

Latin Liberation News Service: The Newspapers of the Young Lords Organization

by Michael R. Gonzales

The Young Lords began in 1959 as a street gang in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. By the end of the next decade it had transformed into an explosive social movement rooted in communities across the country. After reorganizing and formally adopting revolutionary politics in 1968, members of the newly dubbed Young Lords Organization (YLO) committed themselves to educating, uplifting, and fighting for the struggling poor in Lincoln Park and beyond. Their bold tactics, which included a mixture of street protests, building occupations, and "survival programs", quickly garnered wide media attention. News of their audacious actions inspired activists elsewhere, and by 1970 several chapters of the YLO had formed in New York. The movement would eventually spread even further, to cities such as Milwaukee, Newark, and Philadelphia (among other places).

Young Lords leaders in Chicago and across the nation saw the production and distribution of independent newspapers as an important part of their political work. They considered these newspapers to be one of the principal means through which to spread their message and grow their organization. The work done to produce and distribute these newspapers was also seen as indispensable to the intellectual and political development of the organization and its activists. Newspapers were viewed as an educational tool. They were a medium through which to engage people in dialogue, raising their level of class consciousness and gaining new recruits in the process. As well, these newspapers were seen as a way to connect with outside activists, fellow

travelers, and kindred organizations, thereby securing financial support and strengthening bonds of solidarity.

This essay seeks to discuss the newspapers published by the YLO and to tell the stories of the people who produced them. Utilizing information contained in a wealth of documentary and oral history resources (including personal interviews recently conducted with Young Lords leaders) this essay will discuss both the goals Young Lords activists had in mind when they created and distributed their newspapers, as well as the obstacles and challenges that often hampered their efforts.¹ It will also highlight the influence of both local social pressures and international social movements in helping to shape these publications. Hopefully the unique information contained in this discussion will contribute towards a better understanding of this woefully understudied movement.

From Gangsters to Communists

“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 Communists. What we had to realize was that it wasn’t no good fightin’ each other, but

¹ The Young Lords Collection at DePaul University consists of copies of the Chicago and Milwaukee newspapers as well as a variety of party documents, posters, and assorted press. It also contains tapes and transcripts of twenty oral history interviews conducted in the 1990s by DePaul University’s Center for Latino Research and the Lincoln Park Project. Another important resource, the Young Lords in Lincoln Park collection, is housed at Grand Valley State University. Unveiled in September 2012, this online archive features a rich collection of more than 110 oral histories, as well as historical photographs and documents. It exists primarily because of the tremendous effort of former YLO Chairman José “Cha Cha” Jiménez. This essay will also feature unique information contained in the tapes and transcripts of personal interviews I recently conducted with former Young Lords leaders Omar López and Dr. Luis “Tony” Baez. As Minister of Information and Minister of Education respectively, these two individuals were the persons most responsible for producing the Chicago and Milwaukee newspapers. Finally, both the Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee house extensive collections of a variety of movement newspapers and these archives were quite useful for this research. For more information: The Young Lords Collection: <http://eres.lib.depaul.edu/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=4075&page=docs>, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection: <http://gvsu.edu/younglords/>

that what we were doing as a gang had to be against the capitalist institutions that are oppressing us.”²

While their youthful gang activity in the early 1960s was often impulsive and self-destructive, it can also be seen as a logical response to the pressures of growing up in Chicago under conditions of poverty, racial oppression, and social marginalization. While the group was multi-ethnic and multi-racial from the beginning, most of the early recruits were young men of Puerto Rican descent. These Puerto Rican youth were vastly outnumbered by non-hispanic Whites in their Lincoln Park neighborhood.³ As well, these young people and their families, many of them recent migrants, encountered myriad forms of discrimination and generally faced a lack of opportunity for economic advancement in Chicago. Perhaps the Young Lords’ early attempts to forge a collective identity can be seen as a form of incipient political organizing, as these young people attempted to deal with the on the ground ramifications of systemic injustices. While definitely plagued by what the original Young Lords co-founder Angel “Sal” del Rivero describes as a “gang mentality,” one could even argue that their numerous criminal activities (such as frequent turf fights, car thefts, and drug use, etc.) were simply misdirected ways of rebelling against an unjust colonial system that continued to exploit their families.⁴

² Frank Browning, “From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords,” *Ramparts*, October 1970. p 20.

³ Lilia Fernandez: “In 1960, Puerto Rican children and youths in Lincoln Park, both boys and girls aged ten to nineteen, numbered fewer than 500. White children of the same ages numbered well over 10,000... In the entire community area, there were over 4,800 white boys between the ages of ten and nineteen, compared to fewer than 175 Puerto Rican boys of the same ages, a ratio of 27 to 1.: Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, p 181.

⁴ Angel del Rivero, interview by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p16015coll6/id/45/rec/9>

The inchoate rebellious impulses of these early gang members were harnessed and transformed into something much more radical beginning in the mid-1960s. The evolution from street gang to revolutionary organization occurred in response to local pressures, but also within a milieu of global radical movements, elements of which pervaded the Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Certainly the Young Lords early on recognized the ways in which their communities were being targeted by local authorities and institutions. Perhaps most directly, their families were often the main targets of destructive city “urban renewal” projects. These projects were part of a larger gentrification scheme aimed at removing Lincoln Park’s poorest residents, and which would largely displace Puerto Ricans and other Latinos from the neighborhood. While modest urban renewal efforts had been underway in Lincoln Park since the mid-1950s, serious attempts to make Lincoln Park an attractive and fashionable home for young urban professionals began to take shape in the early 1960s. The city’s Community Conservation Board (CCB) produced a plan in 1962 that called for the widespread removal of deteriorating housing (and poor residents), to be replaced by homes for new middle- to upper-income residents.⁵ While the “development” did not come quickly, the destruction wrought by the city’s policies quickly impacted Puerto Rican residents. A 1970 *Ramparts* article sums up the results: “Entire blocks on Armitage, Halsted, and Larrabee streets now lie bare where Urban Renewal has leveled the homes of Puerto Ricans and poor whites.”⁶ Efforts to fight

⁵ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 179

⁶ Frank Browning, “From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords,” *Ramparts*, October 1970, 21.

against the continued gentrification of their neighborhood would become a focus of later Young Lords activism and would feature prominently in their newspapers.

Latinos, as well as other ethnic minorities and poor whites, had also long been subject to abuse at the hands of racist Chicago police. The hostile relationship between the police and the Puerto Rican community in Chicago came to a head in 1966 during the three days of street rebellion commonly referred to as the Division Street Riots. The rebellion was sparked by the police murder of a young unarmed Puerto Rican man. Twenty-two year old Arcelis Cruz was shot by the Chicago police on June 12, 1966, following the city's first Puerto Rican parade.⁷ YLO Minister of Information Omar López describes this incident as “the culmination of all the abuse that the police,” had levied against Puerto Ricans, “especiallly against young people.” He credits those three days as being “key to what happened later in the Puerto Rican community,” because they represented an increasingly militant attitude among Latino youth and awakened many to the “need to organize.”⁸ The YLO's later newspapers would accordingly reflect this militant attitude, often displaying a brazen antagonism towards the police and other state institutions.

This militant attitude was likely also encouraged by the dramatic rise of radical leftwing political activity in Chicago and across the country during this time. A milieu of radical movement activity, which permeated Lincoln Park in the late 1960s, undeniably played an important role in the politicization of these young gang members. Lincoln Park is well known for being the site of many political rallies, is perhaps most famous as

⁷ Judson Jeffries, “From Gang Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” p 289

⁸ Omar López, interview by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/16/rec/46>

the location where camping anti-war protesters were attacked by Chicago police during the infamous 1968 Democratic National Convention. As they grew into adulthood, Young Lords leaders were intrigued by and came to embrace the egalitarian ideals and revolutionary philosophies espoused by various movement leaders.

Undeniably the group which most influenced the Young Lords' political evolution was the Black Panther Party (BPP). The BPP at this time was intent on organizing young gang members in urban ghettos. In an upending of orthodox Marxist theory, the BPP considered the growing mass of so-called "unskilled" and unemployed poor people living in post-industrial cities, whom they referred to the *lumpenproletariat*, to be a class with incredible revolutionary potential. "As the ruling circle continue to build their technocracy," BPP Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton argued, "more and more of the proletariat will become unemployable, become *lumpen*, until they have become the popular class, the revolutionary class."⁹ One could arguably say that were it not for the efforts of Illinois BPP Chairman Fred Hampton in espousing these ideas and working to make them a reality in Chicago, the Young Lords Organization would never have emerged as a group committed to revolutionary struggle.

Perhaps equally instrumental in the Young Lords' adoption of radical politics was the leadership and intellectual curiosity of José "Cha Cha" Jiménez, an early member of the Young Lords gang. Jiménez, along with Ralph Rivera, helped shape the gang's transformation into a group that, while not revolutionary, was routinely engaging in community service activities. Yet Jiménez and Rivera were unsatisfied with the "gift-

⁹ Garrett Epps, "Huey Newton Speaks at Boston College, Presents Theory of 'Intercommunalism'," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 19, 1970. <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1970/11/19/huey-newton-speaks-at-boston-college/>

giving” approach they had taken. While sponsoring dances and food drives did help people in the community, they reasoned, these charity activities didn’t attack the real source of the poverty. When Fred Hampton and the Illinois Black Panthers burst onto the scene, Jiménez and Rivera saw the potential for a new model of struggle. Jiménez was also impressed by Fred Hampton’s charismatic leadership and inspired by the BPP’s affirmation of the revolutionary potential of gang members.¹⁰ After a series of meetings in 1968, the Young Lords Organization formally allied themselves with the BPP by joining the original Rainbow Coalition. The Rainbow Coalition brought street groups like the YLO and the Young Patriots (White Appalachian migrants who sported confederate flags on their jean jackets) together under the leadership of the Black Panther Party.¹¹ Fred Hampton also reached out to other gangs with somewhat less success, such as the failed alliance (due in large part to FBI interference) with Jeff Fort and the Blackstone Rangers. The Young Lords for their part also reached out to other gangs with some success, such as their work with the Latin Kings. The Latin Kings were the largest “Latin” street gang in Chicago, and like the Young Lords, had already been engaging in a variety of community service projects. The YLO leaders hoped to steer the Latin Kings towards the path of revolutionary struggle.¹²

¹⁰ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 183

¹¹ 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*, Vol 18 No 1 (2006) p 155-156.

¹² Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2005, p 78.

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*, Vol 18 No 1 (2006) p 155-156.

Judson Jeffries, “From Gangbangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” p 291.

In general Jiménez and others in the YLO deferred to the Panthers when it came to questions of ideology. Considering the BPP to be the “Vanguard Party” in the growing US revolutionary movement, YLO leaders looked to the Panthers for political guidance. In an interview printed in June 1969 in the BPP newspaper, *The Black Panther*, Jiménez clearly identifies the Panthers as the organization he considered most capable of providing “leadership for the people,” and teaching “correct strategic methods” to groups like the Young Lords.¹³ In addition to adopting the political ideology of the Black Panthers (which represented a unique development of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse Tung thought) the Young Lords Organization also embraced much of the BPP’s rhetorical and aesthetic sensibilities.

Also like the Panthers (and unlike many of the revolutionary groups that championed Maoist political ideology at this time) the Young Lords Organization did not spend much time arguing about theoretical minutiae. Their ideological development was instead based much more on a philosophy of praxis, whereby the implementation of “survival programs” and the carrying out of bold direct action protests were seen as important ways to connect with the people in their community, therefore better understanding their concerns. As YLO Minister of Information Omar López told a *Ramparts* reporter in 1970, they were too “concerned with the immediate needs of the people,” to argue much about questions of ideology. Besides, he says, “we’re better able to analyze when we’re out on the streets talking with the people. Ideas must come after actions, not just from reading Marx, Lenin or Mao.”¹⁴

¹³ “Interview with Cha Cha Jiménez,” *The Black Panther*, June 7, 1969, 17.

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The Birth of *Y.L.O.*

The Young Lords Organization began publishing their newspaper, *Y.L.O.*, on March 19, 1969 (Figures 1-2). Billed as the first of what was supposed to be a monthly publication, this issue features twelve pages of articles, artwork, and photographs, in both English and Spanish. The content deals with a variety of local, national, and international struggles. From neighborhood campaigns for welfare and housing rights to armed revolutionary movements, the first issue of *Y.L.O.* gives voice to a variety of protest communities.¹⁵

Subsequent issues, generally consisting of twenty pages, contain much of the same sort of material. With six issues published over the course of one year, this newspaper featured stories about a wide variety of activists whose messages were either ignored or distorted by the corporate press. Perhaps most importantly, *Y.L.O.* told the story of the Young Lords Organization. It provided a platform through which Young Lords leaders could explain their vision, promote their actions, and present their unfettered analyses. As well, it provided a forum for discussion within their community of supporters.

While drawing upon the energy and passion of a large community of activists, the actual content of *Y.L.O.* was produced by a relatively small group of dedicated volunteers. Led by Minister of Information Omar López, the publication of *Y.L.O.* depended on the hard work of a central core of leaders. López was the chief architect of the newspaper, and was ultimately responsible for marshaling the handful of volunteers who would write the articles, design the layout, and distribute the copies. YLO Chairman

¹⁵ Young Lords Organization, *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, p 1&9.



Y.L.O.



25
cents

affiliated with the Young Lords Organization

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

VOL. 1, NO. 1

Latinos Demandan Nuevo Director de Welfare

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

Mas de 300 personas demostraron en una Coalicion 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 Coalicion 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 apoyo 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 booing 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)

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 equal; 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)

Figure 1: Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, Cover.

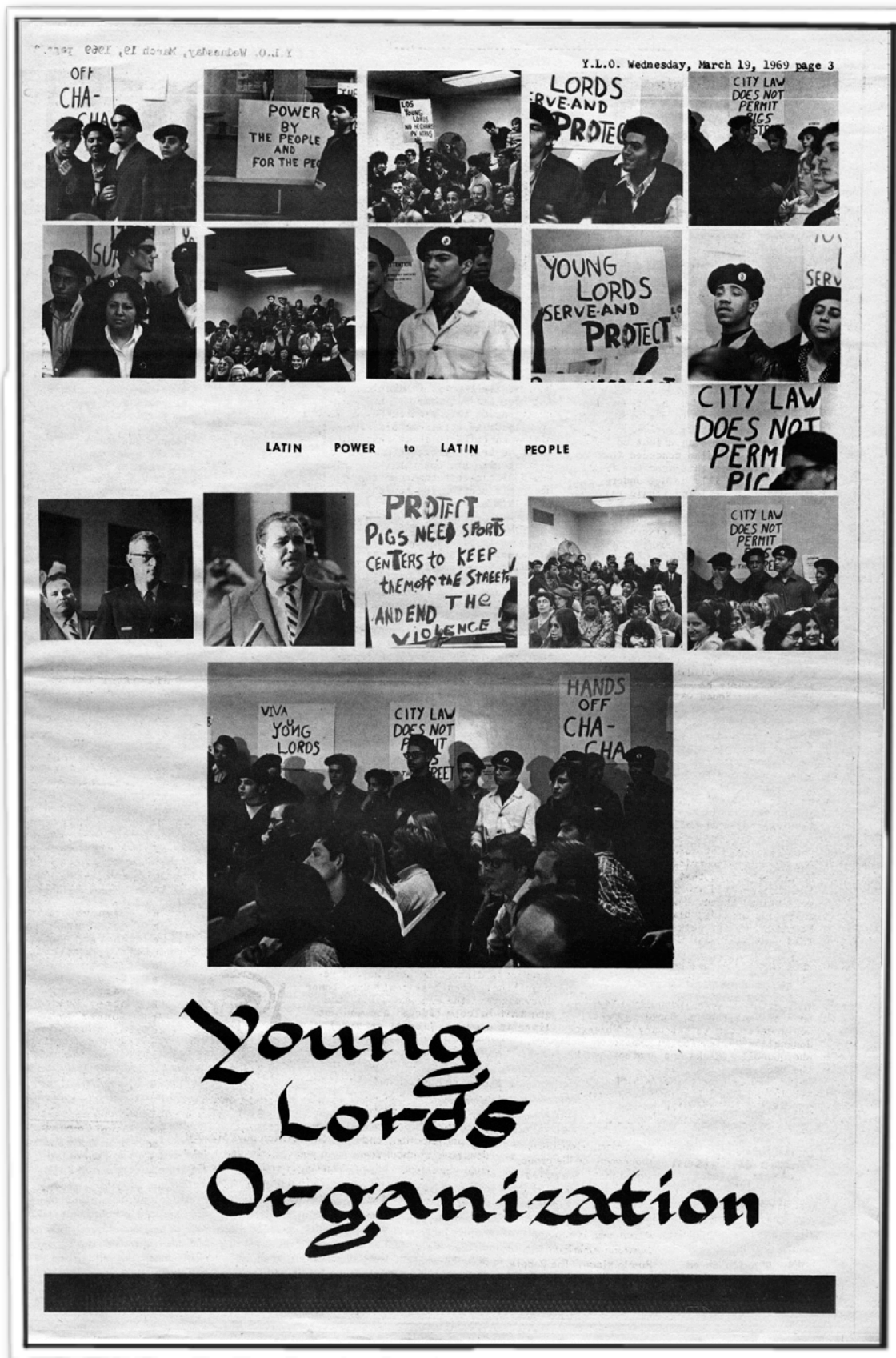


Figure 2: Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, Page 3.

José “Cha Cha” Jiménez provided much of the inspiration and political guidance that proved invaluable in getting the newspaper off the ground and setting its general tone. Other leaders such as Minister of Education Luis “Tony” Baez, Minister of Finance Alfredo Matias, Young Lords co-founder Angel “Sal” Del Rivero, Field Marshall Cosmoe Torres, among others, all played important roles in writing content, designing layout, and raising funds.¹⁶

Omar López was perhaps better equipped to engage in this sort of an undertaking than most of the other activists at this time. Not only was he several years older than most of the Young Lords members (including the leadership), he was much more literate. Unlike most other YLO activists, many of whom were high school dropouts (including some who hadn’t finished grammar school), López had excelled at school and had even attended classes at Loop City College (now Harold Washington College) in Chicago.¹⁷ Not having grown up a member of the gang, López was recruited to join the YLO at the age of twenty three. After a 1968 meeting with Cha Cha Jiménez, López quit school and devoted himself to full-time political activism.¹⁸

Yet despite his marginally higher level of education, López was in no way fully prepared to undertake such an ambitious project such as *Y.L.O.*. He says in a recent interview, “I think it’s important to understand that the people that put together the

¹⁶ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

Luis Baez, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 23, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/52/rec/40>

¹⁷ Young Lords Project: Omar Lopez Interview #1, February 10 1995, conducted by Miguel Morales, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction

¹⁸ Omar López, interview by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/16/rec/46>

newspaper, none of us were in any way familiar with journalism, but we felt that we needed to put something out.” What they lacked in experience these young activists quickly made up for in passion and a desire to learn. Modestly downplaying the important analysis and authentic artistic expression on display throughout *Y.L.O.*’s various issues, López admits there were often flaws in the writing and design. “In the final product,” he attests, “you can see that it was a struggle.” Yet he proudly speaks of the “grassroots” nature of the project. Describing the completion of each issue as “like giving birth,” López stresses that from the very beginning they wanted to have “the cadres,” the rank and file members of the organization, participate in crafting the newspapers. “The cadres were all street, young men and women who weren’t very good at academics, but nevertheless had something to say,” López asserts. “When we decided to do a newspaper,” he repeats, “we never envisioned this journalistic vehicle, you know. But it was something that we needed to put out.”¹⁹

An extended editorial featured prominently on the front page of the first issue explains *Y.L.O.*’s mission. While avoiding overtly ideological rhetoric, it stresses that in order for their movement to succeed they would need to articulate clear revolutionary goals and strategies to the people. Young Lords leaders, it argues, wanted to push the city’s burgeoning “Latin American movement” away from a demand for “reform in the system.” Instead they advocated militant tactics designed to achieve a much more radical political transformation. *Y.L.O.* was seen as a vehicle through which to guide the movement. It offered the Young Lords leaders a means to provide “constant clarification” of their goals and strategies, both “educating the masses” as well as

¹⁹ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

helping to further develop the consciousness of the city's activists—many of whom, the editorial asserts, worked “diligently, often militantly, to achieve reform measures,” but yet had not developed “a clear understanding of the American system and its complexities.”²⁰

Omar López, who as Minister of Information and chief architect of *Y.L.O.* was likely one of the primary authors of this editorial, explains in a recent interview that the Young Lords leaders always tried to produce material that was “didactic.” Whether through the pages of their newspapers or through the distribution of leaflets, the YLO Ministry of Information was constantly producing “propaganda” that aimed to inform and educate the community. Yet beyond this instructional purpose, López also contends that the newspaper was an important “vehicle to organize and engage people.”²¹

López' account squares firmly with the aforementioned editorial, which goes on to explain that “the role of the newspaper is not confined solely to the spreading of information, to political education, and to winning movement allies.” Perhaps more importantly, it asserts, “a newspaper can be the focus of a permanent organization.” *Y.L.O.* was seen as a central means by which to grow the Young Lords Organization, both giving it a central and consistent set of tasks around which to organize as well as providing a tool for recruitment.²²

The Black Panther

Not only were the Black Panthers an incredibly influential force in the political evolution of the Young Lords, they also played an important role in the birth of the YLO

²⁰ “Why a YLO Newspaper?” *Y.L.O.* Vol 1, No 1, March 19,1969, pg 1 & 9.

²¹ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

²² “Why a YLO Newspaper?” *Y.L.O.* Vol 1, No 1, March 19,1969, pg 1 & 9.

newspapers. From the very beginning *Y.L.O.* adopted much of the style and substance of the BPP weekly newspaper *The Black Panther*, mimicking many of its rhetorical and visual strategies. In addition to writing stories about the Black Panthers—such as an obituary for Fred Hampton after he was murdered by Chicago Police in December 1969 (Figure 3)—*Y.L.O.* also borrowed content and sometimes reprinted articles and artwork wholesale from *The Black Panther*—such as the BPP Ten Point Platform and Program and artwork by BPP Minister of Culture Emory Douglas both printed in the first issue (Figures 4-5).

Omar López credits *The Black Panther* for serving as a prototype for *Y.L.O.*, and also as being fundamental to the Young Lords decision to create a newspaper in the first place. “We always said that we were a propaganda unit,” he says. “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 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.”²³ According to the Black Panther model, the regular production of a newspaper served important organizational functions beyond simply the publishing of propaganda. Producing and distributing the newspaper created work, which the Black Panthers identified as an important necessity for the growth of new chapters just getting off the ground. As the BPP Chief of Staff David Hilliard remembers, “the paper...help[ed] us organize new chapters. ‘[W]hat do we do?’ new members in San Diego or Sacramento want to know.

²³ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

PAGE 14
Y. L. O.
JANUARY 1970

“I came down from the mountain to the valley.....”

Nuestro hermano Fred Hampton líder de los Panteras Negras de Illinois, fue brutalmente asesinado por los "puercos" policia de Chicago en la madrugada de Jueves 4 de Diciembre. Casi a esa misma hora los cuarteles nacionales de la Organización Young Lords en Chicago fueron victimas de un ataque para incendiar dichas oficinas con un mecanismo explosivo.

La Organización Young Lords, que defiende los derechos de los Puertorriqueños en Chicago, Nueva York y en todo el país, toma esta oportunidad para poner en alerta y sobre aviso a todas las comunidades acerca de la gravedad y el peligro que conlleva estos ataques en contra de estas organizaciones YLO y Panteras.

Las tácticas de la administración de Richard Nixon, y sus representantes estatales aquí y en Puerto Rico, son las mismas tácticas usadas en contra de el pueblo Vietnamita y fueron las mismas tácticas utilizadas por Adolfo Hitler y sus partido Nazi Aleman para exterminar la raza Judía.

El asesinato político de Manuel Ramos, joven puertorriqueño y además miembro militante de YLO en Chicago, marco el comienzo de la ola de represión mas sangrienta y fascista en la historia de America.

Hoy lloramos las muertes de Fred Hampton y Mark Clark. Lloramos también los arrestos que dirige la administración del titere Luis A. Ferre en nuestra madre patria Borinquen. Tomando en cuenta la gravedad de estos sucesos llegamos a la conclusión de que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos de America se dispone, en forma abierta, a la sangrienta tarea de exterminar la raza Negra, Puertorriqueña y, o cualquier, persona o grupos de personas que traten de una forma o de otra de romper las cadenas del Imperialismo Yankee.

La Organización Young Lords ve como un deber patriótico el que se desarrolle una campaña intensa de orientación y de educación en todas nuestras comunidades de habla Hispana. YLO ya comenzo esta campaña y se esta ocupando de alertar a nuestra gente sobre la necesidad que hayde unificar todas la razas oprimidas en un solo bloque de lucha colectiva.

La Organización Young Lords hace un llamado a todos los pobres y explotados en America a rededicar sus vidas a la ardua tarea con que nos ha confrontado el imperialismo en el mundo entero.

Luchemos juntos bajo los ejemplos sentados por los que han caído en las batallas por la liberación de Puerto Rico las Americas y todas las gestas gloriosas que han caracterizado las luchas de pueblo y de clases a traves de la historia del universo. Detengamos en esta forma el genocidio de nuestra gloriosa raza.

Todo el Poder al Pueblo!
Viva Puerto Rico Libre!
Venceremos!

“Baje de la montana al valle...”

Our brother, Fred Hampton, Deputy Chairman, of the Black Panther Party, Chicago, Illinois was murdered by the Chicago pigs Thursday morning December 4.

On this same night an attempt was made to burn the National Headquarters of the Young Lords Organization at 834 W. Armitage, Chicago Illinois.

The Young Lords Organization would like to inform the community of the seriousness of these gestapo tactics being used by the Nixon Administration and the city against the brothers and sisters of all organizations that serve the people.

The political murders of brothers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark plus the wounding of several brothers on the 2300 block of Monroe St., the murder of Manuel Ramos on May 4, 1969, the arrests imprisonments and murder of our people clearly marked the beginning of Nazi-like extermination being planned and carried out by Richard Nixon and his pigs against our brothers here nad in our motherland, Puerto Rico.

This is the reason why the Young Lords Organization has been informing the community and stressing the importance of the struggle that is being waged by the Black, Brown and poor whites tes for self-determination and the need to bring all struggle of poor people to one united front.

The Young Lords Organization is calling for unity NOW! or be wiped out by the pigs that continue to vamp on us like Nazi storm troopers.

Lets unite and struggle together under the examples of the great men who have died and will continue to die for our people in Puerto Rico and the Americas.



¡FRED VIVE!

Yo soy revolucionario”


.....I AM A REVOLUTIONARY”

Figure 3: “I Came Down From the Mountain to the Valley”
Y.L.O., Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1970, p 14.

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.

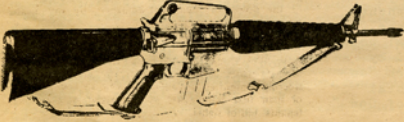
We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore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

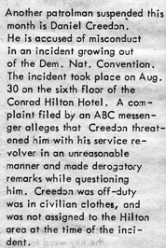
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers 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 4: "October 6, 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program," Y.L.O., Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, p 8

—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 last week by 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 interest in the police force. Miller stated that only 10% 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 their own actions, there's tendency not to do good investigation," he said. Miller also indicated that he believed that policemen accused of brutality during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago were offered early duty until the charges are investigated and their cases concluded.



In testimony before the Senate House economic

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

jailed. But Huey P. Newton can still succeed in his efforts to liberate black people if black people will give support to his efforts. He is not being tried for any crime that he has committed (there is no evidence to that effect). He is being tried for attempting to stop the criminal acts of the white racist power structure. He is being tried for seeking justice for all black people. If we allow Huey's trial to end in a conviction and then do nothing about it, we should no longer complain about our treatment in America because we deserve no more.

Black brothers stop vamping on the hippies. They are not your enemy. You enemy, right now, is the white racist pigs who support this corrupt system. Your enemy is the Tom nigger who reports to his white slavemaster every day. Your enemy is the fat capitalist who exploits your people daily. Your enemy is the politician who uses pretty words to deceive you. Your enemy is the racist pigs who use Nazi-type tactics and force to intimidate black expressionism. Your enemy is not the hippies. Your blind reactionary acts endanger the BLACK PANTHER PARTY members and its revolutionary movements. WE HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THE HIPPIES. LEAVE THEM ALONE. Or—the BLACK PANTHER PARTY will deal with you!

MAIL-ORDERS MAY BE SENT TO:
(NOTE: PLEASE INCLUDE 10¢ FOR POSTAGE & HANDLING)
BLACK PANTHER PARTY
CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS
P.O. BOX 8641
EMERYVILLE BRANCH
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94608

‘[S]ell the newspaper,’ we answered.”²⁴

In addition to helping connect with outside activists and other leftwing organizations (thereby securing important financial support and strengthening bonds of solidarity), distributing newspapers provided the Black Panthers a way to recruit new members into the group. Hilliard remembers 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.”²⁵

Similarly, López remembers sending Young Lords activists out to distribute the *Y.L.O.* newspapers. They went to the 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 says 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 newspaper and explain to them why we were talking about whatever issue was going on at the time, and to talk about all the other things that the Young Lords were doing in the community.”²⁶

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

“Young Lords Serve and Protect”

From the very beginning it was clear to the Young Lords that they were to be the targets of various agents of repression. Perhaps the institution most consistently identified in the pages of *Y.L.O.* as an existential threat was the Chicago police. Blacks, Latinos, and other racial minorities had long been subject to disrespectful treatment at the hands of the Chicago police. As more and more people in the city began to organize, they were increasingly met with violence by local authorities. From the very beginning the Young Lords newspapers focused on issues of police brutality and the role of the police force in suppressing movements, exemplified by the fact that nine separate items about the police were printed in the first issue alone, representing roughly a third of all content.²⁷ This trend continued in subsequent issues of *Y.L.O.*. Several of these articles dealt specifically with the police repression directed against the YLO leaders and their allies. The leader who seemed to receive the most police harassment, and whose legal challenges received the most coverage in the pages of *Y.L.O.*, was Chairman José “Cha Cha” Jiménez.²⁸ Yet he was far from the only Young Lord leader to feel the heat of police harassment.

Perhaps the most important and in-depth story about police repression concerns a tragic event that was pivotal in helping to unify the Young Lords’ political perspective. On Saturday, May 3, 1969, YLO leader Manuel Ramos was shot and killed by an off-

²⁷ *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969.

²⁸ Examples: “Hands Off Cha Cha and the YLO: Puerto Ricans Demand Justice For Brother Cha Cha,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 5, January 1970, p 15.

“Speak Out: Straight From Moussee,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 6, February, March 1970, p 2.

“Justicia Para Rafael,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 6, February, March 1970, p 3.

“Oppression, Repression, Aggression!” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 6, February, March 1970, p 11.

“Cha Cha: Guilty of Innocent,” *Pitirre*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Summer 1970, p 2.

duty Chicago police officer named James Lamb while standing outside of a Young Lords gathering.²⁹ Interestingly, this tragedy and the seeming lack of justice that followed in its wake actually helped to focus the rebellious energy of the group. Omar López, YLO Minister of Information, says that Jiménez pointed to this murder “to convince the rest of us to what the Young Lords should be.” Up to that point Jiménez still faced resistance from a number of YLO members in regards to his effort to steer the group towards revolutionary politics. “When Manuel was killed,” López asserts, “everyone was convinced they had to do something.”³⁰ The second issue of *Y.L.O.*, published in May 1969, accordingly provided extensive coverage of the murder and the community response, devoting the cover and several pages to the memory of Ramos (Figures 6-8).³¹

Besides police brutality, another local issue that received extensive coverage on the pages of *Y.L.O.* was the Young Lords’ response to the city’s planned destruction of their community through “urban renewal” projects. Several articles specifically discuss the Lincoln Park Community Conservation Council (LPCCC), a group appointed by Mayor Daley to represent the community in its dealings with the city. Working alongside other community groups (often through the Poor People’s Coalition in Lincoln Park), the YLO consistently targeted the LPCCC through direct action protests. Accordingly, numerous articles in *Y.L.O.* provide a critique of the LPCCC—citing its lack of diversity and failure to address the concerns of poorer residents—along with detailed

²⁹ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, p 187
Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1969, p 3

³⁰ Young Lords Project: Omar Lopez Interview #2, February 17 1995, conducted by Miguel Morales, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction

³¹ *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1969, p 3.



Figure 6: Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1969, Cover

Y.L.O. May, 1969 Page 3



"WHEREVER DEATH MAY SURPRISE US
LET IT BE WELCOME IF OUR BATTLE CRY HAS
REACHED EVEN ONE RECEPTIVE EAR, AND ANOTHER
HAND REACHES OUT TO TAKE UP OUR ARMS, AND
NEW MEN COME FORWARD TO JOIN IN OUR FUNERAL
PROCESSION WITH THE CHATTERING OF MACHINE GUNS
AND NEW CALLS FOR BATTLE AND VICTORY."

Che

"Man! I believe everyone should be able to walk free, whether you're black, white, or brown." —Manuel Ramos

May 8 (FRED)—On Saturday night, May 3, a birthday party was held for Orlando Davila at his home in a first-floor apartment at 467 West 27th Street here in Chicago. Orlando is a member of the Young Lords Organization, and a number of Young Lords were at the party. Sometime between midnight and 1 a.m. people at the party heard loud voices outside on the street. Several people went to the door to see what was going on. A few moments earlier one of the young men had gone outside, and when the rest arrived at the door they saw their friend near a man dressed in civilian clothes and waving a gun around. According to witnesses, the gun was a luger, a type which police have been prohibited from carrying while on duty. One of the people from the party told the stranger with the gun to take it easy. At that point, without warning, the man fired two shots at the group standing in the doorway. The first shot hit Manuel Ramos, a member of the Young Lords Organization, in the head near his right eye. The second shot struck another member of the Young Lords, Raphael Rivera, in the neck, berets at the time. Having shot the two men, the stranger—later identified as off-duty pig James Lamb (Star 12509), assigned to the Seventh District—neither examined the two wounded men nor attempted any arrests. He entered a building across the street from Davila's home.

Almost immediately, uniformed pigs from the Ninth District (35th and Lowe) arrived at the scene. It is not known who called them. Lamb appeared and identified himself to the pigs as one of their own. He then pointed out four YLO members, and they were arrested by the newly-arrived pigs. The pigs made no attempt to aid Manuel. With one Lord holding his head, the pigs picked Manuel up by one arm and one leg and threw him into the back of their paddy wagon. They took Manuel and the second-wounded Lord to the hospital.

Manuel died in the hospital's emergency room, minutes after his arrival, leaving a wife and two children aged one and three. The second Lord survived and is recovering.

The four men arrested were Orlando Davila, Pedro Martinez, Jose Lind, and Saoul Del Rivero. They were charged with aggravated battery. When an attempt was made to get them released from the 35th and Lowe Station, the pigs first denied that they were there. When faced with a witness who saw them brought to the station, the pigs said that they hadn't understood who was being asked for, and asked: "Why don't they have good American names?" At the bail hearing on Sunday, the court was informed by the State's Attorney that a police officer had been shot in the incident and that he was in critical condition and that if he died the four Lords would be charged with murder. The whole story was a complete fabrication, presumably done in order to get the court to set a high bail. Bail was set at \$3,000 on each of the four men.

Pig murderer James Lamb was not arrested. He told pigs on the scene that he had been threatened with a gun. Press reports indicate that no gun was found, although the pigs now claim that they have the gun. In cases such as this weapons are usually produced on order when needed out of police supplies. There were reports that police attempted to place Manuel's fingerprints on a gun at the hospital after his death. Despite the fact that approximately 10 eyewitnesses saw Lamb gun down two men in an act of wanton murder, he was not arrested, not charged, not suspended—and is free to kill again.

At a protest meeting at the 35th and Lowe pig-pen, Manuel's sister and brother pleaded with the Ninth District commander to arrest Lamb. The commander categorically refused to take any action and suggested that they take their complaints to the State's Attorney. In order to do this the Lords would have to turn over affidavits, testimony, and evidence surrounding the events to the same people who are prosecuting the four Lords charged with

aggravated battery. To do so is out of the question. It would involve presenting the entire defense case to the prosecution prior to the Lords' trial and would mean presenting the entire prosecution case to Lamb prior to any charges being brought against him. The next court date for the four Lords is May 19 in Branch 49 Court, 61st and Racine, at 9:30 a.m.

THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF MANUEL RAMOS

(FRED)

SUNDAY: All day Sunday was spent in a furious attempt to raise \$1200 ransom for the four Young Lords who had been busted the previous night. While in the past raising that amount of money for bond in student and "civil rights" demonstrations had proved very easy, Sunday's experience was somewhat different. It took nearly 12 hours of constant effort on the part of many people to raise the money. The bulk of the money ended up coming out of the pockets of movement radicals. The traditional source of bail money, well-to-do liberals, had suddenly dried up.

Some money was raised at a memorial rally at Haymarket Square which had been called by the city's liberal trade-unionists. When Bill Garvey of the Steelworkers, who was running the event, was asked to allow a speaker for the YLO to make a plea for money, he refused. However, Eliseo Medina, a grape-boycott organizer who had already been scheduled to speak, agreed to make the plea and did so. The speaker for the IWW also asked for donations to the Lords. From the crowd of about two to three hundred a total of \$172 was collected. Another collection was made at a special showing of a Newsreel film at the Playboy Theatre, and several hundred dollars was collected there. By late afternoon the money had been raised and the Lords were freed.

MONDAY: On Monday a rally was scheduled under the joint sponsorship of the Young Lords Organization, the Black Panther Party, and the Young Patriots. The rally was called for

7 p.m. in an empty lot at the corner of Armitage and Halsted. After a number of speakers, the crowd (estimates range from nearly 1,000 to over 2,000) took to the street on foot and in cars. The people marched down the middle of the street ignoring lights, traffic, and police permits. The police made no attempt to interfere. The march wound its way through Latin and white poor and working-class neighborhoods all the way out to the funeral home at Oakley and Hirsch where Manuel's body had been taken.

As the crowds moved through the streets they talked to the people who had come out to see what was going on, urging them to join the march. Leaflets were passed out and a loudspeaker repeated the message "People, join us tonight in a march and memorial for our brother, Manuel Ramos, who was murdered by the racist pig. All power to the people!" After hearing from members of Manuel's family at the funeral home, a caravan of some 75 cars drove to the 35th and Lowe pig-pen (a half-block from Mayor Daley's house). On the way the caravan ignored traffic lights and continued to repeat its message over the loudspeakers.

At the pig station the people were greeted by a heavily-prepared force. A giant paddy wagon was standing by and helmeted police were standing all around the area. Police had blocked off Lowe Street, making it impossible to get near the Mayor's house. The district commander, surrounded by a number of other high-ranking officers, was standing in front of the entrance to the station. As the group arrived, the commander stated that he would arrest anyone using a megaphone or blowing a car horn. He also said that he would not allow any speeches, nor would he allow any rally to be held. He said that he would personally listen to any grievances and would allow the Lords to hold a press conference. He insisted, however, that they "hurry up and get it over with".

Several Lords and members of Manuel's family as well as a few other people moved forward to speak with the commander and the press while a line

(continued on page 8)



Figure 8: *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1969, p 10-11

descriptions of the protests mounted against it.³²

As well, much of the protest activity covered in the pages of *Y.L.O.* centered around issues of gentrification more generally, and included calls to hold nearby institutions accountable for their role in driving low income residents from Lincoln Park. The McCormick Presbyterian Theological Seminary, DePaul University, and Augustana Hospital, for example, all came under fire in *Y.L.O.* articles—blasted for their latest

³² Examples include:

“Students Confront DePaul,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No.1, March 19, 1969, p 4.

“YLO visits urban renewal,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, p 11.

Omar López, “Se Le Niegan Viviendas A Los Pobres,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 6, February-March, 1970, p 4.

Omar López, “Housing Denied To Poor People,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 6, February-March, 1970, p 5.

“Urban Renewal Case,” *Pitirre*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Summer 1970, p 2.

development plans, all of which would presumably entail the displacement of local residents.³³

The McCormick Seminary received the most significant coverage, as it was the site of a five day occupation by the Poor People's Coalition (a group which included the YLO) in May 1969.³⁴ An article in the second issue of *Y.L.O.* (Figure 9) details the events, describing the individuals involved, and explaining their motivations:

"McCormick, in conjunction with other institutions in the community...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 through institutional take over of housing or by housing being priced upwards out of reach of the former residents...the groups who have seized the building are Latin, black and white. They are by and large politically radical and are questioning the legitimacy of the institution and its power, rather than simply trying to force a few concessions..."³⁵

The Young Lords' participation in these sorts of coalitions, as well as the extensive coverage they received in *Y.L.O.*, demonstrates a commitment to building a movement that was non-dogmatic and non-sectarian. The Young Lords worked with a variety of groups in Lincoln Park and beyond, including progressive community organizations (Poor Peoples Coalition, etc.), unions (United Farm Workers, wildcat UPS strikers, etc.), radical groups of Latinos and other ethnic minorities (Latin American Defense Organization, Black Panthers, Indians of All Tribes, etc.), and radical Whites

³³ Examples include:

"Students Confront DePaul," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, p 4.

"McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1969, p 4.

"A Peoples' Struggle," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1969, p 14.

"McCormick Revisited," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1970, p 2.

³⁴ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 191.

³⁵ "McCormick Take-Over," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1969, p 4 & 15.

Y.L.O. May, 1969 Page 4

MCCORMICK TAKE-OVER

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-



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 (30% 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 9: "McCormick Take-Over," Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1969, p 4.

(Young Patriots, Rising Up Angry, etc.). The pages of *Y.L.O.* reflect the Young Lords' efforts to draw these movements together, as it gave coverage to all of these protest communities and more.

The Young Lords complex relationship with other gangs is also on display in *Y.L.O.*, sometimes in interesting ways. An article in the May 1969 issue of *Y.L.O.*, for example, rather diplomatically discusses rumors that the Latin Kings were planning to physically stop a march for welfare justice organized by a coalition of several groups. While admitting that certain members of the Latin Kings had previously "disrupted planning meetings and threatened violence" towards community organizers, the article tries to lay blame for these hostilities on the Youth Action Council, a "YMCA-sponsored group paid by the city 'to keep things cool'." While individual Latin King members are portrayed as having been manipulated into these actions, the Latin Kings organization as a whole is shown to have a more enlightened understanding of the situation, as the rumored disruption of the march never occurs.³⁶ The Latin Kings were the largest "Latin" street gang in Chicago. While the Latin Kings far outnumbered the Young Lords, the YLO had sought to develop good relations between the two groups, in part with the hope of pushing the Latin Kings further to the left. They had some success in these efforts, as can be seen in the Fall 1970 issue of *Y.L.O.*, which celebrates the participation of both the Young Lords and Latin Kings (along with several other gangs) in a United Puerto Rican Coalition (Figure 10).³⁷

³⁶ It is also interesting to note that the article accused the disrupters of setting-up Obed López, and having him falsely arrested. Obed was a leader in the Latin American Defense Organization (LADO), one of the groups that was sponsoring the rally. He was also the older brother of YLO Minister of Information Omar López's brother. This is not mentioned in the article.
500 March for Welfare Justice," *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1969, p 5.

³⁷ "El Barrio Esta Despierto," *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall, 1970, p 5.

'El Barrio Esta Despierto'

5



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.



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



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 prowling 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, and a Puerto Rican revolutionary, was shot to death by an off-duty cop in May, 1969. Many parents and young people from the Division Street area came up to the wake and the march we had for Brother Manuel Ramos. The people in the community saw that the cops are the enemy of all the people, black, white and Latin. They had seen many Latin youths ripped apart by police bullets before — but never had the people united and made such a show of strength and rage as we did around the murder of Manuel.

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 victims 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 rig Casey'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!

Of course the focus of the organization, and the newspaper, wasn't always just on street demonstrations and confronting the "pigs." Like the Panthers, the Young Lords initiated a number of "survival programs" aimed at serving the needs of the people in the community. It should be noted that for the YLO these programs were only possible because of their audacious and years long "occupation" of the Armitage Methodist Church located in the heart of Lincoln Park's Puerto Rican community. While the church's progressive pastor Bruce Johnson and his liberal white congregation supported the YLO's plan to use the church basement for an office and as a site for their planned "survival programs" (which included a food pantry, health clinic, day-care center, and children's breakfast program), the church also had a much more conservative congregation made up largely of exiles from Castro's Cuba. By June 1969 the Young Lords had grown impatient with intransigence on the part of this second congregation, so they occupied the building, renaming it "the People's Church." This audacious action garnered wide media attention, including in *Y.L.O.*, and drew the attention and the ire of dark and powerful forces intent on squelching this movement.

During the midnight hours of September 29-30, 1969, Reverend Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia were brutally stabbed to death in their own home by assailants whose identities are still unknown. The following issue of *Y.L.O.* printed an obituary of Bruce and Eugenia entitled "You Can't Kill A Revolution" (Figure 11) which states that their murders "deeply saddened" the members of the YLO, whom "have come to respect them greatly for their dedication to the oppressed people, to the Puerto Rican community, and to our organization." While suspicion was cast in a number of directions, the crime was ultimately never solved. The Young Lords for their part

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 anyone 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 11: "You Can't Kill a Revolution," Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall 1969, p 3.

suspected the Cuban congregation, the Chicago police, or even the FBI of having a hand in the murders, possibly as retribution for their support of the YLO. The obituary claims that the murders were “meant as a warning to all people fighting for their just rights.” It continues by stating that, “[t]hese murders show to what vicious lengths the ruling class will go to prevent the growth of our just struggle.” Instead of silencing the movement, however, it claims that “[w]e will build them the highest memorial anyone 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.”³⁸ Sadly, many Lords have described these murders as the beginning of the end for their struggle. Not only did these murders have a chilling effect on some of the activists themselves, a cloud of suspicion hung over the Young Lords movement that interfered with future coalition building.³⁹

“Latin Power to Latin People”

While the Young Lords Organization has often been simplistically pegged as solely a “Puerto Rican nationalist” group, it can more accurately be said that they were a multi-ethnic and multi-racial group that identified their political project as both internationalist in nature as well as based primarily on serving the needs of poor people in their immediate community, whatever their national background. Omar López asserts that “as a gang” the Young Lords “had African Americans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, and even a few Whites, and so you know it was already a reflection of how the Young

³⁸ “You Can’t Kill a Revolution,” *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall, 1969, p 3.
Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, p 192.

³⁹ Alfredo Matias Interview #1 Friday, September 29, 1995 DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction

Lords were made up from the beginning.”⁴⁰ As well, while the overwhelming majority of the members were of Puerto Rican descent, several key Young Lords leaders and contributors to *Y.L.O.* were of Mexican background, including López himself, as well as Young Lords co-founder Angel “Sal” Del Rivero, and Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin (perhaps the most prominent female Young Lords leader who contributed important content to *Y.L.O.*).

Examining the pages of *Y.L.O.*, one can see that the Young Lords worked to cultivate a shared Latino identity inclusive of both Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. They promoted themselves as an organization that primarily served the needs of their local Latino community, while at the same time standing in solidarity with the unique struggles of poor Black, Brown, and White communities. Articles, images, and slogans in *Y.L.O.* often reference the needs of “Latinos” and the “Latin American movement,” including their rephrasing of the BPP slogan, “Latin Power to Latin People” (Figure 2).⁴¹ López, who was born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, and moved with his parents at age thirteen to Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood in 1958, explains that the feeling among Latinos in Chicago at that time was that they had to stick together, as there “were so few of us...there was no room for us to discriminate amongst ourselves.”⁴²

As well, the Young Lords at times made efforts to connect themselves more directly with the Chicano movement. Very early on, for example, they created buttons

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

⁴¹ *Y.L.O.* Vol 1, No 1, March 19, 1969, p 3.

⁴² Young Lords Project: Omar Lopez Interview #1, February 10 1995, conducted by Miguel Morales, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction Omar López, interview by José Jiménez, February 2, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/16/rec/46>

with the phrase “*Tengo Aztlán En Mi Corazón*” (I have Aztlan In My Heart).⁴³ As well, *Y.L.O.* routinely covered the struggles of Chicanos in the Southwest and elsewhere through features such as the “Carta de Aztlán” in the January 1970 issue (Figure 12), which presents a callout for solidarity with both *Los Siete de La Raza* (seven San Francisco Chicano youths whose 1970 trial became a *cause célèbre* for the Latin American community) and the United Farm Workers’ ongoing grape strike.⁴⁴

Interestingly, the next page of that issue provides coverage to the budding American Indian movement, with an article detailing the story of the famed occupation of Alcatraz by the group Indians of All Tribes (IAT). The article recounts a recent Thanksgiving visit to the site made by a delegation of Young Lords, led by Cha Cha Jiménez (Figure 13). Articles such as these demonstrate the consistent internationalist perspective of the Young Lords, and the ways in which this perspective pushed them to see their movement as linked with the movements of other colonized national minorities living within the United States

Yet with all that being said, *Y.L.O.* was most clearly and consistently used as a vehicle to promote the movement for Puerto Rican independence. Myriad in-depth articles provide historical background and lessons about the independence movement and nationalist leaders such as Pedro Albizu Campos, Dolores “Lolita” Lebrón Sotomayor, and Ramón Emeterio Betances. Still other articles discuss contemporary events and provide persuasive arguments. The fifth issue of *Y.L.O.*, published in January 1970, devotes ten full pages (exactly half of the newspaper), including the

⁴³ Angel del Rivero, interview by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p16015coll6/id/45/rec/9>

⁴⁴ “Carta de Aztlán,” *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1970, p 16.

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 vamp down on our young brothers, hauling them into 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 Alvarado 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 la 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. Road blocks have been set up—people stopped at random.

En la pinta: The brothers have been treated as inhumanely 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.

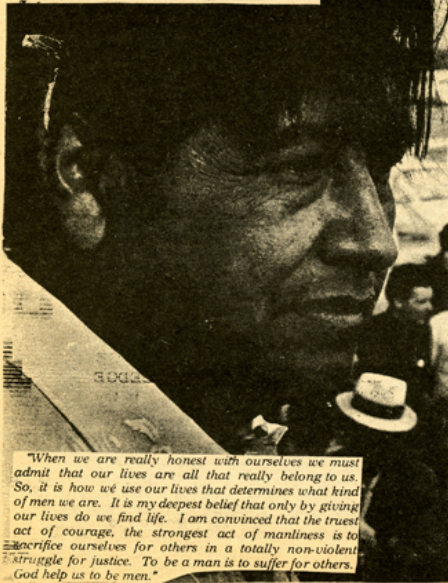
Examining this incident and the aftermath it provoked, you can see the political nature of the case. It affects each and every brown person walking the streets of the Mission, or any street in Aztlan. It involves our right to defend ourselves, our people, against this racist oppressive system. One of 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 ustod?

We call on every carnale to help us defend our brothers to keep them from the fas 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

CHAVEZ



"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.



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 15 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 practice 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.



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 smokestack 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."



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."

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 todas las Américas reconocen plenamente y agradecen profundamente el apoyo dado a nuestra causa por LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS YOUNG LORDS Y EL PUEBLO DE BORINQUEN."

**FREE
AMERICA
NOW**

Figure 13: "Give Alcatraz Back to the Indians,"
Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1970, p 17.

cover, to the Puerto Rican independence movement (Figure 14).⁴⁵ As well, the Young Lords used this newspaper to cultivate an image of themselves as a group that was deeply influenced by Puerto Rican heritage. Banner images and slogans, such as “*Tengo Puerto Rico En Mi Corazón*” (I Have Puerto Rico In My Heart), and “*Machete Redendor*” (Machete Redeemer) allude to this heritage (Figure 14). The “*Machete Redentor*” banner image (an outstretched arm wielding a machete) is an allusion to the folk hero figure of the *jíbaro*. The *jíbaros* were the Puerto Rican peasants that traditionally lived in the mountains or forests and are still often held to represent the hard-working, traditional, and exploited mass of Puerto Ricans. With many of the Young Lords not that far removed from parents or grandparents that could have worn the label *jíbaro*, it seems the implication is that the “*lumpen*” *jíbaros* living in the urban ghettos will have to arm themselves in order to free their nation and their people from tyranny.

Some Young Lords had deeply personal connections to the island and the Puerto Rican Independence movement, having either grown up there or having spent extended periods of time there. Stories these individuals told highlighting the vibrancy of the Puerto Rican movement no doubt electrified other Young Lords cadres. For others one can imagine that a sense of loss and longing for a homeland denied them may in part explain their intense identification with Puerto Rican nationalism. Having grown up in Chicago, many of these youth had never been to Puerto Rico. Yet vastly outnumbered by Whites in Lincoln Park who didn’t consider them to be real Americans, they likely felt marginalized from the American mainstream. They clearly identified themselves as

⁴⁵ For other articles on the movement for independence, see: “Historia Latina,” *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1, No. 1, March 19, 1969, p 7; “Celebracion De La Revolucion De Lares,” *Pitirre*, Vol. 2, No. 7, p 6; “Los Nuestros: Pedro Albizu Campos,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p 8.

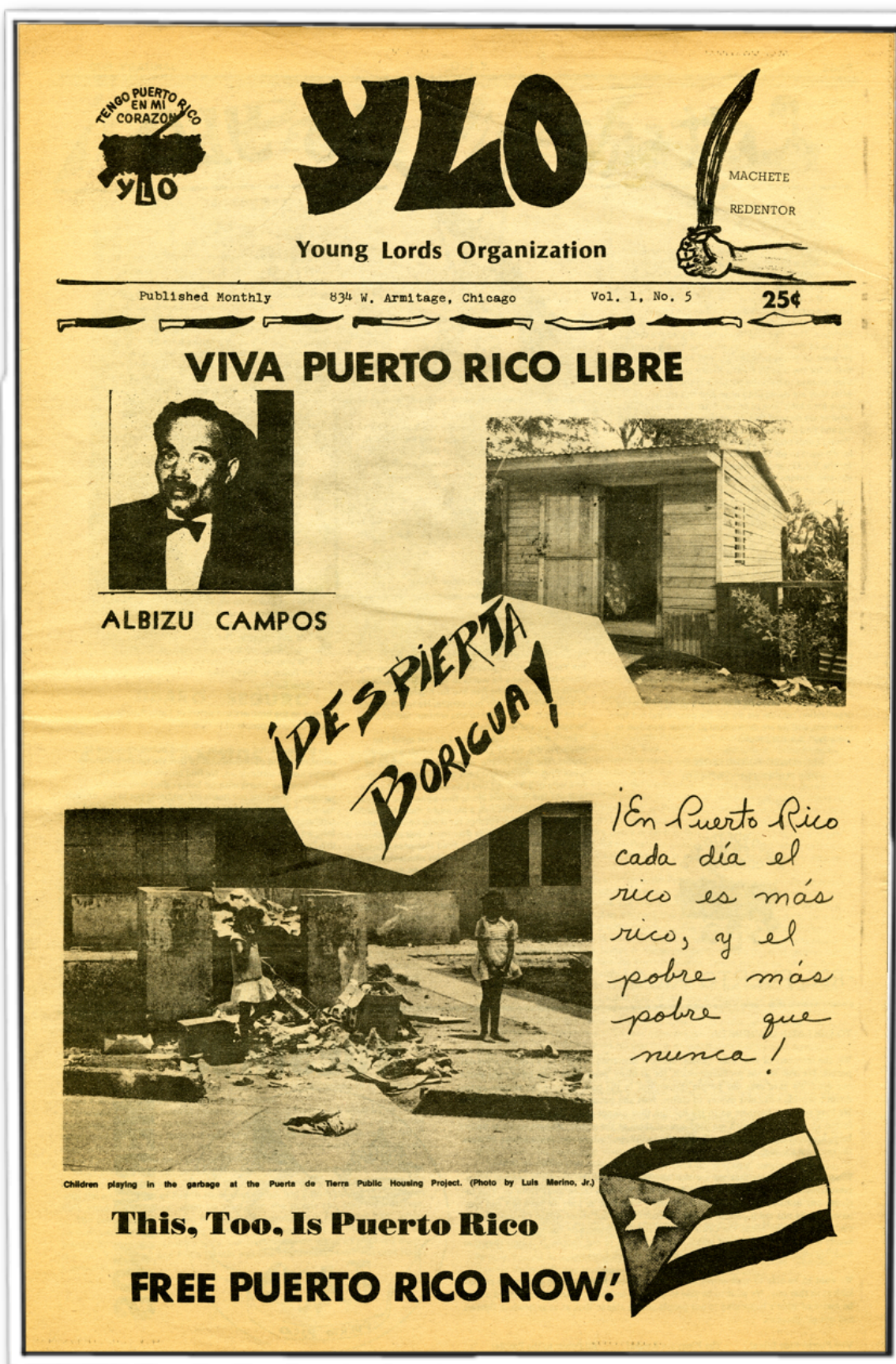


Figure 14: Y.L.O. Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1970, cover.

Puerto Ricans, whether they had direct family ties or (in some cases) fairly tenuous connections to the island, in part at least because they weren't accepted as Americans.

Chairman José "Cha Cha" Jiménez was born in 1948 in Caguas, Puerto Rico, but moved to the United States with his parents at the age of two. Consequently he grew up in Chicago, mostly in Lincoln Park. He did return to the island briefly, however, while still an adolescent. After a number of run-ins with the law, a judge ordered him deported to Puerto Rico for one year in an effort to keep him out of trouble. No doubt his experiences there helped shape his attitude towards the island and its place in their community's movements, although they did not prevent further run-ins with the law and jail-time upon his return to Chicago.⁴⁶

Others had deeper connections to the island, such as Minister of Finance Alfredo Matias. 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.⁴⁷ No doubt his stories, personal history, and ties to the island intrigued and inspired others in the group.

Omar López specifically credits Ralph Rivera, another influential early Young Lords leader, with the initial push to more explicitly embrace the cause of Puerto Rican independence. López says of Rivera, "he was...inspired because of his visit to Puerto Rico. He came back and...began to direct the group in the nationalist direction."⁴⁸ As

⁴⁶ Judson Jeffries, "From Gang Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries," p 290

⁴⁷ Alfredo Matias Interview #1 Friday, September 29, 1995 DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction

⁴⁸ Young Lords Project: Omar Lopez Interview #3, February 24 1995, conducted by Miguel Morales, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department

well, López remembers that very soon after their exploits became widely publicized the YLO “used to have a lot of input from the old time nationalists that were still living in Chicago. I remember a man called Manuel Ravago,” López says, “he was from the period of the Nationalist history when Lolita Lebrón and all those guys went and shot up congress.” After hinting at Ravago’s role in financing these exploits, López proudly remembers that Ravago donated two flags to the Young Lords, one the Nationalist Party flag (black with white cross) the other a flag of Lares (site of the *Grito de Lares*), both of which were used displayed at People’s Church and also taken out to lead rallies.⁴⁹

Luis “Tony” Baez was a latecomer to the YLO, but he quickly became an important figure in the development of the newspaper and his work drew the Chicago movement even closer to Puerto Rico. Born and raised in Barrio Borinquen in Caguas, Puerto Rico (coincidentally the same neighborhood where Cha Cha was born), Baez had been an activist beginning at a very young age. While he was still a high school student Baez was recruited into the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and his work with this group intensified once he began his studies at the University of Puerto Rico. Unfortunately due to heavy police repression of the movement, Baez decided to leave the island before finishing his studies. After being arrested, beaten, and then released, Baez received word of threats to his life being promulgated by the police. Fearing for his safety, Baez’ parents convinced him to move to the US mainland. He arrived in Chicago in February 1970, and within three days he was involved with the Young Lords. Baez sardonically remembers that one of his first tasks was to go downtown to State Street and “to sell the paper to White people.” Before long he was promoted to Minister of

⁴⁹ Omar López, Interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

Education, where he struggled (with some difficulty) to implement an internal education program aimed at raising the level of consciousness of the former gang members. Baez was also responsible for writing much of the later Young Lords' newspaper's Spanish language content.⁵⁰ Baez' affiliation and experiences with the Puerto Rican movement no doubt deeply impacted the work of the YLO, and this is manifest in the pages of their later newspapers.

One might wonder how Young Lords leaders who were not Puerto Rican felt about the pages of *Y.L.O.* so consistently being used as platform for Puerto Rican nationalism. Omar López, who lived in Mexico until moving to Chicago at age thirteen, claims that his unwavering support for Puerto Rican independence was thought of as a logical extension of his ideological support for revolutionary nationalism. "Those of us who were not Puerto Rican," López asserts, "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."⁵¹

Comments made by Young Lords co-founder Angel "Sal" del Rivero, who was also born in Mexico but mostly raised in Chicago, are not so magnanimous. He complains that numerous historical misrepresentations have mistakenly identified the Young Lords solely as a Puerto Rican nationalist group, downplaying the grassroots and diverse nature of their movement and thereby unfairly delimiting the range of audiences

⁵⁰ Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

Luis Baez, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 23, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/52/rec/40>

⁵¹ Omar López, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

who might find studying their history interesting and relevant. If people understood that they really fought for their community, and not just for some ideals about Puerto Rican independence, he argues, they might better see how the Young Lords' story relates to their own struggles for justice in their communities.⁵²

A Place for Everyone in the Young Lords Movement?

While the Young Lords Organization was ostensibly fully open to the participation of women, and women played important roles in running the various YLO survival programs, the face of the movement was overwhelmingly male. Lilia Fernandez argues that "from the beginning, the YLO was masculinist and androcentric in its posture, its politics, and its leadership."⁵³ She points out that the *Y.L.O.* newspaper often promoted a sort of "macho bravado" through the words and the imagery of the "handsome and charismatic José 'Cha Cha' Jiménez," as it sought to promote him as a "revolutionary figure in the community." As well, she points to a letter printed in the January 1970 issue of *Y.L.O.* written by "Isabel, revolutionary sister and wife," which she argues reveals the "gender dynamics of the group and gendered perceptions within the community." Isabel's letter, Fernandez argues, "established YLO activism as men's work...relegated women to secondary supportive roles in the movement and encouraged other YLO wives to be understanding of men's behavior because of its revolutionary purpose."⁵⁴

⁵² Angel del Rivero, interview by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p16015coll6/id/45/rec/9>

⁵³ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, p 195.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 195.

Of course while Fernandez is undoubtedly correct in pointing this out, she also concedes that there were in fact women who played leadership roles in the group. YLO member Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin was perhaps the most visible female leader, both as a public speaker as well as on the pages of *Y.L.O.*. Interestingly, Vasquez-Ignatin was responsible for writing an oft-cited history of the Young Lords that worked to introduce their struggle to a wider audience of supporters in 1969. Printed first in the May 1969 Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) affiliated newspaper *The Movement*, but also then printed later that month in the second issue of *Y.L.O.*, “Young Lords Serve and Protect” represents an effort by the Young Lords to consciously craft their own historical narrative in a way that both admits to and downplays the “problems with police, parole officers, drugs, and all the rest.” At the same time it affirms their early revolutionary potential by simplistically identifying the initial motives in forming the gang as being to defend their communities against the threat of “white gangs in the area.”⁵⁵

In addition to writing for the *Y.L.O.* newspaper and speaking at rallies, Vasquez-Ignatin was also involved in a Chicago based newsletter called *The Voice of the Women’s Liberation Movement* in the late-1960s.⁵⁶ Ironically, despite the efforts of the Young Lords to display support for a variety of movements, the Women’s Liberation movement seems inexplicably absent from the pages of *Y.L.O.*. While the newspaper (and the survival programs) depended upon the words, images, and labor of women, *Y.L.O.* never explicitly discussed the struggles of women (and men) who were

⁵⁵ Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *Y.L.O.*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1969 p 6-7. Hilda Vasquez-Ignatin, “Young Lords Serve and Protect,” *The Movement*, May 1969 <http://farmworkermovement.com/archives/#sncc>

⁵⁶ Michael Staudenmeier, *Truth and Revolution: A History of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969-1986*, AK Press: Oakland, 2012, p 30

organizing against sexism. The failure to analyze issues of gender oppression and to discuss the organized efforts of activists challenging patriarchy represents a major weakness in the newspaper. Perhaps not all Young Lords activists understood the ways in which their struggles against oppression, inequality, and exclusion based on racism and class hierarchies were related to struggles against patriarchy, sexism, and heterosexism.

Given the absence of feminism on the pages of *Y.L.O.*, it should come as no surprise that there seems to be no recognition of mention in these newspapers to the then just emerging Gay Liberation movement. Yet it should be noted that absence of these struggles in the pages of *Y.L.O.* does not necessarily imply that there was any antagonism. The Young Lords were part of a web of larger social justice movements that were slowly opening up to feminist critiques and challenges to heteronormativity. While most Marxist groups were at least publicly in favor of the emancipation of women (albeit only as part of a larger socialist revolution), there was still major disagreement within the communist movement about questions of Gay equality. Huey Newton and other Black Panther leaders publicly declared their support for Gay rights (while others had uttered virulent heterosexist remarks). Yet other communist groups (such as the October League faction of SDS) considered homosexuality to be an aberration and social malady caused by bourgeois decadence. Given this atmosphere, perhaps it is telling that they chose not to publicly weigh in on this just emerging debate. Their silence perhaps demonstrates the gulf between their perceptions of the Gay Liberation struggle and what they saw as the most pressing needs of their community. Or perhaps it simply demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the very existence of the Gay

movement, which would gain much greater visibility and notoriety as the 1970s progressed.

P'alante, Siempre P'alante

When the Young Lords movement spread to New York in the Summer of 1969, it actually began as a student movement. The New York chapter of the YLO was the result of a merger between two different groups of students. One of these, the Sociedad Albizu Campos (SAC), was based in El Barrio (Spanish Harlem), and had been meeting for about six months when they first learned of the work of the Young Lords in Chicago. In a 1971 book detailing the history of the New York Young Lords entitled, Pablo “Yoruba” Guzmán, a member of SAC who then became a leader in the New York YLO, describes this chance discovery:

“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.”⁵⁷ (Figure 15).⁵⁸

At the same time the members of SAC learned of another group of students that had been meeting regularly in the Lower East Side who were already calling themselves Young Lords. Members of this group had met Cha Cha Jiménez at the May 1969 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) convention in Chicago, and had received permission to start a New York chapter. After reading the article and meeting with the other student group, the leaders in SAC were convinced that they needed to become

⁵⁷ Young Lords Party & Michael Abramson, *Palante*, Haymarket Books: Chicago, 1971, 69.

⁵⁸ “Interview with Cha Cha Jiménez,” *The Black Panther*, June 7, 1969, 17.

INTERVIEW WITH CHA CHA JIMENEZ CHAIRMAN --- YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION

BM: Cha Cha, how did the Young Lords come into existence and become an organization?

Cha-Cha: In 1959 the Young Lords was a gang, a street gang on the near North Side of Chicago in the area of Oldtown. It got together as probably being more or less for protection because it was primarily a white area and the Young Lords were Puerto Rican. Later on more and more Puerto Ricans came into the area as more and more of the racist whites moved out into another community which was closer to Oldtown. After a while they became a social club, they had parties for the benefit of raising money for sweaters and T-shirts. They had picnics, they had dinners for the families and slowly but surely they were changing organizationally into helping the people in the community. After a period of time of giving money to the people in the community, and giving donations of food and clothing, the Young Lords tried to sit down to cope with the needs of their environment. So they got together to find out what was the real problem, how could they help their people best. This was the main reason why the Young Lords Organization turned politically, because they found out that just giving gifts wasn't going to help their people, they had to deal with the system that was messing over them.

BM: Cha-Cha I see that more and more in different media that you are associated with different political groups such as the Black Panthers, which is a very political organization and they have a political line and a political platform and program which they follow. What inspired you to align yourselves with the Black Panther Party?

Cha-Cha: Well you see, we're still looking for that way in which we can help our people. Now we're starting to realize who our people really are, who our friends are and who our enemies are. And as we read and studied other organizations that are appearing now in the United States, 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, this is why we follow them.

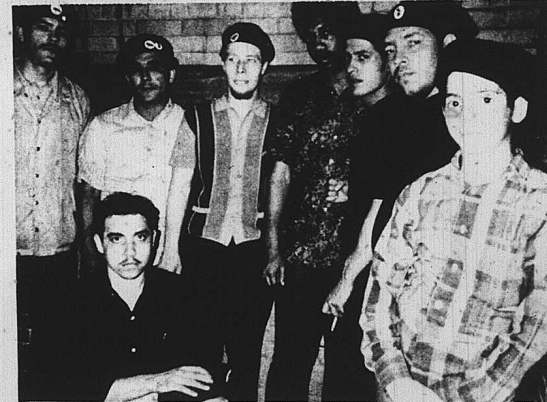
BM: Cha-Cha, I've seen in the news and it's been in different media where you lost a member of your organization, he was shot down by some of the Chicago police. And in working in a political way as the Black Panthers do and knowing Major Daley and the officials or the power structure of Chicago to be, as they've demonstrated in the past, are you prepared and willing to deal with that situation or whatever for existence

as a political organization?

Cha-Cha: As a political organization, I think we're well prepared to deal with it. I think we've dealt with it already, I think we've showed Chicago our following by coming out in 24 hours bringing 3,000 people to the streets which is something that isn't done very often. Manual Ramos was a regular guy from the Ghettoes of Chicago. He was just like most of us are right now. Like we said before earlier, we're still searching for a way to help our people, we're still helping search for a way towards perfection. Manual Ramos was a regular member in the organization since the beginning. We feel that he was a true revolutionary for changing along with it, because most of us don't really understand all the basic issues. Most of us are new in the movement but we can see everyday, this is a common experience they us, you know, this is a common experience for people in the ghetto. Daley just this past week had a press conference four days out of five days, showing the people of Chicago that he is planning this repression against gangs, Fred Hampton, the Deputy Chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party is in jail right now serving a two to five sentence, the head of the Cobrastones is in jail doing three to twenty. I have myself been arrested on a fake charge of aggravated kidnapping, the kidnapping of my own child. They were released right away when they found out. The reason I say gangs, Fred Hampton, Deputy Chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and myself is because this is what he means when he talks about getting rid of the gangs, at least most gangs, are changing and are turning politically.

BM: Have you been confronted with or had to deal with any situations dealing with agent provocateurs trying to get into the organization or coming into the organization or creating situations that might have charges brought against you by the F.B.I, the C.I.A. etc?

Cha-Cha: Just the other day we had a march on the pig station because of the brother Manual, we demanded the arrest of pig James Lam and a group calling themselves the Cobrastones came and threw stones at the demonstrators and we passed through Cabrillo housing project which is mostly a black populated area and we felt that the blacks were our brothers and we wanted them to come in. We thought that they would join us, and they did. They joined us, except for these provocateurs. I wouldn't say that they were C.I.A. or F.B.I, but I do say what they told me after the demonstration. They told me that the pigs were



CHA CHA AND YOUNG LORDS WITH THE ILL. DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE OF THE B.P.P. BOBBY RUSH

saying that we wanted to provoke a fight with them, that we were trying to take over their turf, you know, treating us more like a gang style and we talked to them. A couple of days later we took over McCormick Theological Seminary and there we had a meeting and we found out that the pigs were trying to pay them to attack us.

BM: Cha-Cha since you've been moving in a political fashion as a political organization how many people have been arrested?

Cha-Cha: How many people, I say it's hard to count. About five a week (an average) get arrested. This is including all the Lords. Some of the charges that come on are like mob action, assault and battery on the pigs whether we touch them or not. Just the other day a brother was searched down, because they have this stop and frisk law in Illinois where they just search you anytime they want to, he was searched down and all of a sudden he came out with a bag of marijuana which he never knew he had in his pocket, he couldn't believe it. This is some of the charges that we get charged with. We get stopped for loitering and they say something about littering the streets, you know ridiculous charges, you know, like kidnapping or anything, or just basically disorderly conduct or resisting arrest. Basically disorderly conduct is usually a \$25 bail, resisting arrest is \$25 bail.

Most of these balls are \$25 or there are some up to \$50. This is the basic bond for most people who do get arrested. Now when a Young Lord gets arrested it's a special case, sometimes the balls come up to \$1,000, \$10,000 and \$25,000 and even higher than that, a \$100,000. Excessive balls are given to the Black Panthers and the Young Lords and the Young Patriots, the coalition that we have formed.

BM: Since the Young Lords have become a political organization rather than a street gang how is it accepted in the community? Do the people relate to and support you; how do they feel about the Young Lords; about this transition; Do you get more support?

Cha Cha: In the beginning when we were just a regular organization, a gifting organization, giving gifts out to the people we didn't get too much support, but we did feel happier when we gave gifts. But now that we've started organizing people, getting them together and starting them to work politically, we've gotten much support in the community. We have given much aid to the Latin community especially in the school committee or any committee where no Latinos or even Blacks could be found, but now these places are filled with Latinos and blacks and poor whites. So the people in the community are for us and everyday we get new members.

BM: So then would you say that the people are beginning to recognize or they do recognize that the movement is one of a class struggle rather than a race struggle?

Cha-Cha: I think our organization just by the people, just by the content, just by being Puerto Rican, you just have to understand it's a class struggle, because we have light skinned people like myself, I'm very light, we have dark skinned people, we have red, we have yellow, we have all kinds of people, a rainbow of people. And this is why we can easily understand it is common sense to us that this is a class struggle. I can't relate to black people hating white people and white people hating black people and Puerto Ricans getting hated by anybody, you know, and people can't relate to that, you know, we look to see which is our enemy, which is our commonest enemy and we just see that the pigs are the body guards of the capitalist pigs that are oppressing and exploiting our people. We look to see that this octopus, the United States has been sucking all the resources from Puerto Rico and we see who our enemy is. We see that the United States is our enemy. And we look out for allies, you know, we look at Cuba, we look at Mao, we look at all these other countries that have liberated themselves from the monsters.

CHA CHA JIMENEZ ACCUSED OF KIDNAPPING OWN CHILD



May 22--Last Thursday the straight press and electronic media played up the arrest of Cha Cha Jimenez, Chairman of the Young Lords Organization, for kidnapping without mentioning that the person he was charged with kidnapping was his own 14 month old daughter, Jacqueline. Fred and the Belmont Booster are now the only two media to carry the true story of this unusual case of movement harassment.

On Monday night, May 19, Mrs. Mary Porrata walked into the 13th District Police Station to report that her daughter Mary Lou had stolen her granddaughter, of whom she claimed to be the legal guardian. The cops paid little attention until it came out that Jacqueline's father (Mary Lou's husband) was Cha Cha Jimenez. Upon hearing that magical name, the cops proceeded to collaborate in framing Cha Cha, and that night a warrant was issued for his arrest on kidnapping charges. They

didn't find him until 4:50 Thursday morning, when he walked into the 13th district station and inquired if anyone wanted him. Someone did. Bail was set at \$25,000 (\$2,500 cash bond) and a trial was arranged before Judge Saul Epton. At the trial, it was brought out that: (1) Cha Cha hadn't kidnapped his daughter, since it was his wife, Mary Lou, who had gone to her mother's apartment to take her own child. At the time, Cha Cha was at the Young Lords Office. (2) Mrs. Porrata could produce no papers proving her to be the child's legal guardian. (3) Cha Cha was ready to offer \$2,500 cash bond--in cash. Judge Epton threw the case out of court after what witnesses called a five-minute lecture to the state's attorney on building a proper case. Jacqueline is back with her parents, who are expecting twins sometime in August. And the capitalist press has yet to retract their lies.

Remember Brother Malcolm

born May 19, 1925 - Assassinated Feb. 21, 1965

Figure 15: "Interview with Cha Cha Jiménez: Chairman---Young Lords Organization," *The Black Panther*, June 7, 1969, p 17

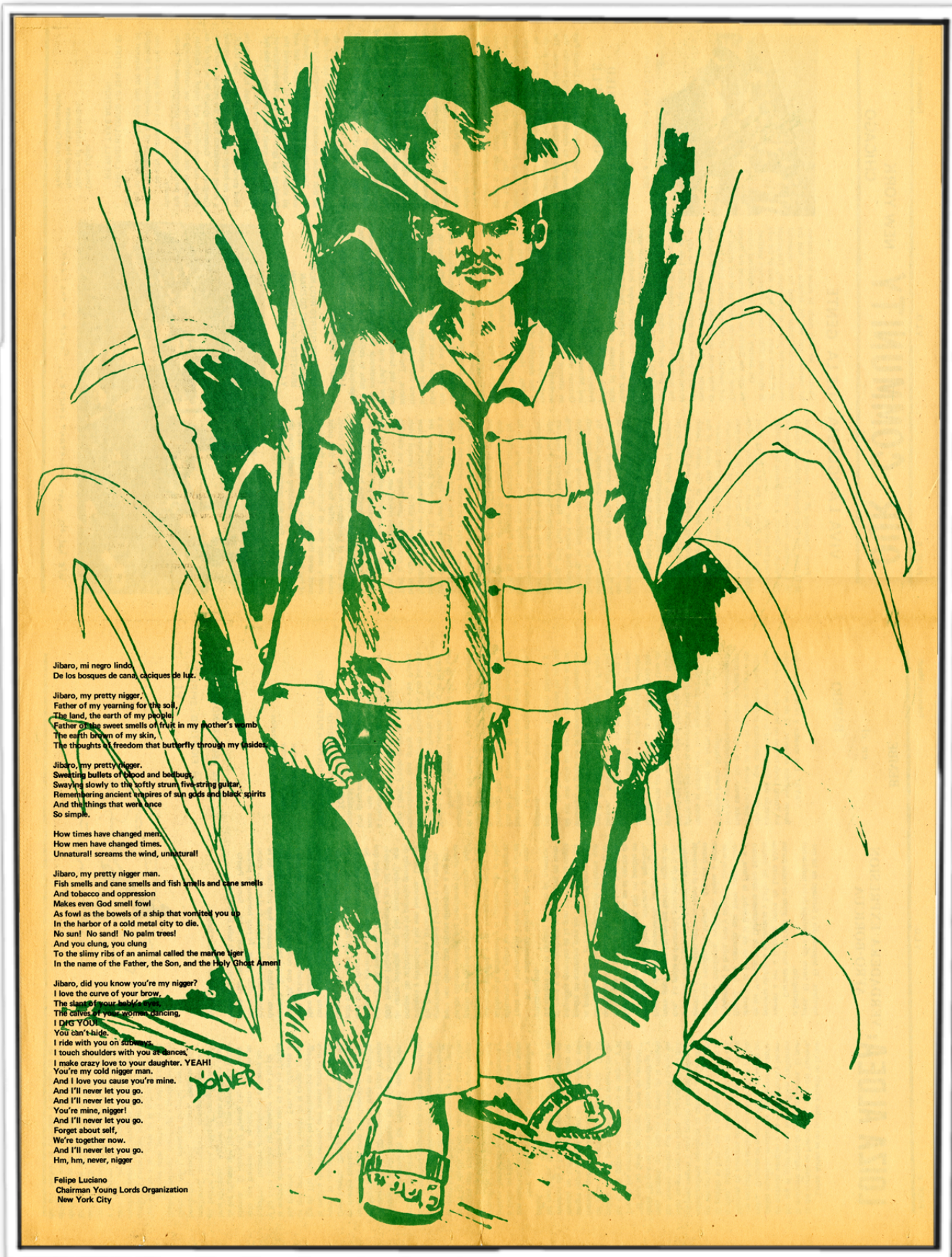
Young Lords. They believed that the Young Lords Organization could not only unite the disparate Puerto Rican student movement, but could also, as Yoruba says, unite “the street people with the students of working-class background” such as themselves.⁵⁹ After sending a delegation to meet with Cha Cha and other Chicago leaders, SAC and the other group merged, and a unified New York State chapter was formed.

These New York recruits almost immediately began contributing content (including articles, images, and poetry) to the Chicago *Y.L.O.* newspapers. Much of this content highlighted the bold direct action campaigns waged in the New York streets, such as the famed Garbage Offensive featured in the fourth issue of *Y.L.O.*, and the Second People’s Church (the ten day occupation of a large Methodist Church in East Harlem) featured in both the January 1970 and February/March 1970 issues of *Y.L.O.*⁶⁰ This latter issue also featured a full center-spread image of a *Jíbaro* wielding a machete, accompanied by a poem entitled “*Jíbaro, mi negro lindo*,” which was written by New York Young Lords Chairman Felipe Luciano (Figure 16).⁶¹ Luciano, of course, was already an accomplished poet who had been an original member of the Harlem

⁵⁹ Young Lords Party & Michael Abramson, *Palante*, Haymarket Books: Chicago, 1971, 69.

⁶⁰ Felipe Luciano explained the beginnings of the famous Garbage Offensive on the Young Lords radio show: “Rather than attack the jobs, and racism, and education in El Barrio (which were problems, but which had been attacked by so many anti-poverty organizations and by so many poverty pimps, who had raised the people’s hopes to a higher level without ever achieving any kind of concrete solutions to these problems), we decided to take something that nobody had tackled before. So the first offensive was the garbage. It was there. We live with it. We eat it. We smell it. And we die by it. But nobody had really attempted to solve the problem.....now we didn’t go out with a whole bunch of rhetoric, because one of the first things we realized is that our people are sick of rhetoric. Our people are sick of words, words that have no action behind them. So we said nothing, and we swept the streets.” And when the city garbage crews did not come through, they began piling garbage in the middle of the streets and setting it on fire. *Palante: self determination for the Puerto Rican colony in New York City*. 1970. Pacifica Radio Archive. “New York Y.L.O.”, *Y.L.O.* Vol. 1 No 4, Fall 1969, p 17. *Y.L.O.* Vol 1 No 5, January 1970, p 20.

⁶¹ “Jibaro mi negro lindo,” *Y.L.O.* Vol 2 No 6, February/March 1970. p 5&6.



Jibaro, mi negro lindo
De los bosques de caña, caciques de luz.

Jibaro, my pretty nigger,
Father of my years for the soil,
The land, the earth of my people,
Father of the sweet smells of fruit in my mother's womb,
The earth born of my skin,
The thoughts of freedom that butterfly through my insides.

Jibaro, my pretty nigger,
Sweating bullets of blood and bellows,
Swaying slowly to the softly strum five-string guitar,
Remembering ancient temples of sun gods and black spirits
And the things that were once
So simple.

How times have changed men,
How men have changed times,
Unnatural! screams the wind, unnatural!

Jibaro, my pretty nigger man,
Fish smells and cane smells and fish smells and cane smells
And tobacco and oppression
Makes even God smell fowl
As foul as the bowels of a ship that vomited you up
In the harbor of a cold metal city to die.
No sun! No sand! No palm trees!
And you clung, you clung
To the slimy ribs of an animal called the marine tiger
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost Amen!

Jibaro, did you know you're my nigger?
I love the curve of your brow,
The slant of your head,
The calves of your women dancing,
I love you.

You can't hide,
I ride with you on shoulders,
I touch shoulders with you at dances,
I make crazy love to your daughter. YEAH!
You're my cold nigger man,
And I love you cause you're mine.
And I'll never let you go.
And I'll never let you go.
You're mine, nigger!
And I'll never let you go.
Forget about self,
We're together now.
And I'll never let you go.
Hm, hm, never, nigger

Felipe Luciano
Chairman Young Lords Organization
New York City

Figure 16: Y.L.O., Vol. 2, No. 6, February/March 1970, p 6-7.

based Last Poets before he joined and quickly became Chairman of the New York Young Lords Organization.

In addition to contributing to *Y.L.O.*, the New York Young Lords launched two of their own media projects. Beginning on March 1970 they hosted a weekly radio program which aired on Pacifica Radio station WBAI in New York City.⁶² Shortly thereafter they also began publishing a modest mimeographed newsletter entitled *Palante: Latin Revolutionary News Service*.⁶³ Beginning in May 1970 *Palante* became a bi-weekly full-length newspaper (Figure 17). The New York activists decided to publish their own newspaper for several reasons, some of which involved their growing dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of the newspapers published out of Chicago.⁶⁴

In June 1970, after a series of meetings between New York and Chicago leaders ended badly, the two groups decided to go their separate ways. When New York Young Lords leaders went to Chicago in the spring of 1970, they already knew that they wanted to wrest control of the national organization from Cha Cha and the other Chicago activists. Out of a sort of twisted logic, however, came the idea of asking the Chicago leaders to move to New York to build a new national party.⁶⁵ Tony Baez remember thinking that it was a ridiculous suggestion. “It was not a college movement,” Baez says, drawing a contrast between the Chicago activism, which was really rooted in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, and the more student-led New York organization. With marriages, kids, and growing families, Baez explains, “there was no way we could

⁶² *Pálante: self determination for the Puerto Rican colony in New York City*. 1970. Pacifica Radio Archive.

⁶³ *Palante*, or *Pa'lante*, is Puerto Rican for *Para Adelante*, which could be translated as Forward.

⁶⁴ Morales, Iris. *Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords*. New York, NY: Third World Newsreel, 1996.

⁶⁵ Young Lords Party Central Committee, “Editorial,” *Palante*, Vol. 2, No. 4, June 5, 1970, p 10-11.

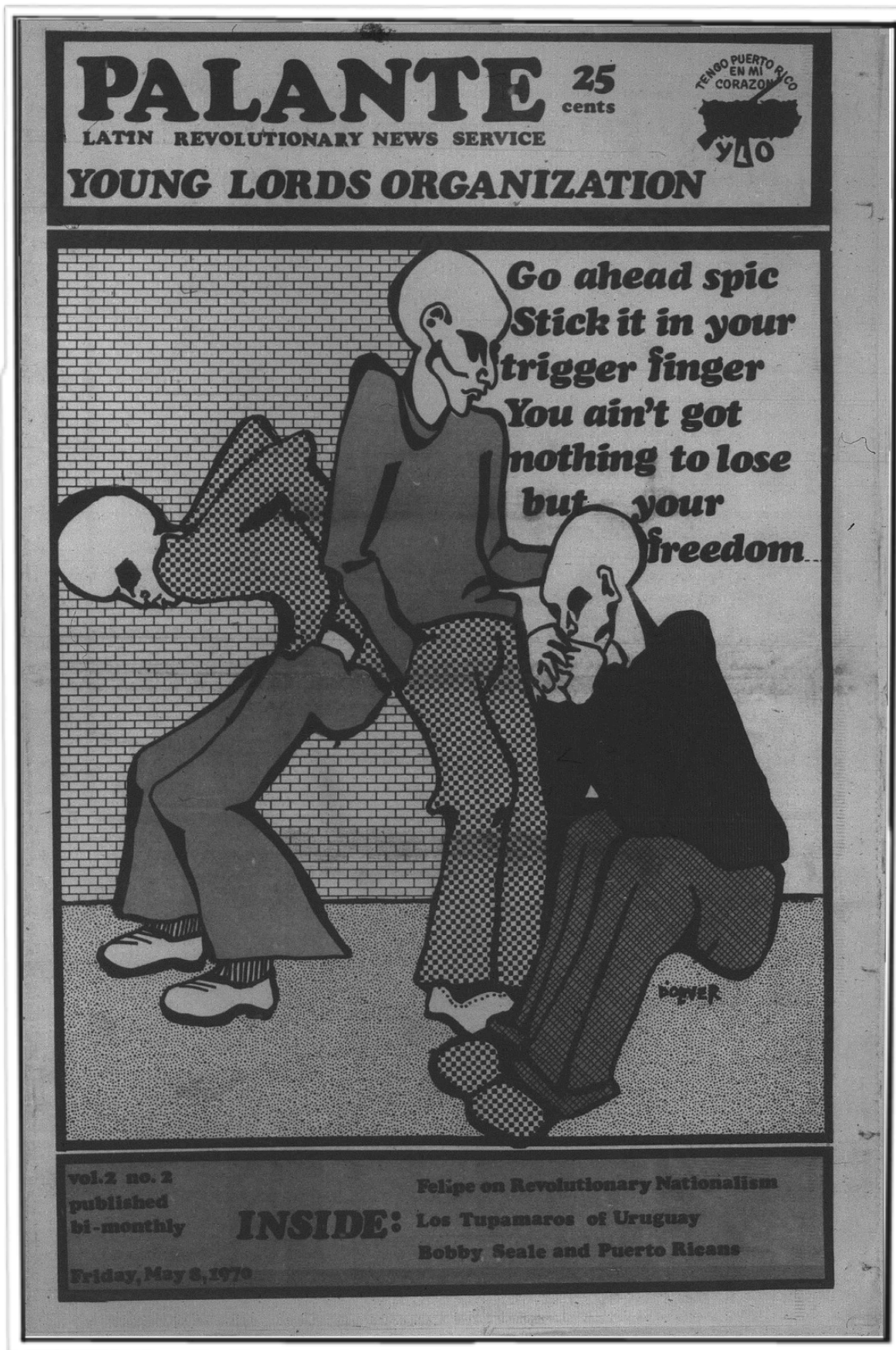


Figure 17: *Palante*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May 8, 1970, Cover.

move.”⁶⁶

The atmosphere was tense at the meetings, which were held over a period of several days in Omar López’ attic. “It was not a nice coming together of the two groups,” López admits. At times the hostility boiled over into physical altercations. Yoruba in particular drew the ire of “Blood,” a Chicago YLO member named Andre that López describes as “very street” and a “very violent guy.”⁶⁷ As Tony Baez describes it, when Yoruba said something that was interpreted as being “anti-lumpenproletariat,” Andre “beat the living heck out of him.” He continues, “and then we were trying to stop this fight in the middle of this discussion about the two groups.”⁶⁸ This flare up of violence in the midst of tense discussions was merely a distraction, and perhaps the outcome was a foregone conclusion. It seems that the general thinking among the Chicago participants was that the New York leadership had a different vision of what the Young Lords should aspire to be. Perhaps with delusions of grandeur the New York leadership wanted to build a more disciplined “vanguard party” to organize and lead the *lumpen* across the country. As genuine articles of the *lumpenproletariat* class who had transformed their street gang into a grassroots community movement, however, the Chicago activists were proud of what they had accomplished. They were not willing to play a secondary role in a movement that they had created.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁶⁷ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

⁶⁸ Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁶⁹ Angel del Rivero, interview by José Jiménez, July 11, 2012. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p16015coll6/id/45/rec/9>

Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

Luis Baez, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 23, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/52/rec/40>

Unable to resolve their conflict, the two groups split into two separate Young Lords organizations in June 1969. The Chicago group retained the name Young Lords Organization (YLO), while the New York faction rechristened themselves the Young Lords Party (YLP). For the next several years they organized separately. Despite their serious differences each group continued to publicly pronounce their support for the other. The leaders of the newly renamed Young Lords Party explained their positions in a center-spread editorial (featuring large photos of the new central committee) printed in the June 5, 1970 issue of *Palante* (Figures 18-19). Citing the gang mentality that still plagued the Chicago organization, the New York activists argued that the Chicago Lords were not disciplined enough (and implicitly suggested they were not educated enough) to provide sufficient revolutionary leadership for the Puerto Rican people. Decrying the fact that the Chicago based *Y.L.O.* “came out only 6 times in 18 months,” they point to this failing as a manifestation of the Chicago group’s lack of discipline. Among other important tasks, they argue, “the National Headquarters” of an effective revolutionary party “has a responsibility to... [p]ublish a national newspaper regularly that will educate and inform our people all across the country.”⁷⁰

More accurately it can be said that at this point *Y.L.O.* had published only six issues during a span of fourteen months (and was in the process of producing a seventh) all the while billing itself as a “monthly” newspaper. Both Omar López and Tony Baez accept some of this criticism, yet they point to their group’s ambitious community work (daycare, health clinic, breakfast program, etc.) and tireless direct action protests to explain that it was not a lack of discipline but instead limited resources that hampered

⁷⁰ Young Lords Party Central Committee, “Editorial,” *Palante*, Vol. 2, No. 4, June 5, 1970, p 10-11.

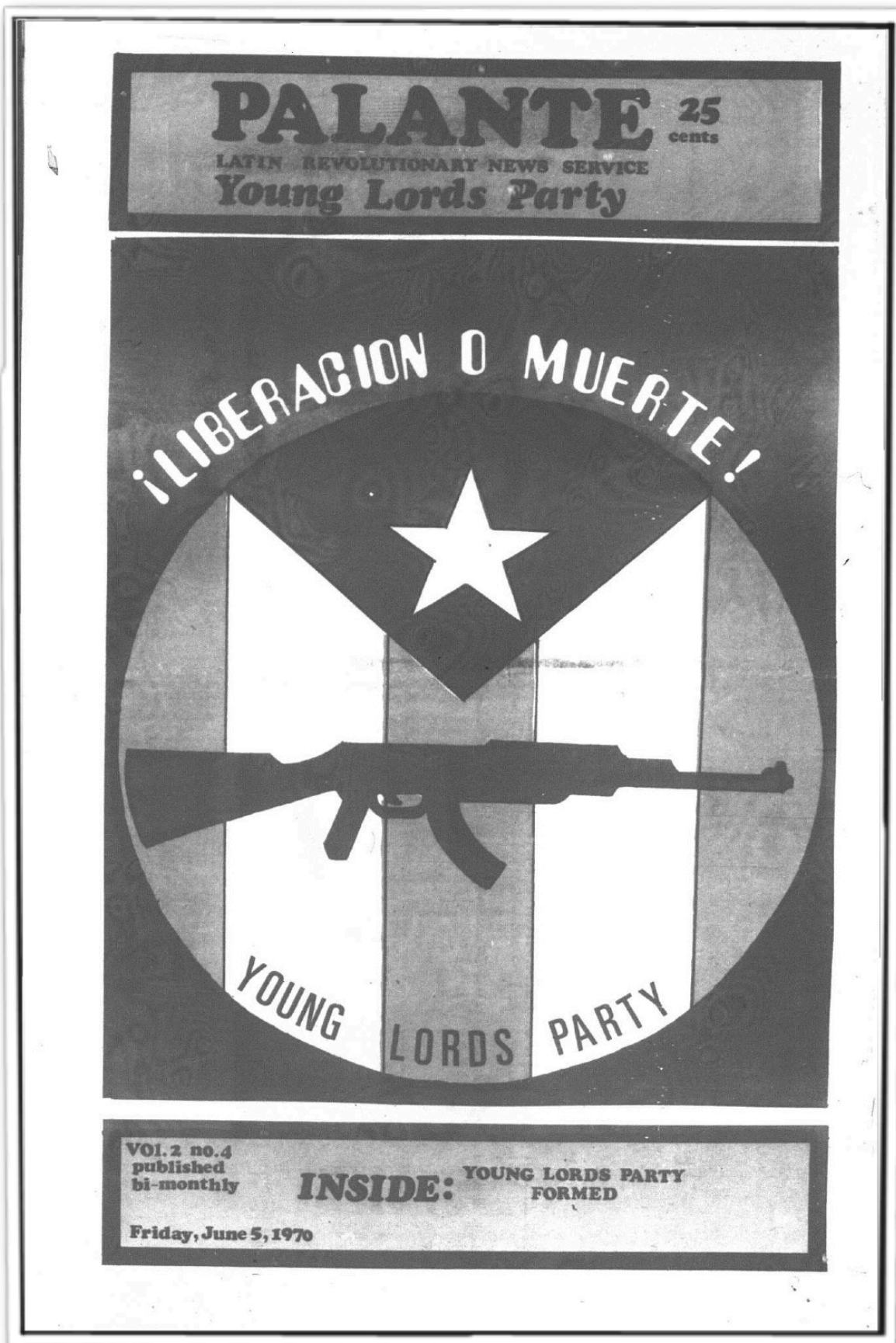


Figure 18: *Palante*, Vol. 2, No. 4, June 19, 1970, Cover.

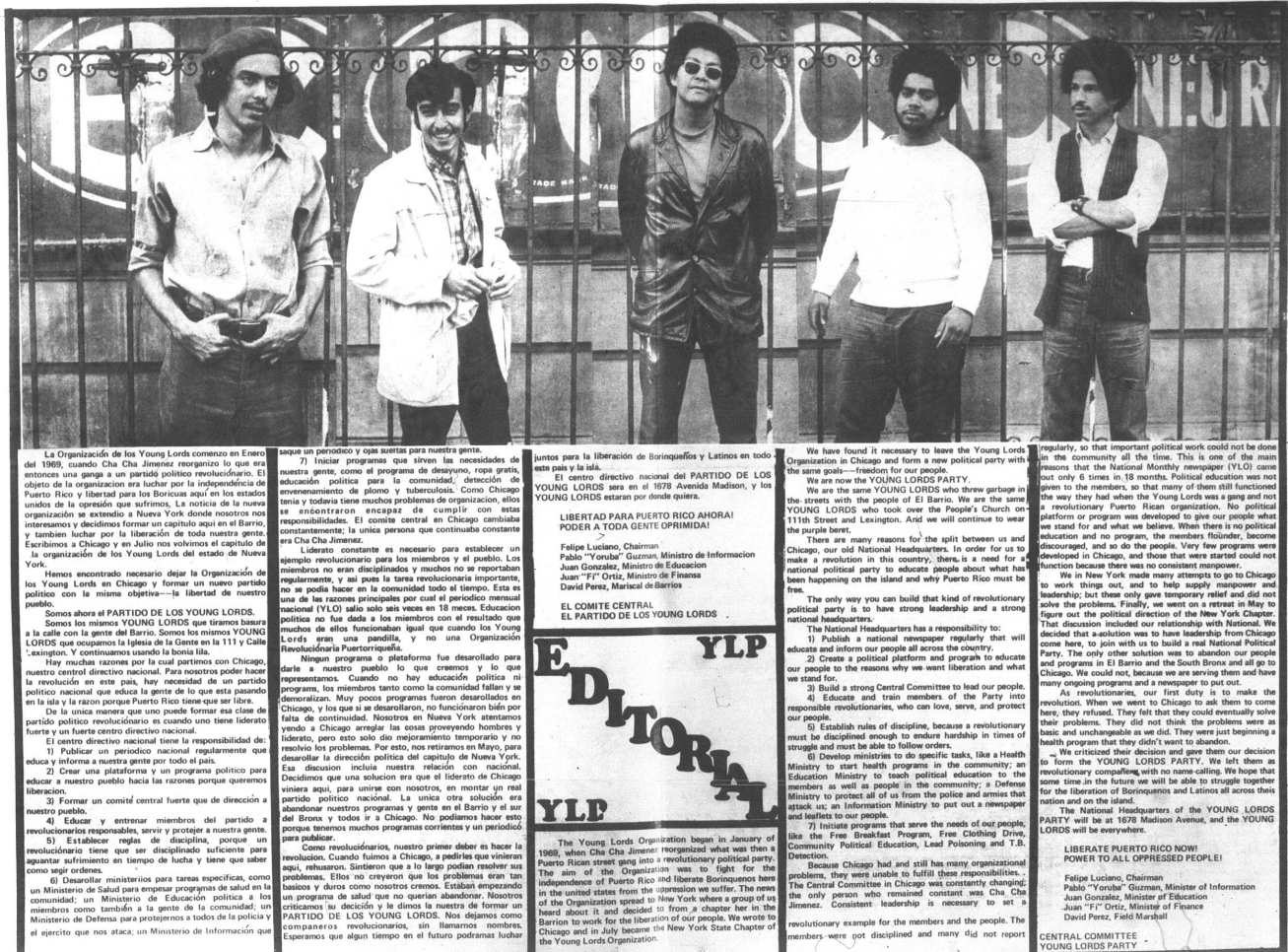


Figure 19: "Editorial," *Palante*, Vol. 2, No. 4, June 19, 1970, p 10-11.

their efforts. "I remember that there was an issue of money," Baez says, pointing to the dilemma of being a poor organization trying to do too many things. "Where do you put your money?" he asks. "Do you put your money into a newspaper, or do you put it more into the health programs that they had downstairs, the breakfast programs, and stuff like that. And not a lot of money was coming in."⁷¹ Minister of Finance Alfredo Matias also describes the newspapers as a financial drain on the organization. "I was supposed to

⁷¹ Luis "Tony" Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

be keeping books,” Matias jokingly says, “but we were always broke because the little money we had went to the newspaper.”⁷² López admits that scraping together enough money to pay the printer was sometimes an issue, but he also points to the steep learning curve they faced as complete amateurs, many of them high school dropouts with poor writing skills. “It was a project,” he says. “It wasn’t like today, you can just sit at a computer and write it. It was a whole process. It was putting people together.” López stresses that they had to learn how to do layout, prepare images, and even how to type, basically from scratch. As well, lacking supplies and office space, they often relied upon the material resources of others, which likely complicated and slowed their efforts.⁷³

López and Baez also both point to the gang backgrounds of the Chicago activists to recast what the New York leaders saw as deficits into strengths. In admitting that the Chicago newspapers lacked the sophistication of the New York publications, López is quick to point out that the Chicago efforts “were much more grassroots,” profiling the activism of “people from the community.”⁷⁴ Baez simply describes their difficulties as “part of the growth of a street movement.”⁷⁵

“Cada Pitirre Tiene Su Garaguo”

In the Summer of 1970, while in the wake of a schism between themselves and the New York Young Lords chapter, the Young Lords in Chicago produced a publication entitled *Pitirre* (Figure 20). They didn’t know that this would be the last YLO newspaper

⁷² Alfredo Matias Interview #1 Friday, September 29, 1995 DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives Department Reproduction

⁷³ Omar Lopez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013. They relied upon the office space and materials of *The Seed*, another independent newspaper that López describes as a “hippy magazine.”

⁷⁴ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

⁷⁵ Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

published that year and the last issue ever created in Chicago. Perhaps demonstrating their humility, or instead maybe disdain, this newspaper makes no direct reference to the split with New York.

It was Tony Baez who came up with the idea of changing the name to *Pitirre*. In part it was meant as an homage to a small circulation mimeographed newspaper by the same name that Baez had produced as a high school student in Barrio Borinquen in Puerto Rico. The name “Pitirre” also derives from an early 20th century poem written by Puerto Rican poet and politician José de Diego.⁷⁶ Entitled “*Cada Guaraguao Tiene Su Pitirre*” (Each Hawk Has Its Pitirre), this poem is meant as a metaphor for the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. The word “Pitirre,” it is explained on the last page of the newspaper *Pitirre*, “is also the name of a Puerto Rican bird that, because of 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.”⁷⁷

Unfortunately for the Chicago Young Lords activists, things fell apart rather precipitously after the split with New York and not too long after the publication of *Pitirre*. While they had been facing police repression, exhaustion, and money problems for quite some time, these stressors really began to take their toll in the Fall of 1970. Not only was the group still harboring feelings of resentment and disappointment after the split, but there was suddenly a major leadership vacuum when Chairman José “Cha

⁷⁶ Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁷⁷ *Pitirre*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Summer 1970.



Figure 20: *Pitirre*, Vol. 2, No. 7, Summer 1970, cover.

Cha” Jiménez decided to go underground in the Fall of 1970 to avoid an extended prison sentence. Jiménez had been convicted of stealing lumber (valued at around twenty dollars) from an urban renewal construction site, wood that he planned to use to help renovate the Young Lords daycare program facilities at the People’s Church.

Cha Cha’s departure (along with the departure of a few others who joined him in clandestine organizing) left the group without effective leadership. Both López’ and Baez’ accounts of this time period suggest that without Jiménez’ dynamic personality and street credibility to back them up, they struggled to effectively establish credible leadership. This problem was also likely compounded by the cadres’ deflated spirits following the split with New York. “I remember I cried that night,” Baez admits when describing the night he learned that the New York leaders were intent on splitting, “because I was trying to keep the organization together.”⁷⁸ One can imagine that he was not the only one who felt this way. As well, the continued removal of Puerto Rican families (among them Young Lords) from Lincoln Park due to “urban renewal” took a toll on the organization’s dwindling numbers. Owing to all of this, the work of the Chicago YLO significantly declined towards the end of 1970.⁷⁹

El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service

While by the end of 1970 the YLO in Chicago had in some ways ceased effectively functioning as a mass based direct action movement, a new YLO chapter emerged in Milwaukee in early 1971. Along with it appeared a new Young Lords newspaper, now renamed *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service* (Figures

⁷⁸ Luis “Tony” Baez, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁷⁹ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.

21-24). This Milwaukee newspaper recaptured the revolutionary spirit of the earlier Chicago publications, and gave coverage to many of the same protest communities. While it was a short-lived project (possibly only two or three issues produced), the very fact that there were newspapers published by Milwaukee activists now calling themselves Young Lords showcases the resilience of the Young Lords movement.

El Young Lord mainly came about because of the influence of Tony Baez and the hard work of Milwaukee activists inspired by what the Young Lords in Chicago had accomplished. Baez had left Chicago in late 1970 in large part because of dissatisfaction with the collapse of the Young Lords movement there. He chose to move to Milwaukee in part because he had previously traveled there and was impressed by what he saw as a vibrant and rapidly growing Latino movement. With the help of some experienced movement people from the local Latino community, Baez set up a small Milwaukee chapter of the Young Lords Organization. Mentioning several individuals who were important in building the Milwaukee YLO chapter, including Carmen Cabrera (who now works with him at Centro Hispano in Milwaukee), as well as William and Eddie Quiles. William had been in the Vietnam War before getting involved with the Milwaukee Young Lords chapter. Baez remembers his brother Eddie as being “extremely bright,” and “one of these people with this incredible capacity and knowledge, a great organizer.”⁸⁰ Baez found these young new recruits to be self-motivated students, which allowed him to more successfully resurrect the internal education program that he had struggled to implement in Chicago.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁸¹ Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

Luis Baez, interviewed by José Jiménez, August 23, 2012, transcript. <http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16015coll6/id/52/rec/40>

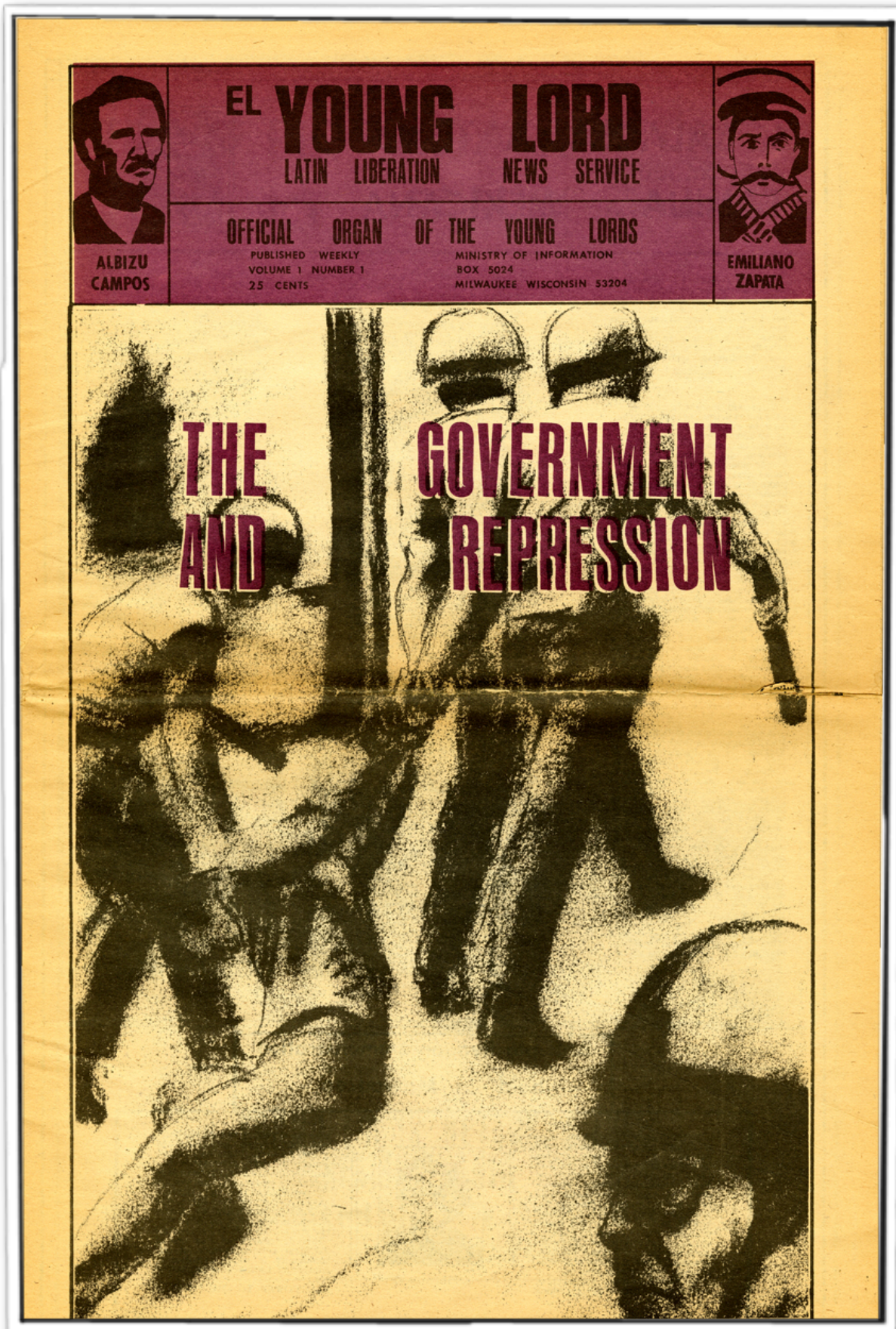


Figure 21: *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1 1971, cover.

YLO HEALTH CENTER

En febrero-71, el Centro de Salud Ramón Emeterio Betances, celebró su primer aniversario después de proveer servicios gratuitos de salud en la Comunidad por un año. A pesar de que el Alcalde, Richard Daley, estaba dispuesto a cerrar el Centro llevándonos a Corte por espacio de nueve meses, nuestro Centro de Salud sigue sirviendo a la gente y sigue probando quien en Chicago está interesado en proveer servicios médicos decentes.

Este pasado año, con poco dinero el programa ha ofrecido cuidado preventivo, cuidado médico en general, y cuidado visual.

El Departamento de Salud de Chicago, con \$18 millones por año, ofrece sólo cuidado pre-natal e infantil en sus pobremente equipadas clínicas. Mas, en lugar de mejorar sus clínicas, el Departamento de Salud se ha esforzado en cerrar los Centros de Salud gratuitos que operan la Organización de los Young Lords, los Young Patriots y las Panteras Negras.

Para comenzar un nuevo año en el programa los miembros del Staff prometieron su apoyo a tres hermanas de la Comunidad que están trabajando con el programa de Salud Betances, ayudando así a aumentar la participación comunal y el control Comunal. Las tres trabajadoras de la Comunidad están envueltas en el Programa visual --uno que lleva a cabo estudios de la vista, ayuda a proveer lentes y cuidado visual-- y, en el "Programa de Alcance Comunal" -- un programa donde los miembros del Centro de Salud salen a la Comunidad para orientar a la gente en relación a cuidado Médico preventivo (exámenes de TB, inyecciones para bebés, prueba de Oríne, cuestionario médico Familiar).

Un programa de paciente y mediador, también fue comenzado por la Organización de los Young Lords cuando estos observaron que la gente de la Comunidad era engañada y acosada en el Hospital Grant--el Hospital que alega servir a la Comunidad.

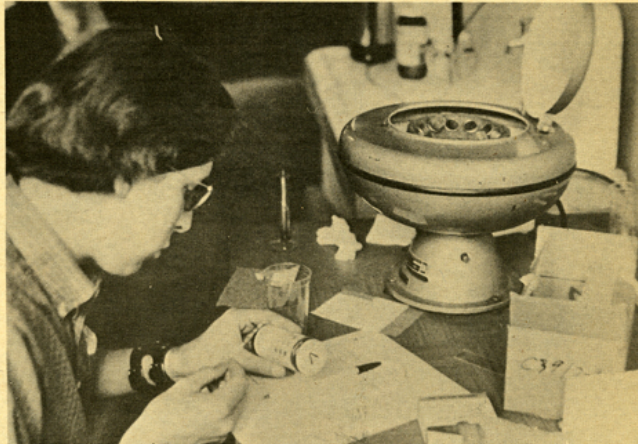
Mediante este programa, miembros de la Comunidad son acompañados al Hospital por un mediador para evitar que se les engañe cobrándole por servicios. Mas, lo que el mediador observó fue que los trabajadores del Hospital no maltrataban a los pacientes --los trabajadores mismos estaban confusos porque sus jefes, los administradores, etc., no les habían informado de las negociaciones. Los trabajadores del Hospital fueron ignorados mientras el Hospital negociaba con la Comunidad. Los Young Lords sabemos que nuestra lucha no es contra los trabajadores sino que unidos a estos contra sus jefes.

En febrero del 1971, la Org. de los Young Lords comenzó un programa de salud gratuito para satisfacer una necesidad inmediata de la Comunidad. La mayor parte de nuestra gente vive muchísimo tiempo sin cuidado médico alguno hasta que su situación se hace crítica. ¿Por qué? Porque cuesta mucho dinero el curarse. Pero, hay otras razones que justifican la existencia del Centro de Salud. Este programa es un modelo del tipo de programa comunal en que creen los Young Lords.

En el Centro de Salud Betances, la persona no es considerada un parásito. El o ella es considerada una persona, sumamente envuelta en la familia, en nuestra cultura, en esta Comunidad que lucha por sobrevivir.

Por tanto, mientras el programa de Salud Betances es uno de "sobrevivencia", por el otro, lado es uno que provee una lección política. Cuando decimos "Cuidado médico gratuito" no queremos decir que no haya que pagar. Decimos que, por haber sido víctima de este sistema capitalista, por ser un trabajador, se ha ganado el derecho a recibir servicio de salud.

CUIDADO MEDICO ES UN DERECHO HUMANO!
TODO EL PODER A LA GENTE!



CUIDADO MEDICO

ES UN DERECHO

HUMANO



Figure 22: "YLO Health Center: Cuidado Medico Es Un Derecho Humano," *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1 1971, p 10.



Figure 23: *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 15 1971, Cover.



Figure 24: *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 15 1971, p 10.

Interestingly, the idea of resurrecting the newspaper came as a result of Baez getting a job. “When I came to Milwaukee initially,” Baez explains, “my first job was to be the Spanish co-editor of *La Guardia*.” *La Guardia* was a Milwaukee based, bilingual, independent newspaper that provided much of the same sort of movement coverage as *Y.L.O.* and *Pitirre* (Figures 25-26). Baez became a member of the twelve person collective that produced *La Guardia* and was paid fifty dollars a week to translate articles into Spanish and to help with the layout. Baez credits Loyd Guzior, “a Puerto Rican kid from the Bronx” and fellow member of the *La Guardia* collective, with envisioning the rebirth of the Young Lords Organization newspapers. Guzior had recently moved to Milwaukee from Madison where he had been studying economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While there he became the chair of the local United Farm Workers (UFW) grape strike solidarity committee. “Cesar Chavez was impressed with his work,” Baez remembers, “and talked with Ernesto Chacon and other people in Milwaukee about [Guzior] coming to Milwaukee and running the grape boycott strike in Milwaukee.” Baez remembers talking with Guzior and others at *La Guardia* when “we came up with the notion that we needed to give some continuity to what was happening with the Young Lords in Chicago.”⁸²

On April 1, 1971, they began publishing *El Young Lord: Latin Liberation News Service*. Billed as a weekly publication that served as the “Official Organ of the Young Lords,” *El Young Lord* resembled previous YLO newspapers in several important ways. The content focused on the same multitude of protest communities that *Y.L.O.* featured. As well, *El Young Lord* continued the tradition of drawing together the Puerto Rican and

⁸² Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

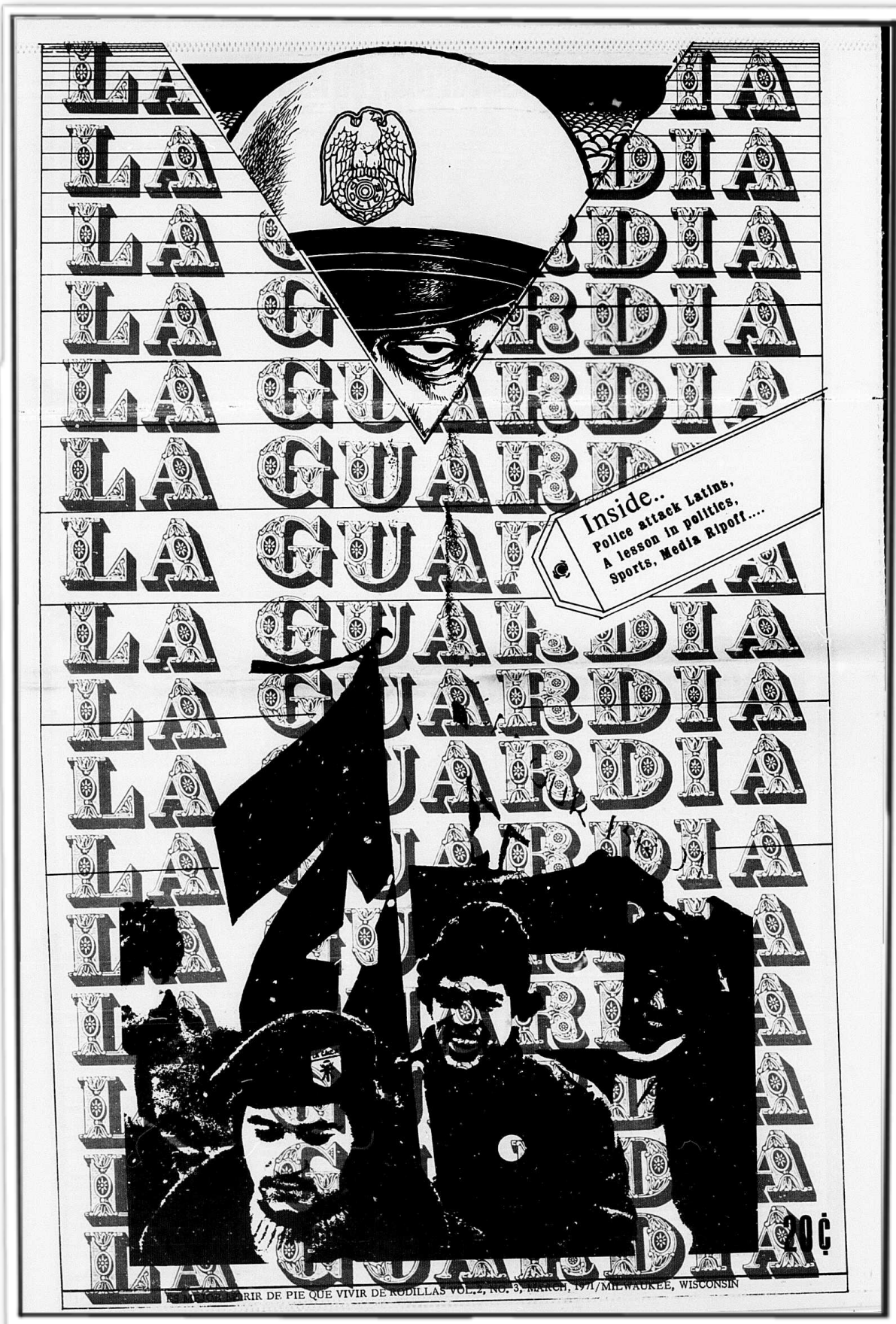


Figure 25: *La Guardia*, Vol. 2, No. 3, March, 1971, Cover.

12 LA GUARDIA

LUCEY'S PANEL ON LATINS

Governor Lucy named a committee to recommend ways of making state programs more responsive to the needs of the Latin community. The committee is a result of a meeting between the governor and leaders of the Milwaukee Latin community held earlier this month.

The Latins met with the governor to discuss the problems in their community and to discuss clemency for Ernesto Chacon and Jose Puentes.

The governor's committee will be headed by Charles M. Hill Sr., head of the State Local Affairs and Development, and Philip Lerman, a member of the Commission on Industry Labor and Human Relations. Other members included members from the state Health and Social Service Department, a dean and an assistant director of the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and Ricardo Fernandez, director of the Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The governor asked the team to report on their findings in two weeks.

At the first meeting in the southside community on March 22 Latins demanded that more Latins be placed on the committee.

Those selected from the community by other Latins are Roberto Hernandez president of the Latin American Union for Civil Rights, Tony Baez Director of Centro Nuestro, Emilio Lopez and Elisa Hernandez from the east side Puerto Rican community, Arturo Gonzalez from Racine and Miss Eileen Lopez from the Latin Waukesha community.

The committee's first meeting was at Spanish Center and later in the afternoon at the Concentrated Employment program (CEP). Among the topics discussed were bilingual driving tests, immigration problems, police brutality and harassment, and the problems of the youth.

Also discussed in depth were some of the unrealistic requirements of high school diplomas for some state jobs, when the position consists of unloading trucks. Also job discrimination by employers and powerful unions. The committee listened to complaints from residents about the inadequacies of the present state programs and related the problems to the bureaucracy and red tape. They also discussed new programs but were concerned about the commitments involved in such programs.

This was the governor's committee first day tomorrow they will visit other places and people. One community person commented, "They are here to find out what we already know and they probably already know, so what's new?"

Another was more serious, "They came, they saw, but what will they do is anybody's guess."

El gobernador Lucy, nobro un comité para que buscare las formas que las agencias que estan sirviendo a la comunidad puedan hacer un mejor trabajo en servir las necesidades de nuestra comunidad. El comité es el resultado de las reuniones que se llevaron a cabo, entre el gobernador Lucy y algunos líderes de la comunidad a principios de este mes.

Los líderes latinos se reunieron con el gobernador para discutir clemencia para Chacon y Puentes, discutieron los problemas de nuestra comunidad.

El comité está dirigido por Charles M. Hill, jefe del departamento para asuntos de desarrollo y de eventos, y por Philip Lerman, quien es miembro de la comisión de Industria Trabajo y asuntos de las relaciones humanas. Otros miembros representan el departamento de Salud y Servicio Social, un Decano y Director del Milwaukee Technical College, y el Dr. Ricardo M. Fernandez Director del UW-M Instituto Latino. El gobernador le ha pedido a este comité que le reporte las recomendaciones en dos semanas.

En la primera junta el día 22 de Marzo se demandó que más miembros latinos estuvieran en el comité, y se logró que fueran nombrados los siguientes latinos: Roberto Hernandez Presidente de Latin American Union for Civil Rights, Tony Baez Director del Centro Nuestro, Emilio Lopez Director del Centro para Ayuda Mutua, Elisa Hernandez también del área de los miembros de la comunidad portorriqueña.

Arturo González de Racine, la señora Eileen Lopez de la comunidad latina de Waukesha.

La primera reunión del comité se llevó a cabo en el Centro Hispano, luego en la tarde el comité se reunió en el Programa Concentrado de Desempleos. Entre los tópicos que se le presentaron al comité: El programa en dos lenguas (bilingüe) Educación para manejo, problemas con la migración, La brutalidad de los policías para con nuestra gente, y varios problemas que a frontan los jóvenes.

También se discutió lo irrealístico de los requisitos de pedir un diploma de Escuela Secundaria o Superior, para entrar a trabajar de trabajos que son efícos, también el hecho de la discriminación de varios patrones y compañías para con nuestra gente, lo mismo de parte de las grandes uniones de trabajadores. Se le presentaron las quejas de como los presentes programas no estaban siendo servidos de la comunidad, que tenían un tren de papeleo, y finalmente no le ayudaban a resolver los problemas de la gente. Se discutieron nuevos programas, pero se pidió que más latinos participen en tales programas.

Esto es en general lo que El comité hizo este día, mañana ellos irán a otros lugares y hablar con otro grupo de gente latina. Como una persona dijo, "Muy bien ellos están en este comité, han oído lo que ya sabían hace muchos años sabían, que haran es cosa que, todos podemos adivinar muy fácil. "NADA"!!!

LATIN MASTERS

We the youth from the United Spots have formed a political group of around 20 people. The group is made up of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Indians. The ages of the group range from 15 to 20 years old. The name we have given ourselves is the Latin Masters.

The group was formed to fight racism and oppression in our community. They will also organize volunteer projects to serve the needs of poor people in the community.

One of the main purposes of the Latin Masters is to build cultural pride in ourselves, we will do this by forming classes and reading about Mexican and Puerto Rican history and culture.

The Latin Masters are made up of drop-outs, ex-inmates from detention homes and jails, and people who are tired of being pushed around. We are beginning to understand that in order to help ourselves we have to help others.

The Latin Masters

MUHAMMAD ALI



STILL OUR CHAMP

GRINGO LOCO

Que voy hacer con este gringo loco, Señor?

Primero he takes el Corazon entero out of my country

Despues he ravages bronze Senoritas, consume Tacos, drinks Coco Loco y Margaritas

Mientras Chicanos shit and piss in the open field....

Crawl with humble hand and knee

All over the red white and blue tierra de Norte America

Picando fruta y vegetales to keep Mr. & Mrs. BLEACHBELL "gringo happy", como la nieve inside a balloon!

My God! what's wrong con este gringo loco ?????

A Quien pueda interesar, Envio estas cuantas lineas para decirle que LA GUARDIA es bien recibida aqui entre nosotros, los Chicanos prisioneros de Fox Lake. Personalmente he leído solo dos ediciones de su periódico. La primer pagina fue suficiente para convencerme que LA GUARDIA es la verdadera voz de los Latinos en Wisconsin. Por ahora tomare la libertad en mandarles un poema que escribí yo hace poco tiempo.

Daniel Trevino Ramirez

YOUNG LORDS CONFERENCE

The Milwaukee chapter of the Young Lords Organization held a conference at St. Michael's Community School on March 13th. The conference was called to discuss issues of police repression and brutality in Latin communities throughout the nation, focusing on the Latin community of Milwaukee. The conference consisted of a panel of speakers including Young Lords Tony Baez, Yolanda Lucas, Thomas Lewis. Other speakers were Lalo Valdez and Hollis Stewart.

Thomas Lewis from Los Angeles spoke of the Chicano Moratorium and the police violence and oppression that followed in the East LA community. He also stressed the importance of the concept of Aztlan and its relation to the liberation of Chicanos throughout the Southwest. Yolanda Lucas from the chapter in Chicago spoke on programs that had been initiated in the Chicago area by the Young Lords. Programs that "serve the interests of the people" like the Botanical Health Center in the near northside Chicago community.

Tony Baez, organizer of the conference and the local Young Lords chapter said, that repression in the Milwaukee Latin community is not an isolated incident. He explained a reflection being carried out by the United States government in all Third World Countries. Lalo Valdez and Hollis Stewart discussed the oppression and tactics being carried out by the local police.

After the speakers there was a general question and answer session. The conference was also called to raise funds to help publish a newspaper that would serve as the official organ of the Young Lords Organization. Young Lords literature and buttons were sold as well as Puerto Rican and Mexican food.

For more information write: Young Lords Organization Box 5024 Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204

Chicano communities through the cultivation of a shared “Latin” identity. Perhaps *El Young Lord* did so even more explicitly than previous Young Lords newspapers, as its banner now included images of both the Puerto Rican nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos as well as the famed Mexican revolutionary general Emiliano Zapata, both of whom had been martyred. Baez explains that while Loyd Guzior was Puerto Rican, “Loyd’s best friends were Chicano,” and even his wife was a Chicana. As a result, Baez recalls, Guzior “was very close to the Chicano movement. He constantly talked to me about it.”⁸³ Fittingly, when Baez showed these papers to López who was still living in Chicago, “he loved it, because it was Mexican, and so is he.”⁸⁴

As with the previous Young Lords publications, *El Young Lord* faced several obstacles which made sustaining it on a long-term basis unfeasible. Admitting that they only ever put out two or three issues, Baez remembers that money was one of their major challenges. As well, *La Guardia* was already a popular newspaper that served Milwaukee’s Latino communities and provided in-depth coverage of the same sorts of issues as *El Young Lord*. Since both Baez and Guzior were already members of the *La Guardia* collective, producing a separate Young Lords Organization newspaper (out of the *La Guardia* offices) would likely have seemed like an exercise in redundancy. Yet regardless of the fact that *El Young Lord* was never published with regularity, its very existence in some ways provides a nice postscript to the story of a movement that otherwise seems to have sadly ended all too soon.

⁸³ Luis Baez, interviewed by Michael Gonzales, April 2, 2013.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

“You Can’t Kill a Revolution”

Despite the severe decline of the Young Lords Organization in Chicago and the eventual demise of the Milwaukee Young Lords chapter, the Young Lords movement did not completely disappear in the early 1970s. Cha Cha, for one, was not willing to let the organization simply fade away into oblivion. Disillusioned with the long-term potential of organizing “underground,” Jiménez decided to return to Chicago in December 1972 to turn himself in and serve a one year prison sentence for the theft charges. Upon his release he opened up a new YLO office in the Lakeview region of Chicago. By that time few Puerto Ricans remained in the Armitage neighborhood of Lincoln Park where the Young Lords got their start. Along with a small number of his former associates, Cha Cha hoped to renew the YLO’s community work and protest activities. In 1974-1975 he ran an unsuccessful though spirited campaign for Chicago city alderman. He was inspired by Bobby Seale’s run for Mayor of Oakland and the Black Panther’s call for radical groups to use the electoral process to take over city governments.⁸⁵ Despite spirited work this new incarnation of the Young Lords faced difficulties of its own, and was seemingly unable to achieve the same impact as the earlier street movement.

While the Young Lords Organization did not survive past the 1970s, there are important and enduring legacies of this movement. Perhaps the most important legacies involve the continued activism and community engagement of Young Lords veterans. Certainly their early experiences working with the Young Lords and producing their newspapers provided these young people with invaluable lessons that deeply impacted their later activism. At the same time we must recognize that not all of the legacies of

⁸⁵ Les Bridges, “Cha Cha Jiménez: The gang leader on the lamb is now the politician on the stump,” *The Reader: Chicago’s Free Weekly*, Vol. 4, No. 18, Friday, February 7, 1975, p 1 & 6.

the movement are positive. There were many casualties along the way, and some experienced drug addiction, violence, and prison in the wake of their experiences with the Young Lords. Ultimately the history of the Young Lords has yet to be fully written, and so it is still too early to assess the full impact of this movement upon its activists and their communities.

But more than just recognizing the legacies of continued community work, perhaps it is more important for us to examine what the newspapers themselves have to teach us. Hopefully by explicating the content of these papers, tracing their historical development, and exploring the lives of the individuals who produced them, this essay has provided a sort of roadmap with which to navigate one's investigation. At the very least, the work of these young men and women with no journalism experience yet who simply "had something to say" should provide inspiration to media activists in this era of corporate media monopolies pushing neoliberal agendas. For Omar López, the real lesson to learn from the Young Lords' experiences in publishing was that "newspapers can and should be an organizing tool for community organizations." As well, they must be "didactic," López asserts. "I think one of the things we've learned and that we tried to do was to suggest that those papers have to be used to educate people and to raise their awareness of why things are happening to them."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Omar López, interview by Michael Gonzales, April 12, 2013.