



**“QUE VIVA EL
PUEBLO”**

**A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF
JOSE CHA-CHA JIMENEZ
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE
YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Cha Cha's story shows the lengths to which the rich who run this country will go to keep poor people and Latinos down. Born in Puerto Rico and raised in a U.S. slum, Cha Cha is only a little different from other Puerto Ricans; that is, he has already spent ten years of his life in court and in jail for rebelling against the system. Those near him in his teen-age years would ask if he had been anything more than a drug addict and a gang member. But what is a gang but a group of young people--products of the ghetto in rebellion--directing their hostilities toward other poor victims instead of their oppressors. Drug addiction is only an extension of the gang.

Although confused for many years as to who the oppressor was, Cha Cha used his time in jail to think. He left jail with a vague conception of an oppressor--a conception he sharpened as he experienced continued abuse. He saw that his problems were not unique but common among the poor, especially among Latinos. He reorganized the dissolving street gang--then on the verge of falling into drugs--and turned it into a political organization fighting for the self-determination of Latinos and other poor and oppressed peoples.

The Young Lords Organization was concerned with the issues of welfare, health, day care, and police brutality. It also dealt with the questions of Puerto Rican independence and urban renewal. These were the issues which brought repression from the oppressor. Mayor Daley and his "Maquina Democratica," who had dominated the Latino vote ever since we can remember, could not tolerate a Latino organization opposed to their scheme for driving the poor out of their neighborhoods so that suburbanites could return to the inner city. Daley drove the Latinos from the areas now occupied by the Carl Sandburg Village and the University of Illinois. When he promised them relocation and decent housing, he swindled

them. He did the same thing to the Lincoln Park community. But Cha Cha, the Young Lords, the Latinos and the poor of Lincoln Park who had been driven out of their homes too many times saw through Daley's demagoguery and protested. This Daley could not tolerate. A deluge of indictments poured out of State's Attorney Hanrahan's office to Lincoln Park residents and Young Lords. The Young Lords leaders got four and five cases each--they were charged with everything from leafletting too close to a school to mob action. Cha Cha alone got eighteen cases dumped on him. He was given a year for taking \$ 23 worth of lumber. He has now won thirteen cases. He still has four cases pending.

What were the crimes committed by the poor and Latinos of Lincoln Park in 1969 and 1970? Demanding self-determination in a democratic society? What was so diabolical about a former street gang and its leader trying to serve their people? Why was the news media used to slander them? As long as street gangs kill and brutalize their own people they are ignored and sometimes even aided by the oppressor, but when they attack the root of the problem, the creators of the ghettos, the actual criminals of this society--the oppressors--will utilize every means in their power--the courts, the police, the State's Attorney's office, etc.--to suppress them.

The only crime that Cha Cha committed has been to wage a struggle for self-determination and to refuse to humble himself before the oppressor. For this, he is now in jail. As Cha Cha himself said after the Young Lord Manuel Ramos was murdered in cold blood by an off-duty policeman:

They can jail us;
They can brutalize us;
They can even kill us--
But they can't stop us!

CHA CHA JIMENEZ

Jose (Cha Cha) Jimenez was born on August 8, 1948 in an apartment in "El Millón," a slum of Caguas, Puerto Rico. His parents came from a rural area. The youngest of 15 children, his mother Eugenia had been raised in a convent because her father was blind and there was no one to take care of her. At the age of 16, she left the convent to marry Cha Cha's father Antonio. In her pregnancy, she went to Caguas to be near a doctor. Antonio had already left to find a job in the United States; he was in a migrant camp near Boston when Cha Cha was born. Cha Cha's older sister died of pneumonia shortly after his birth leaving him the only male and eventually the oldest of four children.

When Cha Cha was two years old, Antonio had earned enough money to send for him and his mother. They lived near Boston for a year, then moved to Chicago with Cha Cha's new-born sister. There they became tenants in a hotel which had been converted into rat- and roach-infested apartments. Known as the Water Hotel, it was on the corners of Superior and La Salle streets on the near-north side in the Old Clark Street area. There, the family lived near relatives and friends who had left Puerto Rico for similar reasons.

In the late forties and early fifties, migration of Puerto Ricans to U.S. cities skyrocketed from an average of 10,000 people a year to 50,000. They came looking for jobs to establish some savings with the hope of eventually returning to their homeland. In Chicago, two centers of the Puerto Rican community grew up--an area around Madison Avenue from Ashland to Kedzie and the neighborhood where Cha Cha lived from Ohio to North Avenue with Clark Street as its nucleus. Among Puerto Ricans these "barrios" were commonly called "La Madison" and "La Clark." "La Madison"

had been an established residential area with two- and three-story apartment houses. It had a sense of community with Latino businesses, theaters, and agencies. "La Clark" was different. Long before the Puerto Ricans moved there, it had been an area under syndicate control. "Los chinos" from "La Clark" had a firm grip on "la bolita" (the numbers game); there was a lot of gambling, drugs, prostitution, and homosexuality, etc.. "La Clark" had "mixed housing"-- if you could call it that. Although many Puerto Ricans lived in the Cabrini projects, most of "La Clark" was made up of dilapidated hotels bandaged and divided into apartments and single rooms. In renting these buildings, it seemed as if the landlords were trying to coin the last bit of profit from their Puerto Rican tenants.

Cha Cha's family lived in the Water Hotel for a couple of years until it was finally condemned and torn down. Drifting northward two or three blocks at a time, by 1956 the family had reached the boundary of "La Clark." In a total of six years, they had been forced to move nine times-- all because of urban renewal. It never dawned on them that the city deliberately intended to push the Puerto Ricans out of their homes. The Puerto Ricans thought the buildings would either be renovated or leveled and then reconstructed so that they would be able to return to live in them. The men who ran the city had a different plan. Today the expensive areas of the Carl Sandburg Village and "Old Town" have replaced most of "La Clark" and Puerto Ricans are a rarity. To make way for the rich, the Puerto Ricans from "La Clark" were pushed into the adjacent community of Lincoln Park or into the new barrio of "La Division." People from "La Madison" poured in there too. The other pockets of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago--"La Blue Island," "La 63," "La Sheridan," etc.--grew up later.

Cha Cha had already attended Holy Name Cathedral, St. Joseph and Franklin schools when he entered Newberry Elementary School in Lincoln Park in the third grade. At first he had a difficult time adapting. Lincoln Park was a community of poor white Americans--Irish, Italians, people from Appalachia, etc.. Cha Cha's family was one of the first Puerto Rican families in the neighborhood. Kids at school would call the few Puerto Rican children "spics" and beat them on their way home. Cha Cha came home injured many times. He told his parents he had "tripped and fallen," but they understood otherwise because they had seen a fight in the alley next to their home. The scuffle began among gypsy youth, whose families shared the building with the Puerto Ricans. All the residents of the apartment house got a panoramic view from their windows as if they were watching from separate booths in an outdoor stadium. The youths were belting a young gypsy who was Cha Cha's friend. When Cha Cha raced outside to help him, the gypsy youths converged on him. When Puerto Rican youths poured out of the building, the fight shifted to a battle between gypsies and Puerto Ricans. Even Cha Cha's friend sided with his kinsfolk. The spectators began casting their ballots arguing with each other, screaming and cheering victory for their side. After letting the fight go on for some time, the adults intervened and brought it to a halt.

As more Puerto Ricans from "La Clark" moved into Lincoln Park, Cha Cha's family followed the current a block upward as Irish, Italians, and Appalachian whites moved further north. Cha Cha's father began guzzling liquor (two of his uncles had already died from liver infections caused by alcohol). To get her husband to stop drinking, doña Eugenia made a "promesa" to dress in black for a year. She persuaded her husband to join the Knights of Saint John, a Latino organization

formed by the Catholic archdiocese of Chicago. Through the aid of a priest assigned to Latinos, she organized Spanish catechism classes in her home for Puerto Rican children in the area.

Meanwhile, Cha Cha was getting into trouble--according to the neighbors who tried to keep their sons away from him. Cha Cha couldn't understand the difference between his actions and those of the neighbor kids nor did he know why people were talking. In fact, a recording at the time with the title "Everybody Else's Son's a Troublemaker But Mine," would have been appropriate.

At his mother's request, the priest talked with Cha Cha and met with him all summer. Soon he became an altar boy at the Spanish mass in Saint Michael's church. His mother arranged with the priest to enroll him in a Catholic school--Saint Teresa's. Though a poor family, they did not have to worry about tuition which the priest had taken care of. Most of the classrooms in St. Teresa's were filled with Germans, Polish people and Italitans. There were only a few blacks and Latinos in the school. In Cha Cha's sixth grade class, there were none.

When he entered St. Teresa's, he had been completely transformed from mischievousness to piety. His teacher--a nun--took special interest in him and became his friend. He put his mind to his studies and no longer spent much time with his neighborhood friends, who people thought had been the cause of his mischief. Before and after class and on weekends, he helped around the church and school--shoveling snow, sweeping, mopping and waxing the floors, and dusting the pews in the chapel. In the three years he attended St. Teresa's, he was always first or second in the number of candy sales made to raise funds to build a new church. Continuing as an altar boy at St. Teresa's, he also sang in the choir. Near comple-

tion of her "promesa," dona Eugenia had set up an altar in their home. Latino neighbors often asked her to lead in the recitation of a rosary; it became part of the daily schedule at home. It was not surprising then that at the age of eleven, Cha Cha had made up his mind about his future. After graduating from eighth grade, he wanted to enter a seminary to prepare for the priesthood.

Meanwhile, although there were still only a few Puerto Rican businesses in Lincoln Park, the influx of Puerto Ricans continued. It was the early 1960's and street gangs were spreading over the city. There were a few gangs in Lincoln Park among the European minorities, but none as yet among the Puerto Ricans. When Puerto Rican newcomers were detected in non-Puerto Rican sections of Lincoln Park, they were beaten mercilessly like someone was beating dust out of a carpet. From time to time, the Puerto Rican grapevine reported incidents like this. St. Teresa's had no gangs although there were a couple of gang members in the school, which was located in the territory of a European gang.

In hopes of preparing for the priesthood, Cha Cha stuck to his studies. In the spring--when the gangs surfaced--he became inadvertently involved in an incident. A group of Puerto Ricans who later the same year would form the Black Eagles, the Paragons or the Young Lords, retaliated against some of the European gang members. Because some of their own had been hurt, the European gang was out for revenge. Although Cha Cha had not been involved in the incident, some of the gang members remembered him from Newberry. One day as he was walking home from school, they caught sight of him from across the street and yelled his name. He kept walking and pretended not to hear. They yelled again. This time he looked at them, turned the corner, and ran down the block. The gang dashed after him chasing him until he got into

the Puerto Rican section. To avoid further beatings, Cha Cha found a new route home from school.

More fights occurred between Puerto Ricans and European gangs. The Puerto Ricans--who by now had grown in number--began to organize themselves in self-defense. Orlando Davila, founder of the Young Lords, asked Cha Cha to a meeting. He had met Cha Cha at his mother's catechism class. Cha Cha decided to attend the meeting along with nine other youths. At this meeting, the Young Lords were formed. The Young Lords remained a nominal organization for Cha Cha: he was not an active participant. Most of the battles were fought at the public school while he was at the Catholic school. Further, at this time, gang organization in Lincoln Park was just beginning.

During the summer vacation, Cha Cha was in a few scattered fights at the beach, but when classes resumed, he split from the gang to readapt himself to a different environment. He returned to his studies. Now he was in his eighth year--the year of decision. He sent his application to a Redemptorist seminary in Wisconsin for which he needed letters of recommendation from the principal and pastor of St. Teresa's. Although Cha Cha had behaved himself all semester, toward the end of the term he and another classmate were caught throwing eggs at a bus in which--they found out later--the pastor was riding. They were suspended from school for a few days. Instead of a letter of recommendation, the pastor asked the seminary to deny entry to Cha Cha. The seminary wrote him to try again the following year. This would be difficult. Because Cha Cha could not afford tuition to a Catholic high school, he would be going to Waller, the public school, which would make it less easy for him to be accepted at the seminary the following year. Further, Waller was the school which the Young Lords and other neighborhood gangs would attend.

Like his other classmates, Cha Cha tried to find people from St. Teresa's who would be going to his new school. Although Waller was the nearest high school, only one other classmate planned to go so Cha Cha didn't find many associates. Soon after graduation, some of his classmates' families organized a graduation party to which neither Cha Cha nor his family were invited--an example of anti-Puerto Rican feeling which he had experienced consistently at St. Teresa's. He found out about the party while walking down the street with two other Young Lords dressed in their purple and black sweaters. Two of his fellow classmates stepped out of the storefront where the party was being held. When they saw Cha Cha they asked him why he wasn't at the party. "I just didn't feel like going," he replied. The Young Lords were anxious to move into the dance, but Cha Cha persuaded them not to.

By now, Lincoln Park was flooded with Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. By summer, gang fights were routine. When either side in the conflict had its members roughed up, both sides would come together quickly like soldiers in a fort after the sounding of reveille--with their weapons and ready for battle. However, gang fighting was not the only wave of action the gangs created in Lincoln Park. The Puerto Ricans hung out on the playgrounds in their idle time. Cliques of twos and threes would disappear for hours at a time to get drugs, sniff glue, smoke marijuana, shoot heroin, burglarize homes, strip cars, snatch purses, and stick up people. After awhile, the Young Lords--the youngest of four or five Latino groups on the playground--got into this. Cha Cha's Catholic education and previous environment did not help him here. If he wanted to be accepted by the crowd--or as it was called then, if he wanted to be considered a "regular"--he had to change his ways. He did so and after awhile he

found himself in jail. In fact, by the time classes began at Waller, he had been arrested many times, had spent nearly two of his summer months in a juvenile home, and had been placed on a year's probation.

Cha Cha lasted only two months at Waller. Soon after registering, he was arrested and spent two months in jail before going to trial. When his case finally came up, the judge decided to deport him to Puerto Rico for a year. Discharged from the juvenile home, he was put on a plane for Puerto Rico. For the eight months he stayed in Puerto Rico, he kept out of trouble with the police. When he returned to Chicago, he tried to enroll in school but was turned down. A week later, he was back in jail. When the judge asked him how long it had been since he had been in prison, he told him eight months. So he put Cha Cha on probation for another year.

By the time Cha Cha was seventeen, he had developed from a "regular" to the president of the Young Lords--not for being tough but for being "trusted" after so many trips to jail. It was 1964 and gang fighting had stopped some. Cha Cha and most of the other members concentrated more on social activities and their girlfriends, but the police wouldn't leave him alone. They caused trouble for him and his girlfriend. Because they eloped and because Cha Cha had a long police record, his girlfriend's probation officer tried to keep the couple apart by forcing her family to leave the community. It was difficult for Cha Cha to accept this. He had been discharged on parole after two more months in the juvenile home and now her probation officer and his probation officer had taken it upon themselves to keep the couple apart. Cha Cha and his girlfriend managed to meet secretly for some months, but after awhile the girl found another romance in her new school. The authorities' scheme worked.

When Cha Cha's friends told him, he let it ride at first, but one day they raised the subject again while drinking wine. Cha Cha and three other Young Lords took the El to the neighborhood of the girl's school where they found her with her boyfriend in a small restaurant. One of the Lords had given his knife to Cha Cha because they thought Cha Cha too tipsy to fight and they didn't want to stab the youth. When the Lord threw the first punch, the boy started to run. He ran straight into Cha Cha who had been standing near the door. Cha Cha reached into his pocket, pulled out the blade, and stabbed the boy three times. The boy reached the other side of the street when a gathering from the school stormed Cha Cha and the Lords. When Cha Cha lunged at the group with a cleaver, they took off. The girl also pushed her way into the fight. Cha Cha belted her and stabbed the boy two more times, then took off with the Lords leaving the youth stretched out on the street with five knife wounds. Chasing the Lords, a group from the school cornered them in a drugstore until the police came and arrested them. When they went to court, Cha Cha took the blame and got six months in a state penal farm. The other Lords were discharged.

When Cha Cha got out in mid-1966, the street gang had broken up. Most of them were in the service, in jail, or married. A few stayed together on the corner but there were no more meetings and no gang structure. Besides the few Lords on the corner, there were others who came just to loiter and get high. If there were any fights, they were with this combined group rather than with the Young Lords street gang. This situation was pure gold for Cha Cha because he had no desire to be part of a gang.

When he got out of the penal farm, he found a job as a stockboy in a nearby factory making \$ 1.65 an hour. He found a new girlfriend whom

he began to take seriously. Problems arose when the girl's family found out about Cha Cha's police record. Without telling him, they left the community. This time, however, Cha Cha managed to keep in touch with his girlfriend.

All was going well until he got into an argument with a neighbor. Because he had spent so much time in prison, Cha Cha didn't know his neighbors. It was a Friday evening and Cha Cha had come home from work with Manuel Ramos. They had stopped to have a few beers before reaching Cha Cha's home. They planned to wait for each other while they changed clothes and washed up. They were going to a dance that night. While Cha Cha washed up, Manuel decided to leave because he didn't want doña Eugenia to see him in a slightly drunken state. He left a message to tell Cha Cha he'd see him later at the dance. When Cha Cha got the message, he walked down the block to catch up with Manuel to tell him his mother wouldn't mind, but he couldn't find him so he turned around and walked back toward home. From a distance next door to his house he saw an older man yelling at a young girl, who took off toward the backyard. A little drunk, Cha Cha mistook the girl for his sister. Not knowing that Cha Cha was his next-door neighbor, the man thought Cha Cha was provoking him. He told Cha Cha to "mind his own business and go to hell." Anytime he wanted to, he said, he would yell at the girl. He felt perfectly in the right since the girl was his own daughter, but Cha Cha took a swing at him and his son, who had come down to help his father.

Doña Eugenia came out to explain that Cha Cha was her son, he was a little drunk, etc.. She told Cha Cha that his sister had been in the house all along. Apologizing to the man and his son, Cha Cha shook hands with them and started toward home. At that point, a police car drew up. The officer ordered

Cha Cha to get into the car. In borken English, doña Eugenia tried to tell the policeman that the problem had been settled. "No trouble, no trouble," she repeated. While she was telling Cha Cha to go upstairs, the policeman kept pressing him to get into the car. Cha Cha told his mother not to worry--he would explain to the policeman and everything would be all right.

Cha Cha never got a chance to explain. The policeman--angry because Cha Cha had not come right away--grabbed him by the collar. When Cha Cha reacted by grabbing him by the collar, another policeman came up from the rear and cracked his club over Cha Cha's head. Cha Cha lay unconscious on the pavement. The policeman knelt down on his arms and began banging his head on the sidewalk. In tears his mother screamed, "My son, my son! Por favor, no hit my son!" She and one of her daughters tried to pull the policeman off Cha Cha; another sister put her hands under his head as the policeman banged it on the concrete. The third sister grabbed the policeman's club and hurled it across the street. The neighbors--including the man and his son whom Cha Cha had hit--screamed at the police to stop when doña Eugenia picked up a bottle and threw it at the officer. Blood streamed from his mouth along with two of his teeth.

When he came to, Cha Cha was in a police wagon with his mother, who was praying over a rosary. Though not arrested, his three sisters had asked to go to the police station with their brother and mother. Cha Cha did not know his mother had been arrested. When he found out he was so shocked and infuriated that he began to fight with the policeman again. This time at least ten policemen beat him black and blue. He was lucky to be alive the next day when he appeared in court. His face was swollen; his neck showed signs of internal bleeding where they had choked

him; he was limping on one leg where they had kicked him. The neighbor who had argued with him brought no charges against him. The only charges brought against him were those of the policeman. Cha Cha was accused of knocking out his tooth--or aggravated battery.

Cha Cha's mother was charged with disorderly conduct, but her case was later dismissed. After the dismissal of her case, Cha Cha eloped with his girlfriend and left the city because he knew that he would lose his case in court. The courts would uniformly accept the policeman's word. Because of his previous police record, whatever he said in court would be of no value.

After about a year, he and his underaged wife decided to return to Chicago. She was pregnant. They both felt they could clear up their differences with her mother while Cha Cha wanted to clear up his case with the courts before the baby was born. When he went to the police station, the police could find no warrants for his previous arrest so they told him to forget about the case. The girl's mother, however, did not want a "criminal" for a son-in-law so she visited the court and had Cha Cha jailed. She got a court order preventing him from visiting his wife or his new-born child. Cha Cha went to the penal settlement again. This time when he returned he was really depressed. He began shooting heroin. Daily until he was addicted and later for what seemed a millennium, he kept taking narcotics. He was in and out of jail until in 1968 while in prison he made up his mind to beat the drug problem.

At the time he was in maximum security because of a rumor that he and twelve other Latinos were trying to escape from the House of Correction. He had not read a book in its entirety since the eighth grade, but in his isolated cell, there was nothing else to do. At first he started with

religious books--Seven Story Mountain by Thomas Merton. He began to think about his life. He got into religion. He wanted to go to church service but he couldn't get out of his cell except to shower once a week. Still he began mental invocation and regretted the mistakes of the past. He asked to see the priest and on his knees in his cell through the bars he confessed his sins.

He read every book he could get his hands on. When a cousin who was also in jail told a Muslim trustee that Cha Cha was Puerto Rican, the Muslim began to supply Cha Cha with political books. He could not see Cha Cha as a Puerto Rican at first because of his light complexion. Jokingly, he would say, "But he looks like the devil--the beast." Then they would all break out in laughter.

While Cha Cha was in maximum security reading about Martin Luther King Jr. and other political leaders, protests were flooding the nation. It was 1968. Martin Luther King Jr. had just been murdered and rioters were streaming into the jails. He saw them as they passed the maximum security cells. Along with the rioters he watched Mexican immigrants being brought in--100 and 200 at a time--for having no passport papers. Cha Cha talked with them in Spanish. They told him they had come to this country to get jobs so they could feed and clothe their families. They had never been arrested until now when they were picked up at their work places. They would be flown back to Mexico, but they would return again to look for another job. The prison guards shoved them around because they could not speak English. Cha Cha and the other Puerto Ricans translated for them from their cells and yelled at the guards for harrassing them.

When Cha Cha got out of jail, he returned to Lincoln Park. The drug addicts on the corner offered him heroin but he had decided now that he

wanted to help his people. He didn't want anything to interfere. He knew this was their way of telling him they were happy to see him out, so he politely told them he didn't want drugs. They weren't surprised: people who got out of jail usually said that at first--a couple of weeks later they were back on drugs.

But Cha Cha was serious. He kept on reading and studying--about Malcolm X, the Massacre of Ponce, don Albizu Campos, etc.. He found other people in the community who thought like him. They invited him to urban renewal meetings. The people at the meetings were all white middle class people. There were no Latinos or other poor. Cha Cha began to see how with the help of these white middle class people urban renewal plotted to force the Latinos and other poor people out of Lincoln Park. He was angry, but what could he do? If he told his friends, would they help? They seemed to be interested only in drugs and gang fighting. Still he knew some of them had been forced out of "La Clark" before and he knew that only the people could stop Daley's urban renewal plans, so he began to talk with them in the taverns, on the corners, and any place he found them.

He put together three organizations. The first, the Concerned Puerto Rican Youth, was co-opted by the YMCA and the same white middle class people who were pushing Latinos out of Lincoln Park. Concerned Puerto Rican Youth preferred to play basketball and baseball; they spent their time throwing dances to earn money for more sports activities. Cha Cha could not see himself doing this while his people were being forced out of Lincoln Park so after quitting them he organized the Puerto Rican Progressive Movement, which held classes on Puerto Rican issues. Later the Puerto Rican Progressive Movement disbanded to become part of the Young Lords which Cha Cha reorganized. It wasn't difficult for the Young Lords to under-

stand what Cha Cha was saying about urban renewal, racism, police brutality, etc.. After all, they lived it. They developed quickly. At first, Cha Cha turned his apartment into an office and organized classes. Later they shared an office with another organization until eventually they occupied a church, renamed it People's Church, and turned it into their national headquarters.

The Young Lords held meetings in Lincoln Park on the problems of housing and urban renewal. From early morning until late at night they would distribute leaflets announcing their meetings until all Lincoln Park had been covered. In the cold winter months, poor people would come to People's Church with their children to tell the Young Lords that the sherriff had evicted them from their homes and dumped their belongings on the sidewalk. Taking the family's belongings into the church, the Young Lords would ransack Lincoln Park looking for a vacated apartment. Because many landlords were remodeling to raise rents, many apartments were empty then. When the Lords found one they would move the family in, visit the landlord, and pay him the first month's rent if the family had no money. They would tell the family to call on them if the sherriff returned. The sherriff, who had built no bonds with the people of Lincoln Park, usually took off when community people gathered.

The Young Lords helped to organize the Poor People's Coalition of Lincoln Park, an organization of all races which protested Daley's urban renewal and fought for low income housing. With 250 poor families, they seized and occupied an empty lot at the corner of Halsted and Armitage to protest the construction of an exclusive tennis club (membership fee--\$1,000) where Latino homes had once stood. In May of 1969 the Young Lords and other community groups confronted McCormick Theological Seminary, an influential backer of

urban renewal. Among other demands, they requested \$601,000 for low income housing. When the administration of the seminary refused the demands, community people--Latino, black, and white--took over the Stone Administration Building and occupied it for four days in one of the first community occupations of its kind in the country.

They renamed the Stone Administration Building after Manuel Ramos, the Young Lord who a few days before had been shot down in cold blood by James Lamb, a Chicago policeman. Lamb was not on duty at the time; when four Lords turned him into the police, the police pressed charges against them, not Lamb. Recognizing that Manuel's murder was part of a broader movement of repression in the United States, the Lords immediately organized a march of 3,000 people from People's Park to Division Street, the heart of the Puerto Rican community. Shouting "Manuel Ramos vive en todos revolucionarios!" and demanding the arrest of Lamb, they were also marching for the independence of Puerto Rico.

The Lords were the first to bring the issue of Puerto Rican independence to Chicago. Over 3,000 people took part in the well-disciplined Albizu Campos march. In addition, the Lords sponsored cultural festivals for the community with entertainment, food, and cold drinks free to all.

They were involved in welfare marches to protest the harrassment of Latino and other poor women not receiving their welfare checks. They set up a free breakfast program for children, a clothing program and a free health clinic for families. Chapters of the YLO grew up all over the country--in New York, New Jersey, California.

They were in the process of setting up a free day care center and a drug abuse program when Daley's systematic repression began. Mayor Daley could buck no interference with his urban

renewal scheme. Getting funds from the federal government, he could not afford to be embarrassed or to frighten the federal officers from HUD (Housing and Urban Development), so when the Latinos and other people of Lincoln Park under the leadership of the Young Lords became an obstacle to Daley's plans, he summoned a press conference to announce his "War on Gangs." To carry out this war, he appointed his close friend Edward Hanrahan, who followed his orders well. From the way it looked as indictments hit all Lincoln Park residents objecting to urban renewal, Daley thought all Latinos and poor people in the area were gang members.

The repression began a few months before Manuel's murder--in January 1969 when Cha Cha was picked up and charged with two old warrants from 1967. He was standing on a corner explaining urban renewal to a crowd of young people when a car with two policemen from the Gang Intelligence Unit drew up and ordered him to get in. "Am I under arrest?" he asked. "No, we just want to talk with you," they replied. "Well, I don't want to talk with you," Cha Cha answered. The two policemen jumped out of the car and told Cha Cha he'd "better get in." The young people began to taunt the policemen telling them Cha Cha didn't have to get in the car. Cha Cha told them to cool it and got into the car. The young people then rounded up community people and lawyers and marched to the police station.

At the station, the police kept Cha Cha upstairs for two hours while the officers combed their files for warrants. Cha Cha was into what seemed to be a friendly argument with the police about Daley's urban renewal. The officers upstairs were all police who had arrested Cha Cha in his gang years--like Commander Brasch, who is now under indictment for ex-

tortion. In the conversation, they brought up Cha Cha's police record and advised him to "quit while the quitting was good." Cha Cha replied that he didn't see anything illegal in what he was doing. He had been in jail before for stealing from his people. If he had to go to jail now for helping them, he didn't mind. The police downstairs finally came up with two old warrants for Cha Cha's arrest--from the aggravated battery case in front of his parents' home. Cha Cha told them the police hadn't been able to find these warrants when he turned himself in for them long before, but the police were bored with talking to him and stuck him in the lock-up.

The Puerto Rican young people raised the bond money which got Cha Cha out, but the repression continued. A week or so later, Cha Cha and twelve others were arrested at a welfare demonstration and charged with "mob action." The other twelve were let off: Cha Cha was not. The same day they charged him with another "mob action" in relation to an urban renewal meeting. Again he was the only one indicted. Three times he was arrested for disorderly conduct--a charge placed on people when nothing else can be found. He was then accused of aggravated kidnapping of his own child. The child was with its mother who had been separated from Cha Cha for some time. It was his mother-in-law who with the generous help of the police department had filed the complaint. The case was so ridiculous the judge got mad and dismissed it the next day.

As the Young Lords left People's Church for another welfare demonstration, Cha Cha and eight or nine others were arrested for aggravated battery against a policeman. (No policemen were taken to any hospital for injuries--no one was bruised or scratched. No one had been touched. In court, however, policemen are considered infallible). Meanwhile, other Young Lords were

getting traffic tickets and being checked for identification. The idea was to keep all of them out of the welfare demonstration.

Two policemen told Cha Cha they had two warrants for his failure to appear in court. Cha Cha was sure he had not skipped a court date so he asked if he could phone his attorney to have his lawyer speak with them. They agreed. They couldn't do much else; after all, when Cha Cha asked them to show him the warrants, they had none. While Cha Cha was phoning his lawyer, community people began to gather. This was enough to prompt the policemen to make Cha Cha get off the phone. They shoved him into the car and drove away. The lawyer went to the station to tell them there were no warrants for Cha Cha's missing a court date, so when the police could find no warrants, they charged him with resisting arrest.

The arrests and indictments continued through 1969 and early 1970 until they totaled 18. The police tried everything in their power to isolate Cha Cha from the community. Because he had many cases against him, he not only had to appear in court three and four times a week, he had to appear in different courts at the same time. When he arrived late, the court would issue a warrant. When lawyers told the court Cha Cha would appear later, the irritated judges invariably answered they weren't interested in talking to attorneys, they wanted to see Cha Cha. When all cause for arrest was exhausted, they started charging him with possession of marijuana.

It is true that Cha Cha voluntarily pleaded guilty on petty theft charges of taking \$ 23 worth of lumber. However, the State's Attorney's office acknowledged that this was the only case Cha Cha was guilty of. They placed it first on the court case agenda while shunting and procrastinating on the prior cases. Because Cha Cha had already

pleaded guilty he did not think a trial was necessary. However, at the last moment, the State's Attorney, who "wanted to give Cha Cha all his legal rights," added the charge of burglary to the same case which made a trial necessary. If Cha Cha were convicted of burglary, instead of the one year sentence, he would get five years for a pile of lumber worth \$ 23.

Of those protesting urban renewal in Lincoln Park, Cha Cha was not the only victim of repression. Because of his leadership role, he got the most indictments and is currently in jail. But many community people were harrassed for nothing more than entering People's Church. The "Red Squad" and "Gang Intelligence Unit" photographed the people from their cars and later visited them in their homes. They stopped and questioned people wearing buttons distributed by the Young Lords like the one which read "Tengo Puerto Rico en mi corazon." (I have Puerto Rico in my heart.) They were arrested at demonstrations protesting welfare, urban renewal, and police brutality. Members of the Central Committee of the Lords got four and five indictments apiece. Along with Cha Cha, other Young Lords and community people were forced into hiding to avoid Hanrahan's and Daley's repression.

Although the indictments were supposedly related to Daley's War on Gangs, the Young Lords Organization proved to the poor--especially Latinos--that they were not a street gang as their enemies portrayed them. They were not in any gang fights. Instead of harming the people, they served them. Cha Cha Jimenez was no gang leader. He was the leader of a bonafide Latino political organization--struggling for self-determination within the confines of the United States.

HISTORY OF CHA

<u>Charges/Court</u>	<u>Bond</u>
1. Petty Theft (Lumber Case) Judge Romiti	\$20,000
2. Disorderly Conduct Judge Wachowski	None
3. Disorderly Conduct Judge Mooney	\$30,000
4. Disorderly Conduct	
5. Aggravated Battery Judge Dunne	\$5,000
6. Aggravated Kidnapping Judge Epton Br. 43	\$25,000
7. Aggravated Battery	
8. Resisting Arrest Br. 46	\$1,000
9. Curfew Violation	\$500
10. Unlawful Use of Weapon	\$10,000

CHA'S CASES

<u>Maximum Sentence</u>	<u>Won/Lost</u>
1 Year	Lost
\$500 Fine	Won
\$500 Fine	Won
\$500 Fine	Won
1-5 Years	Won
2 Years to Life	Won
1-5 Years	Won
1 Year	Won
\$500 Fine	Won
\$500 Fine	Won
and/or 1 Year	Won

<u>Charges/Court</u>	<u>Bond</u>
11. Unlawful Use of Weapon Judge Olson	\$20,000
12. Possession of Marijuana Judge Olson	\$10,000
13. Possession of Marijuana Judge Suria	\$1,000
14. Resisting Arrest	
15. Mob Action Etc. Judge Romiti	\$20,000
16. Mob Action Judge Romiti	\$5,000
17. Aggravated Battery Judge Romiti	\$5,000
18. Jumping Bail (3 Counts) Judge Romiti	\$30,000
Total	\$60,000

8th Amendment of
Excessive bail shall not be required, nor
unusual punishments.

<u>Maximum Sentence</u>	<u>Won/Lost</u>
\$500 Fine and/or 1 Year	Won
90 Days to 1 Year	Won
90 Days to 1 Year	Won
1 to 5 Years	Won
1 to 5 Years	Pending
1 to 5 Years	Pending
1 to 5 Years	Pending
1 to 5 Years	Pending

the U.S. Constitution
excessive fines imposed nor cruel and

CHA CHA'S LUMBER CASE

In August 1970, Cha Cha pleaded guilty to taking \$ 23 worth of lumber from a building contractor in Lincoln Park. As he stood unemotional and silent before Judge Romiti, he was given the maximum sentence one can receive for petty theft--a year. He is now serving the one-year sentence. We have included this section as part of the pamphlet because we feel that it is important for people to know the circumstances of the case.

In the spring of 1969, the Young Lords Organization began planning a new day care center where welfare mothers could leave their children while looking for work. It was also seen as a means of involving welfare mothers in the community--especially in the issue of urban renewal, as they would be most affected by Daley's inner-city removal of the poor.

The community responded well. Many persons dropped into People's Church to offer their services. The Young Lords gathered long lists of children, parents, teachers, and personnel who along with the Young Lords would make up the center. They had visited other centers to see how they were managed. They repainted the church in bright rainbow colors for the children. Community residents painted colorful pictures of clowns, birds, and animals on the walls inside the church. It was to be named after Manuel Ramos, whose portrait was painted on the wall. Community residents also put together a mural of Puerto Rican history.

Preparatory meetings began with people who would be involved in the center. The opening date was set. People's Park was to be used for recreation. Nutritionists were busy making up menus. A few large companies and many small

community stores promised to donate food and supplies. There were more than enough nurses available. The Young Lords refused any aid from the federal government or the city. They did not want the program co-opted.

As opening date approached, Mayor Daley began to move. The Board of Health and the Fire Department paid a visit to People's Church. At first, the Young Lords prevented their entry, but the center staff and the congregation--satisfied that the church was in perfect condition--told the Young Lords that no harm could be done. For two or three hours, the officials inspected every corner of the church. When they finished, they ordered fire exit signs be put up in all entrances. They concluded that the church floor (the size of a gym) had to be raised two or three feet. They also decided the ceiling was too high. They insisted that if these things were not done, there would be no day care center. They announced they would come to the church on a weekly basis to check for more violations. Meanwhile, the Young Lords and the day care center staff who were distributing fliers about the center were harrassed by the police and charged with disorderly conduct, leafletting too close to a school, etc.. Attention had to be refocused on the people being jailed for whom bond money had to be raised.

The Health Department took the minister and congregation to court over code violations. The judge imposed a \$ 200 fine for every day the church stayed open. A trial had to take place to determine whether or not the church could remain open. This involved not only the fate of the day care center but the fate of the church and the Young Lords' office.

Authorities had ordered that room partitions be built along with the enormous floor. The Young Lords and the center staff went around

to all the lumber yards in the area asking for donations. They came back with two or three scraps of wood. Cha Cha could not understand why these huge lumber yards could donate only a few scraps of wood when they supplied the same building contractors who were pushing the poor out of Lincoln Park. He went himself to ask for donations. When they brought Cha Cha more scraps, he told them angrily, "You keep that garbage. We didn't come here to beg from you. This donation is something you owe to the community." With that, they left, got into their car, and drove off to the office. That night Cha Cha and a friend were arrested. At the police station, Cha Cha told the Young Lords that he did take the lumber; that he had mistakingly reacted and that he would be willing now to pay the consequences.

In court, the building contractor could not prove the wood belonged to him. Further, Cha Cha had been given a receipt for the wood. There were no witnesses who had seen Cha Cha take the wood. In the laboratory, sand, dust, and wood particles had been found in the defendants' clothing, but in court, the lab technicians said that these particles could be picked up almost anywhere. The only reason Cha Cha was found guilty of taking \$ 23 worth of lumber was because he himself told them he took it. The only reason there was a trial was because at the last moment the State's Attorney placed another fictitious charge on Cha Cha related to the case. If he had been found guilty of the other charge, he would have gotten five years instead of one--all for \$ 23. The other defendant got thirty days in jail for the same case: his sentence was later nullified.

CHA CHA'S BOND JUMPING CASE

At the end of June or in early July of this year, Cha Cha will go to trial for three counts of bond jumping related to the fact that he did not

show up in court when he was supposed to start serving his one-year sentence for the lumber case and begin trial for the remaining cases, which at the time totaled nine. The charge of jumping bond is usually dropped, but Cha Cha is not just another case. Before Hanrahan left office, he made sure Cha Cha--although away from the community at the time--got charged with jumping bond, which brought the total cases pending to ten.

Bond jumping is a case which carries a maximum sentence of not less than one year and not more than five years for each charge. When a person fails to appear in court, he is issued a warrant and has thirty days to appear to quash the warrant. It is very easy for the State's Attorney to prove a person guilty of jumping bond. All that is necessary is to place the clerk of the court on the witness stand to declare that the defendant did not appear. The judge then finds the defendant guilty. However, if it is a jury trial--as Cha Cha will have--it is up to a jury to hear the defendant's side of the story to find him guilty or not guilty of intentional bond jumping. The whole matter hinges upon "intent." Did the defendant have intentions of jumping bond or was he placed in a position where he had no other choice?

The matter now will be in the hands of the jury. It will be interesting to see what type of jury Cha Cha gets. There are not many Latino jurors. So the case rests on 1) whether there is a jury of Latino peers to listen to the evidence; 2) whether the judge and State's Attorney will permit the choosing of Latinos if there are any Latinos to be chosen; 3) whether the jury will be able to understand Cha Cha's background and culture and 4) most importantly, whether or not there will be a fair trial.

CALL FOR ACTION

The hypocrisy of the judicial system in this country is clear in the fact that poor and oppressed people can't get a fair trial by a jury of their peers. This in turn reflects the falsity and contradictions of the so-called "democratic way of life." The self-determination and spirit of struggle of an oppressed people can never be totally repressed as shown by the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people and as reflected in the words of Cha Cha Jimenez:

They can jail us;
They can brutalize us;
They can even kill us;
BUT THEY CAN'T STOP US!

Cha Cha represents this growing spirit of "lucha" and political consciousness among Latino people in the U.S.. That consciousness comes from the injustice, the repression, and the exploitation which victimize us. We can clearly see how this process comes about when we look at the transformation of the Young Lords from a street gang defending itself against other street gangs--including Latinos--to a true Latino political organization defending Latinos against Daley's gangs--including the police department and the court system.

We should fight against the injustices of this yanqui government which wants to oppress us and put Cha Cha in jail. We should fight against the injustice of poor housing which forces our people to live in rat-and-roach-infested ghettos, where falling plaster and cheap paint give lead-poisoning to our children--our children who don't know what it means to live in one place for more than four or five years because urban renewal pushes our families from one ghetto to another.

We should fight against the injustice of racism which keeps all poor and oppressed peoples divided because of color and keeps Latinos divided among themselves. Hermanos are constantly fighting each other for jobs, government funds for education, and turf, while this racist government makes no color distinction when it decides who it will oppress--economically, educationally, or by means of open aggression including police brutality. We should fight against the injustice of a court system which places high bonds our people can't afford, so they have to stay in jail separated from family and friends until they are called to court, where their "court-appointed attorney"--alias PUBLIC DEFENDER--has made a deal for them with the State's Attorney's office to get them less time for a crime they did not commit.

We should fight not only against these injustices but against all the injustices of this yanqui government which forces its culture and lifestyles on our country and forces our people out of our country by promising them bigger and better jobs, homes, and lives, that do not exist here in the American ghettos. We should and must fight against all the injustices of this yanqui government that wants to put people who struggle--people like Cha Cha--in jail.

Que viva el Pueblo!

Libertad a Cha Cha!