

THE YOUNG LORDS

INTRODUCTION

In the final days of 1969, the Young Lords were on top of the world. As the decade entered its midnight hour, this group of poor and working-class Puerto Rican radicals brought an alternative vision of society to life in their own neighborhood. Their aim was to reclaim the dignity of the racially oppressed and elevate basic human needs—food, clothing, housing, health, work, and community—over the pursuit of profit. In the course of a fight with East Harlem’s First Spanish United Methodist Church (FSUMC), they found an unlikely but irresistible setting for the public presentation of their revolutionary project.

The Young Lords had simply been looking for a space to feed breakfast to poor children before school. The church seemed an ideal place. It was conveniently situated in the center of East Harlem and housed in a beautiful, spacious building that was closed all week except for a couple of hours on Sunday. But its priest, an exile of Castro’s revolutionary Cuba, denied the use of its building. In response, the Young Lords charged that the church’s benign indifference to the social and economic suffering of the people of East Harlem—one of the poorest districts in the city—mirrored government indifference and enabled social violence. They argued further that the church’s professed goals of service to mankind and promises of happiness and freedom from earthly worries in the hereafter cloaked a broader project of social control.

Two months after their initial request was denied, the militant activists nailed the doors of the FSUMC shut after Sunday service and barricaded themselves inside. In that moment, their neighborhood deployment of the building takeover—a strategy popularized by sixties radicals in universities—gave concrete expression to growing calls for community control of local institutions in poor urban neighborhoods.

In their determination to stoke revolution among Puerto Ricans and other poor communities of color, these radicals transformed the occupied building into a staging ground for their vision of a just society. Rechristened the People’s Church by the Young Lords, the liberated space was offered up as a sanctuary for East Harlem’s poor. Before long, community residents poured into the church in search of solutions to all manner of grievances, from housing evictions to the

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absence of English translation at parent-teacher meetings. The Lords served hot meals to school-aged children, helping to institutionalize what is now a federal program that serves school breakfast to children, and ran a free medical clinic for members of the community. They sponsored a vigorous political education program for anyone who was interested, where they taught classes in Puerto Rican and black American history, the history of the national independence movement of Puerto Rico, and current events—an alternative to public school curricula that failed to make sense of the troubles of the poor and the brown in New York City. In the evenings, the Lords hosted “festivals of the oppressed” where they curated spurned elements of Puerto Rican culture and music, performed by underground poets, musicians, artists, and writers—an antidote to the erasure of Puerto Rican culture and history that accompanied the U.S. colonial project that began in Puerto Rico in 1898. New genres of cultural expression were cultivated at the liberated church, among them the spoken word poetry jam, which would in the coming years become a springboard for the development of hip-hop. In the process, the Young Lords created a counternarrative to postwar media representations of Puerto Ricans as junkies, knife-wielding thugs, and welfare dependents that replaced traditional stereotypes with powerful images of eloquent, strategic, and candid Puerto Rican resistance.

At a moment of growing state violence against activists, the decision of these radicals to turn the Lord’s house into a site of protest was a brilliant tactical move that created a strategic sanctuary from the possibility of violent reprisals. Approximately one year earlier, in April 1968, after hundreds of Columbia University students occupied major campus buildings in protest of the Vietnam War and the university’s gentrification of Harlem, students were dragged out of the occupied buildings by police with billy clubs.¹ At the church in East Harlem, such violence was politically untenable.

Immediately, local grandmothers began delivering pots of food to the Puerto Rican radicals through church windows, while a phalanx of National Lawyers Guild attorneys, on-site and in the church’s periphery, filed court injunctions and reminded judges and police of the barricaded radicals’ constitutionally protected right to protest. Teetering between sacrilege and righteousness, the Young Lords’ unfolding drama was captured by TV cameras parked in and outside the house of worship.

As the Young Lords fortified their programs at the church, hundreds of supporters and engrossed spectators gathered to hear about new developments during their daily press conferences. Speaking through a bullhorn out of a church window to attentive journalists outside, Young Lord Iris Benitez explained, “The people of El Barrio have gotten to the point that they don’t ask the why of things anymore, they just see things as they exist and try to survive. The Young Lords know the why and we’re trying to relay that information to the people.”² From

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their pulpit at the People's Church, the Young Lords observed that the poverty indices of Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony, and this Puerto Rican neighborhood were strikingly similar. Another Young Lord referenced the global scope of resistance a year earlier, when millions of people rose up in Rome, Madrid, Paris, Belgrade, Prague, Mexico City, Pakistan, Chicago, across U.S. cities, and beyond. Pablo Guzmán observed, "It ain't just y'all in this church, it ain't just East Harlem. . . . We relate to an international struggle. It may sound ridiculous but this all links up . . . from Vietnam to Puerto Rico to Watts."³ Born in the wake of one of the deepest political radicalizations of the century, the Young Lords' creative militancy, critique of social problems spoken in the language of their peers, and socialist vision for America embodied the best of sixties radicalism.



Against the backdrop of America's escalating sixties urban rebellions, the Young Lords unleashed a chain of urban guerilla protests that amplified the primacy of class analysis and revolution in the fight against racism. From garbage-dumping demonstrations to a series of church and hospital occupations—termed "offensives" in deference to the Tet campaign of the Vietnamese—this small group exploded into the country's consciousness in July 1969, staging their social grievances with infectious irreverence and distinctive imagination. Although a new wave of repression befell the movement, the Young Lords actually benefited from protests in defense of the Panther 21, jailed that same year. The arrests had been part of a police frame-up.⁴ With New York's police department exposed and discredited, the new radicals were able to launch their campaigns without the same level of disruption that the FBI and local law enforcement brought against the Black Panthers in the late 1960s.

Over the course of their brief yet productive life-span, the Young Lords won significant reforms and used local battles to expose the United States' quiet imperial project in Puerto Rico, which became a colony of the United States in 1898. In just a few short years, the group grew from a little-known organization to the stuff of legend. In the process, their media-conscious urban guerrilla offensives, combined with the group's multiethnic membership, redefined the character of protest, the color of politics, and the cadence of popular culture in the city.

And as the children of the vast post-World War II transfer of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland, the Young Lords also helped their generation interpret the causes of that migration and the place of Puerto Ricans in U.S. society as "special citizens" and a diaspora of colonial people living in the metropole. Between 1947 and 1970, one-third of the people of Puerto Rico left the island. Most settled in New York, where Puerto Ricans migrated in larger numbers than black Americans during the same period. By 1970, the Puerto Rican population on the U.S. mainland had grown 500 times to approximately 1.5 million.⁵

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Puerto Rican postwar migration formed part of a much larger migratory process that transformed the class structure and political standing of groups that have been historically racialized and concentrated in the most backward and exploitative sectors of the economy, namely black Americans, Mexicans, and Native Americans. The vast internal migration of people of color from countryside to city during and after World War II proletarianized these previously rural and small-town people, which increased their economic power. Urbanization gave them a sense of their strength in numbers, amplified their potential political power, and established the conditions for the rise of the civil rights movement.⁶ The timing of Puerto Rican migration set the stage for the emergence of a group like the Young Lords in the 1960s, whose members were largely first- and second-generation, working-class Puerto Rican migrants between the ages of fourteen and thirty-four; most were in their late teens.⁷

The postwar migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland was exponentially larger than in previous generations. The young were overrepresented in its ranks, and their consciousness would be shaped by an unlikely combination of politicizing experiences, from the rise of the civil rights, black power, women's, and gay liberation movements and the U.S. declaration of war in Vietnam to their own experience in an urban setting beset for the first time by industrial decline, permanent unemployment, and the growing spatial and economic isolation of its racialized residents. Like their black American counterparts in the sixties movements, the Young Lords became iconic among Puerto Ricans and within movement circles for several reasons. Their uncompromising militancy matched and channeled the anger unleashed by the era's urban rebellions. At a moment when the call for revolution began to replace the call for reform in the minds of many, the Young Lords linked the precarious conditions of postwar Puerto Rican migrants to their status as colonial subjects, identified common cause with black Americans, and called for socialism. And in their quest to take a stand in the city, the Young Lords discovered and asserted in the public square what it meant to be Puerto Rican in America.

Children of the Revolution

As the mainstream and underground sixties press captured the controlled chaos at the People's Church, an evocative portrait of the racial and ethnic composition of the protagonists struck a chord with people around the world. Unintentionally, the Young Lords had staged a visual coup. New York's major Spanish-language newspaper, *El Diario La Prensa*, took special notice: "These young men and women, Puerto Ricans—some white and others of the black race—and among them some Americans, love the ideal of independence for Puerto Rico. . . . They say that they form part of a coalition with the Black Panther Party and the Young Patriots."⁸

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Although the Young Lords were self-professed Puerto Rican revolutionary nationalists, approximately 25 percent of its members were black Americans. The group's membership gave political expression to the common social, economic, and cultural urban experience of Puerto Rican and black American youth who grew up alongside each other in the 1950s and 1960s. Considered New York's Puerto Rican barrio, East Harlem was, in fact, home to Puerto Ricans, black Americans, and white Americans of Italian descent—one of the city's few multiracial and multiethnic neighborhoods. In 1960, 40.4 percent of its residents were Puerto Rican, 38.2 percent black American, and 21.4 percent white American.⁹ With another 5 percent of its members composed of non-Puerto Rican Latinxs, the group's membership also reflected the changing demographic character and diverse ethnic composition of a city increasingly populated by people of color. The ethnic and racial diversity on display at the church seemed to express the possibilities for a society free from bigotry, of the kind that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. imagined in his notion of the beloved community, the same kind that seemed ever more in doubt as riots crept across America's cities toward the end of the 1960s.¹⁰

But the Young Lords envisioned even more. Only a decade removed from the anticommunist witch hunts of the 1950s, the Young Lords, together with a significant minority of young organizers of their generation, began to embrace revolutionary politics. This vision of the political and economic organization of society was radically opposed to standard American political values. The Young Lords' calls for Puerto Rican independence, an end to hunger and want, and a socialist society embodied the politics of the era's revolutions for independence from European colonial rule that swept through Africa, Asia, and Latin America after World War II. In the United States, self-proclaimed revolutionaries of color linked racism to colonialism and class exploitation under capitalism and identified all as barriers to building a liberated society.

Organizationally, the Young Lords modeled themselves after the Black Panthers, who called for the building of vanguard revolutionary parties by black Americans and other people of color as vehicles through which those who believed that the system must be dismantled would come together to concentrate and coordinate their efforts.¹¹ The Lords outlined their bold vision for a just society in a thirteen-point program and platform in which they called for "self-determination for Puerto Ricans" and proclaimed, "We want a socialist society."¹² Through community-based campaigns and political propaganda, the Young Lords popularized the demand for Puerto Rican independence both in their own constituency and within broader movement circles. They also spread and demystified socialist ideas among poor and working-class people of color, arguing that society should be organized around human priorities and needs rather than capitalism's drive for profit.

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Like the Black Panthers, the Young Lords believed that the fight against racism and colonial domination was central, rather than secondary, to the fight for a new socialist society. For this reason, they called themselves revolutionary nationalists, arguing that the fight for national independence was integral to the struggle for socialism. The Young Lords also believed that independence could not be attained through electoral means but only through revolution. They declared themselves the children of Puerto Rico's Nationalist Party of the 1930s and were the first mainland-raised Puerto Ricans to, as a group, call and organize for the island's independence.

The Young Lords' embrace of independence formed part of the 1960s revival of nationalism among Puerto Ricans with varying levels of political experiences and influences. Encouraged by the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the gathering pace of the black freedom movement in the United States, elements of the Puerto Rican Left on the island, which had been forced underground by government repression, reconstituted themselves as the *Movimiento Pro Independencia*. In 1964, *Movimiento Pro Independencia* opened branches in New York and Chicago, attracting small numbers of older, first-generation Puerto Rican migrants. In the late 1960s, the politics and activism of the Young Lords, which had developed independently of the island and mainland independence movements, widened the terrain of independence politics among a new generation of mainland-born Puerto Ricans. They educated other 1960s activists about the language discrimination and racism endured not just by black Americans but also by Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland, and popularized the call for Puerto Rican independence among them.

The New York Young Lords formed part of a cohort of young working-class people—and people of color among them, in particular—whose unprecedented access to higher education sharpened their latent critique of society and afforded them an infrastructure for dissent. The postwar era's exponential increase in college enrollment delayed the responsibilities of work and family among the young for the first time in U.S. history and simultaneously opened up a space where they could question society.¹³ The movements they built challenged racism; the U.S. war in Vietnam; and the oppression of women, gays, and lesbians and the transgender community. They also challenged what many believed were old, soul-slaying social norms and standards of behavior that constrained personal freedoms in the United States. Known collectively as the New Left, these diverse movements were built by a generation whose activism radically changed the cultural and political landscape of the United States. Its participants referred to the overlapping movements of the New Left as “the movement.” These movements are historically significant because together they established contemporary standards of interactions among Americans and between American people and their government—they challenged white supremacy, made

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racism unpopular, changed “the relationship between white people and people of color,” and influenced U.S. foreign policy and the ways the nation understood issues of gender and sexuality.¹⁴

Although the New Left is popularly understood as predominantly white and campus based, its origins are rooted in the intrepid and morally righteous sit-ins and radical campaigns of the youth wing of the civil rights movement that cohered in April 1960 with the emergence of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In the north, the Black Panthers and the Young Lords recast SNCC community organizing strategy. The temperament of their protests and worldview gave shape and meaning to the radical style and politics of the New Left. Built by young people of color in cities like Oakland, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, these movements were university-incubated and deployed to poor communities. And like the white student-led sector of the New Left, the seeds of these movements were also sown in the postwar years. They developed in response to the poverty produced by the flight of industries to the suburbs, which in turn created a class of permanently unemployed and discouraged young workers of color—an unprecedented development in modern urban history.

The politics of the Young Lords were driven by a search for root causes. They also were colored by a disdain for liberalism, an exploration of the broadest possible meaning of liberation, and the call for the transformation of both society and the individual. Like others of their ilk, the Young Lords broke new ground. They uncovered the psychological impact of racism on the oppressed; challenged sexism and homophobia in their ranks; exposed the character of racial oppression in the North, including and beyond that of black Americans; interpreted the standing of the racially oppressed with a colonial frame; fostered solidarity among all racially oppressed groups in the United States; popularized socialist ideas in communities in which they were active; and raised the standard of accountability in local government.

The Young Lords represent one of the most creative and productive expressions of the New Left; and while the group’s rise was influenced by all the movements, the Young Lords are first and foremost heir to the black power movement. The term “black power” had been used in the past, but in 1966, when articulated by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael, it signaled the growing dominance of a more militant political current long embraced by movement people, north and south. It was emboldened by continued white violence against black Americans and their continued exclusion from the political, social, and economic fabric of their society, despite the passage of civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965.¹⁵ Black power was, above all, a declaration of the right to self-determination—the right of black people to control and influence their lives and their world.¹⁶ Before long, a broad cultural and political movement cohered around the concept, which variously came to mean the

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right to armed self-defense against white racist violence, black pride, and the development of independent black political leadership free from pressures to accommodate the interests of northern white liberals. The broad appeal of black power allowed for its use among a wide range of actors with differing political agendas who embraced a broad spectrum of solutions to racial oppression.¹⁷

Black power connected with the rebellious mood of an ethnically diverse set of racially oppressed people in the 1960s because it called on them to embrace the best of their history, lay down socially imposed notions of racial inferiority, exert control over the institutions that governed and oppressed their lives, and see themselves as the architects of a new world. As the black power movement reclaimed culture, language, and history for one of the most racially subjugated groups in American history, it inspired a cultural renaissance among Puerto Ricans as well as among Asians, Mexicans, and Native Americans. Black power enabled Americans of all shades to redefine their political relationship to the nation and to negotiate that often-fraught relationship from a position of strength. In the process, however, the color of the black power movement, and the civil rights movement more broadly, was changed as well.

Overview of the Book

These pages tell the story of the rise and fall of the New York chapter of the Young Lords Organization, later renamed the Young Lords Party, and of how the Young Lords, and so many others of their generation, came to believe in the concept of revolution. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the social and economic forces that shaped the lives of young people of color in the postwar city and laid the seeds of their radicalization in the era of civil rights and black power. Chapter 1 traces the origins of the Young Lords as a Chicago gang. Through the early life experiences of the group's famed leader, José "Cha Cha" Jiménez, the chapter examines how the mass dislocation of Puerto Ricans occasioned by federal housing policy forced them to settle in densely populated blocks on the edges of hostile, white ethnic neighborhoods, where young men of color, who were outnumbered by their white counterparts, joined gangs to survive and became embroiled in a life of petty crime. As the social movements of the 1960s opened up the possibility for self-transformation, Cha Cha Jiménez was politicized in prison and set out to transform his gang into the Puerto Rican counterpart of the Black Panthers. The bold move inspired and propelled a group of radical students looking for an activist agenda to do the same in New York. Chapter 2 examines the global forces that brought one-third of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland and the social and economic crisis that befell the Puerto Rican community in postwar New York. The chapter explores the backgrounds of the talented cohort of first-generation college-educated students who, in July 1969,

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launched the New York chapter of the Young Lords Organization. Unlike their white baby boomer counterparts—whose activism was fueled by the alienation of postwar suburbanization, the repressive Victorian-era morality imposed on youth in the 1950s, and the expansion of the university—for youth of color, the seeds of rebellion sprouted in the crucible of migration, urban decline, and white backlash against their increase in the postwar city.¹⁸ Caught in the middle of a political battle among adults over access to jobs and education, children of color experienced greater overt racism in the classroom and police repression in the streets. The early childhood experiences of the Young Lords in the schools and in the streets and as language and cultural translators for their parents radicalized them emotionally and compelled the evangelical commitment with which they launched their activism as young adults.

Historical accounts of the 1960s and of the civil rights and black power movements are today more textured than ever, with new historical research revealing the local actors, problems, and organizing that gave birth to ideas, strategies, and movements that are often imagined as national projects.¹⁹ From the movement's inception, its local leaders—challenged with the task of increasing their ranks and cognizant that race oppression was not attributable to race alone—broadened their protest demands.²⁰ The objectives and character of protest challenged economic inequality and class divisions in society and among the oppressed. In New York, the Young Lords organized against the most visible manifestations of urban poverty and its distinctly new forms: chronic unemployment, escalating police surveillance and repression, the large-scale displacement of poor city dwellers from housing, intractable public health crises that came in the form of poor sanitation services, growing addiction to drugs, and an epidemic of childhood lead poisoning, among others. Chapters 3 through 6 examine the Young Lords' class-conscious, community-based campaigns and their impact on the city. Although civil rights and black power movement histories are popularly understood within the framework of black American citizenship rights, the work of organizations like the Black Panthers and the Young Lords paint a portrait of struggle that is more composite. Their organizing efforts show that the black movement set in motion an awakening of social consciousness wherein virtually no social issue escaped public scrutiny.

Chapter 3 examines the New York Young Lords' first community-based protests against poor sanitation services in East Harlem, the Garbage Offensive, which pressured the candidates of that year's mayoral election to address the citywide grievance. By pressuring local government to solve neighborhood problems such as poor sanitation, for example, these activists sought to establish standards of decency in city services that expanded the definition of the common good and stretched our nation's definition of democracy. Immediately following the Garbage Offensive, the Young Lords established a headquarters

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in East Harlem and developed an organizational infrastructure and political platform. Chapter 4 examines the nuts and bolts of that process. Chapter 5 reconstructs the medical activism of the Young Lords' 1969 door-to-door campaign to test children for lead poisoning in the tenements of East Harlem and the relationships the group fostered with medical personnel. The campaign ended with a sit-in at the Department of Health in protest of a childhood lead-poisoning epidemic in the city and eventually led to the creation of New York's Bureau of Lead Poisoning. Chapter 6 covers the Young Lords' occupation of the First Spanish United Methodist Church, their relationship with a younger cohort of church parishioners who supported their actions, and the response of the church to their protests. The children's breakfast program the Young Lords set up at this church and those of the Black Panthers established the precedent for what is now the federal School Breakfast Program.

Chapter 7 explores how the Young Lords applied to the U.S. context the political world view known as Third World socialism.²¹ Formed at the height of the greatest radicalization since the labor struggles of the 1930s, the politics of the Young Lords and others of their time reflected the ideas and strategies for social change that became dominant with the advent of wars of decolonization in places such as Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba. Radicals argued that subjugated groups in the United States—including black Americans, Native Americans, Chicanos, Asian Americans, and Puerto Ricans—were internal domestic colonies, politically and economically underdeveloped and dispossessed of their rights to self-determination. While Third World revolutions iconized peasant guerrillas, organizations like the Black Panthers and the Young Lords identified the lumpenproletariat as the most revolutionary class in society. At a moment when economic restructuring and the flight of industries to the suburbs were producing permanent unemployment and greater economic and racial segregation in the city, the activism and politics of grassroots radicals like the Young Lords reflected the distinctive social features of the urban environment in which they emerged. The strong nationalist character of urban radical politics was also tied to the vast relocation of white Americans from city to suburb. In this environment, the ideal of people of color fighting together with white Americans for change grew more and more difficult to enact as the daily lives of these populations grew further and further apart. Instead, dramatic action was created by polyglot groups born of the increasingly multiethnic character of the American slum and its new racialized migrants.

Chapter 8 explores how the organization tackled racism and sexism within the organization. The Young Lords embraced the "revolution within the revolution," by which they meant the deliberate struggle to deconstruct and challenge the manifestations of power dynamics, racism, and sexism in everyday life among movement participants. The effort was also a trademark of the radical wing of the women's movement, articulated in the slogan "The personal is political."²²

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Chapter 9 analyzes the Young Lords' occupation of Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx alongside a radical flank of white doctors to dramatize medical discrimination and the deplorable conditions of a hospital that, according to one of its doctors, "looked more like an abandoned factory than a center for the healing arts." Although historians sometimes interpret the revolutionary nationalism of the 1960s as a rejection of coalition building with white Americans, groups like the Young Lords collaborated with radicalized white allies. In their coalitions, however, the Young Lords, like the Black Panthers, set out to rework the power dynamics of cross-racial and cross-class alliances, rejecting what they perceived as the uninterrogated racial prejudices and liberal tendencies of middle-class white radicals and the potential for their disproportionate influence on interracial coalitions. At Lincoln Hospital, the Young Lords–led coalition drafted the first patient bill of rights and established the first and principal acupuncture drug treatment center in the United States.

Chapter 10 covers the circumstances surrounding the Young Lords' second occupation of FSUMC, this time against the backdrop of a prisoner uprising in the infamous New York City jail known as the Tombs.

Chapter 11 analyzes the New York organization's move to Puerto Rico and its decline. By the end of 1970, the Young Lords had grown to approximately 1,000 members and had expanded to Newark, Philadelphia, Hartford, Bridgeport, and Boston. Over the course of its life, the group drew approximately 3,000 members and influenced thousands more. Amid polarized deliberations about the organization's future and with a majority of its leadership advocating a stronger Puerto Rican nationalist orientation, the group decided to launch two branches in Puerto Rico: in El Caño and Aguadilla. The move to Puerto Rico, for which the group was ill prepared, combined with the decline in the coming years of the mass character of the civil rights and black power movements, weakened the ability of the Young Lords to remain connected to the grassroots. By 1973, Young Lord membership had declined considerably. Fueled by government repression, the youthfulness and political inexperience of its leadership, and a growing dogmatism, the Young Lords became entangled in violent internecine disputes that led to the organization's demise in 1976.

Telling the Story of the Young Lords

The word "radical" is used often in this text. In all cases, I employ the word's most common definition: concerned with root causes of social problems and system-wide change. This history of the Young Lords is reconstructed from the literature they left behind, including their newspaper, *Palante*, and internal documents; audio and visual recordings; municipal government documents that reference their work; extensive records on the Young Lords and studies

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conducted by the FSUMC following the group's occupation of its East Harlem subsidiary; the papers of a growing number of archival repositories across the country; the personal papers of a handful of Young Lords and their supporters; and the FBI's COINTELPRO documents on the Young Lords as well as surveillance documents kept by the New York Police Department (NYPD). Known as the Handschu files, these police documents were found as a result of my 2014 suit against the NYPD for its failure to honor my Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request for the police records of the Young Lords. The suit and its astonishing resolution were widely covered in the media. They led to the 2016 recovery of the "lost" Handschu files, the largest repository of police surveillance documents in the country—namely, over 1 million surveillance files of New Yorkers compiled by the NYPD between 1954 and 1972, including those of Malcolm X.

Over the course of many years, I've conducted close to 100 critical oral histories with the Young Lords, doctors who worked alongside them, and people who were influenced by their activism. The people I interviewed were tremendously generous with their time. Over the years, their articulate and impassioned remembrances of that period kept this project alive.