

Civil Rights Era Community Activism: Case Study with the YLO

Introduction:

This lesson will be done in an individual or group format, with students evaluating selected primary and secondary sources. They will use these sources to make connections between their prior knowledge about the civil rights movements of the 1960's-1970's, the Young Lords Organization (YLO), and the Rainbow Coalition. Students will explore and analyze artifacts from the GVSU Young Lords in Lincoln Park collection with a focus on: Civil rights organizations' platform statements, FBI and government surveillance documents, ads and imagery of the YLO, media response to the YLO and Young Lords Party (YLP) of New York, and challenges faced by members of these movements. Students will also explore the archival process by examining these primary and secondary source materials, analyzing each for: context, perspective, biases, subjectivity, and tone.

Time: 60 - 90 Minutes

Objectives:

Lesson:

- Students will display understanding and analyze (compare and contrast) the goals of the YLO, the Black Panthers, and other activist groups from the 1960's-1970's.
- Students will identify, analyze, and discuss the challenges these groups faced and their impact.
- Students will identify themes and make connections between historical activist groups and ongoing struggles in the present.

Archival:

- PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize
 - B. Identify and communicate information found in primary sources, including summarizing the content of the source and identifying and reporting key components such as how it was created, by whom, when, and what it is.
- PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate
 - B. Critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source, including tone, subjectivity, and biases, and consider how these relate to the original purpose(s) and audience(s) of the source.
 - C. Situate a primary source in context by applying knowledge about the time and culture in which it was created; the author or creator; its format, genre, publication history; or related materials in a collection.

- D. As part of the analysis of available resources, identify, interrogate, and consider the reasons for silences, gaps, contradictions, or evidence of power relationships in the documentary record and how they impact the research process.
- F. Demonstrate historical empathy, curiosity about the past, and appreciation for historical sources and historical actors.

Requisite Knowledge for Students:

Creation of the YLO and YLP:

The history of the Young Lords Organization starts in the tense and socially charged 1960's. Jacqueline Lazú, of DePaul University, worked closely with José "Cha Cha" Jiménez, previous chairman of the Chicago YLO to record a comprehensive history of the YLO and YLP. In her 2013 paper "The Chicago Young Lords: (Re)constructing Knowledge and Revolution" she wrote:

"The Young Lords and Young Lordettes began as a street gang, or crew as they were referred to at the time, led by a young Orlando Dávila in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood in the 1960s.... The neighborhoods saw constant influxes of new immigrant groups and various stages of white flight in and out of the city. In fact, it was protection, not political activism that led the original agenda of the Young Lords. Informal groups of friends bonded, most often along class and/or ethnic lines for safety in the streets. By 1969 the Young Lords shifted toward an activist agenda and became the Young Lords Organization that eventually spread to other cities including the well-known New York chapter... In May 1970, the New York chapter of the YLO split from the Chicago YLO and became the Young Lords Party (YLP)".

History of the YLP:

While working under the YLO umbrella the YLP proved it was more than capable of continuing the vision of the YLO. Darrel Enck-Wanzer wrote about the history and platform of the YLP in New York in his article "Crafting the People's Revolution in El Barrio: The Young Lords' People's Church" (for the University of Illinois Urbana- Champaign "Radicals in Black & Brown, 2008):

"One of the first points of this expansion revolved around the issue of health and, among other problems, lead poisoning in particular was reaching near epidemic proportions in New York City at that time. Reporting in the Village Voice in late-1969 Jack Newfield wrote: "Medical authorities estimate there are 30,000 undiagnosed cases of lead poisoning each year in the city. The victims are usually children between the ages of one and three, who eat flaking or peeling paint from tenement walls." In response to this health disaster and the city's inability (or unwillingness) to address it, the Young Lords struck a deal with the Health Department to administer detection tests for lead poisoning."

The lead testing initiative was not the only action the YLP took in New York. In the last days of 1969 and the first week of 1970 the YLP took over the First Spanish Methodist Church in East Harlem for 11 days. According to Enck-Wanzer (2008):

“the People’s Church” was home to all of the programs (child care, free breakfasts, liberation school, tuberculosis and lead poisoning testing, etc.) the Young Lords sought to implement. Furthermore, the church became a political and social refuge for the people of El Barrio, and the residence of some 300 people. They hosted a children’s theatrical event (which was basically a play about “the People’s Church”), numerous speeches, poetry readings (including the first reading of Pedro Pietri’s famous poem, “Puerto Rican Obituary”), musical events, and more. At 6:30 in the morning on January 7, 1970, one hundred five Young Lords and supporters submitted to arrest, bringing a peaceful end to the church offensive.”

Before the 1970 break between the two organizations the YLP were able to accomplish door to door tuberculosis (TB) testing, the East Harlem garbage offensive, and the opening of a branch in the Bronx. After the split from the YLO they were able to open offices across New York, Puerto Rico, and New Jersey, liberate a TB testing x-ray truck, occupy the Lincoln Hospital for 12 hours, join the 1970 People’s Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and send members to represent the YLP internationally.

Puerto Rican independence and self- determination movement:

The Puerto Rican independence movement is made up of Boricuas (Puerto Rican term for people from Puerto Rico) and Nuyoricans (Puerto Rican term for Puerto Ricans on the mainland). The movement works towards Puerto Rican independence from the United States and Nuyoricans rights within the mainland U.S. The movement has been active since 1493, fighting for independence from Spain till 1898 and the United States today. In 1917 President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Shafroth act, granting U.S citizenship to the peoples of Puerto Rico; but the Jones Shafroth act came with negative consequences for the island including a lack of representation in the U.S. Legislative branch, and predatory taxation on imports. According to Jacqueline Lazú (2013) the push for independence that inspired the YLO was the Vietnam War:

“... between 1964 and 1973, the United States sent over 48,000 Puerto Rican soldiers to fight the war in Vietnam (Black: 2012: ii). Many Puerto Ricans enlisted voluntarily, but many others were drafted, subject to conscription as citizens of the United States. The obligation of Puerto Rican youth to fight in Vietnam cast light on the glaring contradictions of the United States’ relationship with its island territory. Beyond the social and political implications of the war, there was an even heavier burden for those who fought it, and were forced to confront the conflicting loyalties felt by the disparity between their nation and their state.”

The Puerto Rican independence movement was a central part of the YLO platform and could be seen in their acts (both on the island and the mainland U.S.) and their imagery “Tengo Puerto Rico en Mi Corazón”.

Notable Members:

- Orlando Dávila: Founder of the Young Lords gang in Chicago
- Juan González: Co-founder of and Minister of Education for the YLP, and journalist
- Pablo Yoruba Guzmán: Co-founder for the YLP and leader in the New York and Philadelphia chapters
- José “Cha Cha” Jiménez: A founder and chairman of the Chicago YLO
- Omar Lopez: Minister of Information for the YLO, moved to Chicago from Mexico with his family when he was 13
- Felipe Luciano: Co-found of the YLP
- Iris Morales: Leader of the YLO and co-founder of the Women’s Caucus
- Angela Navedo: An Italian-American leader of both the YLO and the Young Lordetts. Wife of Pancho Lind, a member of the YLO murdered by members of a youth white gang in the early 1960’s
- Juan “Fi” Ortiz: Co-founder of the YLP
- David Pérez: Co-founder of the YLP

Connections:

- The creation of the Rainbow Coalition
- Neighborhood gentrification
- Police and government abuse

Assessments:

This lesson will be assessed informally via observation and discussion, and formally through the Critical Examination of Archival Documents worksheet found at the bottom of this document. The professor will look for the student’s ability to display understanding and analyze the goals, platforms, challenges, themes, and connections to the YLO, the Black Panthers, and other activist groups from the 1960’s - 1970’s for the lesson objectives; and the student’s ability to: read, understand, summarize, interpret, analyze, and evaluate archival artifacts for the archival objectives. The framework below can be used to determine a student’s level of mastery in each objective.

Objective Mastery Framework:

Objective	Emerging	Accomplished
<p>PSL 3. B.</p> <p>Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <p>Identify and communicate information found in primary sources.</p>	<p>Students are able to summarize most of the information in a specific document, but misses some of the information, or does not give specifics on key components such as how it was created, by whom, when, and what it is.</p>	<p>Students are able to summarize the information in a specific document, including specifics on key components such as how it was created, by whom, when, and what it is. Students also should address missing information and why it may be missing.</p>
<p>PSL 4. B.</p> <p>Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <p>Critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source.</p>	<p>Students are unable to critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source. They may leave out connections to: tone, subjectivity, and biases. They may also not make connection to how these relate to the original purpose(s) and audience(s) of the source.</p>	<p>Students are able to critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source. They will include connections to tone, subjectivity, and biases, and consider how these relate to the original purpose(s) and audience(s) of the source.</p>
<p>PSL 4. C.</p> <p>Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <p>Situate a primary source in context by applying knowledge about the time and culture in which it was created.</p>	<p>Students are able to make some basic connections to the primary source contexts; while acknowledging some of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge about the time and culture in which the artifact was created ● The author or creator of the artifact ● The artifact's format, genre, and publication history 	<p>Students are able to make strong and more nuanced connections to the primary source contexts; while acknowledging some of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge about the time and culture in which the artifact was created ● People who are similar to the author or creator of the artifact ● The artifact's format, genre, and publication history

<p>PSL 4. D.</p> <p>Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <p>Analyze resources by considering silences, gaps, contradictions, and evidence of power relationships.</p>	<p>Students are able to analyze artifacts for some of these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Silences ● Gaps ● Contradictions ● Evidence of power relationships <p>Students may or may not make basic connections to how these aspects impact the research process.</p>	<p>Students are able to analyze artifacts for some of these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Silences ● Gaps ● Contradictions ● Evidence of power relationships <p>Students make connections, on a nuanced level, to how these aspects impact the research process</p>
<p>PSL 4. F.</p> <p>Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <p>Demonstrate historical empathy</p>	<p>Students are able to demonstrate limited historical empathy by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showing curiosity about the past ● Demonstrating appreciation for historical sources and actors ● Making a personal connection to the artifact <p>Students may not be able to fully make connections between historical artifacts and their own experiences. They may also demonstrate limited curiosity about the past.</p>	<p>Students are able to demonstrate thoughtful historical empathy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showing curiosity about the past ● Demonstrating appreciation for historical sources and actors ● Making a personal connection to the artifact

Discussion Questions:

Section	Documents	Questions	Objectives
Platform Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Revolutionary Timeline ● Young Lords Party 13 Point Program and Platform ● What We Want to Believe ● Young Lords, Organization and the State of America Today ● Background of the American Indian Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compare and contrast the different party aims. ● Can you identify any common themes or outliers? ● Did they list them and/ or draw conclusions or interpretation? 	<p>PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B <p>PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B ● C ● F
FBI and Government Surveillance Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FBI Investigated Jiménez CPD Subversive Personal Files (Pages: 1-3) ● COINTELPRO (Pages: 8-11, 24, 26-27, & 31) ● The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization: A Staff Study (Pages: 11 & 16-17) ● Police Misconduct and Civil Rights - The Assassination of Fred Hampton (Pages: 1 & 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why was the government concerned about the YLO? ● How did the government's actions impact the YLO? 	<p>PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B <p>PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B ● C ● D ● F

<p>Imagery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YLO El Pueblo en Mi Corazón poster ● Power to the People/ Viva el Pueblo poster ● Tengo Puerto Rico en Mi Corazón button ● Free Cha-Cha buttons ● YLO Newspaper Vol. 1 No.1 page 3 ● YLO Newspaper Vol. 1 No.2 page 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What catches your eye? ● What do those characteristics tell you about the document? ● How would you interpret these images, how do you think people at the time responded to these images? 	<p>PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B <p>PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B ● C ● F
<p>Media Response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “City Street Corner Becomes Open-air Drug Market” article ● “Garelik Says Terrorists are Growing Peril Here” article ● Hospitals V. the People! ● 2 Supporters View Urban Renewal in Lincoln Park ● Young Lord Terror in Lincoln Park Told 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the common themes of anti-YLO groups used in their critique of the YLO? ● What agendas or bias were these critiques connected to? 	<p>PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B <p>PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B ● C ● D ● F
<p>Challenges and Backlash</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young Lords Back Again - Say Police Harassing LV Lady ● Revolucion!! ● Memorial Marches and Rites to Honor Slain Minister, and Wife ● Theft’s Harsh Sentence ● Manuel Ramos Murdered May 4 1969 + “Pancho” Murdered April 11 1971 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are the YLO portrayed in these documents? ● What are the effects of the actions taken against the YLO? ● What are the effects of how these actions were portrayed? 	<p>PSL 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B <p>PSL 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B ● C ● F

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

Meet the Record: Without Reading, examine your document.

1. What catches your eye? Are there any unique physical characteristics (handwritten, letterhead, notations, colors, logo, size, etc.)? What do those characteristics tell you about the document?

Initial Questions: Answer while reading your document.

2. Who wrote this document?

3. When was it written?

4. Who is the intended audience?

5. Describe the document's contents. What is the purpose of the document? What evidence supports your conclusion?

Analysis: Read, Consider, and Discuss your item before answering.

6. What intrigued or challenged you most in this document?

7. Link the resource to other sources or what you've already learned about a topic. What does this source add to your understanding of this time?

8. Why is this source significant? What does it tell us about this time period/perspective/topic?