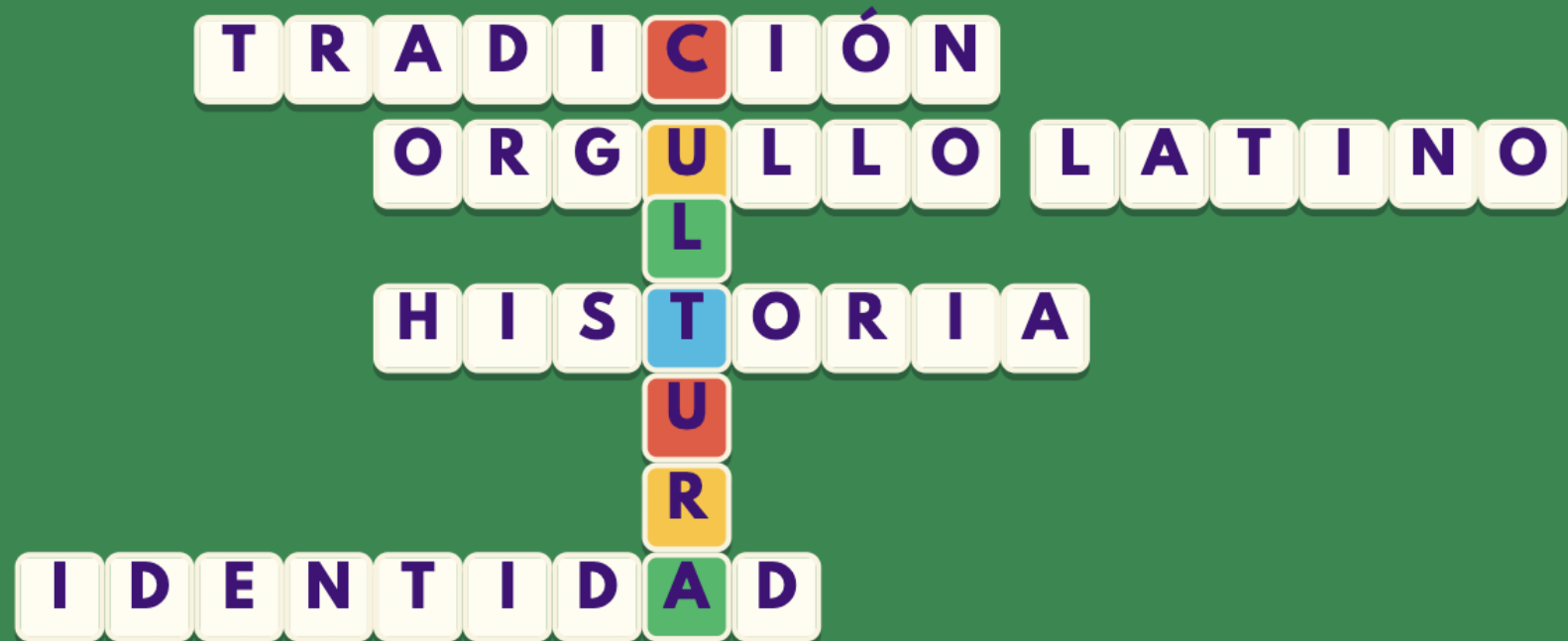




Aprendemos nuestra historia. Compartimos nuestras historias. Celebramos nuestra cultura.

We learn our history. We share our stories. We celebrate our culture.

José “Cha Cha” Jiménez: Making a Difference in Chicago



Discover how José “Cha Cha” Jiménez brought people together to support Chicago families—and how we can make a difference in our own neighborhoods.

José “Cha Cha” Jiménez was a Puerto Rican community leader in Chicago. He worked to help families have safe and affordable homes, good schools, and access to health care.

During the 1960s, Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood was changing. Many Puerto Rican families and other residents were being forced to leave as the neighborhood became more expensive. Moving meant leaving behind friends, neighbors, and familiar places.

Before he became an activist, he was arrested. Cha Cha also saw how language barriers could make difficult situations even harder. While in jail, he met Spanish-speaking immigrants who could not communicate with the guards in English. He helped by interpreting so they could understand one another.

In 1968, Cha Cha helped change the Young Lords from a street gang into an organization that worked for people’s rights. Members organized protests and spoke up about their community’s needs. They wanted families to have a voice in decisions about their neighborhood.

The Young Lords also organized free breakfasts for children, child care, and health services. These programs helped families meet everyday needs.

Cha Cha understood that **organizing can be very important**. Organizing means bringing people together to work toward a shared goal. He worked with Fred Hampton and members of the Black Panther Party and the Young Patriots in the Rainbow Coalition. People from different backgrounds joined together to address problems affecting their communities.

Cha Cha passed away last year, on January 10, 2025, but his legacy lives on. A **legacy** is the lasting influence someone leaves behind. His story reminds us that we can all make a difference in our neighborhoods by listening, helping others, and working together.

Words to Know

- **Community:** People who share a place or have something in common.
- **Organize:** Bring people together to work toward a goal.
- **Interpret:** Help people who speak different languages understand one another.

- **Coalition:** Groups working together toward a shared goal.
- **Legacy:** The lasting influence of someone's life and actions.

Reading Comprehension

Look back at the reading to help you answer.

1. In which Chicago neighborhood did Cha Cha organize?
2. Why were many families having to leave their neighborhood?
3. How did the Young Lords change in 1968?
4. What brought the groups in the Rainbow Coalition together?

Think and Reflect

There may be more than one thoughtful answer.

1. How might a child feel about having to leave their neighborhood?
2. How could interpreting help someone feel heard and understood?
3. Why can organizing with other people help a community?
4. What is one way you could work with others to make a difference in your neighborhood?

Note: This is a great starting point for learning more about José “Cha Cha” Jiménez, his work, and the ways he strengthened his community. Keep reading to discover more about Latino history and its lasting influence!



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