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## “ABORTIONS UNDER COMMUNITY CONTROL”:

### *Feminism, Nationalism, and the Politics of Reproduction among New York City’s Young Lords*

Jennifer A. Nelson

*This study of New York City’s Young Lords reveals that a multiracial group of Puerto Ricans developed a unique radical politics during the early 1970s that encompassed both feminism and nationalism. Furthermore, the Young Lords’ singular brand of politics produced an inclusive reproductive rights agenda that influenced (socialist) feminist politics later in the decade. The Young Lords’ list of reproductive freedoms included demands for legal abortion and contraception, an end to sterilization abuse, prenatal and postnatal care for poor women, affordable day care, and an end to the poverty that prevented poor women and women of color from bearing all the healthy children they wanted. Although heated conflict between male and female Lords accompanied the organization’s development of a feminist ideology, the Young Lords Party (YLP) successfully integrated feminism into their nationalist perspective.*

Eighteen days after a new abortion law went into effect in New York State—on 1 July 1970—the heart of a thirty-one-year-old Puerto Rican woman, Carmen Rodríguez, stopped during a saline-induced second-trimester abortion at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx. She was the first woman to die from a legal abortion after the reformed New York State abortion law—legalizing termination up to twenty-four weeks—became effective.<sup>1</sup> This tragic event immediately became a lightning rod for criticism of both national and local reproductive policies and the conditions of public hospitals serving the poor in New York City. It also helped to crystallize an original reproductive rights discourse—combining both feminism and nationalism—stridently put forth by women in the Young Lords Party (YLP), a New York City-based Puerto Rican nationalist organization.

YLP leaders pointed to Rodríguez’s death as evidence that Puerto Ricans and other people of color were targets for mass genocide through population control. For example, after Rodríguez’s death, Gloria Cruz, YLP health captain, warned that the new state abortion law, in the context of New York City public hospitals’ dangerous medical environment, was an essential part of an attempt to reduce the population of low-income Puerto Ricans. Cruz announced: “A new plan for the limitation of our pop-

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ulation was passed—the abortion law. Under this new method we are now supposed to be able to go to any of the city butcher shops (the municipal hospitals) and receive an abortion. These are the same hospitals that have been killing our people for years.”<sup>2</sup>

When Cruz stated that city hospitals would become genocidal butcher shops, she agreed with many other activists of color involved in such nationalist organizations as the YLP, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panther Party. The belief that people of color were being subjected to a genocidal plot was a popular political position in nationalist circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This view was extreme, and no evidence confirms that population control reduced the numbers of people of color in America. But the realities of inadequate health care at Lincoln and other public hospitals—long waits for emergency room care, exhausted and hurried interns as medical staff, lack of provisions for drug treatment or prenatal and postnatal care, run-down accommodations, and Rodríguez’s death—provided a context for the dire warnings Cruz and other people of color espoused.

At the same time, the YLP distinguished themselves from other contemporary nationalist organizations by demanding a broad reproductive rights agenda, which included the right to legal abortion. Most nationalist organizations of the early 1970s, including the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam, were staunchly opposed to abortion or any other form of reproductive control, even if voluntarily chosen. These nationalists insisted that by increasing their numbers, people of color would gain political power. They called upon women to bear children as their contribution to the Black Power movement. By contrast, the Young Lords’ pro-fertility control position developed as a result of the actions of a few very outspoken and powerful women within the organization. These women were sympathetic to radical feminist thought espoused by women’s liberation organizations proliferating in New York City in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Several Young Lords women participated in women’s liberation organizations, although their primary definition of themselves was as Young Lords. These women ensured that feminist demands for safe, legal contraception, abortion, and other reproductive rights were an integral part of the Young Lords’ politics. Although initially women were not taken seriously by most male members, by 1970—the one-year anniversary of the group’s existence—they had radically altered the political ideology of the group. For the first time, a nationalist and multiracial organization, composed of people of African, European, and native descent, made an explicitly feminist position central to their political ideology.

The reproductive rights agenda developed by female YLP members between 1969 and 1974 was inclusive: it encompassed access to voluntary

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birth control, safe and legal abortion, a quality public health care system, free day care, and an end to poverty among Puerto Ricans and other people of color. It also combined two distinct strands of political thought. The first was a nationalist politics—emphasizing the right of poor people of color to control local institutions, an end to poverty among people of color, and anti-genocide rhetoric—articulated most stridently by the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The second was a feminist politics that demanded a woman's right to control her own reproduction, articulated by women's liberationists during the same period.<sup>3</sup> As female Young Lords pushed feminism to the center of the Young Lords' nationalist political ideology, reproductive rights gained increasing importance. After their first year, the YLP openly insisted in their position paper on women that Puerto Rican women had a right to bear the number of children they wanted and raise them in a prosperous environment.<sup>4</sup>

This study of the YLP reveals that at least one group of Puerto Ricans developed a unique radical politics during the early 1970s that encompassed both feminism and nationalism. The coexistence of these two political positions within one organization may come as a surprise. There has been a presumption among scholars that nationalism and feminism are mutually exclusive, that a group's nationalism renders any feminist expression insincere. I believe that this perspective, however, is not a product of careful historical examination. Not only did women in the YLP push the group to embrace feminism alongside nationalism, they did so without contradiction, although not without conflict. They drew from both nationalist and feminist political ideologies to forge a liberatory reproductive politics. Their standpoint as Puerto Rican feminists active in a nationalist organization that emphasized the needs of poor people of color allowed YLP women to develop this unique version of reproductive politics. In short, their particular position within the YLP fostered an original and inclusive reproductive politics.

### **Origins of the Young Lords Party**

The Young Lords trace their origins to two groups of activists—one in Chicago and the other in New York City. Cha Cha Jimenez, a young Puerto Rican activist, founded the first group in 1968 with the Young Patriots Organization, a politicized street gang. The Young Lords Organization (YLO) founders drafted a thirteen-point platform that echoed the Black Panther Party's ten-point platform. The first point demanded Puerto Rican independence. Independence for the island was important to Young Lords (both Chicago and New York City) politics for the entirety of the organi-

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zations' existence, but became more so after the first three years. Early on, the Chicago and New York City groups focused on improving and empowering poor Puerto Ricans in the barrios. They encouraged individuals with diverse backgrounds to join the group, including people of European, Native American, and African descent. They wanted their organization to reflect the variegated cultural and racial demography of Puerto Rico and the barrios without the prejudice that plagued both the island and the mainland United States.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, in New York City, a group of young New Left and civil rights activists, including Denise Oliver, Robert Ortiz, and Mickey Melendez, all of whom helped found the New York City Young Lords Party, joined an organization called the Real Great Society (RGS)—an anti-poverty program funded by the U.S. government's Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). RGS quickly became known as the Puerto Rican radical group in New York City.<sup>6</sup> In May 1969, Oliver, Ortiz, and Melendez, along with a group of students of color at the State University of New York, Old Westbury, heard about Jimenez's success organizing Puerto Ricans into a nationalist party in Chicago and decided to establish a YLO branch in New York City.

The New York YLO created a central committee of five individuals, initially all men: Felipe Luciano, deputy chairman; Juan Gonzalez, deputy minister of education; Pablo "Yoruba" Guzman, deputy minister of information; David Perez, deputy minister of defense; and Juan "Fi" Ortiz, deputy minister of finance. With about thirty active members at the beginning, the New York group quickly superseded the Chicago YLO as the most prominent branch and began to call themselves the Young Lords Party. Their journal, *Palante*, enjoyed a wide readership among Puerto Ricans and other New Yorkers interested in radical and New Left politics.<sup>7</sup>

The New York Lords drew attention to Puerto Rican struggles in two major actions. The first was a July 1969 protest against the New York City sanitation department. According to the Lords, the New York City sanitation department neglected to provide service to poor black and Latino neighborhoods. To address this problem they began a community sanitation project. YLP work groups piled the refuse in heaps in the streets, blocking traffic, to force the city to collect it.<sup>8</sup> The next protest was a takeover of the 111<sup>th</sup> and Lexington Avenue Methodist Church on 28 December 1969. The New York Lords had formally requested use of the church basement to provide such free community services as a breakfast program, health clinic, and day-care center, modeled on Black Panther social programs.<sup>9</sup> When church authorities refused the request, the New York Lords occupied the church. For eleven days after the initial takeover, they used the

church for a number of free services, including clothing drives, breakfast programs, a liberation school, political education classes, child care, health care, and evening entertainment. Hundreds of people from the community joined the protest and became involved in the various direct service programs.

### **Feminist Philosophy: “We Want Equality for Women”**

The women present in the YLP at its founding and in the first year were a powerful force in the group. They shaped the agenda to include both feminism and reproductive rights demands. The first women involved were Iris Morales, the education captain and later a documentary filmmaker; Oliver, the minister of finance for the YLP, a Black Panther, and eventually a medical anthropologist; and Gloria Fontanez, a stalwart supporter of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, a member of the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (an organization of health-care workers), and a field marshal for the YLP. Although women composed nearly one-half of the YLP from the beginning, these three women in particular were influential in forcing feminism to the center of YLP ideology.

At first, gender was not a matter of great importance for the YLP. Women joined the party for many of the same reasons that men did: they identified as Puerto Ricans and believed that poverty, racism, and disempowerment among Puerto Rican New Yorkers were unacceptable and had to be fought. Just as young black men and women across the country mobilized around explosive cries for “Black Power!” Puerto Rican New Yorkers joined together to transform their status. Within months of the YLP’s founding, however, gender conflict emerged as women pursued a greater role in determining the direction of the movement. Women had become discouraged with male displays of machismo and sexism, and decided to address the issue within the political forum the Lords created.<sup>10</sup>

Oliver recalled the initial incident of sexist display that convinced her that feminism needed to move to the center of Young Lords’ political ideology. Several months after the party’s founding, a schism developed among the (male) leadership. Luciano expressed dissatisfaction with the Lords’ ideological alliance to the Black Panther Party and their national socialist politics, which was diametrically opposed to a cultural nationalism that celebrated “African” identity. He was particularly inspired by poet Amiri Baraka who lived in Newark, New Jersey, and advocated an Afrocentric politics. Luciano and several central committee members arranged a meeting with Baraka in Newark to explore the possibility of a stronger alliance with the Lords. Although Oliver was not yet a central

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committee member, Luciano asked her to join the meeting as one of the founding members of the YLP. She was the only female Lord to attend.

Oliver described her shock and outrage at the scene that unfolded when the Lords arrived at Baraka's headquarters: "Women crawled into the room on their hands and knees wearing elaborate headdresses decorated with fruit. They accompanied Baraka's coterie of male guards and supporters who wore dashikis and gave power handshakes to the male Lords." She immediately fired questions at Baraka about women's role in his organization, but he would not answer her. Guzman, one of the Lords invited to attend the meeting, then asked the same questions of Baraka, but Oliver became so furious she marched out of the room without waiting for his answers.<sup>11</sup>

Oliver returned to New York City and immediately held a women's caucus meeting with other women in the Lords. She explained what had happened with Baraka. She recalled telling them that "if we didn't do something we would end up on our hands and knees with fruit on our heads." The women's caucus decided that it was time to force men in the Lords to take feminism seriously. Shortly before the incident with Baraka, several female YLP members, including Oliver and Morales, had become active in the women's liberation movement and participated in a feminist takeover of the left movement journal *Rat*. The YLP women were unwilling to form their own feminist group apart from YLP men; they decided, instead, to use a strategy that they hoped would convince YLP men to yield to their demands. Influenced by Athenian dramatist Aristophanes' play, *Lysistrata*, they declared they would have no sexual relations with YLP men until the central committee agreed to add women to the central committee, elevate women to other positions of power, eradicate the call for revolutionary machismo from the platform, and integrate the defense committee by gender.<sup>12</sup>

Many in the YLP, including Oliver, joined the party as part of a heterosexual couple. Others formed romantic and sexual partnerships within the group over time. For security reasons, the central committee not only encouraged these sexual liaisons among members, but they also forbade extragroup sexual relations. Violation of this rule was an offense worthy of disciplinary measures and possible expulsion from the organization. With rumors of Federal Bureau of Investigation infiltration within radical groups running rampant, the Lords feared any intrusion by outsiders not committed to the group's ideals.

After the "no sex" strike had been in effect for several weeks, a few central committee members, including Luciano, disappeared. Oliver remembered worrying that the central committee members had been arrested when nobody heard from them for over twenty-four hours. When

they finally turned up after several days, their security guards confessed that the male leaders had been meeting with women outside the YLP. It turned out that all the central committee members were privy to the offense, although not all of them had engaged in extraorganization sexual relations.<sup>13</sup>

As the highest ranking member not on the central committee, it fell to Oliver to decide the men's punishment. She demoted the entire central committee to cadre status. They could eventually be reinstated, but not until they took time to think over their transgression. Oliver enjoyed full support from female Lords and some support from men who had adhered to the rules. With the central committee members humbled, the women's caucus took the opportunity to push their demands: Oliver and Fontanez joined the central committee, and women in the Lords began holding evening educational sessions to teach men in the group how to treat women as equals.<sup>14</sup>

Most YLP women joined the organization already sympathetic to the goals of second wave feminists—including demands for safe, legal abortion and contraception. A few had been involved in women's liberation organizations. Women in the Lords distinguished themselves from many second wave feminists, however, by stressing what they viewed as the absolute right of all women to have as many children as they wanted—to rid themselves of the poverty that could discourage childbearing and end involuntary sterilization or any other form of coerced fertility control. While women's liberationists were declaring an absolute right to safe, legal, and free abortion, women in the YLP argued that Puerto Rican and black populations needed to have the freedom to grow and thrive free from the poverty that affected a woman's choice to bear children or caused illness in children after they were born.<sup>15</sup>

After the demotion of the central committee members, the YLP revised the call for revolutionary machismo on the platform so that it disavowed both sexism and traditional machismo. It stated:

WE WANT EQUALITY FOR WOMEN, MACHISMO MUST BE  
REVOLUTIONARY . . . NOT OPPRESSIVE

Under capitalism, our people have been oppressed by both society and our own men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by our men to take out their frustrations against their wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Our men must support their women in their fight for economic and social equality, and must recognize that our women are equals in every way within the revolutionary ranks. FORWARD, SISTERS, IN THE STRUGGLE!<sup>16</sup>

Although revolutionary machismo may seem like a contradiction, YLP men



and women appropriated the traditional Latino concept of machismo for the purposes of revolution. They literally stood the term on its head, so that machismo took on a connotation directly opposed to its traditional usage. After feminism became part of the YLP ideology, machismo for a YLP man meant treating women as comrades and equals.<sup>17</sup>

By 1971, the YLP explicitly and vocally supported the women's liberation movement. They stated: "We say right on to any women who are revolutionaries. They're getting their shit together, they have to deal with the white man, who is probably at the top of the heap in terms of being a capitalist oppressor, and they've got a heavy battle—they've got to fight their husbands and their fathers."<sup>18</sup> Angie Sanabria, who became a self-described foot soldier for the YLP in 1972 after leaving high school, agreed that the organization had a positive outlook on women's liberation. She recalled that members of the YLP had an "awareness that you were a woman and wanted to be treated as an equal." And, she pointed out, they made a "conscious effort to have women and children in the forefront. People were not allowed to be chauvinistic. Women were not on the back burner."<sup>19</sup>

Over time, the YLP recognized a political symbiosis between feminism and antiracism: a sense that the two movements were necessarily interconnected. The YLP 1970 position paper on women stated that, "Third World women have an integral role to play in the liberation of all oppressed people as well as in the struggle for liberation of women." Furthermore, Young Lords men came to believe that they needed to support women's liberation as an inseparable part of the struggle to liberate people of color.<sup>20</sup> The YLP believed that all people of color should unite to fight problems of poverty and racism. Gender inequality, too, needed to be addressed within a framework that made antiracism, antipoverty, and antisexism equal priorities. "The basic criticism we have of our sisters in Women's Liberation," the Lords added, "is that they shouldn't isolate themselves, because in isolating yourselves from your brothers, and in not educating your brothers, you're making the struggle separate—that's again another division, the same way that capitalism has divided Blacks from Puerto Ricans, and Puerto Ricans from whites, and Blacks from whites."<sup>21</sup>

From the Young Lords' perspectives, white women had created a separatist feminism that excluded women and men of color because it prioritized white middle-class women's progress. Lords preferred that women would lead men to reject sexism not by excluding them, but by teaching them about power imbalances that involved gender difference. In their 1971 official party history, the Lords argued that the division of feminism from antiracism prevented the real revolution from taking place; if white women solely garnered power for themselves, nothing would really

change. Oliver asserted that, "Racism has to be eliminated, and that whole division of male from female has to be eliminated, and the only way you can do that is through political education. I don't believe that a group of women should get together just to educate themselves, and then not go out and educate the brothers."<sup>22</sup>

### **Reproductive Rights: "End All Genocide. Abortions under Community Control!"**

The Young Lords' feminism was essential to their support of a broad reproductive rights agenda. Unlike other nationalist groups, the Lords linked an antisterilization position, which originated with their criticism of high sterilization rates in Puerto Rico, with a proabortion stance. Feminist Lords argued that Puerto Rican women both on the island and in New York required access to safe and legal methods of fertility control, including abortion and a variety of birth control methods. These methods needed to be distributed in publicly funded health facilities under community control. The Lords believed that if fertility control measures fell into the wrong hands, they could become dangerously coercive, even genocidal. Thus, they announced, all Puerto Rican women must be able to choose freely how many children they wanted, whether this meant bearing no children or ten.

Although most YLP members were born on the mainland, Puerto Rican New Yorkers were still culturally and historically tied to the island. A massive out-migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland United States—primarily to New York City—began during World War II when factory laborers were needed for war production. With improved transportation and communications between the island and mainland after the war, migration increased during the 1950s. Despite government efforts to attract industry to Puerto Rico in Operation Bootstrap, Puerto Ricans poured off the island because of high unemployment in Puerto Rico and greater economic opportunity in the States. By the 1960s, migration began to level off, and some Puerto Rican New Yorkers returned to the island. But the constant contact between the two locales ensured strong bonds between people living in Puerto Rico and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

The YLP traced the history of sterilization abuse among Puerto Rican women in New York to what they viewed as a tradition of coerced and forced sterilization on the island.<sup>24</sup> The Puerto Rican legislature legalized sterilization as a method of birth control in 1937. Interest in birth control as a measure to stem a growing poor population in Puerto Rico, however, dated to the early 1920s. In 1922, Luis Munoz Marin, who eventually became the first elected governor of the island, began writing a series of

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articles supporting birth control in *La Democracia*, the Union Party newspaper. He argued that the birth control ideas Margaret Sanger promoted would save the island from becoming overrun with too many mouths to feed, too many children to clothe, and too few resources.<sup>25</sup>

Faith in the potential of birth control to help control unemployment and poverty in Puerto Rico continued to grow throughout the decade of the 1920s, particularly among Puerto Rican physicians and other professionals. Medical doctor José Lanauze Rolon founded the Puerto Rican branch of Sanger's organization, the American Birth Control League (ABCL), in Ponce in 1925. The Puerto Rican ABCL faced fierce opposition, however, from the Catholic Church. As a result, the Puerto Rican ABCL dissolved in 1928. Still many local physicians continued to lobby the legislature for the legalization of birth control.<sup>26</sup>

Puerto Rican professional women—nurses and social workers—also became active in the island's movement for birth control. In 1932, Violet Callendar, who had trained as a nurse at Sanger's Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau in Harlem, opened a birth control clinic in San Juan. Sanger, though, never favored Callendar and refused to support her effort to distribute diaphragms to Puerto Rican women. Callendar's clinic failed within a month. Rosa Gonzalez, a Puerto Rican feminist leader, opened another clinic in Lares, which also quickly closed. Without support from the mainland, feminist attempts to establish birth control clinics following Sanger's model ended in failure.<sup>27</sup>

In 1937, birth control advocates welcomed the efforts of members of the privately funded Maternal and Child Health Association, founded by the Proctor and Gamble Corporation heir Clarence J. Gamble. The association first opened three private clinics, and at its peak directed twelve birth control clinics on sugar plantations throughout the island. In addition to contraceptive distribution, the association successfully lobbied for pro-birth control legislation, including the repeal of Article 268—Puerto Rico's version of the Comstock Law<sup>28</sup>—which legalized birth control. At the same time, the legislature passed Law 116, which created a eugenics board to evaluate legal sterilization cases.<sup>29</sup>

With the legalization of birth control, sterilization became increasingly popular among Puerto Rican women. For some women, the highly medicalized aspect of the sterilization procedure helped overcome the sense that birth control was immoral.<sup>30</sup> Many women also chose sterilization because they believed that other contraceptives were dangerous, dirty, only for use by prostitutes, or the cause of infidelity. Puerto Rican men rarely consented to a vasectomy for fear it would hinder their potency. Puerto Rican women who chose sterilization had a mean age of thirty-two and an average of six children. Most sterilizations occurred af-

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ter labor; by 1949, 17.8 percent of all deliveries were followed by sterilization.<sup>31</sup>

Sterilization was by far the most heavily promoted method of contraception in Puerto Rico. Surgeons in hospitals around the island promoted sterilization surgery as the most effective method of contraception for women with several children. They argued that other methods required too much responsibility by the user and ultimately led to contraceptive failure. One study of 850 Puerto Rican unmarried women revealed that 22 percent knew about sterilization, or *la operación*, while only 1 percent knew about the diaphragm and 12 percent knew about the condom. At first, sterilization was most common among higher-income women who could pay for the cost of surgery in a hospital facility. As the procedure became more available and less taboo, sterilization became the chosen method of middle-income Puerto Rican women. The most privileged and well-educated women chose temporary methods of birth control, and the majority of extremely poor women remained outside the medical establishment altogether.<sup>32</sup>

The theory that Puerto Rican women lacked an ability to choose how they regulated their fertility was reinforced in the mid-1950s when several American contraceptive researchers, including Gregory Pincus, Hale H. Cook, Gamble, and Adaline P. Satterthwaite, under the aegis of Sanger's Planned Parenthood Federation of America, tested the birth control pill in Puerto Rico. The researchers chose Puerto Rico as the locale for the pill tests for several reasons. First, they believed that overpopulation and poverty threatened public health on the island. Second, as a U.S. commonwealth, Puerto Rico's government was more likely than other local governments to give support. And, finally, poverty and a high population density provided ample justification among neo-Malthusian birth controllers for using the island as a laboratory for the pill. According to pill historian Paul Vaughan, birth controllers described the island as "crowded, impoverished and ripe for an intensive birth control program—a prototype underdeveloped country on America's own doorstep."<sup>33</sup> By November 1958, 830 Puerto Rican and Haitian women had participated in the birth control trials in San Juan and Humacao, Puerto Rico, and also Port-au-Prince, Haiti.<sup>34</sup>

The YLP believed that the pill tests, in conjunction with high sterilization rates, revealed the genocidal intentions of U.S. birth controllers.<sup>35</sup> While there is no evidence of a genocidal campaign against Puerto Ricans or people of color in general, the YLP and other nationalist organizations nonetheless perceived that people of color did not have full control of their fertility.<sup>36</sup> Fertility rates were high among Puerto Rican women, but rather than encourage choice among a variety of temporary forms of con-

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traception, birth controllers, the Puerto Rican state, and the Church limited contraceptive choice. Also, birth control advocates often offered contraception as a tool for ameliorating poverty. To people of color, reducing the numbers of poor people was not the same as ending poverty.

Anti-eugenic politics have a long tradition in Puerto Rico among Puerto Rican nationalists. Decades before the pill tests, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party feared that eugenicists intended to reduce drastically the Puerto Rican population. In 1932, Nationalist Party members learned that Cornelius Rhoads, a U.S. physician who worked in the San Juan Presbyterian Hospital under a Rockefeller Foundation grant, advocated the elimination of Puerto Ricans in a private letter. *El Mundo*, a leading daily newspaper on the island, published the letter after its discovery by one of Rhoads's lab assistants.<sup>37</sup> The U.S. appointed governor of the island, James R. Beverly, exacerbated the situation when he announced in his 1932 inaugural address that the population problem on the island would have to be addressed sooner or later. Nationalist Party members were particularly incensed when Beverly stated that the problem was not merely the quantity but also the quality of the Puerto Rican population. Nationalists suspected that Rhoads's and Beverly's sentiments were not uncommon among influential Americans living and working on the island.<sup>38</sup>

Echoing Nationalist Party criticisms, the Lords, many years later, spoke and wrote of what they called an international conspiracy of genocide that U.S. imperialists waged against all Third World peoples. The Lords drew parallels between reproductive abuses occurring in Puerto Rico, Africa, and elsewhere in the Third World. In 1971, YLP member Gloria Colon wrote that "the birth control pill was first used in Puerto Rico; the 'morning after' pill is being experimented on women in Africa. Poor Third World women are continuously being used as guinea pigs, not for our own good, but for the destruction of our people. The proper word for it is 'genocide' (mass murder)." In all these nations, Colon postulated, the United States had a vested interest in limiting the population—both to sustain the abundant natural resources that kept the American economy afloat and to reduce the possibility of organized rebellion in Third World nations.<sup>39</sup>

Writing one year earlier, Morales raised the specter of genocide when she discussed the history of high rates of sterilization among Puerto Rican women. "Genocide is being committed against the Puerto Rican Nation," she asserted, "through the mass sterilization of Puerto Rican women! In no other nation has sterilization been so prevalent as a means of genocide against an oppressed people." According to Morales, Puerto Rico had become a "military stronghold" and base from which the United States could assert control over Latin America. She added, "One way to control a na-

tion of vital importance is to limit its population size. The u.s. [*sic*] is doing exactly this through sterilization."<sup>40</sup>

The Young Lords' anti-genocide rhetoric stemmed from their criticism of international population control policy. They rejected neo-Malthusian theories birth controllers espoused, which maintained that Third World poverty could be eradicated through population limitation. The YLP and other nationalists argued that population controllers wanted to reduce or eradicate groups of so-called undesirable or unfit people rather than put an end to poverty.<sup>41</sup> The Lords also emphasized that Puerto Rican men and women lacked personal control over their reproduction. Social biases discouraged many women from choosing such temporary methods of fertility control as diaphragms or condoms; the pill caused unpleasant side effects (including a risk of death); and female sterilization was more available than any of the non-permanent methods. Under these circumstances, Puerto Rican women had no viable choice about birth control.<sup>42</sup>

High rates of sterilization in New York City also concerned the YLP, particularly in the first few years of the 1970s when they focused almost all their political energies on organizing working-class and low-income Puerto Ricans living in the South Bronx, Harlem, and on the Lower East Side. The Lords argued that when poor Puerto Rican women appeared to choose sterilization, they did so under very restrictive circumstances. In New York City, Puerto Rican women had seven times the sterilization rate of Anglo-American women and twice the rate of African American women. Many of these women had been sterilized in Puerto Rico, but a significant number were sterilized after arriving in New York City. In her 1970 article on sterilization abuse, Morales explained: "Genocide through sterilization is not only confined to the island of Puerto Rico. It is also carried out within the barrio; sterilization is still practiced as a form of contraception among women, especially young Sisters." Morales posited that one in four Puerto Rican women in New York City were sterilized, and many of these had had the operation in their twenties. "The system justifies the shit," she added, "saying the Sisters go to Puerto Rico to get it done. Yet the evidence says that over half the Sisters get the operation done right here in New York City and are strongly encouraged by their doctors to do so." Morales concluded that many Puerto Rican women felt severe disappointment when they could not have all the children they wanted because they had been sterilized before making informed decisions to end their child-bearing.<sup>43</sup>

Other evidence confirmed Morales's claims that poor Puerto Rican women in New York were sterilized in high numbers at a young age. Puerto Rican women tended to have children early, which led many to end child-bearing while still in their twenties. Puerto Rican women "chose" steril-

ization when they wanted to restrict their childbearing, because they often felt uncomfortable with, or did not know about, other methods such as the diaphragm (condoms were often rejected by male partners), and legal abortion was not an option in New York until 1970. The vast majority—80 percent—of Puerto Rican women sterilized in New York had the operation for socioeconomic reasons. Had they been given the economic means to have more children, many of them would have made that decision.<sup>44</sup>

Women in the YLP believed that sterilization had negative psychological effects and they worked to combat stereotypes about femininity that fed this psychology. For example, many Puerto Rican women who opted for sterilization without fully realizing its permanence, or without total confidence in their decision, expressed that they only counted for “half a woman” after the surgery. Writing in 1974, Iris Lopez explained that men shared this perception: “They think that if a woman can’t have children or menstruate monthly that she is not a complete woman.” Female YLP members argued that such myths about womanhood required reevaluation. “Due to his ignorance and ‘machismo,’” Lopez continued, “a man may leave his wife after she has been sterilized. It is wrong for both men and women to believe that the sole purpose of a woman is to bring children into this world.”<sup>45</sup> Women in the Young Lords articulated a feminist rhetoric that challenged stereotypes about womanhood and reproduction traditionally popular among Puerto Ricans. They believed that women should be able to make autonomous reproductive choices without coercion from either birth controllers or their male partners.

The YLP reproductive rights position demanded safe, legal abortion, although the right to legal abortion often was secondary to ending sterilization abuse and ensuring that poor Puerto Rican women received proper health care in public hospitals. Decades later, Oliver recalled that abortion was not central to the Young Lords’ political program. She pointed out that “sterilization was the main thing because of the great number of women sterilized in Puerto Rico.” Olgie Robles, who joined the YLP in 1969 after dropping out of high school at age sixteen, remembered being strongly in favor of legal abortion at the time. She believed that poor women needed the means to limit their reproduction when they could not afford to raise another child. She added, however, that most women in the barrio would not have chosen abortion if they had had the resources to care for an additional child.<sup>46</sup>

After Rodríguez’s death in 1970, the Lords feared that unsafe abortion in public hospitals might become the rule, despite the new law legalizing abortion. The Lords alleged that doctors had carelessly given Rodríguez the wrong medication to control her asthma, which resulted in

a heart attack. None of the staff noticed that she had a heart condition, which could be aggravated by asthma medication. The Lords claimed that an inexperienced student intern without proper supervision had treated Rodríguez. According to the Lords, her case proved that legal abortion was not the answer for poor and Third World women who did not have access to quality health care. The YLP did not trust the new abortion law to change radically this situation. "Abortions in hospitals that are butcher shops," they argued in 1970, "are little better than the illegal abortions our women used to get."<sup>47</sup>

The YLP insisted that the high incidence of poverty-related disease made abortion more dangerous for the poor. For instance, Cruz noted that before the patient's death from legal abortion, Rodríguez had had myriad health concerns that remained untreated and made abortion a dangerous procedure. "She suffered from many of the diseases that afflict all oppressed people," Cruz explained. "She was at one time addicted to drugs; she suffered from asthma, anemia, and a severe heart condition. With all these health problems, she was sent to the operating room without her medical history chart even being checked. She was injected with a medication for the asthma; however, the type of medication used is the worst possible for a patient with a heart condition. But how would they know? They never bothered to check her chart." Cruz added that Rodríguez's physician, an intern from Einstein Medical School, lacked sufficient experience or supervision to handle her complex medical history.<sup>48</sup>

In response to the Young Lords' allegations, the Lincoln Hospital administration denied responsibility for Rodríguez's death. They released an autopsy report disclosing that she had died from a rare reaction to the saline solution that was injected into her uterus during the abortion procedure.<sup>49</sup> They admitted that her heart condition was aggravated by the abortion. But the hospital administration insisted that the death was unavoidable because they had no previous knowledge of Rodríguez's vulnerable condition.<sup>50</sup>

The YLP and a coalition of other groups, including members of the Black Panther Party and hospital workers from the Health Revolutionary Union Movement, called a community meeting to discuss their reaction to the Lincoln Hospital findings. Among those present was Michael Smith, a Lincoln Hospital intern and member of the Medical Committee for Human Rights—a group of medical students allied in an informal national network to address health problems in low-income and underserved areas. At the meeting, Smith presented a chart, or "clinical pathological conference" (CPC), that summarized Rodríguez's case history. Records of an autopsy appeared in the CPC, demonstrating that the patient died of medical neglect. The Lords called the meeting "the people's CPC" to claim the

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community's right to control medical decisions that affected them; they appropriated the hospital medical staff's exclusive access to and manipulation of medical information.<sup>51</sup>

As with other medical services, the YLP asserted that to ensure safety for women of color the community must control their own abortion provision by taking over the clinics and hospitals that performed abortions on women of color. In their 1970 position paper on women, they insisted that women needed to have the option of controlling their fertility using abortion under healthy conditions. "We believe," they stated, "that abortions should be legal if they are community controlled, if they are safe, if our people are educated about the risks, and if doctors do not sterilize our sisters while performing abortions." In some circumstances, they argued, abortion was a necessity, particularly when poor women did not have adequate resources for more children: "We realize that under capitalism our sisters and brothers cannot support large families and the more children we have the harder it is to get support for them."<sup>52</sup>

Rather than oppose abortion, the YLP asserted that poor Puerto Rican and African American women needed greater access to safe abortion and total health care or else they would end up in Rodríguez's predicament; she was so far along in the pregnancy she required a dangerous saline procedure, which turned out to be life-threatening in her condition. One writer for *Palante* described the difficulty of acquiring an abortion in a municipal hospital in the first months after New York City legalized abortion: "Lincoln Hospital has an abortion waiting list of over 300, but provision has been made for only 3 abortions a day. This means that many of our sisters will be in advanced stages of pregnancy when the abortion is performed; this makes the abortion more dangerous. In addition, these operations are not even performed in a well-equipped, sterile operating room, but rather in a small room that had previously been used as a store-room."<sup>53</sup> Abortion provision quickly improved as freestanding clinics became the norm in the 1970s. After legal abortion became more available, low-income women experienced a tremendous improvement in survival rates for termination of pregnancy. One study from 1982 indicated that abortion fatality dropped by 73 percent in the decade after *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in the first six months of pregnancy. But after Rodríguez's death in 1970, legal abortion appeared to some as if it would be as dangerous to minority women as illegal abortion had been for all women before *Roe*.<sup>54</sup>

According to the YLP, safe and accessible abortion ought to accompany a total health care program that allowed Third World women to have all the children they wanted: "We say, change the system so that women can be freely allowed to have as many children as they want without suf-

fering any consequences."<sup>55</sup> This scenario constituted true reproductive freedom for the YLP. Colon illustrated this point in a discussion of the circumstances of a Puerto Rican woman who sought an abortion for economic reasons but became frustrated, in the end, because of the inadequate abortion services in New York City clinics and hospitals. When the woman Colon described first went to a clinic, she discovered that her pregnancy had progressed too far for a first trimester abortion. Hospital doctors would perform a late-term saline abortion but only after she had reached her fourth month. Colon explained that the woman's situation worsened when she discovered that without money to pay for an abortion, she would have to go to a city hospital for the late procedure. (Clinics were not prepared to perform the more difficult second trimester surgical procedure.) At the city hospital a doctor told her that she had reached six and one-half months: too late to terminate her pregnancy at all. "The sister returned home to her other children and her unemployed husband to do more hustling to allow her future child to survive when she gives birth." The woman felt great relief, Colon pointed out, when she was finally forced to forego the abortion; "being a Puerto Rican woman, she knew that for her entering an abortion clinic in a New York City hospital was either risking her life or the possibilities of ever being pregnant again. And she was scared!" Colon proposed that Puerto Rican women were not alone in risking their lives for abortion—other women of color confronted the same circumstances. She postulated that "the case of this sister is no different from that of other Third World (Puerto Rican, Black, Chicana, Asian, Native American) women who face the situation of choosing between the risk of an abortion from a racist hospital administration, or of inventing new ways of hustling to clothe, feed, and shelter an addition to her family." Pregnancy without adequate health-care measures or economic security left a minority woman "holding on to her pregnant body, watching her already born children nibble on lead paint in place of food, watching the rats that gather to nibble on the toes of her children, [and] worrying about having her insides ripped-up during an abortion."<sup>56</sup>

The only way to provide adequate health and fertility care for Puerto Ricans and other people of color, the YLP declared, was to gain control over neighborhood hospitals and health-care facilities. Colon detailed her understanding of this nationalist requirement: "Point Number 6 of the Young Lords Party 13 Point Platform and program states; 'We want community control of our institutions and land.' This means that we want institutions, like hospitals where sisters go to have abortions, to be under the control of our people to be sure that they really serve our needs. Until we struggle together to change our present situation, women will not be allowed to have the children they can support without suffering any consequences."<sup>57</sup>

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The slogan "End all genocide. Abortions under community control" encapsulated the notion of truly voluntary fertility control for Puerto Rican nationalist activists in the YLP. Real fertility control could only be achieved when women of color and poor women could choose to limit their fertility when and how they wanted, could have as many children as they desired, and had economic access to quality health care. The YLP believed that Puerto Rican women needed to wrest control of their bodies and reproductive capacities from institutions and individuals preventing them from making their own reproductive decisions. In this sense, the YLP embraced a feminist politics sympathetic to many of the demands radical feminists and women's liberationists made at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s. The YLP argued that women needed to decide—without pressure from outside the community—what to do with their own bodies. At the same time, Puerto Rican communities' collective control of institutions that provided health care to Puerto Rican women was essential to ensure women's safety from medical abuses. For the YLP, reproductive and health-care decisions were never strictly limited to the individual; they recognized that a woman's right to abortion needed to be guaranteed by a politicized community that could protect both individual rights and the larger group's interests.<sup>58</sup>

Several factors allowed the Young Lords to adopt this quite remarkable position, distinguishing them from other nationalist organizations, such as the Black Panther Party. First, a few powerful female Lords—notably Denise Oliver and Iris Morales—led the way by forcefully arguing that true liberation of people of color must include an end to sexist oppression. These women became empowered to speak out against machismo through involvement in the women's liberation movement. A second factor was a matter of timing and political context: The first members of the Young Lords founded the organization in 1969, just as women's liberation emerged as a popular political discourse among those affiliated with the New Left. The simultaneous development of second wave feminism with the YLP's particular brand of nationalist politics allowed the Lords to become sympathetically acquainted with feminism while they forged their political ideology. By contrast, Black Panther Party members founded their organization several years before women's liberation emerged. As a result, it took much longer for the Black Panthers to incorporate feminism into their political ideology.<sup>59</sup>

In 1970, Young Lords men were in a better position to lend a sympathetic ear to women's liberation than were Black Panther men. Throughout the twentieth century, black men experienced a cultural emasculation—captured by the Black Sambo stereotype—while black women were stereotyped as emasculating and unwomanly. The response among Black

Panther men was to embrace a hypermasculinized identity.<sup>60</sup> Puerto Rican men did not carry a similar stigma and no one accused Puerto Rican women of having committed the crime of emasculation. As a result, machismo within the YLP declined much more swiftly than it did among the Black Panthers.<sup>61</sup>

Women in the Young Lords, therefore, carved out a politics of multiple identity locations—as nationalists and feminists of color.<sup>62</sup> This position allowed them to develop their unique reproductive rights position, which embraced a gender-based politics as well as a race- and class-based politics. While many early-1970s New Left politicians singularly identified with racial oppression, gender oppression, or oppression by sexual identity, YLP women were able to construct a politics that took into account race, class, and gender oppression. An inclusive reproductive rights agenda that addressed the needs of women of different identity positions was the result. By the mid-1970s, socialist feminists—most notably feminists organized into the Committee for Abortion Rights and against Sterilization Abuse—adopted much of the YLP politics of reproductive freedom. But in the early part of the decade, the Lords were among the first to demand an end to sterilization abuse and a right to abortion and contraception on demand within an organization whose politics grew from both nationalist and feminist roots.<sup>63</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>New York, Alaska, and Hawaii were the first states to decriminalize abortion in 1970. Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867–1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 142.

<sup>2</sup>Gloria Cruz, “Murder at Lincoln,” *Palante*, July 1970, 3.

<sup>3</sup>The Young Lords’ incorporation of feminism as an integral part of their party platform made them unique among nationalist organizations. Although the Black Panthers eventually accepted some feminist demands, at least rhetorically, the Nation of Islam found feminism to be antithetical to their ideas of appropriate gender roles. I have written about the reproductive rights positions of both the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam in my dissertation. See Jennifer A. Nelson, “From Abortion to Reproductive Rights: Feminism, Nationalism, and the Politics of Identity” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers–The State University of New Jersey, 1999).

<sup>4</sup>Iris Morales Luciano, “Puerto Rican Genocide,” *Palante*, May 1970, 8–9.

<sup>5</sup>For background material and information on the Young Lords, see Iris Morales, *Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords* (New York: Public Broadcasting Service, 1996), videocassette; Young Lords Party, *Palante: Young Lords Party* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); Augustin Lao, “Resources of Hope: Imagining the Young

Lords and the Politics of Memory," *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 7 (winter 1994–1995 / spring 1995): 34–39; Roberto P. Rodriguez-Morazzani, "Puerto Rican Political Generations in New York: *Pioneros*, Young Turks, and Radicals," *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 4 (winter 1991–1992): 96–117; Denise Oliver, interview by author, New York City, 1 August 1999; Hiram Maristany, *The Young Lords Party, 1969–1975* (New York: Visual Arts Research Center Relating to the Caribbean, 1983); National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, *Young Lords Organization* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1970); and Young Lords Party, *Ideology of the Young Lords Party* (New York: Young Lords Party, 1972).

<sup>6</sup>Oliver, interview, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*; Young Lords Party, *Palante*, 1–3; Lao, "Resources of Hope," 36; and Morales, *Palante*, *Siempre Palante*.

<sup>8</sup>According to Minerva Solla there were about twenty-five to thirty Young Lords in each of their branches—East Harlem (the founding branch), Lower East Side, Bronx, and Brooklyn. The rallies were considerably larger. The church takeover, for example, brought at least five hundred people. Richie Perez, interview by author, New York City, 23 January 1997; José Yglesias, "Right On with the Young Lords," *New York Times*, 7 June 1970, 32; "2 Young Lords Accused of Harlem Arson Attempt," *New York Times*, 15 October 1970, 51; "Trash Burned on 110th St. in Spanish Harlem Protest," *New York Times*, 29 December 1970; and Judy Klemesrud, "Young Women Find a Place in High Command of Young Lords," *New York Times*, 11 November 1970, 52.

<sup>9</sup>Young Lords Party, *Palante*, 3; and Lao, "Resources of Hope," 38.

<sup>10</sup>Cleo Silvers, interview by author, New York City, 20 October 1997; and Klemesrud "Young Women Find Place," 52.

<sup>11</sup>Oliver, interview, 1999.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>The feminist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s was a large and diverse group of people who did not agree on any single agenda. Some radical feminists from the 1960s were aware of the specific experiences of minority women. It was not until the mid-1970s, however, that feminists—notably those organized into the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse and Committee for Abortion Rights and against Sterilization Abuse—made coerced sterilization among women of color a priority. Nelson, "From Abortion to Reproductive Rights," chap. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Morales Luciano, "Puerto Rican Genocide," 8–9.

<sup>17</sup>Young Lords Party, *Palante*, 46–47.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Angie Sanabria, interview by author, New York City, 8 November 1996.

<sup>20</sup>Young Lords Party, "Position Paper on Women," *NACLA Newsletter* 14 (October 1970), 14–17.

<sup>21</sup>Young Lords Party, *Palante*, 50–51.

<sup>22</sup>Oliver in *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>23</sup>Annette B. Ramírez de Arellano and Conrad Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception: A History of Birth Control in Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 87–88, 159.

<sup>24</sup>Sterilization is currently the most popular method of birth control among men and women across race and class lines. It is difficult, however, to measure the extent to which women (white or women of color) choose this method voluntarily, because at this point there are no institutions in place to monitor the delivery of the procedure. Rosalind P. Petchesky, interview by author, New York City, 4 December 1997.

<sup>25</sup>Luis Muñoz Marín, *La Democracia*, 21 August 1922, in Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 16–17; and Laura Briggs, "Discourses of Forced Sterilization: The Problem with the Speaking Subaltern," *Differences* 10, no. 2 (1998): 30–66, esp. 44–45.

<sup>26</sup>Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 19–23.

<sup>27</sup>Briggs, "Discourses of Forced Sterilization," 40.

<sup>28</sup>The Comstock Law made any distribution of information about birth control a felony in the United States. *Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use*, 42d Cong., 3d sess., S.R. 1572, *Congressional Globe* 17 (1 March 1873): 2004–5.

<sup>29</sup>Donald T. Critchlow, "Birth Control, Population Control, and Family Planning: An Overview," *Journal of Policy History* 7, no. 1 (1995): 1–21; Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 45–49; and Briggs, "Discourses of Forced Sterilization," 42–43. Briggs pointed out that the ninety-seven involuntary sterilizations ordered by Puerto Rico's eugenics board were relatively few compared to such high sterilization states as California and North Carolina.

<sup>30</sup>Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 141.

<sup>31</sup>Betsy Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control* (Boston: South End Press, 1995), 190–91; and Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 139. See Briggs, "Discourses of Forced Sterilization," for convincing evidence that Puerto Rican women wanted to control their fertility. Briggs argues that Puerto Rican feminists were vehement about their demands for legal methods of birth control and sometimes advocated the use of sterilization as a contraceptive. They opposed pronatalist arguments

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made by Puerto Rican nationalists that all birth control equaled genocide. The Young Lords, in contrast, identified themselves with the Puerto Rican nationalist movement and their antisterilization position. Women in the Young Lords complicated this position, however, by demanding access to safe and legal contraception and abortion.

<sup>32</sup>Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*, 190–91; Bonnie Mass, "Puerto Rico: A Case Study of Population Control," *Latin American Perspectives*, 4 (fall 1977): 66–82; Jay Katz, *Experimentation with Human Beings* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972), 739, 741; and Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 137–38.

<sup>33</sup>Paul Vaughan, *The Pill on Trial* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970), 39.

<sup>34</sup>Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives, 1950–1970* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 32.

<sup>35</sup>At the same time that the YLP raised the issue of genocide and reproductive coercion and abuse among women of color, (mostly white) feminist activists in the initial stages of creating a women's health movement began to speak out about the dangers women who took the birth control faced. They argued that for the entire decade of the 1960s, physicians and pharmaceutical companies kept vital information from women about the risks of the pill. These feminists (most notably those active in Washington, D.C., women's liberation) demanded that the Food and Drug Administration provide detailed and unbiased information about all possible risks associated with pill usage through a notice enclosed in pill packages. The correlation of the emergence of the early women's health movement and their criticism of the pill with outcries by women of color against reproductive abuses suggests an important ideological link between white feminists and activist women of color. See Watkins, *On the Pill*, chap. 5.

<sup>36</sup>White women also had very limited control over their fertility until the appearance of the birth control pill in 1960. *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965)—the Supreme Court decision that legalized the use of birth control among married couples in all fifty states—further contributed to the broad acceptance of married women's use of birth control. It was not until 1972 that the Supreme Court—*Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438 (1972)—extended the right to contraceptive use to unmarried people.

<sup>37</sup>Cornelius Rhoads, letter in *El Mundo*, 27 January 1932, cited in Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 26–27.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*; and Critchlow, "Birth Control, Population Control, and Family Planning," 36.

<sup>39</sup>Gloria Colon, "Abortions," *Palante*, March/April 1971, 12.

<sup>40</sup>Morales Luciano, "Puerto Rican Genocide," 8–9.

<sup>41</sup>Critchlow, "Birth Control, Population Control, and Family Planning," 13, 16–17, 27.

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<sup>42</sup>Ramírez de Arellano and Conrad Seipp, *Colonialism, Catholicism, and Contraception*, 137.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.; and Morales Luciano, "Puerto Rican Genocide," 8–9.

<sup>44</sup>Iris Lopez, "Genocide for the Poor," *Palante*, February 1974, 3.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Denise Oliver, interview by author, New York City, 18 April 2000; and Olgie Robles, interview by author, New York City, 18 April 2000.

<sup>47</sup>Young Lords Party, "Position Paper on Women," 16.

<sup>48</sup>Cruz, "Murder at Lincoln," 3.

<sup>49</sup>John Sibley, "Dr. Smith Is Back in Lincoln Post," *New York Times*, 2 September 1970, 75.

<sup>50</sup>Harry Schwartz, "Hospital Target for a Test by Radicals," *New York Times*, 6 September 1970, 12.

<sup>51</sup>Michael Smith, interview by author, New York City, 12 July 1997.

<sup>52</sup>Young Lords Party, "Position Paper on Women," 16.

<sup>53</sup>"Lincoln Hospital Must Serve the People," *Palante*, 11 September 1970, 3.

<sup>54</sup>Willard Cates, Jr., "Legal Abortion: The Public Health Record," *Science* 215 (March 1982): 1586–90; Rosalind P. Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom*, rev. ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 156–57; and *Roe v. Wade* 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

<sup>55</sup>Young Lords Party, "Position Paper on Women," 17.

<sup>56</sup>Colon, "Abortions," 12.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Young Lords Party, *Palante*, 51.

<sup>59</sup>Oliver believed that the parallel development of feminism and the Young Lords' nationalist political ideology was essential to the adaptation of a feminist political discourse by the YLP in 1970. Oliver, interview, 1999.

<sup>60</sup>Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's study of black families embodied these stereotypical attitudes toward black masculinity and femininity. See Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965).

<sup>61</sup>A detailed discussion of the extensive literature on women and feminism in nationalist movements lies outside the scope of this article. For more information, see Stephanie Urdang, *Fighting Two Colonialisms: Women in Guinea-Bissau* (New York: Monthly Review, 1980), Stephanie Urdang, *And Still They Dance: Women*,



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*War, and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique* (New York: Monthly Review, 1989); Richard Fagan, Carmen Diana Deere, and José Luis Corragio, eds., *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review, 1986); Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Barbara Laslett, Johanna Brenner, and Yesim Arat, eds., *Rethinking the Political: Gender, Resistance, and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Mino Moallem, *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); and Ula V. Taylor, "Negro Women are Great Thinkers as well as Doers': Amy Jacques Garvey and Community Feminism in the United States, 1924–1927," *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 104–26.

<sup>62</sup>See Norma Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism," in *Making Face, Making Soul=Hacienda Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 356–69, for a discussion of how subjectivity is constituted across multiple discourses.

<sup>63</sup>Radical feminists active in the movement to legalize abortion between 1969 and 1973 also occasionally linked abortion rights to sterilization abuse. Their primary focus, however, was legal abortion. Black feminists were much more outspoken about the importance of linking abortion and contraceptive rights with an end to sterilization abuse during this period. For examples of black feminist positions on sterilization abuse, birth control, and legal abortion, see Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: New American Library, 1970), 97–98; Black Women's Liberation Group, Mount Vernon, New York, "Statement on Birth Control," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970), 360–61; and "Third World Sisters: No Forced Sterilization," *Militant*, 30 July 1971, 21.

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