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Militancy Transcends Race: A Comparative Analysis of the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party, and the Young Lords

By Judson L. Jeffries, Omari L. Dyson, and Charles E. Jones

Often, when United States citizens think of “militants,” they tend to think of Blacks. This image of Black militancy is indelibly etched in the U.S. psyche as a result of, but not limited to, the public condemnations of Whites by Malcolm X, the urban rebellions of the mid- to late 1960s, the Black Panthers’ 1967 armed protest at the California statehouse, the raised, clenched fists of Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympic games in Mexico City, and the militant student takeover of the administration building at Cornell University in 1969. For some, the sixties were a tumultuous yet exhilarating period in American history—an era both full of hope and excruciating pain. The decade began with the U.S. presidential election of John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, over Richard M. Nixon, a Republican. In his inauguration speech, Kennedy challenged America’s youth when he exclaimed, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Some answered the call by enlisting in the U.S. armed forces; others joined the Peace Corps; while some entered into electoral politics. Some of those who considered themselves nonconformists formed and/or joined organizations aimed at making America more democratic, pressuring the U.S. to live up to the ideals expressed in the country’s most sacrosanct documents—the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. In Kennedy’s words, the 1960s represented a new frontier, a new generation of leadership. By the end of the decade, dissident groups had sprouted up all across the country.

One of these groups, which for many has become the face of Black militancy, is the Black Panther Party (BPP). Another equally important, though less ballyhooed, organization was the Young Lords. The American Indian Movement (AIM), probably the least well-known among younger academics and laypeople alike and perhaps the least heralded of the three groups, was nonetheless a key actor in the struggle for minority rights during the late 1960s through the 1970s. In this article, we offer a comparative analysis of these three groups, arguably the most preeminent organizations of their respective racial/ethnic groups. Although it is tempting to provide numerous comparisons among these organizations, we will not run the risk of depriving readers of a quality analysis. This article will be limited to three primary and four interesting but ancillary questions. The primary questions are: (1) What kinds of internal problems/issues did these groups encounter and how were they addressed? (2) To what degree were women involved, and what were their contributions? (3) What methods did the groups employ to gain notoriety? Additionally, we will address a few periphery questions, such as: (4) How were they received by their respective communities? (5) What type of reaction did each group elicit from local, state, and federal law enforcement? (6) What conditions and issues were these groups interested in addressing? (7) What were the socio-economic demographics of their memberships?

The Founding of the Panthers, AIM, and Young Lords

All of the organizations were founded in the latter part of the decade, which was referred to by some as arguably the most volatile period of twentieth-century America—the Black Panther Party in 1966, the Young Lords Organization in 1968, and the American Indian Movement in 1968. According to the Civil Disorder Clearing House, in 1967 alone there were

233 uprisings in 168 cities, with 18,000 arrests, 3,400 persons injured, and 82 killed. The most violent insurrections took place in Newark and Detroit in 1967, but the most violent year was 1968. Joe Feagin and Harlan Hahn note that in the single month after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968, no less than 202 disorders occurred in 172 cities, resulting in 27,000 arrests, 3,500 persons injured, and 43 killed (Feagin and Hahn, 1973). Four days later, Black Panther Bobby Hutton was killed in Oakland, and in June 1968, Democratic presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy was murdered. These acts of violence and urban revolts mirrored the United States' deep entrenchment in the Vietnam War and heightened the extant discord between elitists and historically disenfranchised groups. Therefore, it was not inconsequential that the BPP, the Young Lords, and AIM were founded in major cities—Oakland, Chicago, and Minneapolis, respectively. The daily grind of having to deal with rising unemployment, substandard housing, poor education, residential segregation, and police brutality gave rise to an increasingly hardened and less deferential activist when compared to some leaders who emerged in the small towns of the South during the Civil Rights Movement.

Although the living conditions for Blacks, Native Peoples, and Latinos in Oakland, Minneapolis, and Chicago were similarly poor, the reasons for the founding of the BPP, AIM, and the Young Lords varied. Of the racial and ethnic groups in the United States, only Native Peoples have the right to claim “the United States” as *their land*. Despite centuries of brutality, displacement, and de-humanization, Native groups were somehow able to maintain their rich cultural identity(ies). During the 1960s, a number of organizations were formed, in part, to foment unity and preserve Native People's traditions and mores. Among them were American Indians United, the Indian Task Force, United Native Americans, and the Coalition of American Indian Citizens, all of which merged to form two new groups— the National Congress of American Indians and the National Youth Conference—to press Native People's concerns. AIM arose as the most militant of these groups. With the motto “Anytime, Anywhere, and Anyplace” in response to injustice, AIM's founding is rooted in the Eisenhower-era policies of termination and relocation that wreaked havoc on Native communities. This process resulted in land theft, terminated rights, and the highest number of displaced urban Natives than ever before. “Urbs,” as they were called, experienced constant violations against their human rights. In the summer of 1968, George Mitchell, Dennis Banks, and Clyde Bellecourt, a group of ex-cons in Minneapolis, debated the idea of Indian empowerment while in prison and called a meeting to discuss the best means to achieve it. This union spawned the American Indian Movement. By 1969, AIM courted Russell Means, a charismatic activist for Native rights and native of Pine Ridge, at an Indian conference in San Francisco, which assisted in propelling the organization from local status to national prominence.

In his recollections of AIM's origin, Dennis Banks remembered that:

The living conditions we found ourselves in were deplorable. It wasn't that we didn't know there was racism in the cities. It was how racism forced us into squalid slum tenement buildings, closed doors to job opportunities, and fostered racist laws, jails, courts, and prisons. Beginning with our founding meeting, we immediately set out to bring about change in those institutions of public concern: housing, education, employment, welfare, and the courts (59).

Although the Native population in Minneapolis was less than two percent when AIM was formed in 1968, it was still one of the largest Native populations in urban America, thus giving

AIM a level of visibility that many American-Indian groups lacked. Urban life was characterized by exorbitant unemployment, widespread poverty, and police brutality. Unfortunately, those living on reservations often fared worse, as living conditions resembled that of southern sharecroppers. AIM's original purpose was to assist Indians moving from upper Midwest reservations to the cities, particularly to protect them from selective law enforcement. According to Dennis Banks (Banks and Erdoes, 2004):

Every year, the arrival of spring meant the opening of a season for hunting Indians, who provided slave labor for both the Twin Cities and the state of Minnesota. Together with the first robin came the annual renewal of the "quota system" which meant that the police had to arrest a certain number of Indians—usually about two hundred every week—to provide unpaid labor for the work house and various city projects. Every Saturday night at nine o'clock, the police arrived to conduct their manhunt. You could set your watch by the arrival of the paddy wagons (59).

As Paul Smith and Robert Warrior (1996) proclaim:

By the end of 1971, AIM had established a base, mainly in the Twin Cities, from which it won results for its constituents. AIM Members served notice on police that Indians, drunk or not, were no longer without advocates. They also advised churches, educators, and antipoverty programs that had generally ignored Indians that they could no longer neglect them or take them for granted. Nationally, they had a growing set of local chapters whose members were making a name for themselves in the spate of protests that were sweeping through Indian country (135).

AIM's founding reflected the reemergence of a Pan-Indian consciousness similar to the activism of Native leaders of the Progressive Era. During the 1960s, Native People realized that the problems plaguing their particular tribes, communities, and reservations were endemic and necessitated a collective effort that transcended tribal affiliation. Discrimination and marginalization were characteristic of Native Peoples' experiences regardless of the tribe, and the lack of political power required organization among tribal groups to mobilize sufficient numbers.

Life for Latinos was not that dissimilar. In Chicago, Latinos were relegated to the worst areas of the city and the less well-paying jobs. It was obvious that Latinos, among others, suffered within a duodecapartite system of colonial oppression (see Figure 1)³. In other words, Latinos were subjugated politically, economically, socially, culturally, spiritually, biologically, emotionally, intellectually, morally, psychologically, and chronologically. Not only was the Latino community cordoned off in the most depressed areas of the city and given the least desirable jobs, they also had virtually no political representation (Padillo, 1987). Employers

³ Aldon Morris's (1986) tripartite system (social, political, and economic) is expanded to incorporate forces such as morality, intellect, psychology, sexuality, spirituality, biology, culture, and chronology.

could pay Puerto Ricans less because they were aware that many of them lacked alternative job prospects. Not only were these jobs low-paying and involved dirty and unsafe working conditions, but they were often temporary and had little advancement potential. According to the 1960 United States Census Report on the “Social and Economic Data for Persons of Puerto Rican Birth and Parentage,” the majority were employed in the business sector as messengers and deliverymen or in stock rooms. Others found jobs as janitors and in restaurants as busboys and waiters (U.S. Census, Economic Characteristics, 1960; King, 59).

Originally founded in 1959 as a gang to protect unsuspecting Puerto Rican youth from attacks from White gangs as they walked to and from school, the Young Lords branched out into various criminal activities, such as warring with other gangs, doing stick-ups, and engaging in turf battles (Mink, 1996). After coming under the influence of the dynamic Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton of the Illinois State Chapter of the Black Panther Party, the Lords under the leadership of Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez reportedly changed course in the fall of 1968. Equally important was the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which had a tremendous psychological impact on Jimenez. Said Jimenez, “Dr. King was killed while I was in jail. In the wake of his murder, people starting rebelling all over Chicago[,] and many of them were thrown in the same jail in which I was housed. Consequently, I got exposed to some really heavy political ideas. My cousin[,] who was also in jail[,] had the jailhouse librarian[,] who was Muslim[,] bring me some books, one of which was by Dr. King. After a while I decided that we [the Lords] would no longer be complicit in our own people’s oppression” (Jimenez, 2010). In keeping with the Lords’ new outlook they declared an end to criminal activity and announced that the real enemy was Mayor Richard Daley and his administration, of which the police was a part. This new mind-set was underscored by the group’s new name—the Young Lords Organization. For the Lords, changing their name represented a metamorphosis in their thinking and behavior.

Ironically, in Oakland, where Blacks also suffered from inadequate housing, poor public schools, and high unemployment, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale conducted their own active research by surveying residents about matters they considered most pressing. Not surprisingly, police brutality was at the top of the chart. Consequently, Newton and Seale formed police patrols in an effort to protect motorists and pedestrians against police officers’ use of excessive force.

Members of the AIM, the Young Lords, and the BPP set out to effect change with vigor and dispatch. Indicative of this objective and the level of their commitment is the name change that each group underwent. The Concerned Indians of America started referring to themselves as the American Indian Movement. AIM’s name change was done not only to reflect its intention but to avoid the irony of having the acronym CIA.

The word AIM suggested action, purpose, and forward motion. As the group’s members saw it, you aimed at a target. You could aim for victory, for freedom, for justice. You could also, defiantly, never aim to please. Written verbally and stylized a bit, the acronym became an arrow (Smith and Warrior, 1996, 127).

The main impetus for the formation of the BPP, originally called the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was to curb police brutality against Bay Area residents. The group grew in scope and in 1967 dropped Self-Defense from its title. The name change coincided with the group’s evolutionary development, both symbolically and substantively.

Philosophy

Each group outlined its goals and objectives in a written platform, based in part on its philosophical tendencies (see Appendices 1-3). A close read of their respective platforms/programs reveals some overlap. Central to each group's platform was the call for a redistribution of wealth and resources in the United States and for Blacks, Latinos, and Native Peoples to build and control their own communities and institutions. Of paramount importance to all three was redress for past and present injustices in the form of employment, decent housing, and education that reflected the cultural, political, and geographical heritage of Blacks, Latinos, and Native People. Self-determination was also of concern. The Panthers' slogan, "All Power to the People," became the battle cry for those desiring to empower the dispossessed of all races: "Black Power to Black People, Red Power to Red People and Brown Power to Brown People." Self-determination and empowerment were especially important to AIM, who wanted to wrest control of their communities from the federal government, namely the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Government meddling in the affairs of Native Peoples has a long history, and Native People have long argued that the U.S. government had created the tribal councils on reservations in 1934 as a way of perpetuating paternalistic control over Native Peoples' development.

Reducing government control over Native life was the focus of AIM's twenty-point manifesto. Doing so meant, in part, establishing international recognition of Native Peoples' treaty rights. Additionally, AIM called for Native People to be exempt from commerce regulation, taxes, and state trade restrictions, and a restoration of 110 million acres of land taken from Native Nations by the United States government.

The Panthers platform evolved over time. Although never anti-White when Newton and Seale first founded the Party they proclaimed themselves Black Nationalists. In fact, point number three of the Panthers' ten-point platform initially read: "We want an end to the robbery by the White man of our Black Community." Recognizing that the Black community had been exploited by people of other races (not just Whites), Newton deleted the words "White man" and inserted capitalist. Members of AIM, on the other hand, hated all Whites initially. Said one AIM member "we hated all whites, because we know only one kind—the John Wayne kind . . . it took time before we met whites to whom we could relate and whose friendships we could accept" (Crow Dog and Erdoes, 1990, 77). The Lords demonstrated a similar level of maturity, making a rather progressive addendum to its thirteen-point platform by calling for gender equity, undoubtedly at the behest of its women members. What distinguished the Panthers' platform from those of the Lords and AIM was the Panthers' call for a United Nations supervised plebiscite for the purpose of determining Black peoples' destiny.

Both the Panthers and the Lords maintained that Blacks and Latinos should be exempt from military service. The idea here was that Blacks and Latinos should not fight for a country that had relegated them to second-class citizenship. The Panthers and the Lords also claimed that most Black and Latino inmates had not been tried by a jury of their peers and, therefore, should be released from prison. This was critical, as studies have shown that juries selected from a defendant's immediate social context are more likely to empathize with the defendant than are jurors whose socioeconomic demographics are markedly different than the defendant's (Woodson, 1990/1933). Thus, some of the onus is removed from the individual, and attention is focused on the causes contributing to imprisonment (i.e., colonization, marginalization, social disequilibrium). Moreover, a jury composed of members from the dominant group has a higher

likelihood of re-enforcing a system of domination against People of Color. And since Blacks, Latinos, and Natives were U.S. colonial subjects, their “criminality” functioned as an “open rebellion” against inequitable social conditions and hegemonic relations (DuBois, 1967/1899, 235). Notwithstanding, the notion that most Blacks, Latinos, and Natives had not been tried by a jury of their own peers was not far-fetched; however, the idea that they might be released as a result of having their basic human rights trampled upon was nothing less than utopian.

Interestingly, all three groups found inspiration in international writers and activists. AIM saw the Irish Republican Army, the Nicaraguan Contras, and the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party as models of resistance. The Panthers and the Lords were influenced by the writings of Frantz Fanon and Karl Marx, and both supported the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. International revolutionaries, such as Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Min, were held in high regard by the Panthers, as Huey Newton and Bobby Seale naïvely believed that their ideas on how to carry out a revolution deserved careful consideration by those who experienced oppression in the United States.

Of the three groups, the Panthers were the most concerned with theoretical development. Reading and studying were major components of one’s training as a Panther. Holding political education classes as a way of heightening the consciousness of its members as well as those who lived in the surrounding communities was a staple practice of Panther chapters and branches across the country. Members of AIM and the Lords were less concerned with ideological refinement. The priority that the Panthers placed on education is not surprising given the large number of college-educated activists among the ranks (as was the case with Newton and Seale). This may explain why the Black Panther Party’s ideology was constantly evolving. The Panthers went through four stages of ideological development—Black Nationalism, Revolutionary Socialism, Internationalism, and Intercommunalism (Jeffries, 2002)—with mixed results. Newton maintained that the Panthers’ ideology was fluid so as to keep pace with the ever-changing political, economic, and social developments of the world (i.e., Intercommunalism).

Although neither the Lords nor AIM subscribed to any particular ideology, per se, developing a sense of pride in one’s racial heritage as well as being steeped in one’s history were very important. Ideology or not, the Panthers, AIM, and Lords fashioned themselves as revolutionaries who opposed all forms of injustice. For example, point number four of the Lords’ platform, similarly fashioned from the Panthers’ ten-point platform, stated, “We are revolutionary nationalists and oppose racism.” At the time of the Lords’ metamorphosis, Newton, the Black Panther Party’s chief theoretician, was in the throes of rethinking his position on Black Nationalism, which included incorporating both a racial and class analysis of the oppression that afflicted peoples of color throughout the world.

Membership

Although the organizations had similar goals, when one examines the backgrounds of the organizations’ founders, vastly different characteristics and experiences emerge. Again, the founders of the BPP were college educated. In fact, Newton had earned his Associate of Arts degree by the time he and Seale formed the organization. José “Cha-Cha” Jimenez, the leader of the Young Lords Organization, was a high school dropout and a small-time gang-banger, while the founders of AIM, which included Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt, Eddie Benton-Banai, and George Mitchell, were a mixed bag of ex-cons, working-class stiff, budding activists, and chronically unemployed street-corner types. AIM’s founders and leaders were primarily

Chippewas—Minnesota’s largest tribal group. “Some were born and raised in the inner city, but most were from the reservations a few hours to the north and west of Minneapolis” (Smith and Warrior, 1996, 128). On average, AIM’s founders were older than both the founders of the BPP and the Lords, especially Banks and Bellecourt, who were in their early thirties. The typical Panther recruit ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-two (Jeffries, 2007). Many, but certainly not all, Panthers were raised in the inner city and lived in the most segregated parts of town. Most members of the Young Lords were first-generation Americans, that is, Puerto Ricans who were born on the island and later emigrated to America. Like many of the Panthers, most of them grew up in the most depressed areas of Chicago and New York, where sanitation was substandard and public schools were inadequate. Members of the Lords were even younger than the typical Panther recruit; some joined the group barely into adolescence.

The Panthers and Lords seemed to attract members with jail or prison records. This is not to say that AIM did not. As was mentioned earlier, AIM’s founders were no strangers to the states correctional facilities. According to Dennis Banks, “for Indians, doing time in jail is almost a traditional rite of passage. About 1 percent of the Minnesota population is American Indian, but more than one third of all prison inmates in the state are Indians” (Banks and Erdoes, 2004, 59). Additionally, unlike AIM, both the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords comprised a fair number of former gang members. The Panthers were noted for their recruitment of gang bangers. The Southern California chapter was especially receptive to former gang members, recruiting many from the Slausons, one of the city’s largest and most feared gangs. In fact, Alprentice Bunchy Carter, the deputy minister of defense of BPP’s Southern California chapter, had once been a leader within the Slausons gang. Most of the chapter’s initial members were former gang members recruited by Carter. The number of gang members within the ranks of the BPP still paled in comparison to the Young Lords. From 1959 to 1966, the Lords had been one of Chicago’s most well-known gangs, but by the mid-1960s some members of the gang (most notably those in leadership) began to develop an interest in revolutionary politics (Browning, 1970-1971). To expound, during a stint in prison, Illinois Panther leader Fred Hampton helped Cha-Cha Jimenez reach a higher level of consciousness by urging him to re-evaluate his position as a gang leader and, in turn, influenced him to reorient the gang into a force for social change. Buoyed by Hampton, Jimenez also read works by Dr. King and Malcolm X and studied the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. By 1968, the group’s transformation was apparent, as its new leader, Cha-Cha Jimenez, officially announced that the Lords would redirect the gang’s orientation to that of a revolutionary force.

In addition to former gang members, there were also a fair number of ex-servicemen within the ranks of the Black Panther Party. This was not the case for the Young Lords and AIM. The reason for the absence of significant numbers of ex-servicemen in AIM was because, on the whole, AIM was staunchly anti-establishment, as were Native Peoples generally. As such, AIM made it known that ex-servicemen and women were part of the system. This stance undoubtedly alienated potential members with military backgrounds. Like Blacks, AIM argued that it was foolish to fight for the oppressor when the oppressor had treated Native Peoples like third- and fourth-class citizens. Although many military veterans of Indian heritage could certainly sympathize with AIM activists, some of those who were censured for serving in the military took such criticism personally. Despite Native Peoples’ anti-government thrust, their traditional views of warriors afforded Native People veterans an elevated social position within Indian society—which, arguably, is higher than veterans in American society generally. Ira Hayes, for example, the Pima Indian who had won the Congressional Medal of Honor at Iwo Jima, is widely revered

(Crow Dog and Erdoes, 1990). Hence, to criticize someone who has achieved high esteem for his warrior prowess is to some, sacrilegious within the Native community.

As evidence of the organizations' race consciousness, the uplifting of their own people was each group's first priority. Moreover, Whites were officially not permitted to join AIM, or the BPP. While nearly all of the Young Lords were of Latin descent, there is some evidence that suggests that the Young Lords did not prohibit Whites from joining the organization. Although not huge in number, the Chicago Lords did have a few White members. It should be noted that AIM, the BPP, and the Lords were open to other activists of color. For example, Denise Oliver, an African American, was a member of the New York chapter of the Young Lords. For a time she even sat on its Central Committee. Richard Aoki, an Asian American, was one of the Black Panther Party's earliest recruits. The Seattle chapter of the BPP had several Asian-American members as well (Zane and Jeffries, 2010). Eventually even AIM grew to accept other people of color as members. In her memoir *Lakota Woman*, Mary Crow Dog says, "eventually we were joined by a number of Chicano brothers and sisters and learned to love and respect them, but it took time" (Crow Dog and Erdoes, 1990, 77). It should be noted, however, with a few exceptions, nearly everyone who joined the BPP, the Lords and AIM was of that particular ethnic/racial group.

America Takes Notice

All three groups were image conscious, especially the Panthers, whose uniform included a black leather jacket, set off by a powder blue shirt, black pants, impeccably shined black shoes, topped off with a black beret that was typically and stylishly cocked to the side. AIM members wore dungarees, red bandanas, red jackets and dark sunglasses—a look that was simultaneously cool, yet menacing. Like the Panthers, the Lords also adopted the beret (albeit a purple one) and the black leather jacket, giving them the appearance of Latin American revolutionaries. Some also wore the camouflage or army green military jackets. Not surprisingly, each group had a flair for the dramatic. Each caught the public's attention in a most flamboyant way. Seven months after Newton and Seale founded the Black Panther Party, State Legislator Don Mulford proposed a bill that would make it illegal to carry guns openly in residential and incorporated areas. Panther leaders believed this to be a deliberate attempt to disarm the Party, thus rendering Panther patrols of the police virtually ineffective. Newton sent a delegation of thirty Panthers to the statehouse on the day that legislators were considering the bill. Rather than reading the prepared statement on the capital steps, as Newton had instructed, the delegation led by Seale unwittingly stumbled onto the floor of the legislature where they were met with gasps and stunned faces, some of whom ducked under tables while others scampered out into the corridor. Newspaper headlines across the state read, "Black Militants Invade State Capitol." This stunt garnered national press, which ultimately proved both helpful and harmful.

Two years later, in the spring of 1969, just as a national conclave of Presbyterian ministers convened in Texas, the Lords, along with members of the Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society, moved to take over the Presbyterian McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago ("3 Protest Groups," 1969). They entered the premises, barricaded the doors, and set up security with walkie-talkies. During the occupation, the Young Lords publicized the city's attempts to displace Puerto Ricans from the Lincoln Park community and charged the seminary with being complicit in this displacement. The occupation lasted nearly a week. The Lords demanded that the seminary provide funds for low-income housing in the community, a

children's center, a cultural center for Latinos, and legal assistance. When the media learned of the occupation, reporters rushed to the scene. Jimenez recalls:

The ministers in Texas offered to give \$600,000 for low income housing in Lincoln Park. The Board agreed to meet our demands for housing, that their financial records be open, that McCormick join to help community groups, that it publicly oppose the racist policies of Urban Renewal, and that it opens its facilities to the use of the community (Browning, 1970-1971, 20).

AIM's splash onto the national scene was equally if not more dramatic than both the Panthers and the Lords. On November 20, 1969, at approximately 2 A.M., nearly eighty American Indians from more than twenty tribes made their way by boat to Alcatraz with the intention of seizing it. According to federal law, since the land was no longer in use, it could be given back to the original occupants—Native Peoples. AIM supported restoration of those Indian Lands illegally taken by the federal government. All across the nation, Native militants had occupied public property to protest discrimination and exploitation: overtaking the federal building in Littleton, Colorado, camping in a restricted area atop Mount Rushmore, attempting an occupation of Ellis Island, asserting treaty-guaranteed fishing rights on the Puyallup River in Washington, and entrenching themselves on several military reservations, including Fort Lawton in Puget Sound and the Coast Guard station on Lake Michigan near Milwaukee—acts symbolizing the recovery of property and rights taken from their ancestors by Anglo-Americans (Gibson, 1980).

Thousands of Native People would eventually occupy Alcatraz, which over the years had housed some of the United States' most infamous criminals until its closing in 1963. Native activists attempted to occupy Alcatraz in 1964, filing claim to the land under federal law, but they were ejected. Five years later, Native activists returned to Alcatraz, claiming their right to the island under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which permitted any Native male over eighteen, whose tribe was a party to the treaty, to file for a homestead on government land. This time the activists held the island for approximately nineteen months, in part because there was little resistance from the government. The protest was about human rights; it was an effort to restore the dignity of the more than 554 American Indian Nations in the United States. The occupants wanted more than just Alcatraz the facility; they wanted to reclaim their lives and redress past injustices committed by the American government against Native Peoples. They made numerous demands, among them an ambitious grant proposal of \$299,424 to convert Alcatraz into a cultural park and Indian social and educational center. However, given that the facility was surrounded by water, the idea of a cultural park and educational center seemed impractical.

Many Native People believed that the time had come for them to speak out on a national stage about their plight in America. Not since Crazy Horse, Geronimo, Sealh'th, and Manuelito had Native People captured the attention of policy makers in Washington, D.C., by non-violent methods. Earl Caldwell, then a reporter for the *New York Times*, remembers, "I got the call from New York to stop covering the Black Panthers and go to Alcatraz." Representing scores of Indian Nations around North America, the occupants called themselves Indians of all Tribes. More than 5,000 Indians reportedly joined the occupation. Although most of the activists' demands were rejected, they made their point. AIM was here to stay, and those in power would no longer take the concerns of Native Peoples lightly.

Internal Working/Politics

Though many have become infatuated with the more sensational aspects of these organizations, what is oftentimes ignored or downplayed in the telling and/or writing of their histories is the fact that all three were committed to service; their mission was to meet the needs of their respective communities. Toward that end, the Panthers offered an array of community “survival programs,” ranging from a free breakfast program for school kids, to free medical clinics, to police patrols—all of which were appropriated by the Lords and AIM in one form or another. Although the Lords were able to organize a free breakfast program and set up a free and mobile medical clinic, and AIM was able to put in place police patrols, both groups’ abilities to offer the range of services that the Panthers did was limited. Not only did the Panthers provide residents with the aforementioned resources, but they also sponsored free clothing drives, created escort service initiatives for senior citizens, and offered free legal services, to name a few. In Los Angeles, Detroit, and Cleveland, for example, Panthers offered free busing to prisons, which was especially popular, as many of the relatives of inmates had no transportation and could not visit their loved-ones, who were often held in facilities located in isolated and desolate areas. Other unique efforts included a free ambulance service in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and a Peoples’ Free Library in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The range of services undoubtedly enabled the Panthers to make greater inroads into communities across the country in a way that the Lords and AIM could not. It should be understood that the Panthers were able to offer significantly more services than both AIM and the Lords, not because of know-how, per se, but because the Panthers had an extensive fund-raising apparatus. The Panthers had friends in high places. Moreover, the Panthers proved adept at cultivating relationships with White philanthropists, appealing to sectors of the Black middle class, and tapping into certain liberal Hollywood circles. Having been founded in California—the motion picture capital of the world—the Panthers had access to groups of would-be supporters and sympathizers that were simply not within AIM’s or the Lords’ reach.

AIM, the Panthers, and the Lords experienced a turning point in the early 1970s. By 1971 AIM was stronger than ever, becoming a national organization with seventy-five chapters. With the opening of chapters in major metropolitan areas like Denver, Cleveland, and various cities on the West Coast, AIM’s stature as the preeminent organization of Native Peoples was undeniable. Their popularity landed them supporters such as Anthony Quinn and Marlon Brando. For the Panthers and the Lords, however, the outlook was not as promising. Due to a difference of opinion regarding the direction that the organization should take, the BPP started to hemorrhage. Over a matter of several months from late 1970 to 1971, the discord between Huey P. Newton and Eldridge Cleaver forced some within the Party to take sides. Cleaver believed that the Panthers needed to up the ante; in his mind, it was time for the Panthers to wage war against the “pigs.” Newton believed that doing so would be counterrevolutionary (*i.e.*, reactionary suicide). Instead, Newton maintained that the Panthers had to focus on meeting the needs of the Black community. Toward that end, the Panthers created new initiatives and expanded many of their existing programs. From his exile in Algeria (where Cleaver had fled to escape charges that were certain to land him in prison for his role in the botched ambush of Bay Area police officers in April 1968), Cleaver mustered up heavy support for his position among the large New York State chapter of the Black Panther Party. When New York Panthers commended the bomb-happy Weathermen for their embrace of armed struggle in an open letter published in February 1971,

they also criticized Newton and others for their seemingly reformist approach to alleviating Black oppression. Newton responded by expelling the entire New York State chapter.

Weeks later Cleaver took their ideological debate public and aired their differences on a locally televised talk show. The Newton-Cleaver spat took a drastic turn for the worst as loyalists of both parties implicitly declared war on the opposing camp, culminating in the death of at least two Panthers. The resulting chasm fractured the organization to such an extent that in some instances cliques, departures, dissension, and factions developed within a single chapter or branch. Though many believe that this split occurred along geographical lines (East Coast vs. West Coast), actually within a single branch there were members who sided with Newton, while others backed Cleaver. The Newton-Cleaver war adversely impacted the Panthers' image and threw the organization into disarray, a state from which it never fully recovered. Despite the fact that some in New York supported Newton, the minister of defense hastily expelled the entire New York State chapter. In response, some New York Panthers denounced Newton and his "lackeys." If the purpose of Newton's decision was to shut down Panther activity in New York, it was an unmitigated failure. The New York Panthers continued to operate as they had been, although the chapter did take a very important step toward making its independence from the organization official and permanent. In 1972, the chapter created its own newspaper titled *Right On!*—the alternative to the so-called "reactionary" *Black Panther* newspaper. In 1974, Newton fled the United States to avoid prosecution for murder and turned the organization over to Elaine Brown, under whom the Panthers experienced some of its most productive years, especially in educational reform.

The Young Lords had fallen victim to a similar scenario in 1970. Ten months after the New York activists were granted permission from Chicago to launch a chapter of its own, it broke with the national headquarters. The New York Lords claimed that the Chicago Lords still acted like a gang. Additional complaints from the New York Lords included a lack of ideological clarity and direction from headquarters. The New Yorkers maintained that the Chicago office lacked adequate internal political education. On this matter, Jimenez agreed, saying in an interview, "The Young Lords are going to try to get a little more ideology. We have to do this to educate the Latin community, not just Puerto Ricans, but also Chicanos, Cubanos, South Americans, the whole Latin scene" ("We're fighting Freedom Together," 1969). Jimenez and others in Chicago pointed to the backgrounds of the members within the branches as the principal cause for the discord. Many of the New York Lords were high school graduates; some had been to college or were attending college at the time. In particular, the founders were mostly college students from SUNY-Old Westbury, Queens College, and Columbia University.

This was not the case with the Chicago Lords, who until 1968 had been socialized in the life of gang-banging. Still, the Lords in Chicago believed that the New York office was pre-occupied with ideological refinement at the expense of grassroots organizing. Said one Chicago member, "Here in Chicago we're more concerned with the immediate needs of the people, we're better able to analyze when we're out on the streets talking with people. . . not just from reading Marx, Lenin or Mao" (Browning, 1970/1971, 25). The New York Lords also thought that the Chicago headquarters suffered from high levels of attrition and were unorganized. One example of the latter was the erratic publication of the organization's newspaper. The New York Lords' criticism of the national office on this point is interesting, especially since the New York chapter underwent a series of changes at the leadership level, which may have suggested, to some degree, instability on their part as well. The most notable example included having two deputy chairmen within a twelve-month span. Additionally, the minister of economic development left

the Lords to join the Black Panther Party, interestingly enough. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the New York Lords did not think that the Chicago office was doing enough on behalf of the Latino community, a claim at which Chicago Lords scoffed.

In April 1970, less than a year after the New York office was opened, the Lords there officially broke from the national organization. With them, the New York Lords reportedly took the East Coast chapters and formed a separate Young Lords entity. For public relations purposes, the word Organization was replaced with Party. In addition to the name change, the New York branch supposedly adopted the slogan “*Tengo Puerto Rico en Mi Corazon*” (“I have Puerto Rico in my Heart”) to emphasize its commitment to political activism and community service. However, Chicago Lords maintained that the New York Lords did nothing of the kind and claimed that Omar Lopez, Chicago’s Minister of Information, had coined the slogan long before the New York Lords were founded.

The New York Lords also created their own bilingual newspaper called *Palante* and started a radio show on WBAI-FM. Unlike the much publicized spat that occurred in the Black Panther Party, relations between the Chicago and New York chapters remained amicable over the years. One can only speculate as to why the Lords’ internal troubles did not follow the same path as the Panthers’. Perhaps it was because the leaders in Chicago and New York did not have the kind of egos that both Newton and Cleaver possessed. It also could have been that the rift between the two chapters was not fueled by the FBI and the local police, as was the case in the Newton-Cleaver feud. Additionally, the New York Lords were no match for the Chicago Lords, and both factions knew it. Consequently, the Chicago Lords had nothing to prove to a bunch of college kids. Indeed, when in the presence of the Chicago Lords, the New York Lords walked lightly and always took special care to avoid offending members of the Chicago chapter in any way. This may explain why the New York Lords made the decision to break from the organization. They drove to Chicago to assuage any potential concerns that Cha Cha and others may have had about the impending break. Lastly, it is possible that the Lords had witnessed what transpired among the Panthers and learned from it. In a war similar to the one that occurred in the BPP, the New York Lords would have stood no chance against the Chicago contingent.

The Woman Question

In studies of the Lords, Panthers, and AIM, gender issues are typically given short shrift. Women comprised a sizeable portion of each groups’ membership. It is difficult, though, to ascertain in which organization women played a more prominent role. Moreover, doing so is not within the purview of this article. Unfortunately, of the women whose names are most recognizable by laypersons as well as students of history and politics, most are former Black Panthers.⁴ This does not mean that Panther women were more impressive or carried a greater load than women in AIM or the Young Lords. Rather, this can perhaps be attributed to the media fascination with the Panthers’ histrionics, resulting in them getting the lions’ share of attention. Kathleen Cleaver, probably the most widely known female Panther, was married to Eldridge Cleaver, award-winning author and highly visible leader in the Panther organization. That Kathleen Cleaver was for some time the only woman on the organization’s Central Committee

²The names Kathleen Cleaver, Elaine Brown, Assata Shakur, Afeni Shakur, and Ericka Huggins are arguably more recognizable than those women in either the Lords or AIM.

and a very effective communications secretary only enhanced her stature. However, for every Kathleen Cleaver there were tens of women, whose names did not appear on the nightly news or in the headlines of the country's major news dailies, who were equally as central to the organization's success.

Some male Panthers to whom we have spoken over the years are quick to admit that women were the organization's life's blood. Yet, it is also true that pro-patriarchal ideologies existed in all three organizations, manifesting itself in a variety of ways. Although numerous women held important positions in all three of the organizations, sexism was still prevalent. Some male members tried to relegate certain women to menial tasks and duties that were traditionally reserved for women (i.e., cooking, cleaning, and clerical work). Some men tried to take liberties with women. In other instances women competed for the affection of the groups' male leaders, knowing full well that some of the men were in relationships with several women simultaneously. Given this reality the likelihood of a woman getting pregnant was high; and since the Panthers, AIM, nor the Young Lords were proponents of birth control, it was not uncommon for a leader to have children by multiple women within the organization. In fact, birth control was viewed by AIM, the BPP and the Lords as the White man's way of committing genocide against their people. Mary Crow Dog (Crow Dog and Erdoes, 1990) remembers when her pregnant sister went to the hospital to have her baby, the doctor informed her that a cesarean would have to be performed:

When she came to, she learned that her womb had been removed. In
Their opinion, at that time there were already too many little red bastards
For the taxpayers to take care of. No use to mollycoddle those happy-go-
Lucky, irresponsible, oversexed AIM women. Barb's child lived for two hours
(79).

The Panthers argued that the White man was most willing to abort a Black baby as it undercut the Black Nation's ability to build a strong Black Army. The degree to which this viewpoint was widely accepted among Panther women is unclear. Panther women have revealed via their memoirs and interviews that several Panther women were the victims of sexual harassment and physical abuse by their male comrades. Other women, some of them longtime veterans of the Party, maintained that they did not witness any such mistreatment nor had any knowledge of said abuse. From our research, it is evident that women's experiences varied from chapter to chapter. Despite the presence of sexism, Panther women were apparently able to deal with these attitudes and behaviors and rise to leadership positions within the organization. Some led branches and chapters, such as the Boston, Philadelphia, and New Haven outposts, while others held various leadership posts, including serving on the Central Committee. And for approximately four years (1974-1977), Elaine Brown headed the organization. Under her leadership, a conscious effort was made to compose a Central Committee that more accurately reflected the gender demographics of the organization generally.

Early on, women encountered the same kinds of problems within the Young Lords—exclusion from leadership positions and relegation to clerical tasks and other duties traditionally assigned to women, despite the fact that the men gave lip service to the idea that positions were open to all. Point number ten of the New York Lords' platform, which stated, "Machismo must be revolutionary, not oppressive," was indicative of the way men viewed women. In response, several female Lords in New York formed a women's caucus. Not long after, the caucus

confronted the men about the role that sexism had long played in undermining relationships between men and women and the movements in which they participated. The women's caucus demanded that the Central Committee put an end to sexual discrimination immediately and recognize the leadership qualities of women.

More specifically, women members in New York argued that it was impossible for machismo to be revolutionary and that it should not be regarded as a source of cultural or masculine pride. They insisted that point number ten be rewritten to read, "We want equality for women. Down with machismo and male chauvinism." Along with rewriting point number ten, the Lords took on the mantra "*Abajo con el machismo!*" ("Down with machismo!"), which appeared in the group's newspaper and other pieces of literature. Moreover, the women insisted that they be represented on the Central Committee, resulting in the addition of two female members—Denise Oliver and Gloria Fontanez. To prevent chauvinism from adversely impacting morale within the ranks, the Lords began taking disciplinary action against those guilty of sexist behavior. That women members of the Lords were able to convince their male counterparts to acknowledge that their chauvinistic behavior was oppressive and counterproductive to the liberation of all Latino people is a testament to their will and ability to overcome adversity. Pablo Guzman of New York, for instance, came to realize that sexism was not only oppressive but also "impractical" to revolutionary struggle and welcomed the agenda of women's liberation, though the struggle of "Third World women" was different from that of White women, who "have been put on a pedestal," while White men raped and otherwise exploited women of color (Guzman, 1995, 1995b).

Like the Panthers, the Lords, too, were once led by a woman. By late 1971 and early 1972, Gloria Fontanez assumed control of the New York Lords. Unlike Brown's tenure as head of the BPP, Fontanez's tenure was marked by controversy and strife, not because of her gender necessarily, but because of the heavy-handed manner in which she governed the organization. Under Brown's leadership, the BPP experienced some of its most prosperous years; the same cannot be said of Fontanez's leadership of the Lords.

It appears that AIM was a bit more progressive than the BPP or the Young Lords where women were concerned. This is likely attributed to the traditionally egalitarian nature of Native-American communities. Since many tribes are matrilineal, great value is placed on the role of women in society. Thus, women were less likely to be marginalized or relegated to inferior positions. "Many Native American cultures... were not systems of male dominance and female submission but rather were social orders which affirmed sexual cooperation and were supportive of female expression and involvement in decision making" (Antell, 1990, 4). We, however, do not portend that AIM women did not encounter male chauvinism. Many of the men depended on the women to cook and clean, and some preferred that women stay in the background. Like women Panthers and Young Lords' women, AIM women had to call out their male counterparts more often than not. AIM women had an interesting way of doing this—telling AIM men that sexism was a sign of assimilation. Like the women in the BPP and Young Lords, however, AIM women played an integral role in their organization. Although Banks, Bellecourt, Mitchell, and Means are credited for establishing AIM, Mary Jane Wilson was one of the organization's cofounders. Roberta Downwind suggested the name AIM when it was deemed that Concerned Indians of America (CIA) was inappropriate. Women also set up and headed AIM chapters throughout the country. Pat Ballinger, known as the mother of AIM, chaired the St. Paul chapter. Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash opened AIM's West Coast branch, a move that signaled not only AIM's national prominence, but also Anna Mae's stature in the movement (Mihesuah, 2003).

Though AIM's membership was predominantly male, women made up a sizable portion of its cadre. Indeed, women were present at every major demonstration or event held by AIM. For example, of the 350 activists involved in the ten-week siege of Wounded Knee, fewer than 100 were men. Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash was one of the few women to walk the nightly patrols and dig bunkers at Wounded Knee. Women also spearheaded the dissent at Pine Ridge and performed all tasks, including carrying weapons. Moreover, most of the main negotiators with the government were women (Sayer, 1997). Although the media was captivated by the tough talking, charismatic male leaders, Dennis Banks acknowledged that at Wounded Knee "women were the real warriors" (Sayer, 1997, 99).

How Their Constituents Viewed Them

As organizations designed to uplift their communities, they all endeavored to garner support from those they claimed to serve. At times this task proved to be daunting. All three groups were subjected to some form of criticism from their own people. Support for all three groups tended to be stronger among young people. This is not to say that these groups did not appeal to some older residents—they did. However, older residents were more likely to view militants as adventurist, foolhardy, and misguided. AIM was (and to some extent for good reason) particularly susceptible to this criticism. As far as some older Native Peoples were concerned, AIM was comprised of criminals and thugs who came to the reservation and naïvely and condescendingly tried to dictate to the community what its needs were and how these issues should be addressed. Older Native Peoples considered members of AIM pompous. Moreover, according to community elders, few members of the American Indian Movement were steeped in their culture, and almost none of them could speak the language. This, however, shifted after Pine Ridge in 1973.

Of the three groups, the Young Lords arguably had the most difficult time winning community support. For nearly ten years the Lords had been a street gang that preyed on its own people. Therefore, in 1968 when the Lords changed their orientation, they soon realized that many community residents were not so quick to embrace their turnabout. The Lords' about-face took time to resonate with Latino residents. They had to prove to the Latino community that they had abandoned their criminal ways. They accomplished this by cleaning the streets and offering services such as free breakfast programs and tuberculosis testing—something they had obviously gleaned from observing the Panthers.

The Government's Response

Given the organizations' efforts at political mobilization, it is not surprising that they were met with stiff government resistance. This resistance manifested in a variety of ways. One of the most commonly used methods to undermine left-wing support was red-baiting. With the Panthers', Lords', and AIM's founding coming on the heels of McCarthy's Red Scare, this tactic was highly effective. When one looks at the charges levied against these groups by law enforcement and other agencies, there seems to be a common theme. All three groups were labeled Communists at some point in their history. It would be remiss to talk about the impact of red-baiting without discussing what transpired in the world prior to the founding of the BPP, AIM, and the Young Lords. In the late 1940s and 1950s, U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin led the attack known as the Red Scare. It is also important to recognize that these

organizations were founded at the height of the Cold War and during America's escalation in the Vietnam War. Consequently, the United States government targeted anyone who expressed sympathy or demonstrated support for communist regimes (*i.e.*, sedition). To be a Communist was to be a supporter of Russian expansion into Europe, a supporter of the extension of Chinese boundaries into Asia, and an opponent of capitalism.

By red-baiting the Panthers, AIM, and the Lords, the intent was to create an atmosphere in which it would be difficult for them to attract wide support. Moreover, since the U.S. was fighting communism abroad, it provided domestic law enforcement with a convenient excuse to engage in tactics usually reserved for enemies of war, not U.S. citizens. After all, if these so-called "subversive" organizations were allowed to gain a foothold in American cities, they would threaten the country's way of life, its mores, and values (*i.e.*, ideology). Hence, these activists had to be neutralized at all costs. The way that law enforcement officials targeted the Black Panther Party as opposed to how they pursued the Young Lords or the American Indian Movement is noteworthy, especially in the case of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Of the 295 counter-insurgency tactics employed by the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program, 233 were directed at the Panthers. Not only were AIM and the Lords not subjected to the volume of repression that besieged the Panthers, but the nature of repression that AIM and the Lords experienced was less ferocious. The Panthers, unlike any other group of that period, spent a fair amount of time traveling abroad, meeting with dignitaries, and making public statements in support of leaders and nations with whom the U.S. were not friendly. It is possible that some in government may have feared that the Panthers were attempting to muster support for socialist and communist regimes on U.S. soil. Articles in support of such figures as Fidel Castro and Mao Tse Tung in the organization's newspaper did not belie that impression.

It is also possible that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover did not harbor as much antipathy toward Latinos and Indians as he did Blacks. Hoover believed that Blacks were inferior, intellectually and otherwise. Also, Blacks were the largest minority group in the country at the time, and some public opinion polls revealed that there was a relatively large sector of the Black population that admired the Panthers (Harris et al., 1971). Therefore, Hoover was convinced that the Panthers had the potential to win over recruits and mobilize various minority communities and certain elements of the White community. Furthermore, he believed that the breakfast program was a subterfuge for indoctrinating children with anti-establishment teachings, thus creating a generation of nonconformist Blacks. By contrast, the Latino and Native-American populations within U.S. borders were viewed as inconsiderable compared to the Black community. Consequently, Hoover may not have had the same concerns.

The BPP came under greater scrutiny, to some extent, because it was perceived to be a much larger organization with a wider swath of supporters. Whether this is true is unclear. At its height the Party claimed to have nearly forty chapters and branches in cities across the United States. The Panthers also boasted an international chapter in Algiers, Algeria. Some claim that the Panthers had a membership of 5,000 at one point, but there is no documentation to substantiate that figure.

The Lords and AIM were, to some degree, regional organizations confined to specific areas of the country. With the exception of Chicago and Milwaukee, nearly all of the Young Lords' chapters were located in the northeast region of the country. Moreover, the Lords did not have more than twenty five chapters. Although AIM's operations were much larger than the Young Lords, most of AIM's outposts were situated west of the Mississippi River, although there were chapters sprinkled throughout the Carolinas and other neighboring states.

Another reason the BPP was targeted so strongly was because the Panthers, specifically in Oakland, were the only group that carried guns in full view and monitored police behavior with the threat posed by being armed. Law enforcement officials found the Panthers' militant posture and inflammatory rhetoric particularly insubordinate, especially for Blacks. Police officers, therefore, felt affronted by the Panthers' challenge to their authority. In the minds of some law enforcement officials, the Panthers demonstrated a total disregard for the law; hence, they had to be "put back in their place." Consequently, local police departments in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Army Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, and state police, worked diligently to neutralize the Panthers. The Lords and AIM were of a lower priority and thus did not receive the same kind of attention from those in government. This is not to say that AIM and the Lords escaped the government's wrath. Both experienced their share of governmental intimidation and harassment.

In the case of AIM, to commemorate the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, in which 300 Minnecojou Lakota (including women and children) were slaughtered by the U.S. Seventh Cavalry, hundreds of Natives from reservations across the West gathered on the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, in February 1973. It has been said that Wounded Knee II "celebrated separatism instead of integration, political activism instead of dignified acquiescence, repudiation of white goals and values, and rejection of existing tribal organizations" (Washburn, 1975, 250).

The standoff between Native groups and the U.S. was inevitable, especially when one factors how Natives were robbed of their land, language(s), and culture(s). Native People were now at the cusp of social transformation as they targeted: (1) "a federal investigation of corruption on reservations in South Dakota; (2) an immediate Senate hearing on treaties broken with Indian nations; and (3) the impeachment of Dick Wilson (the elected head of Pine Ridge's tribal government) from office"⁵ (Eyre, 2009).

On March the 5th press conference at the Pine Ridge tribal office, Wilson (a federal employee) stated that he was releasing the restraints on his vigilante group—Guardians of the Oglala Nation (GOON squad)—as he declared that AIM was "free game," stating that "AIM will die at Wounded Knee" (Churchill and Vander Wall, 1998/1990, 146). Despite his threat, AIM—armed with weapons, ready for war, and backed with media exposure—remained relentless in pursuit of their humanity as they positioned themselves against Wilson's opposition, the GOONS, and about 250 armed U.S. personnel surrounding Wounded Knee (Eyre, 2009). After 71 days, the siege finally ended through a negotiated settlement as AIM disarmed themselves on May 7, 1973. The AIM casualty count stood at 2 dead and 14 seriously wounded. Shortly thereafter, Wilson, alongside the FBI, unleashed the Reign of Terror against AIM. This period was marked by surveillance, arrests, and harassments. From this period to mid-1975, it was estimated that AIM underwent 500 indictments, numerous physical assaults, and approximately 60 deaths. On the other end of the spectrum, the government spent near \$1 billion for their Pine Ridge initiatives and lost two FBI agents (Jack Coler and Ron Williams) after a June 25th shootout at the Jumping Bull Ranch on the Pine Ridge reservation (Eyre, 2009; Anderson, 1995). The aftermath remains blurry on who actually killed the agents; however, Leonard Peltier (AIM member) was indicated and imprisoned for the act (Anderson, 1995).

⁵ Many Natives in Pine Ridge were unfavorable to Wilson's venality and oppressive leadership, his failure to distribute resources equally among Native tribes, and his assimilative tactics for some Natives (Eyre, 2009).
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In 1979, AIM leader, John Trudell, was in the process of making a speech in Washington, but was cautioned by FBI officials, who stated that if he gave the speech, there would be “consequences.” Trudell not only made his speech, calling for the U.S. to get out of North America and detailing the nature of federal repression in Indian country, he burned a U.S. flag as well. That night his home—located in the Duck Valley Reservation in Nevada—mysteriously caught fire, killing his wife, mother-in-law, and three children.

Similarly, the Lords drew the ire of Chicago’s political establishment, especially when the Lords began publicly criticizing Mayor Daley’s plans for urban renewal, which called for the displacement of thousands of poor Latinos. When the Lords began staging rallies and demonstrations in protest of Daley’s scheme, the mayor called a press conference and announced a “War on Gangs.” As part of this initiative, the Gang Intelligence Unit increased its number of officers from thirty-seven to two thousand. Members of the “Red Squad” photographed people from their police cruisers and later visited them at their homes. Police stopped and questioned people who wore buttons distributed by the Young Lords, such as one that read “*Tengo Puerto Rico en Mi Corazon*” (“I have Puerto Rico in My Heart”). Governmental officials also discouraged employers from hiring members of the Young Lords as a way of scaring away potential recruits.

Conclusion and Discussion

The American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party, and the Young Lords were similar in many ways, yet very different. All three organizations came to the public’s attention by engaging in what some observers call street theatre. This tactic had a two-pronged impact. First, it sparked the interest of those in oppressed communities while serving as a recruiting tool for each group. Second, these events caught the attention of city, state, and federal officials, who were not open to the idea of revolution in the United States, thus thwarting many attempts by these organizations to transform their respective communities. And while all three groups engaged in histrionics it should be understood that the actions of the Panthers, Lords and AIM were also about claiming space. As far as the Panthers were concerned those spaces in which Black people occupied belonged to Black people and should be run by Black people. The Police had no right to patrol the streets of Black Oakland, for instance, as they had no invested interests. Black communities should be patrolled by those Blacks that live there. The Lords argued the same regarding Latino communities. AIM, on the other hand, sought to reclaim what was once theirs, but appropriated by the White Man. Since Native People’s were the first to occupy certain spaces the White man had no legal claim to it, thus it should be returned to its rightful owners, that is Native Peoples. The way AIM saw it, the White Man should leave Native People’s alone to run their own affairs and create their own government.

Though the leaders of all three groups were known for their fiery and spelling-binding critiques of the American government, AIM leaders often couched their rhetoric in spiritual terms. Although religion and spirituality had their place in the lives of both the Lords and the BPP, it was not something to which either group called attention.

Contrary to popular belief, the Lords, Panthers, and AIM experienced a tremendous amount of success, given their opposition. Despite these accomplishments, it is unfortunate that each of these groups has been either been scantily covered or omitted altogether in standard U.S. history textbooks. This reality represents the incessant forms of oppression (*i.e.*, cultural, intellectual, and chronological) inflicted by this society on People of Color—further evidence as

to “why” Blacks, Natives, and Latinos tend to suffer disproportionately relative to Whites in U.S. public education.⁶ This, in turn, may impact their ability to overcome socio-historical barriers. As Amos Wilson opined:

The psychology of individuals and groups may also, in part, be constructed from “historical and experiential amnesia.” That is, when an individual or a group is compelled by various circumstances to repress important segments of his or its formative history, he or it at the same time loses access to crucially important social, intellectual, and technical skills associated with that history which could be used to resolve current problems. Consequently, to some lesser or greater degree, the individual or group may be handicapped or disadvantaged by the resulting amnesia (Wilson, 1993, 1).

Serious students of 1960s social movements understand that several of the radical groups founded after 1966 were modeled after the Black Panther Party—the Lords and AIM were no exception. Having witnessed some of the problems that the Panthers encountered, the Lords and AIM learned some valuable lessons regarding internal politics. On some issues, the Lords and AIM were able to avoid some of the pitfalls that the Panthers experienced. On other matters, they were apt to repeat the same mistakes. In-fighting in both the BPP and the Lords caused a rift that eventually led to two separate Black Panther Parties and two separate Young Lord outfits. One reason that may explain why the Lords and AIM were prone to similar gaffes is that both organizations began less than two years after the BPP was founded. Therefore, neither the Lords nor AIM had the opportunity to step back and engage in the kind of historical reflection needed to avoid the types of mistakes that the Panthers committed. If the Lords and AIM had been founded in the mid-1970s (several years after the Party had been in existence), they would have been in a better position to learn from the BPP’s example. Additionally, one cannot neglect the level of exposure (not limited to age) that members had in their attempts to go toe-to-toe with the United States. To expound, although there were some models of and readings on revolution, nothing revealed the depths to which the establishment would go to maintain hegemony (*i.e.*, reinforcement of White supremacy).

Nevertheless, each group used a set of tactics that they thought best served their ends. The tactic of disruption was featured prominently by all three groups with the intention of: (1) creating a public stage from which they could voice their grievances, thereby making it difficult for political elites to ignore; (2) heightening public awareness of the injustices that poor and historically oppressed people faced; (3) interrupting the normal course of governmental affairs in order to undercut elites’ ability to conduct business as usual; and (4) pressuring the government to act in accordance with the will of the people. However, one cannot help but think that in a few instances, the Lords’ and AIM’s decisions to employ certain tactics were based less on sound tactical judgment than on what they saw the Panthers do and what they thought worked well for the BPP.

⁶ John Ogbu stated, “A minority group’s relative academic success seems related to its immigration history (voluntary vs. involuntary) and current status in relation to the dominant group. In particular, children from a given sub-cultural group will [perform poorer] if their group was colonized or enslaved historically by the dominant group” (Green, 1998, 102; see also, Ogbu, 1989).

All three groups committed a huge tactical error when they did not join forces in any substantive and systematic fashion. Each group verbally supported the other, paying lip service to a united front, but no significant effort was made to convert this verbal support into any sort of consistent programmatic enterprise. In Chicago, the Lords and Panthers joined forces at various times in an effort to empower oppressed communities, and though their relationship was formalized with the invention of the Rainbow Coalition, which also included a White Appalachian group called the Young Patriots, on the whole, the relationship was not as strong as it could have been. There was also no strong working relationship between the Panthers and AIM or AIM and the Lords. This lack of foresight or inattention to cultivating such alliances as was done in the Civil Rights Movement is not entirely surprising given the documents obtained from the Justice Department, which reveal that the U.S. government helped fuel mistrust among the these three group. More specifically, in Minnesota where AIM was founded, there was no substantive Panther or Lord presence; nor were there any active AIM chapters in Chicago that we know of or points east, where Young Lords branches mainly existed. Consequently, unlike the modern Civil Rights Movement that was to a large extent primarily concentrated in the South, the Lords, Panthers, and AIM were spread out geographically, which perhaps presented challenges that did not come into play within the modern Civil Rights Movement.

One lesson that the Lords learned was that members of AIM apparently did not keep the numbers of branches in their respective organizations manageable. AIM relied heavily on action rather than formal structure (Smith and Warrior, 1996). This acted both as a potential weakness and strength. For example, as the organization grew, chapters and branches sprouted up in various locations without approval or direct contact from national headquarters (Smith and Warrior, 1996), making it difficult for some to discern between actual members and renegades. On the other hand, the lack of “organization” allowed members to take action at any given moment, especially in the face of dehumanization. As Smith and Warrior (1996) stated:

They left their homes in Montana or Syracuse or Tulsa, on Greyhound buses or wing-and-a-prayer Indian cars or via an outstretched thumb, not bothering to promise to write or say when they would return. They were ready for action, ready for anything (138).

Although the BPP adhered to a more rigid hierarchy and stricter chain of command than did the other two groups, managing the organization proved more challenging than it did for AIM or the Lords. From 1967 to 1968, the Black Panther Party grew from a regional outfit that was once limited to the West Coast to an international organization with outposts in Africa. Unfortunately, the Panthers did not have the people-power or resources to accommodate such rapid expansion. The proliferation of Panther branches across the country, in particular, presented a number of challenges with which the Panthers were not equipped to deal. By contrast, with the exception of Chicago and perhaps a few other Midwestern cities, most of the Young Lord chapters were located in cities along the eastern seaboard. AIM was equally geographically clustered since there were only a handful of places within the United States where Native People comprised sizeable numbers, and AIM chapters, although great in number, were for the most part, limited to those locales. Because of the significantly fewer number of Young Lords branches, the Lords did not encounter some of the problems that the Panthers, or any organization for that matter, would encounter that had experienced a massive influx of members and chapters in such a short period of time.

By the mid-1970s, the Panthers and the Lords were decimated by a host of factors that was not limited to governmental repression. AIM lasted as an effective organization well into the 1970s and 1980s. Although perhaps not as powerful as it once was, of the three groups, only AIM still exists. Whatever is said or written about these three organizations in the future, this is undeniable: each of them left behind a rich legacy of unwavering activism that can perhaps serve as a template for future generations.

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Appendix 1
Young Lords Organization
Twelve-Point Program and Platform

1. We want Independence and Self-determination for the People of Aztlan and Puerto Rico.
2. We want an end to all imperialist wars—economic and military.
3. We want an end to the mercenary nature of the U.S. military system and an end to oppression of Latinos and other poor and oppressed people by threats of imprisonment or by economically depriving them of their basic needs then forcing them to volunteer or allowing them to be drafted into unjust, imperialist wars.
4. We want equality for the sexes.
5. We want an end to the inner-city removal of Latinos and other poor and oppressed people. We want Latinos and all poor and oppressed people to control the housing to be built in their respective communities so that they can be sure it is fit for human beings and economically reasonable. We also want all existing housing brought up to comply with the codes.
6. We want a guaranteed income and full employment for Latinos and all poor and oppressed people.
7. We want bilingual education for Latinos. An education that teaches Latinos and all poor and oppressed people the true history of their past and exposes the true nature of this decadent society.
8. We want an end to the robbing of Latinos and all poor and oppressed people by GREEDY YANQUI BUSINESSMEN in the Latino community.
9. We want an end to the enormous drug problem caused by this decadent society. We want the drug pushers, the rich perpetrators of this society, arrested and tried by their victims. We want all those now in Jail for crimes related to drugs discharged to community-controlled rehabilitation centers and provided with good and efficient medical care. We want research begun immediately so that the use of methadone on heroin addicts can be discontinued.
10. We want the same good and efficient health care that is given to the rich to be given to Latinos and other poor and oppressed people. We want it to be free to Latinos and all poor and oppressed people. HEALTH CARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT.
11. We want an end to the brutalization and cold-blooded murder of Latinos and all poor and oppressed people by Yanqui police in this country. We want police in Latino communities to be Latinos and under the control of the Latino community.
12. We want all Latinos released from federal, state, county, and city jails, because they have not had fair trials nor have been tried by a jury of their peers as defined by the U.S. Constitution. They have been tried by Yanqui courts and jurors who have no basic understanding of Latino's nor of the conditions to which Latinos are subjected.

Appendix 2
The American Indian Movement: Trail of Broken Treaties
Twenty-Point Indian Manifesto

1. Restoration of treaty making (ended by Congress in 1871).
2. Establishment of a treaty commission to make new treaties (with sovereign Native Nations).
3. Indian leaders to address Congress.
4. Review of treaty commitments and violations.
5. Unratified treaties to go before the Senate.
6. All Indians to be governed by treaty relations.
7. Relief for Native Nations for Treaty rights violations.
8. Recognition of the right of Indians to interpret treaties.
9. Joint Congressional Committee to be formed on reconstruction of Indian relations.
10. Restoration of 110 million acres of land taken away from Native Nations by the United States.
11. Restoration of terminated rights.
12. Repeal of state jurisdiction on Native Nations.
13. Federal protection for offenses against Indians.
14. Abolishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
15. Creation of a new office of Federal Indian Relations.
16. New office to remedy breakdown in the constitutionally prescribed relationships between the United States and Native Nations.
17. Native Nations to be immune to commerce regulation, taxes, trade restrictions of states.
18. Indian religious freedom and cultural integrity protected.
19. Establishment of national Indian voting with local options; free national Indian organizations from governmental controls.
20. Reclaim and affirm health, housing, employment, economic development, and education for all Indian people.

Appendix 3
The Black Panther Party
Ten-Point Platform and Program

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
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.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to Police Brutality and Murder of Black People.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
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.
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.

Figure 1
Duodecapartite System of Colonial Oppression

Biological
Emotional
Social
Cultural
Spiritual
Intellectual
Sexual
Psychological
Moral
Economical
Political
Chronological
Individual/
Group