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# “They Do Not Treat Us Like Human Beings”: Latino-Police Relations in 1960’s Chicago



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Instances of police brutality against unarmed African-Americans dominate the news and media outlets. Stories of police brutality against unarmed citizens across the United States have garnered the attention of a worldwide audience. Names such as Eric Garner and Rodney King were embedded in people’s memories, but what about names like Manuel Ramos? Members of the Latino<sup>1</sup> community have also been victims of police brutality, even though this community is often left out of the conversation. The Puerto Rican community in Chicago during the 1960’s experienced first-hand the effects of police brutality, most notably in the cases of Celestino González and Silvano Burgos, Arcelis Cruz, and Manuel Ramos and Rafael Rivera. The Latino community attempted to bring attention to the state of Latino-police relations in the 1960’s through various means because there was a lack of awareness of their struggle with police brutality and excessive use of force. How did the Puerto Rican community respond to police brutality and the use of excessive force in 1960’s Chicago? Police brutality, in combination with other factors (i.e., poverty, discrimination, segregated housing, etc.), gradually led to the development of a Latino political consciousness beginning with a letter-writing campaign, a violent protest, and eventually a call for unity among marginalized—specifically Blacks and Latinos—groups who raised their collective voices for action. With their combined efforts, these communities were able to bring attention to police brutality against the Latino community,

even though the issue of police brutality continued to negatively affect the community. Their efforts were not in vain; instead, their actions were able to bring the Latino community of Chicago into the larger national conversation about the mistreatment of marginalized groups in the 1960’s.

## **Puerto Ricans in Chicago**

Puerto Ricans have been migrating to Chicago since the early years of the twentieth century. After World War II there was a surge in migration from Puerto Rico. Between the years of 1946-1950 an average of 30,000 Puerto Ricans were migrating to the US annually.<sup>2</sup> Due to deplorable economic conditions on the island, Puerto Ricans left for the United States in search of jobs. These economic conditions were brought on by the United States’ takeover of Puerto Rico. The island’s multi-crop economy switched to a single cash crop.<sup>3</sup> Sugar companies took over Puerto Rican land and paid workers some of the lowest agricultural wages in Latin America. In Puerto Rico sugar plantation workers were paid an average daily wage of 67 cents while in Cuba and Honduras the average daily wage was over \$1.20.<sup>4</sup> Some Puerto Ricans believed jobs in the United States could provide steady employment and better wages. Although unemployment information is unavailable during this time, there is data on the economically inactive population. In 1935, 24.2 percent of men were economically inactive compared to 65.7 percent of women.<sup>5</sup> Without the opportunity to migrate to the United States the unemployment rate would have been unmanageably high.<sup>6</sup>

1. Paul Taylor et al., “When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity,” Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends, April 4, 2012, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>. Latinos are persons of Latin American ancestry living in the United States. Latino is often used interchangeably with Hispanic. The Pew Hispanic center uses the terms interchangeably in articles. There is frequent debate regarding the interchangeability of these terms. Hispanic is the preferred term used by most Hispanics/Latinos according to a survey conducted by Pew Hispanic center.
2. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 56.
3. Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 39.
4. Dietz, James L., *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 111.
5. *Ibid.*, 131.

Mass migration to Chicago was the result of two things. First, there was a private job recruiting agency called Castle, Barton, and Associates set up in Puerto Rico in 1946 to recruit workers for the Chicago area.<sup>7</sup> Recruits were hired for domestic work and to work in heavy industry, like the steel mills. Second, Puerto Ricans felt Chicago offered more economic opportunity than cities like New York. New York had previously been the destination of choice for Puerto Rican migrants to the U.S., but this changed in the 1940's when fewer jobs were available.<sup>8</sup> This led Puerto Ricans to look for other options, and they began migrating to cities in the Midwest like Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

Once they arrived Puerto Ricans had a hard time finding their place in Chicago's racial hierarchy. In 1940, Chicago's Black population was 278,000 and its White population was 3,115,000, while Chicago's total population was 3,396,808. By 1950 Chicago's Black population had doubled to 492,000 and continued to increase each subsequent decade reaching 1,197,000 (or 40 percent of the total population of Chicago) by 1980, while the White population declined accounting for only 50 percent of Chicago's total population at nearly 1.5 million.<sup>10</sup> The 1960 census first enumerated Puerto Ricans in Chicago; it revealed the Puerto Rican population of Chicago to be 32,371, which would double in the next decade.<sup>11</sup> As Puerto Ricans began arriving in large numbers, they struggled to fit within Chicago's racial hierarchy. This difficulty was a result of the Black-White binary in the United States, whereby race is seen largely as Black or White and everything in between is left in an ambiguous position.<sup>12</sup> The dichotomy of race made it difficult for Latinos and Puerto Ricans, in this case, to fit in with either community. Puerto Ricans were newcomers in a city that did not yet know how to categorize them.

Puerto Ricans had a different culture, spoke a different language, and did not quite have the physical characteristics of Whites or Blacks; they were somewhere in between these two categories. Unable to fit within either community made it hard for them to navigate their space in Chicago. Puerto Ricans couldn't live in white neighborhoods because they weren't White and there was still much prejudice against Hispanics. These migrants also came from a remarkably different culture with its own cuisine, traditions, and values.

Most Latino groups, including Puerto Ricans, tended to socialize among themselves which distanced them from other ethnic groups, contributing to their isolation. Many communities often divided themselves along ethnic lines, which is evident in many social organizations created by Latinos and other marginalized groups. Examples of this include the Brown Berets and the Young Lords Organization (YLO) and gangs like the Latin Kings or the Mexican Mob. In socializing among their own ethnic groups Latinos found support with other Puerto Ricans and Mexicans who were able to sympathize as there is strong kinship developed among the Pan-ethnic Latino groups. This is likely because ethnic groups share the same language and culture, enabling them to talk about their homelands with those who understand and share common traditions and beliefs. After migrating to a foreign country many ethnic groups follow this similar pattern because being reminded of home provides comfort. Another problem for Puerto Ricans is that they often returned to the island – since Puerto Rico is a part of the U.S. they can come and go as they please, and many did. In other words, they maintained strong ties to the island rather than create new ones in their host communities. A lack of understanding of this new ethnic group to the area would contribute to people's bias, as many were unwilling to accept Puerto

Ricans as valuable community members

Puerto Ricans faced various types of discrimination in Chicago. For example, they faced discrimination in housing. Upon their arrival they were relegated to some of the most run-down neighborhoods in the city. Most of them moved into areas like the Lincoln Park neighborhood (See figure 1, number 3). In an interview with José "Cha Cha" Jimenez, the founder of the YLO, said there were certain neighborhoods Puerto Ricans could not go in, and even certain streets they could not go past.<sup>13</sup> Job discrimination was another concern for many Latinos and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Certain hiring practices such as strict educational requirements kept many Puerto Ricans in working-class jobs as busboys, janitors, waiters, and other similar positions.<sup>14</sup> The most pressing of their concerns was police brutality. Police officers viewed Latinos and other marginalized communities with hostility because of their different backgrounds. This hostility was often reflected in relations between the police and Latinos. The Puerto Ricans of 1960's Chicago often did not feel protected by police, and responded to instances of police brutality in different ways that eventually led to the development of their political consciousness.

### **Latino-Police Relations**

Police brutality can be defined as any hostile action an officer makes against a citizen. For example, this might include using derogatory language when addressing minorities or using excessive force in the handling or arrest of citizens. At the Democratic National Convention of 1968 the Chicago Police Department earned a reputation for police brutality when officers attacked protesters on live television.<sup>15</sup> During the convention, beginning on August 25<sup>th</sup>, nearly 12,000 police officers clashed for five days with anti-war demonstrators. A

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6. Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, 39.

7. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 58.

8. Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, 40.

9. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 58.

10. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3.

11. Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, 40.

12. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 5.

13. Jose "Cha Cha" Jimenez, "Latino-Police Relations," interview, 2015.

14. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 110-111.

**Figure 1**

Source: <https://ylohistory.wordpress.com/chapter-ii-harvest-of-empire/>



total of 12,000 Chicago policemen, 7,500 National Guardsmen, and 1,000 secret servicemen had to be brought in before the convention's end. The riots at the convention reflected the political climate of the 1960's. The Civil Rights Movement received a great amount of attention from the mass media in the 1960's with activists marching across the United States. In fact, on August 6, 1966 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marched in Chicago with 600 civil rights demonstrators against segregated housing.<sup>15</sup> African-American residents in the Chicago community

were aware of the way minorities were treated in comparison to Whites. In one article published in response to the riots during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, African-Americans commented that they doubted officers would shoot any rioters like they did with the Black community; they believed this was because the rioters were White.<sup>16</sup> Among the Latino community of Chicago, police brutality was a significant concern, which was evident in their treatment of Latino residents.

One of the first incidents that raised

Puerto Rican consciousness was the beating of Celestino A. González and Silvano Burgos. On July 23, 1965 police came to clear children playing around an open fire hydrant at the intersection of Mozart and Division streets. González and Burgos went into their home when they saw the police officers. This raised the officers' suspicions, which then proceeded to break down the door to arrest the two men. The officers alleged that the two men resisted arrest, and González and Burgos were charged with aggravated battery, resisting arrest, and reckless and disorderly conduct.<sup>17</sup> They were escorted into an officer's car and were taken to the hospital, where the officer who broke the door down was treated for his wounds. At the hospital González and Burgos were brutally beaten in a washroom, and finally they were then taken to the police district where they were again beaten by officers.<sup>18</sup> González was beaten until the point where he lost consciousness, fell to the floor and woke up in Cook County Hospital with his hands and feet tied to the bed. This event sparked outrage within the Latino community, particularly among Puerto Ricans as these two men were Puerto Rican. One Puerto Rican organization called *Los Caballeros de San Juan* (The Knights of San Juan) wrote a letter to Mayor Richard J. Daley urging for an investigation.<sup>19</sup> In this letter they explain Puerto Rican grievances with law enforcement as a whole:

We by no means intend to give the impression that this is an isolated case. The complaints of Spanish-speaking residents within this area revolve around not only the several accusations of irresponsible beatings, but also a complete lack of concern on the part of police in the protection of Latin-American residents.<sup>20</sup>

15. Human Rights Watch, *Shielded from Justice*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), 152.

16. Gene Roberts, "Rock Hits Dr. King as Whites Attack March in Chicago," *New York Times*, August 6, 1966, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/docview/117213815?accountid=39473>.

17. Earl Caldwell, "Chicago Negroes Stirred by Clashes between Whites and Police, Not Convention," *New York Times*, Aug 29, 1968, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/docview/118396957?accountid=39473>.

18. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 124.

19. *Ibid.*, 124.

20. *Ibid.*, 127. *Los Caballeros de San Juan* was a social organization established by the Catholic Church and Puerto Rican laypersons in Illinois as a fraternal and civic entity meant to provide support for Spanish speaking men.

The conflict went beyond the use of excessive force. It was about the lack of concern with which police treated Latino residents by not responding to their calls. The chaplain of *Los Caballeros de San Juan*, Donald J. Headley, also made an appointment to meet with Mayor Richard J. Daley to discuss the charges against the men. It is not known whether such a meeting occurred.

This was one of the first incidents of police brutality that garnered a community response. Prior to this the Latino community had called for investigations of these cases, but this time was different as the excerpts of the letter were published and Reverend Headley asked for a meeting with Mayor Daley. The community's voice was finally heard through some of its leaders, specifically *Los Caballeros de San Juan*. Letter writing was one of their earliest responses to police brutality. Puerto Ricans were able to express their concerns through an organization that cared about the Puerto Rican community and its wellbeing. The fact that there were Puerto Rican organizations indicates that there already was some sort of Latino consciousness. Membership in *Los Caballeros de San Juan* became a way to preserve Puerto Ricans' culture and provide support for them in a hostile environment where Puerto Ricans did not fit in. The Puerto Rican community must have already been aware of the discrimination they were facing because they were willing to take action in response to injustices against their community.

Puerto Ricans faced discrimination in a variety of ways once they arrived in Chicago. First, they were stuck in the laboring class working as waiters, janitors, or housekeepers. Second, they also faced discrimination in dealing with police officers. Puerto Ricans were often arrested, questioned, or searched without provocation.<sup>22</sup> This was embarrassing enough for the Latino community as a

whole; in addition officers frequently used the derogatory term "spik" when dealing with Latinos.<sup>23</sup> They also faced discrimination from other citizens. The *Chicago Daily Defender* reported an instance where two dark-skinned Puerto Rican boys (each seventeen) were chased by a mob of Whites screaming "We don't want negroes in our park" on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1966.<sup>24</sup> Incidents like this illustrate how Puerto Ricans didn't fit within the racial hierarchy of Chicago. To the White community they were considered to be Black, yet there also existed tension between Black and Latino communities. Who were these citizens to look to for protection if not law enforcement? They were forced to find support and protection within their community.

Letter-writing campaigns allowed the Puerto Rican community to voice its concerns and avoid physical confrontations with the police. In the letter *Los Caballeros de San Juan* wrote to the mayor they argued on behalf of all Latin American residents. As leaders in the Puerto Rican community they used their voice to fight for the Latino community as a whole identifying themselves as Latin-American residents rather than just Puerto Ricans. *Los Caballeros de San Juan* argued that police lacked concern in dealing with Latin American residents. If the community was collectively aware that Latino residents were treated differently, there must have already been some sort of Latino consciousness because without it they could not have expressed these concerns. In fact organizations like this could not have been set up without awareness of an issue. For example *Los Caballeros de San Juan* could not have created an organization to preserve Puerto Rican heritage without perceiving some sort of threat to it. The Puerto Rican formation of a community consciousness likely had its origins in social organizations such as this. Participation in organizations such as *Los Caballeros de San*

*Juan* empowered Puerto Ricans to begin thinking and acting on the concerns of all Latinos.

Mayor Richard J. Daley designated the first week of June in 1966 as Puerto Rican Week and community members were thrilled at the opportunity to show off their ethnic pride.<sup>25</sup> This event likely held so much significance in the community because it reflected an acceptance of Puerto Ricans as a part of the Chicago community. However, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the celebration, police officer Thomas Munyon shot 21-year old Arcelis Cruz at the Damen-Division street intersection in the Westtown area, a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood.<sup>26</sup> Immediately after the shooting the crowd became unruly. Police released the canine unit on the crowd, and a Puerto Rican man named Juan Gonzales was injured, which further intensified the crowd's anger.<sup>27</sup> Over the course of the next three days the Puerto Rican community rioted. During the ensuing riot 50 buildings were destroyed, 49 people were arrested, 16 injured, and millions of dollars in damage resulted.<sup>28</sup> Assistant Police Superintendent John E. Harnett even called in Spanish-speaking police officers to calm the Puerto Rican community, but to no avail. Afterwards articles were published in several different newspapers such as the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *The New York Times*, and *Chicago Daily News*.<sup>29</sup> Many of these articles reported on eyewitness accounts of these events; some witnesses alleged they saw Officer Munyon shoot Cruz after he pulled out a revolver.<sup>30</sup> The amount of press coverage received signaled that the Latino community had succeeded in bringing attention to the issue of police brutality within their community.

This event finally gave the Puerto Rican community the opportunity to express their concerns. The riot was an expression of the pent-up frustration they experienced. Police brutality was the

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21. Ibid., 124.

22. Ibid., 125.

23. Ibid., 125.

24. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 163.

25. "Shooting Angers Crowd, Patrol Car Burned." *Chicago Daily Defender* (Daily Edition) (1960-1973), Jun 13, 1966. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/docview/494238344?accountid=39473>.

26. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 146.

27. Ibid., 147.

28. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 111.

final push the Puerto Rican community needed to act on their frustration. This response became one of the most well-known expressions of Puerto Rican outrage in Chicago. It was the first time the community united as a whole and acted against the discrimination they were facing, and it was fueled by the state of Latino-police relations.

For Puerto Ricans there was no real opportunity for upward mobility because these opportunities were limited. They were stuck in the working class because of a combination of racial discrimination and education requirements that kept them in low income jobs. In 1960 the leading category of employment for Puerto Ricans in Chicago (45.7%) was “operative and kindred workers” meaning they were largely employed in semi-skilled jobs such as welders and plumbers.<sup>31</sup> Aside from not being able to escape the working class, Puerto Ricans also could not escape poor housing conditions. Whites often did not want to live with Puerto Rican neighbors which left Puerto Ricans few housing options, including the Lincoln Park and Humboldt Park areas. Landlords were able to charge Puerto Ricans higher rents as they had few other choices.<sup>32</sup> These issues created the frustration that led to the Division Street Riots.

The riot put a spotlight on the blight of the Puerto Rican community with housing and employment. The public was finally willing to hear about the frustration of Puerto Ricans with the discrimination they faced at an institutional level. In fact, after the Division Street Riots, Janet Nolan, from the University of Notre Dame, conducted research and interviewed Puerto Rican residents of the

area to understand coping mechanisms among Puerto Ricans in overcoming poverty.<sup>33</sup> Many residents felt that police officers never treated them fairly because they were Puerto Rican. In addition to this research being conducted in response to the Division Street Riots, a month later a public hearing was held in response and testimonies were taken from 54 witnesses. The Puerto Rican community identified police brutality as their top concern out of six problem areas in the summary report of the hearing.<sup>34</sup> Most Puerto Ricans believed officers were hostile and that officers failed to protect Puerto Ricans by not responding to calls in Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Often Latinos attributed the issue of police brutality to their inability to speak English and officers’ discrimination against Spanish-speakers. Many Latinos felt that the police degraded them and were racist.

Riots plagued the United States of the 1960’s at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout the 1960’s and persisting through the 1970’s youths across the United States became politically active. Youths began protesting the Vietnam War, poverty, imperialism, and racially motivated violence in the United States. Riots occurred sporadically throughout the United States and even high school students were walking out of schools in protest.<sup>35</sup> The Brown Berets organized student walkouts in East Los Angeles for Chicano students to demand a better education.<sup>36</sup> They believed issues such as overcrowding, poor facilities, and culturally insensitive teachers were a detriment to their education.<sup>37</sup> They also demanded courses about Mexican culture and the Mexican-American experience. Gentrification became an issue for

marginalized groups. For example, in 1966 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led a march against segregated housing in Chicago with 600 other demonstrators.<sup>38</sup> The Young Lords, a former street gang, also made the transition to a civil rights organization in 1968 to combat gentrification. This era brought recognition to many leftist organizations such as the Young Lords and the Black Panthers.

Chicago’s Black Panther Party played a significant role in the community, and influenced many other militant organizations. The Black Panther Party (BPP) was a Black Nationalist and militant organization. The organization was created in 1966, inspired by the philosophies of Malcom X.<sup>39</sup> Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton founded the BPP in Los Angeles, and Fred Hampton was the founder of the Chicago Black Panther Party.<sup>40</sup> They served as the model for other militant nationalist organizations such as the Young Lords and the Brown Berets. Hampton helped create a coalition with other social activist groups of all racial backgrounds, in particular groups like Students for a Democratic Society—a predominantly White organization—and other groups like the Latino Young Lords. During this time period activists from various communities began collaborating to combat issues such as war, racism, and imperialism. Many of these activists were from marginalized groups that had been affected by colonialism such as Native-Americans, African-Americans, and Mexican-Americans. These marginalized groups were tired of living in segregated housing, dealing with inferior educational facilities, and being treated as inferiors. As a result some groups advocated

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29. Ibid., 117.

30. Ibid., 148.

31. Ibid., 148.

32. Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. (Boston: Longman, 2011), 302-303.

33. Arturo F. Rosales, “Brown Berets.” *The American Mosaic: The Latino American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, June 2, 2015, <http://latinoamerican2.abc-clio.com/>. The Brown Berets were a militant civil rights organization directed at Chicanos; before their decline their membership encompassed 5,000.

34. Matt S. Meier and Margo Gutiérrez, “Chicano Student Walkouts,” *The American Mosaic: The Latino American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, June 2, 2015, <http://latinoamerican2.abc-clio.com/>.

35. Gene Roberts, “Rock Hits Dr. King”, 1.

36. Zoe Trodd, “Black Nationalism,” *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, June 20, 2015, <http://africanamerican2.abc-clio.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/>. Malcom X was a prominent spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, and later for Muslim Mosque, Inc. He was a prominent leader of the Black Power Movement and advocated for Black self-defense.

37. Jamie J. Wilson, “Black Panther Party,” *The American Mosaic: The Latino American Experience* ABC-CLIO, August 26, 2015, <http://latinoamerican2.abc-clio.com/>.

38. Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez, “Latino-Police Relations,” interview, 2015.

39. Ibid.

**Figure 2**  
**Source: Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection,**  
**Grand Valley State University**



**Figure 3**  
**Source: <https://ylohistory.wordpress.com/chapter-i-introduction/>**



separatism; Chicano activists advocated the creation of a separate nation called Aztlán, while Black activists called for a return to Africa. The Young Lords were sympathetic to these issues and published articles in their newspaper about the Chicano struggle, Native American concerns, and articles from the Black Panthers' newspaper.

Created in the early 1960's the Young Lords were a street gang, and the members were mostly the children of Puerto Rican immigrants. Immigrant communities often created social clubs to celebrate holidays, milestones in community members' lives, and finding a sense of community in a foreign setting. Often self-defense organizations were formed from these social clubs in response to the racially motivated violence these communities experienced. The Young Lords were founded by several individuals including José Jimenez. This was the result of the violence and discrimination they grew up seeing even against their own parents; according to José Jimenez his own parents were antagonized. Puerto Ricans weren't allowed to go beyond certain streets or into certain neighborhoods.<sup>41</sup>

The Young Lords were a self-defense organization originating in the 1960's to protect boys in the Lincoln Park neighborhood from local White youths. Most of the boys joined the Young Lords street gang at young ages, approximately 12 or 13 years old.<sup>42</sup> Many Young Lords went on to become involved in petty crimes, or spent time in jail. In fact at one point José Jimenez had 18 court cases against him, but this was during his time as an activist.<sup>43</sup> One of his earlier jail sentences was actually responsible for his political awakening, which took place in jail when a guard gave him books about Malcom X and other Black activists.<sup>44</sup> During this time Black activism provided a template for the activities of many marginalized groups. Organizations like the Brown Berets and the Young Lords were influenced by the militant tactics and organizational platform of the Black Panthers. The

40. Ibid.

41. Michael Gonzalez. "The Revolution Has Come," Ruffians and Revolutionaries~ The Development of the Young Lords Organization in Chicago, <https://ylohistory.wordpress.com/>.

Young Lord's transformation occurred in 1968 when they became the YLO in response to Jimenez's political awakening. They became a radical organization that "sought to eliminate inequality, colonialism, poverty, and social injustice."<sup>45</sup> Several logos used by the Young Lords illustrated dedication to Puerto Rican determination, and are pictured below (See Figure 2).

The organization fought against the discrimination and gentrification taking place in Chicago. Puerto Ricans were being displaced and forced to relocate frequently as gentrification was underway. Older buildings in the city were being torn down and newer ones were built. The newer buildings were meant to provide housing for middle and upper income individuals leaving no place for low income residents. Organizations such as the Young Lords, Black Panthers, and Students for a Democratic Society were forged in an era of increasing political consciousness among youths. In the late 1960's the Young Lords, the Black Panthers, and Students for a Democratic Society formed the Rainbow Coalition. These groups united over issues beyond race; war and poverty were two of the largest concerns, which were fundamental issues that the Rainbow Coalition united against.

In 1969 with the shooting of Young Lords member Manuel Ramos the YLO and the Rainbow Coalition took a stand against police brutality. During a celebration on May 4, 1969 off-duty police officer James Lamb shot Manuel Ramos in the face for pointing a gun at him, and Rafael Rivera in the neck outside of Orlando Davila's home in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. The

celebration was for the baptism of Davila's daughter and a birthday. Officer Lamb was dressed in street clothes and covered in paint because he had been painting an apartment across the street.<sup>46</sup> In the midst of the chaos four members of the Young Lords street gang, formed in the early 1960's, allegedly attacked Lamb after Ramos and Rivera were shot, and were arrested.<sup>47</sup> Ramos and Rivera were rushed to the hospital after the shooting where Ramos died only minutes later.

After the shooting of Ramos, the Young Lords directed the community in a different form of protest than earlier methods such as the Division Street Riots; this time their methods were calculated. In the aftermath of the shooting, the YLO along with the Black Panther Party, Students for a Democratic Society, and the Latin American Defense Organization (LADO) held a rally at the corner of Armitage and Halsted Streets.<sup>48</sup> Inspired by the words of Ramos' family at the rally, the crowd of about 3,000 led a caravan of 35 cars to the Deering police station in the neighborhood where Ramos was shot.<sup>49</sup> On May 5<sup>th</sup> the Young Lords, the Black Panthers, and parents in the Lincoln Park community attended the funeral which brought out several hundred people.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Latino Response**

Manuel Ramos' death united an entire community in protest against police brutality. This wasn't just about the death of Manuel Ramos, but about the treatment of all Latinos and persons of color by police officers. In response to the death of Manuel Ramos, there was little to no violence involved in comparison to the riot because more thought was put into it. The Young Lords had organized a

rally to mobilize the community. Though the protest at the police station was not planned, it still required some thought. Members of the community had discussed going to the police station to protest the murder of Ramos before reacting violently. Another factor to consider is that the response was not immediately after the shooting. There was more time to consider a plan of action, whereas the riots were spontaneous reactions from an outraged community. Members of the community might have felt a need to participate in these protests because it could have easily been themselves or one of their family members. After all, Ramos was not just a Young Lord he was also a father, a husband and a son.<sup>51</sup> Later, in their newspaper the Young Lords paid tribute to Manuel Ramos by printing a collage of the events that took place after Ramos' death (See Figure 3).

Community members tried to use non-violent protest instead of a riot as in the previous case and this could have been the product of several factors. First, the riot of 1966 was part of a string of riots that occurred between 1965 and 1967 called the Long Hot Summer. The Young Lords also strove to make this a non-violent protest. With their transformation into a political organization, they likely tried to follow tactics popular among other activists of the times. Activists across the country were marching, conducting sit-ins, and conducting rallies as non-violent forms of protest. The politicization of the Young Lords helped organize the community. They also gave power to a powerless community because marginalized communities often believed they lacked the power to make a change, but organizations like the Young Lords

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42. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 204.

43. *Ibid.*, 204. It is possible that Officer Lamb had been conducting surveillance on Young Lords members as the police were already conducting surveillance on Young Lords members such as José Jimenez.

44. Jose "Cha Cha" Jimenez, "Latino-Police Relations," interview, 2015. Part of this could have been because some members were suspected of being involved in illegal activities. Cases involving police brutality or excessive force are often controversial, as there is conflicting information which makes the truth hard to find and therefore requires the use of allegedly.

45. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 188.

46. "Group Stages Protest Over Police Action," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1969. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/docview/168913412?accountid=39473>.

47. Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 188.

48. "Inquest Finds Policeman Lamb Justified in Killing of Ramos," *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 1969. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/docview/168886904?accountid=39473>.

49. Lorena Oropeza. *!Raza Si! !Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 67.

50. *Ibid.*, 67.

gave them clout. They spoke on behalf of the community, and helped them collectively voice their frustrations.

Demonstrations following Ramos' death did not occur in one day. The community organized peacefully as a whole and was able to protest police brutality meaningfully and intentionally without inciting more violence. This seemed to have been an efficient tactic, as it resulted in the community learning about Puerto Ricans' experiences with discrimination. Moreover, it allowed them to confront law enforcement directly and to express their voices without causing harm to other members of the community. They brought attention to the fact that violence perpetrated by police officers could happen to anybody. Non-violent protests were likely so popular because they brought attention to the community in a more positive light than if it had been a riot. Violent protests gave the media and politicians ammunition against their community. The community would be painted as criminals rather than the victims of police brutality. This is illustrated by the hundreds of community members in attendance at the funeral of Manuel Ramos and similarly the many that attended the protest at the police station. Furthermore, it allowed the entire community to demonstrate their political consciousness and their ability to organize to combat issues such as police brutality.

Police brutality cannot be considered in isolation of the formation of a Latino political consciousness. The foundation for the community's political awareness had its roots in the United States political climate of the 1960's. This was a tumultuous time for the United States. Across the U.S. youth activists were protesting the Vietnam War and various types of "isms." Latinos were dying in higher proportions to their population size in the United States and believed this was unjust. A widely circulated report by Ralph Guzman revealed that while the percentage of "Spanish surnamed" males of military age in the southwest was 13.8 percent of the total population, about 19.4 percent of casualties from

these states were "Spanish surnamed."<sup>52</sup> A shocking report that came to the attention of Henry B. Gonzalez, a Democratic congressman from Texas, revealed that 62.5 percent of casualties from San Antonio in 1966 were Latino, yet the Latino population only accounted for 41 percent of the city's population.<sup>53</sup> Latinos were tired of risking their lives in the wars, and still facing discrimination when they came back home despite their achievements overseas. The political awareness of the Puerto Rican or Latino community of 1960's Chicago may have been influenced by this trend. People of all backgrounds were becoming better informed on social issues and organizing around these issues creating groups and collaborating, as in the case of the Rainbow Coalition.

The responses to these three critical instances of police brutality evolved over time and seemingly became more sophisticated and intentional toward the end. This is likely connected to the trend in youth activism across the United States as well. Non-violent protest was gaining popularity in the community with leaders such as Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez being the apotheoses for marginalized communities. These tactics were embraced by marginalized communities because they allowed citizens to express their concerns without incriminating themselves. Members of marginalized communities were less likely to be framed as criminals if they protested peacefully, which likely gave them more credibility than inciting riots.

While the riot of 1966 may not have been the most effective form of protest for the community, it was still a protest. These riots sparked a conversation about the Puerto Rican community's plight. Finally they were receiving the attention they needed to spark discussion within their communities. Puerto Ricans had finally gotten the media's attention with the Division Street Riots, as several articles were published in newspapers such as the *Chicago Daily News*, *The New York Times*, and the *Chicago Sun Times*. They once again garnered the attention of the media with

the death of Manuel Ramos. Articles were printed in several newspapers, and the protest march that took place had thousands of demonstrators in attendance.

As far as a political consciousness the foundation had already begun, but the atmosphere of the times amplified it. This allowed the Puerto Rican community to become a part of this trend or movement in the United States of rejecting oppressive U.S. policies and discrimination. The combination of these factors contributed to their responses. First, the influence of the Black Power movement helped give this community the push it needed to take action. The Black Panthers helped politicize the Young Lords and in turn the Young Lords were able to mobilize the Lincoln Park community to protest the unjust death of a friend. Jimenez modeled the YLO after the Black Panthers, and the Black Panthers also gave the YLO informal political education classes.<sup>54</sup> Second, even though these actions were in response to police brutality the responses were about more than that; it was about their frustration with the treatment of marginalized communities in general. Latinos were frustrated about being stuck in the working class and living in the most deteriorated neighborhoods only to be displaced by urban renewal. These responses allowed them to express anger about all the discrimination and injustice they faced. Marginalized communities, such as the Lincoln Park community, just wanted their experiences validated.

The Puerto Rican community's responses reflected the development of a political consciousness. However, police brutality is not the only factor that contributed to this political consciousness. Puerto Ricans were part of a larger trend of the activism of this time period. All marginalized communities were voicing their concerns. Before the riots and responses to police brutality of the 1960's, there was a preexisting Puerto Rican political consciousness. It was not strictly Puerto Rican because it included other Spanish-speakers in the responses.

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51. Michael Gonzalez, "The Revolution Has Come."

52. Felix M. Padilla, Puerto Rican Chicago, 144.

53. Ibid.

54. Michael Gonzalez. *Ruffians and Revolutionaries*, Ch. 3 <https://ylohistory.wordpress.com/>.

In the case of González and Burgos, *Los Caballeros de San Juan* argued on behalf of the whole Latino community. The Division Street Riots was first called the Puerto Rican Riot because it consisted largely of Puerto Ricans since it occurred in response to violence during Puerto Rican week.<sup>55</sup> However, the death of Manuel Ramos once again attracted the attention of a larger Spanish-speaking community. The protestors were largely Latino rather than just Puerto Rican.

Discussing issues of police brutality is significant in order to create a dialogue within the community. With police brutality dominating the news and media outlets, it's imperative to understand the history of this issue. It is useful to look at past instances of police brutality to reveal the persistence of this issue. We must remember the past and use the past when searching for solutions in the present. The extent of the relationship between these responses and the U.S. political climate needs to be explored further within the context of police brutality, the Young Lords, and the Latino community of 1960's Chicago. The 1960's provided the Latino community of Chicago the opportunity to make their voices heard, and they used their collective voice to ask to be treated like human beings.

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55. Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 144.

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