

The Chicago Young Lords: (Re)constructing Knowledge and Revolution

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ABSTRACT

The Young Lords are widely recognized for having paved the way for the politicization of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mainland and for their entry into the Civil Rights Movement. This study repositions the dominant historical narrative to focus on the origins of the Young Lords Organization in the city of Chicago. Organizing around the issue of gentrification in a notoriously schematized city, the Chicago Young Lords adopted an educational strategy that was the pragmatic imperative of a trans-cultural and transnational social justice movement. The YLO newspaper was the principle crusader for their message of local and global justice and community empowerment. Its didactic content and revolutionary aesthetic stand out as part the affecting rhetorical strategy in their urgent call for Puerto Rican empowerment, coalition, local and global action. [Key words: Young Lords Organization, Chicago, Puerto Ricans, gentrification, civil rights, sixties]

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THE YOUNG LORDS PAPERS IS A COLLECTION OF MATERIALS THAT DOCUMENT THE HISTORY OF THE CHICAGO CHAPTER OF THE YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION (YLO).

Housed in the Latino Archives and the Latino Chicago Oral History Project at DePaul University's Center For Latino Research and the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Collection and Young Lords Newspapers at the John T. Richardson Library, with additional public records and private correspondence in the Chicago History Museum, and most recently at the Grand Valley State University Special Collections and University Archives, the documents can be read individually or as a singular body of work to build breadth and complexity into our knowledge of the Puerto Rican history in the US, the Civil Rights Movement and global social justice movements. Two major themes that emerge from a comprehensive reading that are keys to expanding the common historical narrative about the YLO are gentrification and popular education. In fact, the issue of housing within a city notorious for nefarious political behavior and a landscape being transformed by the Civil Rights Movement actuated the politicization of the Young Lords. At the core of their liberal nationalist philosophy for organizing was a critical pedagogy that included a transcultural, transnational and global praxis. One of their main vehicles for pushing through these efforts was the *YLO* newspaper, also published under the name *Pitirre* and *The Young Lord*, which ran in Chicago from April 1969 through the spring of 1971. The YLO newspaper was a crusader for the community, aiming to lift the self-image of the people through its didactic content and revolutionary aesthetic.

The formation, contributions and evolution of the Young Lords has been the subject of study by many scholars over the decades. The fairly extensive bibliography includes several autobiographical sources and collaborations like the Young Lords Party and Michael Abramson's *Pa'lante: The Young Lords Party* (1971), a collection of political essays by members of the organizations along with Abramson's historical photographs. Iris Morales's film *Pa'lante, siempre pa'lante!: The Young Lords* (1996), and Miguel "Mickey" Melendez's book *We Took To the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (2005) are also among the more readily accessible historical autobiographies of the Young Lords. More recently, Enck-Wanzer's edited *The Young Lords: A Reader* (2010), which consolidates significant primary materials and includes a foreword by Iris Morales and Denise Oliver-Pérez. Scores of essays, book chapters,

websites and even very early accounts like Robert Leroy Wilson's *The First Spanish United Methodist Church and the Young Lords* (1970) published by the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, demonstrate the breadth and impact of the Young Lords' activism from multiple perspectives. In fact, while the Young Lords experienced a shorter lifespan than many other organizations involved in the Civil Rights Movement, the ongoing discussions about their ideologies and political strategies prove that they were, as Andrés Torres states in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, the undisputed catalyst for the second generation's baptism into radical politics (1998: 7).

In these narratives the Young Lords are identified by several periods in their development, particular motivations and ideologies. The epicenter is most often New York, not the original Chicago or any of the other cities where the movement developed. The absence of first-hand contributions by members of the Chicago YLO in most of these sources supports this impression. Also, the main impetus for the organization often stands out as a nationalist agenda toward Puerto Rican independence and self-determination, anti-poverty and lack of access to resources on a local level. The Young Lords are perceived to have been a Puerto Rican organization, not the multiethnic group that was the Chicago Young Lords. Finally, their most recognized actions are the take-over of the detox unit at the Lincoln Hospital, the "garbage offensive" in 1969 and the food and health drives in New York's Puerto Rican communities.

Without understating the significance of these events to the larger history of the Young Lords, I suggest that a fundamental part of the early history of the organization is missing from this political narrative that is the key to understanding the evolution of the Young Lords. First, the development of an anti-gentrification agenda that faced off with one of the most ambitious and diffusive urban renewal plans in the US is largely ignored. Second, the rhetorical strategies that urged a (re)articulation of educational strategies for and about Puerto Ricans, if engaged at all, are treated through biographical or historical discourse rather than as an educational strategy that was the pragmatic imperative of a transcultural and transnational social justice movement. In fact, the anti-gentrification agenda of the YLO, as well as their methods of engagement, participation and education, had a major impact on what is now more readily understood as the relationship between education, neoliberal globalization and gentrification. This is evidenced in the historical development of their political action agenda, their strategic targeting of the main issues affecting the poor minority communities of Chicago, as well as in the visual and aesthetic expression of the movement as seen primarily in the YLO newspaper.

The Evolution of a Street Gang: Constructing Political Narratives

The Young Lords and Young Lordettes began as a street gang, or crew as they were

referred to at the time, led by a young Orlando Dávila in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood in the 1960s. They joined other gangs like the Flaming Arrows, Black Eagles, Latin Angels, Imperial Aces and Queens, Rebels, Trojans, Latin Eagles, Latin Souls, Latin Kings and Queens and Latin Disciples, in a segregated, working class, economically tense, machine-run city. The neighborhoods saw constant influxes of new immigrant groups and various stages of white flight in and out of the city. In fact, it was protection, not political activism that led the original agenda of the Young Lords. Informal groups of friends bonded, most often along class and/or ethnic lines for safety in the streets. By 1969 the Young Lords shifted toward an activist agenda and became the Young Lords Organization that eventually spread to other cities including the well-known New York chapter. YLO founder and chairman José "Cha Cha" Jiménez explains that as they evolved into a political organization, they chose to keep the name Young Lords because it helped to organize the youth who were relating to gang names at the time (Jimenez 1990: 1). In May 1970, the New York chapter of the YLO split from the Chicago YLO and became the Young Lords Party (YLP). Holistically committed to the idea of retelling history through unity, former Chicago Young Lords that I have spoken with insist on referring to themselves and to Young Lords from any city as the Young Lords when addressed in retrospect as an all-inclusive social movement. I choose to follow the same logic by referring to the YLO as the Chicago-based movement, and Young Lords as a general, all-encompassing identifier for people affiliated with the group at any stage and location.

The neighborhoods saw constant influxes of new immigrant groups and various stages of white flight in and out of the city.

The Young Lords can be placed in the category of organizations emerging from the 1960s that turned to nationalism as a tool for formulating ideology in their process of community building. But the YLO as a collective was more reticent about embracing a solely nationalist-based agenda than many of the other organizations that would evolve in the wake of the protests, riots and organizing of the era, for example, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, the Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center and the First Congregational Church highlighted in several critical studies of the Chicago Puerto Rican communities. One main reason for this is the fact that from the beginning, the YLO as both a neighborhood gang and a political organization comprised people from various ethnic backgrounds. Omar Lopez, who served as Minister of Information for

the YLO, moved to Chicago from Mexico with his family when he was 13. He explains that he was primarily exposed to the Puerto Rican community while attending Tuley High School (later renamed Roberto Clemente High School) in the mostly Puerto Rican community of Humboldt Park, which by 1961 was becoming the main relocation site for families being displaced by the Carl Sandburg Village in the Near North Side of Chicago. However, says López (1995: 2):

[There were] very few Latinos in high school...there was no room for us to discriminate amongst ourselves. Not just discrimination against a nationality but discrimination in terms of, "That's a Latino that I don't like." I mean even from the most intellectual Latino to the most street wise Latino, we had to stick together because we were few of us.

It is also clear that as the Young Lords spread throughout the city, the forms of solidarity extended beyond *Latinidad*. In fact, Lopez explains his own introduction to the YLO:

It didn't happen through way of a Puerto Rican or a Mexican. It happened through an Appalachian white, a 'hillbilly.' His name was Kenny Smith...[He was] part of the Young Lords over on Armitage and Halsted. He used to go for some reason into other areas, that he was part of our group in the schoolyard. (1995: 2)

Despite the evident interethnic solidarity, nationalism was for the YLO and many groups of this 1960s and 1970s an important political force. Groups like the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets understood the strength of nationalism in the struggle against totalitarianism. Nationalism provided an ideological framework for defining identity, freedom, power, authority and other key aspects of politics and culture. As the idiosyncrasy of war with other countries on the basis of freedom and democracy while equality stood disparaged at home became increasingly obtrusive, radical nationalism became the perfect instrument for rallying impassioned youth. As the YLO began to develop its own philosophy for action, nationalism stood out to them as a type of entryway into other ideologies and proved to be an effective tool for growth. It became a part of what attracted national attention to the Chicago YLO, leading to the expansion of the group to chapters in New York and other cities.

At the same time, they also understood it to be a limiting ideology within the context of their own reality and objectives. Lopez explains:

We had some people that came from the Nationalist Party. But the contact wasn't to advise as to what we should do with the organization but more like... shots in the

arm to young people to realize that they were in essence an extension of what had happened in the past. [Nationalism] gave the Young Lords its first characteristic... Then came the other political ideologies that helped us analyze our condition... Those are the things that we were grabbing on to in order to be able to structure, plan, and take actions. (1995: 6-7)

YLO members insisted that their purpose extended even beyond the ideologies that they carefully studied and shared with the community in the same process. Ideologies were funneled into the objective of raising the consciousness of the people in those communities about the conditions they were living and the options they had for responding to seemingly insurmountable disparities. Cha Cha Jimenez explains:

All of this was going on. You can see it. It was visible. There was no one doing anything about it, in fact, everyone remained silent even Latinos we had in city hall... They did not want to do anything about it. So there was nothing to defend the community and we started out basically to react to what was going on. The inner city removal of poor people... that is what got us involved and from there we proceeded...[We] were about actions, not theory, we were about practice, so how can we show the people what we are about, so that it can be clear to them. (1993: 4)

Young Lordette, Angie Adorno Navedo, who was Italian-American adds:

We considered ourselves internationalists. So we were involved in international issues as well as national issues as well as local issues. Anything that was an injustice...[If] you are going to push people away its really not beneficial. What you need to do is educate and organize people. You have to sort of wait and find out what is gonna do that...[that] was brought about by all this studying of dialectical and historical material. (1995: 6-10)

The nationalism that the YLO embraced was in many ways a type of liberal nationalism that accommodated the pluralist, albeit increasingly racially segregated setting that was Chicago's poorest neighborhoods.

While the city of Chicago has traditionally been located on the periphery of the metanarrative of the political and cultural developments of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the US, and arguably, the Civil Rights Movement, a number of scholarly works have helped to recreate the pivotal role that the city has played in both. Moreover, the particularities of the city provide a framework for proclaiming it one of the most challenging scenarios in the US for an activist agenda. At no time was this more keenly

experienced and articulated than during Dr. Martin Luther King's transformational visit to Chicago in the summer of 1965, which became known as the Chicago Freedom movement with the purpose of challenging segregation in public schools and slum housing. MLK's position of nonviolence until this point in time was often seen in opposition to the politics of black power and self-determination that characterized groups like the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam and individuals like Malcolm X. King's position shifted after a month in Chicago. He said:

I have never seen such hopelessness... Negroes of Chicago have a greater feeling of powerlessness than any I ever saw... [they] don't participate in the governmental process because they're beaten down psychologically...we're used to working with people who want to be freed. (Dyson 2000: 112)

Thereafter, even *Newsweek* magazine would recognize the growing influence of Carmichael and other black militants on King stating "integration is out: The rallying cry for King's own campaign in Chicago is not 'integrate' but 'end slums'; the means, in effect, is Black Power without calling it that (Dyson 2000: 112)."

While serving a 60-day jail sentence in the summer of 1968 for possession of narcotics, Cha-Cha Jimenez was introduced by fellow inmates from the Nation of Islam to the writings of Malcolm X, King, the Black Panthers, Mao and other philosophical and political texts.

The resistance and violence faced by King as well as the accomplishments that included a \$4 million rehabilitation project known as Operation Breadbasket, headed by Jesse Jackson, and aimed to organize consumers for economic parity greatly impacted the members of the Young Lords. While serving a 60-day jail sentence in the summer of 1968 for possession of narcotics, Cha-Cha Jimenez was introduced by fellow inmates from the Nation of Islam to the writings of Malcolm X, King, the Black Panthers, Mao and other philosophical and political texts. He emerged inspired to organize the Young Lords to similarly address the decrepit and neglected conditions of Chicago's Puerto Rican neighborhoods that he understood to be a part of a systematic urban removal. He describes feelings of powerlessness among Puerto Ricans that resemble those observed by Dr. King in African American communities:

No one was there to support, our parents couldn't do anything about it, they had no clout, very few of them spoke English. So they couldn't do anything to defend themselves. So it had to be their children that got involved. [What] we were being taught in school was not to go against the machine, you have the church, the machine and that's the way of life.... (1993: 8)

Several seminal studies of Puerto Rican Chicago have progressively recreated the economic, social, cultural and political conditions under which the Chicago Puerto Rican Community has developed and the collective responses to these conditions. Among them, the pioneering ethnographic work of Elena Padilla's 1947 master's thesis in the University of Chicago's anthropology program, titled "Puerto Rican Immigrants in New York and Chicago: A Study in Comparative Assimilation"; Felix Padilla's *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (1985) and *Puerto Rican Chicago* (1987); and more recently, Ana Ramos Zayas' *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (2003). Gina Pérez's *The Near Northwest Side Story* (2004), Mérida Rúa's *Latino Urban Ethnography and the Work of Elena Padilla (Latinos in Chicago and the Midwest)* (2011) and *A Grounded Identidad: Making New Lives in Chicago's Puerto Rican Neighborhoods* (2012), stand out as key contributions to contextualizing the work of the YLO within the framework of a notoriously schematized city.

Particularly significant to this study, Felix Padilla's model of internal colonialism describes how conditions forced on Puerto Rican people under U.S. control influenced Puerto Rican migration to Chicago. He argues that Puerto Ricans were rendered marginal before emigration and in fact entered the Chicago labor market on an unequal basis or what Michael Hechter called "a cultural division of labor" (1975: 9). During a time of accelerated industrial-technological expansion, Puerto Ricans were hardly affected as they were relegated to the most marginalized sectors of the economy. As such, Padilla concludes that the manifestation of racial antagonism between Puerto Rican and whites does not take place in the work place but in the socio-political arena (1987: 11-8). The Puerto Rican class struggle takes place in the community living space and institutions as an ethnic/cultural base struggle.

At the root of this struggle is an incongruous narrative described by Gina Pérez. Propagated by the media, early Chicago Puerto Rican migrants were characterized as a "model minority" based primarily on reified traditional family values and structure, which she argues sprang from a national anxiety about American families and gender ideologies during the 1950s and 1960s. Pérez quotes Chicago's *Daily News* trumpeting Chicago Puerto Ricans as "an upbeat West Side Story"; "peaceful and furiously

ambitious” as opposed to other ethnic and racial minorities in the city and the violent, welfare-dependent, and gang-infested Puerto Rican communities in New York (2003: 75). This agenda was short-lived, however, as it ran alongside an equally charged obsession with Puerto Rican housing patterns during a time of growth for the city. The stories were soon replaced by accounts of housing shortages, urban renewal plans and Puerto Ricans’ unassimilability. All of these aforementioned studies recognize the significance of the Division Street Riot in 1966 and subsequently the Division Street Riot in 1977 as a pivotal point, not only in the myth of the gentle, family-values oriented Puerto Ricans but in the history of activism for Puerto Ricans in Chicago and the US. The shooting of a young Puerto Rican man by Chicago police ignited the 1966 Division Street Riots, but underlying the rioting was the violence, economic distress and systematic displacement of Puerto Ricans and African Americans in the city. The riots in turn ignited Chicago’s street gangs and gave rise to an activism that linked community-building initiatives to larger nationalist ideologies.

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Plans for the New American City

In the 1940s and 1950s, there were various epicenters of Chicago’s Puerto Rican community. The first two Puerto Rican *barrios* in the city were around Clark and Madison streets. The Carl Sandburg Village displaced the Clark community and the University of Illinois Circle campus displaced the Madison community. By the late 1950s, the communities had been moved north and west to West Town, Humboldt Park and Lincoln Park. The systematic removal worked within the schemata of Mayor Richard J. Daley’s Chicago 21 plan. Within fifty years, the Mayor envisioned a renovation in the area that would create a “suburb within the city” and there was no limit to the resources that would be used to accomplish this. *Chicago 21* confronted what it saw as the continuing deterioration of the central city, especially for purposes other than work (Chicago Historical Society 2005). Among these neighborhoods, Lincoln Park was the ideal environment for the evolution of the Young Lords. On the one hand, it was being aggressively targeted as one of several optimal lakefront communities by the Mayor Daley’s commission for urban renewal and relocation efforts. On the other

hand, it was a highly charged political environment. Many organizations and activists, like LADO, the Puerto Rican Organization for Political Action (PROPA), Students for a Democratic Society and the Concerned Citizens of Lincoln Park, centered their activities in this neighborhood. Cultural organizations and businesses formed the social fabric of the community along with organizations like Wright Jr. College, YMCA and the Detach Worker Youth Gang Program of the YMCA that offered alternatives to the ever-expanding groups of youth. The Puerto Rican Congress, Claudio Flores' *El Puertorriqueño* newspaper, Raul Cardona's radio program, Puro Pinzón's and Mario Rivera's stores, along with other major Puerto Rican institutions, were also located in Lincoln Park. The first Fiestas de San Juan were held at St. Michael's Church playground, and led to the organizing of the first Puerto Rican Parade of Chicago, in 1965 (Jimenez: 2005).

The plan being suggested by urban renewal initiatives was to establish which buildings were deemed blighted, vacate and rehabilitate them at the expense of the primarily poor people of color who resided in them for a meager compensation. The YLO challenged the plan with its own demands for 1/3 of Lincoln Park to be available for low-income housing and drew up a cooperative housing plan that included a three-story structure for low-income families. Ira Bach, the former director of the Department of Urban Renewal and Architect Howard Alan, as well as Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the Geodesic Dome, offered advice and support of the plan. The Chicago City Council rejected the plan, stating that it was impossible to complete. But the case of Chicago and the significance of the early work of the Young Lords Organization in the city cannot be isolated from a larger national picture of urban areas and inner city communities. While the ghetto continued to grow, redevelopment and renewal legislation had been placed in the books, on both local and national levels. Chicago pioneered concepts that were later incorporated into federal legislation defining the national renewal effort. In particular, the massive public housing program designed to maintain the patterns of segregation that were well under way in the city by 1960 was mechanistically replicated in cities throughout the U.S. A series of legislative tools began the era of reconstruction in the city including the Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act of 1947 and the Urban Community Conservation Act of 1953, which expanded the power of the municipality (Hirsch 1998: xviii).

Strategic Confrontations: Local Activism to Global Change

On a local level, the YLO responded by targeting what they thought were institutions with a moral responsibility toward protecting the poor and vulnerable people of the city—mainly, the church and the police. This led to both coalitions and confrontations with religious institutions. An important collaboration resulted from the Young

Lord's relationship with Rev. Bruce Johnson, pastor of the Armitage Avenue United Methodist Church and Rev. James Reed of the Church of the Holy Covenant. With the support of Rev. Johnson, the Young Lords occupied the Armitage Avenue church and renamed it "The People's Church". From this location, they operated programs that included the free breakfast for children, a day care center, health clinic, and education program and maintained their national headquarters. Conservative church officials, members of the congregation and laymen responded with an aggressive campaign against the church including letters to the police and the mayor, church notes, inquiries and newsletters filled with political and fiscal threats. An October 1970 newsletter of the United Methodists for Methodism headquartered in Evanston, IL, documents three events that paint "a big, sordid picture" of the "questionable ministries" of the church including:

- providing a "National Headquarters" for the Young Lords revolutionary gang in the Armitage Avenue United Methodist Church building
- furnishing housing accommodations for violent S.D.S revolutionists during the destructive riots in Chicago in October, 1969
- providing a meeting place in the Methodist Church of the Three Crosses for an official committee of the Communist Party, USA (United Methodists for Methodism 1970).

Rev. Johnson and Rev. Reed, who was identified in the newsletter as the active leader of the revolutionary Renewal Caucus directing these activities, also became subjects of investigations that went beyond correspondence and ecumenical affairs. In a testimony before a 1970 Congressional committee investigating the "Extent of Subversion In the New Left" Marjorie King, a former chairman of WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell—a guerilla theater offshoot of SDS), described her experiences with radical groups including Rev. Reed, YLO members and allies (U.S. Congress 1970: 189–90).

On September 29, 1969, the relationship between the YLO and their allied clergy was put to test with the brutal murder of Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia. The two were stabbed to death in their home. On October 1st, 1969, the DePaul student newspaper, *The Aletheia* reported that although the community was shocked, "the neighborhood...had mixed reactions to the couple when they lived." They quote one resident saying, "He's been down here encouraging the Young Lords in a manner that the neighborhood doesn't approve." Another neighbor said, "We just feel he was detrimental to the neighborhood. We feel strain about this. People who live around here were close to being enraged." Despite already having most leaders of the YLO under constant surveillance, police immediately questioned and targeted them for the

murders. The YLO responded in the same issue of *The Althea* suggesting foul play, “He’s one of the only North American whites who ever helped us out...This reminds us of the South—when a white gets involved with the blacks, he gets ripped.” The October 1969 YLO newspaper was dedicated to Rev. Bruce Johnson and features picture of the pastor with images of community resistance efforts in collage and a small subheading: “El Barrio Esta Despierto”. Inside, an article title “You Can’t Kill A Revolution” describes the relationship with the Bruces and their struggles for defending the causes of the YLO. The article states directly, “These murders show to what vicious lengths the ruling class will go to prevent the growth of our struggle (1969: 3).” Nearly 40 years later, the murder case of the Johnsons remains unresolved, however, the YLO took it as a reinforcement of their belief that the church and its ministers should be a part of the process of fighting with the people.

The group renamed the building “Manuel Ramos Memorial Building” after the YLO member who had been shot to death by an off-duty police officer the Saturday prior to the occupation of McCormick.

For the YLO, McCormick Seminary and DePaul University, both Catholic Institutions in Lincoln Park, had a similar responsibility. On May 14, 1969, the Young Lords along with a group of McCormick Seminarians called ACTOR (Action Committee to Oppose Racism), crossed the iron fence that surrounded the seminary and occupied the Academic Administration Building. The group renamed the building “Manuel Ramos Memorial Building” after the YLO member who had been shot to death by an off-duty police officer the Saturday prior to the occupation of McCormick. The scene was memorialized in the anonymous artwork that graced the front page of the May 1969 YLO newspaper. The image powerfully depicts the various institutional confrontations and conditions that led to the both the murder of Ramos and the McCormick occupation and constitutes the revolutionary aesthetic qualities of the newspaper. According to the YLO, the takeover was a peaceful takeover, during which they demanded a meeting with the administration and presented a list of demands. The list included a sum of money for low income housing as well as priority renting of McCormick-owned apartments to the poor. McCormick responded with statements assuring the group of their own concerns about housing in the community and the promise to explore with all community groups the potential use of properties in the neighborhood.



Figure 1. Front page of the YLO, Vol. 1, No. 2., May 1969. Anonymous artistic representation of slain YLO member Manuel Ramos by a police officer and the takeover of the McCormick Seminary Administration Building.

DePaul University also had an active role in the Lincoln Park community development. Still a relatively small presence in Lincoln Park, it stood to gain from urban renewal plans as it embarked on a major plan for expansion. As such, administrators were invested in the neighborhood politics. In a very brief inter-office memo dated October 23, 1969, Fr. Munster offers Fr. Wrangler “more exact information on the matter about which I spoke to you this morning.” Fr. Munster is presumably Rev. Thomas Munster, Director of Admissions at time and Fr. Wrangler is presumably Rev. Theodore Wangler, Vice President of Student Affairs. Fr. Munster goes on to identify a new community group named “The Concerned Puerto Rican Youth (CPRY), located on Armitage Avenue and two key organizers, Mingo Alaya and Nestor Hernandez. The CPRY were former members of another neighborhood gang, the Paragons, who inspired by the actions of the YLO, also began to organize. In fact, both Fr. Munster and Fr. Wangler were active in the neighborhood associations most concerned with the issue of urban renewal. Fr. Munster was among the founders of the Sheffield Neighborhood Association and served as President *and* the Lincoln Park Conservation Association. Also included in the archives is a White Paper that resulted from a summer independent study session led by Prof. Jack Nusan Porter of DePaul’s Sociology Department in June-July 1969 titled “The University and Its Community.” In the Introduction, Prof. Porter states,

DePaul University, which decided to expand its facilities in an urban area of Chicago rather than in a suburban or rural area, is in midst of adjusting to just such extern, some the result of circumstances beyond the control of the University; many, however, the direct result of its expansion. As a moral, as well as a secular institution, DePaul is beginning to face the same problems that Columbia University faces in New York’s Morningside Heights section of Harlem or that the University of Chicago faces in the Hyde Park and Woodlawn area: a responsibility to its neighborhood. (1969: Introduction)

While the position that Fr. Munster and Fr. Wangler took toward the work of the YLO within the community as members of the neighborhood associations is unclear, Porter’s position in the White Paper is reflective of the fact that many students, faculty and administrators at both institutions were active participants in the fight against urban renewal and often allied with the Young Lords and other community groups in their actions. In fact, the White Paper was intended to be printed and sold for profit and according to the acknowledgements would be used by the Student Activity Council and the Student-Faculty Sociology Council of DePaul University “for the express purpose of developing meaningful programs to aid the disenfranchised

people of the Lincoln Park area—the poor: black, white, brown and yellow” (1969: Introduction). Among the priorities of the project is what the authors refer to as the “debt” of the university to the surrounding community including public relations, facilitating dialogue between the police and the community, housing and relocation, education and recreational programs for community youth.

Confrontations between Chicago Police and Puerto Rican and Black youth were frequent and not limited to what was often characterized as gang activity.

The riskier and more frequent challenge for the YLO was in confronting the police. Conflicts with the police, as I mentioned previously, were at the center of the outbreak of the Division Street Riots. Confrontations between Chicago Police and Puerto Rican and Black youth were frequent and not limited to what was often characterized as gang activity. By 1968, there was already an aggressive campaign by the Chicago Police targeting political activists within communities as well. In *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America*, Frank Donner documents the most notorious of these institutions throughout major cities in the US. Red Squads were police intelligence units that specialized in overt and covert tactics, such as surveillance, infiltration and intimidation. Initially, they essentially served as henchmen for an increasingly machine-run workforce and targeted so-called anarchists. In the 1920s, they began to focus on individuals and organizations that they believed were staffed by communists. After the infamous 1968 Democratic National Convention, which led to the violent confrontation between Chicago police and anti-Vietnam war protesters in the streets and parks of Chicago, the Red Squad expanded its targets to minority and reform organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, Operation PUSH, the Black Panthers and the YLO.

The YLO experienced not only full surveillance by the Red Squad but infiltration and constant arrest, which they identify as being ultimately detrimental to the organization. Their showdown with Chicago Police peaked in the spring of 1969, when the YLO demanded a meeting with Cook County State’s Attorney Edward Hanrahan to address police brutality, including the murder of Manuel Ramos. When it was announced that Hanrahan would not attend the meeting after promising to do so, the Young Lords organized a rally at Armitage and Halsted, followed by a march to the station that drew a crowd of over 2000 people, one of the largest in the history of Chicago activism to that point. The take-over of the McCormick Seminary coupled

with the propaganda attack on a rapidly expanding DePaul University, alongside the march to the Police Station also represented, almost unbeknownst to the Young Lords, an important tactical move. They got the attention of Fred Hampton, Huey Newton and other members of the Black Panther Party and eventually yielded the “Rainbow Coalition” along with the Brown Berets and Young Patriots. This activity also got the attention of Pablo Guzmán (Yoruba) and other students and activists from New York who brought the agenda of expansion to the Chicago Young Lords. More important, their struggle shed light on the issue of housing discrimination and gave them potentially a national arena. For the YLO these issues were part of an even more universal violation of civil rights and crimes against humanity.

The role of the YLO within the Civil Rights Movement and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement extends the local concerns into national and transnational contexts for bridging the events that make up their historical narrative. Mario Pianta and Raffaele Marchetti assert that it was in the political and economic context of privatization, deregulation and liberalization since the 1980s that a global civil society emerged, generating political opposition and social activism within a “sphere of cross-border relationships” (Pianta and Marchetti 2007: 30). Among the things that differentiate these from earlier examples of work by civil society organizations was the scale and organization (or lack thereof) of the earlier movements and the traditional effort to put pressure on nation-states versus the evolved focus on global problems and on the failure of states to address them. While they cite examples of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s that challenged the political and economic order at national and international levels, they still see in them a transformative perspective focused on state power. They offer the women’s movement as a major exception as it “opened the way to new forms of politics, social practices, and culture based on identity” (Pianta and Marchetti 2007: 33). The ethnic nationalist movements of the 1960s are missing among these exceptions. I believe that this exclusion is based on the often-obscured transnational and global agendas within these movements.

Locating the American Civil Rights Movement within global social justice discourses allows us to consider the political struggle of people of color in the US as an integral part of the universal struggle for human rights. One only has to think of the iconic essays and speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. representing the most impacting rhetorical engagement of U.S. domestic and world issues of human rights and social justice. His proclamation, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” along with references to conditions of repression throughout the globe in the April 1963, “*Letter from [a] Birmingham Jail*” offers the most renowned evidence. At a 1959 event honoring Tom Myoba of Kenya, Dr. King reemphasized that, “Our struggle is not an

isolated struggle, it is not a detached struggle, it is a part of the worldwide struggle for freedom and justice” (King 2000 [1963]: 203). Predating Dr. King’s vision of internationalization, and more accessible to the YLO and similar groups was Malcolm X’s new direction toward internationalism and anti-imperialism, fomented after his break with the Nation of Islam in March of 1964. He spent nearly half of his remaining months of life traveling throughout Africa, the Middle East, Britain and France. In his final months, he began to talk about Pan-Africanism, which was not an entirely new concept for him: his parents had been Garveyites. In “Not Just an American Problem, but a World Problem,” he states:

Many of us fool ourselves into thinking of Afro-Americans as those only who are here in the United States. But the Afro-American is that large number of people in the Western Hemisphere, from the southernmost tip of South America to the northernmost tip of North America, all of whom have a common heritage and have a common origin when you go back to the history of these people... [and when Africans] migrate to England, they pose a problem for the English. And when they migrate to France, they pose a problem for the French. (1965: 149–50)

The case that both Malcolm X and Dr. King ultimately made for the global implications of the American Civil Rights movement was and is actually not a simple one to make within the discourse of global justice movements, particularly in the context of a pre-neoliberal global society. The concerns about scale and organization, cited by Pianta and Marchetti, are reinforced by the fact that much of the activity in the US Civil Rights Movement originates at the level of local community in order to affect state policy, where the US historically relegated policy on race. For the Chicago YLO, fighting against de-facto segregation, inequality and discrimination within even smaller geographic appellations—at the level of the barrios or blocks within communities, the global impact of their movement is all the more obscured. A study of the YLO that considers the multiple strategies that shaped their philosophy of engagement allows us to see its place within transformative domestic, transnational and global movement for social justice.

Young Lords Pedagogy of Critical Engagement

Motivated by the personal impact of the ensuing redevelopment programs, first and then an intense political and social movement growing in Lincoln Park and throughout Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, the strategy of the YLO was to establish a presence in the community and offer resources and knowledge, thereby empowering the residents of the

community. I suggest the YLO's rhetorical strategy is revealed as especially significant when we consider three related objectives. First, we should contextualize the work of the YLO within a social and historical context that both challenges and reinforces the development of a local and transnational critical pedagogy. Second is to consider the role of culture in the production of meaning. In an effort to promote a pragmatic approach to historical and political literacy, YLO worked with cultural artifacts, particularly, the *YLO* newspaper. Its content appealed to both symbols of Puerto Rican pride, nationalism and the roots of transnational and global social movements, creating its own niche within the aesthetics of revolutionary newspapers. Articles on the local, national and international political arena, along with poetry, images and historical essays, shared headlines and gave shape to the political philosophy of the movement. Third is to engage in an analysis of the YLO rhetorical discourse reinforced in the YLO newspaper that calls for mobilization through the (re)education of the masses.

The YLO newspaper stands within the history of the anti-establishment, community-based and underground press of the 1960s and 1970s.

Aligning itself with models of popular education and the political and educational ideals of the 1960s and 1970s Civil Rights Movement, the YLO was committed to linking its pedagogical ideas to the study of the social and political environment and ultimately, civic engagement. As one of the most influential theorists of critical pedagogy, Freire asserted that when individuals understand the contingent qualities of their existence, they realize they possess the creative power of culture, an agency for contributing to the development of their own social contexts. Marginalized communities must act to change their lived social context, and it is through conscious, organized actions that they produce or create new cultural forms (1997 [1970]: 47). For many critics what is often missing in this is exactly how to create a pedagogy of praxis that leads oppressed subjects to more fully “penetrate” and change their oppressive social realities. Furthermore, as James Baldwin argued in the case of African American youth, in “*A Talk to Teachers*,” politics and pedagogy in the African-American freedom struggle are faced with a paradox, “Precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society” (1985: 331). Cultural production in critical literacy offers a unique epistemology. While traditional Western epistemology locates the source of knowledge in a scientific “expert” and the object of study as the product of these systems, critical literacy deconstructs this false duality

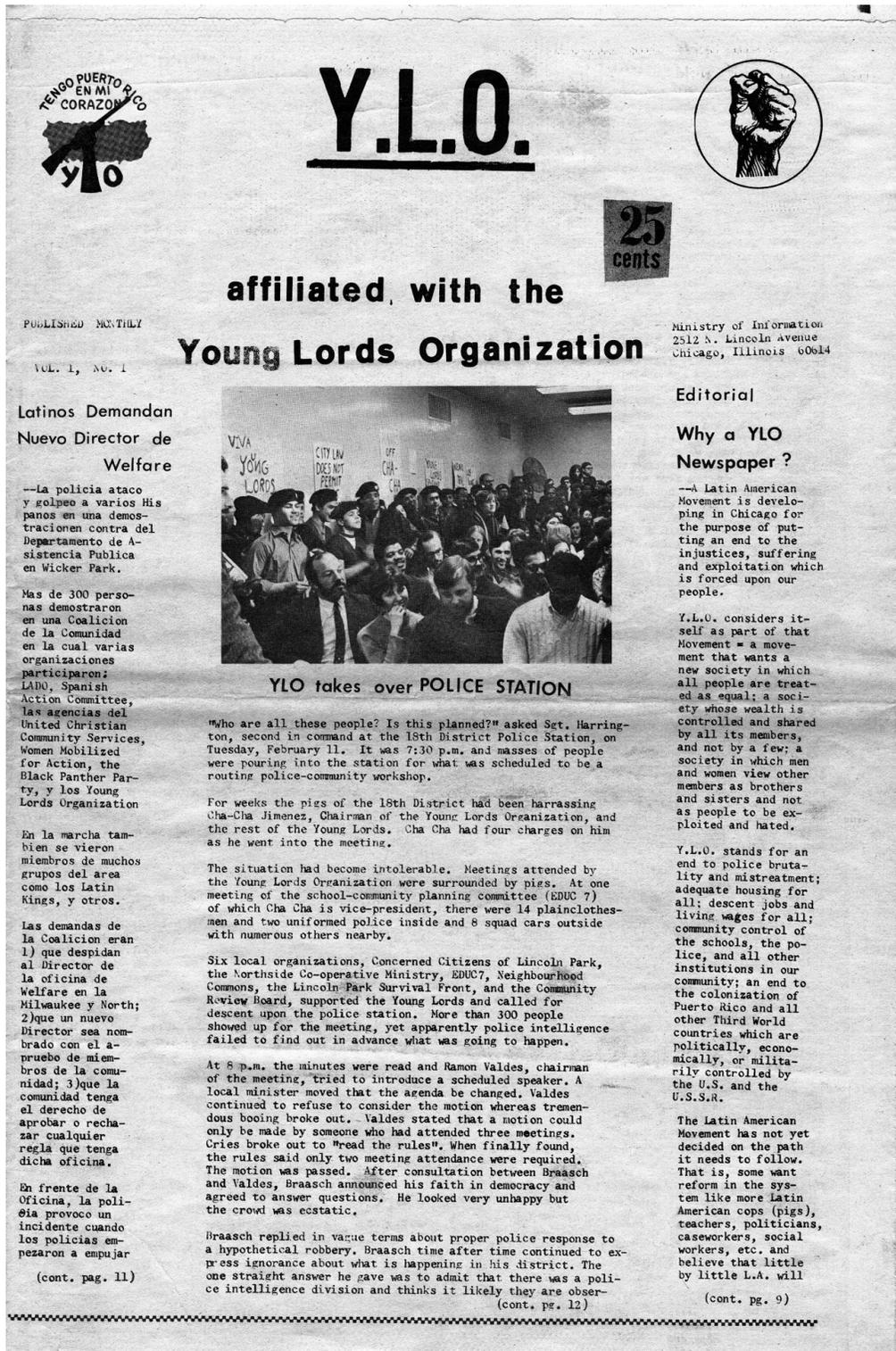
collapsing the subject and object of knowledge. Everyday people possess the ability to construct knowledge, an effect of the interactions and experiences of everyday life. A praxis-based epistemology in critical literacy focuses on the people's knowledge essential for their liberation from oppression (Cammara 2008: 48).

The main source of educational propaganda for YLO was the YLO newspaper. The YLO newspaper stands within the history of the anti-establishment, community-based and underground press of the 1960s and 1970s. The YLO understood that community journalism was a powerful tool for community change. Among the most effective characteristic of community newspapers in this regard is that they can return to issues repeatedly, shedding light on them until they are resolved or at least understood. They are also important cultural artifacts that offer alternative representations of the community to those in mainstream media. Like with their principles and philosophies, the Black Panther newspaper, *The Black Panther*, which began its circulation in 1967 in Oakland, was the inspiration behind YLO. In fact, on page 8 of the first issue of the YLO newspaper is a full reprint of the October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program along with a call for the public to consider their philosophies. The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party had been founded four months earlier and the YLO urged solidarity. *The Black Panther* modeled for them a revolutionary art aesthetic aimed at convincing audiences of Black Power. It was part of a radical aesthetic system produced in collaboration with the Black Arts movement and yielding a cultural politics of convergence between the visceral and cerebral, and the visual and the ideological, which was instrumental to reconstructing abject representations of black subjectivity throughout the decolonizing world (Baldwin 2006: 300).

The YLO newspaper reflects a similar commitment to the aestheticization of politics that is also both universal and grounded in local politics. Within each release YLO includes news and updates about the movement, editorials and creative writing by the community, local, national and international news with nearly every article appearing in both English and Spanish. In the first issue dated Wednesday, March 19, 1969, an editorial states the missions and objectives of the newspaper:

The YLO stands for an end to police brutality and mistreatment; adequate housing for all; community control of the schools, and all other institutions in our community; an end to the colonization of Puerto Rico and all other Third World countries which are politically, economically or militarily controlled by the US and the USSR. (1969: 1)

The statement goes on to identify the movement as "A Latin American movement" that does not yet have clear what the path to revolution is, but does cite a number of ideas



Y.L.O.



25
cents

affiliated with the Young Lords Organization

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Chicago, Illinois 60614

Latinos Demandan Nuevo Director de Welfare

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

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

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

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

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

(cont. pag. 11)



YLO takes over POLICE STATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

(cont. pg. 12)

Editorial

Why a YLO Newspaper?

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

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

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

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

(cont. pg. 9)

that inspire the movement ranging from more representation in institutions, including the police, business and government, to a complete dismantling of the system and socialist revolution. On the other hand, the article continues with a much more clearly defined role for the newspaper itself stating:

The role of the newspaper is not confined solely to the spreading of information, to political education, and to winning movement allies. A newspaper is not merely a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer. (1969: 1)

The YLO's frequent references to other educational, political theories, movements and texts place them within a genealogy of collective ethnic-revolutionary cultural script. The mediation of politics and aesthetics that takes place in the YLO newspaper, as witnessed in their vision of the role of a newspaper, is an integral piece of their revolutionary critical pedagogy and praxis.

People, particularly Puerto Rican people, are urged to see themselves and the situation they find themselves in as part of a global system of injustice and imperialism where the effects constantly trickled down to their homes and everyday lives.

Like *The Black Panther*, the YLO relied on the symbolic power of important people, organizations and events in Puerto Rican history, particularly ones around which there was some consensus, to create a culturally centered knowledge of self and self-determinism but also a system of identification. People, particularly Puerto Rican people, are urged to see themselves and the situation they find themselves in as part of a global system of injustice and imperialism where the effects constantly trickled down to their homes and everyday lives. This was especially important to an increasingly divided nation in relation to politics and issues of sovereignty. Volume 2, number 7, from Summer 1970 dedicates several pages to English and Spanish versions of an article about the history of El Grito de Lares of 1868, when Puerto Rican independence forces revolted against the colonial Spanish regime. Although El Grito de Lares is not a national holiday in Puerto Rico, it was an important symbol used by Puerto Rican patriots like José de Diego and Pedro Albizu Campos in the pro-independence movement, garnering popular support in both Puerto Rico and the diaspora. Among the Lares movement's leaders highlighted in the article is Don Ramón Emeterio Betances, who is quoted and referred to throughout this particular issue. Just before the Lares article in the same issue, a story with the

PITIRRE

PAGE 4

CITY ATTACKS OUR HEALTH CENTER

The city of Chicago is taking the YLO to court for operating a free health program with the intention of forcing us to shut down our health services. According to the so-called "authorities", any group of persons who give FREE advice, drugs, or medical services must first get approval and a license from the Board of Health. Since private doctors who charge money for providing "health care" don't need such a license, the law is an attack on the rights of poor people who can't afford to go to a fee-collecting doctor. The YLO is not going to recognize any law which gives "authority" to the Pigs of the Board of Health to inspect our patient records any time they want (in violation of the right of privacy between a patient and a doctor); to tell us what questions we must ask the patients; to inspect our premises any time they want. Furthermore the law is degrading and insulting. It requires us to post "NO SPITTING" signs on the walls and to provide spittoons for our patients!

This attempt to close down our health program is another example of how the fascist Daley machine responds to any program which truly serves and educates the people. The law has been on the books for more than thirty years. In all that time, only the Young Patriots' Health Service, the Black Panther Party Health Center, and the Emeterio Betances Health Program have been indicted under the law. None of the existing clinics in the city which give free health care (some of which have been in operation for more than thirty years) have ever been bothered by the Board of Health. In fact at the trial of the Patriots one operator testified that the Board of Health told him not to worry about getting a license! Clearly the Board of Health's claim that they are only trying to insure that decent health care is provided to poor people is a filthy lie.

We say that when any institution including the Board of Health, fails to serve the people and oppresses them, it loses its right to in any way interfere in their affairs and that any such interference is criminal. We will not be intimidated by criminals and liars. The Health Program will continue to operate as long as the oppressed people of our community continue to support us! WE WILL NOT GIVE UP! We will expand the Health Program to two nig-

hts a week. We have increased the outreach into the community. We are continuing to recruit more people to work for and support the Health Programs. That is our response to the repression coming down on the us.

**WE WANT FREE HEALTH CARE!
WE WANT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF OUR INSTITUTIONS!**

Alberto Chavira
Minister of Health
YLO

RAMON EMETERIO BETANCES



HEALTH PROGRAM

LA CIUDAD ATACA AL CENTRO DE SALUD BETANCES.

La ciudad de Chicago llevará al Young Lords Organization a corte por operar un centro de salud gratuito con la intención de hacernos cerrar nuestros servicios de salud. De acuerdo con las mal-llamadas "autoridades", cualquier grupo de personas que de consejo, medicinas o servicios médicos gratuitamente debe primero recibir la aprobación y una licencia del Departamento de Salud. Como los doctores privados que cobran dinero por los servicios médicos que ofrecen no necesitan tal licencia, dicha ley es un ataque a los derechos de la gente pobre que no puede afrontar una visita a un mé-

so que cobra por sus servicios. Los Young Lords no vamos a reconocer ninguna ley que autorice a los "cerdos" del Departamento de Salud el poder revisar los "records" de nuestros pacientes cuando así lo deseen (en violación de la privacidad que debe prevalecer entre el Médico y el paciente); a decirnos que preguntas debemos hacer a nuestros pacientes; a inspeccionar nuestras facilidades cuando a ellos le antoje. Además, la ley es degradante e insultante. Requiere de nosotros que no pongamos cartelones de "No escupir en el suelo" y exige que tengamos escupideras para nuestros pacientes!

Este intento de cerrar nuestro Centro de Salud es otro ejemplo de como la Maquinaria Facista del Alcalde Daley responde a cualquier programa que de veras sirve y educa a la gente. La ley ha estado en los libros "almacenada" por más de treinta años. Durante todo ese tiempo solo el "Centro de Salud" de los "Young Patriots", de las "Panteras Negras" y el "Centro de Salud Ramon Betances" han sido denunciadas bajo dicha ley. Ninguno de los centros de salud en la ciudad que ofrecen servicios gratis (algunos de los cuales

han estado operando por más de treinta años) nunca han sido molestadas por el Departamento de Salud. A propósito, en el juicio contra los "Young Patriots", un administrador de una de las clínicas anteriormente mencionadas, declaró que el Departamento de Salud le había dicho que no se preocupara por conseguir la licencia. Obviamente, cuando el Departamento de Salud alega que solo procura lograr que los servicios médicos prestados a la gente sean decentes, ¡están mintiendo!

Nosotros decimos que cuando cualquier institución, incluyendo el Departamento de Salud, no sirve a la gente y participa de la explotación de esta y los oprime, pierde todo derecho a intervenir en sus asuntos y cualquier intervención es de naturaleza criminal. No seremos intimidados por asesinos y mentirosos. El Centro de Salud seguirá operando mientras la gente de la Comunidad siga apoyándonos! NO CERRAREMOS NUESTRAS PUERTAS! Expandimos el programa a dos días por semana. Hemos aumentado el contacto con la Comunidad. Estamos reclutando mas gente para que apoye y trabaje al Centro de Salud. Esa es nuestra respuesta a la represión lanzada contra nosotros!

**¡QUEREMOS SERVICIOS DE SALUD GRATUITOS!
¡QUEREMOS CONTROL DE LAS INSTITUCIONES!
ALBERTO CHAVIRA.**



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**HEALTH CARE
IS A
HUMAN
RIGHT!**

Figure 3. YLO, Vol. 2, no. 7, Summer 1970. Puerto Rican patriots and the history of resistance were fundamental to the iconography of the YLO as a form of identification for the community.

headline “*The City Attacks our Health Center*” features a large picture of Betances, noting that the community health care center set up by the YLO to provide free advice, drug and health care services to the community, named Ramon Emeterio Betances Health Program had been targeted by police and was being taken to court for not having permission or a license to run. The article written by Alberto Chavira, Minister of Health for the YLO protested the actions of the Board of Health and presented a number of cases where similar programs were allowed to run without these formalities. The article about El Grito de Lares along with the story about the Health Program, and the quotes and pictures of Betances are representative of the rhetorical system of the YLO where symbols allowed them to frame their movement within the same genealogies.

As another form of identification, they appealed to other Latin American revolutionary leaders, thinkers and organizations for what they represented within resistive epistemology and self-determinism. In the May 1969 edition of the YLO newspaper dedicated to the memory of Manuel Ramos, one of the many references made throughout various numbers of the YLO newspaper to Che Guevara appears below a photograph of the funeral for their slain brother:

Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive ear, and another hand reaches out to take up our arms, and new men come forward to join in our funeral procession with the chattering of machine guns and new calls for battle and victory. (1969: 3)

The strategic placement of the image of the martyred revolutionary with the image of the slain Young Lord is an example of visual rhetoric that compels readers to imagine the local activist as their own community’s local martyr. His role as a revolutionary also led to his untimely death. This strategy in many ways combines the perspectives of Lloyd Bitzer, who formulated “The Rhetorical Situation” as an exigency that demands a particular form of rhetoric, and Richard Vatz, who countered Bitzer with his claim that rhetoric shapes the situation in which it is presented. In these images, the visual rhetoric both rises out of the situation and creates it. They are meant to play persuasively on an audience as an urgent situation, but they also create the situation that calls for a particular style of rhetoric. Local activism is reinforced by a rhetoric of heroism and combined to create a situation that helps to establish a larger pattern of community and cultural uplift. While Che may appear as a mythologized hero, the community can identify with its own local hero and martyr in Ramos.

A similar effect is produced by the way the newspaper makes it a point to offer material examples to abstractions bridging theory and praxis. This effect begins, of

course, with the inclusion of stories related to housing and gentrification in nearly every issue of the YLO. This was, after all, the principle motivation for the organizers of the movement, having experienced the systematic displacement firsthand, and around which they had organized the daily struggle connecting them directly with the struggles of the community. YLO, volume 1, number 1 includes several stories related to housing including one referring directly to the Young Lord's actions titled "YLO Visits Urban Renewal" (1969: 11). Volume 1, number 2, includes an editorial piece titled "A People's Struggle," a critique and published list of demands for Augustana Hospital's renewal plans that would result in the displacement of dozens of families from their homes. In *Pitirre* of Summer 1970 an article titled "Urban Renewal Case" by Cha Cha Jimenez is an autobiographical reflection of his transformation from gang member, jailed on drug charges to leader of a movement—a personal transformation sparked by the displacement of the community that he observed with anger upon his return. In this way, members of the YLO model identification themselves.

Yet another headline, "*El Barrio Esta Despierto*," features a story about the solidarity movements that the YLO was forming throughout the city, particularly with the Latin Kings, organized at the time as a youth group. Interestingly, the article begins with the following statement that also serves as an announcement for an upcoming anti-war rally:

There is much for us all to learn and know about the struggles of the people in Chicago as we come here to join with them and unite to demand that the U.S. GET OUT OF VIETNAM NOW. This is the story of one part of one struggle, an example of the fight carried on every single day against the pigs by the most oppressed people of this city. Many of these people's organizations have asked us to participate in their fight. We must make every effort to learn from them, as we unite our struggles with the struggles of the Vietnamese in Chicago October 8-11. (YLO 1970: 5)

The call for solidarity with other activists group is important in this statement but so is the urgent lesson about the struggles facing Chicagoans in relation to the conflict in Vietnam. The exigency in this message for the Puerto Rican community lies in the fact that between 1964 and 1973, the United States sent over 48,000 Puerto Rican soldiers to fight the war in Vietnam (Black: 2012: ii). Many Puerto Ricans enlisted voluntarily, but many others were drafted, subject to conscription as citizens of the United States. The obligation of Puerto Rican youth to fight in Vietnam cast light on the glaring contradictions of the United States' relationship with its island territory. Beyond the social and political implications of the war, there was an even heavier burden for those who fought it, and were forced to confront the conflicting loyalties felt by the disparity

between their nation and their state. For Puerto Ricans, these contradictions had, of course, began much earlier. After all, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth act, granting U.S. citizenship to the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, only a month before the US entered World War I. As newly formed citizens, Puerto Ricans could join the U.S. Army, but few chose to do so. After Wilson signed a compulsory military service act two months later, however, tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans were drafted to serve during World War I in a military that was still racially segregated. This and the numerous other stories throughout the YLO about the US conflict in Vietnam and Cambodia shed light on the most glaring contradictions of the United States' relations with Puerto Rico.

The article “*El Barrio Esta Despierto*” then continues with the main storyline:

The Latin Kings are the biggest Latin youth organization in Chicago, claiming upward of 4500 members. They have never had a friendly relationship with the Chicago cops. But in the last few years, the cops have come to understand the enormous potential revolutionary power of the youth organizations, and since the 1996 Division Street Uprising have cracked down heavy on the Kings.... (1970: 5)

Together, these two seemingly separate story lines together create another example of rhetorical narrative exigency. The narrative of the violence and injustice on local streets and the narrative of an unjust war abroad are called to dialogue. The conversation allows for different interested parties to examine the crisis in order to understand how to take action.

Two more layers are then added to this variable system of meanings. The first is a page that is divided in three parts separated by a bold geometric line. One part is dedicated to a brief biography in Spanish of Puerto Rican patriot Pedro Albizu Campos and the other to a biography of a young man named José Rafael “Fefel” Varona described as “*Martir de la nueva lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico.*” Fefel died in Moscow where he was transferred after a service trip to a cooperative agriculture school in the province of Tan Hoa in North Vietnam in March of 1968. U.S. forces bombed the school and then bombed the hospital where he had gone to seek aid. The third space has just two photographs. One photo appears to be a young man walking down a trash-filled street (possibly a reference to the garbage offensives being organized NYC by the Young Lords). The second photograph is of policemen holding a young man in a choke-hold (YLO 1970: 8).

The second layer of this system of meaning follows on the very next page, featuring a reprint of a letter by Ho Chi Minh below a photo of the Vietnamese leader with a signature that reads: “Best greetings! Hochiminh, Hanoi 4. 63.” Although the picture

8

LOS NUESTROS



PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS

Albizu Campos es la figura «umbra del patriotismo puertorriqueño. Fue el hombre que fijó definitivamente los rumbos del destino de nuestra Patria. Su obra seguirá alumbrando la ruta de la Patria Libre que habremos de fundar teniendo como base el pensamiento y la doctrina del maestro.

Hombre de gran personalidad y cultura, nacido en Ponce a fines del siglo pasado, imprimió Albizu Campos vivo dramatismo a su participación en las luchas políticas con sus condiciones extraordinarias de orador y agitador, que ejercían influencia magnética sobre las muchedumbres. Uno de los tribunos más completos que ha tenido la oratoria hispanoamericana, su palabra era rotunda, tajante y resonante, comunicada por una voz clara que transmitía el énfasis en las ideas con la entonación de sus sonidos. Era un expositor incansable, y podía estar hablando tres y cuatro horas continuas, con asombrosa fluidez y sin muestras de fatiga y manteniendo siempre una clara línea de pensamiento. En el apogeo de sus campañas, millares de puertorriqueños se acercaban junto a la tribuna para escucharlo.

Hizo sus estudios primarios y secundarios en las escuelas de Ponce, luego pasó a la Universidad de Vermont, Estados Unidos, donde por sus calificaciones sobresalientes, se le concedió una beca para continuar estudios en la Universidad de Harvard. En este centro universitario se recibió de Bachiller en Filosofía, Ciencias y Arte, de Químico

Industrial e Ingeniero Civil, y luego de Abogado.

En sus días de estudiante universitario Don Pedro se identificó con los movimientos emancipadores de varios países, organizando una campaña a través de los Estados Unidos en favor de la lucha por la independencia de Irlanda.

Albizu regresa a Puerto Rico en el 1921 haciendo su ingreso en la política militante del país. Meses después de su llegada hace su ingreso en el Partido Unión de Puerto Rico. En dicho partido militó hasta que fue eliminada el ideal de independencia de la plataforma política. Fue entonces que decidió ingresar en el partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico.

Al poco tiempo de su ingreso a las filas del Partido Nacionalista dio un viaje por toda la América Hispánica hablando a favor de la independencia de Puerto Rico y así asumió el liberato del Partido Nacionalista convirtiéndolo en un movimiento dinámico y combatiente.

Por defender con verdadero «valor y sacrificio» la independencia de Puerto Rico, Albizu Campos pasó largos años en las cárceles de Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico, más de la mitad de su vida la pasó en la cárcel.

A los 73 años de edad el 21 de abril de 1965 murió Albizu Campos quien fuera el maestro y combatiente contra las injusticias coloniales que sufría y sufre Puerto Rico.

JOSE RAFAEL (FEFEL) VARONA

1946-1968

Martir de la Nueva Lucha por la Independencia de Puerto Rico

Fefel Varona se dedicó a luchar por la Independencia de Puerto Rico desde su primera juventud. A los 17 años ingresó en la Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia (FUPI). Fue miembro del Consejo de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Puerto Rico y Secretario de Asuntos Internacionales de la FUPI, a la que representó en varios congresos internacionales de estudiantes. En el 1968 se le nombro delegado de la FUPI ante la Organización Continental Latino Americana de Estudiantes (OCLAE) con sede en la Habana, Cuba. Fue también militante y dirigente juvenil del Movimiento Pro Independencia de Puerto Rico.

El 19 de Abril de 1967, Varona visitaba una escuela en una cooperativa agrícola de la provincia de Tan Hoa,



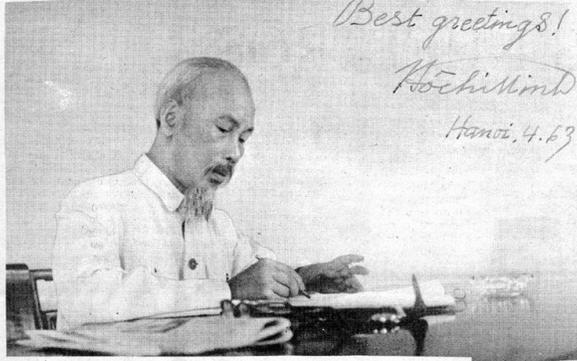
Viet Nam del Norte. Formaba parte de una delegación de la OCLAE que, a invitación de la Union de Estudiantes Vietnamitas, visitaba ese heroico pueblo.

Los aviones Yanquis bombardearon la escuela hiriendo de gravedad a Fefel. Pero el ataque criminal de los Yanquis no se detuvo ahí. Durante la noche también fue atacado el hospital donde había sido trasladado Fefel para prestarle primeros auxilios. Se le tuvo que atender en trincheras instaladas en los bosques, desde ahí fue trasladado a Hanoi y luego a Moscú, donde se luchó durante un año por salvar su vida. Murió el 25 de Marzo de 1968.

Varona fue el primer puertorriqueño, caído junto al heroico pueblo de Viet Nam. Con su muerte se agrega un nuevo crimen, a la lista interminable de atrocidades cometidas por el Imperialismo. Yanqui, máximo gacendia y enemigo número uno de la humanidad.



Figure 4. YLO, Vol. 2, No. 7, October 1969. Seemingly unrelated narratives juxtaposed on the same page create a rhetorical narrative characteristic of the revolutionary aesthetic of the YLO.



Tu-Fu, the great Chinese poet of the Tang Dynasty, wrote, "In all times, few reach the age of 70." This year, with my 79 years, I am still among these "few" persons; my mind is clear although my health has weakened with age. This should not be surprising.

But who can predict how long I can continue serving the revolution, the fatherland, the people?

It is for this reason that I leave these lines, anticipating the day when I go to join Karl Marx, Lenin, and other revolutionaries of the past. Thus our countrymen, the whole country, our party comrades and our friends in the world will not be surprised.

First I want to talk about the party. Thanks to its strong unity and the total dedication of the working class, the people and the fatherland, our party has been able since its founding to unite, organize, and lead our people in fierce struggle and lead them from victory to victory.

Unity is an extremely precious tradition of our party and people. All comrades, from the Central Committee to the cells, should preserve this unity of thought in the party like the apple of your eye.

The best way to consolidate and develop this unity of thought in the party is attaining a broad democracy within its ranks and practicing criticism and self-criticism regularly and seriously. The most sincere affection should prevail among all comrades.

Ours is a party in power. Every member of the party, every cadre, should be deeply imbued with revolutionary morality and be hard working, frugal, show integrity, rectitude, total dedication to the public good, and exemplary generosity. Our party should preserve its total purity, should keep itself worthy of its role as leader and loyal servant of the people.

The members of the Union of Young Workers and the youth of our country in general are of excellent quality, eager to volunteer for vanguard tasks, unshakable in the face of adversity, steered in the quest for progress. The party should give prime attention to its education in revolutionary morality and its training so that it can continue constructing socialism, at the same time communists and efficient.

The training and education of the revolutionary generation of the future is a highly important and necessary task.

Our working people of the plains and the mountains have suffered from time immemorial oppression and feudal and colonial exploitation. Further, it has lived through long years of war. Even so, our people has shown great heroism, valor, and enthusiasm and is

hard working. Our people have followed the party from its birth and have always been loyal.

The party should prepare a good plan for the economic and cultural development with a view toward constantly raising the standards of living of the people.

The war of resistance to American aggression may drag on. Our patriots may have to face new sacrifices in terms of goods and human lives. In any case, we should be resolved to struggle against the United States aggressors until final victory.

Our rivers, our mountains, our men will endure. The Yankees will be defeated and we shall rebuild our country ten times more beautiful.

It does not matter how many difficulties await us in the road ahead, our people can be sure they will win a total victory. The American imperialists will have to withdraw. Our country will be united. Our patriots of north and south will meet under one roof.

Our country will have the singular honor of being a small nation which, by a heroic struggle, will have defeated two great imperialists—French and American—and will have made a worthy contribution to the national liberation movement.

On the world communist movement: having dedicated my whole life to the cause of the revolution, the more I am proud to see the growth of the communist and workers' movement on an international scale, the more deeply it hurts me to see the dissensions that are dividing the fraternal parties.

I wish that our party does all it can to restore the unity among the fraternal parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism in a way that meets the needs of the heart and of reason.

I am sure that the parties and fraternal countries will unite again.

On personal matters: during my whole life I have served the fatherland, the revolution and the people with all my heart and all my might. Now, if I must leave this world, there is nothing I regret having done. I only regret that I cannot serve more and for more time.

After my death there should be no pompous funeral so as not to waste the time and wealth of the people.

Finally, to the whole people, to the whole party, to the whole army, to my nephews and nieces, to the youth and to the children, I leave my limitless affection.

I want to communicate also my fraternal greetings to the comrades, friends, youth, and children of the world.

My last wish is that our whole party and whole people, united in struggle, build a peaceful, united, independent, democratic and prosperous Vietnam and make a worthy contribution to the world revolution.

9

HABLO COSMOE

Si usted es un esclavo y usted desea tener libertad, no tiene uso el hablar acerca de ser libre a menos de que usted hable de tomar parte en lucha armada contra racismo, capitalismo e imperialismo en America. Por eso es que nosotros hablamos de poder politico que viene del canon de pistolas o fusiles. Nosotros no estamos luchando por derechos civiles. Nosotros estamos luchando por derechos humanos.

Porque Manuel Ramos predicaba la necesidad historica de la resistencia de la guerrilla armada al capitalismo en los Estados Unidos, el fue asesinado por el puerco. Esta es la historia Americana. Cada vez que alguien demanda derechos humanos para la gente pobre, el es destruido por la estructura racista del gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Nosotros demos aprendido que esta es la historia Americana y por eso es que hemos empezado a oponernos a la violencia racista-imperialista con violencia revolucionaria.

Los YLO fueron organizados para llevar este pais. Cuando nosotros decimos "lograr poder revolucionario Latino para la gente Latina en este pais," nosotros queremos decir poder para todas las personas de ascendencia Africana, I etnica, o Latino-Americana en los Estados Unidos, como tambien para los blancos progresistas. Nosotros todos somos oprimidos por el mismo enemigo.

Ahora, la mayoria de los revolucionarios Latinos no estamos mezclados en racismo Latino. Sin embargo, cuando uno ha sido explotado, oprimido, asasinado y pisoteado por cientos de anos, uno naturalmente desarrolla un odio desatado por su enemigo y traza una clara linea de demarcacion entre el mismo y su enemigo.

Nosotros estamos totalmente en oposicion a todos los imperialistas y nos moveremos en TODAS la direcciones revolucionaria para destruir nuestro enemigo, a pesar de los escrupulos personales de algunos. Nosotros no queremos crear un Rockefeller latino en vez de un Rockefeller blanco. Si Johnson fuera latino, el seria el enemigo de los pueblos del mundo tanto como el es el enemigo de los pueblos del mundo ahora. Nosotros no queremos capitalistas latinos o racistas latinos, pero tampoco queremos capitalistas blancos.

Si nosotros queremos ser libres, nosotros debemos primero entender que nosotros somos esclavos del neocolonialismo, porque estamos sin poder y deseamos llegar a ser libres, de-

bemos entender un hecho historico: EL PODER POLITICO NOS HARA LIBRES!

despierto



Figure 5. YLO, Vol. 2, No. 7, October 1969, p. 9. References to the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia and to solidarity with Ho Chi Minh add another layer to the rhetorical narrative of the Young Lords who were intent on demonstrating the interconnectedness of US imperialism abroad and the oppressions faced by poor people and people of color in US cities.

suggests that it was signed in 1963, the letter states that the leader was 79 years old, the age at which he died in 1969 and thus appears to be one of his last of the many letters he wrote to the public and public figures throughout his lifetime (YLO 1970: 8). It is difficult to contextualize the image and text; however, while Ho Chi Minh was the main enemy of the US during the Vietnam War, he was among the most important political examples for groups like the Black Panthers and the YLO. He was a mythical personification of socialism and anti-imperialist resistance. Moreover, he too saw in the conditions of people of color in the US, great contradictions to US principles of democracy. In a 1924 essay titled “Lynchings”, Ho Chi Minh wrote on the conditions of Black people in the United States:

It is well known that the Black race is the most oppressed and most exploited of the human family. It is well known that the spread of capitalism and the discovery of the New World had as an immediate result the rebirth of slavery, which was, for centuries, a scourge for the Negroes and a bitter disgrace for humanity. What everyone does not perhaps know is that after 65 years of so-called emancipation, American Negroes still endure atrocious moral and material sufferings, of which the most cruel and horrible is the custom of lynching. (Fall 1967: 51)

As mentioned previously, for many people and revolutionary movements and leaders, Vietnam was a defining struggle for socialism and against imperialism and Ho Chi Minh seemed to speak to them as much as to his own people, calling for a global class struggle.

The narrative of resistance in the life of Albizu Campos parallels the urgency call for internationalism in the representation of Ho Chi Minh.

Together, these articles offer a structural comparison of local oppression to geopolitical oppression. Fefel, martyred in Vietnam, parallels the martyred death of the patriot Albizu Campos. The brutality of life on the city streets in the US parallels the violence faced by Fefel in Vietnam. The narrative of resistance in the life of Albizu Campos parallels the urgent call for internationalism in the representation of Ho Chi Minh. There are lessons in history of Puerto Rico and the world in the compressed images alongside a call for action on both a local and global scale. The images link the issues relevant to the Puerto Rican Diaspora to the transnational issue of colonial oppression and the international anti-imperialist agenda. The *YLO*

embarked on a skilled attempt to analyze larger structures, symbols and ideologies, leveraging their cultural capital and giving it meaning and application to everyday people's lives. Perhaps most importantly in relation to the goals and objectives as defined by the *YLO* itself, these strategies shape the rhetorical appeals of the movement's revolutionary pedagogy.

Conclusion: Legacy of (Re)construction

The Chicago Young Lords foresaw a futuristic city where the poor and people of color would have no living options in the East Side of the city, near the lake, if at all. The Chicago Young Lords Papers document a relentless struggle against what they called "urban removal," demystifying and deconstructing the agenda disguised as beautification and neighborhood improvement. It is significant that they saw renewal as such a key issue considering the relevance of the issue to cities all over the world today. While they treated the issue locally, solidarity with other groups and agendas without losing sight of it as the most significant threat to the communities marks an important place for the *YLO* in the history of activism. Although the Lincoln Park community of Chicago today has only a few tiny vestiges of its Latino legacy, the *YLO* is part of a much larger legacy of resistance that has wrestled gentrification to the doorway of Humboldt Park, now the symbolic center of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. Humboldt Park's Paseo Boricua, in particular, is a community of resistance that actively challenges the issues and institutions that continue to threaten neighborhoods. The *YLO* laid the foundation for leadership by challenging the barriers that prevent Latinos from access to affordable and decent housing and the strategies of gentrification in Chicago. In 1994 a group called Latinos United finally filed a successful lawsuit against the largest provider of affordable housing, the Chicago Housing Authority and its parent, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. It charged a government agency with historical discrimination against a group on the basis of race, color and national origin. Consent Decrees were signed with these two agencies in 1996 and 1995, respectively. Seeking remediation for past discrimination of Latinos from access to housing, the decrees contained provisions for inclusion of Latinos in waiting lists, remediation vouchers, development of bilingual systems and special outreach to the Latino community. In the report titled "The Latino Consent Decree 10 Years Later: Increasing Latino Access to Chicago Housing Authority Programs," it is shown that despite the history of resistance against discriminatory housing practices in the city along with a massive shift in demographics whereby Latinos are now the main source of population increase in the city of Chicago and its metropolitan area, the

Chicago Housing Authority remained reluctant to integrate the spirit of the decree (Latinos United 2006: 3).

Despite the evident challenges that the YLO faced in their challenge to systematic segregation and discrimination in Chicago, their message of self-determinism and activism became a part of the legacy of Puerto Rican resistance and critical consciousness. The Chicago Young Lords support for Puerto Rican independence during a time of severe repression against nationalist ideologies in Puerto Rico was an important message of solidarity between the Island and Diaspora communities. In the Puerto Rican Parade of 1969, the Young Lords marched dressed in black and white—colors of the nationalist party. Shortly thereafter, Don Manuel Rabago of the Puerto Rican Independence Party made contact with the Young Lords and hosted Cha Cha Jimenez in Lares, marking a pivotal moment in the affiliation of Puerto Rican activism in the US and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. In the massive rallies of the Chicago Young Lords, it was not at all uncommon to see flags of different nations and affiliations. Among them was the flag of Aztlan. The mottos of the Young Lords were “Tengo Puerto Rico en mi corazón” as well as “Tengo Aztlan en mi Corazon.” The Chicago Young Lords had, on numerous occasions, Mexican American, African American and white leaders among others in leadership positions. Transcultural and international knowledge stands out as part of the important rhetorical strategy of a generation’s movement that highlighted urban renewal as one of the greatest challenges to local communities and global equality. The *YLO* newspaper stands as a cultural artifact that documents these historical moments and the YLO’s transformational lessons in praxis.

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