
The Young Lords

A READER

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Origins of the Young Lords

(From the book *Palante, Young Lords Party*, 1971)

Many people ask us, “How did you begin?” A few people have the idea that “some foreign power” organized us, or that we are a gang. This is our story:

In New York City, in January of 1969, some Puerto Rican college students got together because they felt something had to be done to connect them with the people they had left behind in the ghetto. The intentions these people had were good, but vague. They didn’t quite understand which was the best way to proceed. As the months wore on, the group met many times in El Barrio. People came and went, the group kept changing, and those who stuck around felt things were going nowhere.

Yoruba came into the group in late May (by this time it was called the Sociedad de Albizu Campos [SAC]). He was a student at the State University of New York at Old Westbury, and had just returned to the States from a stay in Mexico, which was part of his schooling. He was eighteen at the time. Most of his life before going to Mexico was related more closely to the struggle of Black People in Amerikkka than to that of Puerto Ricans. This was because his dark skin and Afro hair made it difficult for Puerto Ricans to relate to him, especially light-skinned ones.

However, Yoruba’s stay in Mexico had made him aware of his Latin roots, so when he returned to Amerikkka he was looking for something to get into. A friend of the brother’s who also went to Old Westbury was one of the people who stuck it through with the SAC from the beginning. He introduced Yoruba into the group.

Two weeks after the first meeting he attended sometime in May, Yoruba met David Perez. Old Westbury needed more ghetto spics to maintain its image of a “with it” institution, and it sent people out all over the country looking for these strange animals. They had found David in Chicago, where he was hustling an anti-poverty group. Whereas Yoruba was born in Lares, Puerto Rico. At ten, he came to Chicago, because his family, like hundreds of thousands of other Puerto Rican families, nearly starved due to the effects of “Operation Bootstrap.”

When David arrived in New York, he was nineteen years old. He and Yoruba quickly got along, and they went to stay at night in the city. They stayed up all night rapping about the SAC in particular, and politics in general. Their points of view on a lot of things were similar, and one thing was especially agreed on: the SAC had to stop meeting and get into the street.

On June 7th, the Black Panther newspaper had a story about an alliance in Chicago called the Rainbow Coalition which the Panthers had formed with two other organizations and a story about one of the groups in the Coalition—The Young Lords Organization (YLO). The Young Lords were Puerto Rican revolutionaries!

The Lords had entered into an alliance with the Young Lords Patriots Organization, a street gang of white youths that had also turned political, and the Black Panther Party. This was called the Rainbow Coalition.

The Rainbow Coalition sent representatives to the annual Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) convention in Chicago, held in May of 1969. An SDSer from Florida, Jose Martinez, who was looking to get back to his Latin people, met Cha Cha, one of the

founders of the YLO at the convention. Martinez told Cha Cha he was going to New York, and wanted permission to start a Lords chapter there.

When Martinez got to New York's Lower East Side, he soon managed to start a group that met regularly. This group heard that there was another group doing what they were doing—except in East Harlem. These young street bloods would clean up the streets of El Barrio at night and leave the garbage in the middle of the street the next morning. In this way, the Garbage (Sanitation) Department was forced to clean it up so traffic could get by. Jose met with this group's leader, Pickle, and the two groups became one, with the intention of getting recognition from Chicago. It was decided that the new group would work out of El Barrio.

At its June 7 meeting, the one where we discussed the Lords, the SAC talked about both New York groups. We felt that it was important for all the little groups that kept popping up to form one national party, and we felt the Young Lords Organization was that party. The SAC met with the group that had just merged, and a new merger was made. This merger represented the uniting of the street people with the students of working-class background.

Together, this new group, already calling itself the Young Lords, cleaned up the streets of El Barrio, rapping to people as they went. On July 26, the group was recognized by Chicago as the New York State Chapter of the Young Lords Organization.

On Sunday, July 27, the Lords of New York blocked the avenue of El Barrio. This action grew in size through the summer, as the frustrated, forgotten mass of Puerto Ricans joined in barricading the avenues and streets. Soon the garbage action turned into a confrontation with police, and the YLO became experienced in street fighting, in basic urban guerilla tactics, the hit and run. For the first time in years, the pigs came into the ghetto with respect and fear in their eyes. This period of the summer of 1969 is referred to as the Garbage Offensive.

By September, we felt that our people had accepted us, and that we were now a part of people's lives. We opened an office in a storefront at 1678 Madison Avenue, between 111th and 112th Streets. The leadership of the organization at that time consisted of David Perez, Deputy Chairman; Pablo "Yoruba" Guzman, Deputy Minister of Information; Juan Gonzalez, Deputy Minister of Finance. This was the Central Staff.

Juan Gonzalez joined the Sociedad de Albizu Campos just before we merged with Pickle's and Jose's group. He had just come out of jail, having done thirty days for contempt of court arising from the 1968 student uprisings at Columbia University. Born in Ponce in 1947, Juan came to the States at an early age. His parents felt that they should always "do better," and Juan's family kept moving from place to place, one step before the Puerto Ricans, two steps before the Blacks, and three steps after the whites.

Juan entered Columbia on a scholarship. To support himself, he took a poverty program job on the West Side of Manhattan. Here, as a community organizer, Juan would go from house to house, getting to know people, and seeing all that his parents kept moving away from. This led him to junk the books his professors would give him for books on how to change the people's conditions, books on revolution. He joined SDS and became a leader of the 1968 uprising.

Fi was a member of Pickle's group, stayed with the merger of Jose's group, and wound up a Young Lord. He was fifteen at the time of the merger. His father is a preacher who managed to save enough to buy a house in Queens. Most of Fi's time was still spent in El Barrio, and he rarely visited the house in Queens.

The brother refused to accept the nonsense taught in school, and he had been tossed out of practically ever high school in Queens, until in 1969, he wound up at Benjamin Franklin in El Barrio. Fi is a brilliant photographer whose work of the street scenes has been exhibited in museums. Many of the people in the photo workshops in 117th Street that he belonged to were also with him in Pickle's group. Although he was not a part of the central leadership in the beginning, the Central Staff soon saw the level he was on, and in September he was promoted to Deputy Minister of Finance.

The Central Staff decided that we would shift the Organization's tactics from street fighting to programs which served our people and which would also build the Organization's theoretical level. We began Free Breakfast and Lead Poisoning Detection programs, supported the struggle of the welfare mothers, and studied revolutions in other countries.

In October of 1969, we wrote the Thirteen Point Program and Platform (revised May 1970) and Thirty Rules of Discipline (revised December 1970).

That same month, we went to a Methodist church on the corner of 111th Street and Lexington Avenue and asked if we could use some space to run a Breakfast Program. We couldn't even get in the front door. We wrote letters, began attending services, and talked with the congregation, but the church's Board voted no. December 7 was the church's testimonial Sunday, when people from the congregation spoke. Felipe rose to speak, and twenty-five uniformed pigs that had been going to church with us for six weeks, ran in, attacking the Lords and our supporters. The ambush netted thirteen Lords and supporters. They and others who got away were treated for broken arms and heads.

For two following Sundays, we went back to the church and interrupted services again. The fact that blood was spilled in the church showed us the level the pigs wanted to go to. On December 28, we took the church, renamed it People's Church, and for the next eleven days, we ran free clothing drives, breakfast programs, a liberation school, political education classes, a day care center, free health programs, and nightly entertainment (movies, bands, or poetry). Three thousand people came to the church. This was our Second Offensive, the People's Church Offensive, and the action spread our name around the world.

Two things happened: our membership increased rapidly, and we were now seen as a legitimate threat to the enemy's balance of power.

It was obvious that we were no street gang; as Socialists and revolutionary nationalists, we had become a political force to be dealt with. Those in power knew, perhaps better than we, what could happen if Socialist, revolutionary nationalist Puerto Ricans in Amerikkka hooked up with the other two-thirds of our people living on the island. The explosion would be tremendous.

Our intention after People's Church was to build our organization to get back in regular touch with our people through our daily organizing programs, which had been suspended for the eleven days of the church. From January through March we did this; during this period there was a series of street battles with the police for allowing the

drug traffic to come into the neighborhood, and then busting junkies instead of the big pushers. The YLO became involved in getting junkies to kick and in having them serve our people.

In October of 1969 we opened our second office, in Newark, New Jersey; the fact that we managed to run an office there, plus the success of People's Church, prompted National in Chicago to recognize us as the leadership for the East Coast Region, with the responsibility for organizing that area. The Central Staff moved up in rank and became the Regional Central Committee with the titles of Regional Ministers.

The Bronx Branch was opened in April of 1970. This was also the location of our Information Center. The leadership for the East Coast now noticed that Chicago was not providing guidance or example; a few things that bothered us were the newspaper, YLO, was not coming out regularly; that there was no political line to follow (which meant that we developed on our own—the Thirteen Point Program and Platform is an example), and that the only branches of the Organization were in Chicago, El Barrio, the Bronx, and Newark, while our people were calling for us everywhere. There was also a branch in Heywood, California, but they were in less contact with Chicago than we were. They are now disbanded.

To offset the problem of not having a newspaper which regularly gave our position to the people, in October, 1969, we had begun publishing a mimeographed packet called *Palante*, the voice of the YLO-East Coast. On May 8th it came out for the first time as a full-size newspaper. The paper has grown in content and circulation. We also have a weekly New York radio program called "*Palante*" that went on the air on WBAI-FM in March.

In May of 1970, the East Coast Regional Central Committee went into a retreat. We discussed where we had been, and where we hoped to go. We knew that we could not continue to run an effective organization on our own personal dynamism, that definite political principles would have to be laid down for others to follow. As a group, we started studying more, and formulated methods of work that would develop other leaders. One of the main areas that we attacked was machismo and male chauvinism. If we wanted to have power in the hands of the people, it would be necessary to have all the people fighting now. The attitudes of superiority that brothers had towards sisters would have to change, as would the passivity of sisters towards brothers (allowing brothers to come out of a macho or chauvinist, superior bag).

It was felt that the vague relationship with Chicago would have to be cleared up. We went deeply into what we felt were the responsibilities that Chicago was not fulfilling. After the retreat, we went out to Chicago. After a series of meetings, we felt that we had to split from the YLO and move ahead with the work that was urgently needed. We had now become the Young Lords Party.

Since October of 1969 we had been active in the field of health, both from the patient's point of view and the hospital worker's. Our work in lead poisoning detection led to deep investigations in New York City that uncovered epidemics; we did the same for tuberculosis.

Ninety per cent of the hospital workers in New York City are Black and Puerto Rican. To meet their demands for better conditions, and to serve the needs of patients, the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (HRUM) was created, made up of these hospi-

tal workers, in the early fall of '69. HRUM has the ideology of the Young Lords Party. It became involved in several health struggles, like Gouverneur Hospital on the Lower East Side.

The Young Lords Party and HRUM, along with the Think Lincoln Committee, a patient-worker group, took Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx in July of 1970. This was our Third Offensive; we ran programs, like TB and lead poisoning detection services, and a day care center, in a building the hospital was not even using. This highlighted the oppressive conditions in Lincoln (the building was condemned by the city), which could have been found in any ghetto hospital. Just before Lincoln was taken, a city-run TB x-ray truck was liberated in El Barrio. This was a good education for our people as they saw the difference between what the government did and what we did; whereas the city was lucky if it tested 300 people in a week, we examined 300 people in one day.

On July 26, 1970, the Party celebrated its first anniversary. Soon afterward, in August, a branch was opened on the Lower East Side.

In August of 1970, Felipe Luciano was demoted from the Central Committee to the position of cadre in the Party. He left the Party in October. This was one dramatic example of a series of internal problems, and the Central Committee met early September to get the Party moving again. One of the results of this was the establishment of a definite system of work and responsibility within the Party. This is called democratic centralism; briefly, it means that there is a top-down, centralist chain of command in the Party, and that at each level (central committee, branch staff, etc.) democracy is practiced.

For this series of meetings there was a new minister, Denise Oliver; afterward, there were some changes on Central Committee, and also, another minister was added, Gloria Gonzalez. Juan was now the Minister of Defense; Fi was Chief of Staff; Denise was Minister of Finance (now Economic Development); and David and Gloria were Field Marshals.

Denise had joined the Party in October of 1969, when she was twenty-three. Before, she had attended the State University at Old Westbury, the last of several universities she had attended, all filled with empty promises. Denise had been raised in a "Black Bourgeois" (really middle-class) family, but she knew that reality was in the ghetto, with the people of the streets, and the workers who came home late for little pay. This is where Denise made her home.

Once, Denise worked in an El Barrio anti-poverty program. In the Lords, she rose to her natural level, and went through the ranks to become a minister. Besides contributing to the struggle against male chauvinism and female passivity, she has helped in eliminating the racism that exists both within the Party and among our People.

(In March of 1971, Denise Oliver left the Young Lords Party to join the Eldridge Cleaver faction of the Black Panther Party. This was not part of a collective decision by the Central Committee, but rather was an individual decision on Denise's part. We in the Lords still relate to Denise as a sister, in the same manner as we would relate to any other Panther. As a result, the position of Minister of Economic Development is now vacant.)

Gloria became a Lord in February of 1970. Born in Puerto Rico, she was a strong supporter of the Nationalist Party. To make a living in New York, she became a health worker in Gouverneur Hospital. There she saw conditions which led her to join community struggles for better health care. For this, the sister was fired, but not until she had

helped found HRUM and its newspaper, For the People's Health, two people's tools that still fight on. That ain't bad for a junior high-school dropout.

Through HRUM, she came in contact with the Party; Gloria went through the People's Church Offensive, and joined the Party afterward. She rose through the ranks aided by her organizing of our Health Offensive that reached a peak in Lincoln Hospital in July. In August she and Juan celebrated a revolutionary wedding. She joined the Central Committee in September, at age twenty-six.

On September 22 and 23, the Young Lords Party and the Puerto Rican Students Union sponsored a conference for Puerto Rican students at Columbia University. The theme was the liberation of Puerto Rico. Over 1,000 high school and college students attended. September 23, El Grito de Lares, the conference marched for a celebration to Plaza Borinquena in the South Bronx.

In August, our branch in Philadelphia was recognized. This has been one of our most effective branches, having dealt with the drug problem (pushers) in the colony, taking over a church to support the demands of rebelling prisoners, and now organizing a conference for church people on the problems of brothers and sisters in the prisons. For this, they have undergone practically the heaviest attacks of any branch; there have been numerous beatings, false arrests, and several firebombs which have wrecked their offices.

We first got involved in the prisons struggle when the prisons in New York City first got taken by the inmates. Many of the sisters and brothers in jail had come from the streets we had worked in, and had read Palante, or were reading smuggled copies. In October of 1970, an organization that arose from the prison rebellion came from the concentration camps to become a section of the Young Lords Party. This was the Inmates Liberation Front (ILF).

Our attention had turned from the prisons toward organizing a national demonstration when we were brought sharply back to the brutal oppression of the inmates. For years, there had been reports, many published in the press, of Puerto Ricans and Blacks committing suicide by hanging in precincts and jails. Such a large number of these deaths were reported that the circumstances were highly suspicious. On October 15, 1970, a Young Lord joined the statistics. Julio Roldan, arrested on the whim of a pig in El Barrio, was said to be found hung in his cell in the Tombs, the Manhattan Men's Prison. We were told it was a "suicide."

We knew we were being taken for a ride. Julio was a Young Lord, and we are not about useless, wasteful suicide. There had to be some action taken to provide an example for our people; a demonstration just wasn't going to make it.

On October 18, at the end of a funeral procession of 2,000 people for Julio Roldan through the streets of El Barrio, we took the People's Church once again. Only this time we took it armed, with guns. Our message was clear: When attacked, defend yourselves. This was the Party's Fourth Offensive.

Where does the Young Lords Party go from here? At this point, we are going ahead with plans to step up the forward progress of the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle. On October 30, 1970, the anniversary of the day in 1950 that the Nationalist Party started a rebellion in Puerto Rico, we organized a march to the U.N. of 10,000 people. On March 21, 1971, we held a demonstration in Ponce, Puerto Rico, in remembrance of

the massacre of innocent people in 1937 by Amerikkkan orders. We announced that day that a YLP branch had opened in Ponce. This has been done to unite our people on the island and the mainland with a common goal: liberation. Wherever a Puerto Rican is, the duty of a Puerto Rican is to make the revolution.

Our new branch in Bridgeport is carrying the Party line to Connecticut. This line carries our belief that national liberation will be won by uniting the most exploited parts of our society, the street people and the workers, in a common effort. We also believe that our fight here on the mainland is fought at the side of many peoples, particularly the people of the Third World, people of color. We are eliminating the racism that divides us.

Our past examples, our past work, and our future successes make victory certain, because we are backed by our people. The enemy, the United States Government, respects us because of our people; we are always humble before our people, and will always be vicious before the enemy.

LIBERATE PUERTO RICO NOW!
VENCEREMOS!
Central Committee

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On Education and Students

In New York, it was principally young people who had been attending various colleges in the state who founded the Young Lords; that said, the Young Lords was a community organization, not a student organization. Doing work in their immediate communities, the Young Lords partnered with students in high schools and colleges to bring their principles and politics to an even younger generation. The articles in this chapter document some of those relationships and the Young Lords' commitment to radical student politics. Furthermore, the Young Lords did not limit education to a formal institutional context; rather, they were leaders in community education and regularly taught classes out of their community offices. As other chapters and their Program and Platform illustrate, education was a core principle and goal of the Young Lords.

Community Education

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 5 June 1970, volume 2, number 4)

When the amerikkkan army landed in Guanica in 1898, they brought with them not only soldiers, but teachers, administrators, geologists, biologists, etc. When they got there, they threw away history books written by Puerto Ricans and had gringos rewrite our history. This new version ended in 1898, and in it the spaniards were the bad guys and the amerikkans the good guys.

What they were doing behind all this was trying to wipe out the minds of Puerto Ricans, our culture, language (they also changed the official language to english in the schools), history and our collective understanding of what we are, a nation.

They had psychologists study us day in and day out, to prove that Puerto Ricans are a docile, passive people, who go around saying "ay bendito" and do nothing more than have babies, play the conga, la bilita, and get stoned.

Now, the YOUNG LORDS, in the tradition of Urayoan, Betances, Albizu Campos, and Alfonso Beal, have picked up from where our Brothers and Sisters have left off, and intensified the struggle for the liberation of our people, our nation. The YOUNG LORDS PARTY is now running many programs which serve our people and educate us as to the way that this capitalistic system oppresses us, like the lead poisoning, t.b. testing, and anemia testing programs.

In addition to these, we are bringing to our people community education programs. These are held in El Barrio and in the South Bronx at 7:30 every Tuesday evening. In El Barrio, St. Edwards Church, 109 St. between Madison & 5th Ave. In the South Bronx, St. Anthanasius old school, on Fox St. near Tiffany St. The sessions will educate and prepare our brothers and sisters to deal with the society in which we live. That society is racist

and capitalistic and has as its desire a world empire (imperialism) built on the backs of Puerto Ricans and other Third World people. Our children must relearn spanish, our young brothers and sisters must learn of our history and culture, and our warriors, men and women, must learn of the greatness of the Puerto Rican nation. Puerto Ricans must also understand the necessity for armed struggle or be wiped out through genocide. Our brothers and sisters on the streets must learn that the pig takes many forms, from dope to genocide in the hospitals, to brutality and murder at the hands of the patrolling pigs, and imperialist robbery at the hands of the army and navy who are stealing our island of Culebra today and will try to steal the rest of Borinquen tomorrow.

We invite all Boricuas to attend our community education sessions and to bring your friends and relatives.

EACH ONE TEACH ONE!

THE DUTY OF A PUERTO RICAN IS TO MAKE THE REVOLUTION!

LIBERATE PUERTO RICO NOW!

Carlos Aponte

Education Lieutenant

YOUNG LORDS PARTY

Bronx Branch

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Puerto Rican Racism

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 17 July 1970, volume 2, number 7)

The Taino Indians were the first people of Borinquen, the Indian name for the island that is still used today. The spaniards came to Borinquen in 1493, changed the name to San Juan Bautista, and forced the Tainos into slavery, exploiting their labor in the gold mines and on plantations. The enslavers divided the land and people among themselves getting all the benefit and profit from the work of the Indian. In return the Taino was given barely enough to keep him alive. The Taino women were also exploited, not only

their labor, but their bodies as well. In the early days the Spanish did not bring any of their women, so they took, abused, or raped our Indian sisters. They justified this inhumanity and murder, saying the Indians were savage, unchristian, and of another race.

Quickly, the colonizer killed, enslaved, or chased into the mountains our first ancestors. The spaniards then had to look to Africa for a new source of slave labor. In 1598, the first contract to bring in large numbers of Africans was signed. The oppressor accepted slavery as normal: the church never condemned it; and the government never enforced the laws against it. Our African sisters were also raped and used as breeders of more slaves. The number of African slaves was important to the sugar plantation owners who made a lot of money off the sugar cane fields where they put the African to slave. Again, the spanish justified slavery and rape, saying that the African was inferior, uncivilized, and of an alien race.

From the 16th to the middle of the 19th century the Africans and Tainos rebelled against spanish colonialism, many times united to fight the common oppressor. By 1868, when the Puerto Rican nation emerged and fought the Spanish in “El Grito de Lares” as Puerto Ricans, Blacks were still slaves. Black slavery was not abolished in Puerto Rico until 1873.

Puerto Ricans don't like to talk about racism or admit that it exists among Puerto Ricans. Boricuas talk of an island that is free from racism, or they say that the amerikkans brought it in. Although the amerikkkan did make it worse, racism in Puerto Rico began with the spanish. According to them, one drop of white blood meant you were white and better than your Black compatriot. Acceptance was given according to the “degree of whiteness.” The upper classes were white, descendents of the spanish or creoles. The spanish colonizer had certain economic interests in Puerto Rico and Latin America: that's why they used racism as a justification for exploiting labor to get economic profit.

When the u.s. invaded Puerto Rico in 1898, racism was reinforced and intensified by them. The white upper class, empowered by the spanish before, now made deals and got money from u.s. industries to stay in power in return for supporting u.s. policies. The u.s. took advantage of the racial and class divisions within our country to better control by playing one group against the other. Puerto Ricans have developed a phrase that is constantly referred to and taught to all Puerto Ricans from generation to generation as a basic axiom of life; “Hay que mejorar la raza,” which means “One must better the race.” Every Puerto Rican grows up with this concept and learns to view as ugly—dark skin, thick lips, a broad nose, and kinky hair. When referring to a person's profile, “perfilado” are used to indicate whiteness. Puerto Ricans believe that to better the race you must marry a light skinned Puerto Rican. As a result every Puerto Rican family has light and dark Puerto Ricans. That's why we say “EL QUE NO TIENE DINGA. TIENE MANDINGA” [basically meaning “everybody's black”]. That's why we ask: “Y TU ABUELA, DONDE ESTA?” [And your grandma, where is she from?]

During the 1940's Puerto Ricans were forced to emigrate to the u.s. Here the formula for racism says “one drop of Black blood makes you Black.” As a result, Puerto Ricans as a mixed people are considered Blacks, and all Puerto Ricans become victims of u.s. racism. Amerikkans cannot accept us because they believe that the racial mixture has caused a decline in our mental and physical capabilities. That's why, at best, the amerikk-

kkans are paternalistic or just out and out racist pigs. Only recently have even the most radical whites been changing this deeply imbedded racism and paternalism.

Amerikkkan racist influence has really succeeded in dividing Puerto Rico along color lines especially within the last ten years. According to one study, 96% of the upper class is white, 94% of the middle class is white, and 60% of the lower class is Black on our island of Puerto Rico. On top of all of this is u.s. capitalism controlling the economy of the island and making bundles of money in alliance with the Puerto Rican capitalist class (people like pig governor ferre).

Back in the u.s., Puerto Ricans and Blacks are put in the same communities. Both are victims of racism, drugs, unemployment, the draft, bad health care, bad housing, and miseducated. Yet each is taught that the other is inferior and to be avoided or hated. For Puerto Ricans this means that the light skinned Puerto Ricans start viewing themselves as white and their compatriots as Black, reflecting amerikkkan society. Many Black Puerto Ricans cling to being Puerto Rican in order to negate their blackness. Many light skinned Puerto Ricans say "I'm American, I'm spanish," or "I'm White" in order to avoid identification as Puerto Ricans. Both Black and light skinned Puerto Ricans adopt racist attitudes towards Afro-American brothers and sisters.

We the YLP are revolutionary nationalists and oppose racism. We realize that capitalism has used racism to keep oppressed people fighting each other while the faggot pig makes the money. We must rid ourselves of the racist attitudes that exist among our Puerto Rican people. We must end the racist attitudes towards our Afro-American brothers and sisters. We grow up together, are victims of capitalism together, so we must pick up the gun and fight the racist, capitalistic pig together!

UNITY AMONG PUERTO RICANS AND ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE!
 REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM
 NOT RACISM!
 LIBERATE PUERTO RICO NOW!

Iris Morales Luciano
 Ministry of Education
 YOUNG LORDS PARTY
 El Barrio

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8

The Garbage Offensive

Garbage collection was a significant problem in communities such as El Barrio/East Harlem. Streets were littered with debris of both the conventional (waste paper, food, plastics, etc.) and unconventional (cars, tires, glass, sinks, etc.) kinds. The first issue the newly formed New York Young Lords mobilized around was garbage collection. Rather than simply petition the city for better service, the Young Lords started cleaning up the community themselves. When the city continued to deny regular garbage collection services or the resources for the Lords to take care of things on their own (brooms, trash bags, etc.), the Young Lords and community members repeatedly blocked the streets with burning debris. The selections in this chapter help illustrate, through words and images, the ways in which the Young Lords sought material transformations in their community around the issue of garbage collection.

Young Lords Block Street with Garbage

(From the newspaper *Young Lords Organization*, 1969, volume 1, number 4)

In a display of community strength and support of the YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION, the people of East Harlem (El Barrio), and the YLO closed the streets of Third Ave. from 110th, across to 112th and down to Second Ave. on Sunday, July 27.

For two weeks previously, the YOUNG LORDS had been cleaning garbage from the streets and into garbage cans to show the people that the department of garbage (Lindsay's department of sanitation), or D.O.G., does not serve them. At first, communication with the people was slow. Then, as the barriers broke down and everyone got their thing together, the people saw that even a nothing department like D.O.G. looks upon Puerto Ricans and Blacks as though they are something lower than garbage. These dogs at D.O.G. have forgotten that they must SERVE THE PEOPLE. And it all blew up on Sunday.

By July 27, the original operation had grown to such a large number of people, not just including LORDS, that the brooms and shovels we were using were not enough. So four LORDS—the Deputy Minister of Finance, Information and Education and an information photographer—went to the nearest D.O.G. hole at 108th St. After some Bureaucratic Bullshitting they steered us to the D.O.G. hole at 73rd St. Dig it! Two miles away, while a hole is sitting three blocks away.

After playing the man's game of red tape, the LORDS brought it all back home. We ran it down about what happened and a course of action was developed. As fast as it takes a streetlight to change, all the People—Lords, mothers, Li'l Lords—placed cans of garbage across Third Ave. at 110th St. The pigs, who have been eyeing the LORDS for the past few weeks in New York, came to the scene in a matter of seconds. Sources on the blocks say the pigs had trucks waiting a few blocks away.

But the pigs found out that the spirit of the people is greater than all the man's pigs. At least 1,000 Puerto Ricans turned out to cheer the LORDS on as they woofed the pigs to their pens. Brothers and Sisters on 111th and 112th caught that old revolutionary spirit, last seen in '66, and blocked their streets, too.

When a garbage truck finally did show, the man vainly tried his game once more. For all those streets filled with garbage, D.O.G sent one Puerto Rican Brother. The people wouldn't fall for this cheap trick, and finally two white garbage men patted the junk into place while the brother hustled it into the truck. Afterwards a rally was held at 112th St. The cats in the street agreed to that.

The streets belong to the People!
The moon belongs to the People!
Power to the People!

PALANTE!

Yoruba
Dep. Minister of Information
New York State YLO

El Barrio and YLO Say No More Garbage in Our Community

(From the newspaper *Young Lords Organization*, 1969, volume 1, number 4)

East Harlem is known as El Barrio—New York's worst Puerto Rican slum.

There are others—on the Lower East Side, in Brooklyn, in the South Bronx, but El Barrio is the oldest, biggest, filthiest of them all. There is glass sprinkled everywhere, vacant lots filled with rubble, burnt out buildings on nearly every block, and people packed together in the polluted summer heat.

There is also the smell of garbage, coming in an incredible variety of flavors and strengths.

For weeks the YLO had been asking the Sanitation Dept. for brooms and trash cans so they could clean up the streets and sidewalks of El Barrio. The city ignored the request. Finally, on Sunday, August 17, the community rebelled.

All the rubbish that had accumulated along East 110th St. was dumped into the middle of the street. At 111th and Lexington Ave., the people turned over several abandoned cars and set them afire.

Hundreds of nervous cops arrived on the scene. When they dragged Ildefonso Santiago out of his car and took him to the precinct house, reportedly on suspicion of burglary (they found a screwdriver in his car), the people retaliated by filling the streets with more trash, cars, old refrigerators, and any thing else they could find. It began to look like a repeat of the 1967 summer riot in which at least two people were killed and scores injured in street fighting with cops.

At this point, members of the YLO stepped in to work with the people. They organized a march to the precinct house where Santiago was being held. Chanting "Viva Puerto Rico!"; "Power to the People!"; and "Off the Pig!"; nearly 300 people marched to the 126th



From the newspaper *Palante*, 16 October 1970, volume 2, number 13.

St. police station to demand Santiago's release. Within half an hour, he was free, and the crowd carried him back to his car on their shoulders.

"It was a victory for the people," said Felipe, chairman of YLO, at a rally the following day. "They've treated us like dogs for too long. When our people came here in the 1940's, they told us New York was a land of milk and honey. And what happened? Our men can't find work. Look at them. They sit around and play dominos because they can't get a decent job. Our women are forced to become prostitutes. Our young people get hooked on drugs. And they won't even give us brooms to sweep up the rubbish on our streets."

The YLO has issued a set of demands: regular collection of trash; at least ten brooms and trash barrels per block; the hiring of more Puerto Ricans by the Sanitation Dept; and higher starting pay for sanitation workers.

The next day, the *New York Post* reported the incident, obscured the main point of the protest by saying the people acted as a result of "misunderstanding" about Santiago's arrest. In fact, the people of El Barrio have said that they will no longer tolerate the city's neglect of their needs. They are taking matters into their own hands.

The way Felipe put it at the rally was that we're building our own community. "Don't fuck with us. It's as simple as that."

9

Health and Hospitals

Adequate health care for the poor was one of the chief demands of the Young Lords. Faced with a health-care crisis on various fronts, the Young Lords (together with the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement) started lead poisoning and tuberculosis testing programs, took over Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, and demanded equal treatment of all “Third World” peoples. Articles in this chapter cover the principles of their health program, describe the theoretical and historical rationales used in advancing their arguments, and document specific health initiatives the Young Lords launched in their communities.

Ten Point Health Program

(From the newspaper *Young Lords Organization*, January 1970, volume 1, number 5)

We want total self-determination of all health service at East Harlem (El Barrio) through an incorporated community-staff governing board for Metropolitan Hospital. (Staff is anyone and everyone working in Metropolitan, except administrators.)

We want immediate replacement of all Lindsay and Terenzio administrators by community and staff-appointed people whose practice has demonstrated their commitment to serve our poor community.

We demand an immediate end to construction of the new emergency room until the Metropolitan Hospital Community-Staff Governing Board inspects and approves them or authorizes new plans.

We want employment for our people. All jobs filled in El Barrio must be filled by residents first, using on-the-job training and other educational opportunities as bases for service and promotions.

We want free publicly supported health care for treatment and prevention.

We want an end to all fees.

We want total decentralization of health—block health officers responsible to the Community-Staff Board should be instituted.

We want “door-to-door” preventative health services emphasizing environment and sanitation control, nutrition, drug addiction, maternal and child care and senior citizen services.

We want education programs for all the people to expose health problems—sanitation, rats, poor housing, malnutrition, police brutality, pollution, and other forms of oppression.

We want total control by the Metropolitan Hospital Community-Staff Governing Board of budget allocations, medical policy, along the above points, hiring and firing and salaries of employees, construction and health code enforcement.

Any community, union, or workers organization must support all the points of this program and work and fight for them or be shown as what they are—enemies of the poor people of East Harlem.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!
QUE VIVA EL BARRIO!
FREE PUERTO RICO NOW!

New York State Chapter
Young Lords Organization

..... **Revolutionary Health Care Program for the People**

(From the newspaper *Young Lords Organization*, January 1970, volume 1, number 5)

Mingo El Loco was a brother off the block who helped out the Young Lords Organization every once in a while. He would loan the Organization his car, would help pass out our literature, would recruit for us. A few weeks ago Mingo was stabbed by another brother. It happens all the time in the street. Our people are always killing each other off instead of fighting the enemy—the pigs, the businessman, the politician.

The ambulance was called. For one hour it didn't come. Meanwhile the pigs arrived. Mingo was dying on the street, but the police did nothing. Finally, the people tried to take him to the hospital in their own car. He died on the way to Metropolitan.

People dying because of ambulances that arrive late, or in emergency rooms of city hospitals while they wait for hours, happens often. The people have become used to butcher health care and resigned to the fact that they'll never be decently treated by the health system.

But the Young Lords, after Mingo's death, began to investigate health in New York and we have begun a program to organize the people—community and workers—to demand decent health care.

As we talked to dozens of sympathetic doctors, nurses, medical students, maintenance, clerical and laboratory workers in Metropolitan Hospital, we began to understand more and more about health oppression.

—We learned that many of the diseases that our people die of could be simply cured or even prevented with correct mass health programs which the hospitals do not have. For instance, thousands of children become sick or die because of lead poisoning, from eating fallen plaster in ghetto buildings. A mass lead-poison detection program could save the lives of thousands of our children. Anemia, tuberculosis, bad nutrition, upper respiratory infections, could be stamped out with mass health programs that go out to the people, into the homes and communities, instead of waiting for a patient to come in to the hospital with the disease already in advanced stages.

—We learned that doctors were making \$60-70 thousand a year because poor people have to have health care. That their organization, the fascist American Medical Association, for years has been trying to keep the number of medical schools down so that doctors could charge higher fees.

—We learned that the drug companies, like Upjohn, Park and Davis, etc., not only push many useless or harmful drugs just for profit, but that they have much influence in Washington and state legislatures over medical bills. Many times officers of these companies sit on the boards of private hospitals and help determine the policy that has been mistreating our people for years.

—We learned that there are things called health empires: medical schools and private hospitals that through affiliations (contracts with the city) operate and run city hospitals. In New York, for instance, Columbia controls Harlem Hospital, Albert Einstein controls Lincoln Hospital, Beth Israel controls Gouverneur Hospital, New York Medical College controls East Harlem's Metropolitan. These affiliations end up helping the medical school much more than the municipal hospital. For instance, interns and medical students have much more practice and experience in the city hospital, because in the private hospital, patients are treated by their own doctor and refuse to be treated by students. The poor people who come to the city hospitals are used as guinea pigs, sometimes, for new treatments, methods, new medicines that will then be used on the rich. The priorities for the medical schools are training and research. The needs of the people are for mass, quality free health care. The two are often antagonistic in our society.

—We learned that in our communities, control of health must be taken out of the hands of drug companies, avaricious professionals, pig politicians, and racist administrators and put in the hands of the people. That is why we demand

COMMUNITY WORKER CONTROL

FREE HEALTH CARE

MASS HEALTH SERVICE.

The Young Lords have developed a Ten-Point Program of Health that explains what we want, the minimum necessary for our people—for Puerto Rican, black and poor white oppressed peoples. We have joined with revolutionary workers in other parts of the city, with the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement at Gouverneur Hospital on the Lower East Side, with the Lincoln Hospital workers in the South Bronx, with the Black Panther Party Free Health Clinics in Staten Island and Brooklyn. We are building a city-wide revolutionary health movement that will shake the city to its rotten pig core.

The revolutionary health groups have also begun forming an alliance with radical medical students and professionals around a week of activities in February, 1970—People's Health Week, which will attempt to have teach-ins, demonstrations, and mass health programs, and educate the people about the difference between capitalist medicine and socialist medicine, between medicine that oppresses the people and medicine that serves the people.

By becoming involved in Breakfast Programs, Clothing Programs, Health Programs, the Young Lords are demonstrating to all Latin and other oppressed peoples that we truly do serve and protect. Wherever the people suffer and resist oppression, we are there to aid, shape and lead their struggle.

Long Live Boricua
 Long Live Independent Puerto Rico
 Free Health Care for Everyone
 Hands off Cha Cha
 Venceremos

YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION
 New York State Headquarters

.....
HRUM: Health Workers Organization

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 22 May 1970, volume 2, number 3)

The Puerto Rican and Black workers in the Human Services is known as an assistant, assistant to the teacher, the assistant to the welfare investigator, and in the hospitals we are the assistants to the doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.

As assistants (sophisticated word for slave) we are totally oppressed and unfortunately at the same time we assist in the oppression of our people.

Eighty per cent of the hospital workers are Puerto Rican and Black—residents of the poorest communities. As Puerto Ricans and Black workers in the emergency rooms and clinics, we see what oppression in the hospital is like, the inferior medical attention our neighbors are subjected to or obligated to accept. The worker also gets the same treatment. The enemy effectively divides the people and the worker finds himself each day divided more and more into two categories: the worker that identifies with the hospital and defends the oppressive, abusive and racist thieving doctors; the worker that does not turn his back on his people and defends the patients and his co-workers above everything else.

The newly formed Health Revolutionary Unity Movement is in the second category. The organization was formed for two reasons: we know that the health system will not change unless we push that necessary change. The unions 1199 and District Council 37, even though progressive in the question of salaries, do not fight against the conditions imposed on the workers nor the quality of the medical services our people are receiving.

Many struggles have risen in the hospitals by revolutionary Puerto Rican and Black workers. During one of these struggles less than a year ago in Lincoln Hospital, the workers took over the mental health services demanding community control of the services. Also in a dump of a clinic in the Lower East Side, the Gouverneur Clinic, a similar struggle was waged.

Although the struggles have not triumphed significantly they have helped us to learn self-organization.

The organization is composed of Puerto Rican and Black workers of Metropolitan, Lincoln, Gouverneur hospitals and NENA Health Center among many others.

We insist that the time has come to act against a system that enriches itself at the expense of our people.

So that our struggle can be effective, we must make clear our purposes. That is why the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement uses the 10-Point Program as their princi-

pal guide. Our efforts have been demonstrated with the educative newspaper “For the People’s Health.” In addition, we work in complete solidarity with the organizations that have shown their commitment to serve and protest the exploitation and oppression of our people, such as the Young Lords Organization and the Black Panther Party.

In the next edition of “For the People’s Health” we shall announce our first general meeting. We invite all workers to attend and in that way join the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement.

In unity, there is strength! The same enemy of Cambodian people is found in the hospitals.

THE HOSPITALS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE!

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

Gloria Cruz (field worker—Gouverneur Clinic)

Health Ministry

YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION

.....
Socialist Medicine

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 5 June 1970, volume 2, number 4)

Every Saturday, the YOUNG LORDS PARTY goes door to door in El Barrio and the South Bronx, testing for tuberculosis. Even though t.b. has been eliminated among the rich, the middle classes, and white people in general, it is alive and spreading in the Puerto Rican and Black colonies of amerikkka, the “richest” country in the world.

Tuberculosis is known as a disease of oppression, just like lead poisoning, anemia, malnutrition, etc. It comes from being so oppressed by the man that we cannot get jobs that pay enough, houses that shelter us right, or hospitals to care for us; it comes from not being able as a nation, as Borinquenos, to control all these things; it comes from being poor, oppressed, and powerless.

During the last 3 months, in El Barrio, and the last month in the South Bronx, we have given over 800 tests for tuberculosis. One out of every three people tested has had a positive reaction. Why aren’t the hospitals doing anything to prevent t.b. in our communities? Because the hospitals do not serve the needs of our people. They exist only to make a profit. Hospitals are only interested in hospitalization (which costs in the hundreds per day), lab tests and medicines. All of which they can charge a lot for. But, as the YOUNG LORDS PARTY has shown, all that is necessary for t.b. testing is a few hours work and dedication.

We live in a country that makes proper health care a luxury only rich people can afford. Heart transplants and brain surgery are done on rich people; t.b. preventive medicine is not done on Puerto Ricans and Blacks because this capitalistic system wants to make the rulers live longer and let the spics and niggers die off as quickly and quietly as possible.

The racism of the health empire must be exposed. It is in every area of medical service. Puerto Ricans have had “drug problems” for many years, but it wasn’t until a few white kids in the suburbs started getting strung out, that the health empire “discovered”

drugs, and a big stink was made in the press. This is like Columbus “discovering” Puerto Rico. The 70,000 Taino Indians had always been there, but just like the drug problem, until the man feels it directly, in his pocket or in his home, it doesn’t exist and he doesn’t give a damn.

Point 5 of the YOUNG LORDS PARTY 13-Point Program and Platform states “We want community control of our institutions and land,” and Point 13 says “We want a socialist society.” In a socialist society, the institutions like the hospitals are controlled by the hospital workers and the patients. Also under socialism they extend their services out to the people visiting them in their homes and setting up Free Health Clinics in every block. This type of service which keeps people from getting sick in the first place is called preventive medicine. Although doctors admit it is needed, preventive medicine will never be done in amerikkka, as it is today because it is a capitalist society. Capitalists run hospitals and make money out of Puerto Ricans being sick and if there’s no money, they’re out of business. Socialists are concerned with keeping people healthy, not with making money.

As long as we don’t control institutions like the hospitals we will continue to die of disease like t.b. and receive poor or no health services in general. We must begin to fight together as a people to take over all the institutions that control our lives, by taking the central power that protects the capitalist hospitals, the state. Pig administrators who run hospitals and profit from other people’s suffering must be put up against the wall. As long as pigs like these are in our communities, they will continue to use (exploit) us.

The YOUNG LORDS PARTY will continue to serve our people through our Preventive Medicine Programs, and we will at the same time continue to expose the way in which the institutions in our communities exploit us. The YLP will fight until hospitals, police, schools, etc. are run by the people, especially those who work in and are affected by these institutions.

FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL!
LIBERATE PUERTO RICO NOW!

Carl Pastor
Ministry of Health
YOUNG LORDS PARTY

..... **The Fight against Prospect Hospital**

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 19 June 1970, volume 2, number 5)

Many of our people believe that hospitals and professionals in the hospitals really want to help them. But more and more people are beginning to realize that the only interest that hospital heads have is how much money they will be able to make out of every patient they see. This exists especially in a hospital in the South Bronx named Prospect Hospital. The majority of the people in the South Bronx have never been treated or examined in this hospital for a number of reasons, but mainly because not so many people have Medicaid or money, so they don’t get treated for illnesses. It is just like the other corporations in our communities like A&P, John’s Bargains Stores, Key Foods, etc.

If you don't have the money or a credit card, you can't buy. (If you don't have money or a Medicaid card, likewise, you can't be treated.)

The YOUNG LORDS PARTY has started a series of preventive medicine programs in the South Bronx, and detecting tuberculosis is the main program we have now. When we go door to door on Saturdays, we give our people a tuberculin test. Three days after the test is given we go back to those families we tested to check if the test is positive or negative. If the test is negative, the person is okay. If the test is positive, then the person needs a chest x-ray. The chest x-ray tells if the person has tuberculosis or not. If the person has tuberculosis, he will be treated for it. This is what Prospect Hospital should be doing, treating the people in the community for sicknesses that are caused by the living conditions in our neighborhood.

About a month ago, three brothers from the YOUNG LORDS PARTY went to Prospect Hospital to talk to the pig administrator silverman and his flunky freeman. The three YOUNG LORDS explained how our people are dying of tuberculosis every day and that if Prospect Hospital allowed the YOUNG LORDS to use the hospital's x-ray machines, many lives would be saved. For a whole month these pigs said "no" to us. To them it wouldn't be right to let us use the x-ray machines since they wouldn't be making a profit out of it.

Prospect Hospital planned a health fair in order to create a good image, since we were letting our brothers and sisters on the street know where this hospital was really at, and they were worried and felt threatened. So on Thursday, June 4, 1970, at 10 a.m., we went again to talk to silverman and freeman, the administrators. This was the fourth time we went to these pigs to demand what is the people's. This time their answer was not "no" but "yes," because they were scared about their image. We should all understand that they don't really want us to use the x-ray machines. The reason they are letting us use them is not because they love the Latino and Black community, but because the PARTY and our people backed silverman and freeman up against the wall.

The YOUNG LORDS will not stop putting pressure on Prospect Hospital. What we want is not just access to Prospect Hospital's x-ray machines; we want access to Prospect Hospital. Point 5 of the YLP 13-Point Program says: "We want community control of our institutions and land."

HOSPITALS MUST SERVE OUR PEOPLE!
LIBERATE PUERTO RICO NOW!

Carlito Rovira, Ministry of Health
YOUNG LORDS PARTY
El Barrio Branch

.....
Think Lincoln

(From the newspaper *Palante*, 3 July 1970, volume 2, number 6)

In July 1970, Lincoln Hospital will be the victim of the greedy businessmen who make money from the illnesses of the people of the South Bronx. Because of the cutbacks in federal money going to social service programs, the controlling Einstein Medical College empire will have less money to spend on its many hospitals, and Lincoln will be the



Denise Oliver speaks at a rally on 110th Street in East Harlem, in late 1969. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Woman holds Puerto Rican flag at a rally at the United Nations in October 1970. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



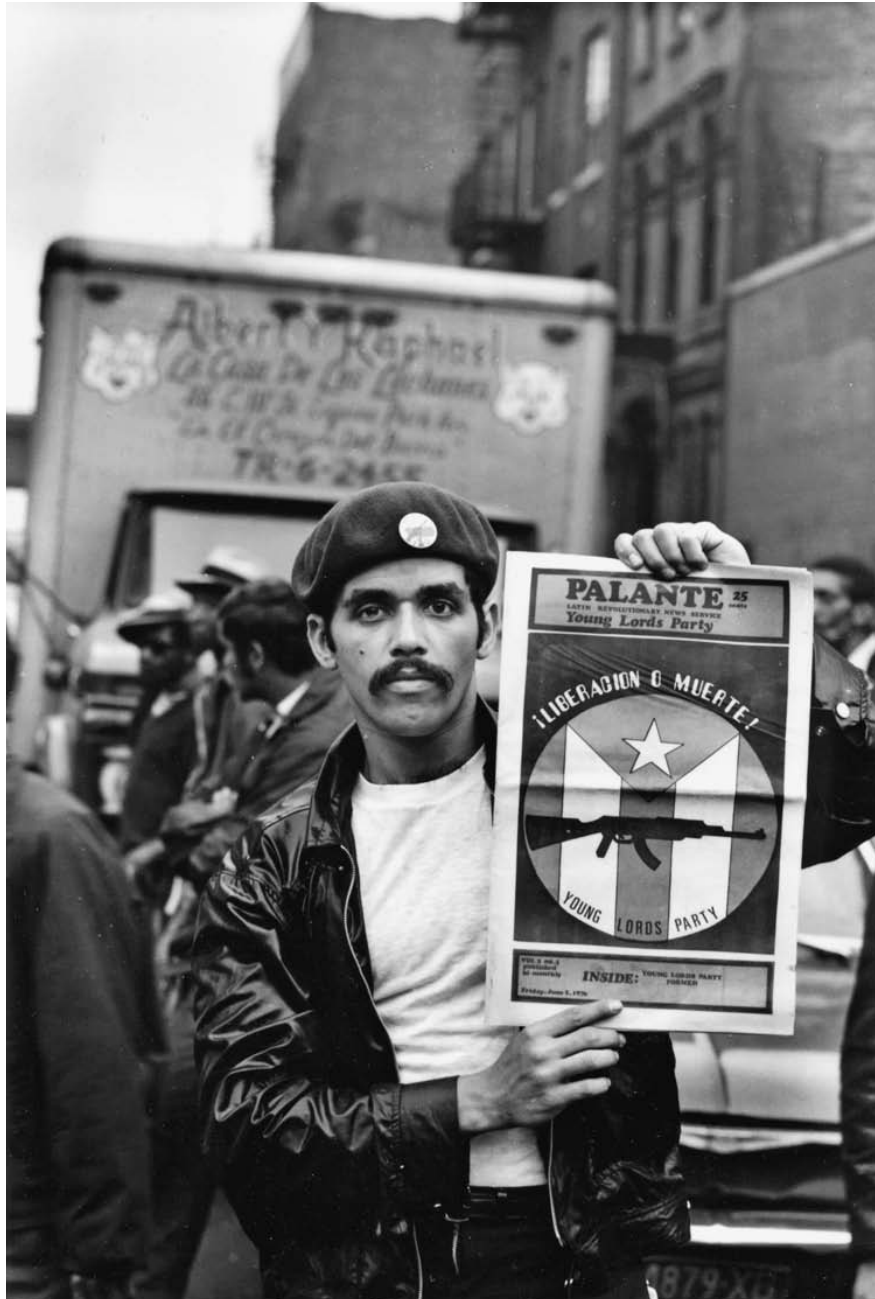
Funeral procession for Julio Roldan in October 1970. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Young Lords and others block streets during the summer 1969 "garbage offensive." Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Young Lords march in unison sometime in the early 1970s. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Young Lords sold newspapers as a fundraiser and information source for the organization. This photograph includes the June 5, 1970, issue of *Palante*. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Felipe Luciano addresses a crowd in front of "the People's Church" in East Harlem in 1970. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



The fact that they were struggling for revolution does not mean Young Lords did not have fun. This young woman is caught off guard by the camera at a rally sometime in the early 1970s. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Young Lords “liberate” an X-ray truck to test for tuberculosis in East Harlem in June 1970. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.



Young Lords and others at a rally in front of the Columbia University library in 1969. Photograph courtesy of Hiram Maristany.