



# From Radicalism to Representation: Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez’s Journey into Electoral Politics

Marisol V. Rivera<sup>1</sup> · Judson L. Jeffries<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez’s 1975 aldermanic campaign and his work toward the successful election of the first African American mayor of Chicago. Several progressive politicians who cut their political teeth on Jimenez’s city council campaign used the skills they acquired in the mid-1970s to break through the political glass ceiling that for decades kept Latinos from actualizing their potential. This article provides a lens through which to see how Jimenez and the Young Lords laid the groundwork for an anti-Daley machine that was a continuation of the original Rainbow Coalition.

**Keywords** Alderman race · Young Lords · Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez · Rainbow Coalition · Electoral politics

## Introduction

Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez’s ongoing oral history project ensures that the legacy of the Young Lords as both a gang and political organization lives on, that it takes its rightful place in both American and world history.<sup>1</sup> Those who are familiar with the name “Cha

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<sup>1</sup>Most of Jimenez’s more than 100 interviews are on video rather than transcribed. Transcribed histories lend themselves to different analyses than those on video. Hearing the interviewee and interviewer in Jimenez’s interviews and seeing the interviewee’s non-verbal modes of communication provide additional layers of information for study. Dan Sipe argues, “Oral history is the collaborative creation of evidence in narrative form between interviewer and narrator, between living human beings .... Oral history should thus document not only the interview’s explicit information, but the process itself.” He explains that the video images oral histories create show dialogs, tone of voice, and other cues that one is unable to see in a written transcript. See Dan Sipe, “The Future of Oral History and Moving Images,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 2003 edition, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 382–385. Also see Grele, “Movement without Aim,” 43–47. Robert Grele argues that oral histories show undiscovered discourses and the creation of historical processes.

✉ Marisol V. Rivera  
mrivera@elgin.edu

Judson L. Jeffries  
Jeffries.70@osu.edu

<sup>1</sup> Elgin Community College, 1700 Spartan Dr, Elgin, IL 60123, USA

<sup>2</sup> The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Cha” Jimenez associate his name with words such as radical, revolutionary, militant, and gang member, but at one point in Jimenez’s life, it appeared that he might be headed toward a career in public service. Despite the scholarly attention devoted to the Young Lords by a younger generation of academics over the past 20 years, few of them have seen fit to highlight Jimenez’s foray into electoral politics (Mantler 2013; Salces 1978). In fact, at the age of 27, Jimenez surprised everyone when he threw his hat into the ring for city council. When Jimenez decided to run for alderman, he did not realize it at the time, but he had joined an esteemed group of radicals and militants such as Dr. W.E.B. DuBois,<sup>2</sup> Upton Sinclair,<sup>3</sup> Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales,<sup>4</sup> Julian Bond,<sup>5</sup> and John Hulett,<sup>6</sup> who at some point during their activist careers sought elected office, with the idea that working within the system might enable them to bring about a greater measure of freedom, justice and equality to those who had historically been denied it.

Jimenez’s run for office came on the heels of a larger movement that emerged in the 1960s with Latinos exerting themselves politically in ways that mirrored the black-led modern civil rights movement. Much like the modern civil rights movement, Latinos experienced a number of high-profile successes that catalyzed the movement and gave it energy. One of the movement’s earliest and most dramatic efforts occurred in the small town of Crystal City, TX, in 1963, where the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO) was formed and coalesced with a predominantly Mexican-American local chapter of the Teamsters Union to vote out all of the white candidates for city council, replacing them with an all-Mexican American council. Mexican-Americans also dominated the elections for the city’s Board of Education (McClain and Johnson-Carew 2017). The “Crystal City Revolt” as it was called was important because it signaled the emergence of Latino political mobilization. This was the first time that Latinos had taken control of a white-run municipal government in modern US history (Munoz 1989). The “Crystal City Revolt” inspired Latinos everywhere, prompting demonstrations of young people in high schools and on college campuses throughout the Southwest and western regions of the USA. These acts of resistance undoubtedly gave rise to such organizations as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Mexican American Youth Organization, and ultimately the La Raza Unida Party (LRUP), which formed, in part, at least initially, to recruit and run Latino candidates for elected office.

Although Jimenez lost the 1975 election for the 46th ward, his continued work in the areas of voter registration and grassroots organizing, helped future progressive politicians gain space to enter into political office.<sup>7</sup> This article shows how Jimenez’s city council race, his subsequent work in voter mobilization and his participation within an anti-machine coalition that was inspired by the original Rainbow Coalition assisted in

<sup>2</sup> W.E.B. DuBois ran for the US Senate in New York in 1950 as a member of the American Labor Party ticket.

<sup>3</sup> Upton Sinclair ran for governor of California as a Democrat in 1934

<sup>4</sup> Rodolfo Corky Gonzales ran the Denver City Council in 1955 as well as the Colorado state legislature in 1960 and the Colorado State senate in 1964. His last race was for mayor of Denver in 1967.

<sup>5</sup> Julian Bond of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was elected to the Georgia in 1965 but wasn’t seated until years later after the US Supreme Court ruled in 1967 that preventing Bond from taking his seat due to his opposition to the Vietnam War was unconstitutional.

<sup>6</sup> John Hulett of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was elected sheriff of Lowndes County, Alabama in 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Diamond argues that political patronage toward youth gangs gave representation to ethnic Europeans in the city. See *Mean Streets*, 10–12; Hagedorn, “Race Not Space,” 196.

Harold Washington's election as the city's first black<sup>8</sup> mayor. This work also demonstrates that while Jimenez himself was not able to break through the political glass ceiling, his work in electoral politics helped usher into positions of power a number of reform-minded, progressive individuals.

## Jimenez's Political Evolution

Jimenez was an anomaly when he ran for aldermanic office. Though unsuccessful, this work assisted in opening space for an unprecedented number of Latinos being appointed and elected to a whole host of offices in Chicago. Jimenez's city council candidacy is one factor that helped politicize a community that had historically registered and voted in low numbers. Jimenez himself admits, "until I ran for alderman, I had never voted in my life . . . the first time I voted was when I voter for myself" (Jimenez 2019). Yet, for all of Jimenez's political maneuvering he was unable to secure any meaningful political position for himself. In an interview with Mervin Mendez, Young Lord Carlos Flores indicated that Jimenez could not enter political office because he "fell out of grace." (Flores n.d.). Specifically, Flores believes that poor decisions on Jimenez's part caused him to fall out of favor with those who were well-positioned to help Jimenez, both personally and politically. Flores also took the opportunity to offer an unsolicited opinion on the generational divide among activists of his era and those that came later. From his standpoint, the difference between those who fought for power in the 1960s, who were part of "movements" did so to improve living conditions within dispossessed communities, while those who came into power in the 1990s, were more interested in personal and professional gain rather than working on behalf of the people whom they were purported to represent (Flores n.d.). Simply put, Flores is of the opinion that although Latinos were able to access the previous impregnable Old Boys club of Chicago politics, those elected in the 1990s did not turn out to be the champions that the people had hoped they would be; instead, in many instances, they became part of the dominant democratic structure.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not this view is representative of other activists of Flores' generation is unclear, but given his long history of activism and work in the area, his view is one that cannot be discounted.

The choices Jimenez made in his youth and in his early adult life made a real impact not only on himself but also on the lives of those within his social network. Whether it was the choices he made as a young man or the perception others had of him, his reputation, and connections as a leader in the Puerto Rican community empowered other underrepresented minorities and women including Harold Washington and Helen Shiller yet were not enough to gain him entry into the hallowed halls of city politics.

In the late 1960s and the early to mid-1970s some progressive ethnic organizations declined or generally became more mainstream in response to government repression (Zayas 2014; Lopez 2017; Fernandez 2012). Jimenez, however, took the Young Lords

<sup>8</sup> At time the words Black and African American are used interchangeably according to sound and context as well as to avoid repetition.

<sup>9</sup> (Flores, unknown) This can also be understood as hegemony. In this case, the hegemon or the dominant ruling power, represents the Chicago democratic political party structure who still has major control over the political realm in the city.

in a different direction, even before becoming more conventional and turning toward electoral politics. The YLO deteriorated as internal and external factors took their toll on the organization in Chicago. In addition to Jimenez's struggle with substance abuse, constant harassment by the government caused major damage. For example, the arrest and incarceration of the organization's leaders created financial distress as resources were redirected for legal purposes.

According to the second author, by the early 1970s, Jose "Cha Cha" Jimenez went underground as multiple charges were levied against him including the charge that ultimately landed him in jail, the ill-advised theft of twenty-three dollars-worth of lumber from an urban renewal site (Fernandez 2012; Jeffries 2003; Young 1974a, b; Page 1972).<sup>10</sup> Jeffries states, "While it does appear Jimenez was subjected to police harassment, some of his troubles were clearly self-initiated" (Jeffries 2003, 297). Jeffries writes in "From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago," that the Young Lords faced police repression as those on the YLO leadership committee faced multiple charges. Jeffries claims that Jimenez seemed to be targeted by the police department's Gang Surveillance Unit as he was arrested eighteen times. Jeffries recalls how the police stopped Jimenez and told him to stop his activism. Clearly, his past criminal actions made him an easy target for harassment. Jeffries illustrates that it was impossible for Jimenez to be present at all of the judicial proceedings. Since they ran concurrently, it was impossible for him to appear. The judge at court would issue a warrant for his arrest as Jimenez, obviously, could not be in two places at the same time—a curious development that attests to the lengths to which the state went to neutralize Jimenez.

While on the run from the lumber charge, Jimenez and others established a location, where according to the YLO's website, "an underground training school is set up to train Young Lords leadership, to take over the organization" (Jimenez Young Lords Website 2017). YLO's member Angie Navedo and her daughter Cathy Adorno-Centeno, are said by Jimenez, to have resided at a ranch in Tomah, Wisconsin, the location of the school (Adorno-Centeno 2012).<sup>11</sup> While the school is said to have been a place to train YLO's future leadership, William "Bill" Zayas, formerly of the Latino Institute, stated that Jimenez was also known to teach revolution there (Zayas 2014).<sup>12</sup> After fleeing in August of 1970, Jimenez eventually turned himself into the police on December 6th 1972 (Young Lords Leader Surrenders to Police 1972; Young Lord Chief Vows Fast 1972). Meanwhile, as the organization struggled for survival during Jimenez's incarceration, Angie Navedo led the organization, though the YLO never fully recovered.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Also see "Jose 'Cha Cha' Jimenez," National Young Lords, accessed 2016, [nationalyounglords.com/?page\\_id=15](http://nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15), which states that Jose Jimenez faced "...eighteen indictments in six weeks..."

<sup>11</sup> Angie Navedo was the widow of Jose "Pancho" Lind also participated in the YLO. Cathy Adorno-Centeno is their daughter.

<sup>12</sup> The Latino Institute, a non-profit created in 1974 functioned as a sort of non-profit "think tank" which released position papers and research on the Latino community and important issues relating thereof until its demise in 1998.

<sup>13</sup> See [nationalyounglords.com/?page\\_id=15](http://nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15) accessed June 15, 2017. It is also interesting to note that Angie Navedo was not of Latino origin. She is another clear example of how despite not being a Puerto Rican, she gained a leadership role within the organization. Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," *Ramparts*, 9 no. 1 (October 1970), 25.

## YLO's Move Toward Electoral Politics

Recognizing that as long as the YLO was viewed in militant terms, political repression of the group would increase, as would anti-Young Lord sentiment among the reading and viewing public whose only knowledge of the Young Lords came from what they saw on TV or read in the newspapers, a conscious decision was made to use the vote as a means to an end. Therefore, when Jimenez was released from jail a year later, in the fall of 1973, he tossed his hat into the ring for alderman. At the time, according to the 1970 US Census, Latinos represented a little less than 8% of the Chicago's total population.<sup>14</sup> Among them were an estimated 51,604 Spanish surnamed registrants.<sup>15</sup> And yet, there was no substantive Latino representation on any of the city's or county's policy making bodies. As expected, Jimenez's announcement made headlines (Schreiber and Davis 1974; Young 1974a, b). According to the National Young Lords website, "In 1973, Jimenez became the first announced Latino aldermanic candidate to publicly oppose the much-feared Daley Machine" (Jimenez, National Young Lords website). Indeed, Jimenez's campaign slogan was *El Amanecer de un nuevo Dia*, meaning *The Dawning of a New Day*.

Jimenez's first order of business was to get the required number of signatures in order to be placed on the ballot. Jimenez went door to door collecting signatures for his nominating petitions. "We got more than 1,000 signatures... way more than we needed... the reason why we got way more than we needed was because we knew that some of the signatures and addresses were going to be ruled invalid, so we got as many as we could in order to compensate for the ones that turned out not to be good" says Jimenez (Jimenez 2019). Jimenez traded in his Young Lords regalia and adopted a more conservative wardrobe. In early summer 1974 Jimenez, dressed in a conservative blue suit with a polka dot and striped navy tie held a press conference at the Lakeview Lutheran Church before approximately fifty people and made clear his intention to form a coalition that would unseat the incumbent in the February 25 primary the following year. With his significant other and infant son beside him, Jimenez crowed, "It is time especially for Latinos, who are represented neither in the city nor state government, to take political power" (Jimenez 2010).

One of the issues featured prominently in Jimenez's campaign was urban renewal. Jimenez promised to oppose city urban renewal projects that displaced poor people while advocating for decent low-income housing (Young 1974a, b). He lamented that "urban renewal is simply a method by which private developers, aided by corrupt politicians, reap huge profits." "Before I finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I was moved nine times by these developers and forced to attend four different elementary schools. Each time I was forced to live in unstable communities with drugs, gangs, prostitution, and other crimes" (Young 1974a, b).

On the surface, the 70,000 resident, 46th ward seemed a curious choice in which to run for city council.<sup>16</sup> Only 14% of its residents were black and less than a quarter were

<sup>14</sup> Like many minority groups, there were those within the Latino community who believed that Latinos were undercounted by census takers. For a substantive discussion on that topic, see *Counting the Forgotten*, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C., April 1974.

<sup>15</sup> This number was calculated by Guillermo Perez, Director of Finance for the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, *El Manana*, Chicago, August 28, 1975: 3.

<sup>16</sup> The words city council and aldermanic as well as alderman are used interchangeably throughout this article according to sound and context.



Latino (U.S. Census 1970; U.S. Census 1980). Of the heavily Latino populated wards, the 46th Ward was one of the least ethnically homogenized, meaning that only 38% percent of its Latino residents were, like Jimenez, Puerto Rican, 22% were Mexican American, 22% were Cuban, and the remaining 18% were other Spanish nationalities. By contrast, Wards 31 and 26 were 76% and 62% Puerto Rican, respectively. Even Ward 22 was significantly less ethnically dispersed than the 46th Ward, with 65% of its Latino residents being Mexican American (Department of Development and Planning 1974). If that were not enough, according to the 1970 Census, of those who identified as Latinos in the 46th Ward, only 8% of them were registered to vote (Development and Planning 1974).<sup>17</sup> To make for an even bleaker scenario, the majority of the whites who called the 46th Ward home were considered poor with an income of less than sixteen thousand dollars annually. Typically, poor people of any race vote in significantly lower numbers than higher income residents. What is more, poor whites are typically more hostile to candidates of color than are more economically stabled whites.

The 46th ward was bounded in the south by Waveland Avenue, the north by Lawrence, the west by Clark/Ashland and the east by the Lake Michigan and the Lake Shore Drive middle-class high-rise apartment buildings. The western section was comprised of white working-class residents with two- and three-story homes. The northern mid-section was composed of Indigenous Americans and poor white emigrants from the Appalachian Mountains, crowded into large tenements. Blacks comprised an eastern corridor up and down Broadway Avenue that stretched the entire ward. And in the southern and mid-section of the ward lived Latinos, few as they were. They and the ward's black section were the targets of the city's urban renewal projects and were in the process of being displaced. The Lakeview area was just north of Lincoln Park where the issue of gentrification was similarly prominent (Black 2019; Shiller 2019). Despite the area's racial demographics, which on the surface did not appear to be in Jimenez's favor he made clear that he decided to run in the 46th "because poor people weren't being represented on the council" and "I knew that [the 31-year-old Cohen] was a rub-stamp alderman for Daley" (46th Ward IPO 1975). On the matter of the ward's racial demographics Helen Shiller suggests that the numbers cited above do not tell the entire story. Shiller offers "the ward itself may not have had a large Latino population, but the southern part of the 46<sup>th</sup> was Northern Lakeview and that part of the ward was 75% Puerto Rican" (Shiller 2019). While that number seems high, Shiller's point is that there was a visible and highly concentrated Latino population into which the Jimenez campaign could tap. However, as pointed out earlier, only 38% percent of that Latino population was Puerto Rican. To say that Jimenez faced an uphill battle is an understatement.

## Campaigning as a Candidate of Color

Historically, when candidates of color have run in overwhelmingly white jurisdictions, they have found it necessary to deracialize their candidacies and their campaigns. This is carried out by doing the following: (a) projecting oneself in a manner that is nonthreatening to whites. Candidates of color who are perceived as strident or are accusatory of whites for their people's condition do not bode well with white voters. Candidates of

<sup>17</sup> To what extent that number increased by 1975 is unknown to the authors.

color, especially black and brown candidates, need to present themselves in ways that whites find palatable (b) steering clear of issues that can be racially construed like welfare, poverty, and affirmative action. Instead, black and brown candidates do well to campaign on issues that transcend race such as taxes, education and employment. Translation: non-racial issues that appeal to a broad base electorate and (c) avoid any association with controversial figures who have made a career out of playing the race card in some way, shape, or form (McCormick and Jones 1993; Jones and Clemons 1993). For example, one political figure that African American candidates have, over the years kept at arms-length when campaigning in majority white areas is the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson. One of the most well-documented cases of a candidate declining Jackson's help on the campaign trail occurred in 1989 when then Lt. Governor Douglas Wilder was vying for the governorship of Virginia. Wilder made clear that he did not want nor need Jackson's help. Wilder feared that Jackson's reputation among many whites as a civil rights demagogue would hurt his campaign. Some black strategists agreed. Wilder won, but by the slimmest margin in the history of Virginia statewide elections (Jeffries 2000). In 2007, US Senator Barack Obama was compelled to disassociate himself from his longtime pastor Rev. Jeremiah Wright, during his presidential run. Wright, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago was thought to be, by some whites, a racially polarizing figure. Some pointed to the slogan he adopted for his church, "Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian," as evidence that he was a political lightning rod that the Obama campaign could do without.

Jimenez stayed true to his roots, refusing to play those political games. "When I ran for Alderman, I was not trying to white wash myself or my campaign... it was clear that I was running as a Latino, a Puerto Rican... I did not try to make myself seem like someone other than a person of color" said Jimenez (Jimenez 2019). When asked if he had different messages for different audiences based on race Jimenez replied "when I talked to whites, I didn't try to act white nor did I try to act Black when I spoke to Blacks... I didn't say one thing when I was talking to whites and then turned around and said another thing when I was talking to Blacks... I wasn't into playing that game... what you saw is what you got with me... I talked about the same issues wherever I went, also I didn't try to make myself seem anything other than what I was... I'm Puerto Rican and I was proud of it then when I was running and proud of it now" said Jimenez (Jimenez 2019).

For some voters, we imagine that the Jimenez campaign may have been a breath of fresh air. Jimenez was not a politician by any stretch of the imagination; that he was a former gang member as well as a revolutionary as the leader of the Young Lords Organization. Jimenez had no plans to become a career politician, but he was authentic. There were times when he may have been too authentic. For example, Jimenez did not hide the fact that he had used drugs in the past and on several occasions made poor decisions, a few of which landed him in jail. While it is possible that some voters appreciated his transparency, it is likely that others may have cringed at the thought of voting for someone with such a checkered past.

## The Year Was 1975

The same year that Jimenez jumped into the race for alderman, also witnessed the reelection of Mayor Richard J. Daley, who received 77% of the vote. Republican and

longtime alderman of the 47th Ward John Hoellen received approximately 140,000 votes, amounting to 20% of the vote while Willie Mae Reid, an African American woman who ran on the Socialist Workers Party ticket, attracted slightly under 17,000 votes for a total of 2.4% of the vote (Election results 1975). Perhaps the most notable African American candidate, Ann Lanford, the first African American woman elected to the city council, in 1971, lost her bid for reelection to the 16th ward that year as well. Langford though, mounted a successful comeback 8 years later when she recaptured her seat the same year Washington was elected mayor. All told, 1975 was not an especially good year for a number of minority candidates in Chicago. Several Latinos and African Americans went down in defeat. Incidentally, that was the same year Congress amended the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 to add protections for language minority citizens in jurisdictions where there were significant numbers of Spanish speakers or a single Asian, American Indian, or Native Alaskan Native language. While the evidence suggests that the VRA helped facilitate the incorporation of African Americans into electoral politics, its impact on Latino, Asian American, and other communities of color is less clear. Still, 10 years after the VRA, Latinos represented less than 1% of all elected officials in the USA. Nevertheless, some Latinos, determined to break down barriers that had historically denied them access to the chambers of such law-making bodies as the city council, state legislature and US Congress, remained undaunted. The same year that Jimenez ran for alderman in Chicago, a city council race in San Antonio, TX, made headlines. There, another 27-year old caught the attention of the city's powerbrokers by running a strong campaign and getting himself elected to the city council, making the Harvard educated Henry Cisneros, at the time, the youngest ever elected to the San Antonio council.

Jimenez's decision to run for political office was prompted not by any previous effort on the part of Latino office seekers, but by Black Panther Party Chairman Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown's run for mayor and city council in Oakland 2 years earlier. "Recognizing the Black Panther Party as the Vanguard party we followed the Panthers' example... that is, the idea of using electoral politics as an organizing tool... one thing people must understand, the run for city council was not a Cha Cha Jimenez initiative, but a Young Lords initiative" said Jimenez (Jimenez 2019). Being familiar with Chicago's political landscape, Jimenez understood that a run for the mayor's office was out of the question, as Mayor Richard J. Daley had no plans to retire and his reelection was all but assured, despite the fact that in the last year or two, the Cook County Democratic machine and the Mayor had been plagued by scandals, indictments, and several convictions focusing on associates of the mayor who engaged in schemes that fattened their wallets at the public's expense. Still, Daley was so certain of a sixth term that he did not bother to give his opponents the satisfaction of a debate, choosing instead to pretend they did not exist and point to his record. The city's three major newspapers—the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Daily News* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* responded to Daley's dismissive and imperial posture by denying him the editorial endorsements they had routinely heaped upon him in previous years.

It should also be noted that at the time, there were few Puerto Rican or Latino role models holding important elected offices around the country to whom Jimenez could look for inspiration. There was Governor Raul Castro of Arizona, the highest-ranking elected Latino at the time, who was elected in 1974. In New York, Herman Badillo, a Puerto Rican, was serving in Congress, having been elected in 1970. At the municipal



level, with the exception of Maurice Ferre of Miami, another Puerto Rican, who was elected mayor in 1973, there was a dearth of Latinos serving as big city mayors and higher (Garcia Bedolla 2014; Hero 1992), and relatively few big city black mayors, for that matter.<sup>18</sup> Jimenez therefore opted for alderman, believing a run for city council was a more realistic undertaking. He also believed that a mobilized and politicized Hispanic community was what was needed if city officials were ever going to take the concerns and interests of the Latino community seriously. Jimenez also recognized that without an energized and engaged Latino community, he had no chance of getting elected. At the time, Chicago did not have elected Latino representation on the city council, even in predominately Latino areas.

## The Campaign Gets Underway

Despite operating on a shoe-string budget, Jimenez's small volunteer army set up three campaign offices, from these offices campaign workers covered every square inch of the 46th ward, canvassing block by block, covering entire neighborhoods under the direction of three campaign managers—well known activist Walter “Slim” Coleman, Jimenez himself and Jim Chapman, an attorney. The YLO developed camaraderie with other ethnicities, such as progressive thinking and left-wing whites as well as African Americans in the area, who not only suffered displacement, but did not support the established Democratic Party Machine in Chicago. Contrary to popular belief, the Latino community is not monolithic in its politics; therefore, one of Jimenez's priorities was to win the support of Mexican Americans, the second largest nationality in the ward. The campaign's support of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers paid dividends.<sup>19</sup> Every Saturday, Jimenez and other members of his campaign went to a different supermarket in the 46th ward where Mexican Americans were picketing and politely informed store management that if the grapes and lettuce were not removed from the store's shelves picketing would continue. Jimenez believes this stance won him both admirers and more than a few campaign workers (Jimenez 2019). Along the way, he picked up a few endorsements such as the Independent Voters of Illinois, The committee for an Effective City Council and the 46th Ward Independent Precinct Organization (Schreiber 1975; 46th Ward IPO 1975).

Jimenez squared off against two candidates, incumbent Chris Cohen and Darrell Quinley. Cohen, a lawyer, who was first elected to the city council in 1971, had the full support of the Democratic Machine. Although alderman elections are supposedly non-partisan, Jimenez ran as an independent Democratic. In early December 1974, the 46th Ward Regular Democratic Organization announced its unanimous decision to support Cohen's reelection at a “combination victory-Christmas party for approximately 150 people at the Taylor Post of the American Legion on Ashland Avenue (Cohen Wins Support 1974). Cohen ran a straight-forward and business-like campaign that featured

<sup>18</sup> Carl Stokes in Cleveland, Kenneth Gibson in Newark, NJ, Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, Walter Washington in DC, Maynard Jackson in Atlanta and Coleman Young in Detroit.

<sup>19</sup> The United Farm Workers developed strong bonds with Black and Brown leftist groups throughout the USA. Two years after Jimenez's race, in 1977, the Panthers, the Brown Berets, the United Farm Workers and other leftist groups supported Judge Lionel Wilson, a moderate African American judge for mayor. He won, in no small measure to the grassroots organizing by those groups.

his accomplishments, that included rezoning parts of the ward to limit high rise construction and the congestion that resulted from high density zoning. Cohen also pointed to his efforts at cracking down on crime by increasing police foot patrols to some of the ward's toughest areas (Zahour 1975). Quinley, a republican and a mortician by trade was viewed as intelligent and energetic. Like Jimenez, he also believed that the city council lacked the kind of representation befitting of a diverse city such as Chicago. He pledged to set up a "community ballot" that would give ward residents an opportunity to have input on matters on that would require his vote (Zahour 1975). In the end, Quinley's candidacy gained little traction, as voters, seemingly taken with Cohen, returned him to office with 63% of the vote.<sup>20</sup>

Although Jimenez lost the election, he comported himself well, all things considered, winning 27% percent of the vote,<sup>21</sup> earning him a second-place finish. Jimenez was one of four Latinos to run for alderman that year with Miguel Velazquez vying for the 31st ward, Ed Campos campaigning in the 22nd ward and Frank Diaz stumping in the 26th ward. Campos and Diaz attracted just 18 and 7% of the vote respectively while Velazquez garnered 28% percent of the vote (Aldermanic results 1975). All four were attempting to become the city's first Latino alderman since William Emilio Rodriguez in 1915, who was elected and reelected on the Socialist Party ticket. Velazquez may have bested Jimenez by one percentage point, but few would argue that Velazquez's showing was any more impressive than Jimenez's, given what Jimenez had to work with. Still, Jimenez even outpolled Black Panther Bobby Rush who won just 22% of the vote in his run for alderman of the 2nd ward.

Jimenez proved to be a worthy opponent, to both Cohen and Quinley. Only 10% of registered voters cast their lot with Quinley (Aldermanic results 1975). Jimenez had none of the resources available to Cohen and Quinley, including the all-important support and backing of a major party. Candidates who have the support of one of the two major parties have key resources at their disposal to which non-major party candidates are not privy. Those resources include an army of campaign workers, experienced campaign strategists, access to television, radio and newspapers, a war chest and endorsements from key party stalwarts. Jimenez's campaign understood the importance of key endorsements, photo opportunities and being seen with the right people, hence the reason his campaign arranged to have Jimenez take a photo with Chicago Cubs outfielder Jose Cardenal, a Cuban. With that photo, large posters were made and hung near Wrigley Field where they would be seen by people passing by as well as people attending Cubs games. Jimenez may have been a political novice, but he had a number of good ideas that were well-received in some sectors of the electorate. For example, one of Jimenez's more creative proposals was the landlord security deposit act, which would require landlords to put \$100 on deposit for each of their properties. In the event, the tenant was denied full services for any reason, such as a faulty furnace or broken window, then the money would be used immediately for the repairs (Zahour 1975). Jimenez also did not shy away from the tough issues. For example, Jimenez favored rehabilitation for small drug dealers and strong penalties for large drug dealers. This caused quite a stir as many people, including his opponent, Chris Cohen, favored

<sup>20</sup> Cohen's numbers compared favorably to those of Daley who won the 46th ward with 70.6% of the vote.

<sup>21</sup> Although voting records show that Jimenez received 27% of the vote, he, and others, believe he received somewhere in the vicinity of 39%, but that belief is not supported by the data.

stiff penalties for anyone dealing drugs. When it comes to law and order, it is important that candidates for elected office be viewed as tough on crime; Jimenez's lenient position on small-time drug dealers may have hurt him with some voters.<sup>22</sup>

## A Political Novice Learns the Tricks of the Trade

Jimenez was a political novice who learned several hard and valuable lessons about running for office, such as the importance of timing. For example, Jimenez announced his candidacy nearly 2 years before the actual election, hoping to use that time to increase his name recognition and build a campaign. What he did not realize however was that he would neither have the monetary resources or human capital to sustain a campaign of that duration. Be that as it may, Jimenez's volunteers ran a hard-fought campaign. Helen Shiller remembers "we worked on that campaign around the clock... sleep was a premium... I didn't get more than 2 hours of sleep a night" (Shiller 2019). Jimenez's day started early in the morning each day. Every day for months Jimenez stood in front of EL stops and at bus stops in jacket and tie, greeting voters, introducing himself to riders, shaking the hands of workers, and passing out literature about his campaign (Jimenez 2019). Jimenez was mindful to project himself in a professional and statesman like manner. As a Young Lord, he understood that many people thought of him in certain terms and were holding fast to those impressions. Jimenez's opposition understood this as well and attempted to exploit the situation. For example, Jimenez recalls, "whenever there was a debate Cohen would show up with an entourage of police officers... Cohen claimed that he was only taking precautions because he knew gang members would be in attendance" (Jimenez 2019). To the degree that Cohen's tactic worked is hard to know for sure, but he clearly wanted to help the voters as well as the media frame Jimenez as a gang member to be feared, not as a candidate for city council to be taken seriously. Critics of this interpretation might argue that as a sitting elected official, Cohen had every right to a police escort, to any and all public events, including a debate. To Cohen's credit though, he never called attention to Jimenez's past indiscretions, although he did not have to, as the local newspapers routinely mentioned Jimenez's gang background and numerous brushes with the law.

Jimenez was not unaware of how he was perceived; he went out of his way to soften his image, even going so far as to take the unusual step of trying to ingratiate himself with poll workers in the 46th ward. Jimenez visited every polling station within the ward and each time he just happened to have with him a box of sweets rolls, donuts, and coffee. Given the history of corruption and voter fraud in Chicago, Jimenez's move seemed a good one. Jimenez also endeared himself to residents, after his campaign sent out precautionary letters on Halloween warning families of the risks associated with trick or treat activities (Jimenez 2019).

Despite the adversity that Jimenez's campaign faced along the way, it brought together people of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and organizations and built a

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most widely known instance of a candidate being made to look soft on crime occurred during the 1988 presidential race between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. A Massachusetts inmate crossed state lines, traveled to Maryland where accosted a man and raped his wife while on furlough from prison. At the time, Dukakis was governor of Massachusetts.

substantial social network that served future anti-establishment political campaigns well. While it did not mirror the Rainbow Coalition that he, Fred Hampton, and William “Preacherman” Fesperman of the Young Patriots had envisioned in 1969, it stands as a laudable achievement. In his chapter “‘We Need to Unite with as Many People Possible’: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Organization in Chicago,” historian Jakobi Williams maintains that Jimenez continued the mission of the Rainbow Coalition as the Black Panther Party (BPP), and other groups assisted in the campaign (Williams 2013, 117–188; 195–196).<sup>23</sup> Journalist Javier Navarro, writing for the local Lerner publications, characterized Jimenez’s candidacy as something much more than a conventional campaign; rather it was “a total social phenomenon” (Navarro 1974).

### Losing the Battle, but Winning the War

Additionally, it could be argued that Jimenez’s effort contributed to the success of Harold Washington’s 1983 mayoral campaign, by organizing a multiethnic coalition that registered voters. It is true that Jimenez’s campaign registered record numbers of Latino voters but getting them out to vote on election day was another matter entirely. The turn-out among Latino registered voters in the general election was less than 25% (Marable 1985). But among those who turned out, Washington received 52% of the Cuban-American vote; 68% of the Mexican-American vote; and 79% of the Puerto Rican vote, the largest Spanish-speaking nationality in the city (Alkalimat and Gills 1983).

Previous historical materials implied that Jimenez ran for city council for the purpose of organizing, not with the intention of winning office.<sup>24</sup> More recently, however, Jimenez states, “Not true. I ran with the intention of accomplishing two things”: (1) “winning and representing the people of the 46th ward” and (2) “rebuilding and strengthening the Young Lords” (Jimenez 2019). Jimenez remembers having tears in his eyes when he gave his concession speech. I wanted to win... we all wanted to win... I mean, that’s why we worked so hard... I honestly thought I could win says Jimenez (Jimenez 2019). Gordon Mantler writes in his book *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown & the Fight for Economic Justice*, that Jimenez stated, “‘The campaign is not a reformist campaign... It’s a campaign to organize the people.’” (Mantler 2013, 5159–5162). Though Jimenez did not win the aldermanic race, his candidacy revealed a voting population not pleased with the established political structure and revealed how previously untapped networks could be used to build coalitions for electoral purposes. Campaign workers gained skills and knowledge that proved beneficial in other political endeavors (Shiller 2012). Interviews from Jimenez’s oral history project indicate that many of those who worked on Jimenez’s 1975 campaign applied those same skills in the Washington campaign (Shiller 2012; Rivera 2012; Hart 2012; Malooney 2011). For example, one of those campaign workers was Helen Shiller who later used what she learned to get herself

<sup>23</sup> Williams is on solid footing when he writes that the Jimenez campaign continued the mission of the Rainbow Coalition, however, the role that the Panthers played in Jimenez’s campaign, if any, is not entirely clear.

<sup>24</sup> The Young Lords website also writes, “The Aldermanic Campaign was then viewed solely, as an organizing vehicle...” “Jose ‘Cha Cha’ Jimenez,” National Young Lords, accessed 2016, [Nationalyounglords.com/?page\\_id=15](http://Nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15).

elected alderwoman of the very Uptown/Lakeview area in which she campaigned for Jimenez, in 1975. After two failed attempts, the second in which she lost by less than 250 votes, the determined Shiller finally broke through in the late 1980s, serving the 46th ward from 1987 to 2011. Curiously, many of the same voters who ushered Shiller, a Washington protégé, into office in 1987, preferred Bernard Epton, a republican and former state representative, over Harold Washington by a margin of 53.0 to 47.0 in the 1983 election. (Chicago Board of Election Commissioners [n.d.](#); Davis [1985](#); Diamond [2009](#); Grele [1998](#); Grimshaw [1992](#); Locin & Fritsch [1983](#); Perez [2004](#); Rivlin [2013](#); Sipe [1998](#); Washington Campaign [n.d.a.](#); Washington Campaign [n.d.b.](#); Washington Campaign [n.d.c.](#); Washington Campaign [n.d.d.](#); Washington Campaign [n.d.e.](#); Williams [2016](#)).

## Latinos for Harold

The Washington campaign put together an unprecedented multiethnic campaign apparatus that proved adept at pulling in hundreds of thousands of voters from a variety of different constituencies. These were sectors of the electorate who were fed up with the way things had always been done and dissatisfied with the status quo (Kleppner [1985](#)). William Grimshaw in *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine* writes about the multiethnic coalition stating,

Full field operations were mounted in over half of the city's fifty wards, including all the black, Hispanic, and white liberal populations. In all, three-fourths of the city's wards were being worked by the formal Washington campaign organization. The campaign also contained an elaborate network of interest groups that worked largely outside the formal structure...The range of the groups was extraordinary; from Artists for Washington to Women for Washington, and just about everything else in between: labor, education, business, and of course, students, but there were dozens more as well...The groups preferred 'doing their own thing'...Several of the developed their own literature, and all of them, of course, fashioned campaign appeals geared to their particular constituencies. (Grimshaw, 172).

To win an election marred by white racial bigotry and become the first African American mayor of Chicago, it was believed that Washington needed to appeal to Latino voters.<sup>25</sup> They had the potential to sway the mayoral race toward either candidate, some argued (Martinez [1983](#)). In what appears to be an internal/white paper from the Committee to Elect Harold Washington Mayor of the City of Chicago, titled "Harold Washington for Chicago: The Harold Washington Campaign," there is a breakdown on the numbers the campaign needed from different racial groups to secure victory. "Hispanics" represented the lowest number of votes needed from the estimated groups, but still denoted half of the expected voting numbers the campaign wanted from the white population, which illustrates the importance of the Latino vote.

<sup>25</sup> Harold Washington ran for mayor in a highly polarized racial environment. Jane Byrne and Bernard Epton engaged in race-baiting tactics against Harold Washington in an attempt to secure white votes. See William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 176–180; Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie*, 2010–2066 & 2157–2162 and Kleppner, *Chicago Divided*, 186–214.



The Hispanic vote while representing only 50,000 votes in the win scenario has been a source of successful growth from the base of approximately 9,000 received during the primary. This growth has been substantiated by the Field Reports (“Harold Washington for Chicago: The Harold Washington Campaign” in Box 5, Folder 29, (Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection, Chicago, Illinois)).

The Washington campaign formed a team with Latinos in visible positions whose goal was to reach out and engage the Latino community. By 1983, there were six heavily populated Latino Wards—the 22nd, 25th, 26th, 31st, 32nd, and the 33rd. The team included rising political star Rudy Lozano, a union organizer with the Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union and Mexican-American. To directly appeal to them in a public relations capacity, William “Bill” Zayas became the Hispanic Media & Advertising Campaign Coordinator (“Harold Washington for Chicago: The Harold Washington Campaign” see Box 16, Folder 12).

Washington’s effort to attract Latino voters was unlike anything political pundits and campaign strategists had ever witnessed in Chicago. The Washington campaign published multiple forms of propaganda and ran media spots on Spanish radio stations (Martinez 1983; Kleppner 153). A Spanish language “blue button” was produced and circulated widely, and the campaign underwrote a newspaper *El Independiente*, which was distributed in Latino neighborhoods throughout the city (Alkalimat and Gills 1983). Washington’s campaign materials tapped into the shared suffering and oppression of African Americans and Latinos, pointing to the commonalities between the two groups as well as emphasizing overall shared history (Kleppner 153; *Que Somos?*). The pamphlets and brochures highlighted Washington’s awareness of the problems and issues the city’s Latino population faced; including a lack of equitable representation in politics and other areas, the need for bilingual education, and relief from overcrowded schools that served Latino communities. Equally as important, those materials featured prominently his support of Affirmative Action, and his work as a congressman on behalf of the poor (Harold Washington Supports the Latino Community). In a piece written in both English and Spanish entitled “A Message from Congressman/Mensaje Del Congresista Harold Washington, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message From the Congressman,” Washington states,

The day I am elected Mayor, the Latino community will have gained full access to City Hall.... I pledge myself to sponsor an Affirmative Action ordinance that will assure Latinos their fair share of City jobs proportional to their population.

This means 20% of all jobs, from cabinet level positions on down, through all levels of public employment (Harold Washington for Chicago: I Want You to Know My Commitments, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman).

Additionally, Washington pledged access to better education, housing, health services, and overall opportunities (Harold Washington for Chicago: I Want You to Know My Commitments, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman).

Washington’s campaign understood that the Reagan era economic policy of cutting taxes and federal spending did not benefit a large swath of the population (Marable

1982; Solomon 1982).<sup>26</sup> Instead, the policies implemented hurt those most vulnerable by cutting federal spending on social welfare programs including food assistance and job programs (Marable 1982). Politicians nationwide laid blame at Reagan's doorstep, President Reagan responded, patronizingly, by telling jobless Latinos to have Patience (Coffrey 1984). Digby Solomon wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Reagan...cut more than \$400 million from the island's social programs" (Solomon 1982). Solomon further argued that cuts in job training programs drove up unemployment in Puerto Rico.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the implementation of lower income thresholds to qualify for food assistance made access to food stamps more difficult under the Reagan administration. Washington's campaign made clear the many ways in which Reaganomics were doing irreparable damage to the economic prospects of Latino communities everywhere (Harold Washington for Chicago: I Want You to Know My Commitments, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman). Few offered as a sobering account of the Reagan administration as did Marxian economist Paul M. Sweezy and Harry Magdoff offered a year later, writing, "What we have is in every respect the most reactionary, right-wing government in the country's history, and in many ways, it is doing things that in other countries and at other times are done by fascist governments." (Sweezy and Magdoff 1984, 1–3).

The size of the Latino voting bloc may have been small compared to other groups—estimated between 95,000 to 96,000 registered voters when compared to 857,000 whites and 673,000 African American—but the campaign sought to win over every one of those voters after a fierce primary with Democratic incumbent Jane Byrne and Richard M. Daley, the son of former mayor, Richard J. Daley, the last of the Big city bosses (Martinez 1983; Sheppard 1983). In an effort to beat-back Republican and longtime state representative Bernard Epton, a corporate attorney and reportedly liberal Jew, the Washington campaign circulated literature widely throughout the Latino community conveying in the strongest possible terms that Latinos experienced severe neglect under previous political administrations, that an Epton Republican administration would only exacerbate their problems.

## Campaigning for Harold

Jimenez used his influence and experience running his own campaign to help turnout the Latino vote for Washington. And Washington needed all the help he could get, as his support from the black political establishment was weak, at best. He was opposed by 18 of the 23 black state legislators and 9 of the 15 black alderman. The black church community was also full of detractors. "If Harold Washington is elected, the city would go down the tube," warned the Rev. O.D. White of Love Baptist Church (Strausberg 1983). Approximately 150 black ministers, led by Rev. T.A. Clark Sr, endorsed Richard M. Daley in the 1983 primary (Protest ministers 1983). Washington however was not

<sup>26</sup> Latinos throughout the country suffered from Reagan's economic policies, including many unemployed in the Texas area who were told to have patience for recovery under Reaganomics. See Raymond Coffrey, "President Tells Jobless Hispanics to have Patience," *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1984.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Also see Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story* for detailed explanation on how the island and the mainland are linked through social networks and cyclical migration. Perez argues this migration is a reflection of the poverty many Puerto Ricans suffer.

without ecumenical support. Over 250 black ministers representing 14 denominations circulated a strong statement, linking Washington with both the “tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr [and] the tradition of [Black] liberation and self-determination” (The Black Church Supports 1983).

Jimenez’s work with the Midwest Voter Registration and Education Project prepared him well for the responsibilities he took on as a volunteer for Washington’s campaign. By the time he joined the Washington campaign Jimenez’s understanding of politics had evolved. Jimenez volunteered at Washington’s Fullerton street campaign office where he worked long hours. Upon noticing Jimenez’s hard work and dedication, after a few months, he was offered the position of Northside Hispanic Precinct Coordinator where he was responsible for several wards including—the 30th, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, and 35th. The 30th ward was nearly all-white with a smattering of Latinos. Wards 32 and 33 were nearly 50% Latino, if not more. Whereas the 34th and 35th wards were 96% black and 80% white, respectively, with a small Latino population. Jimenez was paid \$100 weekly. One of the first things that Jimenez did was organize a Latino rally for Harold Washington in the fall of 1982 in Northwest Hall at the corner of North Avenue and Western (Jimenez 2019). Modesto Rivera, who had worked with Jimenez on the campaign, fondly recalled Washington donning a Puerto Rican hat, called the *pava*, and said that between seven hundred and one thousand people attended (Rivera 2012).

During the campaign Jimenez spear-headed several rallies in places like Logan’s Square and on North Avenue. Since the Young Lords’ name could perhaps be associated with its past as a gang, Jimenez thought it a good idea to distance itself from any potential backlash. Rather than using the name the Young Lords, the group opted for the more palatable “Puerto Rican Diaspora Coalition” (PRDC n.d.) (Unnamed list, in Box 25, Folder 17, Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection). Still, no one went to great lengths to hide the connection, those in the know knew the PRDC as the YLO. The name was the only difference between the two. The political platform of the PRDC remained the same as that of the YLO in terms of its goals to stop urban renewal and fight the established political structure. Under the name PRDC, materials published in both English and Spanish claimed that a vote for Harold Washington could stop the displacement of Puerto Rican neighborhoods (Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago). The pamphlet states,

Now under the leadership of Jane Byrne they are trying to take our homes and neighborhoods again.... West Town, Humboldt Park, Palmer Square, Logan Square and Wicker Park are targets of Mayor Byrne.... One way we can fight back is to organize, unite and support Harold Washington for mayor. He is the only candidate that has not forgotten “La Clark” and “La Madison.” (Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago).

The PRDC portrayed Washington as an antiestablishment candidate who sought to enact changes for Latinos’ benefit and implied his ability to stop the removal of communities due to urban renewal, if elected. The PRDC may have downplayed its YLO roots but did not disown its history. The pamphlet made direct references to its implementation of service programs, the McCormick Theological Seminary takeover and payout, as well as its work against police brutality (Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago).

## Going Where No Latino Has Gone Before

The leaders of the Washington campaign understood the importance of voter registration. Rivera remembered that he, Jimenez, and their group functioned as the vanguard in areas where other Washington campaign workers did not wish to go or were too frightened to enter. In an interview with Jimenez, Rivera stated:

We were troubleshooters. I remember now that there'd be a building [that] some people weren't comfortable going in. A couple of them across the street from Humboldt Park, one on the boulevard. And they would send us, Cha Cha, me, and the group, and we'd talk to these guys. And what it was, by the end of the day, we had every ... antisocial behavior [person] registered and ready to vote for Harold Washington. In other words, there was a lot of high-crime buildings or maybe narcotics going on. And these people were just terrified, and [I] remember Cha Cha—just, he'd go into these buildings ... that's what was our job. One of our jobs was troubleshooting troubled buildings.... Cha Cha would go up ahead and say these are the people you need to talk to, the disenfranchised, not the established Puerto Ricans. The ones that no one is talking to (Rivera 2012).

Jimenez and his group's ability to go into places others feared, gave them an opportunity to obtain more votes for Washington. Jimenez, as Rivera explained, gave attention to a population otherwise unnoticed. Seen as someone too radical for complete integration by mainstream progressives, Jimenez still helped the Washington campaign gain supporters (Rivera 2012). When comparing Latino turnout in the 1979 primary against the 1983 primary one finds some interesting developments in the city's six predominantly Latino wards. From 1979 to 1983, Latino voter turnout increased by 10% in wards 22 and 33 respectively, by 5% in ward 32. Voter turnout remained virtually the same in wards 26 and 31, with a slight decrease of 2% in ward 25. Results from the general election are even more promising, as voter turnout increased across all six wards, with an average of 6.3% increase from 1979 to 1983 (Preston and Puryear 1987; Preston 1982; Also see, Chicago Board of Election Commissioners). This is not to say that the Latino vote was the deciding factor in the 1983 election, as a close look at the data reveals that voters in the highly concentrated Latinos wards supported Epton more strongly than they did Washington (Green 1983). Washington, did however, win the support of Latino trade unionists (Marable 1985). Still, the highly charged Washington campaign, inspired nearly 700,000 black voters to register and turn out. There was little doubt as to why they registered and for whom they turned out. Washington also got 19% of the white vote, a notable achievement given the difficulty African American mayoral candidates of his era had in courting white voters.<sup>28</sup>

Despite all the hard work that the PRDC and other groups did to deliver the Latino vote, the data shows that of the six heavily populated Latino wards, the republican, Bernard Epton won four of them—the 25th, 26th, 32nd, and 33rd. With the exception of the 25th, which was a dead-heat Epton won by margins ranging from 9 to 24%.

<sup>28</sup> For example: W. Wilson Goode was elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1983 as well. No more than 20% of white registered voters cast their ballots for the Black Democrat. A year earlier, in New Orleans, Ernest "Dutch" Morial won just 14% of the white vote in his successful bid for re-election.

Washington, on the other hand, won the 31st by a margin of 21% and the 22nd by a margin of 5% of the vote (Marable 1985; Green 1983). Epton's success with Latino voters was in no small part due to the efforts of Carlos Perez, a political conservative who headed the "Latinos for Epton" group (Marable 1985). Epton's showing among Latino voters is a most interesting development, especially when one compares Washington's 1983 performance in these wards to that of Daley in 1975. Daley's support in the six wards with a strong Latino presence ranged from as low as 74% to as high as 91%. This suggests that some Latino voters who voted heavily democratic in the past preferred to support Epton, the republican over Washington, the democratic, candidate. Strangely, many of these same voters who supported Epton in 1983 when he ran against Washington threw the full weight of the support behind Daley, the democrat, several years earlier. This finding belies a 1974 study that revealed that among those Chicago residents with Spanish surnames, 61% of them self-identified as Democrats, 28% as Republicans, and 11% as independents (Miyares 1974).

While Jimenez is credited with being the PRDC's founder, others who were instrumental in the creation of the effort were David Mojica, Modesto Rivera, and Alberto Rodriguez (Jimenez 2019). Jimenez's work with Washington did not end with Washington's victory. Two months after Washington's historic election in June of 1983, the PRDC held a rally attended by approximately 100,000 people with Harold Washington in Humboldt Park as speaker (Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago). "We handed out 30,000 buttons that day with *Tengo Puerto en mi Corazon* on them... it took us about an hour and a half to hand out those buttons" recalls Jimenez (Jimenez 2019). The coalition between African Americans and Latinos that characterized the general election was made stronger when the mayor's office funded \$60,000 to hold a Puerto Rican festival in Humboldt Park. Jimenez, the principal coordinator of the festival whipped the crowd into a frenzy by demanding self-determination for Puerto Rico. Nina Berman of the *Guardian* noted, "This was the first time in recent memory that a city-sponsored cultural festival turned into a political event emphasizing community and leftist concerns" (Berman 1983).

## Conclusion

Jimenez's attempt to build a winning Rainbow Coalition in 1975 was valiant but fell short. Still his run for alderman helped raised the consciousness of a generation of Latinos that had heretofore been politically dormant. In the ensuing years, Latinos were less hesitant about running for political office and more politically engaged in the electoral process generally. Although Jimenez lost the battle of 1975, he helped win the war of 1983. After working on Harold Washington's campaign, Jimenez did not receive a position in his administration. Nevertheless, Jimenez was content with his contribution to the election of the city's first black mayor, which also resulted in the creation of the Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs, which was charged with recommending Latinos for Washington's administration as well as being an advocate for Latino interests. Washington's win was not only historic, but unprecedented. Not only was he opposed by the same white forces that opposed and continue to oppose many black office seekers, to make matters worse, he faced major opposition from the black political establishment. Still, Washington captured the primary and by extension the



mayor's office by spending a little over \$400,000 compared to over \$10 million by incumbent Jane Byrne in a losing effort and \$1.97 million by third place finisher, Richard M. Daley (Preston and Puryear 1987).

The decision not to offer Jimenez a position in Washington's administration was a political one based on his reputation as a Young Lord, former gang leader and criminal past. His alleged support of the Armed Forces of National Liberation, which reportedly set off a series of bombings in the Chicago area also did not help matters.<sup>29</sup> Washington could ill-afford the kind of unfavorable media attention that would have followed such an appointment. Jimenez understood this. Jimenez was not the only campaign worker whose reputation prevented him from earning a spot in Washington's administration. One of the campaign's hardest workers was a pimp whose reputation preceded him.

As Carlos Flores stated, Jimenez held tremendous potential. That is undeniable. On many occasions, he proved himself to be a capable leader. Jimenez led the YLO as it transformed from a gang into a revolutionary organization; he also collaborated with Fred Hampton, Deputy Chairman of the Illinois State Chapter of the Black Panther Party and "Preacherman" Fesperman of the Young Patriots to form the Rainbow Coalition. He organized large groups of Latinos that proved instrumental to the future success of Harold Washington and his campaign. But he did not fit into the established political structure, even when that structure became less hostile and more open to Latinos.

Jimenez may not have benefitted from the kind of career opportunities that availed themselves to others, but his efforts may have paved the way for others. Washington's election ushered an unprecedented number of Latinos into elected office and other city positions, not only in Chicago, but the entire state. By the end of the 1980s, eleven Latinos had been elected into local office and the city comprised of four Latino wards.<sup>30</sup> In the end, a coalition of progressive individuals of different ethnicities, many influenced by radicals like Jimenez, accomplished what others before them could not, the election of the city's first black mayor and a more inclusive city government.

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<sup>29</sup> Also known as the FALN or the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional*.

<sup>30</sup> Irene Hernandez, Joseph Berrios, Ray Castro, Miguel del Valle, Raymond Figueroa, Jesus Garcia, Luis Gutierrez, Ben Martinez, Juan Soliz and Manuel Torres and Miguel Santiago.

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