,” printed in the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper. “BPP Ten Point Platform and Program,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	166
Figure 15: “It’s All the Same” cartoon by BPP Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, printed in the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper. “It’s All the Same,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	167
Figure 16: “People’s Revolutionary Constitutional Convention,” <i>Pitirre</i> , Summer, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	168
Figure 17: Article about the United Puerto Rican Coalition featured in the fall 1969 issue of the YLO newspaper. "El Barrio Esta Despierta," <i>Y.L.O.</i> , Fall, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	169
Figure 18: Points of Interest, Near North Side and Near West Side (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online).....	170
Figure 19: Article in May 1969 issue of YLO newspaper about the McCormick Occupation. “McCormick Take-over,” <i>Y.L.O.</i> , May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	171
Figure 20: Front page of May 1969 YLO newspaper, commemorating the takeover of the McCormick Theological Seminary. Cover, <i>Y.L.O.</i> , May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois).....	172

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAD	Black Active and Determined
BPP	Black Panther Party
CFM	Chicago Freedom Movement
CHA	Chicago Housing Authority
CUCA	Coalition for United Community Action
CVL	Conservative Vice Lords
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
DUR	Department of Urban Renewal
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FUPI	<i>Federacion Universitaria Pro Independencia</i>
GIU	Gang Intelligence Unit
GNRP	General Neighborhood Renewal Plan
JOIN	Jobs or Income Now
LADO	Latin American Defense Organization
LPCA	Lincoln Park Conservation Association
LPCCC	Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council
LSD	Lords, Stones, and Disciples
MAO	Mothers and Others
MPI	<i>Movimiento Pro Independencia</i>
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NSCM	North Side Cooperative Ministry
OLAS	Organization of Latin American Students

PCHC	People's Cooperative Housing Corporation
PIP	<i>Partido Indendentista Puertorriqueño</i>
PNP	<i>Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico</i>
PPC	Poor People's Coalition
PUP	<i>Partido Union de Puerto Rico</i>
SACC	Spanish Action Committee of Chicago
SAC	<i>Sociedad Albizu Campos</i>
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee
TWC	Third World Coalition
UPRC	United Puerto Rican Coalition
YLO	Young Lords Organization
YLP	Young Lords Party
YPO	Young Patriots Organization

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE YOUNG LORDS MOVEMENT

Introduction

In the early 1960s the Young Lords was a street club in the western Puerto Rican section of Chicago's Lincoln Park community area (see Figure 1).¹ Its members had a reputation for stealing cars and fighting with other street groups over "turf." In late 1968, as Young Lords leaders embraced radical politics, the group transformed into the Young Lords Organization (YLO). By mid-1969 the YLO was a growing national political body allied with and modeled after the Black Panther Party (BPP). No longer engaging in gang activity, YLO activists in Lincoln Park were publishing a monthly newspaper, running a number of community service programs, engaging in militant direct-action protest, demanding the independence of Puerto Rico, and calling for revolution.²

YLO members themselves saw the Young Lords as more than a gang from the outset. "You have to understand that even *before*, we were in some ways already revolutionary. Dig?" Chicago YLO Field Marshal Cosmoe Torres told a *Ramparts* reporter in 1970. "It's not that we were a gang one minute and the next we were all

¹ A note on use of the terms Puerto Rican, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano/a, Boricua, Latin, and Latino/a: The term Puerto Rican is used to refer to all people with Puerto Rican heritage, whether born on the island, in Chicago, or elsewhere, and their communities throughout the diaspora. The term Boricua is used in direct quotes and also in reference to individuals and organizations that used that term to identify themselves. The term Mexican is used in reference to people living in Mexico, as well as to first- and second-generation Mexican immigrants (and their communities in Chicago) who reportedly identified with that term. The term Mexican American is used only in direct quotes. The term Chicano/a is used in reference to individuals who reportedly identified themselves as Chicano/a and with groups that identified with the Chicano movement. The terms Latin and Latino/a can be viewed as interchangeable to refer to all people living in the United States with Latin American heritage. It can also refer to the communities these people form within the United States. When these concepts are expressed through the author's voice, the term Latino is used. The term Latin is only used when in direct quotes or in the name of an organization or newspaper.

² Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; "You Can't Kill a Revolution," *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; "Revolutionaries Serve the People: Day Care Center," *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969.

Communists. What we had to realize was that it wasn't no good fightin' each other, but that what we were doing as a gang had to be against the capitalist institutions that are oppressing us."³

This study explores the political and ideological development of the YLO. It tells the story of the group's evolution from a street gang into a revolutionary political organization. It identifies and analyzes the major factors that contributed to the politicization of YLO members and informed their political thought. It also highlights the ways in which the group's political analysis shaped its major activities. In explaining what elements most influenced YLO leaders, this thesis discusses three major topics: experiences of colonialism and legacies of anti-colonial resistance; the rise of Black Power politics and the BPP; and the displacement of poor and working-class residents from Lincoln Park as a result of urban renewal and gentrification. Each of these topics is discussed successively in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

Chapter One serves as an introduction. It provides a basic outline of the history of the Young Lords movement, discussing the group's gang origins and highlighting key moments in its reconstitution and reformation in the mid- to late 1960s. It also discusses the primary sources, literature and scholarly works that inform this thesis, placing it within its historiographical context.

Chapter Two explores the role of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles in the discourse, identity, and political analysis of the YLO in Chicago. This chapter argues that the young men and women who formed the cadre and supporters of the YLO were shaped by conditions of colonial subjugation and exploitation. Inspired and informed by the legacies of resistance to colonization (both on the island and in Chicago), these

³ Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," *Ramparts*, October 1970, 20.

activists embraced revolutionary nationalism. Yet rather than expressing their struggle in narrowly ethnic and national terms, YLO leaders constructed a class-conscious form of revolutionary nationalism tied to a Marxist-Leninist philosophy of revolutionary *internationalism*.

Chapter Three focuses on the role of the Black Power movement in the political transformation of YLO activists. This chapter examines the impact of Black Power politics on the organizing of street groups in Chicago, and explores the powerful and direct influence of the BPP upon the development of the YLO. Spurred by militant calls for Black Power, gangs throughout the city began engaging in political and community organizing in the mid-1960s. When a local chapter of the BPP emerged in 1968, its leaders hoped to organize within and among these street groups. The work and political ideology of the BPP—with an anti-colonial analysis that celebrated the revolutionary potential of urban gang members—inspired and guided activists in the Young Lords movement. With its leaders viewing the BPP as the “vanguard party” in a coming revolution, the YLO soon adopted much of the BPP’s political program, basic hierarchical structure, organizing model, and even sartorial style.

Chapter Four examines the crisis urban renewal presented for Lincoln Park’s poor and working-class communities in the 1960s, and the role these challenges played in mobilizing YLO activists. This chapter shows how the fight against urban renewal helped define the group as its leaders embraced radical politics in the late 1960s. During this time, Puerto Ricans faced an existential threat in Lincoln Park as urban renewal displaced them from the area. YLO members were motivated into action by this threat, and their anti-urban renewal activism galvanized community support. Consequently, the fight

against urban renewal became a defining feature of the Young Lords movement and came to embody the group's demand for the self-determination of Puerto Ricans and other colonized people.

Basic Historical Outline of the Young Lords Movement

The story of the Young Lords movement stretches back years before the club was founded in the early 1960s. Many of the early Young Lords members grew up attending grade school together and playing with one another on neighborhood streets and parks. In some ways the group's origins can be traced to the numerous YMCA-sponsored athletic tournaments that took place in Lincoln Park during the early to mid-1960s. During this time, counselors affiliated with the YMCA (so-called "detached workers") attempted to engage with troubled youth throughout Chicago by helping them to form their own social clubs. Detached workers also encouraged members of these youth clubs to participate in YMCA sponsored sports and social activities (e.g. baseball and basketball tournaments, dances, and fundraisers). Outside of the context of the YMCA, many of these groups essentially functioned as gangs, with members routinely engaging in gang fights and various types of criminal activity.⁴

Angel "Sal" del Rivero, one of the co-founders and early leaders of the Young Lords gang, later remembered looking up to members of the more established Latino gangs as he came into adolescence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Del Rivero was originally denied membership in the Black Eagles and the Paragons (both Latino gangs) because he was too young. At some point in 1959 or 1960, however, he and a small group

⁴ YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago Records, 1853-1980, Descriptive Inventory for the Collection at Chicago History Museum, Research Center, Mary Janzen, Christopher Ann Paton, Richard Popp, ed. Anthony Ochoa; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *The Movement*, May 1969.

of his friends—including future Young Lords co-founders Orlando Dávila and Fermin Pérez—managed to form a branch of the Egyptian Cobras, a Black gang active on the city’s West Side. Calling themselves the Egyptian Lords, these Lincoln Park youth were soon visited by older Black leaders from the Egyptian Cobras, who educated them about the group’s rules and lectured them on “the facts of life.” Not long afterwards, the Egyptian Cobras were forced out of Chicago’s West Side by a gang war with the rapidly expanding Vice Lords (a Black group founded in the North Lawndale community area). While the Egyptian Cobras later reemerged in the Woodlawn area on the city’s South Side, these Lincoln Park adolescents were once again left without any gang affiliation.⁵

At some point in 1961 or 1962, Del Rivero, Dávila, Pérez, and others decided to form a club of their own. The group’s earliest meetings were attended by approximately ten boys (most of who had been born in 1948) and were held at the Arnold Upper Grade Center in Lincoln Park (see Figure 2). Some of those in attendance went to school at Arnold, which was a facility for seventh and eighth grade students. In the evening the school’s playgrounds, gymnasium, and other facilities were used as a social center for neighborhood kids. The Young Lords held meetings at Arnold in part because of a young female social worker there who provided some assistance in getting organized. “We all wanted to marry her,” Del Rivero later remembered.⁶

Born in Mexico City, Del Rivero was one of the few early Young Lords leaders without Puerto Rican heritage. Most of the group’s other early members—including

⁵ Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995.

⁶ Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*”: *A Biographical History of Jose Cha Cha Jimenez, General Secretary of the Young Lords Organization*, (Chicago: Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, 1973), 8.

Orlando Dávila, Benny Pérez, David “Chicken Killer” Rivera, Santos Guzman, Fermin Pérez, Carlos Montañez, and Joe Vicente (the group’s first president)—had been born in Puerto Rico or had parents who were born there. Before long, however, the Young Lords grew to include a number of non-Puerto Rican members, including Estil Millar, a white Appalachian self-described “hillbilly” who served as the group’s president for a year (likely sometime between 1963 and 1964).⁷

The Young Lords at some point early on began holding meetings at the YMCA. Working with a counselor from the YMCA’s detached worker program, they elected officers, drafted rules, and began raising funds with which to buy club sweaters. The group’s uniform included black sweaters with a purple stripe, a color inspired in part by the Sharks—the purple-wearing fictional Puerto Rican gang from the *West Side Story* musical. In addition to attending “socials” at the YMCA, Young Lords members often participated in YMCA sponsored athletic competitions.⁸

Members of the Young Lords quickly gained a reputation for fighting. The group was involved in a number of gang fights in the early 1960s, often taking on groups of older whites or Latinos. The Young Lords grew during this time through periodic membership drives and the establishment of branches in nearby areas. By the mid-1960s the Young Lords had also brokered peace with a number of other Latino, white, and

⁷ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995.

⁸ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995.

Black street groups. In addition to hosting dances together, these groups often frequented the same street corners and coffee shops.⁹

José “Cha Cha” Jiménez was elected president of the Young Lords in 1964. The following year a group of young women formed the Lordettes, an all-female Young Lords chapter with its own leadership. By the mid-1960s the gang fighting had died down, and Young Lords members spent much of their time socializing with other clubs on street corners and at YMCA dances. In 1966 the Young Lords began to decline, in part because of inconsistent leadership. Some leaders had left the city, such as Del Rivero, who joined the US Army in 1965 and served in Korea and Vietnam. Others got married, had children, and were no longer interested in the gang lifestyle.¹⁰

Some leaders, such as Jiménez, increasingly found themselves in trouble with the law. After stabbing another young man in a fight over a mutual romantic interest in 1966, for example, Jiménez served a six month sentence in a state penal farm. Several months after his release, Jiménez was severely beaten and arrested by police officers following an altercation outside of his home. He subsequently fled the city with his girlfriend in order to avoid prosecution on the charge of aggravated battery against a police officer. She was pregnant and still a minor when they returned to Chicago a year later, and her mother quickly obtained a court order preventing Jiménez from seeing his newborn daughter.

⁹ Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995.

¹⁰ Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *The Movement*, May 1969; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, with José Jiménez, Angel del Rivero, and Fermin Pérez, 1995.

Depressed, Jiménez became addicted to heroin in early 1968. In the spring of 1968 he was arrested for possession of heroin and sentenced to sixty days in jail.¹¹

It was while serving this sentence in the Cook County House of Correction (a decaying facility constructed in the nineteenth century), that Jiménez began a personal transformation. Spending much of his time in isolation, Jiménez began to reflect upon his life and experiences. In part this introspection was sparked by *Seven Storey Mountain*, a 1948 autobiography written by Trappist monk Thomas Merton, which Jiménez read while in his cell. Merton's tale of rebellion and redemption spoke to Jiménez, who had once dreamed of entering the priesthood. Kneeling before the iron bars of his cell, Jiménez confessed his sins to the prison chaplain and asked for absolution. Afterwards, a jail trustee who was a Black Muslim began to supply Jiménez with political literature, including works by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Though he had not read a book in years, Jiménez devoured these texts. He had a new intellectual curiosity and time to study.¹²

Shortly after he was released from jail in mid-1968, Jiménez began to consider the idea of turning the Young Lords into a human rights organization. To be fair, the group's members had earlier participated in a variety of community service projects (e.g. holding fundraisers for charitable projects, giving Christmas food baskets to needy families, co-sponsoring a drug education program, and holding community picnics). The Young Lords had also made significant earlier efforts to promote peaceful relations with gangs throughout Chicago, such as the "Month of Soul Dances" they sponsored with the

¹¹ Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "*Que Viva El Pueblo*", 10-15; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; "Cha Cha Accused of Kidnapping Own Child," *The Black Panther*, June 7, 1969.

¹² José Jiménez Interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "*Que Viva El Pueblo*", 14-15.

Blackstone Rangers (one of the South Side's largest Black gangs) in February 1968.

These earlier efforts to build unity and serve the community in some ways reflected the impact of social movement activity on Latino and Black communities in the city, which had been steadily increasing since 1966. During this time, the YLO newspaper later explained, members of the Young Lords “began to realize that often they were acting like social workers, not getting at the root causes of the community problems.” Yet it wasn't until they learned about the political philosophy of the Black Panther Party (BPP) in late summer and fall of 1968 that they began to fully embrace the revolutionary ideas that would come to define the YLO.¹³

During the summer of 1968, Jiménez participated in an organization called the Puerto Rican Progressive Movement, a small group that mainly studied issues related to Puerto Rico and the struggle for the island's independence. In late August 1968, Jiménez observed protests against the Democratic National Convention that took place in Lincoln Park (a 1,200 acre public park located on the eastern edge of the Lincoln Park community area). At one of these protests, Jiménez listened as national BPP Chairman Bobby Seale urged the crowd to defend themselves against the “pigs.” Meanwhile, police gathered on the outskirts of the park. “If a pig comes up to us and starts swinging a billy club and you check around and you got your piece,” Seale exhorted, “you gotta down that pig in defense of yourself.” Wanting to avoid returning to jail, Jiménez decided to make a hasty exit.¹⁴

¹³ Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *The Movement*, May 1969.

¹⁴ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Mike Lawson, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 29, 2012; David Farber, *Chicago '68*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 190.

“So as I try to walk away,” Jiménez later remembered, “these police from the eighteenth district recognized me. You know they had been busting me all my life.” Instead of harassing Jiménez, however, they greeted him by his nickname. “Cha Cha! How you doing Cha Cha?” the officers asked, as if they were old friends. “I’m doing fine,” he nervously responded, “I’m just trying to get out of here.” Later that evening, after the police began to enforce the park’s eleven p.m. curfew, police officers attacked and beat protesters, chasing many of them into the adjacent Old Town neighborhood.¹⁵

In the fall of 1968, Jiménez and fellow Young Lords member Rafael “Ralph/Spaghetti” Rivera began to participate in student activism at their former high school. Rivera had recently returned from a nearly year-long stay in Puerto Rico. During this time he had undergone his own personal transformation. Having participated in leftwing pro-independence activity on the island, Rivera returned to Chicago with a desire to continue engaging in political activism. When students at Lincoln Park’s Waller High School (see Figure 2) began organizing a student strike shortly after the start of the school year in the fall of 1968, Rivera and Jiménez became involved in this struggle. While the strike quickly lost steam, Rivera and Jiménez were determined to keep organizing.¹⁶

Jiménez had also been in conversation with Richard Vission and Patricia Devine, organizers with a white progressive group called Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park. Devine and Vission wanted to recruit Jiménez to join them in their efforts to stop urban renewal projects and halt the resultant displacement of poor and working-class people from Lincoln Park. Jiménez was moved by their arguments, as well as by the political

¹⁵ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; David Farber, *Chicago '68*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 190.

¹⁶ John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012.

literature they provided him. “They...gave me books to read including the *Black Panther* Newspaper—that did it!” Jiménez later wrote. “I had to create an organization of that kind for the Puerto Rican community.” For Jiménez, the BPP’s political philosophy spoke to the colonial position of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. It also provided a model of resistance that depended upon the participation of urban street youth. Drawn to these ideas, Jiménez envisioned reorganizing the Young Lords into a militant protest organization modeled after and allied with the BPP.¹⁷

As the Young Lords had not been holding meetings or events for some time, by the summer of 1968 it existed more as a group of friends rather than an organized and active club. Throughout the fall of 1968, however, Jiménez and Rivera worked to revive and reconstitute the group into the Young Lords Organization (YLO)—a new organization committed to the independence of Puerto Rico; the self-determination of Puerto Rican people throughout the diaspora; and the liberation of all oppressed people around the world. They reached out to former Young Lords gang members, asking them to help lead the new group. They also spoke with members of other local street groups in hopes of gaining new recruits and allies. Their efforts had mixed results. While many people were receptive to the idea of transforming the group into a vehicle for direct action protest, others were violently opposed. “Convincing them bruised not only my ego, but my face,” Jiménez later wrote. “There were altercations going on because people didn’t want to join the movement,” he later laughed in an interview with this author. “I got beat up a few times. I got called a communist, and we got into fights.” Yet despite this early resistance, by the end of the year Jiménez and Rivera had recruited a core group

¹⁷ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Patricia Devine-Reed, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; “Urban Renewal Case,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

of leaders, many of whom had formerly been Young Lords gang members (such as David Rivera, Fermin Pérez, José “Pancho” Lind, and others). This group later chose September 23, 1968—the centennial of the *Grito de Lares* (a famed Puerto Rican nationalist revolt discussed in Chapter Two)—to represent the official founding of their new organization.¹⁸

From its beginning as a political organization, the YLO was modeled directly after the BPP. In addition to embracing the rhetorical and sartorial styles of the BPP (wearing purple berets, however, instead of black ones), the YLO also adopted the group’s political program and basic hierarchical structure. The YLO had a central committee that mostly mirrored that of the BPP. As chairman, Jiménez served as the YLO’s leader and spokesperson.¹⁹ Rafeal Rivera became minister of education, and was responsible for developing the group’s political education classes. Omar López, a college student and activist, was recruited to serve as minister of information. Other “cadre” became captains, field marshals, etc. Some of the former Young Lords gang members and new senior leaders were in their early-twenties. For example, Jiménez was twenty and López was twenty-three in early 1969. Yet many of the group’s new recruits were sixteen or seventeen-year-old high school students or recent dropouts. While the YLO leaders found they could easily mobilize large numbers of people to attend protests or engage in direct action (many of these people were affectionately dubbed “rally lords”), most of the organizing work was done by a core group of roughly twenty members.²⁰

¹⁸ José Jiménez, “The Young Lords in Lincoln Park” (2012). *Student Summer Scholars*. Paper 96; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

¹⁹ As minister of defense, Huey P. Newton served as the BPP’s top leader. BPP Chairman Bobby G. Seale served as chief spokesperson. As chairman of the YLO, Jiménez served both as the group’s top leader and as the chief spokesperson.

²⁰ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

Members of the YLO engaged in a whirlwind of activity between early 1969 and late 1970, confronting the police, occupying buildings, producing a monthly newspaper, and traveling across the country and to Puerto Rico. In early 1969 the YLO began working with the newly formed Illinois branch of the BPP, which had an office on the city's West Side. The YLO soon joined together with the BPP and the Young Patriots Organization (YPO)—a group of mostly Appalachian whites who lived in the city's Uptown area—to form what they called the Rainbow Coalition (discussed in Chapter Three). The purpose of this alliance was in part to demonstrate the revolutionary potential of united white, Black, and Latino poor and working-class communities. The YLO also helped form the Poor People's Coalition (PPC), a multiracial alliance of organizations that fought urban renewal in Lincoln Park (and elsewhere) and worked to secure affordable housing for the area's poor and working-class residents (discussed in Chapter Four).²¹

A number of watershed events occurred in the spring and summer of 1969, helping to define and unify the YLO. The killing of YLO member Manuel Ramos by an off-duty police officer, for example, had several important ramifications. While the loss of life deeply upset Young Lords members, and the police and city government's response was viewed as unjust, in some ways Ramos' murder and its aftermath worked to strengthen the Young Lords movement.

On the night of Saturday, May 3, 1969, several YLO members were attending a birthday party inside the home of Young Lords co-founder Orlando Dávila. At some point after midnight, as was later reported in the YLO newspaper, several people inside

²¹ Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, "Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón: The Young Lords, Black Power and Puerto Rican Nationalism in the U.S., 1966-1972." *Centro Journal* 18, no. 1 (2006): 155-156; Patricia Devine-Reed, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

Dávila's home heard a commotion out on the street and went to investigate. Outside they encountered a stranger—later identified as off-duty Chicago police officer James Lamb—waving a gun around near an unnamed YLO member. Lamb was dressed in street clothes, and had earlier been painting an apartment across the street. Witnesses claimed that after one of the partygoers told him to calm down, Lamb turned towards the doorway to Dávila's home and fired two shots. The first bullet struck Manuel Ramos in the head near his right eye, killing him. The second shot hit Raphael Rivera in the neck, and he survived the injury. Lamb identified himself as an off-duty officer once uniformed police arrived on the scene. Despite witness accounts that the shooting had been unprovoked, Lamb was never arrested, charged or reprimanded in any way for the attack. Instead, the responding officers immediately arrested four veteran Young Lords members—Orlando Dávila, Pedro Martínez, Jose Lind, and Angel del Rivero—who were each charged with aggravated battery against Lamb.²²

YLO members engaged in a great deal of activity over the next several days. In addition to raising money for bail and defense costs for the four arrestees, YLO members worked to honor the life of their fallen comrade. On the evening of Monday, May 5, the YLO led a thousand people in a march from an empty lot (and urban renewal site) at the corner of North Halsted Street and West Armitage Avenue to the location of Ramos' wake. As is discussed in Chapter Four, this empty lot was later converted into the "People's Park," and served as the symbolic center of the fight against urban renewal in Lincoln Park (see Figure 2). After the wake, a caravan of roughly seventy-five cars

²² Untitled, *Y.L.O.*, May 1969, 3, 8; John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 187-188; "The Trial is Illegal: Los Cuatro Go To Trial," *Y.L.O.*, February/March 1970.

traveled to the ninth district police station (a half-block from the home of Mayor Richard J. Daley), where members of Ramos' family and YLO leaders spoke to a police commander and members of the press. The crowd eventually dispersed under the threat of arrest. Ramos' funeral service was held on Wednesday, May 7, inside St. Teresa Church in Lincoln Park. The service featured the participation of a number of BPP and YLO activists. Dressed in all black (except for the purple berets of YLO members) they stood at attention and held BPP flags aloft. The ceremony was followed by a motorcade and march to the cemetery where Ramos was buried (see Figure 3).²³

In addition to BPP members, a number of those who participated in these events were former Young Lords gang members who up to that point had been reticent about participating in the politicized YLO. Young Lords gang co-founder Angel del Rivero, for example, had returned to Chicago in 1968 after serving in the army. At first he had decided not to participate in the YLO, in part because he felt alienated by the group's anti-military rhetoric. However, Ramos' murder and his own arrest finally convinced Del Rivero that he had no choice but to join his old friends in leading the Young Lords movement. Del Rivero was not the only one impacted by Ramos' death. "When Manuel was killed," Omar López later recounted, "everyone was convinced they had to do something." Jiménez was also deeply affected by the injustice, later saying, "I think it was at that point that I became a real revolutionary."²⁴

The five-day occupation of the McCormick Theological Seminary in Lincoln Park, another landmark event for the YLO (discussed in Chapter Four), began just over a

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 17 1995; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 187-188; Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," 20.

week after Ramos' murder on May 14, 1969. The McCormick take-over was an important moment for the YLO's struggle against urban renewal in Lincoln Park. In addition to invigorating the Young Lords movement, this event helped the YLO gain important resources and new allies.²⁵

The establishment of the People's Church, the site of much of the YLO's community service work, began in June 1969. The origins of the People's Church stretch back to early 1969, however, when YLO leaders first approached members of the Armitage Avenue Methodist Church and requested permission to use the facility's basement space for a number of proposed community service programs. The church, located at the corner of West Armitage Avenue and North Dayton Street in the western Puerto Rican section of Lincoln Park (see Figure 2), housed two small congregations. One group consisted largely of older progressive whites. The other was made up mostly of exiled Cubans who had fled the island in the wake of Castro's seizure of power in 1959. The YLO had already used the church for some of its events, and its members had already gained the support of key church leaders. The YLO faced significant resistance from members of the Cuban congregation, however, who were opposed to these "communists" taking over the church. Unable to reach an agreement, YLO leaders grew increasingly impatient. On Wednesday, June 11, 1969, a group of YLO members decided to take action. Reasoning that the church's basement space should serve the needs of poor people in the community rather than sit empty, they seized the building. This was done without consulting Jiménez, who was surprised when he learned what had transpired. In response, Jiménez quickly held a press-conference during which he promised that the church would remain open and religious activities would be allowed to continue

²⁵ "McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, May 1969.

unimpaired. He even pledged that YLO members would be in attendance during the following Sunday's worship service. Jiménez also affirmed that the YLO would continue to occupy the site, which would henceforth serve as the home for the group's proposed community programs. The following day the YLO began registering children for a free community daycare center.²⁶

Some church members (especially among the Cubans) were against the occupation and left the church in opposition shortly afterwards. However, the YLO received significant support from key church leaders. Perhaps most important was the backing of the church's young pastor, Reverend Bruce Johnson, and his wife Eugenia Johnson. Informed of the occupation shortly after it began, police officers were soon dispatched to the church. In an effort to avoid a confrontation (and over the objections of certain church members), Rev. Johnson assured the police that the YLO had permission to use the space. Afterwards, Bruce and Eugenia Johnson worked to educate the congregation about the Young Lords movement. Together with a number of supportive church members, they also helped the YLO to develop their community service programs. Modeled after the efforts of the BPP and operating in the church basement, these included a free breakfast for children program, a free community daycare center, and a free community health clinic. A new symbol—a cross bursting the chains of bondage—was soon displayed inside the church, and a new creed appeared at the church door. It read:

We have a dream. This Church, led by the community, confronting the powers which limit our destiny, keeping rulers responsible, assisting man to claim his destiny and celebrating in worship the birth of that power is our dream of a

²⁶ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 192; "You Can't Kill a Revolution," *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014; "Young Lords Still Holding N. Side Church," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1969.

People’s Church. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that each man is of worth as a special creation of God. And Christ’s resurrection means that there is no power or establishment which can control a man who claims his own dignity. This is your faith & your Church. Claim them both and join us in this dream.²⁷

In late September 1969, Reverend Bruce Johnson and Eugenia Johnson were brutally stabbed to death inside of their home. While the police never solved these crimes, YLO leaders suspected that the murders were politically motivated—retribution for support the couple had given to their movement—writing in the YLO newspaper shortly afterwards: “these murders show to what vicious lengths the ruling class will go to prevent the growth of our just struggle” (see Figure 4).²⁸

The Young Lords movement spread to New York with the establishment of a YLO chapter there in the summer of 1969. While the Chicago YLO had evolved from a gang into a protest organization, the New York chapter grew out of student activism. The New York state chapter of the YLO was actually the result of a merger between two different groups of New York students. One of these was led by José Martínez, a member of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), who met with YLO leaders at the national SDS convention in Chicago in May 1969. With Jiménez’ approval, Martínez began organizing a New York chapter shortly thereafter. The other New York YLO group began as the *Sociedad Albizu Campos* (SAC). SAC was based in *El Barrio* (Spanish Harlem) and had been meeting for about six months when its members first

²⁷ “Revolutionaries Serve the People! Day Care Center,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; José Jiménez, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Historic Walking Tour sponsored by Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and GVSU Latino Student Union, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Matthew Johnson, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

²⁸ More than forty years later, José Jiménez and other YLO leaders called upon the city of Chicago to reopen the investigation into these murders. “They killed Reverend Bruce Johnson and Eugenia Johnson to try to erase this history,” he told a small crowd in 2013, “[but] we are not going to forget.”; “You Can’t Kill a Revolution,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

learned about the work of the Chicago YLO, as SAC member Pablo “Yoruba” Guzmán later wrote:

What happened was, in 1969, in the June 7 issue of the Black Panther newspaper there was an article about the Young Lords Organization in Chicago with Cha Cha Jiménez as their Chairman. Cha Cha was talking about revolution and socialism, and the liberation of Puerto Rico and the right to self-determination and all this stuff that I aint *never* heard a spic say. I mean, I hadn’t never heard no Puerto Rican talk like this—just Black people were talking this way, you know. And I said, “Damn! Check this out.” That’s what really got us started. That’s all it was, man.

SAC leaders soon traveled to Chicago to meet with Jiménez and other YLO leaders, and shortly thereafter SAC and Martínez’ group joined together to form a unified New York YLO chapter.²⁹

The New York and Chicago groups worked together for almost a year until a series of meetings ended badly and the organization split in June 1970. When New York YLO leaders went to Chicago in the spring of 1970, they already knew that they wanted to wrest control of the national organization from the Chicago leadership. The New York leadership argued that the former gang members that constituted the cadre of Chicago YLO activists were not disciplined enough to provide revolutionary leadership for the Puerto Rican movement. While in Chicago, the New York activists asked the Chicago YLO leaders to move to New York to help build a new national party based there. The presumption was that these efforts would be led by the New York activists. Proud of their grassroots movement and not willing to play a secondary role in an organization that they had created, the Chicago YLO leaders rejected this proposal. Unable to resolve their conflict, the New York and Chicago groups separated into two independent

²⁹ Judson Jeffries, “From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 96, no. 3 (2003): 291; Young Lords Party & Michael Abramson, *Palante* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1971), 69.

organizations, each using the name Young Lords. The Chicago group retained the name Young Lords Organization (YLO), while the New York faction renamed themselves the Young Lords Party (YLP).³⁰

The Chicago YLO faced a crisis at the end of 1970 when Jiménez went “underground” in order to avoid serving an extended prison sentence. In addition to facing a number of pending charges, he had been convicted of stealing lumber (valued at approximately twenty-five dollars) from an urban renewal construction site. Though the wood was ostensibly going to be used for renovations to the People’s Church, Jiménez later admitted that the theft showed poor leadership and was a critical mistake. Discouraged by escalating police repression, the proliferation of heroin into the community, and the continued displacement of Lincoln Park’s poor and working-class residents, a number of YLO leaders decided to join Jiménez in clandestine organizing. In addition to traveling around the country (forming new YLO chapters in Los Angeles and San Diego in the process), Jiménez spent much of the next two years with a rotating group of between ten to twenty YLO members on a farm near Tomah, Wisconsin. Living communally and subsisting on funds from welfare checks collected in Chicago, they envisioned their home as a sort of revolutionary training camp. Much of this training involved political education, with YLO members reading and discussing Marxist-Leninist-Maoist texts.³¹

During this time, a YLO chapter emerged in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. YLO leader Luis “Tony” Baez had moved to Milwaukee in late 1970 after visiting the city and being

³⁰ Luis “Tony” Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013; Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013; Young Lords Party Central Committee, “Editorial,” *Palante*, June 5, 1970.

³¹ José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angie Navedo-Rizzo interviewed by Johanna Fernandez.

impressed by what he saw as a vibrant and rapidly growing Latino movement. Together with a number of Puerto Rican and Chicano activists, Baez founded the Milwaukee YLO chapter in early 1971. This group then began producing a short-lived YLO newspaper there called *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service* (see Figure 5).³²

In late 1972, a YLO member was rushed to a hospital emergency room after accidentally shooting himself while training on the farm in Tomah. Feeling that their security had been compromised by this accident, and concluded that the best way to organize for revolution was to work closely with Puerto Rican communities, Jiménez and other YLO leaders decided to come out of hiding. In a dramatic scene before a crowd of supporters, Jiménez turned himself in to police outside of Chicago's eighteenth district police station on Wednesday, December 6, 1972. The following day he was ordered by Judge Philip Romiti to begin serving a one year jail term. Before his hearing with the judge, a letter was read to the press by Inez Luna, a nineteen-year-old member of the Cha Cha Jiménez Defense Committee. In this letter Jiménez pledged to eat nothing but bread and water for the next forty-six days. "I am fasting," he wrote, "because I want to do penance to the Latin community for making the mistake of taking \$23 worth of lumber."³³

With Jiménez in custody, other YLO activists opened a storefront office in Chicago's Lakeview area. For the next several years the group remained active in the city's Uptown and Lakeview community areas. Following his release after serving nine months in prison, Jiménez ran two spirited though ultimately unsuccessful campaigns for alderman (in 1973 and 1975). "We never believed in elections, that elections were going

³² Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

³³ José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; "Young Lords Chief Vows Fast," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1972.

to bring about change by themselves,” Jiménez later explained about these campaigns, which were launched in conjunction with similar efforts by the BPP in Oakland, “but we had to educate the people...and the elections became an organizing vehicle to do that.”³⁴

The group remained active throughout much of the 1970s, though it was never able to attract as much attention as it did during the late 1960s. Its major political objectives—stopping gentrification in Lincoln Park, gaining independence for Puerto Rico, and decolonization of the *barrio*—were not achieved. Yet as will be discussed in the following chapters, the YLO made several important historical contributions. For one, the group articulated a class-conscious form of revolutionary nationalism. This brand of nationalism was rooted in a philosophy of revolutionary *internationalism*, embodied in the YLO’s solidarity work with the BPP, the YPO, and other multi-racial coalitions. As well, in their opposition to urban renewal in Lincoln Park, the YLO loudly proclaimed the right of poor and working-class people to a place in the city and the right to control the development of their neighborhoods. While their failure to achieve all of their goals reflected the enormously uneven balance of power between themselves and their adversaries, the audacious efforts of YLO activists highlighted the explosive potential of united and mobilized working-class communities.

Telling the Story of the Young Lords Organization

Only a handful of scholarly studies have been published that deal with the YLO in Chicago. This thesis highlights and builds upon the insights developed in these texts. One of the most comprehensive of these is a chapter entitled “The Evolution of the Young Lords Organization: From Street Gang to Revolutionaries,” in Lilia Fernandez’ 2012

³⁴ Les Bridges, “Cha Cha Jimenez: The Gang Leader on the Lam is Now the Politician on the Stump,” *The Reader* 4, no. 18, February 7, 1975; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

book, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*.³⁵ This is a well-researched and informative chapter, with a balanced and critical analysis. At just over thirty pages, however, this text is too short to fully capture all of the dynamics at play in the development of the Young Lords movement. Other studies focusing on the YLO include a 2003 article published in the *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society* written by Judson Jeffries entitled “From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago,” and an article published in *Centro Journal* in 2006 written by Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar entitled “Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón: The Young Lords, Black Power and Puerto Rican Nationalism in the U.S., 1966-1972.”³⁶ All of these texts explore how issues of race, ethnicity, nationalism, migration, and Black Power shaped the development of the YLO. Accordingly, the major arguments put forth in the present study build upon many of the insights contributed by these scholars.

It should be noted that a number of studies have been written that focus more heavily on the experiences of Young Lords activists outside of Chicago, in places like New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. While the East Coast Young Lords story is mostly outside of the scope of this thesis, works by scholars such as Johanna Fernandez, Darrel Enck-Wazner, Carmen Theresa Whalen, and others, highlight national and transnational elements of the Young Lords movement in ways that inform the present study.³⁷

³⁵ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 173-206.

³⁶ Jeffries, “From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 288-304; Ogbar, “Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón,” 149-169.

³⁷ See: Johanna L. del C. Fernández, “Radicals in the Late 1960s: A History of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969-1974” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2004); Darrel Enck-Wazner, “Gender Politics, Democratic Demand and Anti-Essentialism in the New York Young Lords,” in *Latina/o Discourses in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de Una Voz?*, edited by Michelle A. Holling and Bernadette M. Calafell, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011). 59-80; Carmen Teresa Whalen, “Bridging Homeland and

The analysis presented in this thesis is also shaped by research on topics related to the experiences of Young Lords members in more general ways. For example other chapters in Lilia Fernandez' aforementioned *Brown in the Windy City* analyze the experiences of postwar Puerto Rican and Mexican communities over several decades in a number of different Chicago neighborhoods. Her analysis helps place the development of the Young Lords movement into the broader context of challenges Latino communities faced throughout Chicago. This book also discusses the dynamics of racial formation and solidarity among Latinos in Chicago. In doing so, it complicates dualistic understandings of race in the urban north and explores racial ambiguities and racial flexibility within Latino communities.³⁸

The analysis in this thesis also draws insight and inspiration from the works of social scientists studying Puerto Ricans both in Chicago and on the island. Chapter Two, for example, uses concepts explored in two books written by sociologist Felix M. Padilla that highlight the work of Latino activists in Chicago during the 1960s-1970s. The first of these books, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*, published in 1985, grapples with the emergence in Chicago of a shared Latino identity, inclusive of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latin Americans. In this book, Padilla referred to Latino identity formation as *Latinismo* (or Latino ethnic consciousness) and discussed the circumstances under which expressions of this identity are “crystallized.”³⁹ While Padilla's analysis does not explicitly deal with the YLO, his characterization of Latino identity formation as a highly conditional political choice helps

Barrio Politics: The Young Lords in Philadelphia,” *The Puerto Rican Movement*, edit. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 107-123.

³⁸ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*.

³⁹ Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 61-64.

to explain the YLO's simultaneous embrace of both *Latinismo* and Puerto Rican nationalism. *Puerto Rican Chicago*, published in 1987, deals exclusively with the experiences of the city's Puerto Rican communities. In this book, Padilla used the framework of "internal colonialism" to explain the subordinate status, socio-economic position, and lack of meaningful control over social institutions, experienced by Puerto Ricans in Chicago.⁴⁰ While this concept may have limitations, its utility for the present analysis lies in its ability to place the activities of the YLO within a broader context of anti-colonial struggles on the island and throughout the diaspora.

While not explicitly focused on the Young Lords movement, books written by anthropologists Gina M. Pérez, Ana V. Ramos-Zayas, and Jorge Duany, also help provide a better understanding of the transnational dynamics at work in Chicago's growing communities of Puerto Rican migrants. Pérez' book, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families*, uses ethnographic research to connect experiences on the island with experiences in Chicago.⁴¹ This transnational perspective adds depth to our understanding of the histories of these communities. Also utilizing a transnational lens, books such as Ramos-Zayas' *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*, and Duany's *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*, explore the construction of Puerto Rican nationalism and national identity both on the island and in Chicago.⁴²

⁴⁰ Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 4-19.

⁴¹ Gina M. Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁴² Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

YLO members were not defined solely by their racial/ethnic/national identities. In many ways their perspectives were also shaped by their experiences growing up as members of a street club. As such, this study draws upon the work of academics who have focused their research on gangs, both in Chicago and elsewhere in the United States. Ironically, the most comprehensive recent text on the history of youth gangs in Chicago, Andrew Diamond's *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969*, presents an inaccurate characterization of the YLO's political ideas. While he only briefly mentioned the YLO, Diamond erroneously asserted (without citation or further clarification) that, "the Young Lords were embedded in a tradition of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism that resisted forms of Latino identification." An extended discussion in Chapter Two of this thesis demonstrates Diamond's characterization of the YLO to be false.⁴³

More useful to this study is the work of John D. Márquez, which places the "ghetto violence" of American street gangs within a larger context of colonial violence and decolonial struggle. In "The Black Mohicans: Representations of Everyday Violence in Postracial Urban America," published in 2012 in *American Quarterly*, Márquez argued that Black and Latino street gangs in cities like Chicago should be understood in some ways as "self-defense organizations" rising to meet the ubiquitous threat of white violence.⁴⁴ Related to this understanding is the work of anthropologist James C. Scott, historian Robin D. G. Kelley, and others, who have centered their analyses on the concept of "infrapolitics." In doing so, these academics have sought to examine (in the words of

⁴³ Andrew J. Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1907-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 309.

⁴⁴ John D. Márquez, "The Black Mohicans: Representations of Everyday Violence in Postracial Urban America," *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2012): 625-651; José Jiménez, "The Young Lords in Lincoln Park" (2012). *Student Summer Scholars*, Paper 96.

Scott) the often “invisible,” and “circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups.”⁴⁵ Using this framework, the present analysis considers both the early gang activities of the Young Lords and the YLO’s later more explicitly political work as fitting within a broad spectrum of forms of resistance to colonial subjugation in Chicago and on the island.

As the YLO developed into a radical political organization, its leaders were inspired and influenced by the rise of Black Power politics and the work of Black Power groups in Chicago, most importantly the Black Panther Party (BPP). Accordingly, this thesis draws upon a large and growing body of literature on the Black Power movement and the work of the BPP. Several chapters contained in edited works by Charles E. Jones, Yohuru Williams, and Jama Lazerow, for example, help explain the complex history, ideology, development, and day-to-day operations of the BPP.⁴⁶ This literature underpins discussions in Chapter Three about the influence of the BPP on the development of the YLO. Scholars of the Black Power movement, such as Judson Jeffries, Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, Jakobi Williams, etc., have also noted the continuities and discontinuities between the YLO, the BPP, and the organizing efforts of other oppressed national minorities (e.g.

⁴⁵ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 183; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels* (New York: Free Press, 1994); José Jiménez, “The Young Lords in Lincoln Park” (2012) *Student Summer Scholars*, Paper 96.

⁴⁶ For example, see: Charles E. Jones, and Judson L. Jeffries, “‘Don’t Believe the Hype’: Debunking the Panther Mythology,” Nikhil Pal Singh, “The Black Panthers and the ‘Undeveloped Country’ of the Left,” Floyd W. Hayes III and Francis A. Kiene III, “‘All Power to the People’: The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and The Black Panther Party,” JoNina M. Abron, “‘Serving the People’: The Survival Programs of The Black Panther Party,” Christian A. Davenport, “Reading the ‘Voice of the Vanguard’: A Content Analysis of The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service, 1969-1973,” and Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of The Black Panther Party (1969-1972),” all in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); David Barber “Leading the Vanguard: White New Leftists School the Panthers on Black Revolution,” and Robert O. Self “The Black Panther Party and the Long Civil Rights Era,” both in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* edited by Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Chicanos, American Indians, and Asian Americans).⁴⁷ Through an extended discussion of the role of the BPP in the activities and political development of the YLO, this thesis builds upon and extends this literature.

As inspired as they were by the BPP, many YLO activists were motivated into action by the existential threat urban renewal presented to their communities. As such, this thesis relies upon a large body of literature looking at the role of government in shaping urban communities. Published in 1983, Arnold R. Hirsch's classic text *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago 1940-1960*, for example, traces the changing post-war racial demographics on Chicago's South Side and explores the interplay of social forces struggling for and against racial housing discrimination. Thanks in large part to Hirsch's meticulous use of archival material, *Making the Second Ghetto* gained notoriety for its monumental thesis, which argues that the role of government in shaping Chicago's postwar "second ghetto was so pervasive, so deep, that it virtually constituted a new form of *de jure* segregation."⁴⁸ *Making the Second Ghetto* has been widely praised and recognized to have deeply influenced the way urban historians thought about and researched issues of segregation and ghetto formation.⁴⁹ Hirsch's insights laid the essential groundwork that allowed a number of urban historians to conduct similar studies of other American cities, such as Thomas Sugrue, who examined comparable dynamics at play in the formation of Detroit ghettos in *The Origin of the*

⁴⁷ For example, see: Jeffries, "From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries," 288-304; Ogbar, "Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón," 149-169; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, "Rainbow Radicalism: The Rise of Radical Ethnic Nationalism," in *Black Power*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 159-190; Jakobi Williams, "The Original Rainbow Coalition," in *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 254-255.

⁴⁹ Amanda Irene Seligman, "What Is the Second Ghetto?," *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 3 (2003): 272.

Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit.⁵⁰ Critical voices, such as Joe Trotter and Steven Gregory, have suggested that *Making the Second Ghetto* gave too little attention to the agency of poor and working-class people in the communities most affected by urban planning. Sugrue has defended Hirsch's text against these charges. "Making the Second Ghetto is a story of white power, not of black resistance," Sugrue argued. Accordingly, "Hirsch highlighted the power and intractability of white racism."⁵¹

Hirsch's influence can also be seen in books such as Amanda I. Seligman's *Block By Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side*, and Fernandez's *Brown in the Windy City*, both of which deal extensively with issues of race, housing, segregation, and public policy in parts of Chicago outside of the scope of Hirsch's text.⁵² Both works build upon Hirsch's basic framework while also demonstrating the agency of a variety of activists who struggled to have a voice in the reshaping of their communities. In doing so, they address the concerns of critics while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the processes first explored by Hirsch. Much of the discussion in two chapters of *Brown in the Windy City*, for example, focuses on the role of urban renewal projects in the 1950s and 1960s in reshaping residential boundaries for Puerto Rican and Mexican communities. The present study, particularly Chapter Four's discussion of the fight against urban renewal in Lincoln Park, contributes to and helps develop this body of literature. It recognizes and identifies the structures of power that worked to reshape Lincoln Park by displacing its poor and working class residents. Yet as the purpose of

⁵⁰ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁵¹ Thomas Sugrue, "Revisiting the Second Ghetto," *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 3 (2003): 283.

⁵² Amanda I. Seligman, *Block By Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*.

this chapter is to explore the effects of these challenges on the resistance movement in Lincoln Park, it also highlights the agency of anti-urban renewal activists.

While Chapter Four's analysis is in many ways shaped by "Second Ghetto" literature, it is rhetorically framed around the concept of the "right to the city." The phrase "right to the city" was popularized by French Marxist sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book, *La Droit a la Ville*.⁵³ Other scholars, such as radical geography professors David Harvey and Don Mitchell, have argued for reclamation of this idea.⁵⁴ Harvey described the "right to the city" as exerting the right "to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way."⁵⁵ In some ways this definition helps to explain the YLO's demand for Puerto Rican self-determination throughout the diaspora, embodied in the group's fight against urban renewal in Lincoln Park.

While the aforementioned literature helps frame this thesis, much of its evidence is culled from a wealth of primary resources available at several Midwest archives. Some of the information this study relies upon, for example, was found in collections at the DePaul University archives. DePaul's Young Lords Collection consists of copies of YLO newspapers as well as a variety of party documents. It also contains tapes and transcripts of twenty oral history interviews with Young Lords activists and their family members. These interviews were conducted in the 1990s by DePaul University's Center for Latino Research and the Lincoln Park Project. DePaul also houses a variety of documents related

⁵³ Henri Lefebvre, *La Droit a la Ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968).

⁵⁴ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, (New York: Verso, 2012); Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003).

⁵⁵ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 5.

to Lincoln Park and urban renewal in its Lincoln Park Neighborhood Collection. Much of this data can be accessed online through the DePaul University Digital Collections.

Another important resource is the Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection, which is housed at Grand Valley State University and was unveiled in September 2012. This collection includes video and audio recordings of more than 110 oral history interviews, all available to view or hear online. A wide range of individuals associated with the Young Lords movement were interviewed for this collection, including former activists, parents, teachers, social workers, etc. Most of these interviews were conducted or facilitated by former Grand Valley State University student and YLO Chairman José “Cha Cha” Jiménez.

This thesis also features unique information contained in the tapes and transcripts of personal interviews its author conducted with former YLO leaders Omar López, Dr. Luis “Tony” Baez, and José Jiménez.

Drawing from all of these resources, this thesis aims to explain the transformation of Young Lords activists from gang members into revolutionary political organizers. No doubt there are elements of this story that have been left out and aspects of the Young Lords movement not engaged with critically in this study. For example, much more could be written about the Young Lords’ early years as a gang, and how the activity of its members fit into the “circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups” described by Scott.⁵⁶ Also, one of the weaknesses in this thesis is its lack of critical engagement with the issue of gender in the transformation and development of the YLO. As Lilia Fernandez noted, “from the beginning, the YLO was masculinist and androcentric in its

⁵⁶ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 183

posture, its politics, and its leadership.”⁵⁷ Future research therefore needs to give much more attention both to the role of women within the group as well as to how constructions of gender impacted the ideas and practices of the YLO. Other avenues for future research include: a closer look at the YLO’s experiences in the early-1970s as an “underground” group engaged in political study; a more comprehensive analysis of the split between Young Lords leaders on the East Coast and the group’s founders in Chicago; and an exploration of the work of the YLO in the Lakeview community area during the mid-1970s. While these topics are outside the scope of this study, the information presented here will hopefully lay the groundwork and provide inspiration for other scholars.

⁵⁷ Fernandez, *Brown and the Windy City*, 195.

CHAPTER TWO: HARVEST OF EMPIRE¹

Introduction

José “Cha Cha” Jiménez was born on August 8, 1948, in El Millón, a “slum” in the city of Caguas, Puerto Rico. It was in the “slums” of Chicago, however, where he spent his formative childhood and adolescent years. He moved there as a toddler with his family in early 1951. Facing poverty at home and with greater employment opportunities existing in the United States (US) mainland, his family joined hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans who left the island in the decades following World War II. The largest portion of these migrants moved to New York City, yet every year thousands were drawn to Chicago. These newcomers came together to establish sizable Puerto Rican neighborhoods in various parts of the city, including Woodlawn, the Near North Side, the Near West Side, West Town, Humboldt Park, and Lincoln Park. As they grew up in Chicago, Jiménez and his peers were shaped by their experiences in the tenements, churches, schools, and streets of its Puerto Rican *barrios*.²

The growth of Chicago’s Puerto Rican population in the postwar period was a direct result of US political and economic domination over the island. The US took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898 and immediately opened the island to US markets, transforming its agricultural landscape in the process. This profoundly impacted the lives

¹ The title of this chapter is taken from a book entitled *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*. This book, written by journalist and former New York Young Lords leader Juan Gonzalez, explores the shared histories of colonial oppression, exploitation, and displacement of Latino communities in the United States; Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Viking, 2000).

² Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*”: *A Biographical History of Jose Cha Cha Jimenez, General Secretary of the Young Lords Organization*, (Chicago: Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, 1973), 8-10; Judson Jeffries, “From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 96, no. 3 (2003): 290; Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 9.

of Puerto Rican farmworkers, large numbers of whom were resultantly displaced. Uprooted from the land and finding only temporary seasonal jobs on the island, many Puerto Ricans looked to the US mainland for hopes of steady employment and more prosperous futures for their families. Following WWII, state sponsored initiatives encouraged and facilitated even greater labor migration from Puerto Rico to US cities.³

Driven from their homes by the consequences of US colonialism on the island, Puerto Ricans continued to endure colonial subjugation upon their arrival in American cities. All Puerto Ricans had collectively been made citizens of the US in 1917. Accordingly, Puerto Rican migrants were ostensibly afforded the same rights as other Americans. Yet as they quickly learned after moving to the US mainland, Puerto Ricans were generally viewed by whites as foreigners and as racial “others.” As a result, Puerto Rican communities in US cities suffered from widespread discrimination in employment, housing, and education. Exploited on the job and lacking control over the institutions that shaped their lives, these communities constituted what can be identified as internal colonies residing within the borders of the imperial “mother country.” As such, Puerto Ricans in Chicago, New York, and other American cities, faced significant pressure to shed their Puerto Rican identities and to adopt the language, customs, and ideology of the dominant society.⁴

Puerto Rican leaders in Chicago responded to the challenges of internal colonialism in a variety of ways. Some embraced the movement for Puerto Rican independence while others pushed for the greater assimilation of Puerto Ricans into American society. Through participation in social clubs, political associations, and

³ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy*, 24-25.

⁴ Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 5-8.

church groups, many community leaders worked to sustain Puerto Rican cultural traditions and promote an ideology of Puerto Rican ethnic solidarity. Many of these same people also anticipated that through self-help, education, and a certain degree of acculturation their communities would suffer less racism and achieve greater economic success in the future. Adolescents often found a means of resistance through their own social clubs. Many of these young people saw affiliation with street groups such as the Young Lords as a way to defend themselves and their communities from racial violence initiated by white youth.⁵

As the Young Lords transitioned from a street club into an explicitly anti-colonial political organization in the late 1960s, its activists adopted and embodied a philosophy of revolutionary Puerto Rican nationalism. Drawing upon the experiences of more than a century of anti-colonial struggles on the island, and more than a decade of Puerto Rican activism in Chicago, YLO leaders articulated demands for both the independence of Puerto Rico and also the self-determination of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Rather than projecting a narrow understanding of nationalism, the YLO worked to unify with other subjugated peoples, embracing a perspective later dubbed Third World Marxism

Spanish Colonialism and the Birth of the Puerto Rican Nation

When Columbus first landed in Puerto Rico in 1493, the island (known to its native inhabitants as *Boriquén*) was populated by tens of thousands of indigenous people who later came to be called Taínos. After Spanish colonizers returned to the island in 1508, they began to systematically abduct Taíno residents. Those who resisted were slaughtered. Many Taíno captives soon perished from European-borne disease. Slaves

⁵ Ibid.

who survived were forced to perform grueling work in gold mines and newly carved out plantations.⁶

As per the Spanish *encomienda* system and under the governorship of Juan Ponce de León, both land and captured indigenous people were distributed to individual Spanish colonists. These *encomenderos*, as the colonists were called, were supposed to be responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of their Indian charges. Abused, overburdened, and undernourished by their Spanish rulers, however, most Taíno slaves quickly perished. Women among the Taíno slaves were often raped and impregnated by Spanish colonizers (sometimes becoming their common-law wives), producing the island's first generation of *mestizo* children. Within a few decades, Spanish colonizers had eliminated much of the island's native population through murder, torture, and disease. Through Christianization and repression, Spanish colonizers also sought to exterminate Taíno culture. Despite these efforts a number of Taíno cultural artifacts related to language, agriculture, beliefs, traditions etc., remain an important part of contemporary Puerto Rican society.⁷

With their Taíno workforce rapidly dwindling, colonial authorities soon began importing African slaves into Puerto Rico. These African men and women suffered the same abuses as did the Taínos, and accordingly they also died in large numbers. As they did to the Taínos, Spanish colonizers and their descendants (known as *criollos*) worked to suppress the languages and cultures of their African slaves. Yet in common with Taíno

⁶ José Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 5; Jay Hinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood: The Free People of Color and Racial Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 2; Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*

culture, aspects of African cultures continue to play important roles in contemporary Puerto Rican society. Spanish and *criollo* slave owners also routinely raped their female African slaves, often resulting in the birth of so-called *mulatto* children. Branded like cattle, most of these children joined other slaves laboring in the island's fields and mines.⁸

Puerto Rico's population remained relatively small through its first three centuries as a Spanish colony.⁹ The island's lack of growth compared to other Spanish colonies in Latin America was due to a number of factors, including the realization by 1540 that Puerto Rico's mines had been nearly drained of their gold. Some efforts were subsequently made to cultivate cash crops such as tobacco. Yet large scale plantation agriculture did not become pervasive in Puerto Rico until the expansion of the sugar industry in the mid- to late eighteenth century. At that point the island's population rose dramatically, particularly among Black slaves. This growth continued throughout much of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

An increasing number of Puerto Rican slaves were able to gain their legal freedom in the nineteenth century. However, free people of color were still subject to the same system of racial hierarchy (known as *casta*) that characterized other Spanish colonies in Latin America. As a result, Puerto Ricans with the darkest skin tones (defined as *negros*) were consigned to the lowest status positions in the island's political economy.

⁸ Lincoln Berman, Gail Dolgin, Robert Gabriner, Maisie McAdoo, Jonah Raskin, *Puerto Rico: The Flame of Resistance* (San Francisco: People's Press, 1977), 9-10; Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 5.

⁹ A census recorded on the island in 1530 found that 327 Spanish families owned 2,292 African and 473 Taíno slaves. By 1765 the population of the entire island had grown to merely 44,883 people, only 5,037 of whom were Black slaves; Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 6.

¹⁰ By 1802, Puerto Rico was home to 163,192 inhabitants, 13,333 of whom were enslaved Blacks; Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 6-10.

Other free people of color (*mulattos, mestizos, pardos, etc.*) faced varying levels of discrimination depending on their specific “racial” heritage and phenotypic traits.¹¹

Before the nineteenth century, most people in Puerto Rico lived as subsistence farmers in rural coastal areas, often supplementing their income by growing small amounts of cash crops such as coffee. Large numbers of these farmers were displaced by the growth of the sugar industry beginning in the late eighteenth century. As sugar plantations expanded along coastal regions, peasant farmers were often forced to move further inland in order to maintain their independent way of life. In these more remote areas they joined the descendants of Taínos and fugitive Black slaves who for generations had made similar journeys into Puerto Rico’s highland regions. By the mid-nineteenth century an important mythology had developed around these communities of *jibaros*, as the island’s rural highland dwellers became known. Idealized in nineteenth century Puerto Rican literature as a noble “philosopher of nature,” the *jibaro* archetype became emblematic of Puerto Rican people as a whole. As such, these early romantic notions of *jibaro* communities (as imagined by urban elites) facilitated the construction of a nascent Puerto Rican national identity. Tellingly, while the term *jibaro* derived from a Taíno word and rural communities often contained large numbers of free people of color, nineteenth and early twentieth century Puerto Rican literature consistently constructed the *jibaro* archetype as white. This is reflective of the importance of race and racism in the construction of the island’s national identity. As Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas explained, “Puerto Rico’s elite insisted on the *jibaro*’s whiteness because that was the only way in which the *jibaro* imagery could represent the elite’s self-concept as white.” As Jorge Duany argued, this helped develop a nationalist discourse and a collective national identity on the island

¹¹ Jay Hinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood*, 19-52.

that “silence[d] the multiple voices of the nation, based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other differences.”¹²

A series of unsuccessful rebellions against Spanish rule in the nineteenth century also helped promote national imaginings on the island. Inspired by independence movements in other parts of Latin America, the earliest of these rebellions included several failed uprisings launched by Puerto Rican separatists in the 1820s and 1830s. As the island’s slave population grew in tandem with the growth of sugar plantations, Puerto Rico’s abolitionist movement also pressed forward and became intertwined with demands for national independence. On September 23, 1868, a rebellion began in the small mountain town of Lares, Puerto Rico. Principally organized by Ramón Emeterio Betances—a prominent abolitionist, surgeon, politician, and public intellectual in Puerto Rico—this short-lived insurrection became known as the *Grito de Lares* (the Cry of Lares). Although quickly suppressed, this was the strongest and perhaps most important armed protest that occurred against the colonial regime. While unsuccessful in abolishing slavery and establishing a new republic, the *Grito de Lares* became a lasting symbol of resistance utilized by later generations of Puerto Rican *independentistas*, particularly after the US took control of the island in 1898.¹³

US Colonialism and the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence

On April 25, 1898, the US Congress declared war against Spain. That same day, thanks to a Spanish decree known as the Autonomic Charter, Puerto Rican leaders

¹² César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 18, 74, 256; Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7, 19-29; Hinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood*, 35-36; Tony Castanha, *The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction: Continuity and Reclamation in Borikén (Puerto Rico)*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 91-92.

¹³ Jaime Ramírez-Barbot, “A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1973), 3-7; Hinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood*, 3

inaugurated the island's first "autonomous" government. In response to growing pressure from Puerto Rican liberal reformers and the ongoing resistance movement in Cuba, the Spanish government had decided in late 1897 to grant several measures of self-rule to both islands. While Cuban rebels rejected this overture, some Puerto Rican leaders embraced this new status, which afforded island elite much greater local control over a host of issues related to governance and trade.¹⁴

US troops landed in Puerto Rico three months later on July 25, 1898. Their arrival was received positively by many Puerto Rican leaders, in part thanks to a proclamation from General Nelson Miles, commanding general of the US Army. "Our purpose is not to interfere with the existing laws and customs which are beneficial for your people," he wrote in a statement three days after his arrival. Despite these assurances, for the next two years the island was controlled by a US military government whose powers were absolute.¹⁵

After the US congress passed the Foraker Act in 1900, Puerto Ricans were allowed to elect their own House of Delegates, nominally returning the island to civilian rule. Yet in many ways the Foraker Act conferred upon Puerto Ricans less self-government than they had enjoyed under Spain's Autonomic Charter. For example, it directed the US president to choose the island's civilian governor, cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, and other top administrators. It also authorized the US Congress to veto and annul any laws passed by the Puerto Rican House of Delegates. Many Puerto Ricans were outraged by the sweeping breadth of powers assumed by the US government under the Foraker Act and the lack of meaningful control local leaders could exercise

¹⁴ Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 13, 20.

¹⁵ Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 60; Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 30-35.

over island affairs. In response, Puerto Rican leaders formed a number of new political organizations to achieve greater measures of self-rule. Formed in 1904, one of the earliest of these was the *Partido Unión de Puerto Rico* (PUP), which was led by a broad range of leaders with a variety of political objectives ranging from full independence to US statehood.¹⁶

The Foraker Act assigned trade, treaty, military, and other powers to the US federal government. This led to a number of economic changes, including the replacement of the Puerto Rican peso with the US dollar and the opening of the island to unrestricted free trade with the US. Free trade brought growth to certain export industries including needlework, tobacco, and most importantly, sugar. The production of sugar in Puerto Rico grew over 300% between 1900 and 1910. By 1935, over one-third of all cultivated land on the island was being used to grow sugar, up from 15% in 1899.¹⁷

Certain island elite, such as Puerto Rican cane growers (*azuceros*) and owners of cane processing plants, benefited tremendously from the access that free trade afforded them to US markets. US based corporations also benefited from free trade and the access it gave them to Puerto Rican land, labor, and resources. By the 1930s, around one-fourth of all sugar cropland on the island was administered by four US sugar companies, and almost half of all cane grown on the island was processed in facilities owned by these same four US companies.¹⁸

The massive expansion of Puerto Rico's sugar industry greatly impacted the lives of peasant farmers on the island. As US and Puerto Rican *azuceros* devoured land for

¹⁶ Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 60; Ramírez-Barbot, "A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965," 16-17; César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 28, 55.

¹⁷ Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 60-61; César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 33, 38.

¹⁸ César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 38.

their growing sugar plantations, large numbers of rural dwellers were cut off from access to land they had previously depended upon for subsistence farming. For communities of landless *jibaros*, free trade resulted in dislocation and proletarianization. Work in the island's fields and mills, meanwhile, was often seasonal and paid low wages. This drove waves of migration to urban areas in Puerto Rico and eventually to the US mainland.¹⁹

In 1917, US President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the Jones Act of Puerto Rico. This law superseded the Foraker Act, enacting a number of reforms and imposing US citizenship upon all Puerto Ricans. The Jones Act was broadly perceived as an attempt to subvert the movement for Puerto Rican independence and to delay resolving the island's status (i.e. the question of independence or statehood) indefinitely.²⁰

Spurred by an increased sense of urgency, and frustrated with the opportunism and ineffectiveness of PUP leaders, *independentistas* organized a number of new groups in the years following the Jones Act. One of the most controversial of these was the *Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico* (PNP), which was formed by former PUP members in 1922. While at first the PNP hoped to use legal methods to achieve independence, the group embraced more militant tactics in the 1930s. At that time the PNP was led by Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, a fiery orator with the nickname *El Maestro* (The Teacher). Arguing that the time for negotiations had long since passed, Albizu Campos advocated armed resistance to colonialism and called for the immediate independence of the island. His exhortations helped set off a series of violent incidents in the mid-1930s, including the assassination of Puerto Rico's US appointed police chief by members of a PNP youth

¹⁹ César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 34-35, 39; Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 83.

²⁰ César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 57-58; Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 62-63.

organization; the subsequent murder of these youth while in police custody; and multiple shootings by police at PNP protests. In 1936, Albizu Campos and eight other party leaders were convicted on federal charges of sedition and conspiracy to overthrow the US government. Transported off the island, they served their sentences in a federal penitentiary in Atlanta.²¹

Albizu Campos was released from prison and returned to the island in 1947. That same year the US granted “commonwealth” status to Puerto Rico. While this ostensibly gave Puerto Ricans more democratic control over local affairs, it also meant that the island’s economy would still be linked closely with that of the US. Albizu Campos meanwhile resumed leadership of the PNP and continued agitating for independence. In late 1950 the party led a coordinated series of armed revolts in cities and towns throughout Puerto Rico. This insurrection was short-lived, and thousands of *independentistas* (including many not associated with the revolts) were subsequently arrested and faced brutal repression. Captured at his home in 1950 after a shootout with police, Albizu Campos was sentenced to eighty years in prison. After years of failing health (in large part due to abuses suffered at the hands of prison authorities), Albizu Campos died in 1965. While he was unable to spark the nationalist uprising he envisioned in his lifetime, in death Albizu Campos became an icon and inspiration for younger generations of movement activists both on the island and in US cities.²²

²¹ Ramírez-Barbot, “A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965”, 20-22, 110-112; César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 57-58, 105-112; Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 92-95.

²² Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 113-114; César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernado, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 165-167.

Migration and Community Building in Chicago's Internal Colonies

Though his parents were from a rural area, José Jiménez was born in the city. His mother, Eugenia Rodríguez Flores, had gone in her pregnancy to Caguas, Puerto Rico, to be closer to a doctor. Her husband, Antonio Jiménez, was in the United States at the time of their son's birth. He had been living in a migrant camp near Concord, Massachusetts, since leaving Puerto Rico in late 1947. In 1950, after years of laboring as a seasonal *tomatero* (tomato picker), Antonio Jiménez had finally saved enough money to bring his wife and son to live with him in the US mainland. In 1951, after nearly a year in Massachusetts, the entire family (which now included a four-month-old baby girl) moved to Chicago. Staying in a dilapidated roach and rat infested apartment in the city's Near North Side community area, they lived among friends who had also left Puerto Rico in search of employment.²³

Few Puerto Ricans lived in Chicago before the mid-1940s. Yet when Jiménez arrived with his family in 1951, the city's Puerto Rican population was in the midst of a boom. In 1940 the census bureau listed 240 Puerto Ricans living in Chicago. By 1960 that number had jumped to over 32,000, and by 1970 there were approximately 73,000 Puerto Ricans living in Chicago. This growth was in large part a result of high unemployment on the island, greater US labor demands after World War II, and state-sponsored mass labor importation programs that promoted and facilitated greater Puerto Rican migration to US cities.²⁴

²³ Judson Jeffries, "From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries," 290; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "*Que Viva El Pueblo*", 3-4.

²⁴ Gina M. Pérez, "Puerto Ricans," *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1027.html> accessed June 6, 2014; Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 56-58; Cintrón, R., Toro-Morn, M., García Zambrana, I. and Scott, E., *60 Years of Migration: Puerto Ricans in Chicagoland* (Chicago: The Puerto Rican Agenda, 2012), viii.

Post-World War II era economic growth was reshaping the racial and ethnic landscape of much of urban America during this time. Increased labor demands and state policy spurred tremendous domestic migration, bringing large numbers of African Americans, American Indians, and poor southern whites from rural areas into northern industrial centers. For example, large numbers of American Indians were driven off of their reservations and into the cities during this time by federal “termination” policy. With the aim of further assimilating American Indian communities into the dominant US society, this policy eliminated federal protections for a number of American Indian nations and facilitated large scale labor migration into northern US cities.²⁵

For Puerto Ricans, large scale migration to American cities was facilitated through labor recruitment programs overseen by the Puerto Rico Department of Labor’s Migration Division. These recruitment efforts were part of Operation Bootstrap/*Manos a la Obra*, a series of economic development and modernization projects begun in the late 1940s that aimed to reshape the island’s economy and provide industrial employment for Puerto Rican people. Towards this end, US businesses contracted with Puerto Ricans to move to the US mainland and work in a variety of jobs. Beginning in the mid-1940s, for example, Puerto Rican men were recruited to work in Chicago area foundries and factories. At the same time, Puerto Rican women were recruited to work as live-in domestics in the homes of wealthy Chicago families.²⁶

Graciano López Augusto arrived in East Chicago, Indiana, in 1951. With his wife and young daughter still living in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, López and his brother worked

²⁵ Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 7-9.

²⁶ Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 56-58; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 24, 41-43; Gina M. Pérez, “Puerto Ricans.”

together in a steel mill. In the mid-1950s López moved to Chicago. After finding work, and an apartment in the Ukrainian Village (located in the city's West Town community area), López brought his wife and daughter, Ada, to live with him in Chicago. Ada López later recounted the "harsh reality" she faced as a child who had moved from Puerto Rico to Chicago, where she was suddenly surrounded by Italian, Polish and Ukrainian whites in a neighborhood where "racism and the rejection of Puerto Ricans was very overt."²⁷

Puerto Rico's Department of Labor Migration Division encouraged migrants to live among whites in order to more fully integrate into American society, and many Puerto Ricans attempted to do so. Yet rampant housing discrimination, compounded by housing shortages during the 1940s and early 1950s, often made that difficult. Puerto Rican migrants found that their access to Chicago's white neighborhoods was often dependent upon their skin tone. Reflecting the ambiguous and often contradictory racial status of Latinos in the US, some lighter skinned Puerto Ricans even found it advantageous to employ ethnic disguises (passing as Greek or Italian) in order to secure housing or avoid harassment. For most Puerto Ricans, however, claiming whiteness could not protect them from discrimination and abuse at the hands of landlords and neighbors. As such, Puerto Rican migrants increasingly ended up living in one of the city's handful of growing Latino *barrios*. Some of these Puerto Rican neighborhoods developed in parts of the city's Near North and West Sides (discussed in Chapter Four). Pointing to the widespread discrimination, harassment, and exploitation faced by these new Puerto Rican communities, as well as the inability of Puerto Rican leaders to meaningfully control the

²⁷ Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; Graciano López, interviewed by Mervin Méndez, January 19, 1996; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 39-40.

institutions that governed their lives, sociologist Felix Padilla later characterized these growing Puerto Rican communities as “internal colonies.”²⁸

Not only did Puerto Ricans face discrimination in housing and employment, but they also often had to overcome pervasive prejudice in their own neighborhood churches. While some congregations were welcoming to Puerto Ricans, it was a struggle to integrate others. Such was the case at St. Mark Parish, located in the Ukrainian Village neighborhood where Graciano López’ family lived (see Figure 6). The mostly Polish parishioners at St. Mark originally resisted the inclusion of Puerto Ricans despite their growing presence in the area. Refused a space inside, Puerto Ricans staged Spanish-language masses under a canopy of tents set up in front of the church. In another case, the Holy Trinity Church—located in the Pulaski Park neighborhood in the West Town community area—forced its Spanish speaking congregation to hold mass in the facility’s basement. Facing continued hostility from Holy Trinity’s mostly Polish parishioners, the entire Spanish speaking congregation eventually left the church en masse, joining the significantly more welcoming St. Boniface Church located several blocks away (see Figure 6).²⁹

As Puerto Rican congregations grew and organized during the 1950s-1960s, they transformed the cultures of the churches they inhabited. After an initial period of struggle, for example, St. Mark later became known as one of the most important Puerto Rican parishes in Chicago. In addition to becoming a popular site for baptisms and

²⁸ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 13, 66-67, 74, 77-79; Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 4-19; Pérez, “Puerto Ricans,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*; Gina M. Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 76-78.

²⁹ Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; Marixsa Alicea, “Cuando nosotros vivíamos...: Stories of Displacement and Settlement in Puerto Rican Chicago,” *Centro Journal* 13, no. 2 (2001): 174.

quinceañeras, St. Mark's leadership and programming eventually transformed to reflect the ethnic heritage of its heavily Puerto Rican congregation. Similar transformations occurred at churches with Puerto Rican parishioners throughout Chicago.³⁰

Much of the change that occurred within these churches resulted from the work of *Los Caballeros de San Juan* (The Knights of Saint John), an organization created in 1954 by Puerto Rican laypeople and Father Leo T. Mahon in the Woodlawn community area on Chicago's South Side. Receiving support from Chicago's Cardinal Samuel Stritch, *Los Caballeros* soon became a citywide organization. Together with its female "auxiliary," *Las Damas de Santa María* (The Ladies of St. Mary), *Los Caballeros* led religious study groups, sponsored charity events, and organized a number of recreational activities for Puerto Rican families throughout the city. By the 1960s, *Los Caballeros* had become the city's largest Puerto Rican religious and social club.³¹

The program of *Los Caballeros* advanced certain assimilationist goals, reflecting the Church's prescription for Puerto Ricans to overcome prejudice and discrimination. Yet it should be noted that some leaders in *Los Caballeros* considered themselves to be Puerto Rican nationalists, such as Jesus Rodriguez (whose sons Danny and Johnny later became members of the YLO) who often gave public talks about the movement for Puerto Rican independence. Perhaps more importantly, as Felix Padilla argued, *Los Caballeros* "presented the primary means by which Puerto Ricans began to structure a self-conscious community for ethnic advancement and betterment." While church leaders hoped that the organization would serve to indoctrinate and absorb Puerto Ricans into

³⁰ Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; St. Mark Catholic Parish Chicago, <http://stmarkcatholicchicago.org/>, accessed June 6, 2014.

³¹ Gina M. Pérez, "Puerto Ricans," *Encyclopedia of Chicago*; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 76-77, 148-149; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 126-130; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

American and church culture, Padilla argued, much of the work of *Los Caballeros* (promoting Spanish-language mass, preserving Puerto Rican cultural traditions, etc.) helped strengthen Puerto Rican cultural identity and solidarity. “The embryo of what was to later become a diverse Puerto Rican community,” Padilla wrote, “had its inception in the growth of *Los Caballeros*.”³²

José Jiménez and his family were actively involved in the Church at this time. His parents were members of *Los Caballeros* and *Las Damas*. His mother, Eugenia Rodríguez, was well known for the prayer services and catechism classes she provided for other Puerto Rican Catholics. She also was involved in the effort to bring Spanish-language mass to St. Michael Parish in Lincoln Park, even going door to door to collect signatures for a petition to that end. As a child and adolescent, José Jiménez served as an altar boy at both St. Michael parish and St. Teresa parish, which were both located in Lincoln Park (see Figure 6). Jiménez sang in the choir at St. Teresa, where he attended school for several years. Steeped in the practice of Catholicism, young Jiménez dreamed of entering the priesthood. At the end of eighth grade, Jiménez applied to enter Redemptor’s Seminary in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. However, Jiménez was unable to obtain the requisite letters of recommendation from the pastor and principal at St. Teresa due to an incident where he and another student were caught throwing eggs at a school bus. Instead of entering the seminary the following autumn, Jiménez entered the ninth

³² Gina M. Pérez, “Puerto Ricans,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 76-77, 148-149; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 126-130; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

grade at Waller High School, a public school in Lincoln Park attended by members of the Young Lords and other neighborhood gangs (see Figure 2).³³

As church based groups like *Los Caballeros*, *Las Damas*, and others (such as *Los Hermanos en la Familia de Dios*), worked to unify Puerto Ricans in Chicago, a number of secular Puerto Rican organizations in the city served a similar purpose. A veteran of the US Army, Graciano López was a leader in the Boricua Post of the city's American Legion chapter. One of several organizations to which López belonged, this group served as a cultural hub for Puerto Ricans in Chicago, bringing together families, neighbors, and communities for celebrations, fundraisers, and to honor cultural traditions. Other Puerto Rican civic and social groups active in Chicago at the time included the Borinquen Health Club, the Puerto Rican Congress of Mutual Aid, and the Latin American Association of Mutual Aid. These groups sponsored a variety of events such as boxing matches, dances, and domino tournaments.³⁴

While respected community leaders organized religious, civic, and social clubs, a number of independent street groups were forming in the city's nascent Latino *barrios*. Founded primarily as social clubs in the 1950s and 1960s, groups such as *Hachas Viejas*, the Latin Counts, the Latin Angels, the Young Lords, and the Latin Kings, among others, also functioned as self-defense organizations. As their communities faced harassment and violent attacks from racist white gangs, Puerto Rican youth often joined Latino gangs as a way to fight back. One of the earliest of these groups, *Hachas Viejas*, was founded in the 1950s by recent Puerto Rican migrants living in Lincoln Park and the Near North Side.

³³ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014; Jeffries, "From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries," 290; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "*Que Viva El Pueblo*", 8-10.

³⁴ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 148; Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; ; Lowell W. Livezey, ed., *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City* (New York:New York University Press, 2000), 282.

Most of this group's early activities involved weekend socializing. After several members were attacked and severely beaten by members of Italian and Irish gangs, however, *Hachas Viejas* turned their energies towards self-defense and the carving out of territory for Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Latino youth soon began to organize a variety of similar groups in other Puerto Rican neighborhoods, with the Latin Kings becoming one of the largest. Rory Guerra, one of the early leaders of the Latin Kings, later recounted the hostility he faced growing up in Lincoln Park. "We were one of the first [Puerto Rican] families to move into the area," Guerra remembered, "and we were basically prisoners in our own homes. If I'd walk a half a block, I'd have to fight." Latinos throughout Chicago soon joined the Latin Kings. According to Guerra, they did so out of "mutual interest." As Guerra explained, the group's early philosophy was "protect thyself, look out for your brother," and this "protection was based on numbers."³⁵

José Jiménez, like several of his peers, joined the Young Lords gang at least in part for protection. As the only Latino in his class at St. Teresa, Jiménez was often the victim of harassment. As well, he was targeted and chased by members of a white gang on his walk home from school. When he heard that his neighborhood friends Angel del Rivero and Orlando Dávila were forming a street club, Jiménez hoped that joining would provide him with greater security. Rather than avoiding violence, however, joining the Young Lords ensured that Jiménez would be drawn into conflict.³⁶

Some Young Lords leaders, such as Orlando Dávila, saw the Young Lords as a mechanism through which to challenge white gangs (such as the Roma Boys and the

³⁵ José Jiménez, "The Young Lords in Lincoln Park" (2012). *Student Summer Scholars*, Paper 96, 9; Antonio Rodríguez, interviewed by José Jiménez, June 25, 2013; Rory Guerra, interviewed by Johanna Fernandez, October 25, 2005.

³⁶ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

Dayton Street Boys) for access to area parks, restaurants, street corners, and beaches. Successful gang fights initiated by the Young Lords, for example, allowed Puerto Rican youth to access North Avenue Beach and Fullerton Beach, both located in Lincoln Park. Some may dismiss these fights as simply criminal activity. Yet using the framework of infrapolitics (discussed in Chapter One) these fights should be understood as fitting within a broad spectrum of resistance to colonial subjugation among Latinos in Chicago. As Jiménez later said of Dávila, one of the Young Lords' most aggressive and dominant early leaders, "his way of advancing Puerto Ricans was to pick fights."³⁷

The Division Street Uprising and Its Legacies for Puerto Ricans in Chicago

For years *Los Caballeros* had sponsored a June parade in honor of *El Día de San Juan* (Saint John's Day). In 1966, in an effort to broaden the event, *Los Caballeros* joined with a coalition of other groups to organize the first of what would become an annual Puerto Rican parade and festival. Graciano López sat on the organizing committee, which planned a series of events in a weeklong celebration of Puerto Rican heritage and pride. The events were to culminate in a massive downtown parade followed by a festival in Baron Von Humboldt Park (see Figure 6).³⁸

Puerto Ricans from throughout the city gathered in Humboldt Park to enjoy the Puerto Rican festival on Sunday, June 12. Mayor Richard J. Daley did not attend the

³⁷ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *The Movement*, May 1969; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; José Cha Cha Jiménez, Angel Sal del Rivero, Fermin Pérez, interview among participants of the Young Lords Organization, 1995; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1987), 183; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels* (Free Press, 1994); John D. Márquez, "The Black Mohicans: Representations of Everyday Violence in Postracial Urban America," *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2012): 625-651. José Jiménez, "The Young Lords in Lincoln Park" (2012) *Student Summer Scholars*, Paper 96.

³⁸ Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012; Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 41-43; Pérez, "Puerto Ricans," *Encyclopedia of Chicago*.

events that evening, though he had earlier declared “Puerto Rican Week” in Chicago. Other politicians did attend, however, and they exhorted the crowd to vote in the upcoming primary elections. Writing in a local YMCA publication shortly afterwards, Monte C. Unger recalled that people seemed to be “in a light festive mood” that evening. But this “festive mood,” he surmised, masked “a deep raging within. A raging of resentment and hatred built up over the years of being poor, being prejudiced against, being ‘different.’ Then...crack!” A bullet shot from the gun of a police officer served as “the jabbing pick that sent the open nerve screaming.”³⁹

At some point in the evening a white police officer shot and wounded Arcelis Cruz, a twenty-year-old Puerto Rican man. The shooting took place about a mile east of Humboldt Park near the corner of West Division Street and North Damen Avenue in the Wicker Park neighborhood (see Figure 6). News of the shooting spread quickly. Rumors swirled that the young victim had been unarmed and had already died (he would later recover from his injuries). Tempers flared as officers with police dogs attempted unsuccessfully to disperse the swelling crowd on Division Street. Local radio personality Carlos Agrelot was broadcasting his popular weekly program *El Boricua Argentino* from a studio on Division Street. From the studio’s second floor window, Agrelot could see the crowds as they began to gather and confront the police. Ceasing his regular programming, this Argentine-born “Boricua” provided a live description of the events as he witnessed them below. This live broadcast brought additional young people into the

³⁹ Monte C. Unger, “A Puerto Rican Who Didn’t Riot,” *Viewpoint*, YMCA, Chicago, Summer 1966, 1-2; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 41-43; Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971), 148-149.

streets. Ada López later remembered listening to the radio and calling her father to tell him what she had heard, prompting Graciano López to rush to the scene.⁴⁰

As the crowd swelled it became more aggressive towards the police. A large number of those who gathered were members of the Latin Kings, which had been founded in the surrounding Wicker Park neighborhood. At some point violence erupted. The crowds began burning police cars and destroying surrounding white-owned businesses. The rioting continued for two more nights and the destruction spread at least a mile down Division Street. Omar López later remarked upon how coordinated the rioting appeared. López described the Latin Kings as operating with military style discipline. “They weren’t just crazy people,” López explained. “They kept it going under the direction of the leader of the Kings. When he said ‘let’s go out,’ then they’d go out, and when he said ‘pull back,’ They’d pull back.”⁴¹

Some scholars, such as Felix Padilla and Gina M. Pérez, have argued that these events—popularly referred to as either the “Division Street Riots” or alternatively the “Division Street Uprising”—marked a turning point for Chicago’s Puerto Rican communities. The riots have also been widely cited as the culmination of years of deepening antipathy between Puerto Rican youth and the police that patrolled their neighborhoods. Presumably this antipathy extended to a variety of political and economic structures that were seen as either unresponsive to the needs of the *barrio*, or hostile and exploitative towards the poor and working-class people that lived there. Packed into

⁴⁰ Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 145; Jeffries, “From Gang Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 289; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Monte C. Unger, “A Puerto Rican Who Didn’t Riot”; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 145; Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012.

⁴¹ Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 145-146; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 134-135; Jeffries, “From Gang Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 289; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, October 17, 1995; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 145-146; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995.

overcrowded, dilapidated, and segregated neighborhoods (discussed in Chapter Four), and subject to what was perceived as capricious police harassment, residents of the city's Latino *barrios* had been ignored for far too long. The riots did force city leaders to take note, some of whom subsequently made efforts to address grievances in the Puerto Rican community. For some activists, the Division Street riot signaled a rising militancy among Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Determined to harness the rebellious energy of Puerto Rican youth and to take advantage of the shifting political landscape in the city, these activists formed a number of new organizations in the years following the Division Street riots.⁴²

City leaders began making modest efforts to reach out to its Puerto Rican residents shortly after the rebellion. For one, the Chicago Police Department began recruiting and hiring greater numbers of Latino police officers in an effort to improve relations with Spanish-speaking residents. City leaders also began directing War on Poverty money into Puerto Rican neighborhoods through federally funded Community Action Programs (CAPs). Overseen by the city government, CAPs were required by law to include the “maximum feasible participation” of local residents. Through their participation in these programs, Puerto Rican activists in Chicago were able to establish a number of new agencies including the Division Street Urban Progress Center, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and several new Head Start programs.⁴³

Another important legacy of the Division Street Riots was that it helped inspire the creation of new Puerto Rican political organizations committed to militant direct

⁴² Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 134-135, 175; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, October 17, 1995; Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, 83-85; Jeffries, “From Gang Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 289; Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 144-179; Royko, *Boss*, 148-149.

⁴³ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, 83; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 157-161.

action protest. The Spanish Action Committee of Chicago (SACC) was one of the first and largest of these groups. Formed in June 1966 in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, its members and volunteers were composed of a dedicated cadre of Puerto Rican activists. Led by Juan Díaz (a former *Los Caballeros* leader and director of an area boys club), SACC was able to consistently mobilize large numbers of community residents for protests and boycotts. Some of its success stemmed from the group's close affiliation with the federally funded Division Street Urban Progress Center, as SACC leaders sat on the center's steering council and participated in program planning.⁴⁴

A number of smaller protest organizations also developed after the Division Street uprising. Among these was the Latin American Defense Organization (LADO). Formed by a mixed group of eight activists (three Puerto Ricans and five Mexicans), LADO worked to build unity among Chicago's disparate Latino communities. Among its founders were Obed López, who was from Mexico, and Caralee López, a Chicana activist and college student from California. Inspired by the Division Street uprising and hoping to participate in what they saw as a budding new movement in the Puerto Rican community, both Caralee López and Obed López were initially denied membership in the newly formed SACC (supposedly because of Obed López' ties to a pro-Castro organization). Not wanting to abandon their vision, they resolved to form their own organization. They initially recruited a number of other activists to join, including Omar López, Obed López' younger brother who would later become a leader in the YLO; Ada López, born in Puerto Rico and daughter of Graciano López; Miguel Meléndez, a Puerto Rican high school student; and siblings Hector and Olga Pedroza, children of politically

⁴⁴ Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 157, 165-167; Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, 83-85; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, October 17, 1995.

active Mexican parents who lived in the Back of the Yards area of Chicago. LADO was inaugurated in September 1966, and shortly thereafter the group opened an office across the street from SACC's headquarters in Wicker Park.⁴⁵

In addition to organizing protest activities, LADO worked directly with poor and working-class families. The group initiated a welfare rights union and established a free community health clinic, both of which brought poor whites, Blacks, and Latinos together. LADO also built relationships with white activists through coalitions with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Jobs or Income Now (JOIN). LADO also worked with Black activists from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) campaign (discussed in Chapter Three). LADO also worked closely with gangs in Chicago, most notably the Latin Kings. "The guys in the gangs," Obed López later said, "were seeking recognition, and I think that LADO was really the only one that gave them recognition. We were not afraid of them...we began to find ways to let them use our facilities."⁴⁶

The Division Street uprising had a direct impact on the development of groups such as the Latin Kings, SACC, and LADO, yet its effects upon YLO leaders are less clear. Unlike the Latin Kings, the Division Street riots failed to ignite the declining Young Lords gang. Jiménez was in jail during the riots, serving a six-month sentence for stabbing another man during a fight. When he was released later that summer, Jiménez

⁴⁵ Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, October 17, 1995; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, November 21, 1995; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Obed López-Zacarias, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 2, 2012; Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, 83-85.

⁴⁶ Later, in 1969, a number of Latin Kings members that had been working with LADO and the YLO (including a leader known as Tarzan) formed the Latin Kings Organization (LKO), a more directly-political group that engaged in street protests among other activities; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, October 17, 1995; Obed and Caralee López, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, November 21, 1996; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Latin Queens, "To The Latin Community," *Y.L.O.*, January 1970; "El Barrio Esta Despierto," *Y.L.O.*, Fall 1969.

found that the Young Lords gang was mostly inactive. Some members no longer lived in the city, having moved to Puerto Rico or joined the military. Others were married and had lost interest in gang activities. Yet while the Division Street riots may not have played a direct role in the development of the Young Lords, the event did help raise the political consciousness of large number of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Padilla wrote that one of the more important legacies of the Division Street uprising was that it sparked an “awakening among the masses of the Puerto Rican poor” in Chicago, leading to among other things “an increased ethnic consciousness among Puerto Ricans.” Anthropologist Gina M. Pérez argued that in addition to helping “politicize Chicago’s street gangs,” one of the legacies of the riots was that, “Puerto Rican activists increasingly articulated local community concerns in nationalist terms.” It was within this political landscape that the YLO emerged in late 1968 as an organization articulating revolutionary nationalist demands.⁴⁷

The Revolutionary Nationalism of the Young Lords Organization

Drawing from a number of influences, revolutionary Puerto Rican nationalism became a defining feature of the YLO as it transformed from a gang into a political organization in late 1968. In addition to calling for the independence of Puerto Rico, YLO activists promoted self-determination for Puerto Rican communities in Chicago and throughout the diaspora.⁴⁸ In doing so, these young men and women were deeply

⁴⁷ José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 155; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, 85.

⁴⁸ The YLO demand for Puerto Rican “self-determination” throughout the diaspora can also be seen in the work of the New York YLO (whose activities are outside of the scope of the present study). For example, the first demand of the group’s Thirteen Point Program and Platform (drafted by the New York YLO in October 1969) called for “self-determination for Puerto Ricans” and “liberation on the island and inside the United States; “Thirteen Point Program and Platform,” *Palante*, May 8, 1970.

influenced by the legacies of historical struggles against colonialism waged both in Chicago and on the island.

Rafael Rivera, the YLO's first minister of education, played a significant early role in pushing the YLO to embrace the movement for Puerto Rican independence. Rivera had originally been involved in the Young Lords as a gang member. In fall 1968, Rivera had just returned to Chicago after an extended stay in Puerto Rico.⁴⁹ While on the island, Rivera had participated in the movement for independence. Spending time with activists in the far-left *Movimiento Pro Independencia* (MPI) and their student auxiliary *Federacion Universitaria Pro Independencia* (FUPI), he was inspired by what he witnessed. Rivera wanted to continue organizing around this issue upon his return to Chicago. Playing a key role in the reconstitution of the Young Lords into a political organization in late 1968, Rivera pushed the group to embrace the movement for Puerto Rican independence.⁵⁰

Shortly after the YLO emerged as a political group, its leaders were visited by a group of men who decades earlier had been active in the *Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico* (PNP) in Chicago. While most PNP activity took place on the island, the group had an active Chicago chapter in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, mass arrests and convictions crippled the local organization in the mid-1950s. On March 1, 1954, a group of four Puerto Rican nationalists, led by Dolores "Lolita" Lebrón Sotomayor, entered the

⁴⁹ It should be noted that José Jiménez had earlier spent an extended period in Puerto Rico. In the early 1960s, Jiménez increasingly found himself in trouble with legal authorities. At some point in the early 1960s (most likely in 1962 or 1963), Jiménez had been ordered by a judge in Chicago to move to Puerto Rico. He lived there with his extended family for about a year, before he was brought back to Chicago. While Rivera's time spent in Puerto Rico had a profound influence upon his anti-colonial perspective, the impact of Jiménez' experiences on the island is unclear; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

⁵⁰ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 24, 1995; John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012.

visitor's gallery above the chamber in the US House of Representatives. Lebrón unfurled a Puerto Rican flag and shouted "Viva Puerto Rico libre," at which point the group began shooting semi-automatic pistols in all directions. While nobody was killed, bullets did strike five congressmen. In May 1954, six Puerto Rican men from Chicago's Near West Side were arrested and delivered to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). The raids were part of a nationwide sweep that resulted in eleven arrests and a number of indictments over alleged ties to the attack on the capitol. One of the arrested men was Manual Rabago Torres, vice-president of the Chicago PNP branch. Having served several years in prison for his role in the 1954 attack, Rabago led the delegation of PNP veterans who reached out to the YLO nearly fifteen years later. As a gesture of support for the YLO, Rabago donated two flags to the organization: the flag of the PNP (a white cross on a black background), and the flag of the Puerto Rican town of Lares (site of the *Grito de Lares*), both of which would later be displayed prominently inside the People's Church and used during marches.⁵¹

YLO leaders continued to grow closer to Rabago throughout 1969, and the group worked during this time to honor the historical memory of the PNP. In March 1969, Rabago and YLO leaders participated in a Chicago radio broadcast commemorating the *Massacre de Ponce* (The Ponce Massacre)—an event in 1937 in which police killed nineteen peaceful PNP marchers. In June 1969, the YLO marched with PNP members in the annual Puerto Rican Parade. In October of that year the group marched from Lincoln Park to Humboldt Park in honor of former PNP leader Pedro Albizu Campos. With placards of Albizu Campos held aloft, they marched down Division Street through the

⁵¹ Emma Brown, "Lolita Lebron, Jailed for Gun Attack at US Capitol in 1954, Dies at 90," *Washington Post*, August 2, 2010; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 87; "Charged With Conspiracy to Overthrow Government: U.S. Arrests 11 Puerto Rican Nationalists," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 27, 1954.

heart of Chicago's largest Puerto Rican *barrio* (see Figure 7). Also that year, Rabago and José Jiménez traveled to Puerto Rico together to meet with leaders in the Puerto Rican independence movement and to visit the shrine of former PNP leader Albizu Campos.⁵²

As it developed, the YLO also recruited new leaders who had grown up in Puerto Rico. In some ways this helped bring the group closer to the island's movement for independence.⁵³ Luis "Tony" Baez, for example was born and raised in Barrio Borinquen, an area of the city of Caguas, Puerto Rico. As a high school student he joined the *Partido Indendentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP). His work with the PIP continued after he began taking classes at the University of Puerto Rico. After a major demonstration in late 1969, Baez was arrested and beaten by the police. In order to avoid further repression, and at the urging of his parents, he decided to leave the island. Baez joined the YLO within three days of his arrival in Chicago in February 1970. Shortly afterwards he was promoted to become the group's minister of education. One of Baez' responsibilities as minister of education was the administration of an internal YLO political education program. Many YLO activists were high school dropouts who had not received a quality education. Through classes designed by Baez, these young men and women read about and discussed the history of Puerto Rico and the movement for independence. Baez also contributed content to the YLO newspaper writing a variety of Spanish-language articles about the Puerto Rican independence movement.⁵⁴

⁵² Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014; José Cha Cha Jiménez, National Young Lords, http://nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15, accessed June 7, 2014.

⁵³ Alfredo Matias, for example, had been born and raised in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico. Matias left the island at the age of fifteen after joining the US army using false identification papers. He moved to Chicago in 1967 after getting kicked out of the army for insubordination and fighting. After joining the YLO he served as the group's minister of finance; Alfredo Matias, interview, Friday, September 29, 1995.

⁵⁴ Luis "Tony" Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

YLO activists articulated their anti-colonial vision through speeches, buttons, posters, and perhaps most importantly through the pages of their “monthly” newspaper, *Y.L.O.* (later renamed *Pitirre*). Published seven times over a period of a year and a half, this newspaper regularly contained articles related to the movement for Puerto Rican independence. While some articles were critical of what the group called “cultural nationalism,” YLO newspapers routinely provided detailed information about the historical and contemporary movement for Puerto Rican independence (highlighting historical leaders such as Albizu Campos and recounting historical events such as the *Grito de Lares*).⁵⁵ Through artwork, and banner slogans such “This Too, is Puerto Rico,” “*Despierta Boricua*” (Wake Up Puerto Rican), “*Machete Redentor*” (Machete Redeemer)—a reference to the *jibaro* archetype—and “*Tengo Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón*” (Puerto Rico Is in My Heart), the newspaper affirmed and celebrated the YLO’s Puerto Rican identity (see Figure 8). The latter slogan, which overlaid an image of the island and a raised fist clenching a rifle, was also featured prominently on YLO buttons and in a mural painted above the entrance to the People’s Church.

Examining a poem and center-spread image printed in the February/March 1970 issue of *Y.L.O.* provides an example of how the group used and at times modified markers of Puerto Rican national identity. The image, featuring a Black *jibaro* wielding a machete, is accompanied by a poem written by New York YLO Chairman Felipe Luciano entitled “*Jibaro mi negro lindo*” (see Figure 9). The image was drawn by Denise Oliver, a Black YLO leader from New York. “*Jibaro* my pretty nigger,” the poem begins, “Father of my yearning for the soil.” For many YLO activists, their parents or

⁵⁵ For examples of YLO newspaper articles on the movement for independence, see: “Historia Latina,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969; “Celebracion De La Revolucion De Lares,” *Pitirre*, Summer, 1970; “Los Nuestros: Pedro Albizu Campos,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969.

grandparents might have once been referred to as *jibaros*. While romanticized in Puerto Rican literature as a noble peasant, the term was also sometimes used as a pejorative to describe the island's poor and presumably "backwards" rural population. Interestingly, while the *jibaro* archetype had been racialized in Puerto Rico as white (a mythology betrayed by the Taíno origin of the name), Luciano's *jibaro* figure was Black. This reflected the different racial dynamics and racial coding at play in Puerto Rico and Chicago. "On the island," Ramos-Zayas argued, "alliances between popular and elite sectors required...a racial discourse that valorized whiteness and thus reinforced dominant racial hierarchies." In American cities, however, Puerto Rican migrants "perceived valorizing whiteness as evidence of acceptance of the US classification scheme." As racialized and colonized subjects, Puerto Ricans in US cities "recognized the impossibility of infiltrating the power conceded to whiteness." As a form of resistance, the *jibaro* transformed from a "passive white peasant" into a "militant black."⁵⁶

At some point in 1970, Baez came up with the idea of changing the name of the YLO newspaper to *Pitirre*. This name was only used only for the newspaper's final issue, published in the summer of 1970 in the midst of the group's split with the New York chapter. *Pitirre* had been the name of a small circulation mimeographed newspaper that Baez produced when he was as a high school student in Puerto Rico. This name was also inspired by an early twentieth century poem written by Puerto Rican poet, politician, and *independentista*, José de Diego. Entitled "*Cada Guaragao Tiene Su Pitirre*" (Every Guaragao Has Its Pitirre), the poem uses the metaphor of a small bird fighting a hawk to

⁵⁶ Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances*, 200; Felipe Luciano, "Jibaro, Mi Negro Lindo," *Y.L.O.*, February/March 1970.

portray the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. As was explained on the back page of *Pitirre*:

PITIRRE, the name we have chosen for our paper, is also the name of a Puerto Rican bird that, because of his ability to fly fast and high, and his ability to fight and destroy the “guaraguao” (a type of Hawk), has everybody’s respect and is seen by many as a symbol of the Puerto Rican Nation. Sooner or later the small country will rise and, like the PITIRRE, we will push out the vicious ‘guaraguao’ that is invading its territory.⁵⁷

Chicano Power, *Latinismo*, and Third World Marxism

The YLO promoted a politics in many ways defined by revolutionary nationalism. Yet to characterize the YLO as *simply* a Puerto Rican nationalist group fails to fully capture the diversity of its participants and the broad nature of its political ideas. For one, while the group’s members were indeed predominantly Puerto Rican, a number of non-Puerto Rican YLO leaders made significant contributions to the Young Lords movement. Also, recognizing the shared experiences of migration and conditions of internal colonialism common to most Latin American migrant/immigrant communities across the country (especially for Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago), YLO leaders at times promoted and used an inclusive Latino identity. Finally, the group made extensive efforts to reach out and provide support for a variety of national liberation and movements, including among national minorities living within the US (such as the Chicano movement, the Black Power movement, etc.). In sum, through multiple manifestations of solidarity across racial, national, and ethnic lines, the group embodied a form of revolutionary *internationalism*.

The Young Lords was never an exclusively Puerto Rican group. While Puerto Ricans always made up a majority of participants, a number of non-Puerto Rican leaders

⁵⁷ *Pitirre*, Summer, 1970; Luis “Tony” Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

played important roles even during the group's gang years.⁵⁸ Angela "Angie" Rizzo, for example, was a critical and longtime Young Lords member who was not Puerto Rican. Born and raised in Lincoln Park by parents who were both Sicilian immigrants, she grew up close to Jiménez and became friends with him and other Young Lords gang members years before the group came into existence. Rizzo later married a Puerto Rican Young Lords member named José "Pancho" Lind, and they both became active in the politicized YLO. At some point in 1970, Lind was savagely murdered by members of a white gang in Chicago who beat him to death with baseball bats. Widowed and raising four children, Rizzo continued to play a critical role in the YLO through the mid-1970s. For one, she helped organize a sub-group within the YLO—Mothers and Others (MAO)—which focused on issues related to women's emancipation. Also, serving as YLO communications secretary, Rizzo led the organization during Jiménez' nine month prison sentence in 1973.⁵⁹

Born in Mexico City in 1948, Young Lords gang co-founder Angel "Sal" del Rivero was another important leader who was not Puerto Rican. Though Del Rivero was born in Mexico City, his family's experiences of migration to Chicago in many ways mirrored that of his Puerto Rican *compañeros*. His father, Carlos del Rivero, moved to Chicago in 1949 to begin a job at Zenith Electronics, leaving his wife, Susanna, and one-year-old Angel behind in Mexico City. Carlos del Rivero worked for several years in Chicago before eventually bringing his wife and son to live with him in the US. After

⁵⁸ In addition to the non-Puerto Rican YLO activists discussed in the main text of this chapter, the group included a number of other white, Black, and non-Puerto Rican Latino members. These included, among others, Colombian born Luis Arevalo, who played an important role in the group during and after its political transformation; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

⁵⁹ Angie Navedo-Rizzo, interviewed by Johanna Fernandez; Cathy Adorno-Centeno, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012.

moving several times during their first few years in Chicago, in 1958 the family settled into a Victorian row house in the western part of Lincoln Park. At this time the neighborhood was still predominantly white. However, increasing numbers of Puerto Ricans would move into the area over the following decade. Growing up, many of Del Rivero's closest friends were Puerto Ricans, including the other founders of the Young Lords. Del Rivero remained active in the Young Lords until he entered the US military and left Chicago in the mid-1960s. Returning to the city after serving a term in the Army, Del Rivero eventually decided to join the politicized YLO. While supportive of the movement for Puerto Rican independence, Del Rivero challenged other YLO leaders to not define the organization and its goals in narrowly Puerto Rican terms.⁶⁰

As YLO minister of information, Omar López was one of the people most responsible for propagating the group's ideas. Like Del Rivero, López and his family were also from Mexico. Like other YLO members, López and his family lived under conditions of internal colonialism after migrating to Chicago. Born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, López lived there until he was thirteen-years-old. His father, Facundo López Martínez, worked on the railroads his entire adult life, including during the Mexican Revolution (first as a conscripted soldier and later as a Zapatista rebel). Omar López' oldest brother, Hector-Javier, had been the first from the family to move to Chicago when he entered the country without authorization in 1949. His older sister Débora also moved to the city, coming in the early 1950s after obtaining contract employment. Almost the entire family soon followed. Omar López was brought to live in Chicago after his father passed away in 1958. At first he lived with family members in the Humboldt Park area, which at the time was still predominantly white. The area would later become the home

⁶⁰ Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012.

of much larger numbers of both Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Omar López later remembered that Puerto Rican and Mexican students at his high school were often drawn together. The feeling among Latinos, he suggested, was that there “were so few of us...there was no room for us to discriminate amongst ourselves.” While still a high school student in the early 1960s, Omar married his Puerto Rican classmate, Ada López. After joining the YLO in 1968, Omar López became the group’s minister of information. Among other responsibilities, this meant that López served as the chief architect of the group’s newspaper, a publication consistently used as a vehicle to promote Puerto Rican nationalism.⁶¹

A number of other Mexican/Chicano/a activists were involved in the Young Lords movement in Chicago, including Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, who joined the YLO in early 1969.⁶² In addition to speaking at demonstrations, Vasquez-Ignatin wrote an important history of the YLO that was published in the pages of the YLO newspaper as well as in a national Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) newspaper. Another important Mexican YLO member was Luis Chavez, who led the takeover of the People’s Church in June 1969. As well, it was a Chicana artist named Felicitas Nuñez that led a group in 1969 that painted several murals on the People’s Church. These murals included the image of Puerto Rico overlaid with the words “*Tengo Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón*” (Puerto Rico Is in My Heart); images of heroes from the Mexican Revolution (e.g. “Adelita,” and Emiliano Zapata); and images of historical leaders in the movement

⁶¹Obed López-Zacarias, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 2, 2012; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Luis “Tony” Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013; Omar López, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995.

⁶²In addition to participating in the YLO, Vasquez-Ignatin was also active in the city’s budding feminist movement. Later, with her husband Noel Ignatin, she participated in a “new communist” organization in Chicago known as the Sojourner Truth Organization; Michael Staudenmeier, *Truth and Revolution: A History of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969-1986* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 30.

for Puerto Rican independence (e.g. “Lolita” Lebrón and Albizu Campos). Finally, it was Alberto Chavira, a Chicano medical student at Northwestern University, who served as the YLO’s minister of health. Originally from New Mexico, Chavira and his wife Marta (also a Chicana) operated the group’s free community health clinic, which was named after the famed nineteenth century Puerto Rican nationalist and abolitionist hero Ramón Emeterio Betances.⁶³

At the same time that Mexican and Chicana/o YLO activists were promoting Puerto Rican nationalism, Puerto Rican YLO leaders were linking their struggle with the movement for Chicano power. In a modest show of support for the Chicano movement, for example, the YLO at some point began distributing buttons containing the phrase “*Tengo Aztlán En Mi Corazón*” (Aztlán Is in My Heart). The use of this phrase, a reference to the mythical Aztec homeland of Aztlán, was meant as an assertion of support for the right of self-determination for Chicano communities in the US. More substantively, the YLO newspaper gave coverage to the struggles of Mexicans and Chicanos both inside and outside of Chicago. For example, the newspaper ran articles about topics such as the work of activists in the Mexican dominated Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago; the United Farm Workers’ grape strike in Delano, California; and the movement to free *Los Siete de la Raza*, seven Chicano youths from San Francisco whose 1970 trial became a *cause célèbre* for Chicano activists (see Figure 10).⁶⁴

⁶³ Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *Y.L.O.*, May 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *The Movement*, May 1969; Staudenmeier, *Truth and Revolution*, 30. Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 12, 2012; Felicitas Nuñez, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 25, 2012.

⁶⁴ “Carta de Aztlán,” *Y.L.O.*, January, 1970; “People of Pilsen,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012.

In March 1969, a delegation of Latino leaders from Chicago (including YLO, LADO, and SACC members) traveled together to Denver to attend the National Youth and Liberation Conference. This event was organized by Chicano poet, playwright, and activist, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales. It brought together approximately 1,500 Chicanos, and resulted in the formation of several new national organizations, including the *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* (MECHA). The YLO later published an account and analysis of the conference in the group’s newspaper:

The Conference was an education for all of us. We learned what Chicanos are doing to rid themselves of the brainwashing that the power structure calls education. We learned how they are organizing themselves and how they are trying to fight the system everywhere...Most important, we realized how much we have in common, and how our enemy is always the same: the pig power structure, capitalism.

YLO leaders were also critical of some Chicano activists at the conference. “We felt they were too nationalistic and saw everything from a racial or cultural point of view,” the report concluded. “We tried to explain that culture isn’t the whole answer and that the reason we are treated the way we are is usually because we are poor, not because of our race.”⁶⁵

In addition to its support for the Chicano movement, YLO leaders at times promoted the use of a more inclusive Latino identity.⁶⁶ The first issue of *Y.L.O.*, for example, contained a front page editorial espousing the group’s affinity with and clarifying its goals for the “Latin American movement” that appeared to be developing in Chicago. “In the last few years there has been a rise in consciousness among Hispanos,

⁶⁵ “Chicano Youth Conference,” *Y.L.O.*, May 1970, 20; Carlos Montes, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, October 12, 2013; “Historical Foundation,” MECHA, <http://www.nationalmecha.org/about.html>, accessed June 7, 2014.

⁶⁶ This expression of a shared Latino identity can also be seen in the work of the New York YLO. For example, the second demand of the YLO Thirteen Point Program and Platform (written by the New York YLO in October 1969) called for “self-determination for all Latinos,” and called for unity with the Chicano movement; “Thirteen Point Program and Platform,” *Palante*, May 8, 1970.

particularly the youth” it explained, “that has created an entirely new political climate in Chicago.” On the second page of that same issue, the slogan “Latin Power to Latin People” (an alteration of the BPP slogan “Black Power to Black People, Brown Power to Brown People...”) was featured prominently in the center of a full-page photo collage (see Figure 11). This demonstrates that YLO leaders were making a clear effort to cultivate a shared Latino identity among working-class Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latin Americans in the city.⁶⁷

In his work focusing on Chicago in the 1970s, sociologist Felix M. Padilla wrote about a concept he termed *Latinismo*, and its use as a mobilizing tool by Puerto Rican and Mexican activists. Padilla argued that the formation of Latino ethnic consciousness and expressions of Latino ethnic solidarity are highly conditional upon specific “circumstances of inequality experience.” The expression of this identity and its use as a tool for political mobilization, Padilla argued:

is situationally specific, crystallized under certain circumstances of inequality experience shared by more than one Spanish-speaking group at a point in time...the Latino-conscious person sees himself as a Latino sometimes and as a Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Cuban, and the like at other times.

In essence, Padilla argued, the decision about when to construct and mobilize around an inclusive Latino identity (what Padilla termed Latino ethnic solidarity) is a political choice, and is “based on the groups’ assessment of their goals and their options to attain those goals.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ “Editorial: Why a YLO Newspaper?” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969, 1, 2, 9.

⁶⁸ Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 61-64; Put into the language of “racial formation,” the racial theory introduced by sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant nearly a decade after Padilla’s study, Latino ethnic consciousness and solidarity can perhaps be thought of as non-racist (or anti-racist) racial projects; Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56 & 71.

Despite differences in culture, language, and often legal status, Chicago's Mexican and Puerto Rican communities shared many "circumstances of inequality experience." Confined through segregation to decaying urban ghettos, exploited on the job, harassed by the police and white gangs, and lacking access to local structures of power, both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans occupied subordinate positions in Chicago. Also, both populations saw coterminous and dramatic growth in Chicago beginning in the 1940s. This was in part thanks to state-sponsored labor importation programs. Wartime demands and the *Bracero* Program, for example, brought 15,000 Mexican "guest-workers" into Chicago between 1943 and 1945. Many of these *braceros* stayed in the city after their contracts ended, or later returned after the war. Similarly and as previously discussed, Operation Bootstrap/*Manos a la Obra* programs brought large numbers of Puerto Ricans to work under contract in Chicago beginning in the mid-1940s.⁶⁹

As US citizens, Puerto Rican migrants had more rights than Mexican *braceros*. Puerto Ricans could quit a job at will, and were free to leave the city if they desired. While Mexican *braceros* at times walked off and "skipped" their contracts in protest of abuse and poor working conditions, they did so at the risk of capture and deportation. Puerto Ricans, however, also suffered at times as a result of anti-immigrant hysteria. After a massive federal deportation campaign—known as "Operation Wetback"—began in 1954, for example, Chicago police often harassed anyone they suspected might be an "illegal alien." Despite their status as US citizens, Puerto Ricans were routinely detained

⁶⁹ Gabriela F. Arredondo and Derek Vailant, "Mexicans," *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/824.html> accessed June 6, 2014; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 41-43; For more on the experiences of early 20th century Mexican migrants in Chicago, see: Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Chicago: The University of California Press, 2012); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

in anti-immigrant police sweeps and forced to prove they were not “wetbacks.” Puerto Ricans also sometimes faced ignorant employers who sought to use threats of deportation as a means of enforcing strict workplace discipline. Much of the animosity directed at Mexicans and Puerto Ricans during this time was rooted in economic insecurity. These migrant communities became scapegoats for the post-Korean War recession as newspapers decried what was perceived as an invasion of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans taking “American” jobs, driving down wages and putting a strain on the resources of welfare agencies.⁷⁰

It is also relevant to note the relative parity in size between Puerto Rican and Mexican populations in Chicago during this time. According to 1970 census data cited by Padilla (which he argued undercounts Latinos in Chicago), the city’s “Spanish-speaking” population, “was estimated at 247,857, with 43 percent or 83,000 [*sic*] Mexican Americans; 32 percent or 79,000 Puerto Ricans; 7 percent or 15,000 [*sic*] Cubans; and the remaining was comprised of other Spanish-speaking groups.” This differed from other US cities, such as New York and Los Angeles, which respectively had either large Puerto Rican or Mexican populations, but not both. This may help explain why YLO leaders from Chicago were pushing for national Latino unity at a time when this goal was not being pursued by Chicano and Puerto Rican activists elsewhere.⁷¹

Yet while Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos in the YLO were brought together by shared experiences of colonization, their unity and support for other liberation movements cannot be explained without an understanding of the role that Marxist-Leninist internationalism played in the group’s thinking. Influenced by the

⁷⁰ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 41-43, 54-56, 60; Ada López, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 24, 2012; Graciano López, interviewed by Mervin Méndez, January 19, 1996.

⁷¹ Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, 56; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 12, 2012.

ideology of the BPP (as is discussed in Chapter Three) the YLO fused their revolutionary nationalism with a Marxist-Leninist critique of capitalism and imperialism. They joined a number of like-minded groups in the late 1960s that looked for revolutionary models in places like Cuba, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, and China. Part of a tendency later referred to as Third World Marxism, leaders in the BPP, the YLO, and other groups believed that revolutionary struggles against imperialism should play a central role in the international communist movement.⁷²

YLO activists supported a variety of uprisings and national liberation movements around the globe. They also supported movements led by national minorities living in the US, whether Marxist or not. Stories about Marxist guerrillas in Colombia and Vietnam, for example, shared space in the group's newspapers with information about the occupation of Alcatraz by a Pan-Indian group known as the Indians of All Tribes. Lasting for nineteen months between 1969 and 1971, the occupation of Alcatraz aimed to bring national attention to the continued oppression of American Indian communities throughout the US. Jiménez visited the site during Thanksgiving 1969, and upon his return to Chicago the YLO newspaper ran a full-page article detailing his experiences and analysis (see Figure 12). A large slogan was featured prominently in the break between English and Spanish versions of the article text. Demanding "*Alcatraz Para Los Indios, Puerto Rico Para Los Puertorriquenos*" (Alcatraz for the Indians, Puerto Rico for the

⁷² Similar dynamics existed in the New York YLO (which is outside of the scope of this thesis). The third point on the New York YLO's Thirteen Point Program and Platform, for example, called for the "liberation of all third world people," and argued that "all the colored and oppressed peoples of the world are one nation under oppression"; "Thirteen Point Program and Platform," *Palante*, May 8, 1970; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 41.

Puerto Ricans), this slogan meant to connect the anti-imperial struggles of the YLO and the Indians of All Tribes.⁷³

Notions of internationalism also played a key role in how some YLO activists understood the Puerto Rican *nationalism* of their own group. It should be noted that YLO leaders early on deliberated over the decision to link the organization with the movement for Puerto Rican independence. Mexican born Del Rivero later remembered the debate that took place between YLO members: “[Jiménez] said to us, the Mexicans, the Argentinians...you all have your flags. You all have your countries...[but] Puerto Rico was not a free country. It’s a possession of the United States. And we...conceded [that he was] right...if Puerto Rico was to become a free nation, we needed to support that.”⁷⁴

For Mexican born YLO members such as Del Rivero and Omar López, the struggle for Puerto Rican independence was seen as both a just cause as well as a means by which to combat American imperialism. “Those of us who were not Puerto Rican,” López later remembered, “saw [the movement for independence] as an internationalist struggle, and we readily embraced that. So we had no problem at all with the Young Lords being identified totally as a Puerto Rican group that talked about the independence of Puerto Rico, when in the leadership of the Young Lords we had several people that were Mexican and Mexican American.”⁷⁵

⁷³ “Give Alcatraz Back to the Indians,” *Y.L.O.*, January, 1970.

⁷⁴ In a 2012 interview, Del Rivero expressed dismay over what he felt had been a series of historical misrepresentations as a result of the YLO’s association with Puerto Rican nationalism. Del Rivero argued that historians have consistently downplayed the grassroots and diverse nature of the Young Lords movement, thereby delimiting the range of audiences who might find studying the YLO history interesting and relevant. To a large degree Del Rivero blamed this misrepresentation on a conflation between the New York and Chicago Young Lords movements. As a result, Del Rivero asserted, “people don’t know the truth”; Angel del Rivero, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 12, 2012.

⁷⁵ Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

As the YLO developed into the 1970s, Puerto Rican nationalism also became viewed by leaders as a means by which to spread class consciousness. Facing police repression, many YLO activists went “underground” in late 1971. Setting up a revolutionary training school on a farm near Tomah, Wisconsin, they spent much of the next two years engaged in political education. Increasingly influenced by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory, YLO leaders tackled the “national question.” Balancing the seeming contradictions between Marxist analysis and nationalist sentiments, YLO activists were trained to analyze their oppression in terms of socio-economic class, while the group simultaneously sought to promote nationalism among the broader mass of colonized peoples. “You have to understand the difference between the mass line, which is the people’s line, and the disciplined line,” Jiménez later clarified. “For the cadre, we wanted them to be self-conscious. But for the community, we wanted them to understand and be proud that they’re Puerto Rican, or proud that they’re Mexican, or proud that they’re African American. But we were internationalist, of course, as an organization.” Jiménez continued, “Nationalism was a step towards uplifting people to class consciousness, yet we were clear that it was a class struggle between the rich and poor from the very beginning.”⁷⁶

Conclusion

As the YLO developed into a revolutionary political organization, its nationalist politics were shaped by a history of colonial subjugation, both on the island and in Chicago. Its philosophy was also built upon the groundwork laid by decades of cultural and civic activism practiced by older generations of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. YLO

⁷⁶ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angie Navedo-Rizzo, interviewed by Johanna Fernandez.

activists were also inspired by the historical movement for Puerto Rican independence and the recent upsurge in student activism around this issue on the island. All of these factors shaped the Young Lords movement as it developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

While not all YLO activists were Puerto Rican, the organization adopted a Puerto Rican identity and worked to promote and preserve Puerto Rican cultural traditions. As well, YLO leaders consistently advocated for Puerto Rican independence. Accordingly, it makes sense that the organization is often referred to in shorthand as a Puerto Rican nationalist group. Yet to characterize the YLO as *simply* a Puerto Rican nationalist group fails to fully capture the diversity of its participants, the local focus of much of its activism, and the global scope of its political ideas. While YLO leaders advocated for Puerto Rican independence, they also linked their movement with other communities in struggle—Chicanos, poor whites, Asian Americans, Black Power groups, and American Indians—identifying and organizing around their shared historical experiences of colonization. While YLO leaders promoted a form of revolutionary nationalism, they simultaneously condemned apolitical cultural nationalism. Rather than defining their struggle in narrowly ethnic or cultural terms, YLO leaders advanced a philosophy rooted in class-conscious revolutionary *internationalism*.

CHAPTER THREE: “THE REVOLUTION HAS COME”

Introduction

The Young Lords was not the only Chicago street group to embrace political and community organizing in the 1960s. Inspired by local Civil Rights activism and an ascendant Black Power movement, a number of the city’s Black gangs (e.g. Devil’s Disciples, Vice Lords, and Blackstone Rangers) began engaging in protest activities in the mid-1960s. After the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP) was founded in 1968, its leaders sought to coordinate with these street groups. City leaders, however, perceived the organizing of these groups as a threat to the local Democratic Party machine. In 1969 the city launched a so-called “war on gangs” to disrupt and undermine the work of these various organizations. In conjunction with secret FBI COINTELPRO operations, local police repression severely hampered the work of the BPP and Black street groups in Chicago.¹

The protest activities, community service programs, and political organizing of the BPP and these street groups inspired and informed the YLO as it transitioned from a gang into a revolutionary organization in the late 1960s. The BPP in particular—with a philosophy and organizing model that validated and celebrated the revolutionary potential of urban gang members—played a central role in the development of the YLO. By early 1969 the YLO had essentially adopted the organizational structure and political ideology of the national BPP. At that time the YLO also began working closely with the newly formed Illinois chapter of the BPP. Over the next two years these groups regularly joined

¹ COINTELPRO is an abbreviation for Counter-Intelligence Operations, and refers generally to decades of covert and often illegal FBI operations that sought to disrupt and destroy left-wing organizations and movement activity.

together for political education classes, rallies, and other protest activities. Like the BPP, the YLO also became a target in the city's so-called war on gangs and the group's leaders faced ongoing police harassment. This state repression helped drive the YLO underground in late 1970, during which time its leaders engaged in an extended period of study. After the group reemerged as a public entity in late 1972, its leaders continued working closely with and following the direction of the BPP.

Black Power and Chicago's Black Street Gangs

The summer of 1966 was a pivotal time for the Black freedom struggle, both in Chicago and nationally. Urban rebellions occurred in Black communities across the country during that summer. Among these was a riot on Chicago's West Side that lasted for several days in early July 1966. The summer of 1966 was also remarkable for the emergence of the phrase "Black Power" as a political slogan. For many activists this phrase represented a shift towards a more militant approach to the Black freedom movement. In Chicago this militancy manifested itself in part through the work of Black street groups. At times the activities of these so-called gangs led to tensions within the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM)—a campaign that was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and organizers from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and which involved activists from a variety of local Chicago organizations and local chapters of national civil rights groups.²

² Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008), 418-419; Jon Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South*, edited by Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 45-49; Bill Van Alstine, "Leaders Climbing on Dr. King Bandwagon: 'Open City' Plan Picks Up Support," *Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1966; Betty Washington, "The Anatomy of a Bloody Riot: Police Get 12-Hour Duty in Westside Uproar," *Chicago Defender*, July 16, 1966; Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2006), 141-147; Peniel E. Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* (New York: BasicCivitas Books, 2010), 107-110.

When King moved into a run-down apartment in a West Side tenement in January 1966, he was visited on his first night by six members of a local street group known as the Vice Lords. These youth had dropped in unannounced to “meet the leader.” The Vice Lords and other Black street groups became increasingly engaged with the CFM over the next year. Beginning in May 1966, SCLC activists Albert Sampson and James Orange organized a series of workshops that attempted to train hundreds of Blackstone Rangers and other gang members in the philosophy of nonviolence. King also met with a large number of South Side street groups and encouraged their members to participate in a voter registration campaign. During the summer of 1966, the Vice Lords accompanied King and other civil rights marchers as they entered hostile white working-class neighborhoods. Instead of embodying King’s concept of non-violence, however, the Vice Lords confronted angry whites—whether with their fists or by matching volleys of bricks and stones—and provided protection for King and other marchers.³

On July 10, 1966, thirty thousand people gathered for a “Freedom Rally” in Chicago’s Soldier Field. This was much less than the hundred thousand people that organizers had anticipated would attend. King had invited groups such as the Vice Lords, the Blackstone Rangers, and the Devil’s Disciples to attend the rally and listen to him speak. Floyd McKissick, executive director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), also spoke. McKissick had just overseen a CORE convention that explicitly endorsed Black Power principles, yet his speech at the Freedom Rally was conciliatory. He affirmed his allegiance with King and other civil rights activists and he tried to sooth

³ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 418; James R. Ralph, Jr., *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 94; Betty Washington, “Dr. King Meets With Top Cops, Map Plan to Prevent Violence: Vice Lords Also See SCLC Chief,” *Chicago Defender*, January 29, 1966.

fears about Black Power radicalism, defining the movement as simply “a means to bring the Black American into the covenant of brotherhood.”⁴

While a large group of street youth did arrive at the rally, they did not stay to listen to King speak. Instead, a major incident occurred that exposed the contradictions between the goals and perspectives of the more moderate civil rights activists and the militant street youth who were more attracted to the call for Black Power. While accounts vary significantly, it is clear that at some point the youth—a group containing Vice Lords and Blackstone Rangers, and numbering somewhere between fifty and two hundred—stormed onto the field, circling the perimeter and occupying the center, waving banners with Black Power slogans. More “respectable” members of the audience booed and hissed, some calling for the police to remove these young men. After some Vice Lords overheard an SCLC organizer make disparaging remarks about “all of these gang-fighters,” the entire group left en masse. As one Vice Lord later remembered with considerable exaggeration, “When we left, the place was half empty and that left King naked.”⁵

The CFM was a failure in several respects. King and a handful of leaders did eventually manage to secure a weak agreement from Mayor Richard J. Daley, which was ostensibly designed to end segregation and improve housing in the city. Containing virtually no enforcement mechanisms, however, this agreement was criticized as a face-

⁴ Rice, “The World of the Illinois Panthers,” 45; Andrew J. Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1907-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 268; Ralph, Jr., *Northern Protest*, 106.

⁵ David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press Inc., 1992), 110; Rice, “The World of the Illinois Panthers,” 45; Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 268; Ralph, Jr., *Northern Protest*, 106; Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Atlanta: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 202-203.

saving effort by King, allowing him an exit strategy without making a substantive impact on housing segregation. For many activists, this demonstrated that city leaders were unwilling to work towards real solutions, and that more militant tactics would need to be employed in order to bring substantive change.⁶

King and other CFM organizers continued to work with street groups throughout 1966, and members of these groups were deeply impacted by the political mobilizations in which they participated. They were also influenced by the myriad articulations of Black Power occurring both in Chicago and nationally. While never completely abandoning all of their illicit activities, groups like the Blackstone Rangers, the Devil's Disciples, and the Vice Lords transformed in important ways during the following years. In 1967, for example, the Blackstone Rangers and Devil's Disciples worked with The Woodlawn Organization—a group founded by Saul Alinsky in 1962 on Chicago's South Side—in a program that provided remedial classes, vocational training, and job placement for youth. That same year, the Vice Lords in the North Lawndale community area legally incorporated as a non-profit organization known as the Conservative Vice Lords, Inc. (CVL). Thanks in part to assistance from a white activist named David Dawley, the CVL accessed funds from foundations and government sources in order to initiate a number of “self-help” projects. The group also ran an employment service, operated an African clothing and accessories boutique, created a recreation center called “House of Lords,” and opened a restaurant and drop-in center called “Teen Town.”

⁶ Rice, “The World of the Illinois Panthers,” 48-49.

Perhaps most importantly, the CVL and other street groups brokered a series of agreements that temporarily stopped internecine gang fighting.⁷

At the same time that they were courting money from charitable foundations and government sources, many of Chicago's street groups were becoming increasingly influenced by the rise of Black Power activism. The CVL, for example, was visited during this time by organizers from a variety of groups, including the Deacons for Defense and Justice (a southern civil rights group committed to armed self-defense and often credited as an early Black Power influence) and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM)—a clandestine national organization that advocated an anti-imperial and class-conscious form of revolutionary Black Nationalism. When the Illinois chapter of the BPP was formed in the fall of 1968, its leaders hoped to take advantage of the radical momentum building within the city's Black communities.⁸

The Political Philosophy of the Black Panther Party

The BPP was founded in Oakland, California, in October 1966. The primary architect of this organization was a 24-year-old student named Huey P. Newton, who served as the group's minister of defense. His friend and classmate, 29-year-old Bobby G. Seale, became the party's chairman. Among the group's early recruits was Eldridge Cleaver, a 36-year-old writer and political activist who had just recently been released from prison after serving nine years for rape and assault convictions. Cleaver became minister of information and was responsible for producing a weekly BPP newspaper.

⁷ Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 254, 275; R. Lincoln Keiser, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 9-11; Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, xii-xiii; James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers (I): Are the Blackstone Rangers a Corrupt, Exploitive Street Gang, or a Constructive Engine of Community Black Power?," *The Atlantic*, May 1, 1969, retrieved June 22, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1969/05/chicagos-blackstone-rangers-i/305741/>; *Lord Thing* (Film). Directed by DeWitt Beall (1970).

⁸ Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, 110.

These leaders were inspired by an upsurge in Black Nationalist activism in the US and by independence movements around the world. Directed principally by Newton, their intellectual appetite led them to meld ideas from diverse sources such as Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Mao Zedong. In doing so they created a unique political philosophy grounded in revolutionary Black Nationalism and Third World Marxism.⁹

The BPP's early political ideas drew upon a tradition of Black Nationalist thought stretching back more than half a century, which understood Black people in the US as constituting an oppressed "nation within a nation." The BPP's early brand of "revolutionary nationalism" was in part informed by Newton's previous affiliation with RAM, a group started by university students in 1962. RAM activists were inspired by national figures—such as Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams—who advocated armed militant self-defense in the face of racial aggression. They were also motivated in part by the publication in 1962 of Harold Cruse's article "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," wherein Cruse argued that Black people in the US essentially constituted a colonized nation. "What is true of the colonial world is also true of the Negro in the United States," he wrote. "The American Negro shares with colonial peoples many of the socioeconomic factors which form the material basis for present-day revolutionary nationalism," Cruse argued, making Black Americans "the leading revolutionary force, independent and ahead of the Marxists in the development of a movement toward social change."¹⁰

⁹ Floyd W. Hayes, III and Francis A. Kiene, III, "'All Power to the People': The Political Thoughts of Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1998), 159-160.

¹⁰ Harold Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," in *Rebellion or Revolution* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1968), 75; Akbar Muhammad Ahmad, "RAM: The Revolutionary Action Movement," in *Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 252-253; Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black*

Newton was particularly drawn to the work of Frantz Fanon, who wrote about the Algerian revolution in his classic text, *The Wretched of the Earth*. In addition to being inspired by Fanon's advocacy of revolutionary violence, Newton was impressed by Fanon's analysis of the revolutionary potential of the *lumpenproletariat* in the colonized world, a class that had been essentially written off by Marxists as incapable of developing class-consciousness. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used the term *lumpenproletariat*—which derives from the German word for “rag”—to refer to those members of the working class who were unemployed and unemployable, whom Marx described as “social scum,” “vagabonds,” “swindlers,” “pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers,” “brothel keepers,” “ragpickers,” “prepared to sell themselves to anyone who will make extravagant promises,” and a “passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of society.” In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels referred to this group as a “dangerous class,” that “may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.” Fanon argued that in a colonial context, “[the] *lumpenproletariat*, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people.” In a challenge to orthodox Marxism, Newton extended this analysis to members of what he called the Black *lumpenproletariat* in the US, the mass of chronically unemployed urban ghetto dwellers—Newton called them “brothers off the block”—who much like colonial subjects, were systematically denied access to quality

jobs, education, and political power. Accordingly, as the BPP grew, it recruited from and collaborated with street groups in cities across the country.¹¹

By late 1968, the BPP had grown into a national organization, with chapters forming in major cities from New York to Seattle. Its political philosophy also developed as the group expanded. From the beginning there existed contradictions between the group's Black Nationalist appeal and its Marxist-Leninist political analysis.

These contradictions became apparent in early 1968 when the BPP entered into a coalition with the Peace and Freedom Party of California, a white dominated socialist group that committed much of its resources to anti-Vietnam War efforts. For the BPP's part the coalition was organized primarily by Cleaver, as Newton was in jail at the time awaiting trial on the charge that he had shot and killed an Oakland police officer during a traffic stop (he would later be convicted and then acquitted of this charge on appeal).

While in jail, Newton was visited by former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Chairman Stokely Carmichael, who had just returned from a trip to Africa, Cuba, and Vietnam. As Newton later wrote:

“Stokely warned that whites would destroy the movement, alienate Black people, and lessen our effectiveness in the community. Later, he proved right in terms of what happened to the Party, although he was wrong in principle...I did not believe him while he was running these things down to me. We were not into a racist bag...I responded to his racist analysis with a class analysis...But in the thirty-three months I spent in jail our leadership did falter, and serious frictions developed between the Black Panthers and white radicals.”¹²

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 129; Floyd W. Hayes, III and Francis A. Kiene, III, ““All Power to the People”” 159-160; Huey P. Newton: *Prelude to Revolution* (Film). Directed by John Evans. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate (2009); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 482; Karl Marx, “Chapter 5: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” Marxists Internet Archive, accessed June 23, 2014, <http://marxists.anu.edu.au/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch05.htm>.

¹² Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 195-196.

Despite its costs, class analysis remained central to the group's work. As Eldridge

Cleaver wrote in 1970:

We have said: the ideology of the Black Panther Party is the historical experience of Black people and the wisdom gained by Black people in their 400 year long struggle against the system of racist oppression and economic exploitation in Babylon, interpreted through the prism of Marxist-Leninist analysis by our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton.¹³

As the organization grew, there also developed tensions within the party regarding its position on the correct application of revolutionary violence. From the beginning the BPP had been committed to armed self-defense in the face of state repression. Its earliest activities included patrolling Oakland neighborhoods and observing police stops, all while fully armed with shotguns, rifles, tape recorders, and law books. While audacious, these actions were legal and designed largely for propagandistic purposes. Public confrontations often drew crowds, as BPP leaders outwardly displayed their weapons and spoke with confidence to Oakland police officers who had pulled over Black motorists. The objective of these patrols was twofold: both to inform Black community members of their rights when stopped by police, as well as to inspire them in a broader sense to join the struggle against racial oppression. As Newton envisioned it, the BPP was supposed to serve an educational role within a revolutionary process. It was not designed to serve as a military force. Yet by "picking up the gun," the BPP had unleashed the revolutionary imaginations of thousands of frustrated young Black people. Perhaps many of these men and women (including Eldridge Cleaver) imagined they were enlisting in an urban

¹³ Eldridge Cleaver, *On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party* (San Francisco: BPP Ministry of Information, 1970), 1.

guerrilla army, a sentiment summed up in the popular BPP chant: “The revolution has come, it’s time to pick up the gun!”¹⁴

While Newton was in jail awaiting trial, Cleaver wielded more influence within the group. On the night of April 6, 1968, in response to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. two days earlier, Cleaver led a failed ambush against Oakland police officers. This had disastrous results, including the murder by police of seventeen-year-old BPP member Bobby Hutton after he had surrendered. After being arrested and then released on bail, Cleaver left the country and spent much of the next two years in exile in Algeria. Even with Cleaver out of the country, the BPP’s militant posture and rhetoric drew state repression. By the end of the decade nearly thirty BPP members had been killed in clashes with police.¹⁵

In 1969, with Newton in jail and Cleaver in exile in Algeria, the BPP began operating free food, healthcare, and education programs, which were designed to serve the basic needs of poor and working-class people. These “community survival programs,” as they would later become known, were criticized by some (including Cleaver) as an effort to mollify the group’s image in the face of state repression. For Newton, Seale, and other BPP leaders, however, these programs were seen as a logical extension of the group’s role as an educational force. These contradictions were not

¹⁴ *Eldridge Cleaver: Black Panther* (Film). Directed by William Klein, Eldridge Cleaver, and Robert Scheer. 1970/2010, [France], Arte Éditions; Earl Anthony, *Picking Up the Gun: A Report on the Black Panther Party* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), viii, 5-7, 28; David Hilliard and David Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993), 183-186; *Huey P. Newton: Prelude to Revolution* (Film). Directed by John Evans. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate (2009).

¹⁵ Edward Jay Epstein, “The Black Panthers and the Police: A Pattern of Genocide,” *The New Yorker*, February 13, 1971, 45; Anthony, *Picking Up the Gun*, viii, 5-7, 28; David Hilliard and David Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 183-186.

resolved until mid-1971 when Eldridge Cleaver and a number of other BPP members were expelled by Newton and the group began a period of retrenchment.¹⁶

The Illinois Black Panther Party, Chicago's Black Gangs, and the Daley Machine

Inspired by growth of the BPP nationally, a group of SNCC members on Chicago's South Side began efforts to organize a local chapter of the BPP beginning in early summer 1968. Bobby Rush and Bob Brown, who had both participated in the CFM, were among the SNCC activists who toured local college campuses looking for recruits. They soon met Fred Hampton, a nineteen-year-old student who at the time was still a leader in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Hampton had already become enamored with the BPP philosophy, thanks in large part to earlier conversations he had with Lennie Eggleston, a Los Angeles BPP member who had recently visited Chicago. When he left the NAACP to join with Rush, Brown, and the other SNCC/Panthers, Hampton brought several NAACP members with him. Meanwhile on the city's West Side, a group of younger Deacons for Defense members, led by Jewel Cook and Drew Ferguson, joined together with a group of Vice Lords to form their own BPP branch. By the fall of 1968 these two groups had merged, and the Illinois Chapter of the BPP officially opened its headquarters on the city's Near West Side on November 1, 1968.¹⁷

The Illinois BPP branch adopted the same basic structure as the national organization. As deputy minister of defense, Bobby Rush exercised a top leadership role at the local level parallel to the one Newton played at the national level. Fred Hampton

¹⁶; *Eldridge Cleaver: Black Panther* (Film). Directed by William Klein, Eldridge Cleaver, and Robert Scheer. 1970/2010, [France], Arte Éditions.

¹⁷ Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," 50-51; Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 63.

became the local party's chairman, as his oratorical skills made him a natural choice to serve as the organization's chief spokesperson. Other leadership positions included deputy ministers of education, culture, labor, finance, information, etc.¹⁸ A number of field secretaries were responsible for on-the-ground organizing efforts in different parts of the city, including Robert "Bob" E. Lee who organized on the city's North Side and played a critical role in the formation of the Rainbow Coalition (discussed below).¹⁹

Central to the group's early work was the recruitment and education of new members. "We hit just about every college and university in Chicago," Deputy Minister of Education Billy Lamar "Che" Brooks later said of the party's early organizing efforts, "and we hit all the high schools." They were particularly successful at recruiting young people on Chicago's West Side. At the age of fourteen, for example, John "Oppress" Preston was the group's youngest member. He joined the BPP in November 1968 after its headquarters opened a half a mile from his home. Like other new recruits, Preston had to participate in an extended training program that included political education classes. As he later remembered, "You had to learn the party's philosophy...[the] ten point platform and program...rules of discipline...all these things that you learn during your six-weeks of political orientation to become an active member of the party." Like other new recruits, Preston was also required to sell the party's weekly newspaper, *The Black Panther*. David Lemieux was the group's second youngest member. He joined the Illinois BPP in May 1969 at the age of sixteen after an older student at his high school gave him a copy of *The Black Panther* newspaper. In addition to studying texts like Mao Zedong's *Little*

¹⁸ Other leaders included Deputy Minister of Culture Christina "Chuckles" May; Deputy Minister of Labor Diane Dunn; Deputy Minister of Finance Drew Ferguson; and Deputy Minister of Information Rufus "Chaka" Walls, among others.

¹⁹ Billy Brooks, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 28, 2012; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 65.

Red Book in political education classes, Lemieux later remembered having to wake up at 4:30 a.m. to participate in the party's free breakfast for children program. Wanda Ross, who came to serve as the chief administrator of the breakfast for children program, was recruited into the party at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus during her first day of classes in 1969. She later remembered reading Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Karl Marx during her political education training. "I never heard anybody so profound," she said of a BPP leader nicknamed "Teach," who led many of the classes. "Teach put a lot of things in perspective...as we started to read about colonialism and international racism, so that it just seemed like, my goodness, we can't even live on this world unless we change it."²⁰

In addition to recruiting students, the Illinois BPP worked to build relationships with Chicago area street groups. In early October 1968, for example, the BPP hosted a "rally for the defense of Huey Newton." This was an effort to draw attention to the case of the group's leader, who by that point had been in jail for a year on charges that he had shot and killed an Oakland police officer during a traffic stop (he would later be acquitted of these charges on appeal). Held at the Senate Theater in East Garfield Park on the city's West Side, the rally drew a crowd of over two hundred people, including leaders of street groups such as the Black P. Stone Nation (formerly known as the Blackstone Rangers), the Egyptian Cobras, and the CVL. With one speaker describing the militant street youth as "warriors that are needed," the BPP called for the unification of all the gangs.²¹

²⁰ David Lemieux, interviewed by José Jiménez, July 15, 2012; Wanda Ross, interviewed by José Jiménez & Melanie Shell-Weiss, August 24, 2012; Billy Brooks, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 28, 2012; John Preston, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 27, 2012.

²¹ Ronald Koziol, "Find Black Panthers Are Recruiting Here," *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1968; Ronald Koziol, "Panther Chief Pushes Drive Among Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, January 24, 1969; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 65.

The BPP had good relations with the CVL. Not only did the BPP draw in some recruits from the ranks of the CVL, the two groups worked together on a variety of projects. Living up to its name however, the CVL took a more conservative approach to Black Power than did the BPP. In part this may have had to do with the large amounts of federal and foundation money that supported the group's community and business enterprises. Since incorporating in 1967, the Vice Lords had obtained a number of sizable grants to run community programs, including \$15,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, \$25,000 from the Field Foundation, \$15,000 for a program known as Operation Bootstrap, \$36,000 from the Department of Labor, and \$130,000 from the Ford Foundation.²²

The influx of foundation and federal money also impacted the activities of the Blackstone Rangers on the South Side, a group which by that point had grown immensely by consolidating with several smaller gangs, transforming in the process into the Black P. Stone Nation. While on the payroll of the federal government and corporate foundations, the P. Stones (led by a group of twenty-one leaders that included a brazen young man named Jeff Fort) allegedly continued to engage in a variety of illicit practices. Some of these activities drew the attention of federal investigators. In May 1968, Jeff Fort was subpoenaed to testify before a Senate committee regarding charges that the group misused federal funds. Fort was later convicted of acting in contempt of Congress by walking out of this Senate hearing.²³

²² William Jones and Joseph Boyce, "Street Gangs Turn a Profit on Their Brand of Violence," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1969; Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, 43; John Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 77; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 129.

²³ James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers (I): Are the Blackstone Rangers a Corrupt, Exploitive Street Gang, or a Constructive Engine of Community Black Power?," *The Atlantic*, May 1, 1969.

Fred Hampton and others in the Illinois BPP worked to build a coalition between themselves and the P. Stones. An initial barrier to such a coalition may have been the vested financial interest the P. Stones had (as grant recipients) in supporting more mainstream reform efforts rather than the BPP's revolutionary program. Relations between the BPP and the P. Stones soured early on, in part thanks to a series of FBI "counterintelligence" operations popularly known as COINTELPRO. As part of these operations the FBI employed undercover agents who participated in the leadership of the BPP. The FBI also sent anonymous letters to both Jeff Fort and Fred Hampton in an effort to sow distrust between the two leaders. Tensions eventually boiled over after a series of heated clashes. In December 1968, for example, a BPP member was shot while selling *The Black Panther* in Woodlawn, an area of the South Side controlled by the Black P. Stone Nation. A meeting between the groups held in response to the shooting turned into a tense armed standoff between 30 BPP members and nearly 100 P. Stone members. While the two organizations did not become formal allies, the meeting ended in an uneasy truce which would lead to a guarded *détente*.²⁴

Despite lingering tensions among the various gangs (as well as between the P. Stones and the BPP), these groups were growing closer during this time. In early 1969 the CVL, the P. Stones, and the Disciples (formerly the Devil's Disciples) joined together in a coalition they called Lords, Stones, and Disciples (LSD). The name was chosen at least in part as a joking reference to the hallucinogenic drug LSD. As CVL leader Bobby Gore later said, "We were going to take Chicago on a trip." This pact was initiated in part by organizers from a city-wide federation of Black groups known as the Coalition for

²⁴ Rice, *The World of the Illinois Panthers*, 54-55; Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 66; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 161-162.

United Community Action (CUCA). Embracing notions of Black Power and community self-determination, much of CUCA's work focused on the goal of securing construction jobs for Chicago's Black residents. Hampton also participated in discussions between the groups, and he encouraged the LSD gangs to join together into a united front. Wearing their signature berets—red for the P. Stones, blue for the Disciples, and tan for the Vice Lords—these former adversaries now marched side by side. LSD members regularly participated in CUCA protest actions at city construction sites, often shutting down work by intimidating white crews.²⁵

On May 9, 1969, Mayor Daley and State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan officially declared a "war on gangs," despite the fact that rates of gang violence had dropped to their lowest point in years and meaningful peace had been established between the city's largest Black and Latino street groups. Hanrahan argued that the war on gangs was a necessary response to the continued "intimidation" and "extortion" practiced by the city's gangs. While LSD pickets at construction sites had indeed intimidated small numbers of white construction workers, critics have suggested that the war on gangs was really an effort to put a stop to independent political and community organizing activities among Black and Latino communities in Chicago. Perhaps the civic engagement of these street groups was perceived by city leaders as a threat to the Daley political machine. Daley likely recalled his own days as a member of the Hamburg Athletic Club, a group of young Irish-Americans on Chicago's South Side that Chicago newspaper columnist Mike Royko wryly described as "handy with a brick." Like other groups that moved from street

²⁵ Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 78; Erik S. Gellman, "'The Stone Wall Behind': The Chicago Coalition for United Community Action and Labor's Overseers, 1968-1973," in *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry*, edited by David A. Goldberg and Trevor Griffey (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 112, 120-122; *Lord Thing* (Film). Directed by DeWitt Beall (1970).

brawls to politics—including most prominently the Irish-based Ragen’s Colts—Daley’s gang eventually became an integral part of the Democratic Party machine (even launching his own political career in the 1920s).²⁶ Royko summed up Daley’s possible analysis in his classic unauthorized biography of the mayor:

There lay the danger of the black gangs. Blacks had been killing each other for years without inspiring any great concern in City Hall. But these young toughs could be dictating who their aldermen would be if he didn’t stop them. And the Black Panthers, a more sophisticated though smaller group, was even more dangerous. They had set up a free-food program in the ghetto and had opened a health clinic that was superior to those of his own health department.²⁷

The Mayor’s office applied substantial pressure to the charitable foundations that supported groups such as the CVL and the P. Stones, forcing most of them to cancel the funding of community projects already in operation. Through its Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU), the Chicago police also stepped up its harassment of various groups (including the BPP, the CVL, the YLO, the Disciples, and the P. Stone Nation, etc.), engaging in countless arrests. The mounting legal costs and time spent in jail drained resources from and undermined leadership within these groups. In the fall of 1969, CVL leader Bobby Gore and P. Stone spokesperson Leonard Sengali were arrested and indicted on murder charges. While Sengali was eventually cleared of any wrongdoing, Gore ended up serving eleven years in prison based on spurious evidence for a crime he maintained he did not commit.²⁸

All of these actions severely undermined the effectiveness of grassroots Black and Latino political and community organizing efforts in Chicago’s poorest areas. Predictably, with access to quality jobs and political power firmly established as off-

²⁶ Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 78-79; Royko, *Boss*, 206-207; Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 30.

²⁷ Royko, *Boss*, 206-207.

²⁸ Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, 170-176; Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 175-180; Gellman, “‘The Stone Wall Behind’” 127; *Lord Thing* (Film). Directed by DeWitt Beall (1970).

limits, most of these groups reverted to gang activities. As one CVL member later said, “Once Bobby went down, guys didn’t have jobs...and there was money to be made selling drugs.” The P. Stones also reverted back to gang activities as the group’s community programs were shut down and drugs flooded into the city’s South Side ghettos in the 1970s.²⁹

The Illinois BPP also came under heavy fire in the War on Gangs. In addition to being targeted by Hanrahan’s GIU, the BPP faced ongoing harassment from both the FBI and the city’s Red Squad (an anti-subversive police unit that had its roots in the famed 1886 Haymarket affair). The harassment culminated in a deadly early morning raid on December 4, 1969, when Chicago police (accompanied by GIU officers and materially aided by an undercover FBI agent) murdered BPP leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark as they slept in their apartment. Though the Illinois BPP had suffered a devastating blow, it continued organizing. Fallout from the raid would eventually damage Hanrahan’s political career and cost the city millions in legal settlements. Yet no officers or public officials were ever charged for the murders.³⁰

Black Power, the Black Panther Party, and the Young Lords Organization

Jiménez and other YLO leaders were deeply impacted by the rise of Black Power politics in the late 1960s. The work of the BPP was particularly influential, and the organization became a model for the YLO as it developed into a political group. Jiménez and other YLO leaders considered the BPP to be the “vanguard party” in a growing US revolutionary movement. Accordingly, the YLO adopted the BPP’s ideology, rhetoric,

²⁹ Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, 170-176; Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 175-180; Gellman, ““The Stone Wall Behind,”” 127; *Lord Thing* (Film). Directed by DeWitt Beall (1970).

³⁰ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 67-77; Randi Storch, “Red Squad,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1049.html> accessed June 25, 2014.

organizational structure, and community service programs. Doing so brought state repression, eventually driving the YLO underground.

The Black freedom struggle had impacted the thinking and activities of several future YLO leaders even before the group became political. Jiménez, for example, had begun to feel more drawn to the Black liberation movement while in the Cook County House of Corrections in the spring of 1968. While Jiménez sat isolated in a cell on April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Jiménez later remembered watching and reflecting upon the injustice as large numbers of young Black men streamed by his cell, presumably arrested during the subsequent riots. Thanks to a jail trustee who was a Black Muslim, Jiménez soon began to read the words of King, Malcolm X, and other Black activists during his sixty-day sentence. Later, a Black prison guard would accuse the light skinned Jiménez of “acting Black.” Jiménez was shaken by the incident. “It affected me,” he later remembered, “because I’m not looking at myself like that.” Black inmates defended Jiménez, however, and cursed out the guard, calling him a “pig.”³¹

After his release from jail in the summer of 1968, Jiménez enrolled in an ex-offenders program at Argonne National Laboratories, where he secured a job as a janitor and participated in General Educational Development (GED) classes. Located roughly twenty-five miles southwest of Chicago, this research facility was operated by the University of Chicago for the US Department of Energy. Principally run by a civil rights activist named Mike Lawson— an experienced teacher who had marched in Selma and participated in the CFM— Argonne’s ex-offenders program had already worked with

³¹ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, *“Que Viva El Pueblo”: A Biographical History of Jose Cha Cha Jimenez, General Secretary of the Young Lords Organization*, (Chicago: Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, 1973), 14-15.

young people from a number of gangs, including the Disciples, the Black P. Stone Nation, and the Young Lords. In late August 1968, Lawson brought Jiménez and others in the program on a “field trip” to observe demonstrations against the Democratic National Convention. His curiosity piqued, Jiménez returned again over the following days, during which time he would first encounter national BPP Chairman Bobby Seale.³²

During the fall of 1968, around the time they first began reorganizing the YLO, Jiménez and fellow YLO leader Rafael Rivera participated in the Waller High School strike coalition. During strike coalition meetings, they listened as students and organizers from Black Power groups active in the Cabrini-Green housing projects (where large numbers of Waller High School students lived) articulated Black Power demands. One of these groups, Black Active and Determined (BAD), soon worked closely with the politicized YLO.³³

Jiménez and Rivera were not the only future YLO leaders who were drawn closer to the Black Power movement during the mid- to late 1960s. Before joining the YLO, Omar López had participated in the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS), a group composed of Latinos at Loop City College (later renamed Harold Washington College). During his time with the organization, OLAS had allied with the college’s Black Student Union and other groups to create the Third World Coalition (TWC) at Loop City College. Among other activities, at some point (most likely in late 1968 or early 1969) the TWC invited Illinois BPP Chairman Fred Hampton to speak to students

³² “Argonne National Laboratory,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/33965/Argonne-National-Laboratory>; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Mike Lawson, interviewed by José Jiménez, March 29, 2012.

³³ John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969; Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *The Movement*, May 1969.

on their college's campus. It was around this same time that López first made contact with YLO leaders. After meeting with Jiménez at the Urban Training Center (a community organizing space located on Chicago's West Side), and learning about his plans, López decided to devote himself full-time to the YLO, becoming the group's minister of information.³⁴

Jiménez began communicating with national BPP leaders in the fall of 1968, and early on conceived of the YLO as modeled after the BPP. Yet before early 1969 he had not been in contact with local BPP activists. The two groups finally came together in February 1969, largely as a result of a massive protest the YLO had staged at the eighteenth District Police Station (see Figure 13). Among the people that had showed up to the scheduled police-community workshop that evening were dozens of YLO members donning purple berets and carrying signs. These YLO activists had arrived together in a school bus that was owned by one of Jiménez' neighbors. Their signs, which they taped to the walls behind them as they lined the back of the auditorium, contained messages such as "Hands Off Cha Cha," "Young Lords Serve and Protect," "City Law Does Not Permit Pigs on Streets," "Power by the People and for the People," "Pigs Need Sports Centers to Keep Them Off the Streets and End the Violence," and "Viva Young Lords" (see Figure 11). They had come to protest the harassment of YLO leaders by local police. They also hoped to counteract rumors (which they believed the police had been spreading) that the YLO was still a gang and posed a threat to area senior citizens.

³⁴ Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012.

Jiménez later remembered grabbing the microphone at one point and explaining that the YLO was not a threat and was there to help the community.³⁵

Hampton and other BPP leaders were intrigued after learning about this action shortly afterwards. Impressed by what they had heard, Hampton (accompanied by a small number of other BPP members) soon came looking for YLO leaders. They first showed up one evening at the corner of North Dayton Street and West Armitage Avenue, a known hangout of the Young Lords since its days as a gang (and the location of the Armitage Avenue Methodist Church, later to become the People's Church). While YLO leaders often spent time on the steps of the church, they were not there that evening. However, members of the Latin Kings were there, and they knew where to find Jiménez. They brought Hampton and the other BPP members to the home of Rafael Rivera, who shared an apartment with John Boelter, a young progressive white teacher from Waller High School whom Rivera had recently befriended.³⁶ While Boelter was not home, Jiménez and Rivera were both there, and they were surprised and elated when the BPP leaders introduced themselves. Jiménez later remembered that after a brief discussion, Hampton led the group in an impromptu political education class. It was the first of several political education classes to be held in Rivera's apartment, some of which would include Hampton and other BPP members.³⁷

³⁵ José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; "YLO Takes Over Police Station," *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969.

³⁶ Active in his church, Boelter was also a member of a group called the Lutheran Action Committee, which agitated around civil rights and anti-war demands in Chicago. He had also participated in the Waller High School strike coalition (attending meetings and walking the picket line), which is how he first met Rivera and Jiménez; John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

³⁷ John Boelter later remembered attending one of the political education classes led by Fred Hampton. Rivera had apparently invited Boelter to earlier YLO political education classes, but Boelter remembered there being some objection to his participation from others because he was not Latino or Black. Jiménez claimed that Rivera decided to specifically hold a particular political education class at the apartment he

After this initial meeting, the YLO continued to draw closer to the BPP. In addition to holding more political education classes together, the two groups often joined each other's marches, demonstrations, and other protest actions.³⁸ During this time YLO leaders were directed by local and national BPP leaders. As Jiménez explained in an interview published in the June 7, 1969, issue of the *Black Panther*, "we see and we recognize the Black Panther Party as a vanguard party, a vanguard revolutionary party. And we feel that as revolutionaries we should follow the vanguard party." For Jiménez and other YLO members, the BPP ideology affirmed their revolutionary potential as former gang members and colonized people. For the BPP leaders, the YLO represented evidence of the validity of their analysis and the explosive potential of their methods. Drawing its members and leaders from a colonized urban *lumpenproletariat* class, the YLO represented a manifestation among Latinos of the BPP's vision for urban Black communities.³⁹

After Omar López joined the YLO, the group began publishing a "monthly" bilingual newspaper. As YLO minister of information, López served as the chief architect and editor of this publication. He later credited the BPP in part with the initial decision to create a newspaper:

We always said that we were a propaganda unit. At one point if we are a propaganda unit, we need to have some propaganda. One of the ideas that came up was to have a newspaper, and of course it wasn't very difficult for us to come

shared with Boelter so that nobody would be able to object to Boelter's presence. Boelter remembered that during that political education class, Hampton read from Mao's *Little Red Book*.; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; John Boelter, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 20, 2012.

³⁸ For example, Hampton, Jiménez and Obed López of LADO were twice arrested together in 1969 while occupying a welfare office in Wicker Park; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; "José Cha Cha Jiménez," National Young Lords, accessed November 5, 2014, http://nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15.

³⁹ José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; "Interview with Cha Cha Jiménez," *The Black Panther*, June 7, 1969; "José Cha Cha Jiménez," National Young Lords, accessed November 5, 2014, http://nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15.

to that conclusion because we fashioned ourselves after the Black Panther Party. The Black Panthers had a newspaper, so we followed that kind of model.⁴⁰

According to the BPP model, the regular production of a newspaper served organizational functions beyond simply the distribution of propaganda. Producing and distributing the newspaper created work, which the Black Panthers identified as an important necessity for the growth of new chapters. As the BPP Chief of Staff David Hilliard later wrote, “the paper...help[ed] us organize new chapters. ‘[W]hat do we do?’ new members in San Diego or Sacramento want to know. ‘[S]ell the newspaper,’ we answered.” As well, distributing the newspapers helped BPP members connect with outside activists and other leftwing organizations. Distributing newspaper also provided the BPP with a way to recruit new members into the group. Hilliard recounted going to the streets to sell the paper:

“Hey, brother,” I say, flashing a copy in a strangers face, “read *The Black Panther*. Find out what’s really going on in this country”...If the brother takes the copy, I’ve made a potential convert; if he refuses, we get into a conversation that lures other people and ends in a general verbal free-for-all that’s probably the most exciting event on the block in the last ten years.”⁴¹

Similarly, López later remembered sending Young Lords activists out to distribute the YLO newspapers. They went to street corners in Lincoln Park and elsewhere, as well as to universities, community organizations, and political demonstrations, to sell the newspapers. “You know we asked them to try to get donations for the newspaper,” López said of these young activists, “but what we wanted them to do was to engage people when they gave the newspaper out...tell them what was in the

⁴⁰ Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

⁴¹ Christian A. Davenport, “Reading the ‘Voice of the Vanguard’: A Content Analysis of The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service, 1969-1973,” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* edited by Charles E. Jones, (Black Classic Press: Baltimore, 1998), p 196-197.

newspaper...and talk about all the other things that the Young Lords were doing in the community.”⁴²

From the very beginning, YLO newspapers were used to inform readers about the BPP and the struggles of Black youth in Chicago’s urban ghettos. The first two issues of *Y.L.O.*, for example, included full pages devoted to the BPP Ten Point Party Platform and Program. A note from the *Y.L.O.* “staff” briefly introduces the BPP in the first of these issues. Above the iconic image of a charging Black Panther, in part it read: “The Illinois B.P.P. was started 4 months ago and has thus far put the pigs up tight. We think it is important that the Latin community find out what our black brothers are all about and what they are doing” (see Figure 14). That same issue contained artwork from BPP Minister of Culture Emory Douglas originally published in *The Black Panther*. Entitled “It’s All the Same,” the image is of three pigs, dressed up alternately as members of the local police, National Guard, and marines (see Figure 15). Later YLO newspapers would continue to reprint content from the *Black Panther*, and feature articles about the BPP and the Black Power movement in Chicago.⁴³

Unlike the BPP, which published *The Black Panther* weekly, YLO activists in Chicago had difficulty putting their newspaper out on a regular basis. The YLO published only seven issues of their “monthly” newspaper in the span of a year and a half. Luis “Tony” Baez, who helped produce the newspaper after he joined the YLO in early 1970, later pointed to a lack of money as part of the cause of the inconsistency. “Where do you put your money?” he asked rhetorically. “Do you put your money into a newspaper, or do you put it more into the health programs that they had downstairs, the breakfast

⁴² Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

⁴³ Black Panther Party, “Ten Point Platform,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969; Emory Douglas, “It’s All the Same,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969; Black Panther Party, “Ten Point Platform,” *Y.L.O.*, May, 1969.

programs, and stuff like that. And not a lot of money was coming in.” YLO Minister of Finance Alfredo Matias also later described the financial drain of publishing the newspapers. “I was supposed to be keeping books,” Matias laughed, “but we were always broke because the little money we had went to the newspaper.”⁴⁴

López later agreed that obtaining enough money to pay the printer was sometimes difficult, but he also pointed to the steep learning curve YLO activists faced as amateurs, many of them high school dropouts with poor writing skills. “It was a project,” he said in a 2012 interview. “It wasn’t like today, you can just sit at a computer and write it. It was a whole process,” López recalled, pointing out that they had to learn how to design layout, prepare images, and even how to type. These were skills none of the YLO members initially had. As well, lacking supplies and office space, YLO activists often relied upon the material resources of others, which complicated and slowed their efforts. “In the final product,” he continued, “you can see that it was a struggle.” Yet he proudly spoke of the “grassroots” nature of the project. Describing the completion of each issue as “like giving birth,” López stressed that from the very beginning they wanted to have the membership participate in crafting the newspapers. “The cadre was all street, young men and women who weren’t very good at academics, but nevertheless had something to say,” López remembered. “When we decided to do a newspaper, we never envisioned this journalistic vehicle. But it was something that we needed to put out.”⁴⁵

In addition to publishing a newspaper, the YLO followed the lead of the BPP through the development of a number of community service programs that operated out of the basement of the People’s Church. As the Illinois BPP spearheaded initiatives such

⁴⁴ Luis “Tony” Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013; Alfredo Matias, interview, September 29, 1995.

⁴⁵ Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

as a free breakfast for children program and a free community health clinic on the city's West Side, the YLO followed suit by creating similar programs in Lincoln Park. In addition to starting its own free breakfast for children program and free health clinic, the YLO also began operating a free community daycare center. As they did to the BPP and Black Chicago gangs, city authorities used a variety of means to force the closure of the YLO's community service programs.⁴⁶

“Rainbow Radicalism”

As Fred Hampton and other BPP members grew closer with YLO leaders in early 1969, a BPP field marshal named Robert “Bob” E. Lee began surreptitiously working with a group of white Appalachian migrant youth in Chicago's Uptown area. They were members of the Young Patriots Organization (YPO), a group that grew out of the earlier community organizing efforts of activists participating in a SDS sponsored project called Jobs or Income Now (JOIN). In the mid-1960s, JOIN activists engaged in anti-racist agitation among Uptown's poor white communities. They also organized a welfare union to fight for welfare rights, and provided direct services for Uptown's poor and working-class residents. The YPO was founded by a small group of poor whites that included former JOIN members Doug Youngblood and Junebug Boykin. It grew to include a number of southern born whites, such as Hy Thurman and Andy Keniston, among others. Despite the Confederate battle flag patches sewn on their jean jackets and berets, YPO members proclaimed themselves to stand against racism. After several meetings with the YPO, Bob Lee reported his activities to Fred Hampton.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ “Revolutionaries Serve the People! Day Care Center,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; “You Can't Kill a Revolution,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; Alberto Chavira, “City Attacks Our Health Center,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

⁴⁷ Amy Sonne and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power* (Melville House Publishing: Brooklyn, 2011), 66-77.

While Hampton supported an alliance with the YPO, there was some initial resistance from other BPP members. Understandably, several BPP members questioned the YPO's use of the Confederate flag, and they wondered what joining forces with these self-proclaimed "hillbillies" really meant for their movement. YLO members also debated the idea of allying with the YPO, discussing the issue at length before deciding to move forward with a partnership. In early June 1969 the BPP, the YLO, and the YPO announced the joining together of all three groups in an alliance called the Rainbow Coalition, a term reportedly coined by Hampton. As a result of this coalition, leaders and activists from each group repeatedly reached out to each other's communities and joined each other's protest actions. However, the Rainbow Coalition also led some BPP members to quit the organization in protest. "Some didn't like the Patriots; some just didn't like white people in general," Robert Lee later said. "To tell the truth, it was a necessary purging."⁴⁸

Despite some internal dissent within each group, the Rainbow Coalition was generally a success, as it brought poor and working-class white, Black, and Latino youth together for a variety of marches, demonstrations, and political education classes. Members of the YLO, the BPP, and the YPO provided security for each other's leaders at public events. As well, the groups distributed thousands of free meals through its Rainbow Food Program. The Rainbow Coalition also had a profound impact beyond the material support it provided for poor and working-class people in Chicago, as it demonstrated the revolutionary potential of cross-racial working-class alliances. In the words of Robert Lee, "the Rainbow Coalition was just a code word for class struggle."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Amy Sonne and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists*, 76-80; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 190.

⁴⁹ Amy Sonne and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists*, 80-83; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 190.

The YLO also worked outside of the Rainbow Coalition during this time to connect with a variety of movement organizations both locally and around the country. In July 1969, for example, delegates from both the YPO and the YLO traveled together to Oakland to attend the BPP sponsored United Front Against Fascism Conference. There they joined two thousand others (among them Asian Americans, American Indians, Chicano farmworkers, and SDS members) at a three day conference aimed at addressing continued terroristic attacks by police and federal forces against working-class communities and leftwing movements. Many of these same groups joined together more than a year later, meeting in both Philadelphia and Washington D.C. as the BPP worked to assemble a Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention. The purpose of these meetings was in part to draft a document that would serve as a common platform to bring together oppressed working-class communities of all races and ethnicities, and serve as a guideline for their various revolutionary organizations. The YLO publicized the upcoming first meeting of the United Front Against Fascism Conference in the summer of 1970 in the last issue of its newspaper—now renamed *Pitirre*. A center-spread collage of images and slogans celebrating Cuban, Puerto Rican, Black, Asian American, American Indian, and white activists surrounded text with information about the convention's purpose (see Figure 16). Among these slogans was the phrase "Rising Up Angry!" An explanation of the phrase can be found at the end of the newspaper. "Have you heard of Rising Up Angry?" a text box on the final page of *Pitirre* asks. "These brothers and sisters are ANGRY and working to make the dream of revolution a reality." Urging readers to subscribe to the group's newspaper, the column explained that Rising Up Angry was an organization of "Greasers" (white working-class youth) who were

“‘dedicated to building a new man, a new woman and a new world’ and are trying to reach those brothers and sisters who cannot relate to the black or brown movement, but nevertheless, are also our brothers in oppression.”⁵⁰

The YLO also worked during this time with Black and Latino street groups in Chicago.⁵¹ In September 1969, for example, YLO members joined with SACC, a number of Latino church groups, the Latin Kings (arguably the largest Latin street group in Chicago at the time), and twelve smaller street groups to form the United Puerto Rican Coalition (UPRC). The UPRC was organized in response to the shooting of a Puerto Rican high school student by a Chicago police officer. A week after the shooting, the UPRC held a protest march to “Pig Daley’s office” (see Figure 17). As the YLO newspaper reported:

The march was significant in that the barriers between the youth clubs were broken and they were all aware that YLO was with them, struggling against the conservative adults, discussing ideas, urging them to take leadership. The Latin Kings Militant Unit had led the march for the first time appearing in full uniform, marching in formation behind the flag of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement...Whether the United Puerto Rican Coalition is the answer is not important. But laying down the basis of another united youth force against the ruling class is. Right On!⁵²

Repression and Retrenchment in the BPP and YLO

Like the BPP and Black gangs, the YLO also suffered from severe state repression in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jiménez later described getting arrested as “a way of life.” In addition to almost daily harassment from the police, YLO leaders were under constant surveillance. Jiménez later recalled that police officers sat in cars parked

⁵⁰ Amy Sonne and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists*, 1-4; “Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970; “Rising Up Angry,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

⁵¹ In April 1969, for example, Jiménez spoke at an event that also featured Bobby Seale and representatives from the YPO, SDS, and the Disciples. Alluding to their historical feud with the Blackstone Rangers, the Disciples representative said: “We know we’re ready for revolution, because we’ve been out here fighting some of the best fighters in the world.” “Panther Rally,” *Y.L.O.*, May 1969.

⁵² “El Barrio Esta Despierto,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall 1969.

twenty four hours a day in front of the People's Church. "I mean they would change shifts there in front of our church," he laughed in an interview. He also recounted that in 1969 he began to receive daily anonymous envelopes in the mail containing pornographic homosexual images. On the morning of December 4, 1969, at nearly the same time that Chicago police were executing Fred Hampton in his West Side apartment, an attempt was made to firebomb the People's Church in Lincoln Park. The YLO newspaper reported that, "This racist attempt against the Puerto Rican community failed nevertheless because some brothers that were passing by saw the flames near the rear entrance and quickly put them out." Jiménez also later characterized the influx of heroin and other drugs into Lincoln Park in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a form of repression against the Young Lords movement. "There was substance abuse just starting," he remembered, "but the police were arresting people. And all of a sudden when the Young Lords became political, they stopped arresting them. They wanted the drugs to be in the neighborhood...They flooded it, and there was an open air drug market in the next block. And so that affected our work."⁵³

With drugs pervading the neighborhood, Jiménez facing an extended jail sentence, and Puerto Ricans continuing to be displaced from Lincoln Park (as is discussed in Chapter Four), a major portion of the group's leadership decided to take the organization "underground" in late 1970. Spending most of the next two years on a farm near Tomah, Wisconsin, a small group of young self-styled revolutionaries engaged in training and study. "Basically, from early in the morning until late at night they studied," Jiménez later remembered of the training school's participants. "They read everything

⁵³ "Hands Off Cha Cha and the YLO," *Y.L.O.*, January 1970; José Jiménez interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

they could on the woman question and the national question,” among other topics. As they worked to sharpen their Marxist-Leninist analysis, they also remained in contact with the BPP, which had begun a process of retrenchment under a Maoist influenced concept of consolidating and building a revolutionary base in the Bay Area. In late 1972 YLO leaders made the decision to come out of hiding and resume above ground organizing. “It was decided that I would turn myself in,” Jiménez remembered, “and they would use that as a way to build the organization.” While Jiménez served nine months in jail, the YLO began the process of building a new base among Puerto Ricans in Chicago’s Lakeview and Uptown areas. It was towards that end that Jiménez twice ran as a candidate for alderman in Chicago, while BPP Chairman Bobby Seale simultaneously ran for mayor of Oakland.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The protest activities, political organizing, and community service of Black street groups and the BPP informed and inspired the YLO during its development as a political organization in the late 1960s. In particular it was the political philosophy and organizing model of the BPP—which celebrated and validated the revolutionary potential of urban *lumpenproletariat* gang members—that played a central role in the development of the YLO. As it grew in 1969, the YLO adopted the rhetoric, ideology, organizational structure, and major activities of the BPP. YLO leaders continued to look to the BPP for direction, even after going “underground” in late 1970. As influenced as they were by the BPP, however, it was the existential threat that urban renewal posed to their communities in Lincoln Park that motivated many YLO members into action. As is discussed in the

⁵⁴ José Jiménez, interviewed By Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014; Angie Navedo-Rizzo, interviewed by Johanna Fernandez.

next chapter, stopping urban renewal came to serve as one of the group's primary objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR: A RIGHT TO THE CITY

Introduction

A small crowd gathered near the bustling corner of North Dayton Street and West Armitage Avenue in Chicago's Lincoln Park community area on September 23, 2013. This was one of the last stops on a "historic walking tour" organized both to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the YLO and also to honor the lives and memories of fallen comrades. Dusk set in as the assembled spectators stood before an empty lot where until recently had stood a historic church building. The empty lot was soon to be developed into a Walgreens. Used by a variety of congregations over the years, for a few short years beginning in mid-1969 this facility was known as The People's Church and served as the heart of the Young Lords movement in Lincoln Park (see Figure 2).¹

Former YLO Chairman José "Cha Cha" Jiménez stood before the fenced-off lot. His soft-spoken voice amplified by a megaphone, Jiménez recounted the extensive community service work that took place inside the People's Church. "Most of the buildings all around here had Latinos that lived there, or poor working-class people," he said, gesturing toward the surrounding neighborhood, "and this was their church, this was their symbol. A lot of churches are dying. That church was very vibrant at that time." This had not been the case before the YLO took over the site. Faced with a declining membership and lack of operating funds, the Armitage Avenue Methodist Church had for years rented out its basement space to the city government. At this location the city operated an Urban Progress Center, a place for Lincoln Park's poor and working-class

¹ José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

people to obtain food stamps and other forms of public assistance. At some point (likely in 1967) the city government moved this center west into the Humboldt Park area.

Jiménez later characterized this move as part of the effort to push Puerto Ricans out of Lincoln Park. “[Puerto Ricans] hadn’t moved yet,” he explained in an interview, laughing, “but [city leaders] thought they’d have to move, because Puerto Ricans would follow the food stamps.”²

“This neighborhood has not seen this type of people here,” Jiménez explained to the mix of people participating in the 2013 historical walking tour, “so tomorrow they’re going to talk about it.” He was referring both to the diverse crowd of activists assembled before him, as well as to the dramatic demographic changes that had taken place in Lincoln Park over the previous decades. Largely as a result of urban renewal projects initiated in the 1960s, Lincoln Park’s poor and working-class Latino residents had been mostly forced out of the area and replaced by affluent whites. “This is what you call neo-segregation,” Jiménez concluded, stating bluntly, “there are no more poor people living in Lincoln Park.”³

The transformation of Lincoln Park’s working-class neighborhoods into upscale commercial and residential areas did not come without resistance. White activists from progressive churches initially began organizing against urban renewal in Lincoln Park in the mid-1960s, once the destructive effects of initial projects in the area first became apparent. In 1969 the YLO joined together with these white activists and a variety of other community organizations to form a multi-racial alliance known as the Poor People’s Coalition (PPC). From early 1969 until late 1970, activists in the PPC waged a

² José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

³ José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

brief but significant struggle to defend their communities against the displacement of Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and poor whites. Their voices essentially shut out of the official decision making process, PPC activists resorted to a variety of alternative means to exert pressure on decision makers—including a week-long building occupation, the creation of a tent-city, and the crafting of a cooperative public housing proposal.⁴

The struggle against urban renewal helped to define the YLO and became one of the driving causes of the Young Lords movement. Chapters Two and Three of this thesis have shown that YLO activists were shaped by their experiences of colonization, inspired by Black Power activism, and guided by the leadership of the BPP. Yet it was the existential threat that urban renewal posed to their communities in Lincoln Park that motivated many YLO participants into action. As YLO leader Angela “Angie” Rizzo later explained, “The housing issue really made us become a political organization...It was survival.”⁵

Urban Renewal Reshapes Chicago

Broadly speaking, the term “urban renewal” in the US generally refers to efforts from the 1940s through the 1970s to renovate and replace decaying housing stock in urban areas with the help of public funds. In Illinois these efforts began after the state legislature passed the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporations Act in 1941 (amended in 1953). This and subsequent state legislation (e.g. the Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act of 1947, the Relocation Act of 1947, and the Urban Community Conservation Act of 1953) allowed community groups to initiate renewal plans. These laws also expanded the

⁴ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; Patricia Devine-Reed, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

⁵ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 193.

ability of municipalities to seize property under eminent domain rules. City leaders were also able to access federal funds for these projects following the passage of federal urban renewal legislation such as the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954.⁶

Much of the impetus driving urban renewal projects in Chicago had to do with a desire to replace the dilapidated and decaying housing stock (characterized as “blighted”) found in large parts of the city. Much of this substandard housing existed in densely populated areas in the city’s South and West sides. Urban renewal projects often led to the demolition of entire city blocks. Rows of so-called blighted tenements were replaced by new developments, transforming formerly poor and working-class neighborhoods into upscale commercial, institutional, and residential areas. In essence, urban renewal projects helped shape and maintain housing segregation in Chicago along racial, ethnic, and class lines. Urban renewal was also used as a tool by educational institutions—such as the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago—to shape campus expansion and to control the partial racial integration of areas surrounding their campuses during the 1950s and 1960s. While urban renewal legislation ostensibly provided assistance for the relocation of displaced poor and working-class people, quality housing remained mostly inaccessible to these populations. This was true even after the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) began to construct large public housing developments. As the city’s Urban League noted, the razing of “blighted” zones only worsened “the already intolerable overcrowding” in Chicago’s Black neighborhoods.⁷

⁶ Arnold R. Hirsch, “Urban Renewal,” *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1295.html>; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 97.

⁷ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 97-99; Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); Amanda I. Seligman, *Block By Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago’s West Side*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Arnold R. Hirsch, “Urban Renewal,” *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1295.html>.

Puerto Rican Displacement from “La Madison” and “La Clark”

Among Chicago’s early Puerto Rican neighborhoods were those that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s in parts of the city’s Near West Side and Near North Side.

Unofficially known to their Latino residents as “La Madison” and “La Clark,” Puerto Ricans were systematically displaced from these areas in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Driven from their homes, large numbers of Puerto Ricans then began resettling further west into Wicker Park and Humboldt Park and north into Lincoln Park, Uptown, and Lakeview.⁸

La Madison was located in the city’s Near West Side community area image (see Figure 18). The Near West Side as a whole was ethnically diverse at this time, housing large numbers of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Irish, and Italian residents. Yet these populations resided in highly segregated enclaves. José Jiménez later remembered that his family would travel from the Puerto Rican Near North Side to the Mexican section of the Near West Side to attend the St. Francis of Assisi Church, one of the earliest churches in the city to offer Spanish language mass. North of this area, the Puerto Rican La Madison neighborhood stretched west along Madison Street from Halsted Street to Kedzie Street.⁹

The displacement of Puerto Ricans from La Madison began in the 1950s with the construction and expansion of three federal expressways that converged in the Near West Side. Completed in 1955, the expansion of the Congress Street Expressway (later

⁸ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 64, 99-129; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*”: *A Biographical History of Jose Cha Cha Jimenez, General Secretary of the Young Lords Organization*, (Chicago: Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, 1973), 3-4; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

⁹ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 64, 99-129; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*,” 3-4; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

renamed the Eisenhower Expressway) removed sixteen thousand families from their homes. The North (Kennedy) Expressway opened in 1955, and the South (Dan Ryan) Expressway opened in 1961-62, further adding to the displacement of residents. The construction of a new campus for the University of Illinois at Chicago in the early 1960s also led to the massive removal of Latinos (especially Mexicans) from the Near West Side. During this time, large numbers of displaced Mexican families moved south into the nearby Pilsen neighborhood in the Lower West Side community area. Meanwhile, the majority of Puerto Rican families moved to either the Near North Side or west into Wicker Park and Humboldt Park. There they joined thousands of new Puerto Rican migrants who were also settling in those areas.¹⁰

Large numbers of Puerto Ricans began moving to the Near North Side in the late 1940s and early 1950s (see Figure 18). While the eastern portion of the area (known as the Gold Coast) contained some of Chicago's wealthiest residents, Puerto Ricans settled further west near more industrial sections of the Near North Side. There they lived in some of the most dilapidated, crowded, and least expensive housing units in the city. By the mid-1950s, a Puerto Rican neighborhood known as La Clark had developed that spread west several blocks from North Clark Street between West Ohio Street and North Avenue. When Jiménez and his family first arrived in Chicago in 1951, they moved into a run-down hotel that had been converted into a tenement. Known as the Water Hotel, this building was located in the heart of what was becoming La Clark, at the corner of West Superior Street and North La Salle Drive (see Figure 18). While they were among

¹⁰ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 64, 99-129; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "*Que Viva El Pueblo*," 3-4; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

the first Puerto Ricans in the building when they arrived, they were soon joined by other migrants from their home village of San Salvador, Puerto Rico.¹¹

While city and business leaders first started making plans for the “renewal” of the Near North Side in the 1940s, it was not until the 1950s that large scale redevelopment began. One of the most ambitious renewal projects in the area called for the demolition of four square blocks of tenement buildings (nearly thirty-four acres), north from Division Street to North Avenue, and west from Clark Street to La Salle Street. Thousands of working-class Puerto Ricans, Appalachians, and Blacks were removed from the area to make room for a new middle- to upper-income residential development known as Carl Sandburg Village (see Figure 18). This development consisted of thirteen hundred new units (the first of which opened in April 1963) housed in a series of fourteen-story towers, alongside a number of new high-end commercial spaces. Together with other nearby developments, a total of 2,400 luxury apartments were soon erected in the area.¹²

Meanwhile, the CHA oversaw the expansion of public housing in the Near North Side. Opened in 1958, for example, a massive expansion of the Frances Cabrini housing projects resulted in the construction of fifteen high-rise buildings that contained over nineteen hundred apartments. As well, the William Green Homes opened three years later contained eleven hundred units. Contrasting sharply with the luxury apartments of the Carl Sandburg Village, the overcrowded Cabrini-Green projects (as these facilities became collectively known) suffered from a variety of maintenance problems stemming from shoddy construction (see Figure 18). Monse Lucas-Figueroa, whose family moved

¹¹ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 135-136; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*”, 3-4; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

¹² Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 139-144; “Carl Sandburg Village Gets First Tenants,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 20, 1963.

into Cabrini-Green after being forced from their home by the construction of the Carl Sandburg Village, later described the difficult living conditions they endured there: “It was a very sad thing. They stuck everybody in a hole.”¹³

Most Puerto Ricans in the area found themselves pushed north or west as their homes were razed block by block. Some families were able to secure spots in public housing developments, yet most were left to find new housing on their own. By 1956, Jiménez and his family had been forced to relocate a total of nine times. Drifting two or three blocks northward with each move, they eventually made their way into Lincoln Park.¹⁴

Urban Renewal Comes to Lincoln Park

The first steps toward transforming Lincoln Park were taken in the early 1950s when property owners in the wealthier eastern sections of the area (e.g. Old Town and Mid North) began coordinating renovation efforts through their neighborhood associations. In 1954, members of several Lincoln Park area neighborhood associations joined together to establish the Lincoln Park Conservation Association (LPCA). The LPCA ultimately sought to use state and federal urban renewal funds to remove large tracts of run-down tenement buildings and replace them with moderate- to upper-income housing or commercial space. In the process, poor and working-class people who lived in the area would be forced to leave.¹⁵

¹³ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 139-144.

¹⁴ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 138-142; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, “*Que Viva El Pueblo*”, 3-4; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

¹⁵ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 178; Department of Urban Renewal - City of Chicago, *Lincoln Park Project One: Preliminary Proposal*, 1964 (3), Digital Collections, DePaul University archives, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lpnc6/id/771/rec/6>; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

In 1956, the city's Community Conservation Board—the predecessor of the Department of Urban Renewal (DUR) — designated Lincoln Park as a “conservation area,” and thus eligible for the public funding of large urban renewal projects. As required by state law, the city then created a Conservation Community Council (CCC) with board members appointed by the mayor's office. While these bodies were in theory designed to facilitate community participation in the crafting and administration of urban renewal projects, anti-urban renewal activists would argue that the Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council (LPCCC) represented the interests of developers and wealthier property owners while ignoring the needs of poor and working-class residents. Beginning in 1959, members of the LPCA and LPCCC worked together to draft a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP) for Lincoln Park. Throughout the 1960s a significant number of LPCA leaders also sat on the board of the LPCCC, a fact that activists in the PPC would point to as deeply problematic.¹⁶

By early 1963 a broad framework had been agreed upon and the GNRP was approved by the DUR. The Lincoln Park GNRP called for four stages of urban renewal projects that were to be implemented over a period of ten years. During this time a number of designated “areas of blight” were to be targeted for demolition and redevelopment. Dilapidated tenement buildings housing large numbers of low-income residents were to be torn down and replaced by more modern buildings that would

¹⁶ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 179; Department of Urban Renewal - City of Chicago, *Lincoln Park Project One: Preliminary Proposal*, 1964 (4), Digital Collections, DePaul University archives, accessed December 16, 2013, <http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lpnc6/id/771/rec/6>; Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Meeting Minutes, May 14, 1969, Folder: Minutes, Organizational, Box 1, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University Archives, Chicago; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

contain much more costly commercial and residential spaces. By the mid-1960s the initial stages of this plan were well underway and its effects were becoming apparent.¹⁷

“There were some obvious changes that had started to take place in the neighborhood,” community activist and former Lincoln Park resident Patricia Devine-Reed (known during the 1960s as Patricia Devine) recounted in an interview conducted in 2012. As she explained, a number of area residents were taken by surprise in the mid-1960s when they began noticing the dramatic effects of urban renewal projects on the social and urban landscapes of their communities. “The eastern part of the neighborhood was growing more and more wealthy,” she recalled, “and many of the people who had lived there before no longer could afford to own their homes.” She also began noticing the demolition of several large tenement buildings on some of the main avenues. At first she was not alarmed, she explained, because “it wasn’t always clear what was happening.”¹⁸

Devine first learned of the full extent of Lincoln Park’s urban renewal plans in the winter of 1966-67 after becoming involved with a coalition of progressive church groups called the North Side Cooperative Ministry (NSCM). “The pastors of the churches had become very concerned about what was happening,” she remembered. They were bothered by the recent experiences of those who had been displaced from the Near West Side to make room for the construction of a new University of Illinois at Chicago campus. They were also worried that as Lincoln Park became more gentrified, the racially and ethnically diverse working-class residents that lived in the area would be forced to leave. From the perspective of leaders in the NSCM, Devine-Reed explained,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

urban renewal meant “development to the advantage of institutions and the city, and not to the large numbers of people that lived in the city.”¹⁹

A new organization called the Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park was formed in early 1967 to coordinate the efforts of progressive church activists who wanted to influence the shape of future renewal projects in the area. Devine became one of its principal organizers. To her dismay she found that challenging urban renewal would be much more difficult than she had initially imagined. “It became clear that Concerned Citizens and the churches were a little behind the eight-ball,” she later laughed. “The plan had pretty much already been set by the [LPCA] and the city of Chicago.” To Concerned Citizens activists, she explained, it was clear that the LPCA was “not representing all homeowners...not the working class.” From the perspective of Concerned Citizens activists, she continued, LPCA members were using urban renewal as a way to “upgrade the financial level of the community,” and “not as a way to improve housing for the people living there.”²⁰

According to Devine-Reed, Concerned Citizens activists hoped to represent “the common people who were not being represented by the [LPCA].” To aid these efforts the group began publishing *The Lincoln Park Press*, a bilingual monthly newspaper featuring articles written by local community members. Concerned Citizens organizers also mobilized working-class residents to speak out against urban renewal projects. “For each [LPCCC] meeting,” Devine-Reed recalled, “we would organize residents to attend whose living circumstances were being considered,” especially those whose homes faced imminent demolition. By bringing poor and working-class families into the hearing

¹⁹ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; “Neighborhood Program of Concerned Citizens Survival Front,” *The Lincoln Park Press*, March 1969.

²⁰ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

rooms, Concerned Citizens organizers hoped to confront LPCCC board members with the consequences of their plans. They also hoped to push LPCCC leaders to consider alternatives. “We were organizing tenants to come and speak for themselves about improving that property rather than demolishing it,” Devine-Reed said. “We were not opposed to houses being upgraded...[but] we wanted the neighborhood to be upgraded for the people who lived here.”²¹

It was in 1968, while organizing tenants for one of these meetings, that Devine and fellow Concerned Citizens organizer Richard Vission first met members of the Young Lords. “We were making posters out on the sidewalks...out in front of the buildings,” Devine-Reed remembered, “and there were these young guys who were hanging at a hot dog stand on the corner...I met a young man named ‘Cha Cha’ Jiménez—he was very sharp, very bright—and he challenged what we were saying.” While curious about the efforts of the Concerned Citizens, Jiménez was cautiously skeptical about working with area residents. Devine-Reed remembered saying to him, “people in the buildings want you to help them, but they’re afraid of you. And you’re afraid of them, because as you say, they don’t want you on the corner. You need to join together.”²²

The YLO Joins the Fight against Urban Renewal

In early 1969 both the Young Lords and Concerned Citizens were developing in significant ways. The Young Lords street group had transformed into the Young Lords

²¹ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park, *An Action Platform for Lincoln Park*, 1967, Folder: Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park, Organizational, Box 3, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University, Chicago; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

²² Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; Patricia Devine-Reed, *Young Lords Historic Walking Tour*, September 23, 2013.

Organization (YLO), and its members were becoming immersed in the struggle against urban renewal in Lincoln Park. YLO leaders had become convinced that the only way to secure self-determination for Chicago's Puerto Rican communities was to fight against their continued displacement. As the Young Lords movement grew over the next two years, YLO members continued to be shaped by the struggle against urban renewal in Lincoln Park. The Concerned Citizens, meanwhile, had embraced more militant tactics in defense of poor and working-class people. In March 1969 the group's name was changed to the Concerned Citizens Survival Front of Lincoln Park. An announcement of the name change was printed on the front page of the group's newspaper stating "We Stand for Power to the People!" Through their cooperative efforts these two groups seem to have profoundly affected each other. As Concerned Citizens organizers helped provide the YLO with a local focus for its rebellion, the YLO invigorated and helped radicalize the resistance movement in Lincoln Park.²³

For YLO activists, the struggle against urban renewal personally affected their lives. Having previously been displaced from Puerto Rican neighborhoods such as La Madison and La Clark, many YLO members were facing similar experiences in Lincoln Park. Monse Lucas-Figueroa, for example, was a high school student who volunteered at the YLO free health clinic. Her family had previously been forced from their home in La Clark by construction of the Carl Sandburg Village. After a brief stay in the Cabrini-Green public housing projects, they settled near North Avenue on the southern edge of Lincoln Park. Urban renewal followed closely behind. "It was everywhere, they were tearing buildings down," she later remembered. When condos were erected to replace

²³ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10; "Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park Has a New Name!," *The Lincoln Park Press*, March 1969; "Neighborhood Program," *The Lincoln Park Press*, March 1969.

these structures, “[they] were not intended for the people that were living there for years.” Sometimes residents were forced out of apartments that were slated to undergo extensive renovations. Often when the repairs were completed, however, previous tenants were unable to return. As Lucas-Figueroa recalled, “you were paying [so much] for rent, here comes this guy, he renovates your apartment. Now he wants to charge [double]!” José Jiménez’ family had also been displaced from La Clark after having been forced to move a number of times as a result of urban renewal. The family faced similar challenges after having relocated to Lincoln Park. Eugenia Rodriguez, José Jiménez’ mother, later remembered having her rent increased from \$140 a month to \$300 a month after developers had renovated surrounding buildings.²⁴

When Jiménez attended his first LPCCC meeting in late 1968—he had been invited by Patricia Devine and Richard—he was shocked by what he saw as a lack of community involvement and minority representation in the process. “I didn’t see a black face, nor a Puerto Rican face, not even a poor white’s face in the whole meeting for the community who wanted to come and see what was going on,” he later wrote in the YLO newspaper. “The decision making board who sat in front of everyone else were all property owners and middle class,” he continued. “I asked why there was no one from the community, and they said it was hard to get anyone to come...I told Dick Vision [*sic*] and Pat Devine to find out when the next meeting was and I would get some people to come.”²⁵

While urban renewal was seen as a threat by many Puerto Ricans in Lincoln Park, Jiménez initially found it difficult to enlist others to join him. He wrote:

²⁴ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 184, 196.

²⁵ “Urban Renewal Case,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

It was hard getting people interested. Everybody knew they were being pushed out of the community but they felt they couldn't do anything about it because they would lose their welfare check, and the youth just wanted to get "high." I felt almost like giving up but after knowing that my family had been pushed out four times already and they seemed to be getting pushed out again, I continued.²⁶

Despite facing some initial resistance, Jiménez was able to recruit dozens of youth to join him at a January 1969 LPCCC meeting. It was at this meeting where YLO members mounted their first public protest against urban renewal. As they entered the lobby of the DUR's Lincoln Park office (see Figure 2), YLO activists saw a model display of Lincoln Park featuring mostly empty spaces in the Latino sections. Jiménez later wrote, "all of us started saying 'look at my block, there is no building on it.'" After reflecting for a moment about what this meant for their families, the young people entered the meeting. Tensions were running high, and at some point the room exploded. Jiménez later wrote about the scene:

That's when everything started, chairs flying all over the place, washrooms overflowing with soap and toilet paper all over the commodes and water running down the main hall. The neighborhood display was turned over and broken and all the front windows of the place were gone. No one got arrested, it was too fast. I was arrested later, about a week later.²⁷

Before leaving the meeting, YLO activists threatened that the LPCCC would not be allowed to meet again until it included greater representation from poor residents.²⁸

YLO members definitely made an impression through their actions. As Devine-Reed later jokingly recalled, the destruction of the DUR office was "something that all the 'civilized' people were very surprised at." The strength of these actions she insisted, was that "it woke folks up," and served as a warning that poor and working-class people

²⁶ "Urban Renewal Case," *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

²⁷ "Urban Renewal Case," *Pitirre*, Summer 1970; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; Luis "Tony" Baez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

in Lincoln Park were no longer “going to let somebody else speak for them and plan their lives for them.” Devine-Reed ultimately credited this event with infusing much needed energy into the movement. “We had been demonstrating very nicely [up to that point], and everybody acted very proper because the churches were behind the opposition movement,” she remembered. “Now we had these young people, and their whole style of operating was much different than the churches.” While their approach was perhaps abrasive and shocking to some, Devine-Reed recalled that most church activists welcomed the participation of the YLO.²⁹

The actions of the YLO also got the attention of city leaders and LPCCC board members who scrambled to find a solution to the crisis. One of the YLO’s principal complaints that night was that the urban renewal planning process lacked adequate representation from poor and minority voices. This problem was exacerbated by the resignation of Felix Silva from the LPCCC board. On February 20, 1969, Silva wrote in an open letter (published in the YLO newspaper): “Personally, I too feel that there is not adequate representation of the poor in the Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council.” Noting that he was “the only Latin” on a “board of 15 members,” Silva concluded: “I cannot in conscience, be a part of what my people feel to be a conspiracy against them.” At its subsequent meeting (attended by YLO members as well as twelve Chicago police officers) the LPCCC unanimously passed a resolution asking Mayor Daley to appoint additional members to the board to “give the Council broader ethnic and

²⁹ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012.

economic representation.” This resolution pledged that “the Council would not meet again until such appointments were made.”³⁰

These events also helped to ignite the Young Lords movement. Over the next two years the YLO continued to fight against the displacement of their community. In some ways this issue came to define the Young Lords movement for its participants and supporters in Lincoln Park. In addition to the group’s community service work in the People’s Church, much of the YLO’s local organizing efforts from 1969 to 1971 focused on combating urban renewal. By engaging in a variety of organizing activities, YLO members raised awareness about the displacement of poor and working-class residents from Lincoln Park and drew other community members into the struggle. Through countless direct action protests, YLO activists struggled to claim a place in the city. By demanding the power to control the development of their neighborhoods and communities, they were fighting for their “right to the city” (discussed in Chapter One). In doing so, these young people worked towards making the self-determination of Puerto Ricans in Chicago a reality.

In early 1969 the YLO formalized its partnership with the Concerned Citizens by forming the Poor People’s Coalition (PPC). The PPC also included a diverse mix of other organizations, including Black Active and Determined (BAD), which was formed by residents from the Cabrini-Green housing projects; the Latin American Defense Organization (LADO); the Welfare and Working Mothers of Wicker Park, a group that worked extensively with LADO; and the Young Patriots Organization (YPO), consisting

³⁰ Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Minutes, February 25, 1969, Folder: Minutes, Organizational, Box 1, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University Archives, Chicago; “Latin Resigns from C.C.C.,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969; “YLO Visits Urban Renewal,” *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969.

of mostly white Appalachian migrant youth living in the Uptown neighborhood. From early 1969 until late 1970, these various groups coordinated many of their anti-urban renewal activities under the banner of the PPC.³¹

Perhaps the boldest action organized through the PPC was the takeover and nearly week-long occupation of the main administration building on the McCormick Theological Seminary campus, located just a few blocks to the north of the People's Church (see Figure 2).³² The occupation began just before midnight on Wednesday, May 14th, 1969, when roughly a dozen activists set out from the Concerned Citizens offices and walked three blocks to the McCormick campus. After forcing entry into the main administration building, they secured the doors shut with bicycle chains and padlocks. Hanging a banner from a second floor landing, they renamed this building after Manuel Ramos, the YLO member who had been killed just over a week earlier (see Figure 19 and Figure 20). Significant public pressure, along with a threat by the YLO to burn down the McCormick library, finally forced McCormick leaders to negotiate a settlement after five days of occupation. In the end the McCormick administrators met almost all of the PPC's demands; they pledged nearly \$700,000 (and institutional support) for the creation of a low-income housing development, a children's center, and a Puerto Rican cultural center.³³

³¹ "McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, May 1969, 4; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 191.

³² As of 2013 this building had become part of DePaul University and was slated for demolition.

³³ It is unclear how much of the money pledged by McCormick leaders was actually delivered. In the fall of 1969 the YLO claimed in their newspaper that "McCormick still wasn't coming through." The YLO was also upset that McCormick leaders expected to make a profit off of the low-income housing they created. "We should use our strength to educate McCormick: teach them that when you destroy people's housing you don't expect a profit from these people when they rebuild their homes."; "It Was a Circus," *Y.L.O.*, Fall 1969; "McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, May 1969, 4; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José

More than four decades later, Jiménez stood before that same building, addressing the spectators gathered at the last stop of the 2013 historic walking tour. Dimly lit by a streetlamp, he spoke of the support that PPC activists received from McCormick students and community members. He made particular note of the contributions of women from the Latino community who brought their children to the occupation after hearing rumors that the police planned to raid the facility. “We didn’t ask them to do that,” Jiménez told the crowd, “but it prevented the police from entering the building.” Many of these women, Jiménez explained, stayed for extended periods of time throughout the week to participate in a variety of cultural events hosted inside. Among the organizers of these women was Angie Rizzo, who would later help form Mothers and Others (MAO), a separate women’s caucus within the YLO.³⁴

The YLO reported in the May 1969 issue of their newspaper that the PPC chose to target McCormick because of its role in instigating and supporting “an urban renewal program in the community which is designed to remove poor people and replace them with middle and upper income residents.” YLO activists had said the same thing about other nearby institutions—including DePaul University and the Children’s Memorial Hospital, both of which were larger and more powerful than McCormick and were using urban renewal to expand their campuses. As Devine-Reed and Jiménez later explained, the decision to occupy McCormick and not these other institutions was strategic. PPC activists reasoned that McCormick’s avowed social mission and numerous institutional connections with progressive church communities would make its leaders more

Jiménez, February 10, 2012; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 191.

³⁴ “McCormick Take-Over,” *Y.L.O.*, May 1969, 4.; Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 191; José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, June 13, 2014.

susceptible to public pressure (and less likely to use the police). By forcing McCormick to make concessions, PPC leaders also hoped to set a precedent that would aid them in future campaigns against larger institutions.³⁵

Throughout 1969 and 1970, YLO activists employed a number of other tactics (some more confrontational than others) to combat gentrification in Lincoln Park. For example, the YLO at times helped evicted residents to find empty apartments, many of which were undergoing renovation. After moving families into an empty apartment, YLO members would then inform the building's landlord about their new tenants. At times the YLO would even help pay the first month's rent. At some point in 1969 YLO activists participated in what Jiménez later described as an "organized riot." According to Jiménez, the group only targeted new businesses identified as playing a role in the efforts to gentrify Lincoln Park. "Everybody picked a window," Jiménez remembered, "and all the windows were knocked out." In part the limited scope of these actions was informed by criticisms that had arisen after the Division Street riots. "People were criticizing and saying that we were destroying our own neighborhoods," he continued, "but we wanted to make sure that we were disciplined, that people knew we were not destroying our own neighborhoods. But we wanted to make a point. We wanted to let them know that we were serious about not letting them move into our neighborhood."³⁶

Meanwhile, the various organizations involved in the PPC continued mobilizing residents to attend LPCCC meetings. Eventually the location of these meetings was moved to an auditorium in Lincoln Park's Waller High School (see Figure 2). This was done in order to accommodate the growing crowds of community residents that began

³⁵ Patricia Devine-Reed, interview by José Jiménez, February 10, 2012; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; "McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, May 1969.

³⁶ José Jiménez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

attending (and at times disrupting) LPCCC meetings. Several of these meetings were raucous affairs, which the addition of opposition members to the LPCCC board did nothing to quell. An LPCCC meeting on July 29, 1969 was particularly rowdy. Attended by some 500 people (including activists from the YLO, the BPP, the YPO, Concerned Citizens, the Welfare and Working Mothers of Wicker Park, and other groups), this meeting began with a verbal altercation between protestors and police, and ended in a confusing on-stage fracas. The LPCA newsletter later reported that for over an hour, “the stage and microphone were ‘occupied’ by members of several groups.” Richard Brown, a PPC supporter and newly appointed LPCCC board member, and Richard Colon, a member of the PPC allied Young Comancheros Organization, were both later arrested. Charged with “mob action and battery,” they were accused of attacking LPCCC chairman (and LPCA board member) Lyle Mayer, who reportedly had been knocked to the floor during a struggle for control of the microphone.³⁷

Immediately following this meeting, PPC leaders announced that they were planning to take over Urban Renewal Site 19 in order to create a “People’s Park.” At the time, the soon to be developed Site 19 consisted of an entire block of vacant lots located on the east side of North Halsted Street, between West Armitage Avenue and West Dickens Avenue. This block had previously been the site of several tenement buildings housing large numbers of Puerto Rican residents. By 1969, however, all of these buildings had been demolished to make room for new developments. In early 1969 it was

³⁷ (clipping) Urban Affairs Bureau, “Disrupter Given 5 Years’ Probation,” *Lerner Newspapers*, October 1969, Folder: Reactions to the Disruption at the July LPCCC Meeting, Box 1, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University Archives, Chicago; Diane Taylor, “Confrontation at LPCCC: Sequence of Events,” *LPCA News*, 1969, 3-5, Folder: Reactions to the Disruption at the July LPCCC Meeting, Box 1, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University Archives, Chicago.

announced that this site would become the location of a new private tennis club. The People's Park, which emerged on the site in early August 1969 as a protest against the planned tennis club, at first consisted of a massive tent city. Later, PPC activists installed a number of sculptures throughout the People's Park. As Patricia Devine-Reed later remembered, "[the sculptures] were actually here for about three years, and then the city came and mowed them all down to build other things."³⁸

During this time, PPC activists were also moving beyond simply opposing urban renewal projects, and were working to make their own vision of the city a reality. Using funds obtained as a result of the McCormick occupation, the PPC formed the People's Cooperative Housing Corporation (PCHC) during the summer of 1969. Designed as a non-profit organization controlled by PPC leaders, the PCHC soon hired a young architect named Howard Alan to draft plans for a cooperative housing facility for low-income residents. Alan's plans were submitted to the LPCCC in December 1969 as a bid proposal for urban renewal funding.³⁹

A seeming victory for the PPC, the LPCCC voted to recommend funding of the PCHC's cooperative low-income housing plan (over three other proposals for the same piece of land) at a meeting on January 14, 1970. Officials at the DUR had the final say in approving projects, however, and were unwilling to accede to public pressure (even from

³⁸ The tennis club was eventually built at another location, at the intersection of North Damen Avenue and West Fullerton Avenue on the western edge of Lincoln Park Diane Taylor, "Confrontation at LPCCC: Sequence of Events," *LPCA News*, 1969, 3-5, Folder: Reactions to the Disruption at the July LPCCC Meeting, Box 1, Lincoln Park Conservation Community Council Collection, DePaul University Archives, Chicago; Patricia Devine-Reed, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Patricia Devine-Reed, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013.

³⁹ José Jiménez, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Howard Alan, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Patricia Devine-Reed, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Pat Devine, "City Says No to Poor People's Housing," *The Lincoln Park Press*, February 1970; Cha Cha Jimenez Defence Committee, "Que Viva El Pueblo" 17.

the PPC's wealthy new benefactors). When the DUR signaled in early February that it would overrule the LPCCC's recommendation, McCormick president Arthur McKay met with Commissioner of Urban Renewal Lewis Hill in an unsuccessful bid to convince him to support the PCHC's proposal. Despite this appeal, at a chaotic public meeting held on February 11, 1970, the DUR Board of Urban Renewal rejected the PCHC's cooperative housing proposal in favor of a for-profit development. While this defeat did not the end their movement, it certainly deflated the hopes of PPC activists. It also portended the continued losses the movement would face. Within a year, the YLO would be severely crippled by state repression. Coupled with the continued displacement of working-class people from the area, the movement against urban renewal in Lincoln Park could not survive.⁴⁰

Requiem for the People's Church

Standing before the remains of the People's Church in 2013, Reverend Matthew Johnson raised the megaphone to his face as organizers of the historical walking tour passed out candles. He began by testifying to the character and conviction of his slain friends Reverend Bruce Johnson and Eugenia Johnson, who had supported the YLO's efforts in the People's Church: "When he met you, he'd look you in the eye and he'd say, 'where you do place yourself in the world?' Now, he placed himself with the poor and the oppressed, because he was convinced that God had a preference for the poor and the oppressed."⁴¹

"The day that Bruce and Genie's bodies were found," Johnson continued, "he was supposed to be down at the Daley Center at court, on some of the charges that were being

⁴⁰ Patricia Devine-Reed, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, Chicago, IL, September 23, 2013; Pat Devine, "City Says No to Poor People's Housing," *The Lincoln Park Press*, February 1970.

⁴¹ Matthew Johnson, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

made against the health care center and daycare center.” City building inspectors had earlier visited the People’s Church facilities and inspected the basement space that housed its community daycare program. Church leaders were threatened with fines and ordered to complete major renovations to bring the space up to code. The YLO responded in its newspaper, writing: “We were violations to the system the day we were born. The idea of poor people running and benefiting by their own day care center is a violation of city purpose and policy.” A year later the city Board of Health attempted to shut down the YLO’s free community health clinic, which also operated out of the People’s Church. YLO Minister of Health Alberto Chavira charged in the YLO newspaper: “This attempt to close down our health program is another example of how the fascist Daley machine responds to any program which truly serves and educates the people.”⁴²

The unsolved murders of Bruce and Eugenia Johnson, which occurred in September 1969, devastated church members and YLO activists. Still, YLO members and their supporters continued their work both inside and outside of the church. They faced another crisis at the end of the next year, however, when Jiménez and a number of YLO leaders went “underground” to avoid continued police repression. Jiménez was certainly no stranger to police harassment. Yet by late 1970 he was facing an extended prison sentence that had resulted from charges that he had stolen lumber from a Lincoln Park urban renewal site. YLO activists had hoped to use this lumber to complete renovations to the church basement that had been ordered by the city. Over the next two years, Jiménez was joined by a number of other YLO leaders in clandestine training on a farm

⁴² Matthew Johnson, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013; “You Can’t Kill a Revolution,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; “Revolutionaries Serve the People: Day Care Center,” *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969; Alberto Chavira, “City Attacks Our Health Center,” *Pitirre*, Summer 1970.

near Tomah, Wisconsin. Those leaders who remained in Lincoln Park soon found that they lacked the resources to effectively mobilize the movement's dwindling base.⁴³

By early 1971 the Young Lords movement was no longer a force in Lincoln Park, in large part because key YLO leaders had left the city. Nevertheless, a number of activists involved with the YLO and the People's Church's continued their service. "The daycare center continued for a while, the pantry continued for a while, and the feedings continued for a while," Matthew Johnson explained as people lit their candles. The displacement of poor and working-class residents in Lincoln Park also continued, undermining the need for these programs in Lincoln Park. Johnson concluded:

The covenant that the cadre [People's Church activists] had made with the Young Lords was to try to hold the church open and available for as long as possible. And they hung in there for four years. Early in 1973, they concluded that someday there will be a People's Church, somewhere, but it wasn't going to happen on this corner. And so they decided to sell the building... and they decided that it was time to die.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Urban renewal projects in the 1950s systematically displaced Puerto Ricans (including future YLO members) from Chicago's Near West Side and Near North Side. By the late 1960s urban renewal was reshaping Lincoln Park, and threatened to completely remove the area's low-income residents. At first, YLO members were reticent about joining the struggle against urban renewal. Yet throughout 1969 and 1970, anti-urban renewal activism shaped the group and became one of its driving causes. While ultimately unsuccessful in stopping gentrification in Lincoln Park, YLO activists made an

⁴³ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 201; "Cha Cha Busted: Charged With Burglary," *The Black Panther*, July 26, 1969, 19; Les Bridges, "Cha Cha Jimenez: The Gang Leader on the Lam is Now the Politician on the Stump," *The Reader*, February 7, 1975; Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013; Luis "Tony" Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013; Omar López, interviewed by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012; Jose Jimenez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, May 27, 2014.

⁴⁴ Matthew Johnson, Young Lords Historic Walking Tour, September 23, 2013.

important historical statement. They articulated a vision of community based on ideals of solidarity and mutual aid, contrasting sharply with the vision set forward by developers, city planners, and local politicians. Through both their community service work inside the People's Church, and their struggle against urban renewal in Lincoln Park, YLO activists asserted their "right to the city." As well, both the movement against urban renewal in Lincoln Park and the programs that operated out of the People's Church embodied the demand consistently articulated by YLO activists for the self-determination of Puerto Rican communities throughout the diaspora.

CONCLUSION

The Young Lords began as a street gang in the early 1960s. After a period of decline in the mid-1960s, the group was reorganized and reconstituted in late 1968. In the process it became a militant leftwing protest organization. This thesis has attempted to explain what elements most influenced and shaped YLO leaders during this transition. In doing so it has identified three major factors. First, this thesis has argued that a history of colonization and resistance to colonial subjugation shaped the group's nationalist politics. Secondly, this thesis has demonstrated the important role that local and national Civil Rights and Black Power activism played in defining the YLO's politics. Most important in this regard was the political philosophy and organizing model of the BPP. Thirdly, this thesis has demonstrated that the existential threat urban renewal posed to their communities in Lincoln Park played an important role in motivating YLO activists. Consequently, the fight against urban renewal became one of the group's driving causes. In making this argument, this thesis has also worked to draw connections between the gang activities of the early Young Lords social club and the activism of the politicized YLO, placing the work of each group within a broad spectrum of anti-colonial activity.

Other studies about the Young Lords movement have made similar arguments, and in that regard perhaps the analysis presented here is not altogether groundbreaking. Yet in the estimation of the author, this thesis represents the most detailed and comprehensive historical work yet produced on the development of the Chicago YLO. In many ways this is thanks to the wealth of oral history resources that become available over the last two years, and which will hopefully spur work on topics related to the Young Lords movement. Much more needs to be written about the YLO. The author

hopes, therefore, that the present study has laid the groundwork for future research, and provides inspiration for scholars interested in topics related to the Young Lords movement. Activists, intellectuals, and anyone interested in building a more just and equitable world have a lot to learn from studying this history. Historians, therefore, have a duty to contribute to a better understanding of this story.

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APPENDIX: FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Community Areas Mentioned in Text (map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online)

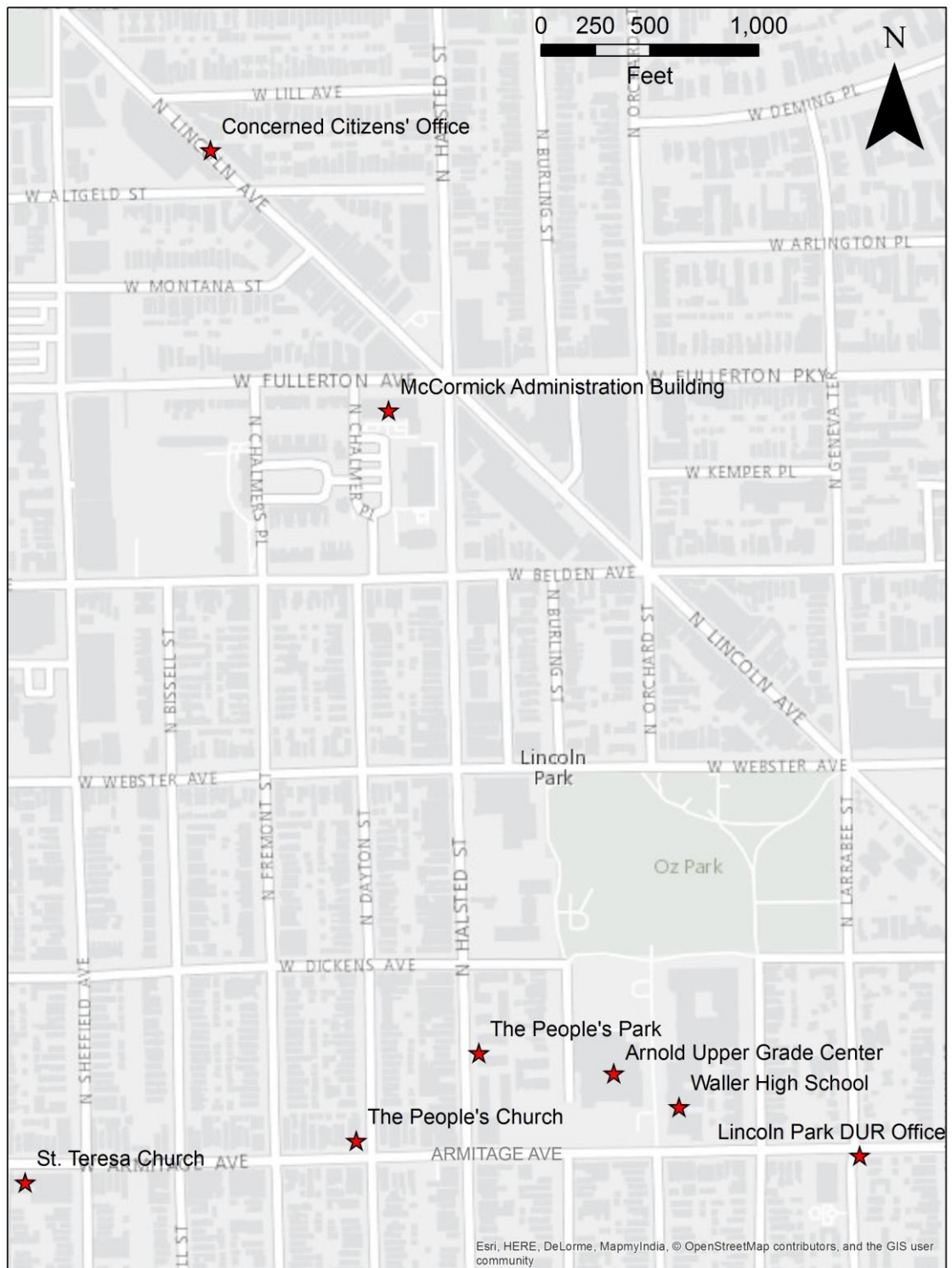


Figure 2: Points of Interest in Lincoln Park (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online)



Figure 3: Collage of photos from funeral and YLO marches held in honor of Manuel Ramos, printed in the second issue of the YLO newspaper. *Y.L.O.*, May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

You Can't Kill a

3

Two friends of the people, Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia, were assassinated late Sunday night (the 29th) or early Monday (the 30th of September). They were brutally stabbed to death in their home at 2038 N. Seminary.

The YLO mourns this tragic event. Bruce and Eugenia were friends and partners in the struggle to open up the day care center at the People's Church, where Bruce was pastor. Both Bruce and Eugenia supported and helped the work of the Lords. And in a sense, both were in the process of becoming revolutionaries. They had dedicated themselves to the struggles of the poor, especially poor Latins.

Since the Young Lords took over the church in June, the Johnsons worked to bring the people they knew to a clearer understanding of the historical and political significance of the church's relationship to the activities of the YLO. The church was renamed the People's Church, a new symbol of the cross bursting the chains of bondage was created, and a new creed appeared at the church door. It goes:

We have a dream. This Church, led by the community, confronting the powers which limit our destiny, keeping rulers responsible, assisting man to claim his destiny and celebrating in worship the birth of that power is our dream of a People's Church.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that each man is of worth as a special creation of God. And Christ's resurrection means that there is no power or establishment which can control a man who claims his own dignity.

This is your faith & your Church. Claim them both and join us in this dream.

Bruce and Jean knew they could only serve the people if they entered into the struggle. They knew that no easy reconciliation of the contradictions of our society was possible. They knew that for the church to speak to man's pains, it could not stand as a mere mediator between the forces in conflict. But that the church and its

ministers must become part of the forces fighting with the people. They knew this and they died knowing it. As YLO Chairman Cha Cha Jimenez eulogized, "Today, too many churchmen are static, like boats tied to the dock, going nowhere, doing nothing. We need people to cut themselves loose and go in search of new ideas, new freedoms, and new ways to get it. We need people who will move across the waters toward the sunlight of freedom, the new land in the sunlight. If people do that, if they ever arrive at the land of freedom and they look back across the water, they will see the bodies of Bruce and Jean Johnson near the land. They will see how close our two friends had come to freedom.

On the morning before the Johnsons were murdered, 10 Young Lords attended the worship service at the church. It was a clear sign of the bond between the Johnsons' dream and the work of the Young Lords. Though they are dead, the bond has not been broken. The people demonstrated this at the community meeting Monday night and the memorial celebration on Wednesday night.

On Monday night, the same day the Johnsons were found murdered, 500 community people came to the People's Church to plan a memorial service and the future of the day care center, and people discussed the meaning of the lives and deaths of the Johnsons. It was announced that the memorial service on Wednesday would in fact be a celebration of the Johnsons' lives—that people should come to celebrate.

The celebration began with a torchlight march through the community to gather the people to the church. 2,000 people came to hear Bishop Pryor, Jim Reed, Pat Devine and Cha Cha speak words of celebration. Balloons, songs, the kiss of peace—

the people all celebrated, saying:
The bread is rising**Bread means revolution**God means revolution**Murder is no revolution**Revolution is love**The radical Jesus is winning**The world is coming to a beginning**Organize for a new world**The liberated zone is at hand. RIGHT ON !

REVOLUTION



The members of the Young Lords Organization are deeply saddened by the murder of Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia on Sept. 28 in their home. In the time we have known them we have come to respect them greatly for their dedication to the oppressed people, to the Puerto Rican community and to our organization.

Rev. Johnson was the pastor of the Armitage Avenue Methodist Church (now Armitage Ave. People's Church) which the YLO used in order to make a reality of the demands of the Puerto Rican community for decent child care facilities. Instead of attacking us the way others in his position might have done, Rev. Johnson, his wife, and the Board of the Church knew our demands were justified and supported us all the way. They helped us greatly in our efforts to open a free day care center, and helped tell others of our needs and the correctness of our action.

In the face of pressure and threats, they stood up for what was right, and continued to defend us from attacks from the police, the alderman and other politicians, and to stop the attempts of building inspectors to close down the child care center. In the past months Rev. Johnson often went to court, at least once a week, about legal "violations." The city had threatened to sue him \$200/day for the "violations."

This brutal murder of Bruce & Eugenia Johnson is meant as a warning to all people fighting for their just rights, to the Latin American people, to the YLO, and also all other people in their position who show they are willing to learn from and work with the Puerto Rican revolutionary movement. These murders show to what vicious lengths the ruling class will go to prevent the growth of our just struggle.

We will never forget Bruce and Eugenia Johnson. We will not be frightened by their savage murder. We will build them the highest memorial any-

one could have, by continuing and stepping up our struggle to win freedom for our people and all oppressed people of the earth, for whom Bruce and Eugenia Johnson gave their lives.



Figure 4: Article on the murder of Bruce Johnson and Eugenia Johnson, published in the fall 1969 issue of the YLO newspaper. "You Can't Kill a Revolution," *Y.L.O.*, Fall, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)



Figure 5: Second issue of YLO newspaper published in Milwaukee. Cover, *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*, April 15, 1971. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

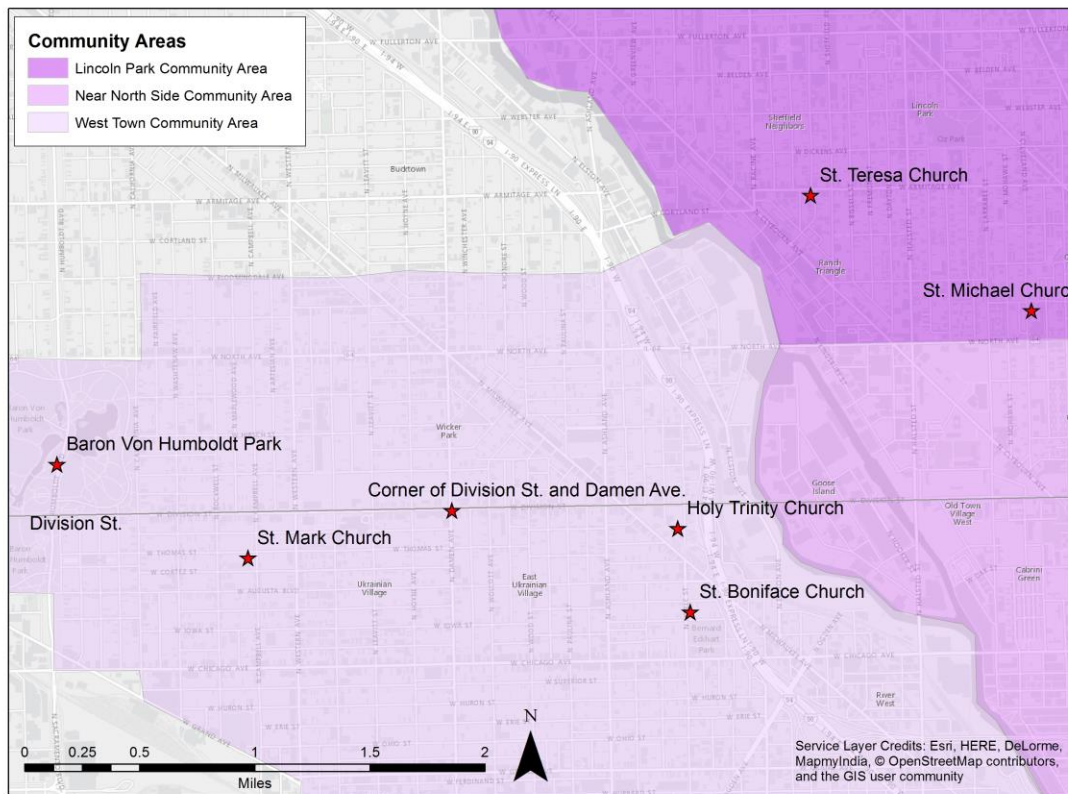


Figure 6: Points of Interest on Chicago’s West Side and Lincoln Park (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard; basemap provided by ESRI Online)

¡DON PEDRO VIVE!



JIBARO SEGURO!

A LOS YANQUIS DALE DURO!

On October 11, 1969, the Puerto Rican community of Chicago, under the leadership of the Young Lords Organization, manifested itself in a historic manner.

Understanding the grave problems of inadequate medical services, poverty, discrimination and other problems that affect Puerto Rican people in this society and the manner in which the US continues exploiting our motherland Borinquen, the Young Lords contacted all of its chapters across the nation. Soon Puerto Ricans from New York and other cities arrived in Chicago for what would be the most extraordinary demonstration in honor of "our father" Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos. For the first time in the history of the Puerto Rican barrio in Chicago, thousands of Puerto Ricans marched in honor of Don Pedro and at the same time against the war in Viet Nam.

The march began in the People's Park. This park is an empty lot where rich people were thinking of building a private tennis club. The membership fee was going to be \$1,000 a year. The Young Lords Organization, conscious of the fact that poor Puerto Rican families had lived on this site, and had been forced to move, and conscious also of the need for our children to have a place to play, decided to take over this lot with the backing of about 250 poor families. From that day on this empty lot has held the name People's Park.

The pigs (police) decided that the people should not go on with their march because, according to them, the permit given to the Young Lords only authorized a rally in People's Park and not a march on the streets. To this the Young Lords answered "The streets belong to the people. It is the cars who need permission to be on the streets. So the cars will have to wait, because the people are going to use the streets now."

So this historic march began amid cries of "The streets belong to the people," "Free Puerto Rico now," "Long live Don Pedro."

Meanwhile, a police force of more than 250 armed fascist pigs, aided by an "alcaquete vende patria" or an anglo-sized uncle Tom Puerto Rican tried to persuade the people not to join the march. Faced with this situation, the people responded in anger with cries of "Viva Don Pedro," "Que viva los Young Lords" and "Shut up, Uncle Tom," and the march grew larger and larger.

When the Puerto Rican patriotic procession neared Division Street, the heart of the Puerto Rican barrio in Chicago, the fascist pigs began their retreat, when faced with the angry masses of Puerto Rican people that had been watching the pigs from their windows and now began to pour into the streets and join the marchers.

The procession culminated in a huge concentration in Humboldt Park, where various members of the Young Lords Organization spoke to the masses of the people. Some of the speakers were our brothers David Perez and Yoruba from the New York Lords and Hilda Ignatin and Cha Cha Jimenez from National Headquarters in Chicago.

MARCHA EN HONOR AL DOCTOR DON PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS

En Octubre 11 del año 1969, la colonia Puertorriqueña en Chicago bajo el liderato de la Organización patriótica de los Young Lords, se manifestó en forma histórica.

Conociendo los graves problemas de malos servicios médicos, pobreza, discriminación extrema y otros que afectan a nuestros borincas en Yankilandia y además la forma en que los Estados Unidos sigue explotando a nuestra madre patria Borinquén la Organización Young Lords se puso en contacto con todos sus capitulos a traves de la nación estadounidense. Pronto llegaron Puertorriqueños de Nueva York y muchos otros lugares dándose cita en Chicago para lo que sería la demostración mas extraordinaria en honor a nuestro padre el Doctor Don Pedro Albizu Campos. Por primera vez en la historia del Barrio Puertorriqueño en Chicago, marchaban miles de Puertorriqueños en honor a Don Pedro y a la misma vez en contra de la guerra en Vietnam.

La marcha comenzó desde el "Parque del Pueblo." Este parque se encuentra en un pedacito de terreno donde unos millonarios "pensaban" construir un club para que los ricos pudieran jugar al tenis. Los miembros de este club pagarían 1,000 dolares al año para poder pertenecer. Los Young Lords conscientes de que en este terreno habían vivido familias pobres puertorriqueñas que se habían visto forzadas mudarse, y concientes también de que la comunidad de Lincoln Park en Chicago estaba necesitada de un lugar donde sus hijos pudieran recrearse, decidió tomar el terreno con el respaldo de mas de 250 familias Puertorriqueñas. Desde ese día ese terreno lleva el nombre de "Parque del Pueblo."

La policía o "puercos" de Chicago decidió que el pueblo no debía llevar a cabo esta gloriosa marcha porque, según ellos, el permiso otorgado a los Young Lords solamente autorizaba una manifestación en el parque y no una marcha por las calles. Ante esta situación los Young Lords contestaron, "Las calles pertenecen al Pueblo. Los carros y los camiones son los que necesitan permiso para usar las calles. Ahora los carros y los camiones serán los que tendrán que esperar hasta que el pueblo termine de usar dichas avenidas!"

Elevando a coro gritos "Las calles pertenecen al pueblo, Viva Puerto Rico Libre, Jibaro sí, Yankee no, Jibaro seguro a los Yankee dale duro" comenzó la histórica marcha. Miles de personas jóvenes y mayores gritaban desde sus ventanas "Que Viva Don Pedro."

Mientras tanto una fuerza policiaca de mas de 250 puercos armados, ayudados por un alcaquete, vende patria o Puertorriqueño americanizado trataba de aconsejar a la gente para que no se unieran a la marcha. Ante esta situación el pueblo contestaba a gritos "Viva Don Pedro, que Vivan Los Young Lords," y la marcha crecía mas y mas.

Cuando el desfile patriótico se acercó a la calle Division en el corazón de nuestro Barrio en Chicago, los puercos de la uniformada comenzaron a tocar su retirada ante la actitud de aquel decidido grupo de Borincas revolucionarios que con imbenos cartones que portaban la figura de Don Pedro Albizu Campos hacían su avanzada en lo que se había convertido en una oleada inmensa de Borincas.

El desfile culminó en una magna concentración en el Parque Humboldt donde varios miembros de la Organización Patriótica de los Young Lords se manifestaron ante el publico allí presente. Algunos de los oradores fueron los compañeros David Perez y Yoruba de nuestro capitulo en New York y Hilda Ignatin y Jose "Cha Cha" Jimenez de las Oficinas Nacionales de los Young Lords en Chicago.

Figure 7: Article about October 1969 YLO march in honor of Pedro Albizu Campos. "Jibaro Seguro! A Los Yanquis Dale Duro!" Y.L.O., January 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

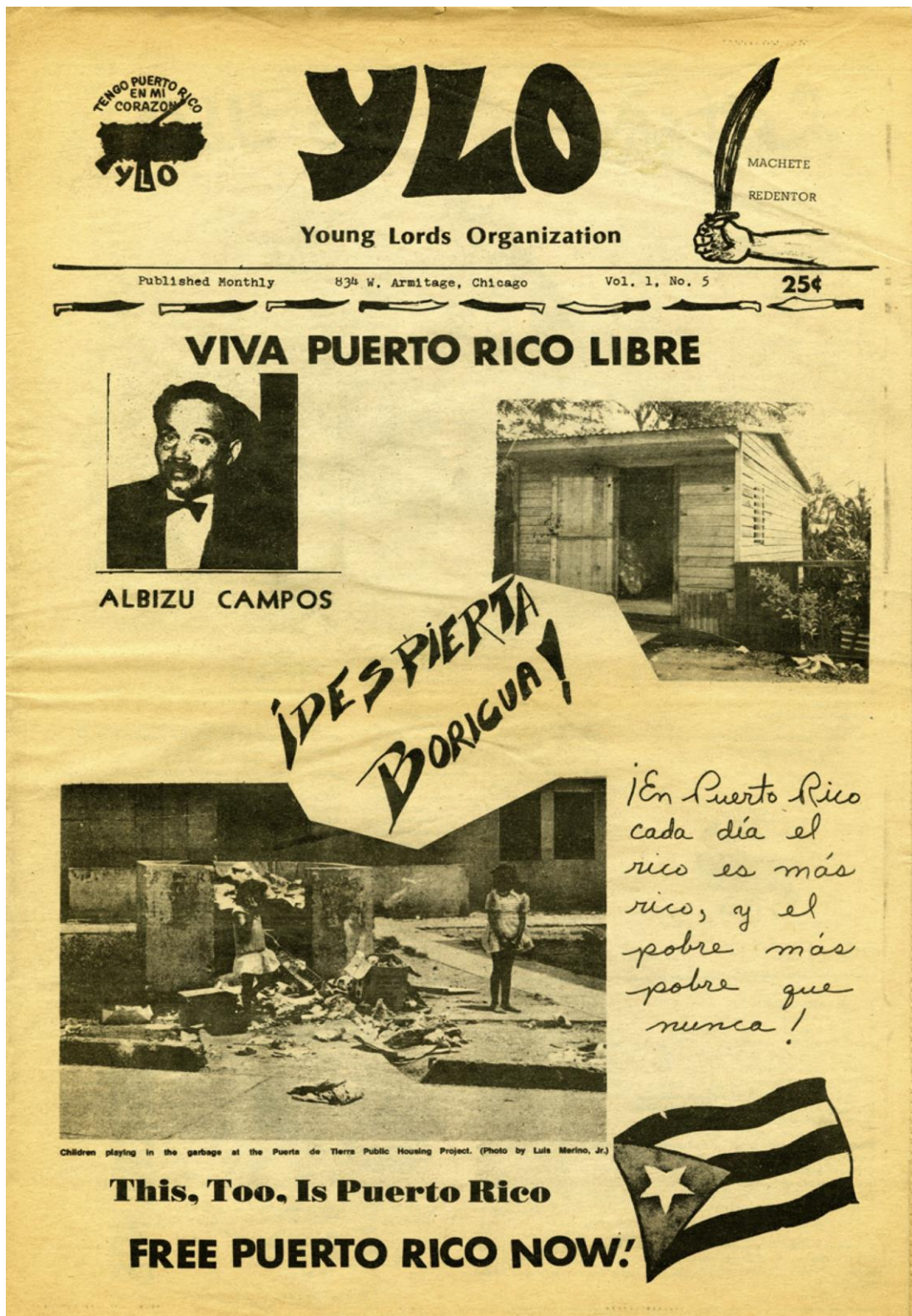


Figure 8: Cover of January 1970 issue of YLO newspaper. Cover, Y.L.O., January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)



Figure 9: “Jibaro mi negro lindo,” from February/March 1970 issue of YLO newspaper. “Jibaro mi negro lindo,” *Y.L.O.*, February/March, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

CARTA DE AZTLAN



In the last weeks of April 1969, a big stink was raised by a few merchants on Mission Street in San Francisco. They accused the young men who hang around the area of creating disturbances that were driving their business away. The papers played it up very big and never did report that soon afterwards this was retracted by the Mission Merchants Association. The real reason for loss of business was the new rapid transit system which has torn up many blocks of Mission Street. But the chotas used this as an excuse to ramp down on our young brothers, hauling them out to jail and holding them for weeks on things like "obstructing traffic." Hermano Nelson Rodriguez was singled out for special attacks and later was personally apologized to at a press conference. Why were these young men called "hoodlums" and so viciously attacked? We later learned that this was just to set the stage for further repression.

May 1, 1969, 10 a.m. in San Francisco's Mission District Barrio, several brothers were accosted by two unidentified men claiming to be policemen. The brothers were innocently transferring a tv in front of the Rios home at 438 Alverado Street. The two unidentified men, not in uniform, began to harass and antagonize the brothers. Out of this resulted one man dead and one wounded. Both were later identified as la jura.

Immediately 150-200 chotas were sent to the scene of the incident. The entire area was surrounded by police with guns, rifles and dogs. The fire department was also brought in to hunt out the so-called "criminals." Rounds of ammunition and tear gas were shot into the Rios home without regard to residents of the area. The 14 year old Rios girl was inside the house at the time this was taking place. She was skinned by a bullet and also gassed. The jura were shooting carelessly, even at one another. The furniture in the Rios home was completely destroyed. Persons thought to resemble nuestros carnales were pulled over and questioned. The hunt for these brothers was con-

¡FREE LOS SIETE!

sidered the largest in the history of northern California. The search went on for 5 days; these were the young men they picked up. Today, Mario Martinez, Rudolfo Martinez, Jose Rios, Nelson Rodriguez, Jose Melendez and Gary Lescallet find themselves in County Prison facing charges of murder and the gas chamber. Another brother, Gio Lopez, is being sought for these same charges. All these brothers worked to help their Raza, en las escuelas, en las calles. Tres carnales as Brown Berets patrolled the streets of San Francisco. They participated in the College readiness program at the College of San Mateo, bringing hermanos y hermanas off the streets into college. They fought this oppressive system in the Third World Liberation Front.

As usual, nuestra gente were harassed. Constitutional as well as human rights were violated. Persons known as amigos de Los Siete have been stopped by the jura and FBI agents and questioned at gunpoint. Homes have been entered without warrants and ransacked. They have tried to buy off the amigos of the brothers. The Mission District has been patrolled nightly by a troop of super jura. Roadblocks have been set up—people stopped at random.

En la pinta: The brothers have been treated as inhumanly as possible. Were it not for the publicity their case has received and the many visitors they get, there would be no hope for them. The chotas have planted their own men in their cell, lied to them, spit in their food, put them in isolation, but the brothers' morale remains high. Brother Jose Rios has developed hepatitis while en la pinta, and it took a court order to get him medical care. Their lawyer, Charles Garry, is the best political lawyer around. We could not find a man more dedicated to la causa, to the rights of human beings to be free. Every time he goes before the court, he provides an education for the entire community.

The parents of Los Siete have organized themselves into a defense group united with the Comite Para Defen-



der Los Siete de La Raza. In the works are a dance featuring a new Cuban movie for the revolutionary Cuban holiday of July 26, and a big rally. Our newspaper, BASTA YA! is working on exposing the actions of the chotas in the Mission. We will not let the jailing of our brothers defeat the movement they are a part of.

Examining this incident and the aftermath it provoked, you can see the political nature of the case. It affects each and every brown person walking the streets of the Mission, or any street in Aztlan. It involves our right to defend ourselves, our people, against this racist oppressive system. One of the first things said against the brothers was "foreign types," "Latin hippies." This is the next step in taking away nuestra tierra, disinheriting us from our birthright.

Why are these things happening more and more? Because La Raza is on the move more and more. Raza is beginning to realize the extent of our brainwashing, that we are not—can never be—gringos. That as brown people we have a proud tradition and a future to determine for ourselves. The rights of brown people in this society have been denied long enough. We are not the passive, manana people the gringos like to think. It is not a question of militancy, but of survival. Any move by La Raza is called violence, while the actions of the chotas are called justice. Our people die of malnutrition in the richest country in the world. It is when La Raza stops fighting among itself and recognizes the true enemy of our people and of all oppressed peoples that the man comes down on us. Today Los Siete, manana usted?

We call on every carnale to help us defend our brothers to keep them from the gas chamber. If one of them is touched, we all die. For more information, write to: Comite Para Defender Los Siete de La Raza PO Box 12217 San Francisco, California Aztlan



"When we are really honest with ourselves we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So, it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us to be men."

SUPPORT THE FARMWORKERS

Don't Buy Grapes!

BASTA YA!

The "Sleeping Giant" in the Southwest area of the United States is asleep no longer. Chicanos primarily from the five southwestern states (Texas, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and California) are preparing for a massive Unity Demonstration to be held in Austin, Texas at the foot of the state capitol building.

The Unity Demonstration will focus on the present struggle by Austin Chicano Strikers at the Economy Furniture Factory in Austin, Texas. These determined Chicanos have been on strike since November 27th, 1968. Their battle has been not only with a factory owner that refuses to recognize what is legally their right—that is, to organize and have a voice in their working situation—but it has been and continues to be a bitter struggle with the Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's staff, the local Police Department, and scab Mexican-Americans. The Chicano strikers are constantly under the watchful eye of people hired by the factory owner with the usage of motion picture cameras and high-powered binoculars—a favorite technique presently being used by the local Sheriff's Department and Highway Patrolmen. There have been dozens of cases clearly indicating that many of the law-enforcing officials are supporting the factory owner who has been ordered by two courts to meet the demands of the Chicano strikers.



Figure 10: Articles about Chicano struggles featured in the January 1970 YLO newspaper. "Free Los Siete," Y.L.O., January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

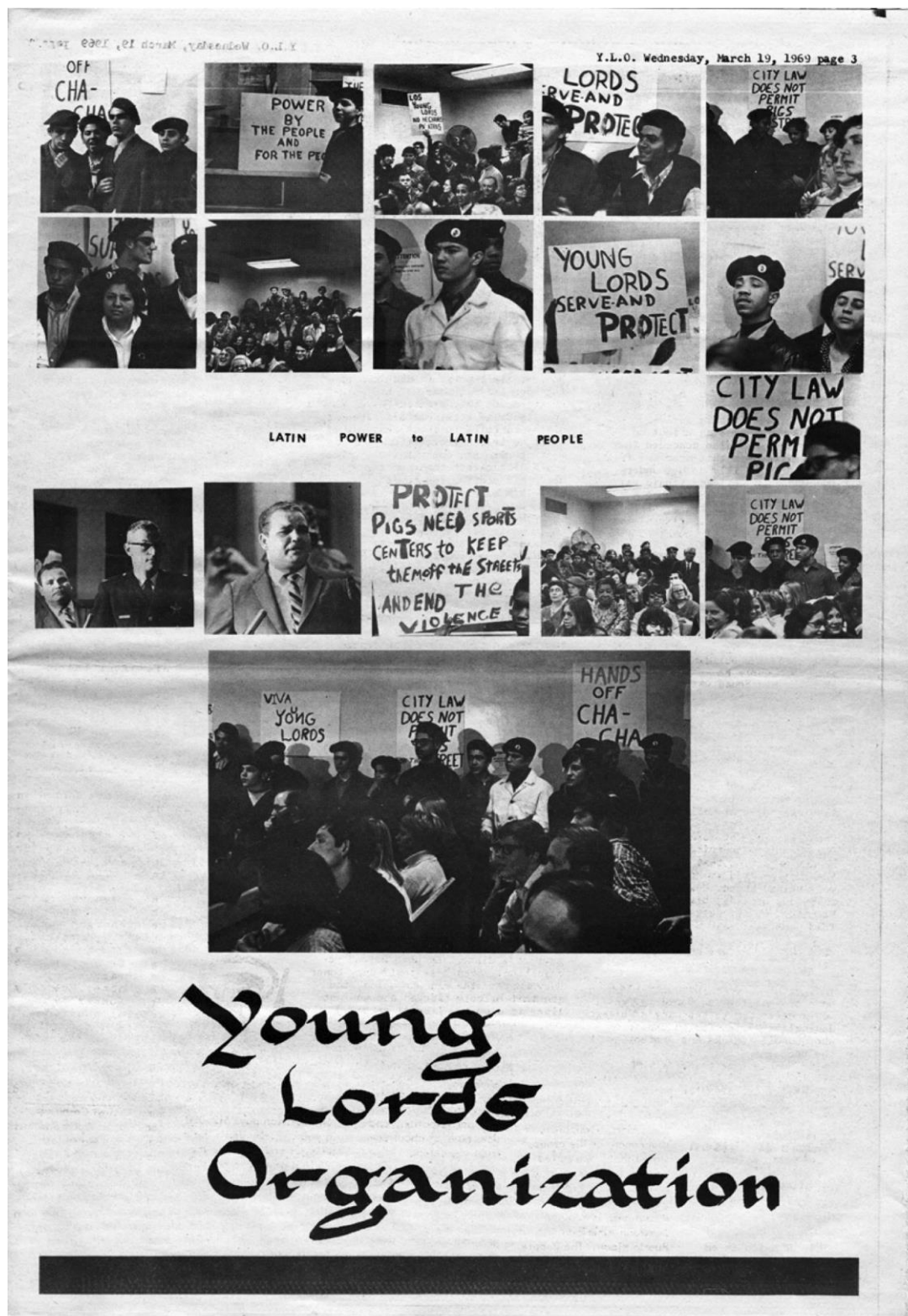


Figure 11: Page three of the first issue of the YLO newspaper, featuring images from the takeover of the 18th district police station. "Latin Power to Latin People," *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

Give Alcatraz Back to the INDIANS

YOUNG LORDS SPEND THANKSGIVING WITH INDIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS ON ALCATRAZ
(YLO/LNS—Karen Wald—San Francisco)

In a proclamation issued November 20, 1969 to "The Great White Father (presumably Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel) and All His People," the Indians declared the former prison island of Alcatraz theirs by right of discovery prior to Columbus.

Expressing a desire to "be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land," the Indians offered the following treaty:

"We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for twenty-four dollars in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago." Noting that they were paying comparatively more for their small island than the Dutch had paid for Manhattan, the Indians generously added, "But we know that land values have risen over the years. Our offer of \$1.24 per acre," they noted, "is greater than the 47 cents per acre the white men are now paying the California Indians for their land.

Regarding the future of the island, the Indians said reassuringly: "We will give to the inhabitants of this island a portion of that land for their own, to be held in trust by the American Indian Affairs and by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs to hold in perpetuity—for as long as the sun shall rise and the rivers go down to the sea. We will further offer them our religion, our education, our lifeways, in order to help them achieve our level of civilization and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state. We offer this treaty in good faith and wish to be fair and honorable with all white men."

With this proclamation, 80 young Indians, stoutly supported by their tribal elders, landed on and occupied Alcatraz Island. A week later, with their numbers reaching 300 and still growing, the Indians celebrated Thanksgiving.

The festival was somewhat reversed. Instead of the friendly Indians showing the newly arrived pilgrims their hospitality, white allies of the Indians brought boat-loads of turkeys, blankets, sleeping bags, firewood, fresh water and milk, and other supplies in assorted motor boats, yachts and junks. The on-again-off-again Coast Guard blockade wasn't operating, and boats were free to land on the island, screened only by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs representatives, who checked out all non-Indians who sought to enter.

Press were welcome—provided that they remain escorted by personnel from the Indian Press Service. So were two Puerto Rican brothers, "Cha Cha" Jimenez, National Chairman of the Young Lords Organization, from Chicago, and "Cano" Miller of San Juan, who came to bring revolutionary greetings of solidarity from their Puerto Rican brothers and sisters.

Our landing party was greeted by a young brave named Dennis Turner, a Mission-Shoshone, who warmly welcomed us and arranged for an Indian sister named Julie the head of the press service, to take us on a tour of the island.

Richard Oakes, a Mohawk, is informally recognized as the leader of the Indians here. It was Oakes who, with 13 other braves, landed on the island for a trial expedition several weeks ago, then went out to gather more Indians from all over California, many of them college students, to reclaim their land for real.

Julie explained that a great deal of organizing was needed once the Indians landed on the island. Now they have committees working on providing food, arranging shelter, clean-up details, guard duty, press clearance, caring for the children and taking care of transportation. Asked by "Cano" whether there was a spirit of resistance against any possible intervention on the island, Julie responded, "We'd use our heads." She gave the example of the blockade that had been set up by the Coast Guard. "Of course we had to do something; we have children to feed. So we ran the blockades all night. We weren't hurting anyone, or really resisting, we were just getting supplies in. But it was like guerrilla warfare.

It's a 15-minute climb to the prison buildings. Alcatraz was a maximum-security Federal prison until 1963. Since then it has been abandoned. Some electric power and some running water remain in a few buildings, but everything is in a state of decay.

Recently the federal government decided to pass the land on to the city of San Francisco, which in turn had decided to sell it to H. L. Hunt (right-wing Texas oil millionaire). He was going to make it into a kind of Space Age Disneyland. Some of San Francisco's enlightened citizens objected, and a dressmaker named Duskin put a full-page ad in the San Francisco Chronicle which brought in thousands of letters of protest to Interior Secretary Hickel. A flood of suggestions began pouring in as to what to do with the island.

The Indians at this point conveniently settled the question by occupying and reclaiming their land. Their plans for the island include:

1. A center for Native American studies, teaching native arts and skills, supplemented by travelling universities which would learn from the various Indian Reservations around the country.
2. An American Indian Spiritual Center.
3. An Indian center of ecology to train their people in "scientific research and practices to restore our lands and waters to their true and natural state."
4. An Indian Training School to teach Indians the trades they need to make a living in the world, as well as a center for arts and crafts, including Indian cooking, all of which would be offered to the public.
5. An American Indian Museum which would contain one portion depicting what the white man gave to the Indians in return for the land and life he took: disease, alcohol, poverty and cultural decimation (as symbolized by old tin cans, barbed wire, rubber tires, plastic containers, etc.) as well as broken treaties and a history of massacres.



Later we spoke with some of the young men who were most responsible for the Alcatraz landgrab, Richard Oakes and Dennis Turner. When asked how this had all begun, Dennis said, "Well, it really began about 470 years ago, when we discovered Columbus, and he was lost..." He then turned more serious, discussing the genocide in Vietnam. "We're now making our stand, and it's a definite stand, and we're gonna stay here."



As we wandered around the island, we saw many signs painted on walls or hung over doorways. Even as we first approached the island, the huge government block letters proclaimed "WARNING KEEP OFF. Only government boats permitted within 200 yards. Persons entering without authority do so at their peril." Hand-painted letters on the adjacent wall proclaimed otherwise: "INDIAN LAND" A huge smokstack was lettered "FREEDOM. PEACE ON EARTH" The word "States" was painted out on another government sign, so that it now read "United 'INDIAN Property." At the entrance to the main prison building, a huge sign with an elaborately painted eagle declared "THIS LAND IS OUR LAND!" Another frequent slogan asserted, "CUSTER HAD IT COMING!"

All of the Indians, young and old, are enthusiastic. A 47-year-old man who has been involved in the fishing rights struggle in the State of Washington said he came down to "see what we can do to help." "We see the young people as moving not only in the right direction," he commented, "but faster. I think this is real beautiful." Asked about whether there was a generation gap among the Indians, he explained that this didn't occur because of the mutual respect between the young and the old.

A white-haired companion from Southern California added, "I support these young people here, because us older people haven't done much for over 200 years, and it's about time we let the young ones do it. At least we're supposed to support them. And I don't think there's much of a generation gap, because they want old people here, and they love us, and that's why I'm here.

**ALCATRAZ PARA
LOS INDIOS**

**PUERTO RICO
PARA LOS
PUERTORRIQUENOS**

YOUNG LORDS VISITAN ISLA DE ALCATRAZ Y AFIRMAN LAZOS DE SOLIDARIDAD CON HERMANOS Y HERMANAS DE LA RAZA INDIA.

El día de Acción de Gracias 1969 marco un evento de gran significado histórico en términos de solidaridad entre El Pueblo de Puerto Rico y La Raza India en los EEUU.

Fue en este día que dos líderes de la Organización de Los Young Lords llevaron personalmente, un mensaje de apoyo a los bravos Indios, y a su líder máximo, Richard Oakes, quien dirigiera el "Asalto" a Alcatraz en días anteriores.


Los hermanos "Cha Cha" Jimenez, Primer dirigente de YLO, y "Cano" Miller de San Juan Puerto Rico fueron recibidos con abrazos su llegada a dicho territorio Libre.

Los hermanos fueron conducidos a través de la isla por una escolta de honor. Afirmando Oakes, "Recibo a estos hermanos revolucionarios Puertorriqueños que de tan lejos han venido a apoyarnos con su presencia aquí. Las Razas Indias de los EEUU y todo las Americas reconocen plenamente y agradecen profundamente el apoyo dada a nuestra causa por LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS YOUNG LORDS Y EL PUEBLO DE BORINQUEN."


**FREE
AMERICA
NOW**

1969 1970 YOUNG LORDS

Figure 12: Article about the occupation of Alcatraz, printed in the January 1970 issue of the YLO newspaper. "Give Alcatraz Back to the Indians," Y.L.O., January, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)



Y.L.O.



25 cents

affiliated with the

Young Lords Organization

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION
2512 N. LINCOLN AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60614

Editorial

Why a YLO Newspaper?

—A Latin American Movement is developing in Chicago for the purpose of putting an end to the injustices, suffering and exploitation which is forced upon our people.

Y.L.O. considers itself as part of that Movement — a movement that wants a new society in which all people are treated as equals; a society whose wealth is controlled and shared by all its members, and not by a few; a society in which men and women view other members as brothers and sisters and not as people to be exploited and hated.

Y.L.O. stands for an end to police brutality and mistreatment; adequate housing for all; descent jobs and living wages for all; community control of the schools, the police, and all other institutions in our community; an end to the colonization of Puerto Rico and all other Third World countries which are politically, economically, or militarily controlled by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

The Latin American Movement has not yet decided on the path it needs to follow. That is, some want reform in the system like more Latin American cops (pigs), teachers, politicians, caseworkers, social workers, etc. and believe that little by little L.A. will

(cont. pg. 9)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

VOL. 1, NO. 1

Latinos Demandan Nuevo Director de Welfare

—La policia ataco y golpeo a varios Hispanos en una demostracion contra del Departamento de Asistencia Publica en Wicker Park.


Mas de 300 personas demostraron en una Coaliccion de la Comunidad en la cual varias organizaciones participaron: LADO, Spanish Action Committee, Las agencias del United Christian Community Services, Women Mobilized for Action, the Black Panther Party, y los Young Lords Organization

En la marcha tambien se vieron miembros de muchos grupos del area como los Latin Kings, y otros.

Las demandas de la Coaliccion eran 1) que despidan al Director de la oficina de Welfare en la Milwaukee y North; 2) que un nuevo Director sea nombrado con el apuro de miembros de la comunidad; 3) que la comunidad tenga el derecho de aprobar o rechazar cualquier regla que tenga dicha oficina.

En frente de la Oficina, la policia provoco un incidente cuando los policas empezaron a empujar

(cont. pag. 11)



YLO takes over POLICE STATION

"Who are all these people? Is this planned?" asked Sgt. Harrington, second in command at the 18th District Police Station, on Tuesday, February 11. It was 7:30 p.m. and masses of people were pouring into the station for what was scheduled to be a routing police-community workshop.

For weeks the pigs of the 18th District had been harrasing Cha-Cha Jimenez, Chairman of the Young Lords Organization, and the rest of the Young Lords. Cha Cha had four charges on him as he went into the meeting.

The situation had become intolerable. Meetings attended by the Young Lords Organization were surrounded by pigs. At one meeting of the school-community planning committee (EDUC 7) of which Cha Cha is vice-president, there were 14 plainclothesmen and two uniformed police inside and 8 squad cars outside with numerous others nearby.

Six local organizations, Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park, the Northside Co-operative Ministry, EDUC7, Neighbourhood Commons, the Lincoln Park Survival Front, and the Community Review Board, supported the Young Lords and called for descent upon the police station. More than 300 people showed up for the meeting, yet apparently police intelligence failed to find out in advance what was going to happen.

At 8 p.m. the minutes were read and Ramon Valdes, chairman of the meeting, tried to introduce a scheduled speaker. A local minister moved that the agenda be changed. Valdes continued to refuse to consider the motion whereas tremendous boing broke out. Valdes stated that a motion could only be made by someone who had attended three meetings. Cries broke out to "read the rules". When finally found, the rules said only two meeting attendance were required. The motion was passed. After consultation between Braasch and Valdes, Braasch announced his faith in democracy and agreed to answer questions. He looked very unhappy but the crowd was ecstatic.

Braasch replied in vague terms about proper police response to a hypothetical robbery. Braasch time after time continued to express ignorance about what is happening in his district. The one straight answer he gave was to admit that there was a police intelligence division and thinks it likely they are obser-

(cont. pg. 12)

Figure 13: Front page of the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper, featuring an image and article about the takeover of the 18th district police station. "YLO Takes Over Police Station," *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

Y.L.O. Wednesday, March 19, 1969 page 8

The Black Panther Party started and is nationally based in Oakland, California. They now have many chapters throughout the country. The Illinois B.P.P. was started 4 months ago and has thus far put the pigs up tight. We think it is important that the Latin community find out what our black brothers are all about and what they are doing. For more information contact the B.P.P. at 2350 W. Madison or this newspaper.

The staff



OCTOBER 1966 BLACK PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM AND PROGRAM

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.



2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.



FREE HUEY NOW

Figure 14: "BPP Ten Point Platform and Program," printed in the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper. "BPP Ten Point Platform and Program," Y.L.O., March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

Nixon Balls

Gang Leaders

(FRED)--The Nixon administration lost little time in initiating its program to co-opt independent black leadership. Invited to Nixon's inaugural ball were two top leaders of the Black P Stone Nation. The two, Mickey Cogwell and Bobby Jennings, both members of the Stone's Main 21 ruling council, were selected to represent the nation by Jeff Fort.

Appearing at the Mayflower Hotel attired in white ties and tails, Cogwell and Jennings were conducted about by Chuck Percy, a founding father of black capitalism. Percy introduced them to Republican big-wigs like Ev Dirksen and Cook County Sheriff Woods. Said Sen. Percy, "I told them that I was delighted to see them taking part in the democratic process."

Police Supt. Conlisk today announced the firing of two Chicago policemen. One of the two was Donald Sommerville, currently serving two to ten years in prison. He was found guilty on March 10, 1966, of receiving stolen property. Patrolman Sommerville made headlines in 1964 when it was revealed that he had masterminded a 1963 holdup of the Zayre Department Store at 8847 S. Harlem. Sommerville's brother, Roger another former Chicago policeman, was also convicted of participating in the armed robbery which netted them \$83,000. Sommerville had been suspended from the force in 1964, but the Police Board only finished hearing evidence in his case this month.

The Rich Get Richer and the Poor pay Taxes

(FRED)--The Internal Revenue Service disclosed today that of 49 people in Illinois who reported incomes of over one million dollars per year, two of them paid no income tax at all. The IRS is forbidden by law to disclose the names of the two.

The IRS spokesman indicated that the non-payment of taxes is made possible by such tax as municipal bonds and oil royalties, whose payments are non-taxable. The spokesman did not indicate how much tax the remaining 47 millionaires paid, but past experiences would indicate it was not much.

In testimony before the Senate House economic committee earlier this month, former Under-Secretary of the Treasury Barr warned of a "taxpayers revolt" if major reforms are not made in the nation's tax laws. Barr has prepared some recommendations for new Treasury Secretary David Kennedy for effecting tax reforms.

(Ed. note: Those of us from Chicago must be excused if we snicker quietly at the idea of David Kennedy rushing to close the municipal bond tax gap. As the chairman of the Mayor's Committee for Economic and Cultural Development, David Kennedy was in the forefront of economic planning (bond floating) in Chicago. It was he who organized and led the massive 1966 bond issue drive in Chicago. It was also he, as head of Continental Ill. Bank and Trust, who headed up the consortium of banks which, in turn, bid on the city's copious bond sales.)



The second patrolman fired today was Clarence Miller who was charged with possession of stolen cars. Miller had been charged with possessing one car that he knew had been stolen and another on which the vehicle number identification plate had been altered. He had been suspended last June 13. Despite the fact that the Police Board found grounds for Miller's dismissal, no criminal charges have been brought against him.

In a related action, the state's attorney's office has announced that it has opened an investigation into the case of Capt. Mazurek also charged with possession of a stolen car. Capt. Mazurek, a former Monroe Street District Watch Comm. was suspended last Dec. 21 pending a hearing before the Police Board on Feb. 14. Mazurek has been charged with submitting a forged title to the secretary of state's office in addition to the charge of driving a stolen car.

Another patrolman suspended this month is Daniel Creedon. He is accused of misconduct in an incident growing out of the Dem. Nat. Convention. The incident took place on Aug. 30 on the sixth floor of the Conrad Hilton Hotel. A complaint filed by an ABC messenger alleges that Creedon threatened him with his service revolver in an unreasonable manner and made derogatory remarks while questioning him. Creedon was off-duty was in civilian clothes, and was not assigned to the Hilton area at the time of the incident.

IT'S ALL THE SAME




Cops and Robbers. Who is Which?

--Charges of brutality against the police should be investigated by an agency outside the police department and the results made public according to a statement made by Jay Miller of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Miller spoke today at a meeting of the City Club. He charged that the police internal investigations division (IID) is not showing itself to be an effective force. Miller stated that only 2 or 3% of the complaints made to the IID bring remedial action and charged that IID reports are distorted and statements of witnesses lost. Said Miller "When you have the police investigating the police, there's tendency not to do a good investigation." Miller also indicated that he believed that policemen accused of brutality during the Democratic National Convention should be transferred off street duty until the charges are investigated and their cases concluded.

Figure 15: "It's All the Same" cartoon by BPP Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, printed in the first issue of the Y.L.O. newspaper. "It's All the Same," Y.L.O., March 19, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)


PITIRRE



PEOPLE'S



CONSTITUTIONAL



CONSTITUTIONAL

FREE PUERTO RICO NOW

CONVENTION

free Puerto Rico Now!

CONSTITUCION REVOLUCIONARIA

¿Porque una Convención Revolucionaria Constitucional? ¿Porque una nueva constitución? Está claro para toda la gente oprimida, y perdíase referirse al caso del latino como un segmento de la gente oprimida, y se puede decir que bajo la presente constitución, con excepción de la Cartas de Derechos, que fueron simplemente "migajas" para mantener la gente calmada, es una acumulación de leyes que priva a la gente pobre de sus derechos humanos básicos. Es un documento diseñado por ricos para mantener a cierto tipo de gente en el poder.

Lo que el latino dice es que hasta ahora, bajo esta constitución, hemos sido linchados en los estados de Texas y California, asesinados a sangre fría en las frías celdas de las cárceles de Chicago y Nueva York (y después dicen que nos ahorran); que bajo esta constitución Puerto Rico fue hecha una colonia de los Estados Unidos; que bajo esta constitución los cinco estados del suroeste de los Estados Unidos le fueron robados a México; bajo esta constitución Latinoamérica ha sido ejemplo hasta el hueso y bajo esta constitución las necesidades de la gente pobre son usadas para hacer ganancias.

La gente pobre necesita una constitución que nos garantice la "vida, libertad y la búsqueda de la felicidad". Necesitamos una constitución que castigue a aquellos que han destruido a la gente física y mentalmente, que castigue a los Nixon y Rockefeller, los Ferré y Maños Marín, los Echevarría y Díaz Ordaz. Una constitución que se garantice a nuestros hermanos y hermanas alimento y un lugar donde vivir.

La necesidad de un documento diseñado por la gente para la realización de toda organización revolucionaria no se discute. La necesidad es grande y el tiempo es AHORA.

REVOLUCIONARY CONSTITUTION

Why a Revolutionary Constitutional Convention? Why a new Constitution. It is clear to all oppressed people, and allow us to make reference to the Brown people as a segment of the oppressed people, to say that we understand that the present constitution, with the exception of the Bill of Rights, which was "crumbs" to keep the people down, is an accumulation of laws that deprive poor people of its basic human rights. It is a document designed to put a certain type of people in power and keep them in power.

What Brown people are saying is that up to now, under this constitution we've been lynched in Texas and California; murdered in cold blood in the cells of the jails of Chicago and New York (and then they say we hung ourselves); that under this constitution Puerto Rico was made a colony of the United States; that under this constitution the five southwestern states of the US were stolen from Mexico; under this constitution Latin America has been exploited to the bone and under this constitution the needs of poor people are used to make a profit.


Poor people need a constitution that will guarantee us the "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." We need a constitution that will punish criminals that destroy people physically and mentally—to punish the Nixons and Rockefellers; the Ferrés and Maños Marins; the Echevarrias and Díaz Ordaz. A constitution that will guarantee our brothers and sisters food to eat and a place to live.

The need for a document designed by the people to be a guideline for the actions of all revolutionary organizations is unquestionable. The need is great and the time is now.


Young Lords Organization



REVOLUCIONARY



VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE



CONVENTION

LA ACTITUD COMUNISTA ANTE LA VIDA ES MOSTRAR CON EJEMPLOS EL CAMINO A SEGUIR.



Figure 16: "People's Revolutionary Constitutional Convention," Pitirre, Summer, 1970. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

'El Barrio Esta Despierto'

5



Latin Kings, Y.L.O. in United Puerto Rican Coalition

young lords

Pedro was thrown into the paddy wagon and driven away. The two pigs went to work: one dug the bullet out of the sidewalk, while the other one tried to wipe up the blood. Then they left. The parents were contacted a couple of hours later. The report they got from pig headquarters was that the officer had seen a gun sticking out of Pedro's pocket, tried to question him about the gun, he ran, and they had to shoot him.



There is much for us all to learn and know about the struggles of the people in Chicago as we come here to join with them and unite to demand that the U.S. GET OUT OF VIETNAM NOW.

This is the story of one part of one struggle, an example of the fight carried on every single day against the pigs by the most oppressed people of this city. Many of these people's organizations have asked us to participate in their fight. We must make every effort to learn from them, as we unite our struggles with the struggles of the Vietnamese in Chicago October 8-11.

The Latin Kings are the biggest Latin youth organization in Chicago, claiming upward of 4500 members. They have never had a friendly relationship with the Chicago cops. But in the last few years, the cops have come to understand the enormous potential revolutionary power of the youth organizations, and since the 1966 Division Street Uprising have cracked down heavy on the Kings. This summer between 150 and 300 Latin Kings were in jail at any one time. The Kings defended members of the community against cop harassment on many occasions.

• They have been subjected to mass shake-downs and phony raps. They have been shot at by prowl cars in King neighborhoods. There is a rumor in the neighborhoods that the pigs keep a list of the Kings and give each other "points" for busting one. One night in July a King brother was beaten brutally by two pigs at Leavitt and Schiller. Later that night, a



patrol car in the neighborhood was fire-bombed. Still later that night, nearly one hundred Latin Kings were arrested on suspicion of the bombing.

The cops keep detailed records of information about the Latin gangs and their families, and try to bribe brothers and girlfriends to become informers. The cops come around the neighborhood and act real friendly to everyone in the broad daylight, but at night they come around and shoot at us, yell racist insults at Black and Puerto Rican kids, and they're too chicken to get out of their cars after dark.

The people have been angry for years. They got even angrier when Manuel Ramos, a member of the Young Lords, who already had the experience of Ramos' murder behind them. The Latin Kings and many other, Latin street organizations united and made the greatest unity yet. Here is how it happened.

So last week, when Brother Pedro Medina was shot in the guts by a Chicago cop, the people were enraged, and they organized together to fight the pigs in the community. They looked for leadership to the Young Lords, who already had the experience of Ramos' murder behind them. The Latin Kings and many other, Latin street organizations united and made the greatest unity yet. Here is how it happened.

At 1:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 15, 1969, a Chicago pig attempted to murder a 17-year old Puerto Rican high school student, in broad daylight.

The pigs reported that the young man, Pedro Medina, was armed and making a get-away when they shot him. They further stated they were in the Puerto Rican community because a burglarly had been reported (but they couldn't or wouldn't say what address they supposedly were checking out.)

Thirty-five people, mainly Puerto Ricans, who witnessed the incident and know the family said Pedro was running back to school from lunch because he was late. They saw a patrol car stop suddenly, 2 pigs got out and started running after Pedro. When they were about 20 feet away, they fired what the pig claimed was a "warning shot" to stop him. When Pedro heard the shot he turned his head to look back, and tripped and fell on his face.

He didn't even have time to pick himself up. The pigs came up to him and rolled him on his back at which time Pedro raised his hands up in surrender and said "Please don't kill me." One of the pigs held him down with his knee and shot him in the stomach. People who witnessed the whole thing were furious that they would shoot someone who was already caught. They started yelling "Pigs," and asked why they had to shoot him. One pig threatened the by-standers and told them to mind their own business and go home.

The other pig went through the victim's pockets and all he found was a pen and 20¢. Meanwhile Pedro's blood was running rapidly down the sidewalk and into the gutter. More and more people gathered and yelled "Murderers," "Pigs" in English, and in Spanish. By this time the pigs were in the car calling in. Twenty minutes later a paddy wagon came instead of an ambulance. The people's anger continued to burn hotter.



YLO people arrived at the scene minutes after the pigs left, and began to work on investigation and rapping to people still there about taking action. Meetings were set up for the following day. Leaflets were distributed throughout the Puerto Rican community inviting all concerned people and especially gang leaders to meet and discuss the incident and others relating to pig harassment and brutality.

The decision was a protest march to pig lawyer's office on Saturday, September 13. Out of that first meeting the United Puerto Rican Coalition was formed, made up of 12 youth clubs (gangs), Latin church groups, the Spanish Action Coordinating Committee, the Young Lords, and others.

The following five days were spent distributing leaflets informing the community of the incident, the formation of the Coalition, and the march on Saturday. The adults in the church groups and "legitimate agencies" tried to control the anger and militancy of the youth. But we argued with them and pushed them hard. The march was significant in that the barriers between the youth clubs were broken and they were all aware that YLO was with them, struggling against the conservative adults, discussing ideas, urging them to take leadership. The Latin Kings Militant Unit had led the march for the first time appearing in public in full uniform, marching in formation behind the flag of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. After the march YLO and all the youth organizations met at a park where the march had started.

YLO members split up and offered to inform different groups what we're all about and answer what questions they might have. A lot of good discussions started about "Pigs" and pretty soon elevated to political questions, then questions on strategy for revolution.

Then we came back to the basic question, where do we start?

We have started by deciding to continue with, and function in the Coalition as an organization. Whether the United Puerto Rican Coalition is the answer is not important. But laying down the basis of another united youth force against the ruling class is

Right On!

Figure 17: Article about the United Puerto Rican Coalition featured in the fall 1969 issue of the YLO newspaper. "El Barrio Esta Despierta," Y.L.O., Fall, 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)

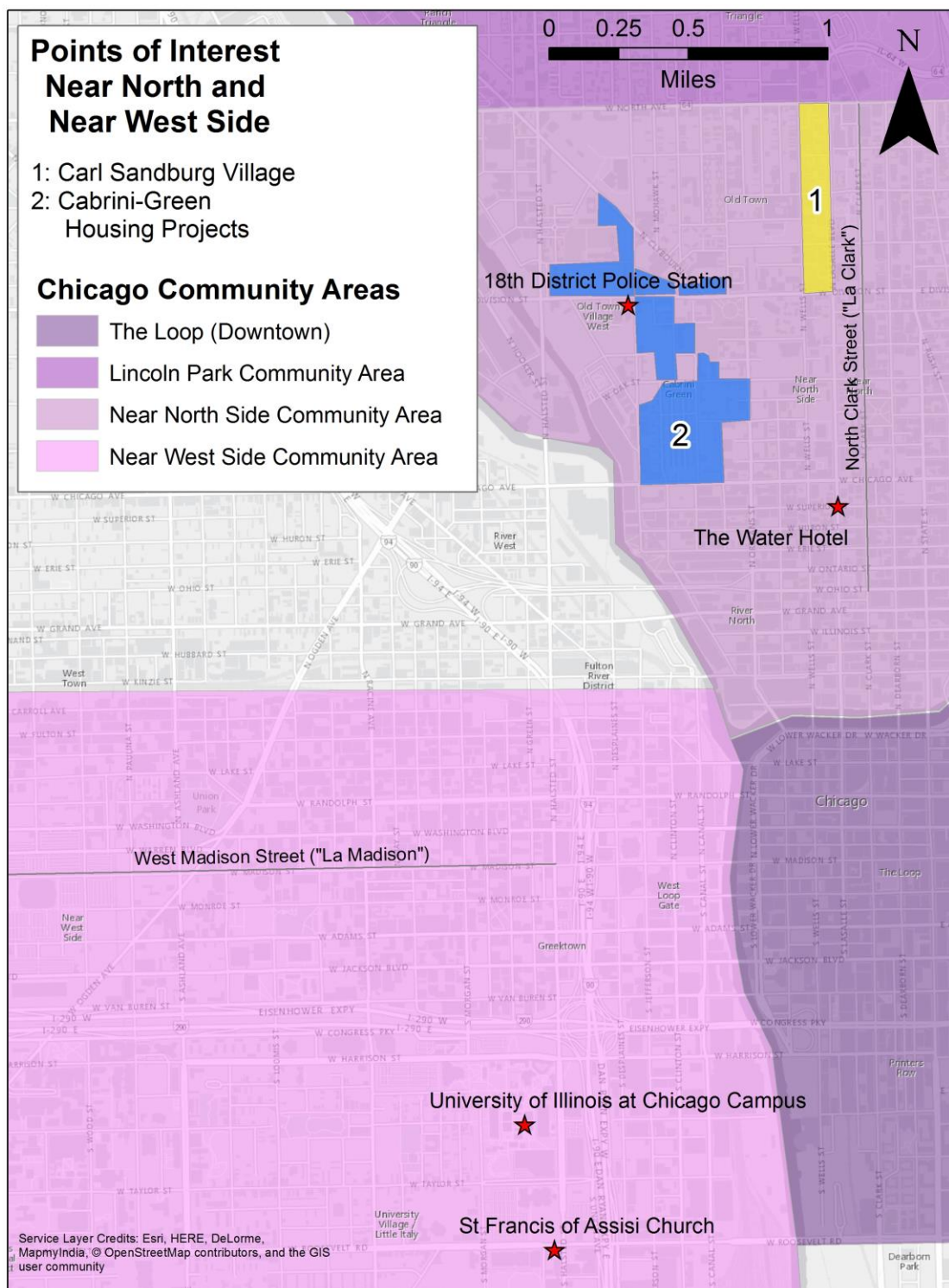


Figure 18: Points of Interest, Near North Side and Near West Side (Map created by Jennifer L. Picard, basemap provided by ESRI Online)

Y.L.O. May, 1969 Page 4

On Weds., May 14, just few minutes before midnight, a coalition of poor people occupied the brand new Academic Administration Building at McCormick Theological Seminary.

As a result of the take-over, the following demands were won:

- (1) \$601,000 for low income housing;
- (2) funds for a Children Center of 100 children that would expand to a 24-hour per day center;
- (3) priority renting of apartments owned by McCormick to poor and working class people;
- (4) (not won) the fence around McCormick to be torn down;
- (5) a Puerto Rican cultural center to be set up by the Young Lords Organization;
- (6) \$25,000 for leadership programs for Y.L.O.;
- (7) McCormick will publicly and actively support the Welfare Coalition of Wicker Park;
- (8) \$25,000 for welfare rights organizing;
- (9) McCormick will publicly and actively support the Welfare Coalition;
- (10) \$25,000 to set up a legal bureau controlled by the Poor People's Coalition to serve the people of the area.

The groups operating with the Poor People's Coalition include the Young Lords Organization, Young Patriots, Black Active and Determined, the Concerned Citizens Survival Front, the Welfare and Working Mothers of Wicker Park, and the Latin American Defense Organization, and others.

On Wednesday, May 7, the PPC met with representatives of the McCormick administration and presented a series of 10 demands. In a meeting on Mon., May 12, McCormick presented a series of formal answers to the demands of all the

For the past two years, McCormick has been under increasing pressure, from internal and external sources, to deal with the problems of the surround-

MCCORMICK TAKE-OVER



ing community. It is important to understand from the outset that McCormick (located at Fullerton and Halsted) has helped to create these problems. It is not an innocent bystander. The biggest single issue is that of housing. McCormick, in conjunction with other institutions in the community (principally DePaul and Children's Memorial Hosp.) has instigated and supported an urban renewal program in the community which was and is designed to remove poor people and replace them with middle and upper income residents. This has been done primarily through the destruction of 1100 family housing units and the removal of 3 to 4 times as many families by institutional take-

over of housing or by the housing being priced upwards out of reach of the former residents. In addition to its aggressive action against the community people in this regard, McCormick has been totally insensitive to other needs of the surrounding community.

involved, including the PPC. Their response to the demand for low-income housing funds was that the seminary restated its concern about housing in the community and would explore with all community groups and institutions the potential use and development of properties in the neighborhood. They would ask that their investment committee give first priority to such neighborhood development, recognizing that substantial amounts of unrestricted funds have already been committed. In response to the demands for day care facilities, McCormick said no, but they would explore with other organizations the extent of the need for such a center and the possibilities of providing the center on a fee basis. To the demand for rental to poor and working families, the Seminary said no. To the demand that the fence be torn down, they said no. To the demand for a Puerto Rican cultural center, the Seminary said no, but it offered to help get the money from other sources. To the demands for funds for, YLO, LADO, and a Legal Defense unit, McCormick responded that no grants of any kind could be given for any purpose other than educating persons for the ministry of the church. In addition, McCormick indicated that they didn't have the funds anyway. In the response to the demand for support for LADO in its struggle with the welfare system, McCormick indicated that the request should be sent to the Presbytery of Chicago and not to them. In response to the request for a condemnation of political persecution, the Seminary replied that such a statement would not be appropriate.

In a meeting held on Wednesday afternoon, May 14, representatives of the PPC made it clear that they considered this response totally inadequate. They had demanded to meet with the executive committee of the board of directors upon being informed of these responses and had been told that it was "impossible" to hold such a meeting without two weeks' notice. Representatives of the PPC told the McCormick people present at the meeting that they were going to be forced to resort to "community education". They did not define that term. At midnight that night, the Stone building was seized. The 80 or so community people efficiently sealed all entrances to the building and controlled all entrance and exit of persons. Their first act after seizing the building was to rename it the Manuel Ramos Memorial Building in honor of a Young Lord murdered the week before by a Chicago pig. The administration was informed of the seizure and the PPC waited for a response.

The response was not long in coming. The meeting with the Board of Directors Executive Committee which was "impossible" to set up without two weeks' notice" was

(continued in page 15)

MCCORMICK SEMINARIANS SUPPORT THE PEOPLE

May 10 (FRED) — Under the sponsorship of a group of McCormick Seminary students called ACTOR (Action Committee to Oppose Racism), several hundred students, movement people, and community residents penetrated the McCormick fortress's iron fence and gates at Fullerton and Halsted Tuesday night to confront the Seminary's Board of Trustees with their demands. What was to have been a People Power festival complete with rock and Latin bands was a rather subdued gathering, due to the murder Saturday night of Young Lord Manuel Ramos by an off-duty pig.

The student-community demands included: (1) that McCormick invest \$601,000 in low-income housing in Lincoln Park (90% of its "unrestricted funds" — the amount that the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church last year recommended be invested in black banks and businesses on a relatively high-risk basis); (2) that its financial records be open to examination upon request so the people could see how McCormick was spending its money; (3) that it join groups working to help community people, including specifically the Northside Cooperative Ministry; (4) that it publicly oppose the racist policies of the Department of Urban Renewal, the Community Conservation Council, and

the Lincoln Park Conservation Association; and (5) that it open its facilities to use by the outside community.

On Wednesday, the trustees met with community representatives to discuss the demands, after which they announced decisions to: (1) devote all of the Seminary's remaining unrestricted investments to low-income housing in the area; (2) begin to raise funds for a Puerto Rican cultural center; (3) develop a policy for neighborhood residents' use of seminary facilities; and (4) join the North Side Cooperative Ministry and unite with other organizations and institutions in the neighborhood in working on community welfare programs. The Board also sent a telegram to Mayor Daley expressing their concern over the shooting of Manuel Ramos and asking for a full investigation.

The decisions were viewed with mixed feelings; the history of Board resolutions is a long, troubled one for poor people.

LATE FLASH—On May 7, Doctor McKay submitted his resignation to the Board for "personal and vocational reasons" at the end of a Board meeting at which he had been praised for his "statesmanship" in handling events of the previous week. One faculty member considered McKay's conduct "perfectly remarkable". One can only speculate on McKay's motives. It could be that he anticipates further confrontation and wants to get out before that happens.



Figure 19: Article in May 1969 issue of YLO newspaper about the McCormick Occupation. "McCormick Take-over," Y.L.O., May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)



Figure 20: Front page of May 1969 YLO newspaper, commemorating the takeover of the McCormick Theological Seminary. Cover, *Y.L.O.*, May 1969. (Young Lords Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University Library, Chicago, Illinois)