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Puerto Rico en mi corazón: The Young Lords, Black Power and Puerto Rican nationalism in the U.S., 1966–1972

JEFFREY O. G. OGBAR



*Young Lords and others demonstrating outside the Manhattan court house for the "Panther 21" trial.
New York City, 1969. Photographer Roz Payne. © Roz Payne www.newsreel.us. Reprinted by permission.*

ABSTRACT

In the U.S. the Black Power movement raised the bar of black resistance and significantly influenced the symbolism, rhetoric, and tactics of radical activism of the Puerto Rican activists in the late 1960s. Black Power advocates among gangs, students, and others represented a model of resistance for Puerto Ricans, giving rise to a new type of Puerto Rican nationalism that also found inspiration from other sources. More specifically, the Black Panther Party had some of the most visible influences on the radical activist struggles among Puerto Ricans, fomenting a visible movement of radical ethnic nationalism. None had as intimate ties with the Black Panther Party or the Black Power movement than the largely Puerto Rican Young Lords Organization. The Young Lords were significant as harbingers for a new wave of Puerto Rican nationalism that was, in many respects, a departure from traditional nationalist struggles on the island. Affected by Black Power, many Puerto Ricans offered new interpretations of race and identity that reflected the unique racial politics of the U.S. (Key words: Black Power, Puerto Rican nationalism, black nationalism, nationalism, activism, Black Panther Party, Young Lords)

Though the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), Puerto Rican Independence Movement (MPI), and its New York City offshoot, the Vito Marcantonio Mission, advocated radical politics in the 1950s and 1960s, the nationalist agendas of these groups centered almost exclusively on Puerto Rican independence, while mainland Puerto Ricans languished in impoverished ghettos.¹ It was not until the late 1960s that Puerto Rican radical activism would develop around both mainland and island issues, while also generating a broader class appeal with the Young Lords Organization. Moreover, this new brand of nationalism recognized the centrality of race to Puerto Rican political discourse in ways unseen in the politics of earlier forms of nationalism. Indeed, Puerto Ricans deconstructed widely held notions of racial and group identity in an effort to realize new forms of revolutionary politics. Not only were racial notions challenged, but Young Lords fundamentally reevaluated gendered nationalist politics in unique ways.

Several factors precipitated the development of popular grassroots Puerto Rican nationalism, including larger anti-imperialist struggles, Cold War politics, and the Black Freedom and Women's Liberation movements in the U.S. The new Puerto Rican nationalism of the late 1960s developed simultaneously among baby boomers in two different cities, converging and giving rise to the most celebrated Puerto Rican organization of the era, the Young Lords Organization.

Puerto Rican nationalism

Nationalism is slippery in its definition. Scholars of nationalism offer complex topologies to make sense of its various manifestations. At times, these definitions and analyses compete and contrast with each other.² There are, however, fundamental qualities that are generally agreed to be universal in nearly all nationalist agendas: self-determination, unity, and territorial separatism. Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson argue that as nationalism emerged among Westerners in the 18th century it was “first of all, a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. The people must be liberated—that is, free from any external constraint; they must determine their own destiny and be masters of their own house; they must control their own resources.”³ This drive for autonomy among a people rests on a basic expression of *national consciousness*. The people must view themselves as an organic unit, bound together with common experiences, historical myths and culture. Moreover, the aspiration for sovereignty is dependent on the people's awareness of an oppositional *other*—an external group that attempts to circumvent freedom and prohibit self-determination for the nation. The major expressions of Puerto Rican nationalist politics embrace all of these qualities.

Puerto Rican nationalism is rooted in the late 19th century, when Puerto Ricans joined with Cubans in the common fight against Spanish imperialism. The United States won Puerto Rico, which had been a colony of Spain for 400 years, after the U.S. defeat of Spain in the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898. Unlike the other possessions procured in the war, such as Cuba and the Philippines, Puerto Rico (and Guam) never received independence from the United States. Puerto Rican nationalism would ebb and flow between 1900 and the 1950s, during which time the Nationalists Party was the major expression of this nationalism. In 1930 Don Pedro Albizu Campos was elected president of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. Considered a terrorist organization by the federal authorities after a series of violent confrontations with colonial leaders, the Nationalist Party was repressed and Albizu was imprisoned from 1936–1948. Following the October nationalist uprising in 1950

Albizu was sentenced to 72 years in prison. He was released in 1965 several weeks before he died. The 1950 uprising fomented extensive political repression of Puerto Ricans on the island and mainland. The 1954 shooting of five members of the U.S. Congress by Puerto Rican nationalists only hardened this repression. Leftist radicalism among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. was limited to larger, mostly white organizations, such as the Socialist Workers Party or the Communist Party USA.⁴ These organizations addressed the question of Puerto Rican sovereignty as a general denunciation of imperialism. Despite increased marginalization, Puerto Rican nationalist organizations were not extinct.

With concentrated poverty, poor housing, and employment discrimination, Puerto Ricans suffered pervasive discrimination in the mainland. There was plenty reason for Puerto Rican activism and outrage at the conditions under which they languished. Initially, some Puerto Rican activists found space in established organizations such as the Communist Party, which had Puerto Rican sections. Others joined the efforts of civil rights organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) or the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) in the early and middle 1960s.⁵ But as the Black Power movement took root, the charisma of black nationalism resonated among other people of color as no radicalism had heretofore. Some Puerto Ricans, particularly those who were darker-skinned, identified as black, since most Americans viewed them as such. As Pablo “Yoruba” Guzman, once explained, “Before people called me a spic, they called me a nigger.”⁶ Small numbers of Puerto Ricans joined the largely insular, though respected, Nation of Islam (NOI). The NOI had long embraced all people of color as “black,” though the message had a special meaning for African Americans. Latinos and Asians had been members of the organization or attended the Mosques across the country. Temple #7 in Harlem was the Nation's largest mosque and under the leadership of Malcolm X in the early 1960s. Thousands of Harlemites—African American and Puerto Rican—listened as he discussed the black freedom struggle in a global context. Malcolm inveighed against white supremacy and stressed the common humanity and common enemy of the Congolese, Algerians, Cubans, and the American “so-called Negro.” Post-NOI Malcolm X transcended the confines of his earlier narrow definition of struggle, which did not see whites as potential allies. After his assassination, he became an iconic figure of revolutionary thought and was revered by the American Left. By 1968 the Black Panther Party (one of many that claimed to be Malcolm's heirs) had established branches in New York and expanded arenas of leftist discourse and praxis.

Through a media savvy leadership, the Panthers spread rapidly in 1968, bolstered by a “Free Huey” movement that highlighted the efforts of black militants to challenge police terror but also offer a powerful, broader gesture of defiance to white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism. Though it was particularly oriented toward the exigencies in the African American community, the Party was not an exclusively African American organization. Asian Americans and Latinos had been active in the organization from the beginning.⁷ As Black Panthers spread, some Puerto Ricans gravitated to its discourse and politics. Pablo Guzman notes that “at first the only model [of revolutionary nationalism] we had to go on in this country was the Black Panther Party. Besides that, we were all a bunch of readers....”⁸ Several Puerto Ricans became active in the New York chapter of the Panther Party early on. In fact, there were at least two members of the famous Panther 21 case of 1969, Raymond Quiñones and Albert Nieves, who were Puerto Rican.⁹

Though the Black Panthers were a product of the Black Power movement, the ideological thrust of the Panthers was decidedly leftist in ways that most Black Power groups were not. Indeed, Black Power was an amorphous term that brought together disparate organizations, agendas, and worldviews under the rubric of black self-determination and black racial pride. All Black Power advocates, for example, were not hostile to capitalism, as evidenced in the capitalist-oriented National Urban League's call for Black Power in 1968. Many were not nationalists, as made clear in the demands made by black students on white college campuses. These students demanded more black autonomy in white-dominated institutions, not an abandonment of these white institutions for black ones or territorial separatism. In the context of the Black Panther Party, self-determination, armed self-defense, racial pride, and socialist ambitions were central to [inter]national liberation.¹⁰ This group typifies what I call radical ethnic nationalism. Unlike typical ethnic nationalism, this form does not limit its nationalist agenda exclusively to its own group.¹¹ Indeed, its national consciousness is central to its politics; however, it can work intimately with members from other ethnic groups in various contexts in symbiotic struggle. Ultimately, this strain of nationalism helped to foment new expressions of Puerto Rican nationalism in Chicago. But despite the participation of Puerto Ricans in leftist activities, in New York there was no organization that simultaneously focused on Puerto Rican radical ethnic nationalism on the island and mainland by early 1969. The only exceptions were Puerto Rican college-based groups.

African-American student activism and the Black Student Union (BSU) movement had already inspired Puerto Ricans by the mid-1960s. Though SNCC was most active in the South, it had established northern bases by 1962. Largely concerned with broader off-campus issues, small African American students groups began to address campus concerns when James Garrett and others established the first black student union (BSU) in 1966 at San Francisco State College. BSUs quickly spread across the country. Some Puerto Rican students joined BSUs or their campus proximate. The militancy and program of these organizations were early models for Puerto Rican students. At City College in New York, for example, Iris Morales joined ONYX, an African American group, and studied Malcolm X as well as other black icons. Years before Morales would become a prominent member of the Young Lords, she was involved with SNCC and the NAACP. Her involvement with ONYX was a reflection of her political trajectory and affinity with the black freedom movement. She could not, however, overlook crises that were particular to Puerto Ricans. When more Puerto Rican students arrived on campus, Morales helped form City College's first Puerto Rican organization, Puerto Ricans in Student Activities (PRISA). In 1968 PRISA members Eduardo "Pancho" Cruz, Tom Soto, Henry Arce, and others established alliances with ONYX and other black groups and by spring 1969 launched an ambitious effort in collaboration with other city college campuses for a city-wide strike. The Black and Puerto Rican Student Community (BPRSC) formed the strike leadership. The strike, almost identical to that staged by the Third World Liberation Front of the California Bay Area, began with activities initiated by black students for a black studies department, more black faculty, and students. Demanding a broader set of changes, including open admission for Puerto Rican and black students, the CCNY insurgents occupied buildings, renaming them after famous black and Latino leaders.¹² By the end of the spring semester, Puerto Rican activists in New York were eager to expand their scope of struggle.

Racial identity in flux

A different type of politicization was developing among Puerto Ricans in the country's second largest city. Chicago, like New York and other major U.S. cities, suffered from a pervasive gang problem. While gangs were generally composed along racial and ethnic lines, they were most likely to engage in criminal behavior against people of the same ethnicity, although gang rivalry also transcended ethnic lines.¹³ The politically charged climate of the late 1960s, the ubiquitous influence of the Black Power movement, and the nature of urban rebellions forced many black gang members to reconsider their activities. Many abandoned gang life and joined the Nation of Islam, the Black Panther Party, or any of the scores of largely local nationalist and Black Power organizations in cities across the country. For Puerto Ricans, the process of politicization was similar. But unlike any major Black Power organization in the country, the leading Puerto Rican radical organization of the era would have its roots in gang culture.

Puerto Ricans migrated to Chicago in substantial numbers after World War II. Lured by the new Commonwealth Office in Puerto Rico and the Point Four Program, many first arrived in New York, but, disaffected with conditions there, moved to Chicago to work in manufacturing jobs and as migrant farm laborers.¹⁴ Initially, whites did not racialize Puerto Ricans as a distinct and organic "other" as they had African Americans. This was generally congruent with how most Puerto Ricans saw themselves. In fact, in 1950 79.7 percent of Puerto Ricans on the island and 92 percent of those on the mainland were classified as white on the U.S. Census. In 1960 a full 96 percent of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. were classified as white.¹⁵ This was a result of complex initiatives rooted in U.S. colonial policies with the island as well as Puerto Rican's own dynamic notions of racial identity. In the early 20th century some government agents as well as scholars assuaged white American racial anxiety of absorbing a "colored" population by depicting Puerto Rico as the "whitest of the Antilles."¹⁶ Additionally, the categorization reflected Puerto Ricans' own sense of identity, which rejected the American notion of white "purity" and hypodescent (the "one-drop rule") and simultaneously stigmatized blackness. But while the federal government recognized Puerto Ricans as whites "unless they were definitely Negro, Indian, or some other race," colloquial policy was a different matter.¹⁷

Beyond U.S. government policy, Puerto Rico's own racial topography rejected the U.S. racial binary but made space for white racial supremacy. As Mariam Jiménez Román explains, in Puerto Rico there existed "a widely accepted belief in the superiority of 'whiteness,' and its corollary, the inferiority of 'blackness'-popularly expressed in the notion of *mejorar la raza* [improvement of the race]."¹⁸ Puerto Ricans, although largely a mixture of European, African, and native Taino natives, had historically idealized whiteness and were reluctant to identify as *negro*, *mulato*, or even *de color*. The U.S. Census Bureau found measuring the racial landscape of the island frustrating after reports suggested a much whiter island than U.S. officials believed was the case. In fact, despite the lack of codified racial segregation preventing social intercourse between races (as in the U.S.) and the wide range in skin color within Puerto Rican families, the percentage of whites reported in the Census grew rapidly through the 19th and 20th centuries, without a commensurate influx of white immigrants. In 1802 48 percent of the island was classified as white. By 1899 nearly 62 percent was white. By 1950 79.7 percent of Puerto Ricans on the island were classified as white. One observer in 1948 complained that "the reliability of Puerto Rican racial classification is open to serious criticisms."¹⁹ Census takers,

who were drawn from the local population, often employed native standards of racial classification. Jorge Duany explains that these census takers rejected the racial categorization imposed upon the island, which forced choices between “white” and “colored,” which was a category including blacks and mulattoes. Due to Puerto Rico’s own stigmatized view of blackness and its bias in favor of whiteness, census takers “tended to avoid the ‘colored’ and ‘black’ labels altogether and to identify their informants as white.”²⁰

Despite being racialized as “other” in New York, Puerto Ricans in Chicago had a somewhat different experience. By 1960 there had not been an identifiable geographically contiguous Puerto Rican community. Puerto Ricans were commonly found in white areas such as Oldtown, Lincoln Park, and Lakeview. Unlike Puerto Ricans in New York, Chicago migrants did not have a particularly close geographic relationship with African Americans. Moreover, Chicago as the most residentially segregated city in the U.S., provided not only significant social intercourse between whites and Puerto Ricans, it circumscribed contact with African Americans and helped extend the virulently anti-black sentiment common among white Chicagoans. Much to the dismay of many Puerto Ricans, however, they became non-white in the popular consciousness of white Americans as their numbers increased. Uptown, Humboldt Park and Lincoln Park emerged as communities with high concentrations of Puerto Ricans, on the city’s white Northside.²¹ In these areas clashes between white gangs and Puerto Rican youth gave rise to Puerto Rican gangs as well as an inchoate political and racial/ethnic consciousness. Bouts with job and housing discrimination as well as police brutality exploded on June 12, 1966. For four days urban unrest shook Division Street in Lincoln Park and Uptown. Though Puerto Rican leadership complained of discrimination, most were loathe to be lumped together with African Americans, largely seen as more marginalized and despised than they. In fact, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. offered to assist in negotiations between the community and the city, Puerto Rican leaders turned down his offer.²² Despite the relatively tepid leadership of the Spanish Action Committee, largely invested in being recognized as a variant of European [white] ethnicity, Puerto Rican street youth proved central to deconstructing traditional notions of community and racial and ethnic identity as the Black Power movement took root. No group was as important as the Young Lords.

Nationalism from the streets

Formed in 1959 by seven Chicago Puerto Rican youths, the Young Lords aimed to defend themselves against attacks from surrounding gangs. Largely engaged in battles with Italians, “Billigans” (Appalachian whites), and other Latinos, the Lords continued to grow into the early 1960s when Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez was elected chairman of the organization. The Division Street Unrest as well as the spread of Black Power forced Young Lord leaders to reevaluate their organization by the late 1960s. A major catalyst for this politicization was the transformation among African American gangs in the city.²³

In 1966 members from various black nationalist organizations fanned across the Southside and Westside to meet with and court various street gangs. Members of the Deacons for Defense, the Revolutionary Action Movement, SNCC, the Nation of Islam, and others directed gangs to cease attacks on black people and prepare to be agents for black people’s liberation. One gangster explained that “the militants came in and say [sic] why be a gangbanger and kill each other when you can kill the honkey



Multi-organizational demonstration for Puerto Rican independence, New York City (1971). Photographer Maximo Colon. © Maximo Colon. Reprinted by permission.

and we began to see that the enemy was not black.”²⁴ The new militancy inherently rejected fear of white power, and black youth were the first to react. Elzy, a twenty-year old Vice Lord, stated, “We were scared of the honkies but this awareness thing has kicked all that bullshit aside.”²⁵ By 1967 the three largest gangs, the Vice Lords, Blackstone Rangers, and the Gangster Disciples established the LSD (Lords, Stones, and Disciples) peace treaty and began investing in commercial endeavors, including cafés, pool halls, and even a bookstore. Cha Cha Jimenez, who served a year in prison and was exposed to black nationalism, insisted that the Young Lords should similarly engage in constructive activities.²⁶

In 1967 Young Lords opened a cafe, Uptight #2, where they talked about the general political and cultural upheaval in the country, as well as more mundane topics. Lords established service programs, including a community summer picnic, a drug education program, and a Christmas giveaway of food and toys for impoverished people in the Puerto Rican community. The Lords even began dialogue with the largest street gang in the country, the notorious Blackstone Rangers, and co-sponsored a “Month of Soul Dances” with them.²⁷ While these efforts impressed many liberals, the Illinois deputy chairman of the Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton, and the local Panthers hoped to make the Lords into revolutionaries. In December 1968 Fred Hampton initiated a meeting with Jimenez.

In accordance with the Party’s theories of class, the Panthers viewed the politicization of street gangs as an essential process in the political transformation of the country’s “internal colonies.” The urban rebellions that often included the poorest and most maligned elements in the community were the precursors to revolution, argued the Party. The lumpenproletariat had guns and were not afraid to use them. Unfortunately, the Panthers explained, they were not yet politically sophisticated enough to aim in the direction of the “pig power structure” more frequently. These rebellions, insisted Party leader Huey Newton, were “sporadic, short-lived, and costly in violence against the people.” The task of the Panthers was

clear: “The Vanguard Party must provide leadership for the people. It must teach correct strategic methods of prolonged resistance through literature and activities. If the activities of the Party are respected by the people, the people will follow the example.”²⁸ The efforts of the Lords and the Rangers had been, to the Panthers, indicative of the political transformation that would make inadvertent agents of oppression into agents of liberation. The Lords, Rangers, and other street gangs could be made into harbingers of freedom, justice, and power for the people by embracing revolutionary nationalism.

As Hampton began dialogue with Jimenez he also met with Jeff Fort, the leader of the Blackstone Rangers, who was less warm to the idea of revolution and radical politics than had been Jimenez. Impressed with the bold and brash militancy that characterized the Panthers, Jimenez envisioned a Puerto Rican revolutionary organization to realize liberation for Puerto Ricans on the island and in the mainland. Lords began to realize that they had been acting more like social workers by only addressing the symptoms and not the cause of social illness. “Giving gifts wasn’t going to help their people,” Jimenez said of the Lords. “They had to deal with the system that was messing them over.”²⁹ Like African American gangs, the Lords became critical of their street violence. They initiated a peace treaty with virtually all of their former enemies and advised them to cease the fighting against each other. Rather, they were to address the struggle “against the capitalist institutions that are oppressing us.” The Latin Kings, the city’s largest Latino gang, began to politically organize as well, even opening a breakfast program for children. By May 1969, the Lords had officially joined a pact with the Panthers, and the Young Patriots, a gang of white Appalachian youths from the city’s Uptown section on the Northside.³⁰

In this new “Rainbow Coalition,” the Lords and Patriots dutifully modeled themselves after the Black Panther Party, believed to be the revolutionary vanguard. The Chairman of the Lords explained that “as we read and study other organizations...we see and we recognize the Black Panther Party as a revolutionary vanguard. And we feel that as revolutionaries we should follow the vanguard party.”³¹ In their respective communities, the Lords and Patriots held political education classes, free breakfast programs for poor children and monitored police activities, in an attempt to curb police brutality. They created an organizational structure that reflected Panther influence, which included Ministers of Information, Defense, Education and a Central Committee with field marshals. The Patriots developed an 11-Point Program and Platform that borrowed heavily from the Panthers, as did the Lords’ 13-Point Program and Platform.³² All three organizations sponsored events together, providing joint speakers and joint security. It seemed odd for some black nationalists to see Fred Hampton and Cha Cha Jimenez give a typically awe-inspiring speech on revolutionary struggle, while white men wearing berets, sunglasses and Confederate rebel flags sewn into their jackets helped to provide security for them.

By mid-1969, the Young Patriots and Young Lords were becoming nationally known through their Rainbow Coalition, which was featured in articles in the *Black Panther* and *Guardian* newspapers and other alternative press. Also that year, the Coalition sent representatives to the annual convention of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), where Joe Martinez, an SDS member from Florida, met with Young Lord founders and was granted permission to start a branch in New York, where Puerto Rican nationalism was still growing.³³

Amid the militant student protests some students at New York’s City College formed the Sociedad de Albizu Campos (SAC) to bring together the militancy of college radicals with that of El Barrio in early 1969. Named after the Puerto Rican nationalist Pedro Albizu Campos who, as “El Maestro,” inspired Puerto Ricans with calls for independence and national pride, SAC reflected the spirit of the *independentistas*. There were, however, other concerns about the plight of Puerto Ricans in the mainland. In a struggle to bridge the chasm between unorganized street militancy and that of the college campus, community-based activists Pablo “Yoruba” Guzman and David Perez joined SAC and became the links to El Barrio that the organization desired. Yoruba, who was named after a major ethnic group in Nigeria, had a strong affinity to Africa, as well as Puerto Rico. Perez, who was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Chicago, had involved himself in radical politics before moving to New York. Simultaneously SAC members were reading the *Black Panther* newspaper regularly and learned of the Rainbow Coalition established by Fred Hampton. After merging with other local Puerto Rican activist organizations, SAC met with Martinez, and on July 26, 1969, a coalition was formed in New York that became the New York State Chapter of the Young Lords Organization (YLO).³⁴

Within weeks, the Lords captured headlines. Lords organized against police brutality, poor city services, slum housing, poor education, and occupied a Methodist church on 111th and Lexington Avenue in December 1969, declaring it the “People’s Church.” For ten days the Lords held off police, as the church became a center for free breakfast, clothes, health care, political education, and cultural events. In an era of incredible contest over the “law and order” conservatism of President Nixon’s “silent majority” and the rising tide of baby boomer leftist activism, events like the occupation were sensational news. The media attention was crucial in popularizing the organization to millions. From New York the YLO spread to several cities along the east coast, including Philadelphia, Newark, and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Several months later Young Lord activities extended into the Lincoln Hospital, where a group of 100 men and women took it over on July 17, 1970, to protest inadequate health care for the poor and neglect from the city government. Though expelled by the police, the act brought attention to insufficient medical care in poor communities. The mayor of New York, John Lindsay, promised community activists that the city would build a new hospital on East 149th street to replace the dilapidated Lincoln. The new hospital opened in 1976.³⁵

Adherents of Puerto Rican independence, the Lords denounced the cardinal “three evils” of revolutionary nationalists: capitalism, racism, and imperialism. They sponsored free breakfast, drug detoxification, and garbage clean-up programs in chapters in several states. They brought attention to police brutality, worked closely with students on college and high school campuses, and even found success organizing in prisons. During the Attica Prison uprising in September 1971, insurgents issued a list of more than twenty demands to prison officials that included a request for the presence of the Young Lords and the Black Panther Party to serve as observers and advisors.

In no uncertain terms, the Lords had become major exponents of new Puerto Rican nationalism. As scholar Andrés Torres notes, the YLO “was indisputably the main catalyst for the second generation’s baptism into radical politics.... The Lords charted new ground... without the benefit of a direct tie to the liberation movement in Puerto Rico.”³⁶ Though not directly connected to Puerto Rican radicals, the YLO’s relationship to the Black Panthers and other advocates of Black Power reveals

that the YLO was not completely without mentors. In many cities Lords worked in alliances with Black Power advocates and helped realize more community control of police, political reform, and political mobilization for poor and working class people. The Young Lords were also able to work with organizations that were openly hostile to the Black Panthers, despite their official alliance with the Party. In the early 1970s the Young Lords in Newark, New Jersey, established an alliance with the Committee for a Unified Newark, led by writer Amiri Baraka, a leading cultural nationalist and ally of Maulana Karenga, who shared mutual animosity with the Panthers.³⁷

Cultural and political discourse

For the Young Lords and other radical ethnic nationalist organizations, various communities of color in the U.S. provided cheap labor and resources for capitalists. Influenced by a theoretical rubric of racism, the capitalists found cheap, expendable labor that provided for increased quality of life for whites by expanding the white middle class considerably. Increased numbers of people of color in urban areas allowed working class whites to assume higher social economic status. But since racism was very real, working class whites, often beholden to white supremacy, out of ignorance and cultural tradition, were intolerant of considering the affinities that they shared with working class people of color. The Young Patriots hoped to demonstrate, however, that working class and poor whites could be mobilized and, indeed, follow a revolutionary program led by a black organization. Preacher Man, Field Secretary for the Young Patriots, explained that many poor whites in Chicago's Uptown felt "forgotten" by the radical discourse of the New Left "until we met the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party."³⁸ Impressed by Panther politics, Young Patriots joined the Rainbow Coalition and dedicated themselves to ending racism, imperialism, and capitalism. But while white groups like the Patriots, Rising Up Angry, and the White Panther Party modeled themselves after the Black Panther Party, the Panthers and Black Power had a special resonance for radicals of color.

Class exploitation was a major concern for leftists; however, the highly racialized climate of the U.S. made interracial political organization difficult, particularly with poor and working class whites, considered by many to be a more overt and crude group of racists than the middle and upper classes. Moreover, the U.S. tradition of class exploitation was significantly bolstered by white supremacy, which had profound psychological and cultural ramifications.³⁹ People of color who were involved in leftist liberation movements of the era were committed to liberate themselves along class and cultural lines simultaneously. For Puerto Ricans the trappings of white supremacy were deep rooted, despite the myth of racial tolerance on the island. From folk songs, sayings such as *pelo malo* ("bad hair") for kinky hair to the concept of *mejorar la raza* by whitening, white supremacy was ubiquitous, though different from its American variant. The Puerto Rican color hierarchy was fundamentally porous and allowed darker Puerto Ricans considered "negros" or "mulattos" to "ascend" to whiteness with economic success. But the ramifications of being dark were nonetheless insidious and widespread.⁴⁰ The Puerto Rican Civil Rights Commission in 1959 and 1972 found explicit discrimination against darker-skinned Puerto Ricans pervasive on the island.⁴¹

Puerto Rican baby boomers in the U.S. began to critically adjust their own notions of ethnicity, race, and identity. They increasingly challenged traditional notions of race, and explicitly addressed their own history of racism. These shifts were a result of the peculiar American racial landscape and a history of codified white supremacy

that chiefly rested on a white/black binary. Despite the special attention given African Americans in their fight against white supremacy, Puerto Ricans could not deny their own depressed circumstances and the effects of racism with which they were confronted. They were also exposed to the rhetoric of the Black Power movement, which stressed the need to resist the cultural and psychological entrapments of whiteness. Black Power advocates not only celebrated black peoples' history and beauty, but many also vilified whites, calling them "honkies," "crackers," "ofays," and "devils." Some publicly joked about the way whites smelled, danced, and lacked hygiene or morality. Though not monolithic in their attention to whites, Black Power proponents depedestalized whiteness in ways not seen in the civil rights movement. The generations of self-hate and internalization of white supremacy were being addressed in what many would consider a collective and profound moment of group catharsis. Young Puerto Ricans took notice. They, too, had to affirm themselves in ways not seen heretofore, while addressing the complicated racial politics of their time. Puerto Rican radical ethnic nationalists initiated systematic efforts to make the psychic break from whiteness (as it was popularly understood in the U.S.). Moreover, there was a conspicuous celebration of Puerto Rican culture and identity that was "Third World" and, in effect, not white. This was a fundamental departure from the Puerto Rican nationalism and consciousness of earlier leaders and movements.

The Young Lords, as the first Puerto Rican radical ethnic nationalist group with a national appeal, denounced racism, while simultaneously calling for greater emphasis on their African and Taino histories, which had been ignored by Spanish and American imperialists. Juan Gonzalez, Minister of Information for the Young Lords, explained the history of Puerto Rico, where the earliest census records show that blacks and Indians comprised the majority while "whites were always the smallest part of the population."⁴² This message was intended to offer a somewhat cultural nationalist challenge to how Puerto Ricans viewed themselves, while adhering to the fundamental tenets of revolutionary nationalism. Despite the fact that over ninety percent of Puerto Ricans on the mainland classified themselves as white at this time, Young Lords made common references to whites and Puerto Ricans as separate and distinct. Cha Cha Jimenez and other Lords were careful to refer to the range of colors among Puerto Ricans as an instructive tool to inveigh against race-only discourse, while celebrating an identity that was not white. Jimenez, for example, would not make reference to the lightest Puerto Ricans as "white." In discussing the importance of class struggle he states, "We relate to the class struggle because there's Puerto Ricans that are real black, then there's Puerto Ricans that are light-skinned like myself."⁴³ Though he would refer to Puerto Ricans as "black," "red," and "yellow," the lightest were simply "light-skinned." He also insisted that it was inefficacious to insist on more "Puerto Rican" police to replace "white" police, when the fundamental job of the police (of any ethnicity or race) was to operate as "bodyguards for the capitalists."⁴⁴ Here, Jimenez implies that unlike Poles, Italians, or Irish in Chicago, Puerto Ricans as a group are distinct from European (read as "white") ethnic groups. He acknowledges that the ramifications of race are real, yet race is itself a social construct that, with its slippery contours, includes yet rejects Puerto Ricans as "others" in American racial politics.⁴⁵

Young Lords and other Puerto Rican militants unequivocally celebrated their Puerto Rican identity with great zeal. It was, indeed, an essential part of cultivating a national consciousness *por la gente*. And though they were nationalists, they were

careful to transcend the debilitating xenophobia that often typifies nationalist movements. Alliances with other people of color as well as whites were central to the YLO. Even in the context of showcasing Puerto Rican culture and history, Lords tended to be broad. In reference to the creation of a Puerto Rican cultural center, Cha Cha Jimenez noted that the center must “include some black culture, cause we got some blacks; we want to include some Chicano culture too, cause we want to include all Latins. We want to invite the people from the white community. We’ll educate them.” Unable to embrace a narrow form of nationalism, the Chairman of the YLO explained, “We feel that we are revolutionaries and revolutionaries have no race.”⁴⁶

What is particularly interesting about the formation and ethnic/national emphasis of the Young Lords is that the organization was never homogenous. Though mostly Puerto Rican, the Lords had Chicano members from its earliest years as a street gang. When it evolved into a radical ethnic nationalist organization, many non-Puerto Ricans adopted its special attention to Puerto Rican independence. In fact, Omar Lopez, a Chicano member, coined the Lords’ slogan “*Tengo Puerto Rico en mi corazón*” (“I have Puerto Rico in my heart”).⁴⁷ On the East Coast the Young Lords had members who were Cuban, Dominican, Panamanian, and Colombian. An estimated 25 percent of the Young Lords’ membership was African American. Despite the explicit emphasis on Puerto Rican politics and welfare, the organization was broad enough to include serious support for “power to all oppressed people,” which included all “Third World people.” Some non-Puerto Ricans in the organization held prominent positions, including Denise Oliver, an African American who was the first woman on the Central Committee and the Minister of Economic Development in the years 1970–71.⁴⁸

Although Puerto Rican identity was malleable, it was not entirely unique in its mutability. Chicanos were similarly shifting identities and engaged in their own civil rights movement in this time. And the Young Lords were not the only radical ethnic nationalist group with a heterogeneous membership. But as much as the Young Lords helped rearticulate ethnic identity, they were also addressing deep-seated psychological issues related to hegemony and resistance and Puerto Ricans. On several occasions, Young Lords leaders indicated that they were rejecting notions of Puerto Rican passivity. Cha Cha Jimenez was careful to anchor YLO radicalism in a tradition of Puerto Rican struggle, not an aberration from obsequiousness. “People consider Puerto Ricans as passive...but as recently as 1950 there was a revolution in Puerto Rico. Lots of revolutionaries have come out of Puerto Rico.” Despite the “uncle toms” that oppress the people of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans are not unfamiliar with resistance, he explained.⁴⁹ Despite Jimenez’s insistence that Puerto Rican radicalism was not entirely aberrant, many Puerto Ricans found the Lords to be truly unique. “Puerto Ricans had been psyched into believing this myth about being docile,” according to Pablo Guzman. “A lot of Puerto Ricans really thought that the man in blue was the baddest thing going.” Guzman was shocked to first learn about the militancy of the Lords in the *Black Panther* newspaper:

Cha Cha was talking about revolution and socialism and the liberation of Puerto Rico and the right to self-determination and all this stuff that I ain’t never heard a spic say. I mean, I hadn’t never heard no Puerto Rican talking this-just black people were talking this way, you know. And I said, “damn! Check this out.” That’s what really got U.S. started.⁵⁰

After conspicuous demonstrations of courage, militancy, and discipline, Young Lords, according to Guzman, were obvious models of revolutionary strength to the people in El Barrio. There were palpable changes in the self-awareness among Puerto Rican youth as well as the police who were assigned the task of controlling them. “Before the Young Lords Party began people used to walk with their heads down...and the pigs would walk through the colonies, man, like they owned the block. They’d come in here with no kind of respect in their eyes.” But after revolutionary examples, the people have been psychologically empowered, Lords claimed. They were shedding the fear that theorist Frantz Fanon said was crippling to the colonized. Police officers, no longer taking Puerto Rican deference for granted, treaded with greater caution. The people are “fighting toe to toe [with the oppressor] and know [that the people] can take his best.” Guzman states that, “the people now have hope.”⁵¹

Nationalism and gender

The Young Lord Organization was never ideologically static. It incessantly engaged in what it considered “self-criticism,” which was the reevaluation of its political positions, measuring them against internal standards. One of the most important shifts in its interpretation of Puerto Rican nationalism was its reconsideration of gender. As it did with its racial analysis, the organization of the Young Lords went beyond their nationalist predecessors to scrutinize the role of the oppressed segment within a larger oppressed group.

The role of gender in nationalist struggles has generally been muted, viewed one dimensionally as masculinist activities and discourses. Ida Bloom explains that, there has been a “built-in antithesis” between the histories of nations and histories of gender, where the emphasis on ideologies and statesmen “have drowned any interest that may have existed in analyzing gender relations and gender orders.”⁵² Indeed, for many men in countries under the rule of foreign states, there has been a systematic attempt to reconcile their manhood with that of the liberation of the nation from imperialist domination. The collective trauma of violent control of the country by occupying armies has fomented a sense of emasculation among colonized male populations. The rhetoric of nationalism, particularly in highly racialized contexts, reflects this attempt to affirm manhood in reaction to being denied the right to be “men.” Cynthia Enloe states that “nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope.”⁵³ Moreover, a similar feeling of emasculation has been noted among oppressed racialized groups in the United States.⁵⁴ From this position, Young Lords initially cultivated a “revolutionary macho” thesis that sought the masculinist redemption of Puerto Ricans. This thesis would not go unchallenged by its own rank and file.

By 1970 the Young Lord Organization experienced a fissure between its New York chapter and Chicago. The East Coast chapters, under the direction of the New York leadership, became the Young Lord Party (YLP) and launched its bilingual paper, *Palante!*, in May 1970. *Palante!* reflected the hyper-masculinity of the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, with acclamations that “machismo must be revolutionary.” Moreover, the organization relegated women to peripheral roles in leadership, despite a general policy that granted all members access to all organizational activities. As a reaction to the widespread nature of machismo in the YLP, women offered their own challenges as early as 1969, when several female members formed a women’s caucus.⁵⁵

Caucus members shared stories of confronting the sexism of their comrades on a regular basis, forcing the male leadership to respond. Denise Oliver explained that equality for women is revolutionary. The caucus opposed machismo and the hegemonic hold that it had on men and women. Not only were the “brothers off the street” unaccustomed to gender equality, many women had been similarly convinced of their sole role as helpers to men. “In Puerto Rican society,” Oliver states, “the woman is taught to cater to the... demands of her father or husband. She is taught that she is inferior in her own ways.”⁵⁶ The women’s caucus issued demands to the Central Committee of the organization for an end to sexual discrimination and full inclusion of women into the leadership of the Lords. The all-male leadership reacted swiftly by promoting Denise Oliver and Gloria Fontanez to the Central Committee. The Lords also adopted a new slogan, “*¡Abajo con el machismo!*” (Down with Machismo!), which appeared in the newspaper and other official releases from the YLP. They also made changes to the 13-point program of the Party to include denouncing sexism as point number five. “Puerto Rican women,” Young Lords stated, “will be neither behind nor in front of their brothers but always alongside them in mutual respect and love.”⁵⁷ For many members of the Lords, the effort to denounce sexism was an inevitable step in the movement toward liberation. Indeed, men even formed a male caucus to discuss patriarchy and ways to resist it. Some men who considered themselves open-minded and progressive realized just how ubiquitous sexism was to society at large. Pablo Guzman insisted that sexism was “impractical” to revolutionary struggle and welcomed the agenda of women’s liberation, though the struggle of “Third World women” was different from that of white women, who “have been put on a pedestal,” while white men raped and otherwise exploited women of color.⁵⁸ Others agreed that there were fundamentally different concerns between women of color and white women in the women’s liberation movement. Iris Morales, a Central Committee member, notes that “we were critical of that movement for purporting to speak for all women when it represented primarily white, middle-class women. It never successfully addressed the concerns of women of color and poor women.”⁵⁹

Some have argued that the major expressions of nationalism during the Black Power movement were particularly sexist.⁶⁰ There is no doubt that many groups struggled with patriarchal policies. The movement clearly lionized black men as hypermacho leaders, fighters, and defenders of black people. The bravado, militant rhetoric and general character of Black Power were decidedly male-oriented. But while Black Power advocates and Puerto Rican ethnic nationalists used hyperbolic language to express their politics, the movement was not monolithic. In 1970 the Black Panther Party became the first major black organization to align itself with the Women’s Liberation Movement as well as the Gay Liberation Movement. The Panthers also denounced sexism on several occasions and appointed women to key positions of leadership throughout the country. Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver explained to men that their freedom couldn’t be arrived at the expense of women’s liberation. “The women are our half. They’re not our weaker half; they’re not our stronger half. They are our other half.” Several articles written by women Panthers appeared in the *Black Panther* extolling Cleaver’s position, while calling recalcitrant male members to task.⁶¹ This progress, however, cannot overlook bouts with sexism fought by Huey Newton and others, even as the Party moved into alliances with feminists.⁶² But by 1973 the Chairman of the Party was a woman, Elaine Brown, who effectively

led the organization for four years. The Young Lords similarly accepted the challenge to transcend the narrow confines of patriarchy and made substantive changes to their organization’s rhetoric and style. Gloria Fontanez eventually led the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (as the YLP was known after 1972).⁶³ Clearly, the liberation of a nation could not tolerate the oppression of its half.

There was no particular formula or model for radical ethnic nationalists to respond to sexism. Latino, white, and black Americans all lived in a patriarchy culture at large that openly endorsed male domination. Mainstream African American and Latino organizations reflected patriarchal traditions without considerable challenges and upheaval. The national leadership of the NAACP and the Democratic and Republican parties was more male dominated than that of either the Panthers or Lords. But it was the passion for total liberation that raised the expectations of struggle for many radical ethnic nationalists. Despite their criticism of the white-oriented women’s movement, radical ethnic nationalists were aware that women’s liberation was intrinsic to national liberation.

Revolutionary cultural nationalism

Similar to the process of psychological oppression experienced by African Americans who lived in a virulently anti-black world, Puerto Ricans had to resist the culturally hegemonic forces of white supremacy as well as the de facto policies that discriminated against them. In this rejection of the cultural orthodox there emerged the opportunity to openly criticize and change traditional gender roles. Of course all ethnic nationalist organizations were not as responsive to the challenges to patriarchy as the Panthers and Lords, who were not fully successful in realizing their goals to destroy sexism within their organizations. But the efforts to confront sexism in a very explicit way reflected the ability of the organizations to adapt, grow, and evolve in ways that many so-called mainstream organizations had not. It was their willingness to consider new challenges and ideas that made these radical ethnic nationalist organizations attractive to young people. In addition, it was the new militant ethnic pride that drew many young people into the movement.

The politics of the Panthers and Lords reflected a conscious effort to culturally affirm people who languished under a dehumanizing system of racial oppression, while it also refused to pander to the convenient race-only discourse that attracted many. These proponents of radical ethnic nationalism glorified their ethnicity while they eagerly embraced a polysemic nationalist framework whose structure was pulled from the writings of Fanon, Marx, Che, and Mao. Too, the YLP was significantly influenced by the political analysis of the Black Panther Party and its thesis of revolutionary struggle. But, as seen above, Black Power’s influence on non-African Americans altered the popular discourse and public discussion of identity and equality in the U.S. in interesting ways. Outside and inside of the radical ethnic nationalist communities were militants who rebuked whiteness and the implications of whiteness such as status dependent on the subjugation of non-whites. In this contextual framework, many militants sought to “humanize” whites by stripping them of any trappings of cultural prestige or supremacy.

There was a particular appeal that made Black Power a model for many young people of color longing for an end to the racial oppression they had endured. It allowed many to affirm themselves without concern for white scrutiny or hostility. Puerto Rican baby boomers in the mainland grew Afros, celebrated African and Taino ancestry, and less identified as white, instead making frequent references to themselves as “brown” people.

Beyond the cultural and psychological effects that radical ethnic nationalism introduced to the New Left of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the movement was truly a unique phenomenon. There are no major examples of ethnic nationalist struggles that have established alliances, as had young radicals of the Black Power era. African American, white, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian, and Native American radicals merged ethnic nationalist rhetoric with a struggle that emphasized class conflict and interracial coalitions. When the Panther Party coined the slogan “All power to the people,” it was attempting to broaden the call for Black Power by transcending race. Unique among political movements anywhere, this was an example of a radicalism that adapted to the highly racialized climate of the United States, while adhering to the fundamental principles of leftist theories that generally criticized nationalism as bourgeois efforts to subvert true radicalism. At the center of this movement was the Black Power movement that provided the earliest examples of cultural nationalism and political organization around ethnic nationalist causes. More specifically, the Black Panther Party served as a paradigm of radical ethnic nationalism and a vanguard party for the revolutionary nationalist movement. The Panthers provided an appeal that was unprecedented in the annals of radical struggle.

Shifts in Puerto Rican nationalism

Ideological shifts changed the YLP into the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO) in 1972. The radical ethnic nationalism of the YLP evolved toward a broader discussion of radical politics that included a “Divided Nation” thesis. The YLP concluded that it had been an error to build an organization around Puerto Rican national independence for the island, while simultaneously addressing the many exigencies faced by Puerto Ricans on the mainland.⁶⁴ The new PRRWO endorsed the formation of two organizations to address the concerns of the island and the mainland. Whereas it had initiated a broader ideological discussion in Puerto Rican nationalist politics, the YLP saw limitations in its ambitious original platform. The YLP also moved away from the Black Panther-inspired emphasis on the lumpenproletariat. “We are a Party,” a special issue of *Palante* declared, “in transformation that recognizes the proletariat as the leadership of the revolution.”⁶⁵ Although the Panthers were in a similar process of ideological transformation away from any emphasis on organizing the lumpen, the Black Panther Party was conspicuously absent from the YLP’s list of “comrade organizations” that worked in its historic national congress. Groups such as the [Chinese American] I Wor Kuen, Black Workers Congress, [white] Rising Up Angry, the mostly Chicano Los Siete De La Raza, and the largely white Revolutionary Union participated in the momentous national gathering of the Lords.⁶⁶

Though it had always embraced a coalition building style, which welcomed non-Puerto Ricans in its nationalist agenda, the decline in its nationalist focus reflected a broader Marxist-Leninist ideological position that also relied less on bombastic rhetoric and stylized militancy typified in hospital takeovers. Its newspaper carried articles affirming support of revolutionary movements worldwide, including those in Angola, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, and others. The bilingual *Palante* reported on radical ethnic nationalist activities among African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, as well as endorsement of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. By moving toward a more orthodox Marxist-Leninist line, the PRRWO’s special attention to workers transformed the organization in important ways. Marxism-Leninism has inveighed against nationalist struggles as bourgeois attempts to control national capitalist markets in collaboration with multinational imperialist elites.

The PRRWO recognized that the power of the U.S. imperialist apparatus could maintain complete economic control over an independent Puerto Rican, much as it controlled the economic direction of other countries around the globe. Nothing short of a broad-based, multi-ethnic working class revolution in the U.S. would end the global threat of imperialism against Puerto Rico, it insisted. Though not entirely new, the shift in focus and style reflected a decline in the nationalist rhetoric of the PRRWO.

Like other radical ethnic nationalist groups, such as the Black Panthers and Brown Berets,⁶⁷ the PRRWO was burdened with debilitating dogmatism, which led to factionalism and internal conflict. Members who disagreed with key officials on the Central Committee were accused of being agents of the state. This tense climate resulted in beatings and expulsions of its membership. As former Central Committee member Iris Morales remembers, “Strict adherence to Central Committee directives frequently stifled member creativity and initiative.” And despite the rhetoric of “democratic centralism,” the YLP/PRRWO “never achieved a balance between democracy, individual freedom, and collective accountability.” As the movement moved away from the more narrowly defined nationalist agenda, it also grew more unstable.⁶⁸ Intense attacks from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, infiltration, police terror, and other forms of repression destabilized the organization. By 1976 the organization was moribund.

Conclusion

Radical ethnic nationalism in Puerto Rican communities was not solely dependent on Black Power for symbolism, political direction, or motivation. In fact, the various movements necessarily influenced each other in alliances, networks, conferences, and general dialogue. They even served as pallbearers for each other when members fell during confrontations with the state, providing important emotional comfort and camaraderie. To paraphrase black integrationists who stressed the need to work with progressive whites, black people could not go it alone. Neither could Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian, or Native American allies, who were essential to each other in forming a broad based and effective movement to realize the liberation they envisioned. Too, the international dynamics that influenced Black Power similarly formed Puerto Rican struggle in the U.S. The symbiotic relations were extant. Still, the Black Power movement helped form a period of social and cultural transformation that would have substantial effects on the cultural and political landscape of the country, including the Puerto Rican community. The Young Lords in particular extended the realm of Puerto Rican radicalism and helped popularize efforts to shift ethnic and racial identity and politics. They initiated direct challenges to the institutionalized discrimination faced by Puerto Ricans and in the process demonstrated the malleability of race and identity in a country where race and identity have long determined one’s access to the most essential human needs, even life itself. And though they did not destroy racism, they unequivocally revealed its vulnerabilities, illogic, and provided a foundation upon which activists would build for decades. They also inscribed a sensitivity and attention to the role of gender in nationalist politics rarely seen. In part a reflection of the historic movement, which witnessed the rise of the women’s liberation movement, the attempt by the YLP to eradicate sexism cannot be overlooked. Many nationalist organizations that were contemporaries did not offer similar analysis. Moreover, mainstream organizations had not made meaningful efforts to address patriarchy and its debilitating effects on society. In the final analysis, the Young Lords introduced significant interpretations of Puerto Rican nationalism that have remained largely unique in the historic discourse of island and mainland Puerto Rican political expression.

NOTES

- ¹ Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloé S. Georas, “The Racialization of Latino Caribbean Migrants in the New York Metropolitan Area,” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, volume 8, 1&2, 1996, 193–4. For a more elaborate discussion of Puerto Rican nationalist organizations, see Andrés Torres and José E. Valázquez, eds. *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices of the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); Luis Ángel Ferrao, *Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras, PR: Cultural, 1990); María E. Pérez y González *Puerto Ricans in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), esp. 30–3, 135–6; Edwin Meléndez and Edgardo Meléndez, eds., *Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico* (Boston, South End Press, 1993).
- ² See Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000); Shafer Boyd, *Faces of Nationalism: New Realities and Old Myths* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972); Anthony D. Smith *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971); Jyoti Puri, *Encountering Nationalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, LTD, 2004); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).
- ³ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4–5.
- ⁴ María E. Pérez y González *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, 30–3, 123, 135; See also Juan Manuel Carrión, “The Petty Bourgeoisie and the Struggle for Independence in Puerto Rico” in Adalberto López, ed. *The Puerto Ricans: Their History, Culture and Society* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman, 1980), 233–56.
- ⁵ Basilio Serrano, “‘Rifle, Cañón, y Escopeta!’ A Chronicle of the Puerto Rican Student Union,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 124–5; Esperanza Martell, “‘In the Belly of the Beast’: Beyond Survival” also in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 175.
- ⁶ The Young Lords Party and Michael Abramson, et. al., *Palante: The Young Lords Party* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 73.
- ⁷ Though some have argued that Japanese American Richard Aoki was a co-founder of the Party, official Panther history from beginning only includes Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale as co-founders. Aoki is acknowledged, however, as a “consultant” and close comrade to the Party. In Seattle, however, Guy Kuruse was one of the first Asian Americans to become an official member of the Black Panther Party. “Yellow Power,” *Giant Robot*, number 10, Spring 1998, 76; Bobby Seale, conversation with author, April 2002, Washington, D.C.
- ⁸ The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 74.
- ⁹ The Panther 21, also known as the New York 21, was the informal group name of 21 Black Panthers who stood trial for conspiracy charges to bomb various parts of the city. After serving over a year in prison, all were acquitted.
- ¹⁰ For a general discussion of the Black Power movement and its many organizations, see William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), *passim*; Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), *passim*.
- ¹¹ For a more elaborate examination of ethnic nationalism, see Puri, *Encountering Nationalism*, especially pages, 170–209.
- ¹² That fall Puerto Rican students formed the Puerto Rican Student Union (PRSU), which combined the campus-based concerns of PRISA and BPRSC with those of the larger Puerto Rican community in the mainland and in Puerto Rico. This development occurred after the arrival of Young Lords into NYC. Iris Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 213–214; Basilio Serrano, “‘Rifle, Cañón, y Escopeta!’ A Chronicle of the Puerto Rican Student Union,” in *The*

Puerto Rican Movement, 124–5; Flyer, November 1971, University of California, Berkeley Social Protest Collection hereafter called UCBSPC, Box 18, folder 33, Young Lord Organization.

- ¹³ See James F. Short and Fred L. Strodbeck, *Group Process and Gang Delinquency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), *passim*; David M. Downes, *The Delinquent Solution: A Study in Subcultural Theory* (New York, Free Press, 1966), *passim*; James Diego Vigil, *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), *passim*.
- ¹⁴ President Harry S Truman initiated the Point Four Program in 1949 as tool to extend industrial capitalism into underdeveloped countries. Puerto Rico was used as a model of this industrialization. Incentives, such as lower fares to the mainland, were offered to impoverished Puerto Ricans who had been courted by labor scouts. Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloé S. Georas, “The Racialization of Latino Caribbean Migrants in the New York Metropolitan Area,” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, volume 8, 1&2, 1996, 193–4.
- ¹⁵ Jorge Duany, *Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 248, 255.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 246–7.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.
- ¹⁸ Mariam Jiménez Román, “Un Hombre (negro) del pueblo: José Celso Barbosa and the Puerto Rican ‘Race’ Toward Whiteness.” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* vol. 8, no 1&2, p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Duany, *Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*, 249.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 250–1.
- ²¹ <http://www.gangresearch.net/latinkings/lkhistory.html> accessed May 25, 2003.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ “Interview with Cha Cha Jimenez,” *The Black Panther* June 7, 1969, 17.
- ²⁴ David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*, (New York, 1973), 113.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 118–9.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113–5; David Dawley, interview with author May 16, 2003.
- ²⁷ Flyer, n.d., UCBSPC, Box 18, folder 33, Young Lord Organization.
- ²⁸ Huey P. Newton, *Essays From the Minister of Defense*. Pamphlet, 1967, 11.
- ²⁹ “Interview with Cha Cha Jimenez,” *The Black Panther* June 7, 1969, 17.
- ³⁰ “From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords,” *Ramparts*, October 1970; Flyer, n.d., UCBSPC, Box 18, folder 33, Young Lord Organization; see also David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 229.
- ³¹ “Interview with Cha Cha Jimenez,” *The Black Panther* June 7, 1969, 17.
- ³² “From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords,” *Ramparts*, October 1970; Flyer, n.d., UCBSPC, Box 18, folder 33, Young Lord Organization.
- ³³ Pablo Guzman, “La Vida Pura: A Lord of the Barrio,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices of the Diaspora*, 156.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 156–7; The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 75–7; “Palante Siempre Palante! A Look Back at the Young Lords.” <http://netdial.caribe.net/~dfreedma/beginnin.htm>. Accessed July 30, 1999.
- ³⁵ Guzman, “La Vida Pura,” 159–60; Iris Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 213–4; The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 69–70; “Palante, Siempre Palante!” Internet web site <http://netdial.caribe.net/~dfreedma/itsuptou.htm>, July 30, 1999.
- ³⁶ Torres, *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 7.
- ³⁷ The Panther Party leadership official condemned cultural nationalism as politically

innocuous and counterrevolutionary. Karenga's organization, US, the leading cultural nationalist group, and the Party viciously attacked each other in speeches, writings, and even physically. Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 138–40.

38 “Young Patriots at U.F.A.F. Conference,” *The Black Panther* July 26, 1969, 8.

39 These psychological benefits were translated into social and cultural capital, when economic circumstances did not allow poor whites to accrue material benefits. See David R. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of The American Working Class*. (New York: Verso, 1991), passim.

40 Torres and Valázquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 250–5.

41 Kelvin Santiago-Valles, “Policing the Crisis in the Whitest of all the Antilles,” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, Vol. 8, 1&2, 1996, 46.

42 The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 60.

43 “We’re Fighting for Freedom Together. There is no Other Way,” *The Black Panther* August 2, 1969.

44 “Interview with Cha Cha Jimenez,” *The Black Panther* June 7, 1969, 17.

45 It must be noted that though virtually all Puerto Ricans in the U.S. were classified as “white” in 1970, many of them, particularly in large contiguous Puerto Rican communities on the East Coast, saw themselves as distinct from white Americans in a colloquial sense. Despite the history of prestige that many Puerto Ricans may have associated with being considered white, there is ample evidence that many, if not most, saw themselves as more than just a variant of whiteness. On the census, for example, there was no option for “Hispanic” until 1980. Once the choice was given, the percentage of Puerto Ricans who reported being white dropped from 92.9 in 1970 to 48.3. See Duany, 253–7.

46 “We’re Fighting for Freedom Together. There is no Other Way,” *The Black Panther* August 2, 1969.

47 Pablo Guzman, “La Vida Pura” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 157.

48 Carmen Teresa Whalen, “The Young Lords in Philadelphia,” 121 and Iris Morales “Palante, Siempre Palante,” 215 both in *The Puerto Rican Movement*; Raquel Z. Rivera “Boriquas From the Hip-Hop Zone: Notes on Race and Ethnic Relations in New York City,” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, volume 8, nos. 1 and 2, 1996, 208.

49 “We’re Fighting for Freedom Together. There is no Other Way,” *The Black Panther* August 2, 1969.

50 The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 75.

51 *Ibid.*, 82.

52 Ida Bloom, “Gender and Nation in International Comparisons,” in Ida Bloom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall, eds. *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

53 Puri, *Encountering Nationalism*, 136.

54 For a discussion of gender in nationalist movements, see Puri, *Encountering Nationalism*, 107–41, and Bloom, Hagemann and Hall, *Gendered Nations*, passim.

55 Iris Morales, “Palante Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 217.

56 The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 50–2.

57 *Palante Siempre Palante: The Young Lords*, written, produced and directed by Iris Morales. (New York: Latino Education Network, Inc.), 1996; The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 117.

58 The Young Lord Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 46, 54.

59 Iris Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 219.

60 Several popular press and some (less than vigorously researched) scholarly pieces have argued that the Black Panthers were virulently sexist. See Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York: Norton, 1999), 199–201.

61 “Roberta Alexander at Conference,” *The Black Panther*, August 2, 1969, 7; “The Role of Revolutionary Women,” *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1969, 9.

62 Hugh Pearson, in his book *In the Shadow of the Panther*, provides a detailed discussion of Huey P. Newton’s violence directed at women. Newton, as Pearson also details, was even more violent toward men. In fact, the Panther leader’s rage was not discriminating. To call him a “misogynist” may be a simplistic take on Newton’s violent character that was not particularly directed at women.

63 Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 222.

64 “Report from the Y.L.P. Congress,” *Palante*, July 21, 1972–August 14, 1972, p. 1.

65 “Faction Leaves Young Lords Party,” *Palante*, June–July 1972.

66 There is no record of organizational disputes between the Panthers and the Lords, though Felipe Luciano, the former Chaiman of the YLO (July 1969–September 1970), was derisively called a “maximum leader” who undermined alliances with the Panther Party, and operated as an “opportunist.” “Faction Leaves Young Lords Party,” *Palante*, June–July 1972, B. See also “Report from the Y.L.P. Congress,” *Palante*, July 21, 1972–August 14, 1972, p. 1, 8.

67 Brown Berets was a Chicano organization, based in Los Angeles. It was formed in 1967 and had a close relationship with the Black Panthers.

68 Morales, “Palante, Siempre Palante: The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 221–3.

