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Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: The Food Activism of United Bronx Parents

Lana Dee Povitz

Introduction

In the late 1960s and 1970s, United Bronx Parents (UBP) was one of New York City's most respected and effective antipoverty agencies. Comprised largely of poor Puerto Rican mothers with little formal education, it may have been less glamorous than the Young Lords, the *Independentistas* of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, or other Puerto Rican leftist organizations from the period, but it had a lasting impact on the South Bronx and set into motion a chain of events that would forever change the face of school food in New York City. By organizing the city's first sustained grassroots campaign to improve public school lunches in notoriously awful South Bronx cafeterias in 1969 and 1970, and then by administering New York's first ever citywide free summer meals program in 1971, UBP leaders took "traditional" women's work—food provision—and transformed it into an effective organizing tool. The two projects mobilized and politically empowered hundreds of people who, because of poverty, language barriers, and, often, relative newcomer status to the United States, were unaccustomed to making demands on the city's institutions of power.

UBP was founded in the South Bronx in 1966 by the charismatic Evelina López Antonetty. What began as a grassroots community organization in the poorest congressional district of the United States grew, via a steady stream of foundation, state, and federal funding over the next two decades, into a nonprofit agency with a small but well-managed bureaucracy. Still in existence today, UBP's accomplishments have included organizing free day care, working with parents to advocate for change in their children's schools, establishing job training programs for youth, and developing in-patient drug rehabilitation for mothers that allowed their children to remain with them during treatment. In recent years, historians such as Sonia Song-Ha Lee and the late Adina Back have written about UBP and the importance of Antonetty's leadership during the War on Poverty.¹ Yet, scholars have ignored the organization's work around school lunches and free summer meals. In addition to increasing low-income children's basic access to food, UBP reconfigured school lunches from a neglected federal program into a measure of the city's investment in poor Puerto Rican and Black communities.

Both the school lunch campaign and free summer meals program were also crucial to building the organization's reputation as a responsive and effective force. This was true not only within the South Bronx, but also throughout the city, in New York State, and, for a time, in the offices of the federal government. To overlook the importance of food is to continue to miss an important organizing spur for traditionally oppressed groups: women, immigrants, poor people, and people of color.

Evelina Antonetty and UBP in the South Bronx

Puerto Ricans living in the South Bronx in the late 1960s comprised a relatively new community within New York City. Because of structural unemployment and social dislocation caused by Operation Bootstrap, Puerto Rico's major industrialization effort, Puerto Ricans had migrated to the United States en masse from the early 1940s through the 1950s. Eighty-five percent made their home in New York City. By the end of the 1950s, approximately 900,000 New Yorkers had either been born in Puerto Rico or were of Puerto Rican parentage; more than one-third of the island's population transferred to the city between 1943 and 1960. The vast majority of immigrants came from poor, rural environments to work in industrial jobs.² With industrial decline and greater economic and racial segregation in the second half of the 1960s, Puerto Rican communities across the United States grew more militant. The anticolonial uprisings and establishment of newly independent nations in Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia encouraged Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican movements in the United States to articulate their struggles in colonial terms.³

Evelina López Antonetty arrived in New York City before major migration began. She was born on September 19, 1922, to Eva López, a single mother, in the small, poor, fishing village of Salinas, Puerto Rico. She moved to East Harlem to live with her aunt in 1933. Her mother and younger sisters, Lillian and Elba, joined her a couple of years later. Both her aunt and mother were involved with the laundry workers' union in the 1930s, where they organized alongside Black and Jewish women.⁴ Antonetty would later continue this tradition of multiracial organizing in UBP, whose storefront sign depicted two clasped hands: one light, one dark. Antonetty's daughter Lorraine described her mother as *una hija de Maria* until she was politicized by her future husband, Binaldo Montenegro, whom she met as a teenager.⁵ When she was fifteen, in 1937, Antonetty was among the tens of thousands who gathered in Central Park to mourn the deaths of nineteen Puerto Rican National Party protestors who had been shot by police in Ponce, Puerto Rico. She supported the antifascist forces in the Spanish Civil War and was a member of the International Workers' Order.⁶

Antonetty attended Wadleigh High School, a prestigious all-girls public school in Harlem whose alumni included Dorothea Lange and Lillian Hellman. As one of the few Puerto Rican students, she, along with her Black peers, was encouraged to participate in dancing and singing, rather than take up more intellectual pursuits. In spite of the discrimination she faced, she was academically successful. Although her mother valued education enough to support her high school education, Antonetty lacked the financial resources to attend college. Much of her education, therefore, took

place in her community, where, immersed in the rich interwar Puerto Rican subculture of El Barrio, East Harlem, she was schooled in Depression-era progressive politics. She helped her neighbors handle evictions, translating between Spanish and English, and brought packages of government surplus food to those too sick or too proud to retrieve it themselves. Her mentors included the Puerto Rican nationalist writer Jesús Colón, who paid her membership costs for the International Workers' Order, and Vito Marcantonio, East Harlem's Communist-supported Italian-American congressman.⁷

At sixteen, Antonetty became part of the Young Communist League, the youth wing of the American Communist Party.⁸ Her Party training was practically as well as ideologically significant to her future work as an organizer. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Party trained thousands of people to mobilize, delegate, motivate, run a meeting, analyze an action, stick to a topic, be disciplined, seek accountability, and expect follow through. The Young Communist League had Marxist reading groups, which helped young people learn to process what they read and confidently articulate their ideas. Her involvement with the Party helps explain her lifelong emphasis on job creation. It may have emerged from a firsthand exposure to grinding poverty, but it was also filtered through an ideological lens of class consciousness.⁹ Like many of her generation who lived through the Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s, Antonetty seldom, if ever, spoke of her Communist history, even to others with a similar background, but its hallmark was there in her efficacy as an organizer.¹⁰

In 1947, as a recently divorced twenty-five-year-old with a baby, she became one of the first Latinas hired full time by District 65, a militant union that organized small shops. She helped bring more than 4,000 Spanish-speaking workers into the union.¹¹ She remained with District 65 for ten years until 1957 when her second child, Anita, was born. By this time, Evelina was living in the South Bronx with her second husband, Donato Antonetty.¹² After her third child, Donald, was born in 1960, Antonetty worked toward the development of Head Start Programs, eventually becoming the supervisor of the first Head Start in the City.¹³ It was through this work that she first encountered parent associations. When, in 1965, her five-year-old Donald was suspended from kindergarten on so-called disciplinary charges (no one seems to remember what he had allegedly done), she transitioned into a full-time parent organizer. At around the same time, a teacher at the same school was accused of sexually abusing several students. Antonetty, having by now been elected president of the school's parent association, tried to have the teacher discharged. She also fought to dismiss the district superintendent who had been reluctant to investigate the teacher after parents complained.¹⁴

UBP and the school system

For Antonetty these events symbolized the unfair and arbitrary power that teachers and principals wielded over low-income Black and Puerto Rican pupils.¹⁵ Furious at the rampant inequality she saw plaguing the school system, she began drawing on her own experience as a labor organizer and day care coordinator to organize parents into an all-volunteer organization. UBP was a movement organization, both deriving

energy from and spurring on the citywide community control of schools movement in the late 1960s. It also quickly came to be a staff organization, albeit a small one, concerned with providing social services to an extremely deprived population; in the mid-1960s, more than half of all Puerto Rican families in the South Bronx lived below the poverty line.¹⁶

Except for two important paid staff members, Kathy Goldman and Ellen Lurie, both of whom were white, middle-class Jewish women, UBP was largely composed of low-income immigrant and first-generation Puerto Ricans, as well as an unspecified number of Black women.¹⁷ Most of its day-to-day activities were carried out by volunteers, although the organization was adept at fundraising and created paid positions for its most involved volunteers whenever possible. To a limited extent, UBP was also a member organization: the volunteer membership identified the problems, generated ideas for campaigns, and helped suggest tactics. But decisions about strategy ultimately rested with the leadership, which enjoyed remarkably uncontested support.

UBP was not the only militant Puerto Rican group leading community-based campaigns during the foment of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but its methods were less challenging to the status quo than were those of the more brazen Young Lords, who "liberated" a city truck and took over a church to accomplish some of their projects.¹⁸ The Lords, many of whom were university students and American born, were more explicit than UBP about tying local economic and social grievances to larger critiques of structural racism and Puerto Rico's neocolonial relationship to the United States. The Lords offered political education, distributing a newspaper, *Palante*, and hosting a radio show on WBAI-FM by the same name in 1969.¹⁹ Members of UBP were to the Young Lords the older, more pragmatic aunts who lived a few blocks over but in the same neighborhood; while they basically shared values with their rowdier nieces and nephews, the aunts were slower to react, more patient, and more focused on creating change here and now than on the revolutionary possibilities of the future. Evelina Antonetty in particular shared the Lords' radical analysis, but she was running a nonprofit concerned first and foremost with the basic survival of its community: adequate food, the need for local jobs, and community control of local schools. Nevertheless, Antonetty served as a mentor to many Young Lords, including Juan Gonzales and Felipe Luciano. She supported them emotionally and at times financially, giving them money to set up a storefront in the South Bronx and allowing them access to the UBP office's mimeograph machine. They were different wings of the same movement.

In 1967, UBP received funding from the federal Office of Economic Opportunity and later received additional money from the private New York Urban Coalition and Ford Foundation to begin training parents to advocate for change in their children's schools. By this time, the push to decentralize school districts and concentrate power in the hands of more responsive local community school boards had largely eclipsed the unsuccessful movement for racial integration of the 1950s and earlier part of the 1960s.

It is significant that UBP was born from the struggle for better schools. Quality education was of the utmost importance to New York's Puerto Rican community. The 1960s and early 1970s was a time when many Black and Puerto Rican people throughout the city were coming to embrace a form of cultural nationalism that

pushed them to demand direct control over the institutions that shaped their lives, including decentralized, culturally affirming schools. In a letter drafted to fellow South Bronx Puerto Ricans, Antonetty reminded parents that keeping their rich heritage alive depended upon their receiving a decent education. She said: "It is up to us as parents to demand and get the school authorities, the legislators and city officials to give our children the education which is rightfully ours. Our children can become the educators, doctors and leaders of tomorrow. Don't let anyone tell us differently ... that our children are 'uneducable or mentally retarded.' ... We will not be satisfied with less."²⁰

Such galvanizing rhetoric was needed because parents tended to blame themselves for their children's lack of achievement in school.²¹ Indeed, although 65 percent of students in the Bronx's School District 7 were Puerto Rican, they made up only 3 percent of students receiving high school diplomas. Few could read at grade level and most were two years behind.²² Antonetty, along with Ellen Lurie, who had been organizing parents in public schools in East Harlem and Washington Heights since the 1950s, prepared a "treasure hunt" for "re-educating parents who have been turned around against their own." It involved taking parents into a middle-class neighborhood and asking them to look for resources which were absent in their own communities. Antonetty and Lurie beseeched parents to visit the public libraries to review their hours and titles; to seek out the nearest dime store and see what educational materials and toys were available for inexpensive prices; to drop by the nearest bank to investigate whether it had any school savings accounts or tuitions loans; to find whether there were any restaurants without a bar where families could get a decent meal for a low price; and to discover whether there were good-looking apartments with three, four, or five bedrooms.²³

One of UBP's main goals was to assure parents that low academic success rates were a systemic problem. As one UBP pamphlet pointed out, "If only one or two children are failing in each class, there is probably something wrong with these children. But if two thirds of the children are failing, THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE SCHOOL!"²⁴ This was not immediately clear to parents, who, in Puerto Rico, had been accustomed to treating teachers with respect and the principal with honor, as a real representative of the community. If children in Puerto Rico had problems in school, the teacher would make home visits to discuss issues.²⁵ In the South Bronx, however, teachers and principals were usually not from the community and had little cultural literacy or understanding of their students. Overwhelmingly, those in positions of power (superintendents, principals) were white, while those working menial jobs (janitors, cafeteria workers) were Black or Puerto Rican.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, the most experienced and highest-paid teachers in New York City tended to teach at schools with a whiter student population. Conversely, the least experienced teachers were paid lower salaries and usually taught in schools with a higher percentage of students of color.²⁷

To overcome academic disparities, UBP advocated for community control over hiring and for the idea that districts should receive their fair share of the education budget. They also promoted a new educational ideal: a "school without walls" where academic learning would be continuous with the struggles of the home and the

community.²⁸ Unlike white teachers and principals, UBP understood that students faced an enormous discrepancy between school and home life. Most Puerto Rican pupils faced some degree of poverty, and many were forced to live in overcrowded apartments, where they lacked adequate study space, proper diets, and privacy. While teachers expected students to go home after school to do homework, it was not uncommon for Puerto Rican students, by their sophomore years, to be their family's main breadwinner.²⁹ Puerto Rican immigrants typically viewed the home as a social space for welcoming visitors and relatives. It was often difficult to be able to go home, close the door to "one's room," and simply study. Through bilingual promotional material, UBP encouraged parents to fight for culturally representative teachers, classroom aides, and administrators; an accurate representation of Puerto Rican and Black history and culture in the classroom; a fair disciplinary system; decent cafeterias; and improved school food.³⁰

This vision drew deeply from contemporary discourses among Black educators, activists, and intellectuals living in New York City in the mid-1960s, such as Harold Cruse, Milton Galamison, Babette Edwards, and Kenneth Clark and Mamie Phipps Clark.³¹ These discourses attacked the idea of a "culture of poverty," popularized by Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1964 report for the Office of Policy Planning and Research in the Department of Labor, as an explanation for low student achievement. They also rejected the moderate cultural pluralism guiding educational policy at this time, most publicly embodied by Al Shanker, the teachers' union president and perhaps the greatest opponent of community control. They sought to replace the Board's purportedly race-blind approach that focused on individual merit, competition, and materialism with radical democracy, racial consciousness, and social responsibility that devolved power downward away from bureaucrats toward students and parents.³²

United Bronx Parents offered this framework to a population of people who were not intellectuals but who were quickly coming to realize that their children were getting a raw deal. Parents, most of whom had grown up in rural poverty in Puerto Rico, could trust an organization whose staff was largely the product of its own parent training process, and which had no major class, ethnic, or educational differences between most of its staff and the people it served. UBP worked to produce a politically sophisticated cadre of parents who could agitate effectively for change, governed by the principle that "[t]he parent is the professional when it comes to the education of their children."³³ Their community education materials emphasized parents' own ideas and priorities as the main content.

A large part of UBP's success rested on the credibility of Antonetty herself within the community.³⁴ Typically, representatives from local parent associations would approach her at the UBP office on 791 Prospect Avenue with a grievance, and if the issue seemed large-scale enough, she would call a neighborhood meeting, advertised through posters in schools and phone trees. In the late 1960s, these meetings, especially when they were about food, could attract hundreds of people. Rooms would frequently fill to overflowing as Antonetty facilitated in Spanish or English, and decisions would be reached by the vote of anyone who was in attendance. At large meetings, particularly when politicians and other elites were present, UBP made sure to provide simultaneous

translation, a real rarity in those days. This ensured that Spanish-speaking parents could always understand and be understood.

Multiracial leadership and UBP's school lunch campaign, 1969–70

A concrete example of neighborhood women approaching Antonetty with a problem occurred in January 1969. An unusually large group of ten mothers appeared at UBP headquarters and asked for a meeting. They came from PS 25, the elementary school two blocks away, to discuss the appalling conditions of school lunch. Lunchrooms were crowded, noisy, and overheated, they explained to Antonetty. Students had no place to hang their coats, so they had to eat with them on. The food was trucked through traffic across two boroughs from a central kitchen in Queens, a facility that used to be a Depression-era soup kitchen. It often arrived late, compressing the time in which students had to eat. Soups were cold and greasy. Sandwiches—typically baloney, peanut butter, or cheese on white bread—were dry and stale. There was tremendous waste. Lunch monitors yelled at students. Cafeteria cooks had no way to sterilize dishware and had to buy soap out of pocket if they wanted to properly clean things.³⁵ The list of grievances went on and on. Kathy Goldman, who, along with Ellen Lurie, worked as a parent leadership training coordinator for UBP, became especially caught up in this campaign.

Before any more can be said about the school lunch campaign, a brief digression is needed to discuss the role of Lurie and Goldman: the two Jewish women were the only white people in the organization, and yet they occupied the two most important positions in those early years, second only to the executive director herself. This was a strategic choice on Antonetty's part. Although she must have been aware of the irony of positioning two white people directly under her, their competence, savvy, connections, and devotion outweighed their race. Lurie and Goldman had met earlier in the 1960s in EQUAL, a militant group of white parents struggling for school integration, and had come to work for UBP in 1966 after Antonetty recruited them.³⁶ The working relationship between these three women was extremely productive, although there was sometimes disagreement between Antonetty and Lurie, who was already a citywide leader in her own right even before coming to UBP. According to Luis Caban, who came to work for UBP under Lurie's supervision when he was twenty-three years old, the two women "really hashed things out. This was why so many of the things that UBP did worked: the only thing to come out of it was something that was very doable. The love between them oozed out of their pores, but when they sat down to talk about ideas it was very tense." Caban's wife, Maria, who also helped out with parent training at the time and later assisted Kathy Goldman in administering the summer meals program, added that "Ellen and Evelina were like a married couple, the way they argued . . . They got done what needed to be done."³⁷

The Cabans' recollections may have been filtered through a slightly rose-colored lens. Or, perhaps, in a hierarchical organization such as UBP, the Cabans were simply

not privy to the extent of interpersonal tensions at the higher echelons. Goldman mentioned feeling increasingly caught in the middle, and the stress of navigating between these two epic personalities almost led her to a nervous breakdown.³⁸ Lurie finally resigned in 1971 to work for the Community Service Society, but she remained close to the organization. Following her departure, Lurie wrote to Antonetty: "I notice I keep saying 'we' and 'us' [in this letter]. The separation from UBP is coming very hard. But I have heard that the project is moving forward wonderfully and I know you and the staff will produce a remarkable [parent training] manual. As I told you, if there is anything I can do to help, please let me know."³⁹ The parting was amicable, and the two women remained allies until Lurie's death in 1978.

Goldman, younger than Antonetty by a decade and two years Lurie's junior, was an altogether different kind of leader, happiest working behind the scenes. The American-born daughter of Eastern European Communists, she had participated steadily in progressive causes since joining the Labor Youth League (a later iteration of the Young Communist League) in the late 1940s. After a legal scare when she was eighteen years old, she disaffiliated from Communist Party connections but continued to work on education and housing issues. Goldman had grown up down the street from UBP's 791 Prospect Avenue office in what had been, at the time, a largely Jewish neighborhood; though, like many other middle-class Jewish families, her family had relocated to the West Bronx in the 1940s. Goldman's various paid positions and time with EQUAL let Antonetty know that she was both committed to the cause of racial and economic equality and able to do the nitty-gritty work of coordinating parents. I can find no evidence of Goldman or Lurie's race and class privilege being a source of tension within the organization. It appears that, as they did with so much else, others who worked in the organization followed Antonetty's lead. Certainly all the narrators I interviewed about UBP only spoke about the women with warmth, fondness, and respect.⁴⁰

Goldman, for her part, was "totally bowled over" upon meeting Antonetty: "She was very smart, very erudite . . . She wore this big hat. She was really something."⁴¹ Goldman recalled that "Ellen was audacious . . . smart, very fearless. It was wonderful to work with someone like that. And Evelina was flamboyant in a smoother way. People would stop and listen to her. She was heavyset, but she was beautiful. Don't discount beauty and its impact."⁴² Antonetty's daughter, Lorraine Montenegro, told the following story to illustrate her mother's fierce outspokenness in the face of injustice:

She was attending a hearing in DC, and I hear different stories about what ignited in her—one was that a woman sitting next to her was trying to say something in English and my mother overheard [one of the Congressmen] say, "I wish that woman would shut up." And she stood up and said, "No, you shut up, and you listen!" Anyway, I got a call from a lawyer [who had been there], and at the end of the conversation he tells me, "I never met your mother but I'll never forget her . . . I heard her stand up and tell a United States Congressman to shut up and listen."⁴³

The moment has since been commemorated as a mural outside UBP's current building on 773 Prospect Avenue at 156th Street. Working together, Antonetty, Lurie,

FIGURE 1.1. Mural of Evelina López Antonetty, 773 Prospect Ave., South Bronx. Mural by Tats Cru Inc., 2011.

Source: Photograph by author.

and Goldman, with their different strengths and personalities, made for a fierce leadership team.

Goldman's experience with school lunches at UBP would set the stage for a fifty-year career as a food activist. At the first community meeting that UBP held about the issue, parents described to her not only how terrible the meals were, but also how dependent they were on them. There was severe poverty in the area and the mothers had no other way to guarantee that their children would eat lunch. But while these women may not have had money, many of them were also talented Puerto Rican cooks. Goldman could not help but notice that for discussions about school lunch more than a hundred parents attended. These were far larger numbers than when a meeting was called about reading scores. Clearly, food made sense as a medium for their political organization. For these women, food was a comfort zone.⁴⁴

At the time, New York City schoolchildren were allowed the option of leaving for lunch, and those who could go home, did, or else brought their own lunch. The tacit expectation that a "good mother" would be home to feed her children or be able to send them to school with a brown bag lunch kept those who could not do so—either because they were out working or because they had no food in the house—from questioning school food arrangements too vocally. Prior to UBP picking up the issue, there was the occasional critical report on school food from the white, liberal Citizens' Committee for Children and United Parents Association, two of the most active organizations in New York City around school issues. For the most part, school lunch was seen as a "poor kids program" and therefore received relatively little attention.⁴⁵

Following the initial community meeting, UBP organized parents to monitor and evaluate lunchrooms in twenty-five South Bronx schools over eight weeks, based on criteria such as menus, amount of food service, amount of waste, supervision, cleanliness, and physical setup of kitchens and cafeterias. One evaluation judged PS 25, the school from whence the original ten mothers came, to be "the worst of all the schools we have visited ... Most schools use a room such as this for storage of

old equipment. Here it is the lunchroom."⁴⁶ At certain schools, including JHS 98, the parent committee took the added step of asking students what they thought of their school's food situation. One student informed the committee: "Macaroni's no good, sour. I wish they gave me rice and beans and chicken. Always the same thing ... Lunchroom help is so slow—we wait a long time and have to leave without lunch. I like Spanish food but if they're going to cook it, forget it. They wouldn't know how."⁴⁷ UBP organizers took note of students' unsurprising preference for culturally familiar foods.

After trying but failing to win immediate remedies from Kevin Howard, the director of New York City Board of Education's Bureau of School Lunches, UBP organizers undertook a variety of creative and often whimsical approaches to effect change. For example, on April 10, 1969, UBP invited a group of elected officials for a lunch meeting. Among those present were state senators, assemblymen, city councilmen, aides of the governor, representatives from the mayor's office, and Bronx Borough President Herman Badillo. This impressive turnout owed much to Antonetty's own political clout; she was ensconced in a range of political scenes, from serving as the parent coordinator of the South Bronx's first Head Start program, being appointed by Mayor John Lindsay as the vice chair of the New York City Council Against Poverty, to sitting on the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (even though she was not Episcopalian, her social connections throughout the city were vast enough to justify her seat).⁴⁸ Taking the group completely by surprise, UBP members put the officials on a school bus, brought them to the notorious PS 25, and served them the lunch provided to the students there. On their way in, the delegation was greeted by a few hundred unamused parents, many of whom held picket line-style signs. This massive turnout was organized by UBP volunteer and PS 25 parent Juanita Hernandez, who used word-of-mouth, posters, and flyers to rally fellow parents. The fact that one assemblyman got sick from the experience only furthered their message that school food had to change.⁴⁹ Afterward, as was customary, organizers and parents debriefed the action, analyzing what they had learned in order to approach future actions with greater discipline and intuition.⁵⁰

One of the parents' demands that day was to have lunches prepared on site. They argued that having food made locally would provide much-needed jobs for community members who already knew how to prepare the kind of meals that Puerto Rican and Black children enjoyed.⁵¹ They would soon have the opportunity to put this idea into practice. As the officials left PS 25 after eating lunch there, UBP presented them with a rain check. Now that you have seen what school lunches are like, the rain check continued,

[W]e will be delighted to serve you a "real school lunch" the way it should be. We expect you, our elected representatives, to come on that date and tell us what you have done to achieve our demands. We are not interested in being told why these problems exist. We want solutions to the problems!! We will use every means of communication—radio, tv, newspapers, fliers, newsletter—to let the community know what you are doing for us now! We expect you to do everything possible to help our children.⁵²

Officials were invited to Herman Ridder Junior High School 98 on May 2 for a UBP production of school lunch as they envisioned it. Like PS 25, JHS 98 had a Puerto Rican principal who was allied with the parents. The model lunch constituted a direct and significant challenge to the Bureau of School Lunches' approach, so the principal was risking his own career in allowing UBP to come in. Two local people did the actual food preparation: a Black man who had been a cook in the army, and a woman who had been a cook in Puerto Rico. The flyer UBP made to advertise this lunch listed foods in English and Spanish that their community schools could make to appeal to their children. These foods included sliced pineapple and grapefruit sections, sweet potatoes, stewed beans, ham hocks, spare ribs, sweet plantains with butter, grits, scrambled eggs, black-eyed peas, farina, fried chicken, and roasted pork chops.⁵³

The demonstration was enormously successful and fed 500 people.⁵⁴ Being able to organize such a tasty meal gave parents the confidence that they could in fact do what was best for their children.⁵⁵ The Board of Education had repeatedly told UBP organizers that they did not have the money to make any changes to the school lunch program. To prove them wrong, UBP kept scrupulous track of their budget, and—lo and behold—they spent less money per meal than did the Board of Education.⁵⁶

Although parents felt this demonstration was successful, proving what the community was capable of if given some power, in fact the situation was worsening in some lunchrooms. This was due to the dreaded Meal Pack frozen lunches, which the Bureau of School Lunches had begun to push into schools in 1968 in the name of convenience and cost savings. Millions of dollars were invested in renovating kitchen facilities with "convenience kitchens," or kitchens with convection ovens. A UBP delegation of about forty mothers and a few fathers met with the Board of Education President, Joseph Monserrat, in November 1969 to express their displeasure. The Meal Pack portions were too small to satisfy the hunger of older children; the meals themselves were so hated that they generated more garbage than nourishment; none of this was leading to the creation of local jobs nor was it strengthening any local decision-making power.⁵⁷ The parents were promised an official report on frozen lunches, with facts and figures that would allow them to create a counterproposal, but the report never appeared. Frozen meals would continue to expand throughout the 1970s, but UBP was not willing to give up yet. Early in 1970 UBP coordinated a final major demonstration. To draw attention to the ongoing problem of waste in the school lunch program, they dumped full plastic garbage bags of food collected from school trash bins after lunch at a federal government building in downtown Manhattan.

Trying to engage with the Board of Education proved to be a frustrating and largely futile endeavor. Parents gained firsthand knowledge of the way the Board of Education was both powerful in its ability to keep passing the buck and ineffectual in its ability to solve problems. Ultimately, meaningful community control evaded UBP areas, but some positive material changes were made. Schools received proper dishwashers or disposable dishware, and the soups and sandwiches were, for the most part, no longer prepared offsite but were made fresh each morning on school premises. According to Kathy Goldman this change at PS 25 and other neighborhood schools was not just a material change. It also represented a change in people's conceptions of what was possible. In an interview, Goldman explained the power of people learning that

they could change things—coming to see themselves as agents of change rather than people to whom things happen. After experiencing a victory in one area, such as the realm of food activism, people gained the courage to fight for and win even bigger improvements. With the school lunch campaign, parents learned by doing, and moved from blaming themselves to struggling for community-wide survival within a system structured to work against them. This was a hugely important lesson.

Free summer meals, 1971

Now that UBP organizers understood the galvanizing power of food as an organizing tool and had a preliminary understanding of what it would take to run a meal program, UBP turned to the issue of bringing the free summer meal program to New York City.

Officially, money to support free meals during the summer months had become available in the United States in 1968 with an amendment to the National School Lunch Program.

The Summer Food Service Program, as it was called, represented significant federal acknowledgment of what food advocates had been saying for years: hunger doesn't take a vacation. Children needed food just as much when school was not in session. The amendment was an important first step, but on its own it did not guarantee a sudden implementation of free school meals for everyone eligible. It required the agitation of local groups to bring the program to their communities. During the first few years that federal money for summer meals was available, between 1968 and 1971, antipoverty activists and organizations in New York, UBP chief among them, lobbied the State Education Department in Albany to pressure the city's Board of Education to run summer meal programs. (The State Education Department was in charge of distributing federal money for summer meals wherever there was organized local demand for a program.) Looking to the Board of Education seemed to make sense because many schools had kitchens and cafeteria facilities that sat idle during the summer.

Despite countless letters and phone calls to secure the Board of Education's support, the Board refused, claiming it did not have the capacity to administer the program nor to cope with the additional costs that would be involved in opening up school buildings, such as the cost of custodial service.⁵⁸ Eventually, Richard Reed, the Chief of School Food Management of the State Education Department in Albany, suggested that UBP take on the task. Antonetty and Goldman discussed what it would mean to accept the challenge. They knew welfare benefits were being cut and the ranks of the unemployed were growing throughout the city. They already knew firsthand that nutritional health was poor in low-income neighborhoods such as theirs. Indeed, according to a 1970 study of low-income New York City children aged six years and under, 45 percent of those tested had vitamin A deficiencies; over 55 percent had hemoglobin deficiencies; almost half had thiamine deficiencies; and over 65 percent lacked sufficient riboflavin. Children with these deficiencies were more susceptible to contagious diseases and minor illnesses such as colds and earaches and were more likely to be irritable and tired.⁵⁹ UBP understood their organization was uniquely positioned to intervene, and

so they accepted. While all the decisions about the program ultimately rested with Antonetty, it was Goldman who did the bulk of the logistical work as coordinator. She liaised with state officials; found, contracted with, and supervised a food service provider; and oversaw distribution site monitoring, among other tasks.

Despite some daunting administrative difficulties, such as the fact that UBP's budget was not confirmed until eight days before the program was set to begin, they were able to feed over 150,000 children a day in all five boroughs, ultimately serving more than 6 million lunches in July and August of 1971. UBP was known as the sponsor, and it contracted with ARA Food Services (today Aramark) to be the vendor, producing food for all those children.⁶⁰ Then the lunches were distributed by volunteers at various sites—day cares, summer camps, churches, and block associations. Lunches tended to consist of cold milk, juice, a sandwich, and a fruit. UBP prided themselves on the quality of food, and indeed the organization received countless letters of praise. For example, Helen Marshall of the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center in Queens observed: "At first we thought the lunches would be unappetizing because they were free, but much to our delight they are delicious; the fruits and milk are always fresh and of high quality."⁶¹ Jack Thomas of the Boys' Club of New York noted that "most of our children are use[d] to having candy and soda for lunch, so I fully appreciate the opportunity of giving them a nourishing meal."⁶²

Site organizers also thanked UBP for the opportunity it gave them to help their community, to meet neighbors, and to enroll more young people in services. They also praised the workers who made and delivered lunches. Workers were all hired from the South Bronx, as stipulated in UBP's contract with ARA. An important part of summer meals was providing jobs for community people—men and women—who badly needed employment. The program did not always go smoothly. Because of serious delays at the federal level in notifying UBP of its budget (\$3.2 million, ultimately), the program began only during the second week of July.⁶³ In a memo explaining to sites what was causing delays, Antonetty wrote:

This program has never been done before in New York City. It certainly has never been attempted through a community organization. We hope you will work with us to iron out problems the first week or so. [We also insisted that ARA] hire community people to package and deliver the food. (They wanted to hire off-duty policemen and firemen who are experienced drivers.) We said no. We told them we'd rather help train our own community people for jobs, even if the deliveries are a little rough at the beginning. So please, work with us on this.⁶⁴

Summer meals did not benefit children alone; they provided jobs and job training. In order to prepare so many lunches, a production plant was set up to run three assembly lines, operating twenty-four hours a day, with more than 300 people working three eight-hour shifts to keep up with demand. Workers spread fortified margarine on buns, placed on them two slices of meat or cheese, and sent the sandwiches into automatic wrapping machines, packing ninety-six at a time into a carton. Downstairs, dock workers unloaded trailer truck after trailer truck of meat, cheese, margarine, and buns for assembly lines, as well as orange, apple, pineapple, and tomato juice; fresh

fruits such as bananas, oranges, plums, and apples; and milk. Truck drivers worked from five in the morning to one in the afternoon, earning \$4.00 an hour "and the gratitude and respect of everyone in the program," according to an informational pamphlet UBP prepared for a Senate Committee hearing later that year. Once the lunches reached the sites, parents and neighborhood volunteers distributed lunches to local children.⁶⁵ Bearing in mind that the minimum wage in New York State in 1971 was \$1.85, \$4.00 an hour meant that these jobs were valuable economically as well as socially.⁶⁶

Being able to provide food for the whole city's children and socially useful jobs for an underemployed population gave UBP enormous power both materially and symbolically. People wrote such comments as, "If there's anything we can ever do for you, let us know," "Please add us to your mailing list," and "There's a reason why people talk about UBP as the number one anti-poverty agency in this city."⁶⁷ Clearly, organizing around food was an important way of building local power and gaining citywide recognition in these years.

Women's power, community strength

To associate United Bronx Parents with feminist activism, or even to say that it was led by feminists, is to risk anachronism. The feminist discourses that became prevalent after the late 1970s were not available a decade earlier when UBP was first gaining momentum. Moreover, with the exception of the three lead women, the majority of the volunteers and employees would not have identified as political activists, much less feminists. Over the course of my interviews, it became clear to me that most who worked with UBP in its early years associated "political work" with city politicians and the electoral system. Grassroots organizing with UBP was about doing what needed to be done, rather than enacting any kind of theory or political agenda.

Despite the lack of members' identification with "political" labels, UBP was absolutely part of a long tradition of women taking the lead to care for their children where they perceived official institutions and traditionally male leadership were falling short. All of the women I interviewed expressed a sense that *of course* women have a special strength and power. Interestingly, it was never associated with a desire to exclude men or work separately from men. In part, this speaks to the position of Puerto Rican men in the South Bronx at the time. They did not enjoy the same level of privilege as their white counterparts: they faced racial discrimination from employers and the police and suffered from drastically high levels of unemployment. Women also suffered from unemployment (in fact, women had a higher unemployment rate than men: unemployment for male Puerto Ricans was 6.27 percent in South Bronx, whereas for women it was 10.7 percent),⁶⁸ but under the male breadwinner paradigm that prevailed, this was not generally considered as serious. Puerto Rican men may have derived some social power within their own communities because of the patriarchal tradition, but they were losing far more than they were benefitting from the system at large.

The women of UBP understood their own power, within their families and within their community, but they did not wish to call attention to it. Elba Cabrera described

her sister Evelina Antonetty as “a feminist before it became popular. She tried to impress upon women the importance of understanding themselves, applauding their female strengths, but at the same time expressing her belief that these strengths should be used to be supportive of their men.”⁶⁹ Laly Woodards was a Puerto Rican immigrant to New York who worked for decades as Evelina Antonetty’s secretary. She recounted a story that successfully captures the supportive attitude toward men within UBP:

Sometimes [Evelina] would come to my desk and sit down. One time a man came through the door—and she says to me “Laly, when men come through that door, it takes *every-thing* they have because men are very proud. They don’t want to beg. And when a man comes through that door, we have to help them. We have to give them what they need.” People were coming in for all kinds of things ... food, housing ... They needed help with welfare ... And I think that when she told me that, I remembered my father, and I remembered my brothers, and I said, God! It just clicked. So after that, men came through the door and I was gonna help. I always say I was blessed to work with a woman of such vision, of such wisdom.⁷⁰

Within this paradigm, men were not a distant “other”; they were fathers, brothers, fellow community members for whom the system was also not working.

The passage also exemplifies Antonetty’s remarkable power as a leader. In all six of my interviews, and from all of the evidence I have seen in the archives, it has been very difficult to find criticism of her, either personally or administratively. I have been forced to conclude that her charismatic leadership was responsible for much of UBP’s organizing momentum, as well as for establishing its moral imperative of community service.

It is also important that men contributed to United Bronx Parents, both as board members and as employees (though male employees were far fewer in number). Perhaps the most important male UBP worker was Luis Caban. Antonetty recruited Caban to UBP while he was working for a Montessori Head Start Program in the Bronx. Caban recalled that there were very few fathers engaged in parent associations: in five organizations at five different schools, there might have been two men. Still, he reflected, he never felt out of place at UBP and was somewhat familiar with women’s issues through his involvement with an on-campus student organization at New York University, which he was then attending. Caban served as Assistant Director of Education under Ellen Lurie. He was in his early twenties and recalled that he “loved working with her ... She was a very deep thinker, very supportive of my ideas.”⁷¹ Evidently, the kinds of men who were drawn to working with UBP had enough respect for the mission and the leadership that their masculinity was not threatened. That men could and would make valuable contributions is perhaps why Antonetty named the organization “United Bronx Parents” rather than “United Bronx Mothers.” Without denying the overwhelming burden that women carried for childrearing, it would be a mistake to think that the only way men ever contributed to child welfare was through breadwinning.

This was particularly true in a context of persistent unemployment. Involvement in UBP provided useful skills and occasionally, in the case of employees, a source

of income. As importantly, it offered a way of contributing not only to the nuclear unit of spouse and children but also to the much more meaningful "extended Puerto Rican family." The idea of the extended Puerto Rican family reoccurs as a theme in UBP literature, evoked, for instance, in grant applications for programs intended to keep young people out of trouble with the law. For the majority of immigrant and first-generation Puerto Rican families in the 1970s, the all-American nuclear family structure did not apply. Rather than two parents, a mother and father, being the primary caregivers of one or more children, it was frequently not only parents and offspring but also aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins sharing both home spaces and caregiving work, often serving as foster families.⁷²

UBP understood the way that these alternative family arrangements were pathologized both formally and informally. A good example of the formal rejection of the extended family was public housing regulation. Housing projects forbade occupancy of anyone other than the nuclear family—parents and children—and contravening this arrangement was punishable by immediate eviction. On an informal, discursive level, much was being said in the media about the "problem" of single-mother households. In the early 1970s, seven out of ten homes in the South Bronx were headed by one adult only, and 98 percent of these were headed by women. Many women ended up taking on leadership roles in their community by virtue of the struggle to survive, and there were far *more* mothers active than fathers. But it is also important to understand that, in the absence of biological fathers, men could still take on important caregiving roles, whether as extended family members, community workers, or both.⁷³

In the end, the question is not so much whether UBP was feminist, but what the organization has to teach those of us interested in a more equal world: for women and men, for children and adults, for racial and economic as well as gender justice. An intersectional approach was never a matter of philosophical choice for marginalized communities like this one. UBP undertook community organizing within spheres that were traditionally gendered female—feeding, education, child care—and thus traditionally made politically invisible, and provided for their community when the city government failed. We need to view the decision to evoke *parenthood* rather than *motherhood* as a testament to the holistic vision of the women at the helm of United Bronx Parents: either the whole community was helped, or nobody was.

Notes

- 1 Sonia Song-Ha Lee, *Building A Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Adina Back, "'Parent Power': Evelina López Antonetty, the United Bronx Parents, and the War on Poverty," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980*, ed. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).
- 2 Johanna L. del C. Fernandez, "Radicals in the Late 1960s: A History of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969–1974," PhD diss., Columbia University, 2004, 16–19.
- 3 Ibid., 20. See also Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review* 1, 2 (2004): 282.

- 4 See Jenny Carson and Nell Geiser, "'The Democratic Initiative': The Promises and Limitations of Industrial Unionism for New York City's Laundry Workers, 1930–1950," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of The Americas* 8, 4 (Winter 2011): 65–87.
- 5 Lorraine Montenegro, "Evelina (Titi) Lopez Antonetty," Lorraine Montenegro, private collection, Bronx, New York City. See also Lee, *Building A Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 153.
- 6 Back, "Parent Power," 188.
- 7 Ibid., 187; "The Story of U.S. Puerto Ricans—Part Three: Puerto Rican New York during the Inter-War Years," Centro—Center for Puerto Rican Studies 2010, <http://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/education/puerto-rican-studies/story-us-puerto-ricans-part-three>, last accessed July 29, 2015.
- 8 "Historical/Biographical Note—Guide to the Lillian López Papers," March 2003, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York City, <http://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/faids/lopezf.html>, accessed July 29, 2015.
- 9 Randi Storch, "'The Realities of the Situation': Revolutionary Discipline and Everyday Political Life in Chicago's Communist Party, 1928–1935," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 1, 3 (2004): 19–44.
- 10 Kathy Goldman, interview by author, July 3, 2015. Goldman, Antonetty's employee at United Bronx Parents, had also been involved with the Party in a slightly later period, but she does not recall the two of them ever speaking directly of it, although they worked extremely close for more than five years.
- 11 "Founder—United Bronx Parents," United Bronx Parents, 2014, http://019cdc7.netsolhost.com/ubpwp/?page_id=9, accessed April 9, 2014; Lorraine Montenegro, interview by author, March 4, 2013; Nélica Pérez. "Antonetty, Evelina López, (1922–1984)," in *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 48–49.
- 12 Back, "Parent Power," 189.
- 13 "Founder—United Bronx Parents." The Head Start Program began in the 1960s as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, and offered preschool classes, medical care, and nutritional and mental health services to children in low-income communities.
- 14 Back, "Parent Power," 190; Montenegro, "Evelina (Titi) Lopez Antonetty."
- 15 Kathy Goldman, "Winning Victories, Losing Power: Changes In School Food Programs, 1967–1981," Master's thesis, Queens College, CUNY, 1986, 15.
- 16 Statement of Herman Badillo, Establishing a Special Summer Lunch Program: Hearings Before the Select Subcommittee on Education, Eighty-ninth Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 9339, Washington D.C., March 9, 1966, 44; New York, March 18, 1966, Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1966.
- 17 It is unclear exactly what proportion of UBP members was African American. Sonia Lee simply states that UBP primarily organized Puerto Rican mothers, though the group included "a number of black mothers." Lee, *Building A Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 154. The demographics of the South Bronx circa 1970 were roughly 60 percent Puerto Rican, 30 percent Black and 10 percent white, and according to Kathy Goldman, a key UBP organizer and the coordinator of the summer meals program, the demographic makeup of the group roughly mirrored that of the neighborhood as a whole. Of course, many people would have identified as both Black and Puerto Rican. See "Preparation for School Decentralization: A Proposal to Organize and Train Parent and Community Leadership for Effective School Decentralization in the South Bronx," United Bronx Parents, n.d., Appendix 1, p. 21, Box 4, Folder 1, United Bronx Parents Papers (hereafter UBPP).

- 18 See Alfonso Narvaez, "The Young Lords Seize X-Ray Unit," *New York Times*, June 18, 1970, 17; Fernandez, "Radicals in the Late 1960s," 200.
- 19 "Origins of the Young Lords," in *The Young Lords: A Reader*, ed. Darrel Enck-Wanzer (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 33.
- 20 Evelina Antonetty, "¡Despierta Boricua! Padres Unidos Del Bronx," ... *Toward the Dream*, October, 1969, p. 4, Box 2, Folder 7, UBPP, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York City.
- 21 This is discussed in Back, "Parent Power," 193–4, and more extensively in Lee, *Building A Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 132–210.
- 22 "Built-In Discrimination Permeates School System," *NY Amsterdam News*, July 3, 1971, p. C9; Evelina Antonetty, "The Educational Needs of the Puerto Rican Child in New York City," Prepared for Presentation to the New York State Board of Regents, United Bronx Parents, March 25, 1971, Box 4, Folder 3, UBPP.
- 23 Evelina Antonetty and Ellen Lurie, "Parent Leadership Training Program Materials Kit #4," United Bronx Parents, 1967, n.p., Box 4, Folder 3, UBPP.
- 24 "Achievement Tests," United Bronx Parents, n.d., n.p., private collection, Kathy Goldman, New York City (hereafter KGC).
- 25 Kathy Goldman, interview by author, November 2, 2012.
- 26 "Do Black and Puerto Rican Students Get the Same Opportunities As White Students Get in the New York City Public Schools?" United Bronx Parents, n.d., 1, KGC.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 3, KGC.
- 28 "Chapter 4. United Bronx Parents," no author, n.d., p. 314, Box 2, Folder 14, UBPP.
- 29 This helps explain the low graduation rate, as young people were forced to drop out to work more hours. Michael Cappiello, "Can A White Middle-Class Teacher Effectively Teach Puerto Rican Students?" *The Puerto Rican Child in New York Schools*, May 15, 1975, Box 2, Folder 8, UBPP.
- 30 "Chapter 4. UBP," 365, UBPP; Frank Siaca, for Dr. Antonetty, "Continuity," *Puerto Rican Child in the American School*, Fall 1974, Box 2, Folder 8, UBPP.
- 31 Harold Cruse was a social critic and academic whose most influential work was *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. Milton Galamison, minister of Brooklyn's Siloam Presbyterian Church, led New York's school integration movement in 1964, initiating a boycott of more than 460,000 students. See Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Babette Edwards was a parent leader who advocated for school reform in Harlem. Kenneth Clark and Mamie Phipps Clark were Harlem-based psychologists whose work exposed internalized racism and the negative effects of segregation on Black children. The Clarks were the first African Americans to obtain their doctoral degrees in psychology from Columbia University. See "Featured Psychologists: Mamie Phipps Clark, PhD, and Kenneth Clark, PhD," American Psychological Association, 2016, <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/psychologists/clark.aspx>, last accessed January 28, 2016.
- 32 Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 50.
- 33 "Chapter 4. UBP," 365, 273, and 271, UBPP.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 285.
- 35 Goldman, "Winning Victories," 10.
- 36 Kathy Goldman, "Curriculum Vitae," n.d. but circa 1973, private collection, KGC.
- 37 Luis and Maria Caban, interview by author, October 21, 2013.

- 38 Kathy Goldman, email correspondence with author, February 3, 2014.
- 39 Letter to Evelina Antonetty from Ellen Lurie, October 27, 1971, Box 3, Ellen Lurie Papers (hereafter ELP), Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York City.
- 40 I have interviewed five other people about UBP aside from Kathy Goldman: Elba Cabrera, Antonetty's sister who worked in the office and on programming, and who took on the summer meals program when Goldman left the organization in 1972; Laly Woodards, Antonetty's secretary; Luis Caban, who worked under Lurie as Assistant Director of Education; Maria "Coqui" Caban, who held a variety of responsibilities in the UBP office including assisting Goldman with summer meals; and Lorraine Montenegro, Antonetty's daughter, then involved in helping with general operations and who eventually took over as UBP's executive director when Antonetty died in 1984.
- 41 Goldman, interview, November 2, 2012.
- 42 Goldman, interview by author, December 21, 2012.
- 43 Montenegro, "Evelina (Titi) Lopez Antonetty."
- 44 Goldman, interview, November 2, 2012.
- 45 Goldman, "Winning Victories," 11. For an example of one such report, see "Report of United Parents Associations' Lunchroom Study," May 1967, Box 1, Folder Lunch Oct 69, ELP, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York City.
- 46 Kathy Goldman, notes on the lunchroom at PS 25, March 20, 1969, n.p.; and Kathy Goldman, untitled notes, March 12, n.p., KGC.
- 47 Goldman, Notes on the lunchroom at PS 25, Feb. 21, 1969, n.p., KGC.
- 48 "Evelina López Antonetty, Biographical Information 1973—Executive Director," n.d. Box 2, Folder 7, UBPP.
- 49 Sara Slack, "Bronx School Lunchrooms Filthy," *New York Amsterdam News* (1962–1993), April 19, 1969, 1, 53, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News (1922–1993); Kathy Goldman, "Staff Meeting" notes, April 11, 1969, n.p., KGC; Teri Otero report, notes, n.d., KGC. The assemblyman who got sick was Seymour Posner. Congressman James Scheuer, who was also present, went on to demand an immediate federal investigation after what he saw in the Bronx. He wrote to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng that the program was "operating under grossly inadequate and unsanitary conditions" and reasoned that, because the school lunch program was funded principally by the federal government, the conditions under which children were fed was a matter of federal supervision. He told Lyng that his office had been in contact with the Bureau of School Lunches, a division of the City's Board of Education, but it had shown no concern nor taken any remedial action. It seems that not much came from the federal investigation, perhaps because the local school board, not the federal government, had final authority over the school lunch program, but Scheuer stuck with the issue in years to come. He continued to advocate for improvements to the program, introducing in 1981 an amendment to the School Lunch Act that would have required participating schools to improve the quality of school lunches and establish their own nutrition councils to oversee improvements. Perhaps the awful experience at PS 25 remained in Scheuer's memory over the years. See "Congressman Scheuer Asks Bronx Lunch Program Probe," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 24, 1969, 36; Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 125.
- 50 "Chapter 4. UBP," 356, UBPP.

- 51 Sara Slack, "Bronx School Lunchrooms Filthy," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 19, 1969, 1, 53.
- 52 "To All Elected Officials: Luncheon Raincheck," United Bronx Parents, n.d., in Appendix B, Goldman, "Winning Victories."
- 53 "An Invitation to a School Lunch the Way It Should Be!" United Bronx Parents, poster, KGC.
- 54 "Dear Friend," letter to community from Evelina Antonetty, October 8, 1969, Box 1, Folder Lunch Oct 69, ELP.
- 55 Goldman, "Winning Victories," 22.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 57 Stephen Macdonald, "New York: The School Lunch Syndrome," *Wall St. Journal*, November 20, 1969, 20.
- 58 Summer Food Project and the Summer Food Committee of the Hunger Task Force, "Report on Monitoring the 1976 Summer Food Service Program for Children," May 1976–October 1976 (New York: Community Council of Greater New York, 1976), 16; and Public Law 90–302, 90th Congress, HR 15398, May 8, 1968, Box 271, Folder 1, Bella Abzug Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.
- 59 Statement of Elizabeth Vernon, Agency for Child Development, and Liz Robbins, Committee on Public Welfare, 475–6, 483–4, Hearings Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, Part 13 Funds: Summer Lunch–Pre-School Feeding, Washington, DC, April 7; June 21, 1972.
- 60 ARA was the vendor for the first two years. Subsequently there were multiple sponsors and multiple vendors. The program continues to run today, although the Board of Education finally assumed responsibility for sponsorship in 1978.
- 61 "Dearest Friends," from Helen Marshall, Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center, August 10, 1971, Box 1, Folder 8, UBPP.
- 62 "Dear Sir," from Jack Thomas, Intermediate Director of the Boys' Club of New York, August 3, 1971, Box 1, Folder 8, UBPP.
- 63 "Buen-Apetito: The Story of the United Bronx Parents," 11, Hearings Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, Part 13 Funds: Summer Lunch—Pre-School Feeding, Washington, DC, April 17, 1972.
- 64 Memo, "To All Groups Participating in the Summer Lunch Program," from Evelina Antonetty, July 1, 1971, Box 1, Folder 8, UBPP.
- 65 "Buen-Apetito," 14–16; quotation on 15.
- 66 "History of the Hourly Minimum Wage," New York State Department of Labor, http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/minimum_wage.asp, accessed April 15, 2014.
- 67 Letter to Evelina Antonetty from Richard L Detrich, Mott Haven Reformed Church, August 17, 1971, Box 1, Folder 8, UBPP; Letter to UBP from Gloria Archer, Education Specialist, Stuyford Action Council Inc., Brooklyn, September 28, 1971; and letter to Kathy Goldman from Allen Hodge, President of Upper West Side Independent Youth Council, September 3, 1971, both KGC.
- 68 "Chapter 4. United Bronx Parents," no author, n.d., Box 2, Folder 14, 319, UBPP.
- 69 Elba Cabrera, "Evelina López Antonetty," June 18, 1977, Ella Cabrera, Box 2, Folder 7, UBPP.

- 70 Interview with Laly Woodards, October 22, 2013, Bronx, New York.
- 71 Luis Caban, interview by author, October 21, 2013.
- 72 "Juvenile Court Diversion Proposal," United Bronx Parents, August 6, 1975, 6, Box 4, Folder 1, UBPP.
- 73 "Juvenile Court Diversion Proposal," 2-3, UBPP.