

# Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive

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*Examining the nascent rhetoric of the Young Lords Organization's (YLO) 1969 "garbage offensive," this essay argues that the long-standing constraints on agency to which they were responding demanded an inventive rhetoric that was decolonizing both in its aim and in its form. Blending diverse forms of discourse produced an intersectional rhetoric that was qualitatively different from other movements at the time. As such, the YLO constructed a collective agency challenging the status quo and, in some ways, foreshadowed more contemporary movement discourses that similarly function intersectionally. Examining the YLO's garbage offensive, then, presents rhetorical scholars with an opportunity to revise our understanding of how marginalized groups craft power through rhetoric.*

*Keywords:* Young Lords; Social Movement; Agency; Intersectional Rhetoric; Jaibería

The colonized man [sic] who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope.<sup>1</sup>

[W]e need to develop critical theories of Latino politics. Arguably, the main task for such a theoretical practice should be to devise, from within the movements and/or

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in collaboration with them, an analysis of the achievements, virtues, potentials, and limits of Latino politics while producing (in theory and practice) Latino radical political discourses.<sup>2</sup>

The setting is New York City in 1969; more specifically, the setting is East Harlem (also known as Spanish Harlem or *El Barrio*), a predominantly Puerto Rican section of New York City. Economic conditions are lean: jobs are hard to come by (especially if you do not speak English) and those jobs you can find involve hard physical labor and little pay. For those fortunate enough to find work, more than one job is often needed to support a family. The benefits of “Great Society” social programs that aimed to improve the economic conditions are lost in the messy bureaucratic web spun by the state in conjunction with local Puerto Rican-run professional organizations.<sup>3</sup> Politically, the community is disparaged as “docile,” and the role of political activism is monopolized by professionals, “experts,” and elites.<sup>4</sup> By most accounts, life for the working class Puerto Rican in *El Barrio* leaves much to be desired.<sup>5</sup> It is within this context that the Young Lords Organization (hereafter YLO) emerged and sought change. The first order of business for the Lords was to devise a way to get word out to the people of *El Barrio* that they had formed and were seeking radical transformations in the immediate community and beyond. After a combination of careful deliberation, community investigation, and pure happenstance, the nascent YLO launched their first political offensive to advance social movement: the “garbage offensive.”

The garbage offensive emerged in late June/early July 1969, when *El Barrio* was dirty and the city sanitation department was ignoring the needs of the neighborhood. To address the problem, the YLO (a small group at this time, composed of a handful of members) began quite simply by arriving every Sunday to clean up the garbage. On July 27, one day after officially becoming the New York chapter of the Young Lords Organization, and two weeks after starting to clean the streets, the first point of social discord surfaced when some members attempted unsuccessfully to procure new supplies (brooms, cans, etc.) from the local sanitation department. It was at this point that the YLO came face to face with the bureaucracy of the liberal capitalist system and subsequently advanced a revolt in *El Barrio*. The YLO, together with a variety of community members who had been helping them pick up garbage, took heaped trash collections and placed them in several busy intersections, blocking significantly the traffic coming into and going out of Manhattan. The tactical placement of garbage peaked on August 17 when hundreds of *Barrio Boricuas* expanded their rebellion to include overturning cars, lighting fire to the trash, and assaulting police property.<sup>6</sup> The Sunday garbage offensives continued until September 2, with Lords and other community members engaged actively in dissent. YLO Minister of Information, Pablo “Yorúba” Guzmán, recounts, “We would hit and run, block to block, talking and spreading politics as we went, dodging the slow-moving pigs sent to crush any beginning *Boricua* movement for freedom. The garbage offensive united us through struggle.”<sup>7</sup>

In examining the burgeoning rhetoric of the YLO’s garbage offensive, I argue that the long-standing constraint on agency to which they were responding—the exigence

creating a need to be “united . . . through struggle”—demanded an inventive rhetoric that was decolonizing both in its aim and in its form. In terms of aim or function, the YLO asserted a form of independence; they demanded, through their words and actions, freedom from an oppressive “system” that had subjugated Puerto Ricans for half of a millennium.<sup>8</sup> With regard to form, the YLO declined the opportunity to mimic the form of the oppressor’s rhetoric and reforms (e.g., leader-centered rhetorics, public speeches, or legal changes). The YLO, to the contrary, engaged in an *intersectional rhetoric* that refused to privilege or be disciplined by single rhetorical forms (e.g., verbal, visual, or embodied forms). If, as John Louis Lucaites has argued, “every rhetorical performance enacts and contains a theory of its own agency—of its own possibilities—as it structures and enacts relationships between speaker and audience, self and other, action and structure,” then the *form* of the YLO’s rhetoric is a critical component for addressing this broader problematic of agency.<sup>9</sup> By encouraging diverse discursive forms to intersect to produce a movement rhetoric qualitatively different from others at the time, the YLO constructed a collective agency challenging the status quo and, in some ways, foreshadowed more contemporary movement discourses.<sup>10</sup> Examining the YLO’s garbage offensive, then, presents rhetorical scholars with an opportunity to revise our collective and growing understanding of how marginalized groups craft power through rhetoric.

As an interrogation of how one radical political organization sought to define a new social imaginary and delineate a space for social movement, this essay hopes to contribute to ongoing disciplinary dialogues about social movement tactics and rhetoric. Early rhetorical scholarship focused on social movement identifies importantly the ways in which rhetorical agents go beyond speech to accomplish their persuasive goals. Leland M. Griffin’s 1964 essay on the emerging “New Left” movement, for example, notes how “body rhetoric” (bodies used as symbolic modes of influence) instigates new modes of appeal, thus altering the trajectory of verbal arguments.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, James R. Andrews’s study of “coercive rhetoric” at Columbia University notes that the *actions* of protestors, while “non-persuasive” (i.e., not symbols intended to influence), point to a need to examine “the means of protest” in order to better understand the rhetoric of social dissent.<sup>12</sup> And Herbert W. Simons expands our conceptualization of body rhetoric by suggesting that it is “designed to dramatize issues, enlist additional sympathizers, and delegitimize the established order.”<sup>13</sup> While what these scholars and others studying diverse forms of dissent say is agreeable, they do not explicate fully the rhetorical effectivity of body rhetoric in conjunction with other rhetorical forms—especially in the context of a need to constitute new forms of agency in the face of lived colonial oppression. As an addition to the disciplinary social movement dialogue, this essay asks: How can a movement articulate a sense of agency through a rhetoric that employs bodies, images, and speech in ways that do not privilege one over the others? Answering this question may prompt rhetorical scholars interested in social movement to question dominant assumptions about agency and its relationship to rhetorical form.

Using the YLO’s garbage offensive as a focal point, this essay demonstrates the need to explore more fully the relationship between agency and rhetorical form by

illustrating the ways in which the YLO defines a space for social movement in El Barrio through a formally *intersectional rhetoric*. What is meant by “intersectional rhetoric,” here, is a rhetoric that places multiple rhetorical forms (in this case, speech, embodiment, and image) on relatively equal footing, is not leader-centered, and draws from a number of diverse discursive political or rhetorical conventions. The garbage offensive is interpreted here as an attempt by the YLO to lay bare the internal inconsistencies of “the system” and establish an anti-colonial sense of agency for the people of El Barrio partially through use of the popular Puerto Rican tradition of *jaibería*, which is a form of subversive complicity.

This essay develops over three sections. The first section offers a critical review of social movement scholarship in rhetorical studies paying particular attention to (a) the ways in which that scholarship incorporates attentiveness to non-verbal rhetorical forms, (b) the importance of developing further such an attentiveness, and (c) the relevance of eliding the metaphor of the “text” in order to examine intersecting rhetorical forms and the resulting implications for anti-colonial agencies. The second section examines the garbage offensive as an example of intersectional rhetoric that provided an alternative to (at the time) dominant activist discourses that privileged single rhetorical forms (often speech or writing) produced by charismatic leaders. The final section offers an extended conclusion that expands on the relevance of intersectional rhetoric as a heuristic for the critique of social movement discourse that emerges organically from an organization attempting to constitute a space for collective agency beyond the dominant colonial imaginary.

### Social Movements, Old and New

The rhetorical study of social movements has a long and rich history in our field, of which others offer more comprehensive reviews than space allows in this forum.<sup>14</sup> Agreeing, by and large, with Michael Calvin McGee and Kevin DeLuca, it is assumed here that the rhetorical significance of a “movement” lies not in the discourse that comes out of a specific *group*; as McGee suggests, that is to put the cart before the horse because it presupposes movements as phenomena—as entities that speak.<sup>15</sup> Rather, “movement” is a measurement of the discourse itself; to talk about social movement is to talk about the ways in which a discourse represents a shift away from or challenge to a dominant social imaginary as evident in narratives, ideographs, and other rhetorics.<sup>16</sup> This essay is focused on *what* movement scholars look at when they are examining the rhetoric of social movement.

In the first essay written on social movement in rhetorical studies, Griffin lays out a set of practices and goals for analyzing movements. In “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” Griffin goads critics to “judge the discourse in terms of the theories of rhetoric and public opinion indigenous to the times”—a charge important to keep in mind when critiquing the rhetoric of marginalized groups who may be operating within rhetorical and political traditions different from those within which the critic is living.<sup>17</sup> Bernadette Calafell and Fernando Delgado make a similar point more recently, arguing that critics should deal with and “accept the text on its terms.”<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, in their analysis of one of the key texts of the farm workers' movement ("The Plan of Delano") and the rhetoric of Caesar Chavez, John Hammerback and Richard Jensen repeat this sentiment by arguing that understanding the rhetoric of the Plan of Delano and the farm workers' movement requires an understanding of the rhetorical history of "plans" as a distinct rhetorical genre operative in Mexican political discourse.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, this scholarship points to a need to consider *forms* and histories of rhetoric that may fall outside the traditional purview of U.S. rhetorical studies. Griffin concludes his original essay arguing that "essentially, the student's goal is to *discover*, in a wide sense of the term, the rhetorical pattern inherent in the movement selected for investigation."<sup>20</sup>

One direction in which the "discovery" of rhetorical patterns directed scholars was toward more holistic engagements of specific protests and the structures of persuasion and coercion in social movements. In an early essay on the "New Left" movement, Griffin remarks on the importance of "direct action tactics," a "physical rhetoric of resistance," and "'body' rhetoric" as forms that serve to alter the dramatic scene and open up the possibilities for persuasive discourse.<sup>21</sup> Andrews notes similarly the relevance of such non-verbal forms in enacting "coercive rhetorics" that bolster the "stories" and "hyperbolic description" of protesters at Columbia in 1968.<sup>22</sup> Scott and Smith suggest the same in claiming, "The act carries a message," which is to situate confrontation within a dramatic frame and recognize that "symbolic action" is more than just the words someone speaks.<sup>23</sup> Herbert W. Simons also seems to be in agreement, arguing that "militant tactics," including embodied rhetorics, "confer visibility on a movement" and dramatize the scene in ways words alone might not make possible.<sup>24</sup> Finally, scholars like Franklyn S. Haiman and Parke G. Burgess acknowledge the importance of embodiment in the "rhetoric of the streets," a label they give the protest phenomenon active in the 1960s.<sup>25</sup> While vital entry-points into the discussion, all of these accounts seem to face four main limitations with respect to dealing effectively with an embodied and intersectional rhetoric like the YLO's garbage offensive.

First, despite explicit recognitions to the contrary, all have a *verbal bias* that directs them to be concerned first and foremost with the *words* protestors speak and write. For example, Andrews seems genuinely interested in the rhetorical functions of body rhetoric, but that interest is limited to the ways in which embodiment bolsters or accents the protesters' linguistic tactics, arguments, stories, labels, descriptions, etc.<sup>26</sup> In other words, he does not take up embodied discourses on their own terms, as rhetorics themselves. In Griffin's analysis of the New Left, body rhetoric occupies only part of one page in a rather lengthy essay devoted mostly to tracing the New Left's ideological evolution in its *written* works. Scott and Smith face a similar outcome in recognizing the importance of the body in something like the rhetoric of Black Power, but then spend most of their critical energies devoted to offering an account of the language of confrontation emerging principally from Franz Fanon.<sup>27</sup> McGee, too, rarely acknowledged the importance of extra-linguistic rhetorics, choosing instead to focus on changes in words and their meanings.<sup>28</sup> In being most concerned with written or spoken words, scholars of rhetoric and social movement do not devote

enough critical attention to embodiment or visibility—an interpretive move that makes it difficult to evaluate a robust connection between form and agency in the YLO's garbage offensive.

Second, although rhetorical scholars focusing on social movement have documented the key role non-verbal rhetorics play in confrontation and the rhetoric of the streets, that role is often reduced to an *instrumentality* that enables or facilitates verbal rhetorics. Griffin, for example, considers body rhetoric one possibility in an early stage of social movement development when a non-rational, non-democratic scene invites non-rational, non-democratic acts. This, however, is one stop along a movement's evolution, eventually giving way to “the decision to speak openly (‘overtly,’ unambiguously).”<sup>29</sup> For Andrews, body rhetoric heightens the coerciveness of speech. While he agrees with Scott and Smith that it can be “consummatory,” Andrews never explicates the tactical functioning of body rhetoric. John Bowers, Donovan Ochs, and Richard Jensen place themselves in a similar position when they deny the rhetoricity of consummatory acts and insist on the instrumental function of any rhetoric, especially nonverbal agitation tactics.<sup>30</sup> For Simons, “militants use rhetoric as an expression, an instrument, and an act of force.” Furthermore, by conferring “visibility,” embodied rhetorics open spaces for “moderate tactics” to “gain entry into decision centers.”<sup>31</sup>

While certainly true in some instances, reducing non-verbal rhetoric to such an instrumental role fails to consider what the rhetoric itself is up to—what cultural or social work it is accomplishing. Even DeLuca (who, ironically, is often quite critical of Simons) seems to mirror Simons by arguing that staged, embodied “image events” alter public consciousness through their instrumental usefulness in getting a message out (for example with the 1999 Seattle WTO protest images serving “as a dramatic lead that opens into expansive and extensive coverage of the issues surrounding the WTO protests”).<sup>32</sup> Alberto Melucci would agree that a focus on the instrumentality of any movement activities risks missing the point of the movement:

Contemporary movements operate as signs, in the sense that they translate their actions into symbolic challenges to the dominant codes. . . . In this respect, collective action is a *form* whose models of organization and solidarity deliver a message to the rest of society. Collective action . . . raises questions that transcend the logic of instrumental effectiveness and decision-making by anonymous and impersonal organizations of power.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, reducing embodiment to instrumental utility is problematic because it obscures the ways in which rhetorical and organizational *form* may be constitutive and central to a movement's political and social objectives rather than a means to an end.

Third, rhetorical social movement scholarship is too often *leader-centered* to be fully applicable to a study of an organization like the YLO, which did not have a clear leader. Simons offers an early justification for “a leader-centered conception of persuasion in social movements” in arguing that the “primary rhetorical test of the leader—and, indirectly, of the strategies he [sic] employs—is his capacity to fulfill the requirements of his movement by resolving or reducing the rhetorical

problems.”<sup>34</sup> Others who write on social movement tend to focus on particular leaders, even if they do not offer an explicitly leader-centered “theory” of movements. For example, virtually all of the scholarship on 1960s/1970s Chicano movement rhetoric (most of which was written by Hammerback and Jensen) examines the words of particular charismatic leaders.<sup>35</sup> The majority of scholarship on Black Power is also focused on leaders’ rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> To be clear, this is not necessarily a problem. In many of these instances, it makes perfect sense to focus on leaders and their rhetoric because, in those instances, leaders were central to a movement both in terms of producing messages and being visible to audiences. Stokely Carmichael, for example, was clearly a charismatic leader who made Black Power palatable to countless people. Malcolm X was, similarly, a brilliant rhetorician and worthy of a great deal of critical ink. The problem, instead, is that leader-centered studies do not equip a critic to examine the rhetoric of a group that saw itself first and foremost as a *collective* and resisted internally the tendencies for leaders to emerge. Furthermore, they risk glossing over the issue at stake: the YLO rhetoric’s form and content assembled an anti-colonial collective agency that came before consideration of even the group’s leadership position within a broader Puerto Rican movement.

In contemporary scholarship, critics have become particularly adept at engaging different rhetorical “texts” of social movement. Hammerback and Jensen’s groundbreaking work on the Chicano movement and Fernando Delgado’s exploration of the ideographs of the Chicano “plans” and their ideological valences are two prime examples that illustrate rhetorical engagements of verbal (written and spoken) “texts” of the Chicano rights/power movement.<sup>37</sup> My fourth critique of social movement literatures, however, is that many of the aforementioned studies run the risk of *reifying or fetishizing the “text”* (even if “text” is not words on a page or in a speech) in a way that misses the radical fragmentation of late-modern movement rhetorics.<sup>38</sup> I hope not to be misunderstood, here. Rhetorical scholarship has done a marvelous job adapting itself to changing circumstances and “textual” forms. For example, recent years have seen an explosion of valuable scholarship on so-called “visual rhetoric” addressing topics ranging from the discursive and ideological functions of “iconic” photographs, to the roles of images in the construction of identities, and the rhetorical function of the visual in spurring and advancing social movement(s).<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding such advancements, the *metaphor* of the “text” may hinder considering fully the possibilities of movement discourses—like the YLO’s—that operate differently “in the streets,” because “text” restricts our critical attention to certain aspects of rhetoric while obscuring other aspects.

To state it directly, the problem is that most critical rhetorical heuristics for examining movement discourse *do not account for the confluence of forms in a radically fragmented vernacular rhetoric* like that of the YLO garbage offensive. As Dwight Conquergood argues, “The verbal/visual bias of Western regimes of knowledge blinds researchers to meanings that are expressed forcefully through . . . what de Certeau called ‘the elocutionary experience of fugitive communication. . . .’”<sup>40</sup> This focus also blocks critics from interrogating the ways in which different discursive *forms* (e.g., speech, performance, and image) combine to build a

unique intersectional rhetorical vision. To adopt an aphorism from critical race feminists' work on the intersectionality of oppression: the movement that takes place at the intersection of these different discursive forms is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>41</sup> In other words, coming to a discourse with the assumption that *different forms intersect with each other equally* will help us to see something differently than if we assume that the primary social work is being done by *either* verbal, visual, or embodied forms.

By highlighting this limitation of contemporary social movement research, I wish to draw our attention to how our *critical heuristics* for engaging marginalized discourses (heuristics rooted in a different system of speech making) may be unfit to groups like the YLO. Some scholars attempt valiantly to adapt to new forms, but as Kent Ono and John Sloop write with respect to "vernacular discourses,"

Rhetoricians cannot take the tools they have now and blithely apply them to the study of cultures. Rather, new methods, approaches, orientations, even attitudes, toward cultures need to be created. . . . [C]ritical rhetoric must be reconceived in light of the vernacular discourse that challenges approaches founded within Western notions of domination, freedom, and power.<sup>42</sup>

Scott and Smith frame the task similarly, writing,

As specialists interested in communication, we who profess the field of rhetoric need to read the rhetoric of confrontation, seek understanding of its presuppositions, tactics, and purposes, and seek placement of its claim against a just accounting of the presuppositions and claims of our tradition.<sup>43</sup>

While one might rightly object both to the notion from Scott and Smith that we "read" the rhetoric of confrontation and to the notion from Ono and Sloop that we start anew, it is important to try to shift our critical optics (at least slightly) about street movement rhetoric so that we might see beyond how <bodies *plus* words > function, and begin seeing how <bodies-words-images > intersect to form (an)other rhetoric of resistance that is qualitatively different than a critic might have assumed.

The importance of this challenge to our disciplinary heuristics is particularly pronounced in the instance of the YLO's garbage offensive. If the garbage offensive is approached as a "text" to be "read" and as guided principally by one rhetorical form or another, then we risk losing sight of the important connection between rhetorical form/movement tactics and the constitution of an anti-colonial Nuyorican agency. Just as examining the *content* of the YLO's discourse is relevant to understanding how they constitute Nuyorican agency, so too is examining the *form* of that discourse critical to seeing how they challenge agency in the diaspora. In what follows, I demonstrate how the YLO's garbage offensive functions as an intersectional rhetoric and why a critical heuristic attuned to the intersection of forms is necessary for seeing such rhetoric's constitutive effects on agency. This analysis is guided by two primary assumptions: First, the act of resistance in the garbage offensive should not be reduced to an instrumentality; doing so risks overlooking the constitutive effects of their performance.<sup>44</sup> Second, focusing solely or separately (that is, apart from visual

and verbal) on the embodied performance aspects of the situation traps us conceptually and critically in a related but different way by denying the intersectionality of rhetorical forms constitutive of this resistance and of the agency of “the people” of El Barrio.

### **Trashing the System: Articulating Agency Through the Garbage Offensive’s (Re)claiming of Space**

Two days after the climactic moment of the garbage offensive, the *New York Times* offered an account of the scene in El Barrio on August 17, 1969:

Against a backdrop of decaying tenements, a low-income housing project, and the Penn Central tracks that carry commuters to the suburbs, a purple-bereted youth told yesterday why his group, the Young Lords Organization, had sparked a garbage-dumping protest in East Harlem on Sunday.

During the protest, residents of the area around Park Avenue and 110th Street joined in heaping and burning garbage at several intersections. . . .

In claiming credit for the protests, a group of Young Lords said yesterday that they had acted to show the people of El Barrio, East Harlem’s Puerto Rican Slum, that such activity was necessary to get city action to meet community needs.<sup>45</sup>

In an article that originally appeared in the *Village Voice* over 25 years after the garbage offensive introduced New York City to the YLO, Pablo Guzmán recounts, with exhilaration and a more personal tone, the climax of the scene on August 17, 1969:

I had never done anything like this before. Twelve other guys, one woman, myself, and a small handful of people who, until moments before had been spectators, were about to set a barricade of garbage on fire. Garbage in the ghetto sense: rusted refrigerators from empty lots, the untowed carcasses of abandoned vehicles, mattresses, furniture, and appliances off the sidewalk as well as the stuff normally found in what few trash cans the city saw fit to place in *El Barrio*.<sup>46</sup>

This was an important (even critical) moment for the young Boricuas leading the YLO in their first protest. The moment represented a turning point, not just for the Lords—signaling their entrance into the New York political landscape—but also for the community members who had been living in squalor due to the City’s unwillingness to provide services to them equal to those offered the affluent white citizens down the street.<sup>47</sup> All of this, however, is to get us ahead of ourselves. In order to obtain a better sense of the situation in which the Lords emerged and the ethos of their response, we have to journey back several weeks before this turning point.

The YLO’s story begins in January 1969, when a group of Puerto Rican college students gathered as a kind of consciousness-raising measure to understand the situation of their brothers and sisters in the El Barrio. By one former Lords’ own admission, “the intentions of these people were good, but vague.”<sup>48</sup> As months passed, different people entered and left the group, which became known as the Sociedad de Albizu Campos (SAC).<sup>49</sup> In May 1969, the group began to clarify its mission with the help of several key members. First, Guzmán (who would become

Minister of Information and one of the most visible and vocal members of the group) came to New York and joined the discussions. Next, David Perez (a political radical from Puerto Rico who came to New York via Chicago) met up with Guzmán and the SAC. On their first night spent talking together, they came to an agreement that the SAC needed to stop meeting and start acting. A couple of weeks later (on June 7, 1969) they found their model for activism: the Young Lords Organization, a street gang “turned political” in Chicago.<sup>50</sup> At this point, the members of the SAC developed coalitions with some of the other activist Puerto Rican groups from El Barrio and the Lower East Side, and after a series of mergers, a unified group—the New York Young Lords—received an official charter from the Chicago organization on July 26, 1969.<sup>51</sup>

In the beginning, the Lords were filled with revolutionary desires—they wanted nothing short of a different world, an almost utopian world in which their people (and all “the people”) could coexist peacefully and equally. The older members of the group (the ones who had some college education and had founded the SAC before the Lords) were especially well read. “Toiling at our studies,” recounts former Young Lord Miguel “Mickey” Melendez, “we developed a good sense of what the people needed and how to proceed in order to succeed in political struggles . . . or so we thought.”<sup>52</sup> They were academic revolutionaries at the beginning, having read “Che, Fidel, Fanon, Marx, Lenin, Jefferson, The Bill of Rights, Declaration, Constitution—[they] read everything.”<sup>53</sup> Quickly, however, the Lords learned that these different theoretical perspectives offered little solace to the (poor and often uneducated) people in El Barrio, as most people simply did not see the relevance of such theories in practice. Therefore, the activists decided they would have to go to the people to figure out what they needed if it was not Che’s revolution. Said Juan Gonzalez, “We must go to them . . . to the masses. . . . They may know something we don’t. So first, we must go to the people of El Barrio.”<sup>54</sup>

And go to the people they did, donning their grassroots activist/ethnographic researcher hats and venturing out into El Barrio.<sup>55</sup> Coming across some men playing dominoes (a common pastime for Nuyorcan men at the time), the young radicals inquired as to what these men thought was the biggest problem facing their community. Said one older man of El Barrio, “Don’t you see the garbage all throughout the streets? It is overflowing the entire area with smelly odor . . . everywhere! Don’t you smell it? It’s horrible!”<sup>56</sup> This opinion was reaffirmed later in the day when they came across a group of *doñas* (older, presumably married women): “Look at the garbage!” said one of the *doñas*. “It smells! For how long do we have to take this . . . ?” the vehemence of their outrage was surprising to us only because we failed to recognize the obvious.<sup>57</sup> Standing amidst the stench, they realized promptly that the all-pervading garbage indeed was an important, if not the most important, issue that they had to address.

Garbage, though, cannot be easily textualized. In fact, the whole garbage offensive event presents significant difficulties in terms of textualization. Unlike the speeches delivered in the mainstream civil rights movement or the discrete “image events” for contemporary radical environmentalists, there is no single static “text” to which we

can turn to critique. Even in their newspaper, *Palante*, and their book, *Palante: Young Lords Party*, the Lords declined the opportunity to offer up a sustained “text” of the event.<sup>58</sup> As Conquergood suggests, “Subordinate people do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communication, free and open debate on a level playing field that the privileged classes take for granted.”<sup>59</sup> This creates a methodological problem because we are now *forced to make* sense of the event by stringing together the many utterances of different members of the Lords. The critic must be (perhaps as s/he always must be) a *bricoleur*, assembling “texts” and defining the bounds of a fragmented rhetoric.<sup>60</sup> Once we do this, we have a very moving and powerful story about the material and symbolic conditions under which the YLO lived and operated. Their situation—environmentally, politically, economically—was one marked by filth and decay. The images of these decrepit conditions were re-presented through words depicting/describing a sensory explosion by drawing attention to the physical (omni)presence of the garbage.

*Seeing* garbage as a key issue began structuring the narratives and experiences of the Lords. For example, one early issue of their newspaper, *Palante*, states,

East Harlem is known as El Barrio—New York’s worst Puerto Rican slum. . . . There is glass sprinkled everywhere, vacant lots filled with rubble, burnt out buildings on nearly every block, and people packed together in the polluted summer heat. . . . There is also the smell of garbage, coming in an incredible variety of flavors and strengths.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, in another early issue of *Palante*, Felipe Luciano (the chairperson of the organization) wrote,

They’ve treated us like dogs for too long. When our people came here in the 1940’s, they told us New York was a land of milk and honey. And what happened? Our men can’t find work. . . . Our women are forced to become prostitutes. Our young people get hooked on drugs. And they won’t even give us brooms to sweep up the rubbish in our streets.<sup>62</sup>

This return to the centrality of garbage is indicative of the broader dialogues occurring at the time.

As such, garbage was experienced and constructed, verbally and visually, as a central material problem in its own right. It was the proverbial slap in the face in light of all the other conditions faced by the people of El Barrio. Garbage represented both evidence of the state’s disrespectful and malicious attitude toward the community and proof of “the system’s” incapability to deal with its own intemperance. Visual imagery works, here, on several interrelated levels. First, there is a raw, very material sense of visibility that must be considered. The YLO and members of the community *experienced* the rotting and rusting garbage of El Barrio on a daily basis—a factor that is important to consider when reading critically the offensive. Why is this an important element? This relatively unmediated, multisensory, and markedly visual experience provided a physical manifestation of the frustrations the people felt about

the system. It also *showed* them, prior to the assistance of the Lords' verbal interventions, the failure of the system to take into account its own excesses.

The result of this experience was a moment of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call *antagonism*. "[F]ar from being an objective relation," according to Laclau and Mouffe, antagonism "is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown. . . . [It is] a witness of the impossibility of final suture."<sup>63</sup> Moments of antagonism, then, are moments when the apparent fixity and completeness of an ideological fantasy or social imaginary (i.e., liberal capitalism) are disrupted. Such a moment forced them to question why a supposed democracy guided by principles of fairness and equality would treat its citizens so differently. Why would the garbage trucks drive through El Barrio to pick up trash in Manhattan, but rarely stop to pick up the same trash in the Nuyorican neighborhood? Such a question became an impetus to act.

Reflecting back one year after the YLO organized, Guzmán recounts the decision to act: "We decided that the first issue we could organize people around was the filth in the streets and lots, since it was clearly visible. . . . For the two Sundays before the Tompkins Square rally, we cleaned 110th Street in El Barrio, rapping while we went."<sup>64</sup> The act of cleaning may not seem all that radical; however, the Lords' actions early in the garbage offensive are important rhetorically in several ways. In one piece of photographic evidence from the garbage offensive, for example, we see Guzmán sweeping up the street. In contrast to the way in which Puerto Ricans had been defined by scholars and government officials as "docile" and inactive, Guzmán's sweeping is instructive of an active life in opposition to racist docility—"it participates in the transfer and continuity of knowledge," especially in the context of the verbal messages and lore surrounding the event.<sup>65</sup> As indicated above, Lords like Guzmán, David Perez, and Juan Gonzalez were not from El Barrio, but rather were college-educated, working- to middle-class Puerto Ricans and looked the part: they regularly clothed themselves middle-class, usually wearing button-up oxfords, and looked more like the kind of people Barrio residents would work *for* than have working for them. When they were seen sweeping up the street, their bodies serve as a critique of labor hierarchies and inequality through their presence in action in El Barrio. Just by *being* there—on and with the streets—the Lords performed resistance by reclaiming and redrawing their own public space and articulating Barrio citizenship with the *vita activa*. "This brought the college people and the street people together, 'cause when street people saw college people pushing brooms and getting dirty, that blew their minds."<sup>66</sup> Exploding such a "mind bomb" was a critical step in changing fundamentally the consciousness of Barrio people to get them to imagine a world beyond inaction.<sup>67</sup>

On Saturday, July 26, 1969 (after sweeping the streets for two weeks), the group received their official charter to become the New York (or, more accurately, East Coast) chapter of the "Young Lords Organization" and held a rally at Tompkins Square to announce their existence and state their agenda. The next day, they went about cleaning the streets; this time, however, they reached another turning point. Recalls Guzmán, "On Sunday, July 27, we needed more brooms for all the community

people who were with us. We went to a garbage (sanitation) office nearby and were given a racist run-around.”<sup>68</sup> The precise details of what happened at this point are unclear. Some stories claim that Guzmán punched a sanitation official and stole some supplies. Other stories portray a scene wherein they were sent to another office and denied supplies there, too. Whatever happened, Melendez’s assessment seems to hold consistent: “The only choice we had was confrontational politics”;<sup>69</sup> and by “confrontational politics,” Melendez really means direct-action protests, which were repeated nearly every Sunday up to August 17—the biggest protest of them all.

Fed up with the apparently contradictory and inherently racist actions of “the system,” the Young Lords sought to rectify the situation. First, they began blocking off streets with the trash they had collected. Lexington, Madison, and Third Avenues were blocked at 110, 111, 115, 118, and 120th Streets. After they noticed people in cars and buses moving the trash out of the way, they got a little more insistent and began lighting fire to the trash. “Fires were set to cars, bottles were thrown, and the people proved for all time that the spirit of the people is always greater than the man’s pigs.”<sup>70</sup> This moment of antagonism served as a moment of radical possibility—it opened up the available means of persuasion and action so as to make meaningful social movement probable; as such, the people had challenged “the system” and made clear that “the system” was neither invincible nor contained. In the end, Felipe Luciano triumphantly asserted, “We’re building our own community. Don’t fuck with us. It’s as simple as that.”<sup>71</sup>

Guzmán details similarly the ways in which this guerrilla offensive was part of both short- and long-term struggles:

The handful of us who were there employed basic techniques of urban guerrilla warfare: flexibility, mobility, surprise, and escape. By involving our people directly in revolution and participation (Thousands [*sic*] of spics blocked streets and fought cops that summer), we made many LORDS and won friends to the struggle.<sup>72</sup>

Note that for Guzmán, the garbage offensive was not *principally* about cleaning up the streets, although that was important; the garbage offensive was always about more than just trash—it was about *guerrillismo*, constituting Lords, building a community, and constructing a place and space for literal and social movement in El Barrio.<sup>73</sup>

It may be tempting, however, to read the garbage offensive as a political tool. This is the interpretation preferred by historian Johanna Fernandez in the only sustained analysis of the garbage offensive.<sup>74</sup> Declining to acknowledge the interpretive move she makes in analyzing the garbage offensive, Fernandez presents a matter-of-fact assessment of the offensive from a social services perspective. Fernandez advances a causal argument about the effect and success of the garbage offensive based on a reading of secondary sources from the time period. In her assessment, the garbage offensive was only about picking up the trash and it was a success because the city sanitation department began picking up trash in El Barrio. Missing the fact that the sanitation department quickly went back to irregular trash collection (which can be verified by looking at subsequent issues of *Palante*), Fernandez overlooks the *political* implications of the garbage offensive. One of her sources would agree. Carl Davidson,

writing for the *Guardian* in 1970, observed, "City sanitation officials were forced to meet with the community three times and promise to remedy the situation, but with few results so far. . . . However, the actions had the effect of establishing the presence of the Young Lords in the community."<sup>75</sup>

Mickey Melendez offers a similarly instrumental read of the garbage offensive, but directs his attention to politics. He argues,

An "offensive" has no value in itself; it is a political tool. It is a resource in the political education of the masses. What we intended to do was to show the people a path toward a high level of political consciousness, to understand the power that lies in the hands and the souls of the working people.<sup>76</sup>

We can imagine Melendez's position as, in a sense, a standard rhetorical account of what the YLO was attempting in their resistance. Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen likely might agree that the offensive was rhetorical insofar as it was a symbolic act designed to achieve an instrumental goal.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, while Melendez's account goes beyond the idea that the offensive was *merely* about getting the trash picked up, the offensive retains a kind of instrumental quality. The offensive, in Melendez's reading, was a *tool*—an instrument like a compass helping people get their bearings straight. Like the way that a compass directs people toward their destination, the offensive pointed people to an *awareness of politics*. It showed people that their political voice could be acknowledged in an era where quite the contrary seemed the case.

The political consciousness of which Melendez speaks, though, does not suggest a fundamental shift in the way "the people" saw the role of the political or themselves within a political system. Rather, the offensive swept people up in the fervor of the moment, helping them understand that politics and resistance were possible. Yet this perspective does not seem to go far enough. While it is certainly the case that there is an instrumental element in any offensive, *reducing* the garbage offensive to instrumentality misses the possibility that the act of protest itself has a constitutive effect on the people involved and those who bear witness to it.

One feasible way to move beyond this instrumental focus on the garbage offensive is to interpret it as an embodied act of decolonization. This attitude is best exhibited by Agustín Laó, who argues that the garbage offensive engaged in a "Spatial Politics of recasting the colonized streets through direct action [that] is grounded in the common sense of cleanliness ('we are poor but clean'), and the performative power and polyvalence of the symbolism of cleansing."<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Laó suggests, "[t]his great sweeping-out became an act of decolonization, a form of humanizing the living space, a way of giving back dignity to our place, by taking it back."<sup>79</sup> Notice that Laó does not really *reduce* the offensive to pure instrumentality; rather, he seems to be cognizant of the ways in which the *form* of the protest has significant implications. His attentiveness to the "spatial politics" of the offensive is particularly significant because it makes the focal point the *performance* of cleansing and/in protest, suggesting that the *act itself* has important political/identity-constituting implications that come prior to any benefits accrued as a *result* of the protest (that is, as a result of

the offensive's instrumentality). Laó's interpretation is incisive; but he seems hesitant to expand or extend the theoretical importance of this move.

Taking a cue from Laó and radicalizing Melendez's point about political consciousness, a more productive engagement of the garbage offensive would understand it as a rhetorical performance of trashing "the system." To begin unpacking this metaphor, we might return once more to retrospective remarks made by Guzmán, who writes,

We hoped to show that our object as a nation should not merely be to petition a foreign government (*amerikkka*) to clean the streets, but also to move on that government for allowing garbage to pile up in the first place. By *questioning this system's basic level of sanitation*, our people would then begin to question drug traffic, urban renewal, sterilization, etc., until the whole corrupt machine could be exposed for the greedy monster it is.<sup>80</sup>

One of the central devil figures for the YLO (as it was for many radical groups of the era) was "the system."<sup>81</sup> Drawing primarily from Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, "the system" represents the (more or less) monolithic, assimilating machine that is able to keep the dominant group dominant and ensure that resistance can never be truly successful. The system keeps the rich rich, the poor poor, and maintains that inequality without critical reflection.

The italicized portion of Guzman's quotation seems particularly incisive because it offers a triple meaning that could be overlooked easily, but demonstrates nicely the performative aspect argued by Laó. First, there is a literal/material read of the fragment: literally, the activities of the garbage offensive served the purpose of questioning the cleanliness of their material environment. This was certainly part of the offensive's effect, given the immediate concerns they had about the "squalor of the barrio."<sup>82</sup> Second, there is an initial symbolic reading of the fragment: through the garbage offensive, they were questioning the cleanliness of the system, suggesting that "this system" is dirty, corrupt, and drenched in the garbage water of inequality. Finally, there is another, more Marcusean symbolic read of the fragment: through the offensive, they were questioning the sanitizing force of the system; that is, they questioned the system's capacity to clean up politics and eradicate opposition. Reading the apostrophe, then, as possessing the tools and agency to clean demonstrates a different performative critique lacking in both Melendez and Laó's interpretations.

All of this is helpful analysis, but to realize its fuller impact and glean more out of the garbage offensive (rhetorically, materially, and politically) we must be attentive to not only the instrumental and performative nature of the event, but the material resources and the locally global moves the YLO was proffering vis-à-vis "the system." It is to this end that we ought to look at how different elements of the situation fit together to form a remarkable normative claim about how "the people" of El Barrio *should* act politically—that is, a claim (of sorts) about the ethos of their agency. Here we could understand garbage to be functioning as a synecdoche for the excesses of liberal capitalism; the sanitation department's refusal to assist functions as a sign of capitalism's failure to cope with those excesses. Through an intersectional rhetoric,

the garbage offensive incited a moment of antagonism in which the literal and symbolic excesses of the liberal capitalist “system” were called into question, opening up a space for the YLO to begin advancing social movement amongst “the people” of El Barrio.

Thought of in this manner, we have to take into account the ways that the raw, stinky materiality of the garbage functioned as a *part* of a larger *whole* (the system) that is made to *show* the people the excesses of the liberal capitalist system. This is painfully obvious in the descriptions of the garbage offered by the YLO—and made even more poignant in images they circulated (e.g., images of kids playing—a game of tag, or possibly king of the hill—atop a sea of garbage). Such images serve to make present, through a remembering and re-visioning of trash, the material scope of the problem. Additionally, in the stories about their exchanges with the sanitation department, the Lords make the department’s refusal to assist (either before, during, or after the YLO’s intervention) a sign of “the system’s” failure to cope with its own immoderation.

When we combine this symbolic-materialist reading with the kind of performative interpretation Laó offers, we end up with the point that the YLO was able to call into question the logic of “the system” in such a way as to open up a discursive space. Within this space, a kind of social movement is advanced. The YLO’s performance of resistance, through an intersectional rhetoric, altered fundamentally people’s consciousness about their relationship to “the system” and the possibilities for their futures. The space made possible new significations and practices of an anti-colonial agency that was intimately tied to both the YLO’s *message* and the *form* that “message” took. As such, it is in the intersectional rhetorical act of making the garbage do something and its twin of doing something with the garbage (and the words and images invoking garbage) that we more fully understand the greatest strengths of the offensive. The ways in which bodies get positioned vis-à-vis the system in the garbage offensive are a critical component of this intersectional rhetoric. Just as words and images seem to advance an argument about the relationship between the people, the system, and the environment, so too do bodies enact a similar message of dissent. By (*en*)*acting* this significant critique of the system, the YLO articulated a fundamentally *political* social imaginary that altered the Latino political landscape in New York for years to come.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the apparent constitutive benefits of the garbage offensive, there remains a looming question about the offensive: Why does any of this matter given that the garbage offensive “failed” to achieve its instrumental goal of getting El Barrio cleaned up? This is certainly a noteworthy question, and one that raises another question: How can we interpret the YLO as challenging the system when their explicit demand was a reformist one for the sanitation department to pick up the trash (a clear reliance on a component of the very system they were critiquing)? These are important challenges for which reasonable answers can be offered; however, my first question is a bit of a red herring. While the practical goal of any rhetoric may be to persuade people to act in one way or another, instrumental “success” may not be the best criterion on which to base our judgments.<sup>84</sup> Rather, we would do well to

remember that rhetorics serve constitutive functions that articulate a “people” and imbue them with certain qualities, capacities, and ideals.<sup>85</sup> Thought of as a moment of constitution, the garbage offensive should be understood as a success because the performance of an intersectional rhetoric of resistance challenged the constraints of the system on sociopolitical agency. Specifically, the Lords were able to both translate a language of revolutionary consciousness into the language of the people (the residents of El Barrio) and provide a set of practical resources for *enacting* that consciousness. By enlisting the people of El Barrio in this initial struggle, the Lords both created a revolutionary, even radical, democratic discursive space and defined an ethos of radicalism that escaped the tentacles of the system.<sup>86</sup>

The fact that the Young Lords sought ultimately to use the system, however, does not undercut this constitutive success. While it may seem paradoxical (or contradictory) for them to make such a move—and it may, indeed, be paradoxical—the Young Lords’ demands on the system were performed in the spirit of *jaibería*. In *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism*, Ramón Grosfoguel, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, and Chloé S. Georas turn to what they call “the popular tradition of *jaibería*” to articulate a space for oppositional agency amongst Puerto Ricans struggling for radical democracy. Defined, in Puerto Rican usage, as “collective practices of nonconfrontation and evasion..., of taking dominant discourse literally in order to subvert it for one’s purpose, of doing whatever one sees fit not as a head-on collision . . . but a bit under the table,”<sup>87</sup> *jaibería* is “a form of complicitous critique or subversive complicity”<sup>88</sup> that can result in the extreme adoption of dominant/ruling ideologies, beliefs, or actions in order to demonstrate their shortcomings and instigate movement.

Although they did not always adopt such an attitude, it is exactly this strategy that the Young Lords deployed in advancing their demands in the garbage offensive. They could have rejected the system outright; instead they adopted a different relation to the system by demanding a leveling equality (the literal promise of liberalism) vis-à-vis garbage collection. Rather than simply continuing to pick up all of the garbage themselves, the YLO demanded that the sanitation department assist in various ways. The subversion, however, lies in their knowing full well that New York City’s sanitation officials were unwilling and incapable of meeting their demands. In making demands that could not be fulfilled, the YLO’s apparent complicity functioned as a critique and rupturing of the system’s racist/classist underpinnings.

This reliance on the system is also a key difference between the Young Lords and other anti-colonial groups in the U.S. at the time. Seen from a post-colonial vantage with an emphasis on national independence, such reliance on the state would be read merely as complicity with oppression—as the further perpetuation of a “colonial mentality.”<sup>89</sup> The YLO case, though, problematizes that analysis by challenging the lines between “us” and “them” in a Manichean struggle. As such, their ultimate reliance and insistence on the system served as a “complicitous critique” undermining the system’s legitimacy when it could not meet the YLO’s demands. In this sense, the YLO’s failure in getting the sanitation department to pick up trash regularly

was a success for the Lords because it both furthered their critique and demonstrated another way in which resistance could occur.

### Postscript: Social Movement Critique and the Young Lords

In the end, it is the breadth and subversive quality of the Young Lords' intersectional rhetoric that makes the garbage offensive such a unique and radical instance of resistance, and such a difficult scenario for critics of social movement rhetoric to evaluate. The YLO refused to comply with the formal norms of (the) Anglo rhetorical tradition(s); thus the shortcomings of extant approaches cannot (or at least, do not) account for an intersectional rhetoric like that of the YLO. In the sense I am using it, "intersectional rhetoric" can be a descriptive label for a phenomenon that appeared in the Young Lords' rhetoric of movement breaking out of a *formally* one-dimensional Marcusean system. "Intersectional rhetoric" is a *kind* of rhetoric wherein one form of discourse is not privileged over another; rather, diverse forms intersect organically to create something challenging to rhetorical norms. Intersectional rhetoric, then, is more than <words + images + bodies > because those different forms can be present without intersecting and challenging norms of textual boundedness. Instead, intersectional rhetoric is better represented as three intersecting lines. In their intersection, one is not privileged over another; they are not ordered hierarchically. In so challenging rhetorical norms, intersectional rhetoric also functions in a hybrid political space, exhibiting a kind of incredulity toward the political traditions (e.g., U.S. liberal democracy) with which rhetorical traditions are bound. Incredulity does not necessarily mean that they reject those traditions; instead, intersectional rhetoric pushes the boundaries of traditions and encourages a hybridization or mixing of ideas. Furthermore, this difference in form represents a distinctive stylization of power compared to what we find in the speeches of Malcolm X or the writings of the New Left, for example. The intersection of images, words, and actions from an entire community of individuals formally mimics an articulation of collective agency that finds strength in the articulation of a "people" rather than any particular person. While collective agency may not be unique to the YLO, the way in which the YLO accomplished the task through an intersectional rhetoric is previously under-explored in the social movement literature.

With this, however, comes a need to challenge our disciplinary conceptions of "rhetoric," "texts," and "movement" to test the bounds of text-centric critique within our scholarship. By enacting an intersectional *sensibility* (in the way the object of critique is assembled, the limits of "rhetoric" rethought, and ideological movement reconsidered), this essay attempts to create the space for some movement of its own—movement away from a scholarly enterprise marked by expectations of formal and textual boundedness. The analogy to "intersectionality" in critical race scholarship mentioned earlier is relevant here. If bound by categories such as "race," "gender," or "class," we see racism *or* sexism *or* classism; but we do not see racist-sexism, sexist-racism, racist-sexist-classism, etc. Similarly, when bound by "textual" categories, we have difficulty making sense of the ways in which word and body

combine to create something qualitatively distinct from words or bodies considered separately. As conceived here, “intersectional rhetoric” is both a label for a kind of discourse and a marker for a critical attitude necessary to examine such rhetorics. This is where status quo approaches to social movement probably fall short of the task. While someone like McGee, through his focus on “ideographs,” does well to problematize the “texts” of social movement, he remains concerned only with the verbal—a byproduct of disciplinary constraints and/on his choice of object. Likewise, DeLuca, Scott and Smith, Simons, and others have done well to call into question our preoccupation with the verbal; but in so doing they risk treating “image events” or “body rhetoric” as discrete “texts” or only instrumental stylizations.

To back up for a moment, though, perhaps this critique of McGee, DeLuca, Scott and Smith, Simons, Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen et al. belies my own desire to take rhetors up “on their own terms.” We must recognize that McGee’s concern is with mainstream rhetorics of social control that most readily manifested themselves in the form of ideographs circulating in public, verbal argument. Correspondingly, DeLuca is concerned primarily with discourses that are also, in many ways, “mainstream” in the ways in which they circulate in dominant, corporately-owned news media. In both instances, then, we are dealing with historically contingent rhetorical forms of social movement—arguably an older one with McGee’s and a more contemporary one with DeLuca’s. Additionally, both McGee and DeLuca examine movement rhetorics that have a particular socio-spatial positionality; both examine dominant or circulatory dominant (by virtue of their dissemination in mass media) rhetorics. In taking such foci, McGee and DeLuca are convincing and both have advanced compelling critiques of their subject matter, but their approaches should not be the final word in a methodologically progressive rhetorical formulation of social movement critique. While the work of all of these scholars has had, in the words of Ono and Sloop, “broad ‘historical’ impact,” it has often done so “without the additional examination of texts that have profound effect on vernacular communities and have widespread effects on *communitas*.”<sup>90</sup> What might be suggested here is that, although most rhetorical critics offer appropriate and productive heuristics for engaging the discourses they engage, they may only offer an initial starting point from which to critique the YLO or any number of other “movement” rhetors.

Furthermore, while we cannot deny the *possibility* of a primarily instrumental political offensive, the *desirability* of interpreting this instance only (or even predominantly) through such a lens is challenged when we begin to recognize what this ignores. As Kenneth Burke argues, while symbols may be used as tools, instrumentality is not their principle purpose (they are a form of action, he says); similarly, this essay suggests that the intersectional rhetoric of the YLO’s garbage offensive represents a way of acting in the world and, in the process, serves to constitute that world by delineating a material place (El Barrio) and discursive space (*political* Nuyoricans in El Barrio) for this altered public consciousness.<sup>91</sup> Diana Taylor writes, in a manner reminiscent of Burke’s theorization of the scene-act ratio, that

[T]he place allows us to think about the possibilities of the action. But action also defines place. If, as Certeau suggests, "space is practiced place," then there is no such thing as place, for no place is free of history and social practice.<sup>92</sup>

The rhetorical constitution of such a space affords the YLO the opportunity to challenge prior constructions of Barrio Boricuas and invent a new, radical democratic political consciousness that played in the hybrid space between U.S. American and Puerto Rican, domestic and foreign, etc. In her engagement of Chicana feminist writing, Lisa Flores suggests,

Creating space means rejecting the dichotomy of either at the margins or in the center and replacing that perspective with one that allows for Chicana feminists to be at their own center intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and ultimately physically. The desire for space is the need for both a physical location and an intellectual one.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, the YLO invented an intellectual, political, and physical space in which radical democratic resistance through "community control" could be envisioned and, in some cases, realized.

Importantly, the YLO articulated this radical democratic space at the intersections of various rhetorical forms rather than through dominant modalities. For Laclau, "a radical democratic society is one in which a plurality of public spaces, constituted around specific issues and demands . . . , instills in its members a civic sense which is a central ingredient of their identity as individuals." Laclau continues, "Not only is antagonism not excluded from a democratic society, it is the very condition of its institution."<sup>94</sup> In this way, the YLO exploited an antagonism in "the system" and, through their intersectional rhetorical performance, constituted a radically democratic space. Their rhetorical performances functioned, Taylor would likely agree, "as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called 'twice-behaved behavior.'"<sup>95</sup> Quite significantly, the way in which the YLO accomplished this task was through an *intersectional* rhetoric that our critical heuristics must be fine-tuned to notice more clearly. The status quo models of envisioning "texts" and privileging discrete rhetorical forms are insufficient to this task. In the words of Conquergood, "The hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined."<sup>96</sup>

Considering the different aspects of the garbage offensive together, I hope the case of the YLO has made clear that looking at just one facet (i.e., words, images, or bodies), or at these characteristics discretely or instrumentally, only provides a partial view of the significance of the garbage offensive. When we consider the verbal, visual, and corporeal forms of discourse and how they come together, however, we see an *intersectional* rhetoric that articulates a particular anti-colonial sensibility for acting in the world. We also see an intersectional *rhetoric* that resists hegemonic norms for appropriate protest rhetoric because it refuses to recognize the singularity or boundedness of any solitary rhetorical form.

Such a critical attitude may also help to explicate meaning from other movement rhetorics that emerge after the mainstream civil rights movements, which were

similarly intersectional and lacked clear leaders. The question of how other movements—perhaps environmental, feminist, GLBT, and critical race movements—articulate unique agencies in the absence of charismatic leaders, speeches, and access to mass dissemination may also be addressed through an attentiveness to the intersection of rhetorical forms because “every rhetorical performance enacts and contains a theory of its own agency.”<sup>97</sup> But addressing these questions in different contexts is a challenge to our research and our critical perspectives. This is the lesson we must learn from the YLO garbage offensive: status quo theories of rhetorical movement efficacy obscure the full experience of Other rhetorics; it is by expanding our critical heuristics that we can best begin moving beyond a restrictive boundedness in our own disciplinary spaces. Hopefully other scholars of rhetoric and social movement will take up this call to examine the unique work done at the intersection of rhetorical forms. In this sense, the garbage offensive can stand out as a moment of radical possibility both for the people of El Barrio and for rhetoricians today.

## Notes

- [1] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), 232.
- [2] Agustín Laó-Montes, “Niuyor: Urban Regime, Latino Social Movements, Ideologies of Latinidad,” in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York*, ed. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene M. Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 141–42.
- [3] See Antonia Pantoja, “Puerto Ricans in New York: A Historical and Community Development Perspective,” *Centro Journal* 2, no. 5 (1989): 21–31; Carlos Rodríguez-Fraticelli and Amílcar Tirado, “Notes Towards a History of Puerto Rican Community Organizations in New York City,” *Centro Journal* 2, no. 6 (1989): 35–47.
- [4] For an account of the narrative and an attendant critique of docility, see Juan Flores, *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1992), 13–60.
- [5] The History Taskforce of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies offers an explanation of the economic conditions of Puerto Ricans on the Island and in New York (and the relationship between the two) in History Task Force Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, *Labor Migration under Capitalism: The Puerto Rican Experience* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).
- [6] While “Nuyorican” tends to be a term descriptive of a population (people of Puerto Rican descent who live in New York City), “Boricua” encompasses the description and adds a political edge. Derived from the original Arawak/Taino name of Puerto Rico (Borinquen, meaning Land of the Brave Lords), the term “Boricua” has been adopted as a politically charged, culturally nationalist term for Puerto Ricans. Being similar to the movement from African American to “Black,” or Mexican American to “Chicano,” “Boricua” historicizes the Puerto Rican colonial experience through a shift in signifier. I will, however, switch more or less freely between “Boricua,” “Nuyorican,” and “Puerto Rican” in this essay.
- [7] Pablo “Yoruba” Guzman, “One Year of Struggle,” *Palante*, July 17, 1970, 12–13.
- [8] For good introductory texts on Puerto Rican history, see James L. Deitz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); History Task Force Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, *Labor Migration*; Manuel Maldonado-Denis, *Puerto Rico: A Socio-Historic Interpretation*, trans. Elena Vialó (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Kelvin A. Santiago-Valles, “Subject People” *And Colonial Discourses: Economic Transformation and Social Disorder in Puerto Rico, 1898–*

- 1947 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); José Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- [9] Quoted in Cheryl Geisler, "How Ought We to Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 13.
- [10] I am thinking of different social movement organizations that do not operate principally through speech or writing. This might include different feminist, GLBT, or environmental movement organizations.
- [11] Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetorical Structure of the 'New Left' Movement: Part I," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50 (1964): 127.
- [12] James R. Andrews, "Confrontation at Columbia: A Case Study in Coercive Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (1969): 16.
- [13] Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 8.
- [14] For a comprehensive history, see Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Browne, eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest* (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001). For a history critical of dominant trajectories, see Kevin DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford, 1999).
- [15] Michael Calvin McGee, "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning?," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 233.
- [16] "Social imaginaries" combine attentiveness to the explicit political doctrines (e.g., liberal democracy and socialism), social habits/practices (e.g., voting and protest), and symbolic systems (e.g., myths, narratives, and images) in a manner that highlights the "ways of understanding the social." They "become social entities themselves, mediating collective life." To put it differently, "social imaginary" is one way to talk about the hegemonic structuration of the social in manners that informs and is informed by political discourse and *habitus*. See Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 4. On contemporary discussions of the social imaginary, see Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 191–213; Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 91–124; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, *Public Planet Books* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
- [17] Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38 (1952): 187.
- [18] Bernadette Marie Calafell and Fernando P. Delgado, "Reading Latina/o Images: Interrogating *Americanos*," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21 (2004): 18. See also Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 19–46; Fernando P. Delgado, "When the Silenced Speak: The Textualization and Complications of Latina/o Identity," *Western Journal of Communication* 62 (1998): 420–38.
- [19] John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen, "Ethnic Heritage as Rhetorical Legacy: The Plan of Delano," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 53–70.
- [20] Griffin, "Historical Movements," 188.
- [21] Griffin, "'New Left' Movement," 127.
- [22] Andrews, "Confrontation," 10 and 12–13.
- [23] Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (1969): 7.
- [24] Simons, "Requirements," 8.
- [25] Franklyn S. Haiman, "The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 99–114; Parke G. Burgess, "The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54 (1968): 122–33; Franklyn S. Haiman, "Nonverbal Communication and the First Amendment: The Rhetoric of the Streets Revisited," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982), 371–83.
- [26] Andrews, "Confrontation," 12–14.

- [27] In another work, co-authored with Wayne Brockriede, Scott again recognizes the importance of non-verbal rhetoric, but proceeds to focus only on the verbal because there is “much more difficulty in giving a decent account of nonverbal elements than of verbal.” See Robert Lee Scott and Wayne Brockriede, *The Rhetoric of Black Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 2.
- [28] McGee, “Social Movement,” 243. See McGee’s Van Zelst Lecture for an example of his focusing on extra-linguistic rhetoric. Even there, however, McGee’s attention is on “performativity” generally, not on specific examples of body rhetoric in action. Michael Calvin McGee, “On Feminized Liberty” (paper presented at the Van Zelst Lecture, Evanston, IL, May 1985).
- [29] Griffin, “New Left’ Movement,” 127.
- [30] John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, and Richard J. Jensen, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1993), 1–2. A good example is in Bowers et al.’s initial discussion of nonviolent resistance in the early mainstream civil rights movement. Suggesting that agitators use “their bodies as symbols of their extremely strong convictions about laws and customs” places bodies in a subservient position to the “convictions” that are expressed verbally (40). Of all the specific agitation tactics they identify, only five (of the nearly 30, by my counting) do not incorporate the verbal; but all five are to be evaluated for their instrumentality *vis-à-vis* verbally motivated strategies.
- [31] Simons, “Requirements,” 8.
- [32] Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the ‘Violence’ of Seattle,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 141. The charge of instrumentalism is one that DeLuca and Peeples explicitly deny but, nevertheless, may fall victim to given statements like the one quoted.
- [33] Alberto Melucci, John Keane, and Paul Mier, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 12.
- [34] Simons, “Requirements,” 2–3. Simons has developed this leader-centered theory further in subsequent publications.
- [35] John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen, “The Rhetorical Worlds of César Chávez and Reies Tijerina,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (1980): 166–76; Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback, “Radical Nationalism among Chicanos: The Rhetoric of José Angel Gutiérrez,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (1980): 191–202; Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback, “‘No Revolutions without Poets’: The Rhetoric of Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (1982): 72–91; John C. Hammerback, Richard J. Jensen, and Jose Angel Gutierrez, *A War of Words: Chicano Protest in the 1960s and 1970s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); John C. Hammerback, “Jose Antonio’s Rhetoric of Fascism,” *Southern Communication Journal* 59 (1994): 181–95; Hammerback and Jensen, “Ethnic Heritage,” 53–70; Ruby Ann Fernandez and Richard J. Jensen, “Reies Lopez Tijerina’s ‘the Land Grant Question’: Creating History through Metaphors,” *Howard Journal of Communication* 6 (1995): 129–45; John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez*, 1st ed. (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998).
- [36] See, for example, Victoria J. Gallagher, “Black Power in Berkeley: Postmodern Constructions in the Rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 144–57; Scott and Brockriede, *The Rhetoric of Black Power*; Charles J. Stewart, “The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 429–46. An exception to this is Parke Burgess’s essay on Black Power. See Burgess, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?” 122–33.
- [37] On Hammerback and Jensen, see Hammerback and Jensen, “Rhetorical Worlds,” 166–76; Jensen and Hammerback, “Radical Nationalism,” 191–202; Jensen and Hammerback, “No Revolutions,” 72–91; Hammerback, Jensen, and Gutierrez, *War of Words*; Hammerback, “Jose Antonio,” 181–95; Hammerback and Jensen, “Ethnic Heritage,” 53–70; Fernandez and

- Jensen, "Land Grant," 129-45; Hammerback and Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez*. On Delgado, see Fernando Pedro Delgado, "Chicano Movement Rhetoric: An Ideographic Interpretation," *Communication Quarterly* 43 (1995): 446-54; Fernando Pedro Delgado, "Chicano Ideology Revised: Rap Music and the (Re)Articulation of Chicanismo," *Western Journal of Communication* 62 (1998): 93-113; Delgado, "Silenced Speak," 420-38; Fernando Delgado, "The Rhetoric of Fidel Castro: Ideographs in the Service of Revolutionaries," *Howard Journal of Communication* 10 (1999): 1-14; Calafell and Delgado, "Reading Latina/o Images," 1-21.
- [38] Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990): 274-89; Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91-111.
- [39] For example, DeLuca, *Image Politics*; Kevin DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, Act up, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36 (1999): 9-21; Kevin DeLuca, "Articulation Theory: A Discursive Grounding for Rhetorical Practice," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32 (1999): 334-48; Kevin Michael Deluca and Anne Teresa Demo, "Imaging Nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the Birth of Environmentalism," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17 (2000): 241-60; DeLuca and Peeples, "Seattle," 125-51; Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler, "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph: The Iwo Jima in Editorial Cartoons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 289-310; Cara A. Finnegan, "The Naturalistic Enthymeme and Visual Argument: Photographic Representation in the 'Skull Controversy,'" *Argumentation and Advocacy* 37 (2001): 133-50; Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and F.S.A. Photographs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), Cara A. Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting' the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 377-402; Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Dissent and Emotional Management in a Liberal-Democratic Society: The Kent State Iconic Photograph," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31 (2001): 5-32; John Louis Lucaites, "Visualizing 'the People': Individualism and Collectivism in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 269-89; John Louis Lucaites and Robert Hariman, "Visual Rhetoric, Photojournalism, and Democratic Political Culture," *Rhetoric Review* 20 (2001): 37-42.
- [40] Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," *The Drama Review* 46 (2002): 146.
- [41] For an excellent example of this attitude, see Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, ed. Katharine T. Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 57-80. Crenshaw writes, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (58). See, also, Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-99; Angela Harris, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory," in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, ed. Katharine T. Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 201-34; Cheryl I. Harris, "Critical Race Studies: An Introduction," *UCLA Law Review* 49 (2002): 1215-39.
- [42] Ono and Sloop, "Vernacular Discourse," 40.
- [43] Scott and Smith, "Confrontation," 8.
- [44] Ronald Walter Greene, "The Aesthetic Turn and the Rhetorical Perspective on Argumentation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 35 (1998): 19-29. The division between "influence" and "constitutive" models of persuasion and identification are set up in the first couple of pages and extended throughout the essay.

- [45] Joseph P. Fried, "East Harlem Youths Explain Garbage-Dumping Demonstration," *New York Times*, August 19, 1969, 86.
- [46] Pablo Guzmán, "La Vida Pura: A Lord of the Barrio," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 155.
- [47] Sadly, a trip to New York City today verifies the same tendency, even if it is not as pronounced. Affluent, predominantly white areas like much of the Manhattan borough are blessed with regular, efficient garbage collection. East Harlem, still overwhelmingly Latino (including people of Mexican and Dominican descent, in addition to the Puerto Rican majority) continues to face less regular garbage collection and street cleanings. The police presence, on the other hand, is much more visible on 106th and Madison (East Harlem) than on 50th and Madison (a wealthy business center in Manhattan).
- [48] Young Lords Party and Michael Abramson, *Palante: Young Lords Party*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 8.
- [49] "Sociedad de Albizu Campos" translates as the "Albizu Campos Society." Pedro Albizu Campos was the Harvard-educated co-founder and leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in the 1930s.
- [50] Unless otherwise noted, as in this sentence, all references to the Young Lords will refer to the New York Young Lords, who are the focus of this study. I limit my focus to the New York group because they were the most explicitly political group, had the greatest effect on Nuyorican radicalism, and were the only group involved in the garbage offensive.
- [51] Young Lords Party and Abramson, *Palante*, n. pag and 73–74. The New York group eventually split from Chicago in 1970 because they felt Chicago "hadn't overcome being a gang." The Young Lords *Organization* then became the Young Lords *Party*—a name and mission they retained until changing into a different, decidedly Maoist organization in 1972. See Guzmán, "La Vida Pura," 157, 67–68.
- [52] Miguel Melendez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martins, 2003), 93. This kind of quasi-intellectualism bears some similarity to the SDS, which makes sense both because of the YLO's temporal proximity to SDS and Juan Gonzalez's involvement with SDS at Columbia after Mark Rudd ascended to national leadership. For another account of such intellectualism, see Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, rev. trade ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).
- [53] Guzmán in Young Lords Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 74.
- [54] Quoted in Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 94.
- [55] This means of going out into the community taps into a tradition of "community organizing" at least as old as Saul Alinsky's work in the 1930s. Although not published until after the "garbage offensive," see Saul David Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1971). This tactic was certainly similar to those used by SNCC in the South and SDS in New York and New Jersey in the 1960s (Juan Gonzalez, as mentioned in a previous footnote, had been active in SDS leadership at Columbia before helping form the Lords).
- [56] Quoted in Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 95.
- [57] Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 96.
- [58] The closest they come is in volume 1, no. 4, where there are several small news pieces about the garbage offensive. Even here, however, the narrative remains fragmented, disjointed, and (by nature of there being several pieces) repetitive. *Palante* was originally sold on street corners and subway stations in El Barrio, the Bronx, and the Lower Eastside. It was eventually sold at newsstands throughout New York City in addition to the more interactive means of distribution.
- [59] Conquergood, "Performance Studies," 146.
- [60] See McGee, "Fragmentation," 274–89. Also see DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 147–55.

- [61] "El Barrio and the YLO Say No More Garbage in Our Community," *Palante* 1, no. 4 (1969): 19.
- [62] Quoted in Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City, Urban and Industrial Environments* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 165–66.
- [63] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Practice* (London: Verso, 1985), 125.
- [64] Guzman, "One Year," 12.
- [65] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 5. For an account of the narrative and an attendant critique of docility, see Flores, *Divided Borders*, 13–60.
- [66] Guzmán quoted in Young Lords Party and Abramson, *Palante*, 75.
- [67] DeLuca uses "mind bomb" to reference the explosive psychological effect image events have on collective consciousness. For an introduction to the term, see DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 1–22.
- [68] Guzman, "One Year," 12.
- [69] Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 105.
- [70] Ministry of Information, "Pigs Oink in Fear as YLO and the People March Thru the Streets," *Palante* 1, no. 4 (1969): 17.
- [71] Quoted in "El Barrio and the YLO Say No More Garbage in Our Community," *Palante* 1, no. 4 (1969): 19.
- [72] Guzman, "One Year," 12.
- [73] One might object to my use of "space" in this essay given that the rhetorical scholarship on social movement(s) does not point to a similar construction. While this is mostly true, DeLuca is an exception. For DeLuca, "space" is aligned with the strategic practices of those in power (e.g., legislative and legal space) and "suggests an impersonal geometrical region known through the rationalized, objective methods of science" (76). He suggests a need to focus on "place" which is "a particular locality of which a person has an intimate knowledge derived from passionate attachment and caring inhabitation" (76). I understand his desire to focus on "place" rather than "space" (especially given the definitional game he plays), but his division between the two relies on a false dichotomy. While the advances of social movement certainly emanate from particular *places*, social movement (even if scholars like McGee and DeLuca do not explain it this way) seems to be directed at the (re)formulation of cultural or discursive *spaces* in which terrains or fields of intelligibility are constructed and reconstructed. In this sense, to talk about the Young Lords as constructing a space is meant to draw attention to two things: first, the Lords redefine the barrioscape to make it an acceptable location for contestation and dissent; second, and more importantly, the Lords help to constitute a "people" who could, contrary to popular and academic characterizations, *be political* (an agential change). My position seems, moreover, to be more in line with Michel de Certeau's explanation of space as "practiced place." See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.
- [74] Johanna Fernandez, "Between Social Service Reform and Revolutionary Politics: The Young Lords, Late Sixties Radicalism, and Community Organizing in New York City," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, ed. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 255–85.
- [75] Carl Davidson, "Young Lords Organize in New York," *Guardian*, October 18, 1969, 6.
- [76] Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 109. I am not oversimplifying Melendez's account, here. This is as far as his read of the purpose and significance of the garbage offensive goes.
- [77] Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen, *Agitation*, 1–17.
- [78] Agustín Laó, "Resources of Hope: Imagining the Young Lords and the Politics of Memory," *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 7, no. 1 (1995): 37.
- [79] Laó, "Resources of Hope," 37.
- [80] Guzman, "One Year," 12, emphasis added.

- [81] A survey of the primary literature on Black Power, the Black Panther Party, Students for a Democratic Society, and others makes this evident. See Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London; New York: Verso, 2002). By “devil figure,” I allude to Richard Weaver’s notion of an ultimate term that carries a negative force. A “devil term” is the dialectical counterpart to a “god term,” which Weaver defines as “that expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate and serving dominations and powers” (212). See Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1985).
- [82] Iris Morales, “¡Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 213.
- [83] Marta Moreno, speaking of the Young Lords, reminds us of the importance of “this group of young men and women of color who made significant impact on history. Inequalities in the areas of culture, education, prison reform, housing and health care came under their careful scrutiny and systematic attack. Significant changes directly resulted from their efforts.” See Marta Moreno, “The Young Lords Party, 1969–1975; ‘Publisher’s Page,’” *Caribe* 7, no. 4 (1983): 2. It is ironic that, given the importance of the Lords recognized by Puerto Rican scholars, there is so little written about them. Writing broadly about scholarly attention to Puerto Rican movement(s), Andrés Torres argues, “The historical record on this experience is almost nonexistent. Even within the ‘social movements’ and ‘diversity’ literature, we find barely a mention of the Puerto Rican contribution to the insurgency that changed the United States.” See Andrés Torres, “Introduction: Political Radicalism in the Diaspora—the Puerto Rican Experience,” in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 1.
- [84] This, in part, is what led Edwin Black to critique neo-Aristotelian critics; it is certainly part of Maurice Charland’s motivation behind his work on Quebec. See Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965); Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133–50.
- [85] See Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric,” 133–50. See also McGee, “On Feminized Liberty,” 1–31; Michael C. McGee, “In Search of ‘the People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235–49; Michael Calvin McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 1–16; Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of *Différence*,” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, ed. John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: Guilford, 1999), 232–46; Greene, “Aesthetic Turn,” 19–29.
- [86] José Esteban Muñoz makes a similar point vis-à-vis the constitutive potential of Latina/o performances today. He writes, “The performance praxis of US Latina/os assists the minoritarian citizen-subject in the process of denaturalizing the United States’ universalizing ‘national affect’ fiction as it asserts ontological validity and affective difference.” See José Esteban Muñoz, “Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho’s *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)*,” *Theatre Journal* 52 (2000): 72.
- [87] Ramón Grosfoguel, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, and Chloé S. Georas, “Beyond Nationalist and Colonialist Discourses: The *Jaiba* Politics of the Puerto Rican Ethno-Nation,” in *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism*, ed. Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 30–31.
- [88] Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel, *Puerto Rican Jam*, 31.
- [89] For an analysis of Puerto Ricans’ modern colonial status, see Ramón Grosfoguel, *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4–5.
- [90] Ono and Sloop, “Vernacular Discourse,” 20.

- [91] Kenneth Burke, "Definition of Man," in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 3–24.
- [92] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 29.
- [93] Lisa A. Flores, "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 153, footnote 8.
- [94] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(S)* (London: Verso, 1996), 121.
- [95] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 2–3.
- [96] Conquergood, "Performance Studies," 147.
- [97] Lucaites, quoted in Geisler, "Rhetorical Agency," 13.