"The Law Has a Bad Opinion of Me":
Policing and Politics in Twentieth-Century Black Chicago

By

Simon Balto

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(History)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

Date of final oral examination: 5/4/2015

Dissertation committee members:

Brenda Gayle Plummer, Professor, History & Afro-American Studies
William P. Jones, Professor, History
James H. Sweet, Professor, History
Christina Greene, Associate Professor, Afro-American Studies
Heather Ann Thompson, Professor, History & Afro-American Studies
(University of Michigan)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about policing in Chicago's black community, and black Chicagoans' relationships with the police, from 1919 through the mid-1970s. Its central explorations revolve around black communities' dual experiences of being both under-protected and over-policed by the Chicago Police Department (CPD). On the one hand, it shows the degree to which the CPD and urban policymakers corralled criminal activity into black communities at various junctures, withheld police protection at others in order to extract political or economic favors, and consistently failed to respond effectively to black demands for protection from vice, crime, and white racist violence.

On the other hand, it documents the many ways that racial suspicion contoured police actions toward black Chicagoans as early as the 1910s, and the many resulting abuses and harassments that followed. In so doing, it argues that the extreme racial disparities witnessed in the modern mass incarceration crisis originate not in the post-Civil Rights Wars on Crime and Drugs, as many scholars and citizens have assumes, but in local policing practices and traditions that have been extant and growing for a century. Racial disproportion in arrests (from which convictions and incarceration stem) is a very old tradition in Chicago, and was a feature of the city's law enforcement culture that nonpartisan observers began acknowledging a hundred years ago. Even when black people were not being arrested, they were frequently subject to an intensifying surveillance apparatus, and to mechanisms of control such as stop-and-frisk, harassment, and torture. To be sure, when the federal government unleashed the drug and crime wars beginning in the mid-1960s, they exacerbated the disparate ways that black people would be freighted with the weight of the criminal justice system. But those wars did not *create* such disparities, and their foundational logics when it came to treating black communities with

suspicion and force were, at the wars' inceptions, already heavily engrained in law enforcement cultures, both locally and across the country.

Those dual experiences – over-policed, under-protected – have sat at the heart of police-community dynamics for roughly a century. They continue to pose intense challenges for urban communities to this day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The roads we travel are funny sometimes. I took one to Madison in September of 2008 with an eye on a History Ph.D. How exactly I arrived at that decision remains something of a mystery to me. I'm fairly certain that I had no idea then what I was going to do with one if I eventually earned it, or what the process of working toward one would entail exactly. The first year taught me a hell of a lot of lessons about the latter question. I spent seminar after paper-writing session feeling long on ideas and short on knowledge, a feeling something like swimming out of depth. I thought – often – that I'd maybe made a mistake. I applied to the School of Education, thinking that maybe training to be a high school teacher was a pursuit better tailored to my capacities and aspirations.

It was other people's beliefs in my capabilities – beliefs that outpaced my own self-estimations – that made me stay. The most important people in this respect during that first year were my advisor, Brenda Gayle Plummer, Christina Greene, and the late Camille Guerin-Gonzalez. All three of them approached and interacted with my ideas in ways that bolstered my own confidence in them. Camille's enthusiasm was particularly important in helping me gather my legs underneath me. At the end of our Spring semester seminar on U.S. Social Movements, she gifted to me a copy of Nichelle Tramble's *The Dying Ground* – a novel set in crack-era Oakland that Camille thought I'd like, based upon various conversations we'd had about racism, urbanism, and public policy. The gift, and the interest in my ideas that I took it to represent, meant more to me than Camille probably knew. I studied that book like a treasure map; I cherish it all the more since her passing.

Gayle and Christina's hands and minds are all over this project, as are those of Will Jones, Jim Sweet, and the University of Michigan's Heather Ann Thompson, the five of whom

comprise my dissertation committee. As my advisor, Gayle is largely responsible for having softly steered me toward this subject matter. I had very amorphous notions of what sort of project I wanted to do when we first broached the "what do you want to do for a Masters thesis/dissertation?" conversation. I landed on this topic after several collaborative diggings through my head in an effort to answer that question. She has also been a tireless advocate in the nuts-and-bolts work of reference writing and editing, and an invaluable person with whom to kick around ideas. Christina has been the most relentless editor of my writing since I arrived at grad school, in all the best senses of the word "relentless." "Ink is love," she once told me after handing back a chapter that was more her ink than mine. I don't know that I heard truer words in my seven years of grad school. Will has been an invaluable mentor and advocate throughout my time at Madison, and his ability to push me intellectually in useful directions is one of the primary reasons that this dissertation's important contributions made it to the foreground, rather than being left to drown in the back. As one of the most important scholarly voices in the field of carceral studies right now, Heather has consistently wowed me with her ability to ask exactly the right questions and push me in exactly the right ways. Heather has a public speaking schedule that would exhaust an average person just to look at. Piled on top of her obligations to teaching, scholarship, and family and friends, it would have been more than understandable had she declined my request to serve as outside reader. She didn't, and I'm forever grateful. The giving of her time and her enthusiasm about this project are generosities of epic proportions. In the five years that I've known him, meanwhile, Jim has proven to be one of the most kindred spirits and inspiring minds that I've enjoyed spending time with during my career. Both by example and through direction, he has consistently taught me how to look at the world from different angles, to both trust and mistrust evidence and conclusions, and to defend (respectfully, but firmly) my

ideas. He has also been an important model to me of the importance of living a life committed to academic pursuits, but that is not bounded by those pursuits.

In addition to these mentors, my growth as a scholar is a testament also to the guidance, teaching, and prodding of a great deal of other people in both the History and Afro-American Studies Departments at UW-Madison. Steve Kantrowitz has been an important teacher and mentor, pushing often, asking questions frequently, and supporting always. He is also a friend, and a valued one, at that. In addition to seminars with Steve, Gayle, Christina, Camille, Will, and Jim, I learned a great deal – both factually and methodologically – in seminars with Neil Kodesh, John Hall, Jane Collins (Sociology), and Francisco Scarano. I also twice worked as a Teaching Assistant for Franco, and learned a great deal both times. The same may be said for my semester TAing in Afro-American Studies with Christy Clark-Pujara, with whom I had valuable conversations about pedagogy and history. Karl Shoemaker, who pulls double duty as an historian and legal expert, was kind enough to offer advice on questions about affidavits and archives that arose while I was in Chicago and he was overseas. Since we reconvened in Madison, he's also been generous with invitations to UW sporting events, and a good friend to turn to when I've wanted to have a beer and talk about any number of things, professionally related or not. David McDonald, meanwhile, has consistently led by example in reminding me that historians should be good storytellers. No one tells a better story than David, and the department is a better place for it. Florencia Mallon, Giuliana Chamedes, and Sean Dinces all offered valuable insights at the mock job talk I gave at UW that ultimately landed me a job at Ball State; their willingness to carve out time to attend and interrogate is a testament to the department's care in the success of their students.

Leslie Abadie, who is UW History's Graduate Program Coordinator, deserves every bit of heraldry imaginable, and then some. She is constantly in the trenches with grad students, advocating for them, keeping their career paths in order, and helping them maintain sanity. I'm no exception. Marlina Polk McGiveron and Jana Valeo also do critical work in holding grad students' worlds together. Before them, Carrie McCann and Jane Williams did the same. I'm grateful to all of them.

I'm thankful also to a raft of scholars beyond the bounds of UW, for the variety and scale of encouragement that they've shown me over the years as I undertook this project and presented it in various formats. This cohort includes (but is not limited to) Charles McKinney, Tim Tyson, Martha Biondi, Hasan Jeffries, Yohuru Williams, Rob Widell, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Khalil Muhammad. A very special thank you is reserved for Erik Gellman, who was my earliest mentor while I dabbled in graduate coursework at Roosevelt University in Chicago, and who has remained a sometimes giver-of-advice and, more importantly, a consistent and treasured friend.

Tim Tyson, jesting in the acknowledgements to his book *Blood Done Sign My Name*, once wrote that Charles Hughes was "a dangerous man who must be stopped." If I may amend Tim's passage, it would only be to say that Charles Hughes is a dangerous man that no force will ever stop. His boundless generosity as a mentor and his unbridled enthusiasm about the role I might play in the academy were among the greatest gifts I received during my time at UW. I have sought his council often, and much of what I've accomplished is in part due to his advice and encouragement. After Ari, Rudie, the cats, and maybe some members of his immediate family, I suspect I may be in line for the presidency of his fan club.

Other colleagues in the UW History Department were vital crutches throughout this journey. Faron Levesque has been a treasured friend since very early in grad school. She has one

of the sharpest minds I've ever come across, and arguably the biggest heart. We taught each other many things over these years, even if many of the lessons were forgotten the next morning. Brian Hamilton and Jesse Gant pushed me toward completion of this project via our writing group, which, while tacitly sponsored by High Life, never found a formal name. An earlier writing group, the Weary Writing Collective, also sharpened my thoughts and writing, and buoyed my spirits. Members included the three miscreants mentioned above, as well as Leah Webb-Halpern and Jackie Cooney. Jackie left us for a better life in Canada some time ago, but the friendship of all these folks is something that I'll hold closely forever.

This project would literally have been nothing but a mass of unsubstantiated thoughts, were it not for the work and help of archivists and librarians around and beyond Chicago. A tremendous debt of gratitude is owed to staff members at the University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center, the Chicago History Museum Research Center, the University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections section, the Newberry Library, the Vivian Harsh Collection at the Woodson Branch of the Chicago Public Library (CPL), the Municipal Reference Collection at the CPL's Washington Branch, and the People's Law Office. Invaluable, too, were Susan Klonsky, Amanda Klonsky, and Martha Biondi's willingness to plug me into networks in Chicago that I may not have been able to access, as were the conversations I had with Timuel Black and Ralph Metcalfe, Jr. about Chicago, black history, and their own personal stories.

This work was funded by a variety of sources, and I am indebted to them all. Thank you to the History and Afro-American Studies Departments at the University of Wisconsin, and to its Graduate School. Thanks also to the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, and the Doris G. Quinn Foundation, as well as to Roger and Anne Blattberg, who

established the Sandoway Fellowship at UW, and to the E. David Cronon Fund for History at UW.

Lastly, the people closest to me in my life have buoyed me along throughout this journey. Leah Schubert has been an unflagging supporter of my dreams and of my work, and a selfless partner when it comes to the time and energy I've had to pour into this project. She's also been an ace companion for helping me get my head out of the work and into less labor-intensive pursuits. I cannot thank her enough. The friends who have supported me during this long road, and have resisted the urge to ask when I was going to finish it, are too numerous to mention, but thank you, all. My dad's partner, Karen Sherman, does many things for our family, and offering consistent solidarity about the world of academia is one of them. My brother and his family, and our extended family beyond, have been vital in shaping me into the person I am.

My mother and father instilled in me at an early age a desire to dissect the world and to better understand its power structures. They gave me James Baldwin and Howard Zinn. They encouraged me to analyze, rather than accept, and to to question all that was around me. Ma passed when I was eighteen. She loved to read more than anyone I've ever known, and it saddens me that she will never get to read this dissertation, because, warts and all, she would've wanted to. But I'm bolstered by the knowledge that she'd be proud, and by the fact that my dad's still here stirring up enough trouble for the both of them. This is dedicated to them.

Introduction

"The Law Has a Bad Opinion of Me"

*

"Now, I will tell you about the Law," said my Simple Minded Friend. "I am a-scared of the Law! And I do not like the Law!"

"Why?" I asked.

"Because the Law beats my head," said Simple. "Also because the Law will give a white man one year, and give me ten."

"But if it was not for the Law," I said, "You would not have any protection."

"Protection?" yelled Simple. "The Law always protects a white man. But if I holler for the Law, the Law says, 'What do you want, Negro?' Only them polices do not say, Negro."

"You have a bad opinion of the Law," I said.

"The Law has a bad opinion of me," said Simple. "The Law thinks all Negroes are in the criminal class. The Law will stop me on the street and shake me down—me, a working man—as quick as they will any old weed-headed hustler or two-bit rounder. I do not like polices."

"You must be talking about the way-down-home-in-Dixie Law," I said, "not up North."

"I am talking about the Law all over America," said Simple, "North or South. In so far as I am concerned, a police is no good."

"You certainly have no respect for the Law," I said.

"The Law has no respect for me, you mean," said Simple. "I believe in respect where respect is due. Now take a cracker down South or an Irishman up North—as soon as he puts on a star, he wants to try out his billy-club on some Negro's head. I tell you polices are no good! If they was, they wouldn't be polices."

"Listen," I said, "you are generalizing too much. Not all cops are bad. There are some decent police."

"You can count them on the fingers of your glove," said Simple. "They are in the minorality."

"You mean minority."

"That's it," said Simple.

"But what about the colored cops?" I asked. "Not all cops are white."

"Man!" said Simple, "The colored cops are colored—so they can't bully nobody but me! You know colored cops ain't gonna hit no white man! So when the black Law gets a chance to hit somebody, they have to hit me twice! Colored cops is worse than white. A black law is terrible!"

"I do not agree with you," I said. "There ought to be more colored cops."

"You can add, can't you?" asked Simple.

"Sure," I said.

"Then use your mathematics," said Simple. "A black Law cannot lock up a white man—and he better not try! So when a colored cop does do some arresting, he has to lock up two or three of me to fill his quota—otherwise he would never get promoted."

[...]

"You look at everything in terms of black and white," I said, "Which is bad."

"So does the law," said Simple. "White is right—and black ain't—to them." [1]

---

[1] Langston Hughes, "Simple and the Law," *Chicago Defender*, January 13, 1945. Simple's sweeping complaints about northern policing weren't the first time Hughes had used his typewriter to comment on the police and their role in the community. Several years earlier, in 1941, he'd published an essay in the literary magazine *Common Ground* called "What the Negro Wants," in which he listed "a fair deal before the law" (by which he meant courts, juries, and police) as one of the seven prime concerns for black Americans. Without that sort of fair deal, Hughes wrote, "the law imposes upon us—and seldom with majesty." Writing for the *New Republic* about deplorable ghetto conditions in the aftermath of the 1943 Harlem riot, Hughes recalled a server at a barbeque joint commenting that "Somebody ought to call the cops" on a half-dozen boys arguing in the shop, before he parenthetically reflected "(As though the cops could solve the problems of poverty and delinquency.)" See Langston Hughes, "What the Negro Wants," *Common Ground*, September 1941: 52-54; Langston Hughes, "Down Under in Harlem," *The New Republic*, March 27, 1944: 404-405.

Langston Hughes wrote in haste, bent over a typewriter in a Harlem apartment in the gloaming of 1944 or the dawning of 1945. Set to embark on a four-month-long nationwide speaking tour, he churned out columns over the early winter to meet his publishing obligations. By this point in his career, Hughes had finally begun to taste his first bites of financial success, after two long decades laboring as a poet, novelist, and essayist.[2] He had emerged as one of the premier literary voices in African America, his work appearing in magazines and newspapers across the country, including a recurring stint for the venerable *Chicago Defender.* In his "Here to Yonder" column for the paper, Hughes used the above character Simple (full name, Jesse B. Semple) and others like him to ruminate on everything from divorce to love, structural racism to perplexing folkways, northern winters to southern violence, white people's use of *nigger* to black people's use of *motherfucker*. Simple was a black everyman – a voice of the proverbial "folk" whose views and expressions often found no home in the world of respected letters. His existence, in some respects, was itself subversive – an expression of black working-class fears and frustrations in a social context with little interest in either. While he is most remembered for his poetry and novels, it was through Simple that Hughes would lodge some of his most strident critiques of the failed promise of America, articulating American racism as, in literary scholar Joseph McLaren's words, "a fracture of both the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."[3]

"Simple and the Law," as the above story was titled, traces one such fracture, and this project follows in kind. For generations, the police have been representatives of a certain (and

---

[2] Success, and Hughes' increasing politicization, also generated suspicion, bending him into a prominent target of political condemnation and government repression. "When poems stop talking about the moon and begin to mention poverty, trade unions, color lines, and colonies, somebody tells the police," as he would later reflect upon these HUAC-addled years. See Langston Hughes, "My Adventures as a Social Poet," *Phylon* 8:3 (Third Quarter, 1947): 205-212.

[3] Joseph McLaren, *Langston Hughes: Folk Dramatist in the Protest Tradition, 1921-1943* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1997), 169.

desirable) kind of social order for many Americans – as protectors of home and family, and arbiters of the real and imagined lines between right and wrong. This was true in the days of "Officer Friendly," when police departments tried to paint officers as, above all else, compassionate friends to children and the rest of the community. It remains true today; a recent poll showed the police to be one of the three institutions that Americans trust most – outpacing churches and schools, bettered only by the military and small business.[4]

But like many things in America, both historically and contemporaneously, such perceptions of the police have shifted depending upon one's vantage point and social position, and have been deeply contoured by the nation's unreconciled racial divisions. The fact that the relationships between black communities and the police departments around them are, in modern America, *fraught*, could hardly be called a controversial statement. At the end of 2013, more than 2.2 million citizens sat in prison or jail, with another 4.7 million under some other form of correctional control (primarily probation or parole).[5] Of those, an extraordinary number were black. Black/white incarceration disparities presently sit at roughly 5.6:1 nationally, and climb near or above 10:1 in many individual states. (In the interest of this study of Chicago, present disparities in Illinois are roughly 9:1.)[6] Black men have been hit especially hard by this phenomenon; as historian Heather Ann Thompson has noted, "By the middle of 2006 one in fifteen black men over the age of eighteen were behind bars as were one in nine black men aged twenty to thirty-four."[7] And what was true then is true now; in the intervening nine years, those statistics have been characterized by nothing so much as a stubborn durability. The divide

---

[4] Gallup Poll, "Confidence in Institutions," June 2014, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx [Last Accessed: January 29, 2015]
[5] United States Department of Justice: Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Correctional Populations in the United States, 2013," http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus13.pdf [Last Accessed: January 26, 2015]
[6] The Sentencing Project, "Racial Disparity: Corrections Population Statistics," http://www.sentencingproject.org/map/map.cfm#map [Last Accessed: January 26, 2015]
[7] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation, in Postwar American History, *Journal of American History* 97:3 (December 2010): 703-734 (703).

between the demography of the country and the reality of our criminal justice system is, in fact, so yawning, that the racialized nature of this "mass incarceration" has in common parlance assumed the (perhaps problematic) moniker of "the New Jim Crow." And the point of departure for almost every individual story behind those astonishing statistics is some or another encounter with police.

This project argues that the origin stories of these contemporary racial disparities are rooted not in the post-Civil Rights Wars on Crime and Drugs, but in local policing practices and traditions that have been extant and growing for a century. It documents the degree to which black people, ever since they began migrating in substantial numbers to northern cities like Chicago, have been subject to suspicion from the police because of the color of their skin. Harassment and abuse have followed. Racial disproportion in arrests (where conviction and incarceration begin) is a very old tradition in places like Chicago, and was a feature of the city's law enforcement culture that was widely acknowledged by nonpartisan observers as early as 1920. From those early years, and growing increasingly worse over time, those disproportions pounded black Chicagoans with unique acuity. By 1930, black people were arrested at rates more than three-and-a-half times their representation in the city's population. By the late 1950s, they were more than eighty percent of those arrested on narcotics and gambling charges, in dramatic disproportion to their numbers in the general population. When they were not being arrested, they were subject to intensive surveillance, and to mechanisms of control such as stop-and-frisk (birthed in Prohibition) and police torture (first widely declaimed in the 1920s). To be sure, when the federal government unleashed the drug and crime wars beginning in the mid-1960s, they exacerbated the extreme disparities by which black people would be battered by law enforcement apparatuses. But those wars did not *create* those disparities, and their foundational logics when it

came to treating black communities differently than white ones were already heavily ingrained in law enforcement culture both locally and across the nation. In other words, while this dissertation does not claim to explain mass incarceration *write large* as the gargantuan project that it is, it does trace the evolution of the racial disproportions that are part of mass incarceration's essence.

Both in contemporary and historical contexts, the irony (and frequent tragedy) of those disproportions, surveillances, and heavy-handedness is that they have never made black communities safer spaces. Today, as sixty years ago, drug arrests pile up year after year in places like Chicago, but the supply doesn't stop. While hundreds of thousands of black citizens are stopped on the street every year simply for seeming "suspicious," guns proliferate, and many of those same people live under a constant, throbbing fear. Anti-gang initiatives by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) over the past fifty years have had the effect not of curbing gang violence, but of fracturing and scattering it, making it more unpredictable. Arrests for violations of public order (drunkenness, loitering, disorderly conduct, etc.), meanwhile, have done virtually nothing to improve the overall quality of life for people living in the neighborhoods where these arrests are happening. (Of course, they certainly have done nothing to improve the quality of life of the arrested.) In Oakland, California, where, like Chicago, the history of police-community conflict burns brightly, gang-member-turned-sociologist Victor Rios remembers growing up in the early 1990s and constantly seeing police around only "selectively, to arrest my family and friends for petty acts but not to arrest the main drug dealers and victimizers who continued to prey on my community."[8] The sum of the parts – of living under intense surveillance while also living in fear – has been central to the experience of millions of people, saddled with the sense of being at once *overpoliced* and *underprotected*.

[8] Victor M. Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), xiii.

Few have captured that duality better, whether in pieces or composites, than some of America's finest contemporary black artists and writers. Here is writer Hilton Als calling his hometown "my New York of cops and very little safety."[9] There is Atlanta hip-hop artist Killer Mike on the black experience under the War on Drugs: "They declared the War on Drugs, like a War on Terror, but what it really did was let the police terrorize whoever. But mostly black boys, but they would call us 'niggers,' and lay us on our belly while their fingers on their triggers."[10] Here is Chicago rapper Chance the Rapper screaming desertion: "They murking kids; they murder kids here; why you think they don't talk about it? They deserted us here….No love for the opposition, specifically a cop position. 'Cause they've never been in our position."[11] There is the journalist and writer Melissa Harris-Perry, on the national airwaves of MSNBC, couching comments about the killing of black men by police alongside a reading from the infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision – the decision that effectively ruled against the very possibility of black citizenship, Chief Justice Roger Taney famously saying that a black man had "no rights which the white man was bound to respect."[12]

The comments of these writers and artists have deep ancestry. Watching the trajectory of this story before and since 1945, "Simple and the Law" appears as both reflection and auguration, Langston Hughes looking not just backward and around him, but forward as well – a certain prescience contouring the things his mind's eye saw. The elements buried in the conversation between Simple and the story's anonymous narrator covered a range of issues that had swirled through the lives of many black folks for the entirety of Hughes' adulthood:

---

[9] Hilton Als, *White Girls* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2014), 139.
[10] Killer Mike, "Reagan," *R.A.P. Music*, Williams Street, 2012, MP3.
[11] Chance the Rapper, "Pusha Man/Paranoia," *Acid Rap*, self-released, 2013, MP3.
[12] Melissa Herris-Perry, "No Rights Which the White Man Was Bound to Respect," MSNBC, August 16, 2014, http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/no-rights-which-the-white-man-was-bound-respect [Last Accessed: February 4, 2015]

irrevocable fear of the police ("I am a-scared of the law"); failures of protection ("The Law always protects a white man. But if I holler for the law, the Law says, 'What do you want, Negro?...'"); racial slurs ("…Only them polices do not say, Negro"); racial condemnation ("The Law thinks all Negroes are in the criminal class"); harassment ("The Law will stop me on the street and shake me down…as quick as they will any old weed-headed hustler); brutality ("the Law beats my head"). Similar issues would swirl around his descendants.

He was not alone. Melissa Harris-Perry, knowingly or not, wasn't the first to conjure the ghost of Dred Scott to describe the derogation of black rights vis-à-vis the police; the Chicago-based *Crusader*, in fact, had done precisely the same thing in 1958, writing that, "In the eyes of the police, no Negro has any rights that a policeman is bound to respect."[13] Seventy-seven-year-old Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of the National Council of Negro Women, penned an opinion piece in the *Defender* in 1952 that blasted "swaggering bullies clothed with law enforcement power," who harassed and abused law-abiding black urbanites.[14] James Baldwin often implanted within his work the indelible image of "the ever-present policemen, wary on the street corners"—abusive, menacing, unyielding.[15] "The Law is meant to be my servant and not my master, still less my torturer and murderer," he once wrote in *The Nation*, weighing what his relationship to the police was and what it should be. But he saw his masters and torturers everywhere. Black neighborhoods to him were "occupied territory."[16] Black Arts poet Leroi Jones (later, Amiri Baraka) had similar fever visions: "you can walk along 125th Street any evening and meet about one hundred uniformed policemen, who are there, some will tell you, to

---

[13] *Chicago Crusader*, March 22, 1958.
[14] Mary McLeod Bethune, "Toughs Have No Place on Public Payrolls; We Must Drive Them Off," *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1952.
[15] James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983 [1955]), 57-58. The police were a recurrent presence in both Baldwin's fiction and non-fiction. Among others, see his characterizations of them in *Another Country*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, *No Name in the Street*, and so on.
[16] James Baldwin, "A Report from Occupied Territory," *The Nation*, July 11, 1966.

protect the people from themselves."[17] Black freedom activist Jack O'Dell in 1965: "the county courthouses, the city halls, sheriffs' offices and the police stations…are symbols of racist tyranny to black people."[18]

These idioms were widely interpretable across black America, whether in 1965 or 1945, and particularly in the dense metropolises of Harlem and the South Side of Chicago. Hundreds of thousands of black people for whom Simple purportedly spoke, for instance, would have understood his summation that, for police, "White is right—and black ain't." In Chicago, the frustrations and challenges he described had been emergent for more than a generation by the end of World War II, stretching back to the moments when the city had begun to absorb a sizeable black population and confine it to particular spaces within the urban geography. While emerging mostly along parallel lines before entangling – perhaps irretrievably – in the 1940s and 1950s, those themes of overpolicing (surveillance, harassment, brutality) and underprotection (neglectful responses to vice and violence) shaped this history from very early on. Even in the 1910s and 1920s, thousands of black residents complained of overaggressive and brutal treatment by the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Others lamented (to put it mildly) the fact that the police seemed to not care about crime and vice in black neighborhoods, still less about anti-black terrorism and violence. With differences in degree and in content, in other words, today's stories echo yesterday's in very real ways.

What follows is a work of history that tries to flesh out, bundle together, and make sense of those threads – of what lay beneath the angry, agonized writings of Baldwin and Baraka and O'Dell and others, and by extension, what also lies beneath the words of Als and Harris-Perry

---

[17] LeRoi Jones, *Home: Social Essays* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1966 [1961]), 92.
[18] Jack O'Dell, "The Threshold of a New Reconstruction," *Freedomways* 5, no. 4 (Fall 1965), in *Climbin' Jacob's Ladder: The Black Freedom Movement Writings of Jack O'Dell* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), Nikhil Pal Singh, ed., 120.

and Killer Mike and Chance. When he wrote in 1945, America and (to a lesser extent) Harlem were Langston Hughes' muses; America and (to a greater extent) Chicago are mine. In the following pages, I trace a history of policing in black Chicago, and of the relationships between the police and the black community, from one awful summer in 1919 thru the middle of the 1970s. While change and evolution deeply contour this history throughout, with rough consistency, the ways that policing was envisioned and executed in black neighborhoods did little to better the condition of black communities in Chicago. Instead, policing practices, abuses, and neglects were central drivers of black alienation from the state and a crucial part of the broader socioeconomic system that marginalized and disadvantaged black communities relative to the broader population. City officials recurrently avoided meaningful attempts to ameliorate the city's deep racial and socioeconomic inequalities. Instead, they chose variously to contain and allow for criminal activity within black neighborhoods in ways that worsened the quality of life and infrastructural integrity of those communities, and at other times to deploy the police as the city's enforcement face against people living under the conditions that criminogenic ghettoization had wrought. The processes of being both underprotected and overpoliced thus sat at the center. Early in the twentieth century, some members of the community would worry over the protective abilities (or will) of the police, while others would fume over their aggressiveness and abuse. Beginning after World War II, and particularly during the 1950s and onward, however, more and more people would have cause to worry about both of these problems at the same time. Put differently, while in 1945, Simple and his conversational counterpart were far apart in their views on "the Law," ten or fifteen or twenty-five years later, the distance between them would not have been so great. As practices of racial profiling, stop-and-frisk, neighborhood saturation, and so on became increasingly widespread elements of policing Chicago's black

neighborhoods, compounding those neighborhoods' deep poverty and resource flight, greater and greater numbers of black people found themselves captured in the maw of the criminal justice system and hurled into a position where they stood at odds with the police. That relationship devolved further and further, policing grew more and more aggressive, and arrest logs got blacker and blacker during the late 1950s, the tumultuous 1960s, and into the mid-1970s, at which point the War on Crime (and eventually the War on Drugs and new sentencing laws), following these patterns that had already been well set, concretized the massive and disproportionately black carceral project that exists in America today.

Beyond the ways that it has come to bear upon black America, this subject matter raises larger questions about the role of the police within American society. For one, it demonstrates some of the ways that the function that most Americans ascribe to the police – namely, upholders of law and social order – is in actuality just one of several components of police power as it plays out in the real world. Back in the late 1960s, the legal scholar Kenneth Culp Davis noted warily that American police forces, far from simply being *executors* of public policy, often acted as *crafters of it.*[19] Davis wrote in a context riven with antagonisms among citizens about the legitimacy of state authority and seething with tensions between the police and citizens over the degree of influence that the former exerted over the latter. But this was a drama enacted over and over again, through a much longer term, in certain local contexts. It is obvious within these pages, spread out in the machinations of the Chicago Police Department as its administrators worked to expand its own slate of powers at various junctures – particularly as department officials sought to reconcile civil liberties/police prerogative questions in their own favor. It was, for instance, the CPD itself – not legislators in Springfield or Washington – that first began

[19] Kenneth Culp Davis, *Discretionary Justice: A Preliminary Inquiry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

crafting what would become known as stop-and-frisk in the late 1920s. It was CPD Commissioner William Russell who told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1930, after a circuit court judge questioned the legitimacy of the practice on constitutional grounds, that the police would continue doing it "no matter what the state's attorney or the judges do about it."[20] And thirty years later, when the legality of such practices remained in limbo when new CPD head Orlando Wilson came into office, it was Wilson who would prioritize lobbying Mayor Richard Daley and legislators of both parties in the state legislature to codify stop-and-frisk as legal law. And when Illinois Governor Otto Kerner vetoed stop-and-frisk over concerns about its constitutionality, Wilson effectively threw gubernatorial authority to the side and ordered his men to keep stopping and frisking anyway. For prolonged detention and questionably legal interrogation practices, a similar arc. While legal experts and judges have long held that such practices violate due process, the CPD over time continued to tacitly reject such arguments and constitutional rights as anathema to its own prerogatives. For decades this happened, in contravention of legal opinions and without consequence. Similarly so for the shrouded adoption of covert anti-subversive strategies (including assassination) by the CPD over time – tactics that teetered on and toppled over lines of legality, seemingly without consideration of consequence or ethics.

In other words, part of what we see happening within this story is a police force self-defining the extent and limits of its powers. While growing exponentially in terms of numbers and power, the CPD normalized its own legitimacy and the latitude of its prerogatives and actions. Most often, this happened absent public input, and sometimes in explicit contravention of nominally higher legal authorities. By so establishing its power, it created a climate in which more and more police on the street came to be seen as a natural part of the urban landscape – as a normal and commonsense idea, and almost never a politically challengeable one. This might be

[20] *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 1930.

appreciated most simply in terms of simple numbers. From 1920 to 1970, the total population of Chicago grew in the aggregate by a little over 650,000 people, and by a percentage of just under twenty-five percent. Meanwhile, over the same fifty years, the ranks of sworn personnel on the department increased by nearly 9,000, or *more than 260 percent.*[21] To a certain degree, this was a product of just how understaffed and underfunded the police department was in the first two decades of the twentieth century; city officials and observers among both the citizenry and watchdog groups at that time constantly talked about the need for more resources for the department. But early-century understaffing alone cannot reconcile the sheer scale of growth evident here. Nor can heightening rates of crime: the vast majority of this numeric increase happened not during either of the period's greatest upticks in violent crime (during the 1920s Prohibition wars and the street gang violence of the mid-1960s and beyond), but in between them – sometimes steadily, sometimes in tidal waves as politicians called for more law and order. And it bears emphasis that this tremendous rate of growth – an increased police presence that grew at a rate *ten times* that of the population over the span of fifty years – took place under the aegis of neither the nationally declared War on Crime nor the War on Drugs, but entirely through locally based impulses and channels. Indeed, in the actual age of the War on Crime, beginning in 1970 and extending to 2010, the ranks of sworn personnel on the CPD overall have, actually, *decreased* slightly.[22]

This suggests further questions about the relationship between the state and its citizens, and the ways that that relationship has changed and been reconstituted over time.[23] The presence

---

[21] Chicago Police Department Annual Reports: 1920, 1970, Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Chicago, IL.

[22] Chicago Police Department Annual Report: 2010. https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/News/Statistical%20Reports/Annual%20Reports/10AR.pdf [Last Accessed: March 29, 2015]

[23] Scholars of the American twentieth century have long been interested in the expanding role of the state in American life, particularly during the New Deal, the GI Bill, and onward through the Great Society. Among others,

and role of the state in American life has expanded in countless ways over the past century. This was particularly true during roughly the three decades stretching from the New Deal through the Great Society. Yet if we accept the premise that the police are the most prominent domestic enforcement wing of the state's will ("a symbol of society's authority," as the police department in Milwaukee, Wisconsin self-styled in the 1950s), then we must also consider the dramatic growth of police power that coincided with those larger shifts, and what that growth means and has meant within the context of American society.[24] And we should also consider what it means that this expanding surveillance apparatus and enforcement mechanism has generally happened without great pushback from many Americans. Returning to the example of stop-and-frisk's growth, it's worth considering just how unimaginable it would have been for law enforcement officers of a century ago to possess a legally codified right to stop and search an American citizen in the street on grounds merely of appearing "suspicious." That this became not only *imaginable* by the 1960s and on into today, but became a common practice enjoying frequent bipartisan support and political defense from large chunks of the American population, is, frankly, rather astonishing. It's likely that this is precisely because those who have been most affected have been the most disadvantaged members of society. Still, as we chart the development of this expanding surveillance and police apparatus, it's worth keeping in mind the

---

see David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1999); Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1990]); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1981]); and Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[24] On the Milwaukee Police Department's postwar practices, and specifically its combative relationship with black Milwaukeeans, see Simon Balto, "'Occupied Territory': Police Repression and Black Resistance in Postwar Milwaukee," *Journal of African American History* 98:2 (Spring 2013): 229-252.

degree to which key elements of it seem contrary to what are nominally some of Americans' most treasured freedoms and rights.

Finally, this history urges caution against narrative arcs that assume modernization and racial progress might go hand in hand. One strand that comes and goes throughout this story, and that is particularly prominent during the 1960s, is about the modernization of the CPD – of the ways it grew into a sophisticated, technologically advanced, and organizationally sound institution. Another, thicker strand is about the increasing ubiquity of racial repression of black communities by the police, and of black frustrations with the CPD. The two strands were never separate, but were instead braided together. While calling them mutually constitutive might overstate the point, failing to appreciate the relationship between the two risks missing it more badly.

*

This is a study, then, not just about our past, but also in some ways about our modern world – or at least, about a particular aspect of our modern world. This is not the first story that tracks along that aspect's contours. In recent years, historians have begun the process of excavating the origins and development of mass incarceration and its distinctively racialized form – beginning, as Heather Ann Thompson has insisted that they must, "to think critically about mass incarceration and…to consider the reverberations of this never-before-seen phenomenon."[25] Covering geographies as far apart as rural Texas and the cities of Philadelphia and New York, and chronologies as broad as the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the twenty-first, they have deeply enhanced our knowledge of everything from the sweeping

[25] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97:3 (December 2010): 703-734 (704).

development of state-level prison apparata;[26] Jim Crow-era prison labor;[27] shifts in drug law and federal policy;[28] the criminalization of blackness and the state's response to supposed "black criminality;"[29] and challenges *to* the carceral state both by prisoners and those on the outside.[30] While all of these fine studies, Khalil Muhammad's *The Condemnation of Blackness* especially, deal to some degree with the initial face of the carceral state when individuals confront it – namely, the police – none of them place the matter of policing at their core. Works by Leonard Moore and Marilynn Johnson focus on police brutality, but leave as unexplored the broader political and social dynamics and police-community relations that form brutality's context.[31]

---

[26] Robert Perkinson, *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire* (New York: Picador, 2010).

[27] David Oshinsky, *"Worse Than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London: Verso Books, 1996); Mary Ellen Curtin, *Black Prisoners and Their World, Alabama, 1865-1900* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000); Karen Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America, from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

[28] Elizabeth Kai Hinton, "From Social Welfare to Social Control: Federal War in American Cities, 1968–1988" (Ph.D. Diss.: Columbia University, 2013); Jessica Neptune, "The Making of the Carceral State: Street Crime, The War on Drugs, and Punitive Politics in New York 1951-1973" (Ph.D. Diss.: University of Chicago, 2012).

[29] Kali Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Cheryl Hicks, *Talk with You like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[29] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); William Van Deburg, *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). For a correlate study, see Khalil Gibran Muhammad, "Where Did All the White Criminals Go?: Reconfiguring Race and Crime on the Road to Mass Incarceration," *Souls* 13:1 (March 2011): 72-90.

[30] Robert T. Chase, "Civil Rights on the Cell Block: Race, Reform, and Violence in Texas Prisons and the Nation, 1945-1990," Ph.D. Diss., University of Maryland, 2009; Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[31]Leonard Moore, *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Marilynn S. Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004). Also see Karl E. Johnson, "Police-Black Community Relations in Postwar Philadelphia: Race and Criminalization in Urban Social Spaces, 1945-1960, *The Journal of African American History* 89:2 (Spring 2004): 118-134, and some of the works in Jill Nelson, ed., *Police Brutality: An Anthology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000).

The vast historiography on black freedom movements and other political struggles in various local contexts throughout urban America consistently sheds some important light on these issues, too. Among those that do the best job in this sense, see Martha Biondi, *To Stand and To Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Patrick Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*

In these pages, I demonstrate the extent to which understanding the development of policing strategies and actions, at the local level and in the more distant past, is crucial for understanding how mass incarceration emerged, from essentially its first breath, as something that would come to bear upon black Americans with tremendous disproportion. In one sense, this has been a product of the deep socioeconomic and criminogenic inequality wrought by public policies at the local and federal levels, and I have tried to be remindful of those contexts throughout. In a less familiar sense, however, it is a function of practices and logics of policing that are generations in the making. While much is made of the racial impacts of stop-and-frisk today, for instance, it bears understanding that virtually since stop-and-frisk's earliest iterations were implemented by the CPD during the Prohibition era, and especially by the 1950s, the practice was coming to bear in profoundly disproportionate ways on black communities. (The same may be said for deeper histories of police saturating black neighborhoods, and of racial profiling.) I also show how the extraordinary levels of distrust between the police and black communities run generations deep, having been guided by abuses and harassments that long ago conjured patterns of deep silence when it came to helping the police. Physical torture and brutality, racist language, evidence of racial solidarity by white officers in moments of interracial conflict – all of these suggested to black Chicagoans of previous generations the degree to which their civil rights and bodily security were derogated within the confines of their relationship to the police. Little wonder, then, that in response, many began to see the police as occupiers and enemies.

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

This work also stands to add new layers to the expansive legal and social scientific scholarship on mass incarceration – a tremendously rich and important corpus of work, but one whose relationship to history is never fully realized.[32] The most widely read book on the subject of mass incarceration and race, Michelle Alexander's critically important *The New Jim Crow*,[33] exemplifies the problem of historicity that much of this work faces. Legal scholar James Forman, Jr. has already offered some pointed comments to this effect, pointing out the various ways that Alexander's "new Jim Crow" frame not only does damage to what we can understand about some of the contours of this new phenomenon, but also to what the *old* Jim Crow actually was.[34] To that, I would add that while Alexander's discussion is mostly rooted in the 1980s and onward, particularly the present day, her reliance upon historical allusion (as the title suggests) and a

[32] The body of scholarship on mass incarceration by policy analysts, legal scholars, and social scientists is immense. Among others, see Michael Tonry, *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (New York: Verso: 1999); Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007); Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (New York: The New Press, 2006 [1999]); Todd Clear, *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mary Louise Frampton, Ian Haney López, and Jonathan Simon, eds., *After the War on Crime: Race, Democracy, and a New Reconstruction* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Goffman, *On the Run*; Victor Rios, *Punished*; Victor M. Rios, "The Hyper-Criminalization of Black and Latino Male Youth in the Era of Mass Incarceration," *Souls* 8:2 (September 2006): 40-54; Paul Butler, *Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Nell Bernstein, *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* (New York: The New Press, 2005); Nell Bernstein, *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison* (New York: Perseus, 2014); Ernest Drucker, *A Plague of Prisons: The Epidemiology of Mass Incarceration in America* (New York: The New Press, 2011); Jonathan Simon, *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). There are, to be sure, a small handful of exceptions. Marie Gottschalk's *The Prison and the Gallows*, for instance, works to trace a history of national-level penal policy leading up to the rise of the modern carceral state. But her view is so incredibly broad (literally referring back to 1492) that actual human subjects and processes can feel amorphous and very far away as a reader. See Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[33] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

[34] Forman makes a number of points about why Alexander's book tells us less than a full story about today's carceral project. Perhaps the largest intellectual ones are that Alexander does little to resolve the matter of the extraordinary numbers of non-black people caught up in the system of mass incarceration, and does nothing to deal with the problem of violent offenders who fall outside the range of her War on Drugs-centric focus. James Forman, Jr., "Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow," *New York University Law Review*, 87 (April 2012): 101-146.

teleology of caste (from Jim Crow to mass incarceration) to reckon with what prefaced the modern carceral state's abusive relationship toward African America is a problematic one. There are far more direct analogues and development lines to follow in trying to tell that story of the racialization of modern prisons, and understanding the approaches of police systems to black people, as I aim to do here, is one of them.

Nor is Alexander alone. The brilliant Berkeley sociologist Loïc Wacquant, whose work on neoliberalism, racism, and punishment is essential, previously laid down the same teleology as Alexander, but with a couple of extra stops along the way: slavery was followed by Jim Crow, which was followed by ghettoization, which was followed by racialized mass incarceration.[35] Randall Kennedy, in one of the earlier legal examinations of War on Drugs-era race and punishment, traced histories of punishment leading up to the War on Drugs, but primarily through the same slavery and Jim Crow lenses, with some legal analysis and examination of lynch law added in, as well.[36] Alice Goffman's recent *On the Run*, meanwhile, which focuses on policing in modern-day black Philadelphia and community members' entanglements with the justice system, is stunning in many respects but, when it comes to the longer history of policing in that city or any other, offers a story without origins. The voices of all but the most privileged of past record-keepers are silenced. Relying entirely upon the testimonies of black elites and academics from long ago (those least likely to experience the effects of overpolicing), she comments that, prior to the 1960s, "reports from firsthand observers paint the police in

[35] Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009 [original French version, 2004]), 197. See also Loïc Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Loïc Wacquant, "Class, Race and Hyperincarceration in Revanchist America." *Daedalus*, 139:3 (Summer 2010): 74-90; and Loïc Wacquant, "The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *Ethnography* 3:4: 371-397

[36] Randall Kennedy, *Race, Crime and the Law* (New York: Pantheon, 1997).

segregated Black neighborhoods as uninterested, absent, and corrupt."[37] There is no indication that police abuse and harassment were of concern to community members.

Making such claims, or relying upon history as metaphor ("the new Jim Crow"), allusion ("mass incarceration is like a new form of slavery"), or teleology (the Wacquant model of slavery→Jim Crow→ghettoization→mass incarceration) at best tells us less than half the story about the actual historical trajectory of black entanglement with the criminal justice system. I wish to be clear: I sympathize fully with the idea that racial discrimination in the United States has persisted in various forms, and essentially unabated, *from* slavery *to* mass incarceration. But while there is a clear arc bridging the century-and-a-half between slavery and the hyperincarceration of black people – and while the psychological effects of warehousing, surveilling, and physically controlling more than a million black people on any given day clearly conjure a psychic afterlife of slavery – there is very little historical evidence of a tangible relationship between the two.

*

At its core, this project is a study of the long-term development of policing strategies in Chicago through the early years of the War on Crime, and the problems with the black community that those strategies conjured. It begins with the infamous July 1919 riot in Chicago, during which black Chicagoans – many of them new transplants to the city, who had carried with them tremendous hopes for a more racially egalitarian new home place – were provided crucial evidence of the treatment they might expect from the police. As Chapter 1 makes clear, from white officers arresting hundreds of black non-participants and victims of violence, to others expressing racial sympathies with white mobs, the riot served as an important touchstone for race relations in Chicago and as a gauge for equal rights vis-à-vis law enforcement. The remainder of

[37] Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 2.

the 1920s would provide similar clues as to what was to come in the trajectory of police-black community relations: black people facing disproportionate rates of arrest, often on petty (sometimes fabricated) charges; many within the black community complaining that the police department was, despite such arrest rates, not doing *enough* to protect their communities from crime and vice; and not-infrequent police violence toward black people.

Chapter 2 begins with the onset of the Great Depression and runs through 1940, a period during which material conditions withered, and, in response, political radicalisms bloomed in the city. The CPD during this long historical moment stood on precipices, often charged with maintaining the status quo and preserving order at all costs, standing as the state's face in the protection of capital interests and the repression of protest. As radical politics took hold on the black South Side, the first large-scale open conflicts between black people and the police erupted – most often in the context of anti-eviction campaigns (the sheriff's office and city police being charged with eviction enforcement), relief marches and demonstrations (the police charged to disperse such crowds), and so on. Within this context, what would be frequent lines of division between citizens seeking *justice* and police seeking *order* emerged. In the face of citizen protest, the city of Chicago responded in part by deploying a dramatically expanded surveillance apparatus that included a counter-subversive "Red Squad," which would be at the foreground of state efforts to subvert black movements for self-betterment for decades into the future.[38] As poor people got poorer and more desperate, and as they turned toward illegal economies and petty theft, the city, lacking resources for amelioration, instead responded punitively as much as possible. Black entanglements with the criminal justice system escalated as police cracked down on black people trying to turn dimes into dreams through gambling rings, or as they resorted to

[38] On the history of Red Squads, see Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

petty property crime to makes ends meet. Meanwhile, it police almost no time at all to begin using practices like stop-and-seizure (later stop-and-frisk), initially developed to deal with the tremendous violence orchestrated by white ethnic mob bosses during the Prohibition Wars, disproportionately against black people who had little to do with that torrent of violence.

But if there was a period during which things truly fell apart – or at least began to – it was in the years during and after the Second World War. While a popular line of thought attributes the dissolution of police-community relations to the explosion of "law and order" political rhetoric after the black rebellions/riots in American cities during the 1960s, if we take black experiences and voices seriously, the evidence suggests that such logics put the proverbial cart before the horse. Chapter 3 explores the ways that most remaining trust and goodwill that existed between black communities and the police dissolved in the context of renewed black southern in-migration to the city during World War II; anti-black housing riots, during which the police department frequently did nothing at all to protect black life and property; a deluge of narcotics that hit black neighborhoods the hardest, deepest, and longest; and a regime of hyper-surveillance toward black communities that included increased reliance on stop-and-seizure, racial targeting, and profiling. Prior to this point, black people living in Chicago may have felt, as the frame goes, overpoliced or underprotected, but rarely before had the same people experienced both at once. No longer. A reinvigorated stop-and-seizure apparatus bloomed parallel to black in-migration, and was almost exclusively applied to black Chicagoans. Illegal practices of detention and interrogation proliferated and came to bear disproportionately on black people. And police violence became less and less episodic and more and more constant. Spurred by all of these developments, black Chicagoans increasingly channeled the idiom of terrorism when they talked about the police.

The evisceration of police-community trust during the 1940s and 1950s set the stage for the tumultuous decade of the 1960s. From 1960 to early 1967, the CPD was helmed by Orlando Wilson, the most progressive and technically brilliant head official it had ever had. Under his leadership, the CPD underwent its most dramatic modernizations, with Wilson supplying new technologies and methodologies that would put it on pace with other departments around the country. He worked to bring greater accountability to the department, and to disentangle it from the web of the Democratic political machine. And yet, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, at the same time, Wilson formalized a forceful pallet of measures that black Chicagoans, whether in the moment or in hindsight, would identify as deeply repressive: the legal codification of stop-and-frisk and other surveillance capacities, as well as the expansion of Red Squad operations to battle black radicalism. Deteriorating relationships between police and community – decades in the making but exacerbated during the early and mid-Sixties – became one focal point of the nascent Chicago Freedom Movement, which sought to democratize the city and upend the structural racisms that had long shaped life in Chicago. As the freedom movement gathered steam and national attention, particularly when Martin Luther King arrived in town in 1966, its direct action campaigns created still further circumstances in which the police and black citizen-activists would come into negotiation and conflict, and wherein police concerns with order would once again collide with (and ultimately trump) black demands for justice.

Accounts of the freedom movement in Chicago have often taken 1967 to be a moment of collapse, and in many respects, the freedom movement did dissolve at this juncture, without having achieved any of its goals.[39] But black activism carried over in more fragmented ways, and in few places was this more apparent than in community activism surrounding the police. As

[39] See especially Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

Chapter 5 shows, between 1967 and 1973, black Chicago witnessed its most sustained period of police-reform activism, across contexts ranging from the electoral arena to Black Power politics, Urban League community uplift to black police officers' challenges to the department around them. By this point, the conjunction of overpolicing and underprotection was evident in abundance; as black CPD officer Howard Saffold explicitly declared in 1972, "Chicago's black neighborhoods are the most overpatrolled and underprotected in the city."[40] While the War on Crime escalated at the national level and federal dollars began to sift into Chicago, and as Chicago on its own terms underwent dramatic new investments in its police department, black citizens organized to try to seize control of the police and battle these twinned challenges.

In doing so, however, they confronted a department that was continuing and expanding the most repressive measures birthed during the 1950s and 1960s, and that had simultaneously rejected the anti-corruption and officer accountability measures that Orlando Wilson had implemented during the early 1960s. The department met a seething gang crisis with extreme force that often seemed designed to exacerbate violence. Incidents of brutality and police killings of citizens skyrocketed. Putting a stamp on things, investigators discovered a cell of Ku Klux Klan members operating within the department. By 1973, then-CPD Superintendent James Conlisk would retire from the department, the black press having declared his administration to be the worst in Chicago's history. A cadre of police officers under the direction of Jon Burge had begun working the black South Side, wielding various implements capable of extraordinary physical torture. With the War on Crime growing, the War on Drugs on the horizon, and police arrest roles veering blacker and blacker, the relationship between the police and the community hung in tatters.

---

[40] Quoted in "The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago:" A Report and Recommendations Based on Hearings Before the Blue Ribbon Panel Convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, on June 26, July 17, July 24, and July 31, 1972, 20

*

At the end, this history helps further our understandings of modern mass incarceration's steep racialization – of why when mass incarceration emerged, it did so as a fully formed machine of profound racial subjugation. But it is also, at its heart, about the tremendous costs to individuals and communities living through this history. These stories matter if we are to understand the full breadth of challenges African Americans faced as they tried to harness American citizenship and belonging and make it into something meaningful for them. They matter in explaining the shape and content of the ghettoization to which millions of people have been subjugated. They matter in showing how the individual lives of some black Chicagoans were profoundly impacted by the force and absence of the police, long before the 1960s riots or the War on Crime or the War on Drugs. And they matter in forcing us to more fully reckon with the slippery promises and hanging failures that reside in the American democratic project, both then and now.

What follows is an effort to tell those stories.

1

Furies and Sounds: Chicago, 1919-1929

*

So far as I can learn the black people have since history began despised the white people and have always fought them….It wouldn't take much to start another riot, and most of the white people of this district are resolved to make a clean-up this time…If a Negro should say one word back to me or should say a word to a white woman in the park, there is a crowd of young men of the district, mostly ex-service men, who would procure arms and fight shoulder to shoulder with me if trouble should come from the incident.

-Daniel Callahan, Chicago Policeman, 1920[1]

*

The Negro crime rate is exaggerated…as much by the comparatively fewer arrests of whites than Negroes to crimes committed as by the ease with which many Negroes may be arrested for one crime….Fewer Negroes than whites escape arrest and prosecution. When comparisons are made on the basis of statistics for arrests and convictions, there is presented, unless proper explanations of the statistics are made, an erroneous picture of Negro crime. Thus is kept up the vicious circle: Negroes are arrested more readily because the figures show them as a group to have a high crime rate, and figures are large – showing a high Negro crime rate – because Negroes are more readily arrested.

-Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1920[2]

*

The prisoner spent four nights in a police holding cell, the walls around him sweating in the midsummer heat. The faces around him, too, glistened, the body heat from the men crowded in the cell driving temperatures in the badly ventilated space upward. So packed were the rooms that some nights, there would have barely been room for him to stretch himself out to sleep. Outside, the pavement shimmered in the heat, the daily highs inching close to a hundred degrees, the air humid-damp in the way that late July in Chicago often is. Until the rains came on the last night, bringing thousands of state militiamen in tow, the sweltering pavement pounded with feet—thousands of them—angry, hurried, and combative—retreating and sneaking and squaring for battle, shaping the contours and crafting the tragedies of one of the worst race riots in American history.

---

[1] Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR), *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 451.

[2] CCRR, "Crime and the Negro, 1920," in box 114, folder 738, Victor Lawson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

The year was 1919. Beginning with the killing of a black teenager at a South Side beach on July 27, Chicago had come undone. Violent mobs, a majority of them white, had torn the city at its seams. Gangs of white men marauded through black and mixed neighborhoods, savagely beating African American citizens and torching property. Having too often seen this drama play out before in the newspapers (some of them, perhaps, through their own eyes before turning their backs on the South) in places like Tulsa and Atlanta and not-so-far-away East St. Louis, black people fought back – often in self-defense, other times preemptively. Over the course of nearly a week, riot violence would claim the lives of thirty-eight people (twenty-three black and fifteen white), see more than five hundred others suffer injury, leave a thousand more homeless, and damage thousands upon thousands of dollars worth of property.[3]

For the prisoner, a stockyards worker by the name of Kin Lumpkin, his journey to the cell had begun so prosaically – with a train ride home from work. But the riot made the prosaic deadly. Ever since its start, white rioters had routinely taken to the cars of the elevated train system ("the El") and to the platforms where people alighted and departed. As opposed to city streets, with their networks of intersections and alleyways, here were confined spaces with few escape routes – places where mobs could effectively cordon off and trap victims. Routes like the one Kin Lumpkin traveled, between black neighborhoods and the stockyards where thousands of black men worked, were particularly choice targets. And so Kin Lumpkin stepped off the El at 47th Street and found himself besieged by a mob, the members of which beat and battered him on

[3] Detailed narratives of the riot, complete with varying degrees of analyses, include the sprawling 1922 study of it, and black-white relations more generally, by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922); Carl Sandburg, *The Chicago Race Riots: July 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1969 [1919]); and William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970). The story of Kin Lumpkin is taken from a brief description in *The Negro in Chicago*, p. 34.

the train platform. After the injury came the insult: when a police officer tardily arrived on the scene, he made just one arrest – of Kin Lumpkin, on charges of rioting.[4]

At this point, the precise details of what happened to Lumpkin fade into conjecture, but reasonable guesses can be made. Both during the riot and in the years surrounding it, a decided unevenness marked people's experiences once police took them in for booking. For those with money or social connections, those who could call the right person or pay the right bribe, the process was usually quick. But for people like Kin Lumpkin – in the wrong income bracket and certainly of the wrong skin pigment – the matter was entirely different. Rather than being charged and released, Lumpkin was tossed into a police holding cell. At which district isn't clear, although where he was arrested means it was probably in the station house in the Stockyards, Stanton, or Wabash districts. If he were lucky, he ended up at Wabash, where the lockup facility serviced a majority-black district and had been first put into operation two years prior. The Stockyards, on the other hand, would have meant being housed – *in the midst of a race war* – in a multi-occupancy cell among a largely ethnic white population in one of Chicago's most virulently anti-black neighborhoods. At Stanton, on 35th Street in the heart of black Chicago, Lumpkin would have sat in a thirty-five-year-old overcrowded firetrap of a basement with bad lighting, worse plumbing, and neither beds nor bedding.[5] The station there lacked even toilet paper for prisoners' use. Perhaps the savings were diverted toward providing for the cadre of cats

[4] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 34.

[5] Descriptions of and information about these police lockups is taken from a 1947 investigation of such facilities, conducted by the John Howard Association (JHA), a Chicago-based prisoner rights organization. That report in turn makes detailed reference to a similar study conducted in 1912 by a special City Council Committee on Schools, Fire, Police and Civil Service, the complete report of which has proven impossible to locate. I arrive at the above portrait of the lockups at the time of the 1919 riot by cross-referencing the JHA's detailed observations in 1947 with its summation of those of the City Council in 1912. Zemens, Eugene S., "Held Without Bail: Physical Aspects of the Police Lockups of the City of Chicago, 1947-48," Chicago History Museum Research Collection, Chicago, Illinois.

kept around to wage war on the remarkably prolific rodent population.[6] (It could have been worse. Some other facilities lacked any sewage system at all aside from a trough running the length of the floor through which rivers of urine and shit ran.) Regardless of where he spent those four nights, they surely were agonizing and long ones.

Although we know just the bare bones of Kin Lumpkin's story, that we know it at all is only because the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR), founded in the aftermath of the riot, recorded his name. But there is no singularity to his experiences. His story played out, with variations, over and over and over again throughout the riot. The passel of similar narratives was immense, running hundreds deep – all of them freighted with terror and fury and violation.

The 1919 riot – one of many nationwide during that awful "Red Summer" – in many ways formed the context in which black Chicagoans would approach the color line in the coming decade.[7] That approach was not deference in the way that southern Jim Crow had demanded, but wariness in the way that the urban North often required. While the early August rain flooded out the last of the riot's fires, the scars and psychic ruptures would remain. And lingering with them was people's distrust of the institutional apparatus that had most evidently failed them during the riot, made manifest in the bodies of Chicago Police Department officers.

During the riot, patterns emerged that would set the template for the future course of police-community interactions in Chicago. When things fell apart in late July of 1919, the police offered little help to black citizens. Many African Americans called for protection, sometimes literally running to the police begging for help, only to find it not forthcoming. Shouldering the burden of generations of racial disrespect, derogation, and intimidation, others picked up arms in self-defense or retaliatory violence, only to find the police cracking down with both sweeping

---

[6] A. L. Beeley, *The Bail System in Chicago* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1927), 32.
[7] On Red Summer more broadly, see Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2011).

arrest and brutal force. For government officials charged with controlling the riot at a macro level, politics trumped all. Illinois Governor Frank Lowden and Chicago Mayor William Hale Thompson engaged in a politically driven staring contest over the matter of calling out the state National Guard, the result of which was thousands of guardsmen sitting in makeshift dormitories and bunkhouses in the heart of Chicago, their weapons cleaned and stowed away, while the city around them burned.[8]

The patterns of the riot carried forward. Politicians would prove almost completely inoculated to the needs and demands of the black community during the 1920s, except during times when they needed a scapegoat or when they needed votes. Through a decade wrought with immense political battles, economic booms, racial violence, and social moralizing, black Chicagoans tried to exert some control over the police. Rarely were they united in their aims, for, like any group of people, they had different (often competing) interests. Some sought more uniformed bodies in the streets of their neighborhoods, to relieve them from the "immoralities"—prostitution, gambling, drinking—so abundant in their midst. Others hoped to see less of the police—those engaged in such vice trades, to be sure, but others as well who faced violence at the hands of the police, which sometimes descended into literal torture.

Along these parallel lines, black people's engagements with the police ran. And virtually no one within black Chicago, a few wealthy crime syndicate operatives aside, was able to exercise much meaningful control over the police. All told and for a variety of reasons, the 1920s would be a decade in which the CPD showed its true colors – which looked like nothing more so than abject dysfunction and corruption. The assessment would hold true at both ends of the decade, and all points in between. The *Defender*, in 1920, referencing both endemic corruption and the discrimination that black police officers faced within the department, described the

[8] Tuttle, *Race Riot*.

department as "rotten from stem to core," while in 1929, a Chicago grand jury called the CPD "rotten to the core."[9] The toxins of the rot, in views both short and long, would be tremendous.

*

From 1910 to 1930, Chicago's black population doubled and then doubled again—from 44,103 (1910) to 109,458 (1920), to more than 235,000 by the dawn of the 1930s.[10] Flooding in from points south, people came for opportunities and with hopes for a broad array of freedoms. And they came to escape the wretched horrors of Jim Crow, the many bitter fruits that hung like Spanish moss on live oaks all across the South. The path for most of these new migrants was wrought from railroad ties, laid out upon gravel beds that stretched from the bayous of southern Louisiana into the heart of Chicago's Loop. The Illinois Central was the primary technology by which they journeyed northward. Like a river of rails, it wound alongside the east bank of the Mississippi River and through the alluvial plains of the Delta, connecting with the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad in Jackson and Memphis and pulling from tributaries throughout the Southland. As the passenger trains pulled in to the bustling grandeur of Chicago's Grand Central Station at Michigan Avenue and Twelfth Street (now Roosevelt Road), migrating people may have craned their necks at the station's 225-foot clock tower, nine-floor office building, and three-story marble waiting room, and felt in their bones that Chicago was a very different place indeed from the ones that they had left.

Once outside Grand Central, that feeling of awe would become more palpable. For many migrants, Chicago appeared as a vast landscape of wonder and wickedness, promise and peril, ambition and anxiety. The destination for most would be the bustle, vibrancy, and teeming

---

[9] *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1920; Citizens' Police Committee, *Chicago Police Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 1.
[10] James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 4.

streets of the famous Southside "Black Belt," a narrow stretch of land extending southward from the Loop, centering around State Street, and so named because of its concentration of the vast majority of Chicago's black population. Perhaps outside of Harlem, Chicago's Black Belt was the center of urban African America. The State Street corridor that ran through it— from Twenty-Sixth to Thirty-Ninth and colloquially called "the Stroll"—was home to many of black America's premiere music clubs, theaters, and various other entertainment options. People flocked there in abundance. The *Defender* variously called it "the popular promenade for the masses and classes," a "Mecca for Pleasure," and a "poor man's paradise."[11] From the clubs and theaters on the strip floated the sounds of some of the best musicians in America. From the gambling dens came the sounds of paychecks turned into prayers. And everywhere, a huge mélange of humanity circled about – people of different classes and interests converging on the short stretch of the Stroll, with even a fair share of white Chicagoans seeking out pleasures that they could find few other places.

But perhaps more than anything else, upon first impression, Chicago was steel and noise. The city—Carl Sandburg's one of the big shoulders—rushed with a pounding, workmanlike intensity and constant human and industrial movement.[12] By the end of the 1920s, it was estimated that close to two million people poured through the central Loop on an average business day.[13] As a product of Daniel Burnham's singular vision for a magisterial downtown, coupled with the political ambitions of Mayor William Thompson to see such a vision at least

---

[11] Black elites may have used more colorful language to describe it. The Stroll ignited feverish politics of respectability-driven intellectual warfare within the black community, particularly because even the strictest moralists within the community were forced to live in extraordinarily close proximity to the Stroll's various licit and illicit amusements. Robin F. Bachin, *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civil Culture in Chicago, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 247. For an especially rich accounting of "the Stroll" and early-century black cultural life in Chicago more generally, see Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
[12] Carl Sandburg, "Chicago," *Chicago Poems* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1916).
[13] Citizens' Police Committee, *Chicago Police Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 150.

partially realized, the Loop towered and glimmered in architectural magnificence. And while the tallest skyscrapers of the century's second half were still to come, from just beyond the central business district, plumes of industrial smoke jutted high into the air, as if to serve as placeholders awaiting their steel-and-girder descendants. Horses and pushcarts lumbered over an expanding grid of both dirt and paved streets. They shared them with automobiles, a technology that took Chicago increasingly by storm in the 1920s despite apparently no one knowing how to actually use them safely.[14] Further to the southwest, from the meatpacking district where many black men were to find their work, emanated the sensory hallmarks of the slaughterhouses—the bellows and cries of livestock, the smells of shit and blood and rendering animal fat.[15] And in every direction but the lake, neighborhoods sprawling for miles: German; Italian; Polish; Italian; black; and more.[16] On the cacophonous waves of noise and industry and people and capital and technology, in just a handful of decades, a lonely trading outpost had been bent into an immense metropolis—into the nation's "Second City."[17]

Chicago famously was the embodiment of hope for many black southerners migrating northward. The metropolis, wrote Jack Conroy of the New Deal-era Illinois Writers' Project, "was known to all [black southerners]. It was the big town by the lake from which the mail order

---

[14] Indeed, so chaotic was the city's traffic situation prior to the installation of street lights in the Loop in 1930 that by the end of the 1920s, it was routine for more than six hundred pedestrians to be killed annually as the result of being struck or run over by a car In 1927, for example, the police department recorded 8,031 non-fatal and 625 fatal car-pedestrian accidents. Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1927, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Municipal Reference Collection (hereafter, CPL MRC).

[15] For a sustained, if notably antiquated, contemporaneous account of Chicago's meatpacking industry in the early twentieth century and African Americans' roles and experiences within it, see Alma Herbst, *The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat-Packing Industry in Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932).

[16] For an excellent overview of the working, home, and associational lives of members of many of these immigrant blocs in the first decades of the twentieth century, see Cohen, *Making a New Deal.*

[17] Historian William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* provides an essential analysis of how an array of technological and economic processes—and the engineers of those processes—molded Chicago into the social and financial epicenter of the Midwest, at the same time that they were changing the broader geographies of the entire "Great West." William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991). Also see Robert Lewis, *Chicago Made: Factory Networks in the Industrial Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

catalogues came, and thus vaguely associated in the minds of hinterland folks with everything desirable but hitherto unattainable."[18] The "big town's" promise, indeed, could seem biblical. Poems and songs about the northward trek carried names like "Bound for the Promised Land" and "The Land of Hope" ("Go on, dear brother / you'll never regret; Just trust in God / pray for the best / And at the end You're sure to find / Happiness will be thine.")[19] Sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, in their classic study of the South Side *Black Metropolis*, channeled idioms of freedom and emancipation as they interpreted migrants' views of their destination. The rail routes to the city on the lake represented a "flight to freedom."[20] The migration was, to "most Negroes…a step toward the economic emancipation of a people" long bound to the exploitations of southern society, the brutalities of its caste system, and its punishing political economy.[21] In a similar vein, local entrepreneur and community biographer Dempsey Travis noted that transplanted Southerners maintained optimism about the far-preferable "Northern situation," and juxtaposed it with the "Southern suffocation born of the fear with which they had grown up."[22]

On the traffic-weathered ground of the metropolis, however, the city's grit and majesty might as easily conjure apprehension. Ida Mae Brandon Glandon, who first caught sight of Chicago in 1937 from the vantage of the Twelfth Street Train Station, gazed onto "a cold, hurrying place of concrete and steel. People clipped past them in their wool finery and distracted urgency, not pausing to speak."[23] Langston Hughes novelized it much the same, the young protagonist of his *Not Without Laughter* narrating his first impressions of Chicago (via Kansas)

---

[18] Jack Conroy, "The Migrants Keep Coming," in *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers*, ed. Brian Doliner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 231.
[19] Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 96; Joseph Bougere, "The Exodus Train" (1942), in *The Negro in Illinois*, 248-9.
[20] St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1945]), 31.
[21] Ibid, 60.
[22] Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Urban Research Institute, 1981), 20.
[23] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010), 225.

as a city colored with "blocks of dirty grey warehouses….He hadn't expected the great city to be monotonous and ugly like this."[24] The writer Richard Wright, who joined the Chicago leg of the Great Migration in 1927, recalled a city of similar daunting and bustle. Remembering his first impressions of "this machine-city" in his 1944 autobiography *Black Boy*, Wright wrote:

> My first glimpse of the flat black stretches of Chicago depressed and dismayed me, mocked all my fantasies. Chicago seemed an unreal city whose mythical houses were built of slabs of black coal wreathed in palls of gray smoke, houses whose foundations were sinking slowly into the dank prairie. Flashes of steam showed intermittently on the wide horizon, gleaming translucently in the winter sun. The din of the city entered my consciousness, entered to remain for years to come.[25]

Such impressions were not the lone province of black southern newcomers. Barry Byrne, a white man who worked as a cathedral builder, echoed such sentiments: "The Chicago I knew was vast and squalid. An inexpressibly dreary city, without any delight. Yet you're caught in a sort of beat; you always move. Chicago was a place were things were done, a working place."[26] Even W.E.B. DuBois, never prone to public flinching, stood in awe: "Chicago scares me: the crowd at State and Madison, the ruthless raggedness and grime of the blazing streets, the brute might of the Thing."[27]

Daunting—penetrating, by Wright's characterization—as "the Thing" may have seemed, migrants made it their home. And because cities are their people, over time, they (and their children and grandchildren) would change Chicago, just as it in turn would change them. They would reshape its social and cultural life, carrying traditions of their own and injecting them into the lifeblood of the city.[28] Even as many of their white neighbors, with tacit and overt support from the city's public and private institutions, resisted black southerners' entry into many of

---

[24] Langston Hughes, *Not Without Laughter* (New York: Scribner Paperback, 1995 [1930]), 278.
[25] Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993 [1944]), 307.
[26] Studs Terkel, *Chicago* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986 [1985]), 94-5.
[27] W.E.B. DuBois, "Hopkinsville, Chicago, and Idlewild," *The Crisis*, August 1921, 158.
[28] On the influence of black Chicago on the cultural life of the city (and nation), see Darlene Clark Hine and John McCluskey Jr., eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Robert Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-1946* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Chicago's physical places and all but the most proscribed socioeconomic positions, these new migrants would nevertheless fundamentally alter the social terrain and cultural constitution of the city.

Be that as it may, for people forging ahead in real time, it was the business of living – of surviving, perhaps – that sat at the forefront of their minds. How and where to find work weighed with special heaviness. Options were limited: into a market where some of the best-paying jobs required industrial expertise and skill, new migrants overwhelmingly entered with a knowledge base that rhythmed not with factory lines, but with southern growing seasons. Worse, most trade unions excluded black workers and many employers refused to hire blacks for anything other than strikebreaking and menial, unskilled positions, effectively rendering moot the professional skill sets that some black people did possess. For black laboring men especially, such proscriptions often led them to the front steps of the slaughterhouses, the steel mills, or the service industry. For black women, meanwhile, service work ranked as the most ubiquitous occupational platform, though it was not uncommon, in war-era Chicago at least, for them to also find work in the packinghouses and other factory jobs.[29] A few black men and women found work in positions that would pay a middle-class wage—teachers, policemen, postal workers—but *few* captures their numbers quite well.[30] Ten years later, as the prosperity of the roaring 1920s gave way to the Great Depression's desperation, that arrangement had changed little. As St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton noted, on the eve of the Depression, twenty-five and fifty-six percent of black men and women, respectively, were doing some sort of service work; "professional, proprietary, managerial, and clerical work was almost a white monopoly;" and

[29] Grossman, *Land of Hope*, pp. 181-207.
[30] For an examination of the social and political situations of black teachers, police officers, and postal workers during the early twentieth century, see Harold F. Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 219-318.

African Americans "were doing a disproportionately large share of the poorly paid and less desirable work."[31]

The quest for housing was similarly fraught. Although the Stroll offered its brands of excitement, and while the Black Belt held special appeal for new migrants to settle in for simple reasons of cultural comfort, the signals of extraordinary poverty spread out across many sections of the area were unmistakable. The white ethnics that had left these areas in recent decades had done so purposely, hoping to leave behind neighborhoods that even then were considered the city's most "deteriorated"—contemporary code-speak for neglected, undesirable, and fraught with social ills. As the black sociological luminary E. Franklin Frazier noted in his classic *The Negro Family in Chicago*, black people were entering into areas that had already been characterized by dilapidation and delinquency for decades prior to their arrival, when those neighborhoods were the province of European immigrant groups.[32] And once black people moved there, they would find it virtually impossible to move out without facing extraordinary

---

[31] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 219-221.

[32] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 205-206. Historians still disagree somewhat on the degrees to which agency and constraint respectively shaped the process and outcome of that ghettoization. Exclusion and proscription weighed heavy on the housing question, as migrants found themselves hemmed in by the machinations of white supremacist housing policies, threats, and economic deprivation. Writing in 1967, historian Allan Spear hedged no bets on the matter—especially on anti-black racism's role in the ghetto's creation story: "The development of the physical ghetto in Chicago, then, was not the result chiefly of poverty; nor did Negroes cluster out of choice. The ghetto was primarily the product of white hostility." Two decades later, historian James Grossman, while allowing significant social power to the effects of racism, argued also for some degree of choice at work in black people's residential choices: "Exclusion aside, many migrants sought their first homes in areas populated by other blacks, where they could be more comfortable and find familiar institutions." Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 26; Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 127.

It should be noted that there is at least a bit of disagreement over whether or not the Black Belt ca. the 1920s even actually constituted a "ghetto." Chicago historian Christopher Reed suggests that it did not, citing the extraordinary diversity of class and sensibility that characterized black neighborhoods, the fact that some very wealthy African Americans *did* move out of that area, as well as the fact that a sizable amount of white people still lived intermingled with the black population. It might be countered, however, that the majority of black people lacked the ability to move out of this section of the city, whether as a consequence of racial terrorism, the threats of same, or economic deprivation the roots of which were also bound up with the history of racism both locally and nationally. Which is, in many ways, a ghetto in an almost classically defined sense. See Christopher Robert Reed, *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

resistance from the communities around them, both through legal restriction, restrictive covenants, and white violence.

Thus, while a variety of factors contributed to the formation of the ghetto, white racial resistance buttressed it, cultivating the realities of outdated housing stock, residential overcrowding, and heavily taxed neighborhood resources that black Chicagoans would have to live with every day. Such was life in the famed "Black Metropolis"—a city within a city that stood at once as a signifier of black autonomy and achievement, complete with its own religious communities and stores and political organizations and financial institutions, as well as a reminder that that exact same autonomy was more than partially birthed from racisms that cleaved African Americans from the opportunities and perquisites that members of the broader society took for granted. Already in 1910, Chicago had been second only to Cleveland among northern cities for which data is available in terms of the degree to which it was segregated; by the 1920s, the distance between white and black had grown still greater.[33] Such segregation had steep costs. In 1920 and 1921, three black women employed by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations' (CCRR) surveyed the living conditions of 274 random families living on the South Side. Their notations frequently read like a textbook entry of dilapidation: "water pipes rotted out; gas pipes leak." "Plastering off; large rat holes all over; paper hanging from ceiling." "Water for drinking and cooking purposes must be carried in; toilet used by four families; asked landlord to turn on water in kitchen; told them to move."[34] The CCRR's summary of the women's findings, in part: "The ordinary conveniences, considered necessities by the average

[33] Segregation statistics for 1910 as measured by a standard index of dissimilarity are pulled from Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's *American Apartheid*. 1910 statistics are unavailable for Indianapolis, New York, San Francisco, and Wilmington, though given general patterns of ghetto formation and concretization, it is reasonable to assume that all were less segregated than Chicago based upon the fact that all had lower indices of dissimilarity in both 1860 and 1940 (excepting Indianapolis in 1860). See Douglas Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 21.
[34] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 153.

white citizen, are often lacking. Bathrooms are often missing. Gas lighting is common, and electric lighting is a rarity. Heating is commonly done by wood or coal stoves, and furnaces are rather exceptional."[35] And even with such conditions prevailing, there was far too little housing for the number of people flooding into the Black Belt. As early as 1917, only one in thirteen requests filed by black people for help finding housing was being met.[36] With so many people looking for largely non-existent housing, and with so many of those who did have it struggling to make ends meet, overcrowding followed: multi-family dwellings and the taking in of lodgers became commonplace on the South Side.

As the carrying capacity of the Black Belt strained and buckled under the migration's weight, black Chicagoans with the means to do so tested the rigidity of the Black Belt's invisible boundaries. While racial frictions had arisen intermittently in Chicago for decades—particularly around labor strife and Chicago employers' affections for using African Americans as strikebreakers against the demands of labor—it was in black people's search for housing in historically white neighborhoods that white rage crescendoed. Indeed, if migrants arriving in the clang and clamor of Chicago's heart were disconcerted by the city's cacophony of sounds, they were quick to discover, also, that it was similarly a land of many furies. Over the course of forty-five months from July 1917 to March 1921, white citizens and neighborhood associations bombed fifty-eight homes—all of them belonging to black people moving to white areas, or to people who had rented to or brokered such deals for blacks. The home of Oscar De Priest, the most powerful black politician in the city at the time, was bombed. So too was that of Jesse Binga, a prominent banker and entrepreneur who held one of the largest masses of wealth in black Chicago.

---

[35] Ibid. 152.
[36] Ibid, 185.

Even with such high-profile targets and the ubiquity of violence, the police response was negligible. During the entirety of that four-year bombing campaign, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) generated only one arrest.[37] In 1919, prior to the riot, Police Chief John Garrity told an incredulous Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who had settled in Chicago after being run out of Memphis because of her anti-lynching activism, that he "could not put all of the police in Chicago on the South Side to protect the homes of colored people," which seemed, in so many ways, as good as saying that the bombs were not his problem.[38] Charles Duke, a prominent member of the black community, bitterly responded that had the racial roles in these bombings been reversed, "a Negro would [not] have been allowed to go unpunished five minutes."[39] So lax was the police response to the bombings that the Chicago branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) took it upon itself (without success) to do the police's job for them; correspondence between local branch executives and national branch assistant secretary Walter White finds the local NAACP's Citizens' Defense Committee working to "locate and prosecute those behind the bombings."[40] The general stance of the police department, if unstated, was relatively clear: making much effort to track down white culprits of anti-black terrorism was, simply, not something that the Chicago police were going to do.

Thus as early as 1917, one of the hallmarks of black experiences with the police was beginning to crystalize. Black people's rights to protection, especially when it involved violence across the color line, seemed to stand thoroughly derogated vis-à-vis the police. But what had started in such aggressive fashion with the onset of the 1917 bombing campaign would find its fullest expression during the coming terrible week in the summer of 1919. In the narrow context

---

[37] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 178.
[38] Gary Krist, *City of Scoundrels* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012), 103.
[39] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 34.
[40] Morris Lewis to Walter White, January 21, 1922, Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, microfilm reproduction, series 12, reel 1.

of those few days, black Chicagoans would often find themselves totally without police protection when they needed it most; they would find themselves cast as suspicious by law enforcement officials based singularly upon their race; they would look on as political officials failed to handle the riot in a way that could have lessened the violence; and they would watch as many white police officers, rather than doing their legally charged task, seemed to instead gravitate toward a pose of racial solidarity when the weapons and words flew.

*

It started with a stone. And another. And another. They splashed in the water and thudded upon the wooden railroad tie to which seventeen-year-old Eugene Williams clung. A whole barrage of them, a hailstorm of rock, pounded down around the teenager as he floated, panicked, in the waters off Chicago's 29th Street beach. Informally but rigidly segregated, Chicago's beaches were a perilous place for a black person to breach Chicago's unseen but commonly understood Jim Crow lines. Black people swam at 25th Street, whites at 29th. Williams and his friends had set out into the lake on their homemade raft from the shallows around the "Hot and Cold"—a little island just off the Lake Michigan shoreline south of the 25th Street beach, hoping to paddle out, tie up at a post further into the lake, and practice diving and swimming. But the raft got carried by the current, too far south and past the manmade breakwater that stood as the northern boundary of the white swimming area. Tensions had already run high that day at the lakefront after several black people had tried to enter the 29th Street beach from the shore, and the sight of a raft of black boys floating into white waters set off angry reactions from white swimmers and sunbathers. A young man on the beach named George Stauber began hurling rocks at the raft, and whether from actually being struck or through force of panic, Eugene

Williams went under. By the time divers recovered his body more than thirty minutes later, he was dead.[41]

Williams' friends, now shore-bound, pointed George Stauber out to a black policeman that they had managed to flag down, who approached the young man to question and possibly arrest him. But Daniel Callahan, a white officer stationed at the beach, intervened, preventing the black officer from making the arrest. Williams' friends pleaded as crowds began to gather, but Callahan refused to see Stauber arrested. A short while later, Callahan himself arrested one of the black men shouting for Stauber's arrest. Outraged, black citizens swarmed Callahan, and a riot, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR) concisely noted later, "was under way."[42]

From the beach spot where Callahan was posted, the violence exploded outward across the South Side. Two hours after Eugene Williams's corpse was pulled from the Lake Michigan waters, a policeman's bullet struck down James Crawford, a black man, after Crawford allegedly fired his gun into a mass of police officers gathering in response to the heightening tensions. In the black districts near the beach, white men were beaten by mobs of black people. Further west, near the stockyards and where black neighborhoods abutted those of white ethnics, gangs of white youth mobilized; over the course of six hours, they beat twenty-seven black people, stabbed seven more, and shot four.[43] The geography and patterns of violence would shift to various flash points throughout the coming days, but its intensity never truly subsided until pouring rains and the Illinois National Guard entered the fray four days later.

Blame for the riot flooded in quickly. The most ready scapegoat was Officer Daniel Callahan, whose (in)actions in the moment and aftermath of Eugene Williams' killing were the most obvious precipitant of the violence. Blame churned his way. As the CCRR later put it, "The

[41] See Tuttle, *Race Riot*; Krist, *City of Scoundrels*, 169-171.
[42] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 4.
[43] Ibid. 5.

two facts, the drowning and the refusal to arrest, or widely circulated reports of such refusal, must be considered together as marking the inception of the riot….There was every possibility that the clash, without the further stimulus of reports of the policeman's conduct, would have quieted down."[44] Callahan's own police chief, John Garrity, upon temporarily suspending Callahan for failure of duty, echoed the thought: "If these charges [of refusal to arrest] are true, I believe Callahan is responsible for this outrageous rioting. The fact that he refused to arrest the white boy angered the Negroes, who sought revenge, and the deluge of hatred has inundated the city."[45] For his part, Callahan seemed perfectly willing to play the part of villain. To the end, he would remain remorseless about his culpability in the riot and explicit in his disdain for black people. Interviewed by the CCRR shortly after being reinstated to the CPD, Callahan told them—in a statement that was both classically packaged white supremacy and a masterwork of projection—that:

> So far as I can learn the black people have since history began despised the white people and have always fought them….It wouldn't take much to start another riot, and most of the white people of this district are resolved to make a clean-up this time…If a Negro should say one word back to me or should say a word to a white woman in the park, there is a crowd of young men of the district, mostly ex-service men, who would procure arms and fight shoulder to shoulder with me if trouble should come from the incident.[46]

But if Callahan could be identified as the instigator of the riot, others molded its context. Blame for the intense racial hostility that simmered before the riot broke lay far more with City Hall and Chicago police administrators than it did with individual officers. Members of the black community had been pleading for the hiring of more black officers to police the South Side during the hot summer months preceding the riot, as interracial hostilities soared. Just before the riot, the situation had deteriorated so far as to provoke some to beg the replacement of every single white officer in the Black Belt: "For the safety of the twenty-five thousand colored and ten

---

[44] Ibid, 5.
[45] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 30, 1919.
[46] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 451.

thousand whites in the Second Ward of Chicago," appealed one of numerous black people so advocating, "we ask that every white patrolman in the district be replaced by a colored bluecoat."[47] While that particular measure would have been impracticable in such a short amount of time, the city's failure to even take the sentiment behind such requests seriously was costly. By doing little to stop the cascade of bombs in recent years, and still less to try to mitigate anti-black sentiment in Chicago more broadly, city and police officials had helped create a tinderbox waiting on a spark.

Moreover, once the riot exploded, it was lengthened and worsened by political infighting and bureaucratic incompetence. As the riot began, Mayor William Hale Thompson was hundreds of miles away from Chicago, vacationing in Wyoming.[48] The papers and many citizens had questioned the wisdom of the trip even before the riot broke, given that the city was on the brink of a transit strike.[49] Worse still, Thompson had taken many of his top administrators with him to Cheyenne, including Police Commissioner John Garrity, leaving the city without its top law enforcement official when the late summer violence exploded. Moreover, as the riot progressed, Thompson and Governor Frank Lowden, both Republicans locked in internecine political warfare, wrangled and stalled over whether or not to call out the National Guard. Thompson, not wanting Lowden to get credit should the Guard succeed, refused to do it, and Lowden, nearly as stubbornly, refused to claim his gubernatorial prerogative to send Guard units in whether Thompson wanted them or not. Thus while Guardsmen got as far as Chicago, they sat in their bunkhouses for days while the city around them seethed with violence, before finally, four days in, being formally called upon to help quell the riot.

---

[47] CCRR, "Public Opinion and the Negro," box 114, folder 746, Lawson Papers.
[48] Douglas Bukowski, *Big Bill Thompson, Chicago, and the Politics of Image* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 104.
[49] Krist, *City of Scoundrels*.

With Garrity out west, it fell to Deputy Commissioner John Alcock to craft a strategy for reckoning with the violence, and by virtually all accounts, his plan—one that Garrity continued when he arrived back in town—failed to work. The CPD plan for curbing the riot called for blanketing the South Side with nearly every one of the department's 3,500 officers, and moreover, sending *four-fifths* of the entire department's force—2,800 officers—to the Black Belt in the South Side's heart. The department was particularly attuned to the Black Belt's boundaries with white neighborhoods, like the ominously monikered "Dead-Line" of Wentworth Avenue that separated parts of the Black Belt to the east from Irish Bridgeport to the west.[50] Once the saturation of the Black Belt with officers had been accomplished, departmental policy was to allow no one in or out of the area.

The effect was that while blacks were effectively quarantined inside the Black Belt, they lay deeply exposed outside of it. Men working at the stockyards and having to commute to and from work proved especially vulnerable – particularly after the looming transit strike became reality midway through the riot, forcing those workers still willing to risk getting to their jobs to do so on foot. White mobs flocked to the stockyards as a result, most notably and violently, youth gangs coming out of areas like Bridgeport, such as Ragen's Colts and the Hamburg Club.[51] Thus it was that forty-one percent of the injuries sustained during the riot took place to the west of the Black Belt in the area around the stockyards, versus thirty-four percent in the Black Belt itself, while in other parts of the city, the central Loop, especially, white rioters roamed through businesses that employed black service workers, pulled them out on the street, and beat them.[52]

---

[50] Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 61.

[51] The future Mayor Richard J. Daley, seventeen years old in 1919, was a member of the former group at the time of the riot; five years later he would serve as its president. Charges that he was involved in the rioting were never substantiated, and Daley himself remained silent on the matter in later years. Roger Biles, *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), 22.

[52] Stockyards vs. Black Belt injury statistics are from CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 37-8.

"Those of our group living in other parts of the city," the *Defender* mourned, eulogizing two black men beaten to death in the Loop, "were left to the mercy of the hoodlum."[53]

The hoodlum had no mercy, but he had political connections in spades. Even in these early years, local aldermen and political party precinct captains held significant sway over policing at the street level. On the one hand, although a Civil Service Commission was nominally responsible for matters of hiring for city positions, police jobs often got bound up in ward-level patronage politics, with men who might not otherwise qualify for such jobs finding their way onto the rolls anyway.[54] (This was, in part, the reason why even during some of the best of times, black representation on the police rolls ran at a rate roughly half of what it should have been based upon demographics.) On the other hand, because most police commissioners were political appointees, and because local politicians exerted such disproportionate power within the political machinery, those politicians were able to exercise an extraordinary amount of control over which officers worked in their districts, under threat of transfer if those officers failed to conduct themselves in accordance with politicians' demands.[55] White youth gangs (the

---

[53] *Chicago Defender*, March 20, 1920.

[54] The recollections of a white CPD officer named Joseph Sevick, a respected policeman who retired from the CPD in 1967 after some forty years of service, illustrate the point. Whether Sevick himself passed through civil service channels on his road to employment in the police station is difficult to say, but his personal papers contain a detailed recounting of the aid he gave his brother in getting on the force is illuminating. Sevick's brother John was too short to pass the CPD's entry physical, and physical stature was supposed to be a non-negotiable component of the department's evaluation metric. But if you knew the right people, the story could be different. Sevick called in favors to the CPD Commissioner's Office, where someone got John's height requirement waived. Sevick then called a friend at the Deputy Coroner's office, who supplied John with an answer sheet to memorize for the department's mental exam. The rest is history. John got a job with the CPD despite his various deficiencies of qualification; and he acknowledged, in fact, that the process had been even easier for some of his co-applicants who "otherwise could never have passed [the exam] were it not for some political clout that they had." Obituary of Joseph Sevick, *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1999; Obituary of Joseph Sevick, source unknown, in Joseph Sevick Papers (single folder), Chicago History Museum Research Collection, Chicago, IL (hereafter, Sevick Papers); Joseph Sevick, Untitled Document, Sevick Papers.

[55] This is precisely what happened to William Meadows, who patrolled the South Side Levee district in the early 1900s until he found himself transferred "to the woods" (one of the far-flung, long-transit corners of the CPD's jurisdiction) in 1909 after arresting two women for soliciting for sex in a South Side saloon. Prostitution, though common, was of course technically illegal, but Meadows had chosen his targets poorly: the saloon had been owned by two officers in the local Republican political organization, who had in turn demanded that the CPD station chief in their district transfer him out of their neighborhood. Richard C. Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect: Chicago Politics*

Defender's "hoodlums") often performed work in service of those same local politicians, and even when they didn't, they and their families were thoroughly enmeshed in their local community networks. So when it came to problems between those youth gangs and outside groups, particularly blacks, there were an array of built-in institutional protections for the white youths. Consider, for instance, a story from six weeks prior to the riot, when white youth gang members had murdered two black men "for no more apparent reason than their desire to 'get a nigger.'" There were witnesses to the murders, but no arrests, "strengthening the suspicion," as historian Allan Spear pointed out, "that the gangs were protected by white politicians."[56] The CCRR leveled similar claims at the time of the riot, writing that "political 'pull' exercised with the police on behalf of [white] rioters has been indicated."[57] Similarly, a local politician told the *Tribune* during the riot that police officers were telling whites "to arm themselves, that the blacks were coming and that the cops couldn't stop them."[58] One member of Ragen's Colts reported being tipped off by a Stockyards district officer to avoid the gang's headquarters because the Attorney General's office was running surveillance on it.[59]

While many officers, out of racial fealty or fear of being reprimanded politically or socially, neglected to pursue the main perpetrators of violence during the riot, still others plainly abetted or meted out violence of their own. Such stories were legion. On the second full day of rioting, a black man named William Thornton went looking for his mother near Thirty-First and State Streets after she had gone missing. With violence raging around him and fearing for his safety, Thornton asked a policeman to escort him home. The officer instead took him to the

---

and Police Corruption from the Lager Beer Riot to the Summerdale Scandal (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press), 128.
[56] Spear, *Black Chicago*, 213.
[57] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 39.
[58] *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1919.
[59] Ibid.

police station on Cottage Grove Avenue and threw him in a cell. Another man asked officers for protection, only to find himself searched, clubbed, and finally, when he tried to run away, shot. Wellington Dunmore reported being beaten in plain sight of two white officers who did nothing to intervene. For John Slovall and his brother, the same story: beaten and robbed by a white mob while a white officer looked on. Worse still for Horace Jennings, who reported that, as he lay bleeding on the ground after being attacked by a white mob, a white police officer approached him, snarling, "Where's your gun, you black son of a bitch? You damn niggers are raising hell." To add injury to insult, Jennings said the officer knocked him unconscious with a blow to the head and robbed him of thirteen dollars. And on and on.[60]

While hatred seemed to guide the actions of the officer who attacked Horace Jennings, far more common was police officers' suspicions that black people were instigators of violence – blackness, as it were, as a proxy for criminal proclivity. The evidence was plain in arrest patterns during the riot. One report that documented the alleged criminal actions of 229 people during the riot ledgered 154 blacks against seventy-five whites. The state's attorney's office reported eighty-one indictments against blacks, forty-seven against whites.[61] An early draft of the CCRR's research found that in the five years prior to 1919, seventy-one white people and just one black person had been arrested on charges of rioting, while in the actual year of the city's biggest race riot, when race relations went the way of war, twenty-nine white and twenty-six black people were so arrested.[62] (This statistic failed to make it into the CCRR's final, published edition of its report, for reasons that are unclear.) Both anecdotally and statistically, these numbers suggest patterns of violence almost directly inverse to reality: while twice as many

[60] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 34-5; 38-9.
[61] Ibid., 35.
[62] CCRR, "The Negro and Crime," 53.

blacks than whites had been murdered and injured in rioting that had been entirely interracial, twice as many blacks were arrested and indicted.

Contemporary observers—both black and white—openly balked as these patterns crystalized in front of them. Writers for the *Crisis*, the national NAACP's print mouthpiece, pointed out that not only were there few arrests made in instances of white-on-black violence, but that it was difficult even to get *details* about white perpetrators because of police officers' evident lack of concern with their crimes. Speaking on the problems in trying to bring white rioters to trial, editorialists wrote: "The police were responsible for this state of affairs, for while they arrested colored rioters with great enthusiasm, they failed to arrest white rioters."[63] The dissonance was so extreme that it inspired the grand jury convened to hear riot cases to effectively go on strike until more white people were brought forward for indictment. Their statement, in part, read as follows:

> This jury has no apology to offer for its attitude with reference to requesting the state's attorney to supply it with information of crimes perpetrated by whites against blacks before considering further evidence against blacks….The reason for this attitude arose from a sense of justice on the part of this jury. It is the opinion of this jury that the colored people suffered more at the hands of the white hoodlums that the white people suffered at the hands of the black hoodlums. Notwithstanding this fact, the cases presented to this jury against the blacks far outnumber those against the whites.[64]

As the prosecutor in these grand jury cases, and thus feeling as though he rather than the police were the one being accused by the jury, State's Attorney Maclay Hoyne protested that it was the police who were to blame for the prosecutorial disjuncture. Testifying before the CCRR, Hoyne argued that, "there is no doubt that a great many police officers were grossly unfair in making arrests. They shut their eyes to offenses committed by white men while they were very vigorous

---

[63] *The Crisis*, 19:3 (January 1920), 129.

[64] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 35. The grand jury's statement is meaningful, though it did not stay out of session long. Its members resumed hearing cases the following day, when they voted in favor of indictments against twenty-three African Americans. See "Indict 23 More in Riot Cases; 5 as Slayers," *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1919.

in getting all the colored men they could."[65] Hoyne was a political aspirant who despised Mayor Bill Thompson, and thus had great cause to try to undermine the legitimacy of his police force. He also possessed exceedingly low opinions of African Americans, made oddly manifest in wild conspiracy theories that black people had consorted to incite the riot, and his prosecutorial efforts held evidence of racial bias at almost every turn. But the condemnations of an independent coroner's jury supported his claims and the grand jury's larger point:

> Our attention was called strikingly to the fact that at the time of the race rioting, the arrests made for rioting by the police of colored rioters were far in excess of the arrests made of white rioters. The failure of the police to arrest impartially, at the time of rioting, whether from insufficient effort or otherwise, was a mistake.[66]

Illinois Attorney General Edward Brundage was even less charitable, weighing the facts of the riot against the patterns of arrest and calling the conduct of the police department "flagrantly neglectful."[67]

*

The trials would end and the city would shift toward détente, but for many black people, the riot of 1919 opened psychic wounds that left deep scars. So many things, morphed into bitter symbols of racial ferocity. For the parents of Dempsey Travis, water carried terror, with Travis remembering that his mother, stricken by the memory of the riot and its beachfront origins, "never put even a toe into Lake Michigan's water" after that year. His father never wore a swimsuit again.[68] Decades later, a Chicagoan by the name of Chester Wilkins looked back on the riot as a moment when the black community came to realize the degree to which it was on its own when under attack. In a 1969 interview, Wilkins described the riot to historian William

[65] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 34.
[66] Ibid, 36.
[67] *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 1919.
[68] Travis, *Autobiography of Black Chicago*, 26.

Tuttle as having brought black Chicago "closer together than they had ever been before," and demonstrating to them their need to arm and protect themselves.[69]

From an institutional perspective, the relationship between the CPD and the black community would perhaps never be the same. Editorializing the following spring, the *Defender* rhetorically asked, "Who among us does not remember how defenseless men and women of our group, innocent of any thought of wrongdoing, were dragged from their homes and incarcerated in dark and dingy cells? And this, too, in the face of the fact that their only crime was in seeking to defend themselves and their homes from the [white rioters]."[70] Consider, too, Chester Wilkins' latter-day reflection that the riot provoked a response by many black Chicagoans to arm themselves, or national NAACP leader Walter White's 1920 statement that black people felt "that they will have to depend upon themselves for proper defense."[71] Few things speak more assertively to the lack of faith in police officers' ability or willingness to protect black interests, and more generally to the sense of civil society's breakdown.

Those conjoined themes of neglect and abuse, so powerfully on display during the Red Summer heat, would continue to shape police-community relations in the post-riot years. While the chaotic violence of the riot had few correlates in everyday life during the 1920s, the ways that the police acted during it did. Patterns of differential arrest, under-protection, abuse and brutality, all broadly evident during the riot, would reverberate through the following decade.

Similarly, police failures to properly protect black people had strong analogues, particularly during a period of ongoing white terrorism that prevailed in the years after the riots. In the winter of 1920, the *Defender* lashed out at Mayor Thompson's affinity for hiding behind racially progressive political appointments while doing precisely nothing to counteract white

---

[69] Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 243.
[70] *Chicago Defender*, March 20, 1920
[71] Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 256.

violence—"the welfare of all the Colored community," the paper editorialized, "cannot be bargained away for a mess of political pottage."[72] Repeatedly, the paper's writers and letters to the editors raised the point. In April 1921, the editors asked, "Does the police department of our city, which we pay to protect us, countenance the evil [of racist bombings], or does it admit to its inability to eradicate it?"[73] A husband and father of three who labored on the railroads penned a letter to the editor the following month that distilled the fears of many residents of the black South Side: "Every malicious bomb exploded adds to the terror of the situation, and then, when we consider the passiveness of the city and police officials in connection with these outrages the conditions seem hopeless."[74] And it wasn't just in reference to bombs: Arthur Burch, a black packinghouse worker, was beaten by a gang of white street toughs within view of a white police officer. When Burch appealed to the officer for help, the patrolman told him he'd better catch a streetcar out of the area.[75]

For as much as such stories bespoke the violation of black rights, if not a diminished consideration of their humanity by the police, few things scorched black relationships with the police quite as badly as the complaints of brutality and torture emergent during the 1920s. In 1925, the *Defender*'s editorial board summarized the issue: "Complaint is frequently made of the brutality of the police, and there is no group of people who have suffered more, physically and mentally, than we have."[76] Brutality had many contexts, from being clubbed on the street to being abused in an interrogation room as police tried to extract a confession – the latter of which was often euphemized as "giving someone the third degree" but which fits most modern definitions of torture: banging rubber hoses across a suspect's abdomen; placing a box over their

[72] *Chicago Defender*, February 21, 1920.
[73] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), April 9, 1921.
[74] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), May 7, 1921.
[75] *Chicago Defender*, September 11, 1920.
[76] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), April 11, 1925.

head and filling it with tear gas; applying acid to genitals; sleep deprivation; hanging prisoners upside down by their ankles; beating them with poles to the point of eyeball dislocation and blindness; and so on.[77] It was mostly men and boys who came in for such treatment, and their age appears not to have mattered much. In March 1924, a pair of black high school boys, Ivan Glen and Vane Ware, described being taken into the "'goldfish' room" at a police station house for interrogation into an alleged robbery. When Glen said he knew nothing about the robbery, an officer punched him in the gut and knocked him to the floor, while a second beat his head with a rubber hose. One of the officers then pinioned the boy's head to the floor with his boot while others kicked and beat him while hurling strings of racial epithets. The officers threw Glen into a cell, brought Ware to the interrogation room, told him that Glen had confessed, and gave him roughly the same treatment as Glen when Ware said he didn't know anything about the robbery. No witnesses to the robbery could identify the boys, multiple witnesses testified to their having been at a basketball game when the robbery was said to have taken place, and within a couple of days the charges against them had been thrown out. When Ware returned to school four days after the beating, he could hardly walk.[78]

Year in and year out during the 1920s, these sorts of stories surfaced. Three years after the beatings of Ivan Glen and Vane Ware, police reportedly arrested a black suspect, took him into custody, and proceeded to fracture his skull and break two of his ribs using an iron rod. When he passed out from the pain, officers threw water in his face to revive him, and beat him again.[79] Two years later, a South Side woman identifying herself simply as "Mrs. Woods," who

---

[77] Report of the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1931), vol. 11: "Lawlessness in Law Enforcement"; Ernest Jerome Hopkins, *Our Lawless Police: A Study of the Unlawful Enforcement of the Law* (New York: Viking Press, 1931), 218-219; Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Walter H. Pollak, Carl S. Stern, "The Third Degree: Report to the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement," (New York: Arno Press, 1969 [1931]), 128, n. 84.
[78] *Chicago Defender*, March 29, 1924.
[79] *Chicago Defender*, July 23, 1927.

lived next door to the police station at 48th and Wabash, described nearly being driven toward a "nervous breakdown from hearing those poor prisoners crying like children" as police officers split lips, knocked out teeth, and committed any number of other abusive acts. Affirming her commitment to upholding the law and opposition to law-breaking, Woods nonetheless asked a question that was undoubtedly on the minds of a good many of her fellow citizens: regardless of guilt, "why should a man be treated so terribly?" She answered her own question: "I do not see them (white officers) treating their own like that. Maybe because they are only after the colored man. It's a shame, a disgrace to humanity, and it should be stopped now."[80]

But it wasn't stopped. Such violent impulses found their logical culmination in police killings disproportionately falling upon black people. For the years during the 1920s for which such statistical information is available, African Americans constituted more than forty percent of people killed by the police in cases that the courts ruled justifiable or excusable.[81] The *Defender* alluded to this trend in 1929 in an editorial criticizing the *Tribune*'s practice of giving $100 "bravery" awards each month to a particular CPD officer – an award that seventy percent of the time was given to a police officer who had killed a suspect and, "more than half" of the time, was given to "killers of black men."[82] A year later, a sixteen-year-old African American boy accused of breaking a store window was killed in his home in a hail of thirty-five bullets when police officers broke into his house without a warrant. In response Ida B. Wells wrote a scathing editorial in the *Chicago Daily News*: "Perhaps if the city had recognized [the consistent killing of black men by police] as a menace to her fair fame and public sentiment and then

[80] *Chicago Defender*, February 2, 1929.
[81] For these four years for which these numbers are available, the total number of justifiable/excusable killings ran to 147, sixty of whom were black. See CPD Annual Reports for 1923, 1926, 1928, and 1929.
[82] *Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1929.

sternly demanded the removal of incompetent heads of the police department, [the boy] might not now be lying cold in death."[83]

The problem of police violence served as the stamp on a broader set of issues involving interactions between black people and the police. Indeed, while such violence dominated headlines and editorial pages, more common complaints leveled by African Americans revolved around feeling targeted by police for arrest based singularly upon their skin color – early signals of tendencies toward race-based over-policing. As the *Defender* put it in a 1921 editorial, "to the white officer, every black face is a potential criminal," echoing the comments of a criminal court judge the previous year: "I don't think the police are quite as careful with reference to the rights of the colored man as with reference to the rights of the white man. I think they hesitate a little longer [to arrest] when a white man is involved….I am certain that it is so."[84] Interviewed by the CCRR in 1920, Dr. Herman Adler responded similarly when asked whether it made a difference to a white policeman if a suspect was white or black: "We all know that it does make a difference. We know that there is race prejudice. We know that certain races are not popular. On the whole a policeman is taking fewer chances if he arrests a colored man than if he arrests a white man. He is not so likely to get into trouble."[85] So widespread were such opinions that, before dulling the assessment's sharp edges a bit in the report they eventually made public, the CCRR confidentially argued that, "The testimony [of various people within Chicago's law enforcement community] is practically unanimous that Negroes are much more liable to arrest than whites since police officers share in the general opinion of the public that Negroes 'are more criminal than whites,' and also feel that there is little risk in arresting Negroes."[86]

---

[83] Khalil Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 249.
[84] *Chicago Defender* National Edition, September 3, 1921; CCRR, "The Negro and Crime," 126.
[85] Ibid, 127.
[86] Ibid, 115.

These tendencies reflected trends that had been developing around the nation for decades. The entire social and intellectual climate of late-1910s/1920s America engendered racist assumptions of black criminality and produced concomitant arguments for the necessity of more assertive law enforcement control of blacks. As historian Khalil Muhammad has demonstrated, by the early decades of the twentieth century, suppositions of socially or culturally innate black criminality had burrowed their way into the intellectual circuitry of the United States' sociological and criminological communities.[87] Those ideas—call them conceptions of racial inferiority or of cultural depravity—subsequently poured out of the academy and into the practices and logics of law enforcement. In urban areas, police officers and officials, inclined to see black people as shifty, dishonest, or dangerous, routinely targeted African American migrants especially for questioning or arrest. In the process of acting upon this notion of black criminality and arresting African Americans in large numbers, they *reified* that very same stereotype of black criminal proclivity. As Muhammad has pointed out, with the late-1910s rising tide of migration, black arrest and imprisonment rates in places like Cleveland and Pittsburgh went through the roof, less because black people were committing demonstrably more crimes than because police departments *assumed* they were committing more crimes and thus singled them out as targets.[88]

In Chicago, the same. As the above observers testified to, police officers often assumed black people to be more criminally inclined, and those who did not often focused their arrest powers on black citizens because considerations of politics or profit kept them from meeting their performance expectations through arrests of white people. In turn, black arrest rates rose disproportionately, particularly for petty crimes against the public order and especially because

[87] Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness.*
[88] Ibid., 232-235.

police generated so many numbers through raids on black homes and clubs that were unprotected by politicians and payoffs. Statistically minded proponents of blacks-as-criminals theories could then point to those arrest statistics as evidence of what they had been saying all along. Although the assessment was dropped from the final cut of *The Negro in Chicago,* preliminary drafts of the report show how, already by 1920, the CCRR could clearly discern the intersecting crux of racism and law enforcement that would deeply shape American race relations through the entire twentieth century:

> Fewer Negroes than whites escape arrest and prosecution. When comparisons are made on the basis of statistics for arrests and convictions, there is presented, unless proper explanations of the statistics are made, an erroneous picture of Negro crime. Thus is kept up the vicious circle: Negroes are arrested more readily because the figures show them as a group to have a high crime rate, and figures are large – showing a high Negro crime rate – because Negroes are more readily arrested.[89]

Black criminality, in other words, though a logic built of fictions, became a self-fulfilling prophecy in the broader society's consciousness.[90]

---

[89] CCRR, "Crime and the Negro," 116.

[90] Across the country, the blacks-as-criminals trope continued to produce a wide range of ripple effects and moments. Some were obvious, others strange. For instance, the 1920s witnessed an upturn in the number of white people blackening their faces and hands in the committing of a crime. Although it is impossible to accurately say how often this happened, black newspapers around the country reported such acts—call it criminal minstrelsy—with enough frequency to suggest that it was more common than might be expected. This was a phenomenon that transcended regional boundaries. White gang members allegedly did it in Chicago during the 1919 riot, corking their faces and setting white houses ablaze in an effort to generate retaliation. Dade City, Florida, in 1919. Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1920. Phoenix, Arizona in 1922. Elizabeth, New Jersey and Kansas City, Missouri in 1923. St. Louis, Missouri in 1926 and 1927. Denver, Colorado in 1928. In Camden, Tennessee in 1922 a mob "with faces blackened like minstrel performers" pulled two white men convicted of murder out of a local jail and lynched them. In February 1926, the *Detroit Independent* reported that four white Detroit police officers had been corking their faces to try to infiltrate black gambling rings. Decrying the precedent being by the lawmen, the *Independent* hinted too at criminal minstrelsy's frequency: "White men disguised in [blackface] find it equally easy to commit highway robberies, murders, burglary, and assault on women, and shift the suspicion on Negroes. Policemen with blackened faces may find it easy at times to apprehend colored lawbreakers, but it is a dangerous precedent by which many white youths with criminal proclivities might be led to commit crime and escape detection by hiding behind a black mask." (The *Independent*'s article was reprinted in the *New York Amsterdam News*.) *The Nation* similarly editorialized in 1927, following a suspicious report of a white woman who accused two black men of attempted assault in Hammonton, New Jersey, that, "Every Negro knows that there is no commoner device of white criminals than to blacken their faces or for persons guilty of a crime to declare that 'to Negro brutes' committed it." (*The Nation*'s piece was reprinted in the *Pittsburgh Courier*.) These acts of criminal minstrelsy, and black recognition of its commonplaceness, both reflected and anticipated W.E.B. Du Bois's comment in the *Crisis* in 1932 that, "Nothing in the world is easier in the United States than to accuse a black man of a crime." *Chicago Defender*, May 10, 1919; *Chicago Defender*, January 3, 1920; *Chicago Defender*, May 27, 1922; *New York Amsterdam News*, February 14, 1923; *Chicago Defender*, December 15, 1923; *New York Amsterdam News*, September 15, 1926; *Chicago Defender*, April 30, 1927; *Chicago Defender*, April 21, 1928; *Chicago Defender*, October 28, 1922; Reprinted in the *New York*

As more and more African Americans found themselves caught in this tangle, it had real effects on their lives. Although the intensity of law enforcement surveillance in black Chicago was by several degrees less severe than it would become in later decades, there was still a unique acuity marking police attention to black petty crime already in these early days. In 1920, a year in which black people made up just over four percent of Chicago's total population, they constituted 11.3 percent of the CPD's total arrests. They were overrepresented more than two and a half times in disorderly conduct arrests and vagrancy arrests, and nearly six times over for being inmates of a "disorderly house"—speakeasies, illegal theaters, and so on.[91] Crucially, that year was neither an outlier nor a high-water mark. In 1921, noted E. Franklin Frazier, one in ten black men between seventeen and forty-four years of age living in the dilapidated areas clustered nearest the Loop had spent time in the county jail *that year*.[92] By mid-decade, the *Defender* was lamenting the fact that, particularly in the Black Belt, "the police picked up the just with the unjust and made life [unbearable] for the decent, respectable citizens."[93] By the close of the decade, arrest rates for African Americans were even further misaligned: fully one quarter of citizens arrested by the CPD in 1929 was black (48,806 out of 194,999), while the African American portion of Chicago's population was less than seven percent.[94]

The potential reasons for arrest were innumerable. Sometimes they were in response to real breaches of the legal code, other times they were driven by officers' own outlooks on propriety and decency and racial supremacy. Unsurprisingly, interracial intimacy was a particular affront to some officers. In 1923, reports surfaced recurrently of white police officers

---

Amsterdam News, February 3, 1926; *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 8, 1927; W.E.B. Du Bois, "Courts and Jails," *Crisis*, April 1932.

[91] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1920, CPL MRC.

[92] Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago*, 210.

[93] *Chicago Defender*, April 11, 1925.

[94] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1930, CPL MRC.

on the South Side accosting black/white couples appearing to breach the color line—the social taboo *in extremis* during the early twentieth century. The issue was particularly serious (predictably) for black men and white women (as well as black men with lightly complexioned black women), who constantly complained of police harassment when officers came across them in public places together. William Gray, a black man, was arrested in Chicago's City Hall for escorting a white woman by the arm down a hallway after she left court.[95] Harvey Jackson was mercilessly beaten by two white officers when they mistook his light-skinned wife for a white woman; the officers charged Jackson with disorderly conduct, with Jackson quickly acquitted by a jury.[96] *Defender* founder and editor Robert Abbott went so far as to write an open letter to CPD Commissioner Collins on the matter, demanding that "what the South Side needs is not so much in the way of additional police officers as more TACTFUL AND SENSIBLE police officers, who are good officers to administer the law and not go beyond the law in preserving the peace of the community."[97] Failing that, Abbot warned, threatened to provoke another outbreak of violence on par with July 1919.[98]

Contemporary explanations for disproportionate arrest rates hinged upon more than just racism. Some saw them as a logical result of similarly disproportionate crime on the part of blacks. Ascriptions for such criminality would sometimes fall into the predictable realm of white supremacy, such as commonplace claims about black moral and social inferiority. Others saw regional explanations: with the flood of migrants pouring into the city, many observers, black and white alike, assumed that it was black *southerners* who were constantly running afoul of the law because they were failing to acclimate to the urban environment. Others looked at crime

[95] *Chicago Defender*, December 8, 1923.
[96] *Chicago Defender*, August 11, 1923.
[97] *Chicago Defender*, June 23, 1923. Emphasis in original.
[98] *Chicago Defender*, June 23, 1923.

rates and saw at work the wages of structural inequality embedded in ghettoization and diminished opportunities. Writing in the national Urban League's mouthpiece, *Opportunity*, in 1929, T. Arnold Hill warned that limited employment opportunities for blacks, particularly their growing relegation to domestic and service work, produced a group of people "driven to commit crime."[99]

But others rejected the idea of there being anything at all unique about black crime – or at least the extent to which it was unique. When it published *The Negro in Chicago*, in fact, the CCRR ultimately rejected consideration of comparative crime statistics across racial and ethnic groups, disavowing "figures which carried such clear evidence of their own inaccuracy and misrepresentation."[100] That sort of inaccuracy derived from multiple sources, not least of all the various inequalities in how people were policed, and the suppositions of black criminality that coursed throughout the city and nation.

The idea that black arrest rates were excessive, and claims of black crime overwrought, was buttressed by the frequency with which the charges police preferred failed to hold up in court. Police officers came under criticism by watchdog groups like the Chicago Crime Commission for their laxity in properly preparing evidence and reports, which in turn led to numerous exonerations on technicalities.[101] Meanwhile, the maw of Chicago's criminal courts had a tendency to chew slowly and get congested, a fact that maddened police officials and reformers pushing for a more punitive and efficient law enforcement system.[102] And while these were issues that often transcended race and blanketed the criminal justice process in general,

---

[99] Toure F. Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League & the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 76.
[100] CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 330.
[101] See, for example, various accounts in the report of the Chicago Crime Commission's Committee on Police from 1923. Chicago Crime Commission, Fifth Annual Report of the Chicago Crime Commission: 1923, Chicago Crime Commission Records (hereafter, CCC Records), Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL, especially p. 23.
[102] On the congestion of the criminal courts, see Chicago Crime Commission, Fourth Annual Report of the Chicago Crime Commission: 1922, CCC Records.

there was an added racial dimension at work when it came to black arrestees charged and brought to court. The testimonials of defense attorneys like Roy Woods (who angrily averred that "too often, self-respecting citizens of Chicago find themselves facing cell bars for no other reason than because their skins are dark") and criminal court judges like Kickham Seanlan ("I don't think the police are quite as careful with reference to the rights of the colored man as with reference to the rights of the white man") demonstrate an awareness within the legal system of the racially prejudicial ways that policing was conducted vis-à-vis African Americans.

Arguably the clearest place to see the collision of many of these factors – politicized policing, racist public policy, attenuated black social power, and social conceptions of black criminality – was in the context of vice and the ways that the city responded to it. For different reasons, vice and African American urban life were deeply entangled both in reality and in the racial imagination of many Americans by the time of the First World War and the Great Migration. Social scientists and generations of race-based assumptions of black deficiency had taught white Americans that black people harbored unique proclivities toward addiction, "passion," and indecency. Moreover, the suspicion of black morality was heightened by urban segregation, particularly in the case of northern urban centers like Chicago where public policies had specifically channeled and contained vice to black neighborhoods since before the turn of the century. In the 1890s, city administrators who had become worried about the proximity of the vice district—known as "the Levee"—to the downtown business district decided not to eradicate the Levee itself but to relocate it further south into neighborhoods that were beginning to transition into black communities. That situation repeated itself in 1912 when a city-sponsored Vice Commission recommended a severe crackdown on prostitution in the new Levee, which

pushed and scattered vice even deeper into the Black Belt.[103] This was not coincidence. His disparagements of sex workers aside, the words of one former chief of police deftly capture broader city policy on the matter: "so long as this degenerate group of persons confined their residence [to colored areas] they would not be apprehended."[104]

Historian Khalil Muhammad, in his indispensible *The Condemnation of Blackness*, writes in reference to these trends and to the political benefits bestowed upon the white powerbrokers who crafted them, that "ineffective policing was good public policy," and there is great truth to the statement.[105] Highlighting what were problems of failing protection in the minds of many black Chicagoans, "ineffectiveness" certainly meant that there were few honest efforts to actually eradicate vice when it was located in black neighborhoods. It meant that people with sensibilities opposed to promiscuity and other "immoralities," who understandably wanted to see their communities rid of brothels or gambling dens, were constantly frustrated, which we will turn to momentarily. And yet it surely did not equate to a totally laissez-faire approach to policing. Instead, in the vice districts, the comparative "effectiveness" of the police, in the most basic sense, often revolved around whether or not people in that district were paying enough to keep the police at bay. Those who could pay officers and officials to look the other way could keep their operations going largely undisturbed; those who would not or could not faced the consequences.

Politics often guided these decisions as much as money did. Allowing vice rings to continue to exist meant kickbacks not just for police, but for politicians, too, and allowing them to continue *specifically in black neighborhoods* meant that few people outside that particularly marginalized community would care—especially since so many Chicagoans already assumed

[103] Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 258.
[104] Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 259.
[105] Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 226.

that black neighborhoods were the natural home for vice operations. (Circular logic again brought home.) Politicians could conceivably score points in multiple senses by variously allowing vice to take hold in black neighborhoods when it was expedient, and clamping down hard on it just as easily. In the 1927 mayoral election, for instance, Democratic incumbent William Dever, sensing that he was going to get none of the black vote against Republican challenger and former mayor Bill Thompson, sent CPD officers crashing through bars, brothels, and private homes in the South Side's predominantly black Second and Third Wards. In one Friday, the police arrested more than a thousand black people and held all of them over the weekend before releasing them the following Monday. Questioned about the raids, Dever's chief of police, Morgan Collins, offered a variety of explanations for them, mostly centering around the proliferation of gambling dens and other forms of vice. Yet beyond that, a bright through line of racist supremacy and solidarity colored Collins' logic, claiming as he did that ever since Thompson had come out of the Republican primary as that party's official candidate, throughout the South Side "white people don't dare walk on the sidewalks for fear of being elbowed off."[106] Here was an appeal to some of the basest racial logics then current in America.[107]

The context in which all of this was happening was important. Vice may have been a public policy concern for civic leaders in preceding decades, but questions about its fate grew increasingly intense during the 1920s because of the implementation of Prohibition and the rise of organized crime. Chicago stood as one of the epicenters in America's battles over morality

---

[106] Bukowski, *Big Bill Thompson*, 180; Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 253-254.

[107] For a history of these sorts of contests over sidewalks and public spaces more generally, in a global scope, see Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, *Sidewalks: Conflict and Negotiation Over Public Space* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011). Although these contests over public space are outside the focus of this study, other than where the police were actively involved, Robin Kelley's work on black "infrapolitics" is useful for thinking about things like black Chicagoans elbowing whites off the sidewalks. (If Collins is to be believed that this was indeed happening.) See Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); also, Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80:1 (June 1993): 75-112.

and criminality during the decade, as a series of mob families and bosses claimed a piece of the turf in the city. In the early years, the Genna brothers reigned out of Little Italy on the Near West Side, creating a network of home stills there so prolific that the whole neighborhood reputedly reeked of alcohol fumes.[108] Legendary mobsters like Johnny Torrio, Dean O'Banion, and other crime bosses joined the fracas at various points. Bodies piled up by the hundreds, dominating headlines and police and political concerns. The stars of all these bosses would eventually be eclipsed by Al Capone, the era's most famous bootlegger and mobster, who became virtually synonymous in the public mind and memory with Prohibition's ironic role as the midwife of organized crime and its attendant violence.[109]

As bootlegging emerged as such a lucrative enterprise, those organized crime syndicates looked for turf in which they could establish themselves and grow their operations. While they often kept things as close to home as possible, like the Gennas working out of Little Italy, others migrated to places where there were already established vice zones, in which the politicians and police could easily be bought. So it was, for instance, that by the time Al Capone murdered and muscled his way to the top of the crime boss hierarchy, he had made the South Side one of his central operational havens. As a series of exposés in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Daily Journal* uncovered in 1927 and 1928, when it rooted itself in the South Side, organized crime and vice there held a privileged place relative to the rest of the city in terms of the CPD's toleration for and protection of it.[110] Moreover, and especially during the Republican mayoral administrations of Bill Thompson, City Hall ordered police to lay off South Side saloons and vice dens from which political favors could be gleaned in the form of votes and money.[111] In

[108] Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise & Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 128.
[109] On the synonymous reputation of Capone and Prohibition's breeding of crime, see Okrent, *Last Call*, 321-322.
[110] Walter C. Reckless, *Vice in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 71.
[111] *Ibid.,* 90.

1922, for instance, the *Daily News* ran a feature detailing a veritable "immunity zone" for vice to operate in a wide swath of blocks centering around Indiana and 31st in the Douglas neighborhood, where black politician Dan Jackson headed an operation that extracted tribute from gambling resorts and drinking dives in return for police looking the other way.[112]

In this way, the lives of many African Americans were deeply shaped by mob activity, due to basic facts of physical proximity and political concerns. Vice lords had the money to pay off the police so that they could continue their operations unmolested, lending the South Side a reputation as one of the widest-open sections of what was a very wide-open town. Yet despite living in or near those "immunity zones" and centers of mob activity, the majority of black Chicagoans themselves were only peripherally involved in them. At the upper echelons of the organized crime syndicates, trust circles were often tightly bound along ethnic or even familial lines. More importantly, mob bosses like the Genna brothers and Al Capone operated with the sort of financial resources and political cover that few black people could command. There were a handful of notable exceptions in the gambling world, where a few African Americans rose to wealth and social prominence through control of gambling rings. But they were far from the norm.

These patterns shaped the options of people in other vice economies, as well. For example, and as shown by historian Cynthia Blair's meticulous reconstruction of the working world of black prostitutes in Chicago at and after the turn of the century, the concentration of prostitution in black communities was a deliberate project of municipal authorities, and the black women who participated in the sex trade were uniquely subject to police power.[113] This was especially true with the ascendency of organized crime during Prohibition-era Chicago, as the

---

[112] *Ibid.*, 92.

[113] Other works showcasing how local authorities directed vice toward black neighborhoods late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth include Spear, *Black Chicago* and Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes.*

Capone mob syndicate came increasingly to offer protection to white women working in the industry. Blair writes:

> [M]any of these resorts [in black districts] were under the control of increasingly powerful vice syndicates, crime organizations able to broker protection from politicians and police for their enterprises. While it is difficult to determine how many resorts were controlled by syndicates, it appears that most white women who worked in the Black Belt worked in connection with a syndicate. A large proportion of Black Belt resorts operated without syndicate protection, however. Black women tended to work in nightclubs and apartment-based houses that existed beyond vice networks. Lacking the cover and protection of the syndicates, black prostitutes encountered police harassment much more often than did white prostitutes working on the South Side."[114]

Once again, arrest statistics demonstrate some of the effects. Police arrested black women for prostitution at much higher rates than were their white counterparts, comprising one-third of those arrested as "inmates of houses of prostitution" in 1922, more than half in 1924, and an incredible seventy-eight percent by the onset of the Great Depression.[115] As Blair argues, part of what explains this rise—harkening back to aforementioned harassment of interracial couples by police officers—was the growing permeability of the color line which black prostitutes depended upon for their trade. White men were frequenting black houses of prostitution, and observers and arbiters of the color line were panicking, placing demands upon the police, investigatory bodies, and anti-delinquency organizations to put an end to such practices.

In other words, the folkloric idea that 1920s-era Chicago was a place where anyone could get away with anything, at any time, was and is a fiction, and black Chicagoans without means were the exceptions that proved the rule. It is true that some black kingpins flew ascendant in the various vice rings of the day. But where black Chicagoans were involved in organized crime—particularly in reference to the liquor trade that was the mob's financial lifeblood—was mostly at the same levels as white ethnics: small-scale distillers, low-grade numbers runners, saloon keepers, and, most of all, consumers. Lacking much in the way of material resources, they

---

[114] Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 232-3.
[115] Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin'*, 234.

seldom had protection when it came to getting busted by the police for their illicit actions, hence the constant reports of black-owned speakeasies being raided and shuttered, their patrons hauled off to jail. The same for black people arrested on gambling charges, who often were taken in and charged as patrons of a "disorderly house." The same for black sex workers without access to people able to pay off the police. Put differently, the thousands of African Americans swept up by police arrests every year would probably be surprised to hear latter-day characterizations of the Black Belt as a place where anything went.

So, too, would black people who inhabited other socioeconomic orbits, and who bristled at the difficulties they faced in securing a police presence that would hold in check those influences that they saw as inherently immoral and destructive. The rigidness of ghetto boundaries thrust African Americans of various classes and sensibilities into close living proximity, and intraracial divergences of opinion over crime control and racial respectability were ubiquitous. While nearly everyone in black Chicago had heard stories of police harassment or abuse and thus had cause to be wary of police power, many of them, community leaders especially, publicly wished for more aggressive crackdowns than those currently underway. This was particularly so among the "Old Settler" crowd – people who tended to have been in Chicago prior to the Great Migration, identified primarily as upper or middle class, who often inveighed against the impoverished moral sense of poor and working-class blacks migrants, and who implored them to be, simply, *better*. They understandably resented the fact that endemic racism capped the economic, residential, and social mobility their class status should have granted, and wanted the communities they lived in to be rid of signs of immorality and social disorder. Many of them seethed at living side-by-side of brothels and gambling dens and walking the same

sidewalks alongside streetwalking prostitutes, "compelled to be mixed with the undesirable or remain at home in seclusion."[116]

As a result, and despite the large passel of negative black experiences with the police, black elites often found themselves expressing support for police crackdowns on vice and "idleness" as in the best interests of the community's moral health and racial respectability. In Chicago and elsewhere, for example, local Urban League branches gave hearty approval to the criminalization of black sex workers, expending no resources on trying to either protect or channel them into employment in the mainstream economy.[117] National leaders with the League complained extensively about what they saw as "laxity of law enforcement," and encouraged the criminalization of "idleness" and "vagrancy" among young people especially.[118] Typical, too, were black newspapers condemning and criminalizing black idleness. A *Defender* report that "found many loafers hanging around the pool rooms near 31st and 35th on State Street," for instance, quickly turned toward threatening that "those who do not behave themselves will be handled by the proper authorities."[119] At other times and more generally, it similarly blasted police negligence in removing "loafers and idlers" from hanging out on South Side corners.[120] It crusaded against gambling houses and cabarets consistently throughout the 1920s, already in 1920 singling out professional gamblers as "cancers" to the community, and scored the police for not doing more about rising juvenile delinquency and vice more generally.[121] The anti-prostitution investigatory group known as the Committee of Fifteen in 1922 approvingly (and more than a bit self-righteously) noted that, "The respectable colored people are expressing

---

[116] Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 106.
[117] Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 48.
[118] Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity*, 61-62, 76.
[119] Bougere, "The Exodus Train," 259.
[120] *Chicago Defender*, September 11, 1920.
[121] *Chicago Defender*, July 17, 1920.

hearty approval of the work of the committee."[122] An unnamed black alderman took the argument even further, encouraging closure of pool rooms and vice dens, the forbiddance of loitering on street corners, and passage of a vagrancy law "that will take the idle shiftless and intolerant hoodlum off the streets. *Put the burden of proof on the one so arrested.*"[123] The latter of these, in addition to suggesting a total break with common jurisprudential practice and logics, inadvertently served up a classic opportunity for imprecision, selectivity, and abuse—the very things that so many people in black Chicago were already dealing with.

*

The night that Roy Woods stood before the night court expressing frustration with the parade of black faces being hauled into court in 1925, he lashed out broadly at "the tyranny of police rule in this city." He continued: "The time has come when the police of this city must be made to realize that the constitutional rights of the commonest citizen cannot be trampled upon with impunity. The time has come for a redistribution of justice."[124]

In some ways, the rest of this work is about black people's desires and efforts to effect such a "redistribution of justice." More so, however, it is about the frustrations and roadblocks they would face in doing so. In every facet of criminal justice, black people found themselves disadvantaged, in patterns that crystallized during the 1920s as the South Side became the Black Metropolis for which it would be known. Black people had a more difficult time feeling safer in their homes and neighborhoods than did their white counterparts. They had greater reasons to fear that encounters with the police would turn violent. They were arrested more readily and convicted more easily. They faced assaults on their racial character and discrimination in most aspects of life across the color line.

---

[122] Mumford, *Interzones*, 33.
[123] CCRR, "Public Opinion and the Negro," box 114, folder 746, Lawson Papers. Emphasis added.
[124] *Chicago Defender*, November 28, 1925.

When it comes down to it, what had emerged during the 1920s was an arrangement in which effectively leveraging police power, whether getting its attention or asking it to look the other way, often and in very fundamental ways involved being able to leverage some amount of *social* power. Affluent business owners could see their local political representative to ensure that word carried to the police precinct that their business should have special protection. Mob bosses could pay to keep the police at bay in ways that a small-scale black distiller (or a man drinking on the street for that matter) could not. White prostitutes had syndicate protection in ways that black sex workers did not. And although many poor whites had very little of that social power either, the vast majority of black Chicagoans had virtually none. If the police needed to generate numbers or give the appearance of not being "inefficient," the heat was almost inevitably going to come down on black people before others. As the CCRR wrote, "it is unquestionably safer to 'pick up and mug' a Negro than a white person. This can be done without fear of an unpleasant 'comeback.' Negroes have fewer resources and less influence with which to insure their chances of fair treatment."[125]

These disadvantages established in the decade of heavy in-migration to Chicago – the profoundly un-level field on which black people found themselves navigating the world of criminal justice – lived on and grew in future generations. The consistency with which black communities in Chicago found themselves feeling variously overpoliced and underprotected became increasingly encased as common practice – another buried cost of what black people could expect to receive in the way of public services and racial respect. The coming chapters will bear this out, explaining how such practices became further enmeshed in public policy over time, and how those two senses, previously seeming to occupy divergent ends of the black political spectrum, over time moved closer together.

[125] CCRR, "The Negro and Crime," 78.

For now, however, it's worth considering just how much the half-lives of such disadvantages lived on, even though less tangibly—haunting the individual and collective memories of Chicago's black communities. Kin Lumpkin was unlikely to forget his nights locked up during the riot. Eugene Williams' family was never going to forget that the patrolman on duty that awful day at the beach refused to allow the arrest of their boy's alleged killer. Old Settlers who found no help from the police in eradicating the vice they hated from their communities would remember that their protests for better protection went unheard. Mrs. Woods would remember her sleepless nights listening to torture victims scream in the station house next door. Vane Ware and Ivan Glen's beating by the CPD would endure; little doubt that word of it would be passed between family members and on to the next generation. The parents and spouses and children of people who died in encounters with the police would remember. And while memory is, as Susan Sontag put it, "achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead," so too do those memories serve as the context and frame for our present and futures.[126] Even those who remembered the police during this time, as Timuel Black did, as being not so much "brutal" as "racial," nevertheless implied in doing so that the relationship was fraught with some difficulties.

Nor were black people the only ones to remember and learn lessons from events unfolding in the 1920s. Political operatives associated with both major-party machines took away knowledge not only of the ways that patronage with regard to police department positions could endear them to constituents, but also of the ways that the CPD could be used as a blunt force to try to bend the will of citizens toward proper political allegiance. White organized crime bosses would have the obvious fact reinforced to them that the safest place in which to set up shop was in black neighborhoods, so long as they kept their political connections straight and

[126] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 115.

paid who they needed to pay to get the police looking the other way. White Chicagoans, their ideas about race already molded by generations of racist public discourse about blackness and crime, could look at arrest statistics and newspaper stories and see their racial suspicions confirmed in the black and white of the newsprint. Perhaps most importantly, police officers on the whole were not immune to these ideas, having been raised in the same milieu. Because of the powers with which they were endowed by virtue of their job descriptions, as well as of the particular corruptions running rampant in the CPD, they more than anyone else in or outside the criminal justice system could influence the relationship between that system and the community it was supposed to serve.

The imprints of these memories, lessons, and impressions about the relationship between the community and the police are as incalculable as they are indelible. That people would remember, discuss, and pass down these experiences – that they would learn from and interpret the things they had seen and shouldered – is obvious. That they would shape how people in the community would come to understand the dissonance between the police's charged and real functions in the community is similarly clear. Over time, the eroded rights of black Chicagoans vis-à-vis the police by this early moment would devastate police-community relationships. The brute facts of where the law enforcement apparatus as a total entity appeared to stand on the question of black people's rights to the city would bring people increasingly to distrust and resent that apparatus. It is to the story of those ongoing erosions and resentments within the context of the Great Depression that we now turn.

2

"You Can't Shoot All of Us": Protest and Policing during Hard Times, 1929-1940

*

Let it not be construed that we are endeavoring to abet and defend criminals of our Race, but rather that we are resolved to see that the laws are enforced according to our statutes—instead of by the whims of a few uncouth, unmanly, and rabidly Negro-hating police officers.
-A. Rousseau Dawson, *Chicago Defender*, August 18, 1934[1]

*

The student sat in a window-side booth in a South Side Black Belt diner, staring out as a parade of black people marched past. They walked in columns three wide, arranged in "a long, uninterrupted line." "What impressed me," he later wrote, "were their serious and determined faces and their extreme poverty," and the "orderly, silent procession" into which they fell—a collective focus that to the student seemed unusual for such a large mass of "poorer Negroes." Curious, the student stepped outside and fell into line with them.[2]

And so it was that Horace Cayton, here in the fall of 1931 a black twenty-eight-year-old University of Chicago graduate student in sociology who would later co-author the classic *Black Metropolis*, found himself on the way to an anti-eviction protest. As he walked in the ranks of the destitute, a man beside him said that the crowd was heading to the nearby home of a family that law enforcement officers had just evicted, and that they were going to "put back the family" and "put an end to people being treated in such fashion." When marchers arrived at the scene, they found that a similar group had beaten them there, and had already helped move the woman and her children back in. But soon word spread that a family another block over were being evicted right at that moment. The crowd headed toward the second home, with Cayton suddenly finding himself near the front lines of the procession.

---

[1] *Chicago Defender*, August 18, 1934.
[2] The following story is from Horace R. Cayton, *Long Old Road: Back to Black Metropolis* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishing, 2010 [1963]), 178-181.

But before they got there, they were met with two squad cars full of police officers. Unswayed from their path, the crowd swarmed around the officers, who jumped from their vehicles and ordered the marchers to disperse. "No one moved," Cayton recalled,

> they simply stood and stared. A policeman lost his head and drew his gun, leveling it at the crowd.
>
> A young Negro stepped out of the crowd. "You can't shoot all of us so you might as well shoot me. I'd as soon die now as any time. All we want is to see that these people get back to their homes. We have no money, no jobs, sometimes no food. We've got to live some place."
>
> The officer stared at the young man, then at the crowd, and the crowd stared back. No threats, no murmurs, no disorder; they just looked at him. There he stood, surrounded by a crowd of dirty, ragged Negroes, a sea of dark eyes watching him. He replaced his gun in its holster.

An old woman ascended a soapbox and began talking to the crowd about evictions and food and job shortages and the various other wages that the Great Depression was reaping. One person in the crowd turned to the police officers and asked whether they were ashamed to be putting people out of their homes and into the street. An officer, not answering the question but appearing sympathetic, said that he didn't care what crowd members did so long as they kept things orderly and made no trouble.

But from a distance, the sound of trouble drifted, a police siren that began as a "far-off whisper" before becoming "an ugly rising scream." Within moments, four more police cars and a paddy wagon for hauling prisoners screeched to the scene. Before the cars had even come to a halt, police officers barreled out and charged forward, "night sticks playing a tattoo on black heads." Blood spurted from the mouth and nose of a young man who tried to protect the aged speaker. An officer fired his gun into the air and the crowd ran. The old woman on the soapbox stood struggling in the arms of two officers as the crowd melted. Cayton turned and left.

The Great Depression pounded black Chicago, and is it did, it conjured new challenges in the relationship between the black community and the Chicago Police Department. Over the long term, the most consequential of these developments would be the dramatic expansion of the surveillance apparatus within the CPD, partially in response to growing black and interracial

radicalism.[3] This included but was not limited to actions by the newly emboldened "Red Squad"—an anti-subversive unit within the department whose obsessions with radical politics during the Depression set the tone for police responses to black protest in the coming decades. The Red Squad was almost certainly involved in the violent response to the anti-eviction protest to which Horace Cayton bore witness, just as it would be involved in dozens more similar South Side confrontations during the Depression decade. The expanding surveillance apparatus also included a turn toward using stop-and-seizure (much later to be recast as "stop-and-frisk") by regular CPD officers. Nominally a reaction to the gallons of blood being shed during the Prohibition wars and explicitly race-neutral in language, it took almost no time at all for stop-and-seizure to begin being applied in totally disproportionate ways against black Chicagoans. This surveillance apparatus would, in time, become a core constitutive element of that trend toward overpolicing under which many black people would increasingly fall.

The Depression changed police-community dynamics in other important ways. For one, as many contemporary observers and subsequent historians noted, economic conditions bred by the Depression were bleakly criminogenic, at least in reference to the legal letter of the law. The Depression's fury bridled millions of Americans with tremendously difficult choices, ones that often distilled to deciding between turning toward underground economies or toward destitution, between stealing and starving. During the worst years of the Depression decade, consequently, rates of arrest for property crime turned sharply upward, virtually across the board and irrespective of race. Just as it was true elsewhere around the country, so it was in black Chicago, where property crime ballooned and subsided sharply in accordance with the worst years of the

[3] On the expansion of police surveillance capacities more generally, see Donner, *Protectors of Privilege.* Theodore Kornweibel, Jr.'s *"Seeing Red": Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) documents efforts by the federal government to suppress black radical activity during the early New Negro era, but doesn't carry into the Depression and is far more focused on the federal rather than local level.

economic collapse. But unlike for non-black people, whether in Chicago or elsewhere, escalating property crime often collided with extant patterns of racial suspicion and physical abuse, leading to still further frustration and mistrust on the part of many African Americans in terms of how they approached the police.

As a correlate response to deprivation, underground economies proliferated during the Depression. In black Chicago, none did so more than that surrounding a gambling operation known as *policy*, which grew to such prolific proportions, funneled so much money, enchanted so many people, and employed so many workers that to call it "underground" seems to border on the absurd. The city's response to the policy economy was in many ways a distillation of the recurring problems of political influence and corruption, the distorted risk of arrest marginalized people faced, and other citizens' frustrations with the CPD for doing nothing to attack vice on its face. Rather than doing anything meaningful about the gambling bosses, the hallmarks of the police response instead involved taking tributes from and granting favors to them, and, when it came to enforcement, focusing on players and low-level operators.

In this respect, the police approach to the policy syndicate reflected the broader dysfunctions that had long characterized the CPD, and that would continue to do so. Despite commonplace pronouncements of the department's "rottenness," ongoing political sway over and within it yielded a wholesale lack of meaningful reform and reorganization efforts. Seemingly vast numbers of officers and captains were irretrievably corrupt, enmeshed in the politics and graft that Prohibition and machine politics had conjured. The commissioner found almost no ability to exercise much control over the men (and few women) at his command. Chicago's taxpayers could have little confidence in the ability and willingness of the police to adequately perform their functions. So bad was the situation, in fact, that the final conclusion of

an independent investigative team examining the CPD in 1930 was that the best way to fix the department might be to blow it up and start anew, replacing every single one of the department's six thousand employees, from top to bottom. As the opening lament of the final report (unsubtly titled *Chicago Police Problems*) read, "Criminal justice in Chicago has come to be a symbol. By common consent it stands as a perfect example of civic failure and official corruption."[4]

In all of these respects, the Windy City was a bellwether for the nation—an extreme example of larger problems in law enforcement in the waning years of Prohibition and the early years of the Depression. In the late spring of 1929, the Hoover administration convened the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (colloquially called the Wickersham Commission in honor of its chair, former Attorney General George Wickersham) to study the state of law enforcement practice throughout the United States. After two years of research, the commission produced a document that was as remarkable in its scope as it was stunning in its content, its final report stretching to fourteen volumes and spanning topics ranging from police politicization to mob influence on police officers and judges, problems of the parole system to police brutality and torture.[5] Summarizing the many police problems that the Commission identified in his own book *Our Lawless Police*, one of the Commission's researchers, Ernest Jerome Hopkins, wrote simply that, "'The Force' operates outside 'The Law.'"

Through furious editorials, letters to the editor, black institutions, and radical affiliations, African Americans in Depression-era Chicago sought to resist that sort of "law-less" force, and bend it more toward something that could fit their needs. The ranks of people doing so were tremendously diverse in their politics, aims, and tactics. A Communist Party (CP) that had a stronger foothold in black Chicago than in any other black urban section in the nation led

[4] Citizens' Police Committee, *Chicago Police Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 1.
[5] Report of the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement.

observers at the time to brand all black protest "red," but on the matter of protest against police mistreatment, as with all other matters of black protest, the issue was far more complex. During the decade, members of the Unemployed Councils and the CP proper, as well as the NAACP and the Urban League, would variously weigh in on the matter of police violence or harassment. So too would black newspapers both radical and viciously anti-Communist. They would fight back with typewriters and words and, as Horace Cayton observed, they would put their bodies on the line when necessary. Although they would fail to achieve meaningful reform, their efforts are worth paying attention to, for they explain much about the tenor and content of police-community relations during this time, as well as demonstrating the genesis of future protests against police abuses that would animate a range of black politics in later years.

*

The Great Depression stands as a watershed in twentieth-century American history. "No one," Isaac Asimov wrote, "can possibly have lived through the Great Depression without being scarred by it."[6] It haunted the minds' eyes of some of the greatest artists of the generation that lived through it, searing through Woody Guthrie's ballads and Victoria Spivey's blues, shrouding the figures of Steinbeck's Joads, conjuring the square-jawed populism of Harburg and Gorney's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" It consumed. Chicago's own Tampa Red maybe put it best when, in the early throes of the Depression, he sang, simply, "If I could tell my troubles, it may would give my poor heart ease, but depression's got me, somebody help me please."

For millions of Americans, the years of the Depression, coupled with the ones that encompassed the Second World War, were ones of dissonance, disorientation, and deprivation. Profound questions abounded about nation, democracy, and above all else, of self and familial

[6] Isaac Asimov, *I, Asimov: A Memoir* (New York: Bantam, 1994), 36.

well-being.[7] The punishments of the financial collapse sank deeply into people's lives. Season after season in the early 1930s, material conditions grew worse for massive numbers of Americans. Work and wages evaporated. Desperation rolled across the western plains and settled deep into the row houses and tenements of city centers. It transformed lives in ways that were often painfully intimate. Familial relationships and hierarchies rearranged themselves as traditional breadwinners struggled even to root out crumbs. Rates of divorce and child-bearing plummeted in tandem as people lost the financial ability to exit bad marriages and the power to care for new children. Millions of people lost their homes. Bank failures saw seven billion dollars worth of depositors' savings evaporate overnight.[8]

In Chicago, the troubles of Tampa Red—a Chicagoan by way of Smithville, Georgia—were reflective of an entire metropolis in distress. Few American cities were as poorly suited as Chicago to handle the Depression's opening barrages. Because of rampant corruption and fiscal mismanagement abounding in the city during the 1920s, Chicago had entered the Depression already heavily in debt and essentially broke.[9] Thus when the Depression settled in, already lagging city services were decimated still further, with funding for everything from schools to fire safety to hospitals slashed. Municipal workers often went without consistent paychecks. By Christmas of 1930, police officers were no longer getting consistently paid for the work they were doing. By 1932, the city would lay off some of its police officers and firemen because it couldn't afford to pay them.[10] Teachers, meanwhile, were paid with tax warrants in the first

---

[7] See Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013).
[8] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 162-3.
[9] Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1969]), 296.
[10] Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly in Chicago* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 23.

couple of years of the Depression until the winter of 1932-33, after which they were paid nothing at all.[11] "The city," as labor historian Irving Bernstein wrote, "was without resources."[12]

So were its citizens. By October 1931, more than 620,000 workers were unemployed in Chicago, and two years later, the manufacturing labor force in the city had been shrunk in half from where it stood in 1927, with payrolls dropping to one-quarter of their previous levels.[13] Destitution prevailed. By the winter of 1932-33, as Bernstein put it, "the mood…was gloom—unrelieved, despairing gloom." He continued, channeling Edmund Wilson: "'All around…there today stretches a sea of misery more appalling even than that which discouraged Miss [Jane] Addams in the [1890s].'"[14] The eminent historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. described a characteristic city nightscene circa 1930 this way: "Every night that fall hundreds of men gathered on the lower level of Wacker Drive in Chicago, feeding fires with stray pieces of wood, their coat collars turned up against the cold, their caps pulled down over their ears, staring without expression at the black river, while above the automobiles sped comfortably along, bearing well-fed men to warm and well-lit homes."[15]

Like nearly everyone else other than society's wealthiest (Schlesinger's "well-fed men"), the black working class buckled. The Depression came to bear on different people in different ways, and it is true, as some black people who went through the Depression have said and as some later historians have echoed, that because of the deprivation African Americans (and many poor whites[16]) already dealt with daily, the Depression's wrath perhaps came as less of a shock

---

[11] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 163.
[12] Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 296.
[13] Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 217.
[14] Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1940* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1969]), 14.
[15] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Older Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 168.
[16] This was particularly true in rural areas, where the Roaring Twenties hadn't roared well at all for poor farmers. On this see, among others, Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, Chapter 6.

to them than to others.[17] Historian Cheryl Greenburg, writing about Harlem, put it this way: "The Depression did not lower black living standards as much as it did those of whites, because blacks had less distance to fall."[18] More contemporaneously, the black journalist George Shuyler recalled that, "the reason why the Depression did not have the impact on the Negroes that it had on the whites was that the Negroes had been in the Depression all the time."[19] And Clifford Burke, a black Chicagoan, told Studs Terkel basically the same: "The Negro was born in depression. It didn't mean much to him, The Great American Depression, as you call it."[20]

But to many black people, it did in fact mean a very great deal. In material terms, the same socioeconomic marginalization they faced actually meant that when the Depression came, it hit African Americans with a special acuity.[21] Consider the desperation of Will Gorner, a young black fugitive from the Georgia chain gang who, after trying to make his way in Depression-era Chicago – trying to find work and failing, requesting relief and being denied, eventually trying to barter his labor for food and a place to eat before failing in that, too – walked into a Chicago police station, declared "the going too hard" in the city, and asked to be extradited back to Georgia.[22] Gorner's choice to return to a Georgia prison camp—the particular horrors of which would be vividly captured just a year later in Robert Burns' bestselling memoir *I Am a*

---

[17] In addition to the deprivation they recurrently experienced as residents of an overcrowded and under-resourced area, black workers had in fact begun feeling the pains of financial contraction even before "the Depression" proper hit. Prophesizing blacks as the coalminer's canary, the *Defender* had been panicking over the discharge of long-employed laborers as early as January 1929, ten months before Black Tuesday ("Negroes were a barometer sensitive to the approaching storm," as Drake and Cayton put it.) Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 83.

[18] Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?: Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 215.

[19] Quoted in Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?*, 41.

[20] Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon, 1986 [1970]), 82.

[21] In his history of the Depression's early years on the South Side, Christopher Reed makes the argument that blacks were better braced for the Depression because of their prior marginalization. For the early Depression, he argues, African Americans were more concerned with winning rights and privileges as racial subjects, believing economic stability would follow. But his argument seems to an extent refuted by the multiple and varied documentations in the rest of his book of black protest over Depression-era deprivation. See Christopher Robert Reed, *The Depression Comes to the South Side* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

[22] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), March 11, 1933; *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), March 25, 1933.

Fugitive From a Georgia Chain Gang!—a choice to go back to someplace where he might at least secure consistent lodging and meals—is a particularly potent reminder of the agonizing depths of despair to which many people were relegated.[23] But throughlines of similar desperation—if different from Gorner's, by matters of degree rather than kind—coursed through black Chicago's socioeconomic ladder. Tens of thousands of black workers lost their jobs, many of them new migrants who rode to Chicago on the promise of a better life. With more than half a million unemployed in the city as a whole by 1931, black Chicagoans, long plagued by "last-hired, first-fired" practices in northern industry, were overrepresented by fourfold on the unemployment rolls by winter time, constituting just four percent of the population and sixteen percent of the jobless.[24] Even the conservative *Chicago Tribune* admitted, "That the Negroes are the hardest hit of all the laboring classes in the present depression, the first to be fired and the last to be hired, and that the suffering among them is widespread and intense, is the testimony of all the social service agencies."[25] In nearby Gary, Indiana, a couple dozen miles from the South Side, over half of the black citizenry was unemployed and on the relief rolls by 1933.[26] Chicagolands's brutal statistics echoed those around the country; as historian Raymond Wolters reported in his study of blacks and the Depression, according to an Urban League report of conditions in one hundred and six U.S. cities, "with a few notable exceptions…the proportion of Negroes unemployed was from 30 to 60 percent greater than for whites."[27] Those able to keep themselves in work almost invariably found their wages and hours cut. Within ten months of the market crash, every single bank in Chicago's Black Belt had shuttered its doors, wiping out the

---

[23] Robert E. Burns, *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang!* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997 [1932]).
[24] Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 298; Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 87.
[25] *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1930.
[26] John B. Kirby, *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 97.
[27] Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood), 91.

savings of thousands of depositors who had no shelter from the avalanching collapse of the banks. People's savings were gutted; literally overnight, they lost virtually everything. Looking back on this period of his life, Horace Cayton recalled the desperation and disappointment running through Black Chicago:

> These people had migrated a few years ago from the South—in wagons, in cars, by train, some even walking. They had left their homes with happy songs and hymns on their lips, full of prayers to the Almighty for their deliverance, and in the North they had been welcomed, for this great pool of unskilled labor was needed to win the war. But soon the war was over, and before long the good times and prosperity it had brought were over, too. Now hard times had brought real poverty, and they were virtually starving to death.[28]

*

As they did throughout the United States, those "hard times" wrought profound transformations in the political life of black Chicago, constituting the backdrop for and auguring new forms of protest politics.[29] In so doing, they also brought widespread shifts in the dynamics

---

[28] Cayton, *Long Old Road*, 179.

[29] To be sure, organic radicalism had been simmering on the South Side for at least a half decade before. The flamboyant Lovett Fort-Whiteman, Texas-born and Yucatan- and Harlem-radicalized, made his activist home in Chicago during the decade's first half, in February 1924, organizing a "Negro Sanhedrin" of black organizations to try to bring some unity to their goals and actions. Cyril Briggs' African Blood Brotherhood had established a presence in Chicago before it was supplanted by Fort-Whiteman's American Negro Labor Congress in 1925 after Fort-Whiteman declared the ANLC "the official black Communist organization." Numbers of the affiliated during this time, though, remained exceedingly small; much broader in the membership numbers it captured was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. In the white public imagination (as well as in much of the black press), Garvey had been ridiculed as a fraud and a radical, giving black radical thought an ugly public veneer of incoherence and gullibility. Such impressions were made worse, too, at the close of the 1920s by the rise of the Moorish Temple Society – an antecedent to the Nation of Islam that was rooted on Chicago's South Side. The religious sect served but a miniscule fraction of black Chicago's population, but the curiosities provoked by it and the Temple's founder Noble Drew Ali captured public attention in extreme ways. Black Chicago felt the consequences of this in 1929 when six to eight Temple adherents, allegedly at the behest of Noble Drew himself, stabbed and shot to death Claude Greene, a well-connected black political player who the Temple accused of attempting to lead a breakaway sect. Alongside forty other members, Drew was arrested following the murder but died awaiting trial, leaving a power vacuum within the organization that led to still more bloodshed. The nadir was a shootout between members of the Temple and CPD officers searching the South Side for gunmen with the sect, in which two policemen and one temple member were killed. Sixty-three temple members were arrested, including two prominent players in the organization who were sentenced to life in prison, effectively driving temple adherents underground until the 1940s. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), pp. 40-57; Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 271-3; *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1929; *Ibid*, September 28, 1929; *Ibid*, October 5, 1929.

of police-community relationships – many of them profoundly destructive.[30] The gestation of direct action protest during the Depression began with the famous "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns, utilizing boycotts and consumer pressure to force Black Belt retailers to hire black workers, and were soon followed by the so-called "streetcar protests" of late 1930 and early 1931.[31] During both, extensive conflict between police and citizens was largely avoided. The "Don't Buy" campaigns were tarred as Communistic and participants were almost certainly spied upon by the police, but they faced no extraordinary repression from law enforcement. The same held true during the streetcar protests in the winter of 1930/1931, when black unemployed workers, angry at a streetcar project in and around the Black Belt employing only white unionized labor, marched to various project job sites related and literally took the tools out of white workers' hands. With a tense and volatile situation simmering, members of the CPD were called to the scene and, according to historian Christopher Reed, "used extreme restraint in dealing with the unemployed blacks."[32] Even in one of the earliest of many anti-eviction protests, calm prevailed during a confrontation between police and civilians. In late July of 1931, a crowd of two thousand people flooded to the corner of 36th and Wabash, where they confronted CPD officers charged with enforcing the eviction of a single mother of four for unpaid rent. Crisis was

---

[30] It should be pointed out that some of the same sorts of repressions discussed in this section were profoundly widespread throughout the United States during the early 1930s. In Birmingham, Alabama, for instance, officials penned a new "criminal anarchy" ordinance in 1930 as an umbrella law with which to prosecute radical activists and Communists in particular. The Birmingham Police Department used the law freely as a means of harassing and arresting political dissidents, sapping the organizing effort there in Alabama's Black Belt. After the infamous police repression of the Loray Mill strike in Gastonia, North Carolina in 1929, Communist organizers urged the International Labor Defense to send money, weapons, and lawyers into the South—the only means by which they "could expose the 'system of police persecution as part of the machinery of class and racial oppression in the South." In his history of the early Depression, historian Irving Bernstein documented tense moments of the police disbanding mostly peaceful protests in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles – all in the month of February 1930 alone. See Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 16; Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 93; Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 426-7.

[31] On the "Don't Buy" campaigns in Chicago, see Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 84; Reed, *Depression Comes to the South Side*.

[32] Reed, *Depression Comes to the South Side*, 80.

averted when police officers and officials at the scene, in a remarkable display of kindness, collected money to cover the woman's rent, which they handed over to her landlord in order to rescind the eviction order.[33]

But as the Depression ground onward, political action became more and more sustained, and the city came to rely increasingly on the police force to act as its agents of response to radical politics. The most common fields upon which these battles would unfold during the first few years of the 1930s were front yards and sidewalks on the South Side, where law enforcement officers were charged with placing the belongings of evictees unable to pay their rents. This was precisely the context for Horace Cayton's experience that autumn day in 1931, but it was just one of many. In fact, later on the very same day that Cayton watched police batons "tattoo" black heads, several hundred activists descended upon an eviction at 37th and Rhodes, where police scattered them before they could move the family's belongings back inside. A couple of days later, a demonstration at 29th and South Park was met with a cordon of police who dispersed the crowd, which proceeded to march to Washington Park for a series of meetings and rallies staged by members of the Communist Party. Alarmed reporters in Chicago's black press, many of whom thoroughly opposed direct action protests and especially the CP, depicted the rising tensions surrounding evictions in starkly racial terms, arguing that the increasingly militant alliance between the CP and members of Chicago's black community was bringing Chicago to the brink of another race war.[34]

A race war never came, but violent tragedy did.[35] On August 3, a confrontation between the police and anti-eviction activists resulted in the deaths of three black men—John O'Neil, Abe

[33] *Chicago Defender*, August 8, 1931.
[34] *Chicago Defender*, August 8, 1931.
[35] Similar tragedies were legion nationwide. Schlesinger, in his influential study of what he called "the age of Roosevelt," recalled a huge assemblage of protestors in Washington D.C. being "routed" by District police on the

Gray, and Thomas Paige—all of whom were southern transplants that had been swept up in the anti-eviction effort. That day, a group of some five thousand citizens mobilized outside the flat of a just-evicted 72-year-old widow and told police they planned to move her belongings back in. Charged with upholding the rights of the evicting landlord, the officers warned that doing so was illegal. As the standoff between activists and law enforcement built, the ranks of both multiplied. According to one police officer's report, in an effort to get the crowd to disperse, he fired a gunshot into the air, at which point all hell broke loose. Police and civilian activists exchanged blows, and within minutes, O'Neil, Gray, and Page were dead from police bullets, while other protestors and several police officers sustained injuries of varying severity.[36]

The night of the killings—what black activist Harry Haywood termed "the Chicago massacre"—organizers distributed some fifty thousand leaflets throughout the Black Belt demanding the death penalty for the police officers who had sent them to their graves.[37] Soon thereafter, a funeral procession comprising some fifteen thousand demonstrators, black and white shoulder-to-shoulder, marched through the South Side and the Loop in protest. Two months later, however, a mixed-race coroner's jury absolved the police officers of guilt in the killings. Five of the six jurors were reportedly convinced that the officers on the scene had been

---

front yard of the White House. The same day in New York, 35,000 more Americans gathered at a rally in Union Square; from the rostrum, Communist leader William Z. Foster encouraged a march on city hall, after which "hundreds of policemen and detectives, swinging nightsticks, blackjacks, and bare fists, charged the crowd. The scene resounded, the *New York Times* reported, with 'screams of women and cries of men with bloody heads and faces. A score of men were sprawled over the square, with policemen pummeling them.'" At the Ford Motor Plant in Dearborn, Michigan in March 1932, police were called in to calm labor unrest, and ended up firing point-black on demonstrators, killing three and wounding more than fifty. A similar story undergirded the federal government's response to the protests, building occupations, and eventually the campsite of the famed "Bonus Army," a citizens group comprised of World War I veterans who had come to the District to demand the government's advance payment of soldier bonuses not set to be delivered until 1945. In late July 1932, army forces and District police tried to evict Bonus Army protestors from buildings they were occupying on Pennsylvania Avenue, provoking a riot in which two veterans were killed by violence that was, according to historian David Kennedy, mostly directed by police. In Minneapolis in 1934, police opened fire on a group of striking teamsters trying to stop a truck from crossing a picket line; under the hail of police bullets, sixty-seven men were wounded and two killed. Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 426-35; Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt*, 166; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 92, 295.

[36] *Chicago Defender*, August 8, 1931.

[37] Cayton, *Long Old Raod*, 182; Reed, *Depression Comes to the South Side*, 86.

"overzealous" in their handling of the protest. Newspapers reported that the jury swung away from a conviction on the "stolid insist[ence]" of one white juror who deemed the killings justifiable.[38]

Those conflicts were the large tip of an iceberg. The battles between police charged with the maintenance of *order* on one hand, and protestors in pursuit of what they saw as *justice* on the other, extended into a range of other arenas over the next couple of years. In the autumn of 1932, large cordons of police officers looked on warily as fifty thousand unemployed people, black and white, marched through the Loop protesting relief cuts, the cessation of evictions and foreclosures, the release of prisoners taken in previous demonstrations, and more.[39] That December, the entire reserve strength of the South Side's Fourth and Fifth CPD districts was mustered out to 50th and Vincennes near Washington Park, when a large crowd of people gathered outside a local relief station to protest the bloated salaries of those charged with distributing welfare, which demonstrators saw as especially egregious given the meager funds available to themselves and the contempt that was often doled out with them by those workers.[40] Again, a month later, five hundred people marched on a South Side relief station to demand food supplies. Wabash Avenue police were called out to disperse the crowd, with the situation bordering on the dangerous after one CPD officer reportedly kicked a protestor and was about to strike him with his night stick before another officer intervened.[41]

The CPD's Red Squad loomed large in the exacerbation of these sorts of conflicts. With lineage stretching back to the 1870s railroad strikes and the 1886 Haymarket uprising, anti-subversive units like the Red Squad had from their inception been tasked with rooting out radical

---

[38] *Chicago Defender*, October 24, 1931.
[39] Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 266; *Chicago Defender*, November 5, 1932.
[40] *Chicago Defender*, December 10, 1932.
[41] *Chicago Defender*, January 28, 1933.

dissenters, often through virtually any means.[42] While the Red Squad (formally called the Industrial Squad, formerly the Bomb Squad) in Chicago had become increasingly active during the post-World War I "red scare," its mission ballooned extensively during the 1930s as it became instrumental in the department's larger efforts to keep public order in the face of heightening dissent. There were times when the unit seemed both utterly reckless and completely omnipresent. The squad was headed by a Russian immigrant named Make Mills, a CPD lieutenant who absolutely delighted in his charged task of abusing, harassing, and arresting dissidents. In the middle of 1930, Mills boasted before the U.S. Senate's Fish Committee (an anti-Communist investigatory body, and precursor to the infamous Dies Committee) that in the first six months of the year, his squad had monitored 132 meetings held by 'radical' groups, and had arrested 313 individuals at thirteen different demonstrations. (Mills was the man whom citizens had to see to obtain requisite demonstration permits. He recurrently denied those permits based on people's politics and then arrested them when they demonstrated anyway.) The tactics that the men at his command used to harass and intimidate suspected radicals were boundless, many of them predicated on the hope of inciting violence that would undermine radicals' credibility and give proper cover for intense police repression. Back in the days when the Red Squad was simply the Bomb Squad, for instance, one of Mills' agents infiltrated the Industrial Workers of the World, and was subsequently outed as a police agent after he tried to convince striking workers to plant a bomb in their boss's car.[43] Red Squad members broke up political meetings, taking notes on who was in attendance and the tenor and content of the speeches. They routinely drove police cars into assemblages of people, committed rampant brutality, and, on

[42] Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*, 7-43. On the Haymarket tragedy and the city's response to radicalism in that context, see James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006).
[43] Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*, 32.

more than one occasion, resorted to shooting of demonstrators.[44] Mills brazenly took bribes as big as five thousand dollars from big business in exchange for using police powers against organized labor, infiltrating unions and Unemployed Councils, attacking workers on picket lines, arresting and beating labor leaders, and supplying information to newspapers hostile to organized labor.[45] The tragic culmination of the Red Squad's tactics in this vein came with the infamous Memorial Day Massacre in 1937, when members of the Squad and a large phalanx of other CPD officers shot and killed ten people who were marching in support of striking steel workers at the Republic Steel Mill on the Southeast Side.

While such repression has been well-documented by scholars, Frank Donner in particular, the deep undercurrent of racism girding Red Squad actions during these years has garnered less attention than it should, particularly in light of the obsession with black radicalism that future Red Squad officials and agents would demonstrate. Squad leader Mills was emblematic of the larger issues here. It took him little time leading the unit to become known in the black community for his bad temper, flagrant use of the word *nigger*, and suspicion that interracial mingling was inherently subversive. (Though he did claim to have many "nigger friends.") Interviewed in May 1934 by a coterie of University of Chicago students after his unit had arrested three white students for demonstrating against police brutality in the Black Belt, Mills went on a tirade in which he admitted that a central idea animating Red Squad actions was that interracial protest gatherings were unwise and unlawful. In his words, later printed in part in the *Defender*, "Any time you [white kids] go into a nigger district you'll get hit with a [police] club. You've got no right to parade with niggers." Later: "You kids were born here and you have been fed and raised here, and your damn fool fathers pay to send you to school. You've no right

[44] Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*, 49-50.
[45] Michael Dennis, *The Memorial Day Massacre and the Movement for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 77-79.

to go into any nigger neighborhood."[46] Playing off those comments and broader observations about the Red Squad's work, the *Defender* summarized the unit's labors thusly: "It is the duty of [the Red Squad] to cruise around the city in search of 'Reds' as evidenced by a group in which black and white people are found together as friends and not fighting each other. Whenever these squads find such gatherings, they immediately pounce upon the offenders, beat men and women over their heads with clubs, haul them off to stations and put them through 'the works,'" and haul them off for booking.[47]

The Red Squad's efforts to clamp down on black and interracial activism were on display time and time again. In November 1935, the unit led a larger police detail in breaking up an interracial assemblage at 47th and Prairie who had gathered to peacefully protest fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Police beat both demonstrators and bystanders and arrested some five hundred people.[48] When the National Negro Congress held its inaugural national meeting in Chicago in February of 1936, rumors that the Red Squad was bent on raiding the scheduled venue caused both *Defender* founding editor Robert Abbot and Chicago Mayor Ed Kelly to back out of their scheduled speaking slots.[49]

The cumulative effect of these sorts of actions was to give increasing cause to thousands of black citizens in Chicago to interpret the police as aligned against their best interests—as the enforcement face of a socioeconomic regime that consistently worked against their interests. That understanding was reinforced and made worse by illegal police actions in which officers across the department, not just in the Red Squad, took private monies from vested interests, and used their authority as a means of intimidation against community members. A case in point:

---

[46] *Chicago Defender*, May 26, 1934.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1935.
[49] Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 27-28.

Willye Jeffries, a black woman and tenant organizer living in a South Side apartment complex, recalled the building landlord with whom she was doing battle as having "a paid-off bunch of police officers" at his disposal. With her building populated in large numbers by women on public relief, and with statutes in place saying the women could have their relief cut if a male breadwinner was found in the house, the landlord used the officers he paid to search women's apartments in search of men. If the officers' found one, they reported the woman, who in turn stood a substantial risk of getting booted from the relief rolls.[50]

It may be asked to what degree the officers working single women over in this way, or those raining bullets upon unarmed protestors, or those berating interracial student groups, were outliers in a broader system—aberrations within a larger organization that functioned well. And indeed, for countless officers, the positions in which their jobs placed them were profoundly unenviable. Most would take no joy in the unsavory tasks of putting a family out of their home and onto the street, or even necessarily in breaking up picket lines. After all, police officers in Chicago made comparatively little even before the Depression, and that was before they watched as their own wages were slashed during the financial collapse.

But focusing on "good police" in this respect might cloud the point. (So too, actually, might focusing too much on those who were extraordinarily abusive.) The line between police officers on the take being bought off by landlords for purposes of intimidating a tenants' rights organizer, and others doing their legally charged duty to execute evictions and blockade against those trying to reverse them, was wide in its legal contours but profoundly narrow in its practical consequences. With the growth of more organized repression and the crushing of political dissent by the police during the Depression decade, individual officers would become increasingly irrelevant in weighing the dynamics between police and community. The issue was

[50] Terkel, *Hard Times*, 398-400.

instead far more systemic. Like its counterparts in other cities, the CPD during this time, with the Red Squad its most obvious but not only clear example, was becoming a central cog in a system dedicated to preserving the status quo and protecting certain sets of interests. To put the matter more callously (and also more clearly), police officers had a job to do if they wanted to keep their own. How they felt about that job really didn't matter. The expansions of the police mission to include the breaking up of peaceful marches, serving and helping execute eviction notices, the raids of dissident group meetings in the name of "precautionary measures," the deployment of the police in the name of capital interests—all served as evidence of the disjointed ways that the police department was expected to serve some interests and not others.[51] Citizens could thus see the law enforcement apparatus in Chicago (and elsewhere) being consistently and unabashedly used to preserve particular visions of public order that fundamentally disregarded their best interests—what activists in future generations would have called basic human rights.

In black Chicago especially, this dovetailed with ongoing patterns of unusually intensive contact and arrest – patterns that were exacerbated as the Depression sank deeper into the city's bones. As the financial collapse ravaged Chicago and the nation and swept from under them the crutches they'd come to consider at least modestly reliable, the families and individuals facing its fury found themselves presented with increasingly difficult choices. Protest was far from the only avenue toward which people turned in looking to better their condition. Ethical lines became steadily blurrier. Many people faced with starvation, eviction, and the like did what they had to do as a means of survival. Turns toward illegal income-earning strategies proliferated, and have been well-documented in the subsequent record of the period. Indeed, Franklin Roosevelt himself articulated the federal government's massive New Deal programs of direct relief and job creation as in part measures to "[strike] at the very roots of crime itself." Reflecting back from

[51] *Chicago Defender*, February 4, 1933.

the vantage of 1939, as the Depression lifted, Roosevelt satisfied himself with the knowledge that in the six years since the inauguration of the New Deal, "our citizens who have been out of work in the last six years have not needed to steal in order to keep from starving."[52]

Roosevelt's assessment of how well New Deal programs had offered relief was far rosier than reality, but he was correct that in the early 1930s, property crime had ballooned, taking many shapes and forms. In places as disparate as small-town Oklahoma to New York City, the Pennsylvania hinterlands to the heart of Detroit, unemployed workers, desperate to feed their families, succumbed to the need to steal food.[53] In the winter of 1932, a Pennsylvania man wrote then-governor Gifford Pinchot: "I don't want to steal, but I won't let my wife and boy cry for something to eat."[54] By the end of that same year, wrote labor historian Irving Bernstein, "organized looting of food was a nation-wide phenomenon."[55] Even captains of industry, largely buffered from the worst wages of the Depression, showed cognizance of the fact that people's choices were being irrevocably circumscribed. Daniel Willard of the B&O Railroad, seventy years old and a capitalist to his core, noted that he began to doubt "the very foundations of our political and economic system" as he gazed out upon the Depression's wrath. But what for him was a hypothetical was, for untellable numbers of his fellow Americans, the reality: "I would steal before I would starve."[56]

Steal-not-starve was a choice many Chicagoans similarly made in the Depression's early years. Sharp upticks in reported property crime, and anecdotes about and arrest statistics for same, demonstrate how the Depression drove people to desperation and into contact with the

---

[52] Ryan S. Johnson, Shawn Kantor, Price V. Fishback, "Striking at the Roots of Crime: The Impact of Social Welfare Spending on Crime During the Great Depression," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper #12825, 2007, http://www.nber.org/papers/w12825.pdf [last accessed: August 19, 2014].
[53] Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 422.
[54] Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt,* 174.
[55] Bernstein, *The Lean Years, 422.*
[56] Schlesinger, *Age of Roosevelt: Crisis of the Old Order*, 181.

police. In the years immediately after the crash, from 1929 to 1931, larceny charges rose by eleven percent, felony burglary charges by forty-seven percent, and robbery charges by sixty percent.[57] Changes in the CPD administration in 1931 brought with them innovations in how crime and arrests were reported, making comparisons between years prior to and after that difficult. But it is clear that by 1934, when some of the most debilitating effects of the Depression had begun to slacken, property crime was also beginning to fall back down.

Numbers exchanged between the city and the federal government reinforce the data. The onset of the Depression coincided with the first comprehensive effort by the federal government to collate information on crime in different localities in the United States. The result was the establishment of the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR), still in existence today. The UCR data was and is problematic in the way that all crime reportage is – susceptible to inconsistencies, prejudices, over- and under-reportages, and so on. This was especially true in the early 1930s, when municipal police forces were first getting used to relaying this data to the FBI and the Bureau was trying to make sense of it all. But the numbers from the early 1930s nevertheless show a decided glut in property crime, after which they tapered off significantly. In 1931, for instance, Chicago reported offenses known to the police for various property crimes at the following eleven-month averages (January numbers went unreported): robberies at 1,227; burglaries at 1,653; larceny in excess of fifty dollars at 490; and auto thefts at 2,539. By 1934, as the New Deal's reforms were starting to take hold, every single one those numbers had plateaued or fallen. And by 1936, robberies stood at a monthly average of 491, burglaries at 1,148, major

[57] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1931.

larcenies at 275, and auto thefts at 271 – all dramatically substantial rate reductions from their 1931 high.[58]

Behind those raw numbers lay the human face of desperation, of people driven toward crime by the circumstances of their time. In its 1930 appeal to citizens to employ the unemployed, the *Defender* argued that, "The man who is hungry will steal and will often shoot or otherwise injure. By ignoring him we make a criminal of him." This was as true in Chicago as it was elsewhere around the country. Stories abound of people arrested for petty larceny of bread and other foodstuffs, all across the country. A fourteen-year-old Chicago boy, shot in the leg by a storeowner and subsequently arrested by CPD officers after he was caught trying to steal something to eat.[59] A nineteen-year-old in New York arrested and held on three hundred dollar bail for stealing fifty-four cents worth of dinner rolls.[60] Two fifteen-year-olds in Atlanta hunted by the police after stealing the purse of a woman who they had initially approached asking for food.[61] A seventeen- and eighteen-year-old in Harlem arrested and held on five hundred dollar bail each after stealing nine loaves of bread around Christmastime in 1933.[62] A hungry and unemployed Manhattan man sentenced to an indeterminate sentence in 1932 after stealing goods he said he hoped to flip for food.[63] A twenty-five-year-old man in Philadelphia hauled into a police station for stealing an unattended loaf of bread off a doorstep.[64]

A common thread entangling each of those stories, and countless others like them, is the obvious fact that increasing property crime meant increased citizen entanglement with law enforcement. The exact degree to which black Chicagoans felt the effects of this is unclear from

---

[58] United States Department of Justice. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Uniform Crime Reports: 1930-1959, Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2003.
[59] *Chicago Defender*, December 5, 1931.
[60] *Chicago Defender*, July 19, 1930.
[61] *Atlanta Daily World*, July 14, 1932.
[62] *Chicago Defender*, December 30, 1933.
[63] *New York Amsterdam News*, September 7, 1932.
[64] *Chicago Defender*, April 4, 1931.

a statistical standpoint because of imprecisions and non-reportages in police data. Most importantly, the aforementioned changes in statistics reporting by the CPD after 1931 included a shift away from disaggregating data by the race of arrestees. Why this happened isn't clear, but it has the effect of limiting the degree to which black arrest rates during this period are knowable with any great precision. The only reported figures for the arrest of black people during the 1930s come in 1930 and 1931, prior to the shift away from race-based reportage, and even then, the only felonious property crime category that appears is larceny. (Three black men and two eastern European immigrant men were arrested in 1931 for "possessing burglar's tools," but those numbers are extraordinarily statistically insignificant.) The larceny statistics do, however, demonstrate that black people were far more prone to arrest on such charges than were members of any other demographic group, constituting twenty-eight percent (918 of 3,311) of those arrested in 1930 and thirty percent (963 of 3,198) the following year.[65] Moreover, it would seem to betray common sense to assume that, with black arrest rates so disproportionate *before* the Depression, they would have somehow fallen off during a period of peaking crime rates. Nor would it be especially surprising that city neighborhoods with the highest unemployment, the worst public services, the most heavily sapped private charities, and the greatest degrees of infrastructural collapse would have higher rates of property crime – whether people were stealing food to live or goods for material gain. Furthermore, the broad dynamics of racial suspicion that had animated police-community interactions during the 1920s continued to pulse throughout the fabric of the law enforcement apparatus and the broader community it represented.[66]

---

[65] Chicago Police Department, Annual Reports for 1930 and 1931.

[66] These dynamics came under close scrutiny later in the 1930s, when arguably the most influential observer of late-1930s American racial politics, Gunnar Myrdal, began overseeing the research for his expansive, ambitious study of racism in America, published in 1944 under the title *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy. An American Dilemma* served as an extended treatise on the seemingly conjoined but irreconcilable fates of American racism and American democracy. In the area of law enforcement, like in most of the text, Myrdal focused on the South, but many of his critiques of criminal justice practice and logics were not easily bound to the

That confluence of factors – scarcity of resources, racial suspicion, over-surveillance – came to bear strongly in the blooming of the Black Belt gambling economy during the Depression and the ways that the city responded to it. Although gambling itself proliferated all over the city, the black South Side had its own unique variant – a small-stakes daily lottery system known as *policy*, with dozens of different policy bosses with hands in hundreds of separate stations throughout black neighborhoods. The game itself was uncomplicated, with players placing bets as low as a penny on a particular number (or set of numbers) in the hopes that in one of the daily drawings, their number or set would be drawn as winners. Each single bet was low-stakes, but with the ubiquity of gaming stations throughout the area and with sometimes multiple drawings per day per station, it was possible for a woman or man to spend a lot of money in a little time. While these operations had been present in the community prior to the Depression, they became a full-blown *institution* in it during the 1930s. [67]

---

region. He pinpointed police officers' willingness to arrest black people "on the slightest suspicion," remarking that the "popular belief that all Negroes are inherently criminal operates to increase arrests, and the Negro's lack of political power prevents a white policeman from worrying about how many Negro arrests he makes." (He went on to note how these tendencies made it easier for white criminals to shift suspicion toward black people, via criminal minstrelsy and other measures.)

Myrdal was especially critical of crime statistics in *An American Dilemma* because those statistics were so often, as he pointed out, one of the cruxes upon which white supremacy was justified. Although he was sometimes off target in his causal assessments of black crime (example: his argument that because of their southern heritage, black people were more likely to bring a knife to what would otherwise be a fist fight), he was sharply on point in his rejections of black crime statistics as illegitimate and, frankly, cooked. Citing "the caste situation" (essentially the entire American racial arrangement, and black peoples' subordinate place within it socially, politically, and economically) as one reason for higher crime rates, Myrdal went on to offer incisive critiques of the very idea of criminality and who was punished for what. He was especially critical of the disconnect between punishments meted out (or rather, *not* meted out) for white-collar crimes committed by white people versus low-level petty crimes committed by poorer members of society in general, and African Americans in particular. "Crime" as such was imprecise and slippery, and punishment for engaging in various criminal activities was highly contingent upon one's position on the racial and socioeconomic ladder. In Myrdal's fashioning there were, in other words, particular selectivities and injustices embedded within a system that cloaked itself in a veil of objectivity and justice. See Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962 [1944]), 968.

[67] John "Mushmouth" Johnson had brought it to the South Side as early as the 1890s, and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a handful of black moguls on the South Side had made financial killings and political fortunes in the 1920s through the operation of policy rings. Dan Jackson, whose funeral homes served in part as fronts for gambling houses, was inarguably the most famous and well-connected of that decade, having formed a close alliance with Big Bill Thompson that saw Jackson selected as the head of Thompson's forces in the South Side Second Ward. When Thompson ran to regain the mayoralty in 1927, he and Jackson exploited the raids made by the

In the opening years of the decade, it was far from clear that this would be allowed to happen, because of particularities and corruptions within the city's political machinery. During Republican Big Bill Thompson's final term as mayor, from 1927 to 1931, Thompson had colluded widely with black policy moguls to keep policy stations running smoothly. His successor, Democrat Anton Cermak, meanwhile, who possessed a distinctly hostile relationship to black Chicago because African Americans had *en masse* failed to vote for him, declared a war of political retribution on the South Side, and chose the police as his weapon. Cermak's explicit directive to famously hardened police captain John Stege, upon transferring him into the heart of black Chicago, was to "raise all the hell you can with the policy gang."[68] But "the policy gang," as it turned out, effectively meant anyone involved with gambling on the South Side whatsoever. Stege's men by themselves arrested two hundred people per day in the Black Belt, "cramming them into jail cells so tightly that no one could sit down," according to historian and mayoral biographer Roger Biles.[69] They stopped and searched cars at random, and busted down the doors of private residences throughout the South Side's black neighborhoods. They had racially selective enforcement down to a practical science: eighty-seven percent of police raids conducted that year took place within the Black Belt. The guiding impulse for these actions was not moral or legal but *explicitly* political. The heat would come off, Cermak told the black community, when they traded their Republican votes for Democratic ones.[70]

CPD on the Black Belt during the preceding four years to their political benefit. As political scientist Harold Gosnell wrote in the early 1930s, Thompson promised to black voters that "he would remove the offending police captains, he would stop the breaking-in of homes and the 'fanning of mattresses for pints'; he would end the persecution of the colored people; he would open ten thousand joints. After he had been elected mayor, some of these promises were carried out. In Chicago history, the period has been called that of the 'Big Fix.'" Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 57.

[68] Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 89.

[69] Ibid, 89-90.

[70] Ibid.

The political tides shifted again in 1933, when an assassin's bullet rumored to have been meant for President Franklin Roosevelt killed Cermak while the two were in Florida. Once Edward Kelly, Cermak's successor and a product of the emergent Democratic machine, took office, the raids of the previous two years subsided. This isn't to say people didn't still get arrested in large numbers for gambling violations; they did. But during the repressions of the Cermak years, the policy barons had begun organizing themselves into a large affiliated syndicate, complete with lawyers and bondsmen held on retainer, in an effort to improve their lot and protect their enterprise.[71] The windfall years for them would come under Kelly, whose administration chose to engage black Chicago's policy syndicate in a mutually beneficial relationship, with the policy kings helping supply the Democratic machine with money and votes in exchange for a blind eye from the police. The result was an inordinately big business. As Biles described the effects of this on the policy operation, "Originally a nickel and dime operation, by the thirties the policy game had become a multibillion dollar operation and the chief source of capital within Bronzeville."[72] By the time Drake and Cayton sent *Black Metropolis* to press in 1945, they estimated that black Chicago was home to nearly five hundred policy stations – "almost as numerous as the churches (and more evenly distributed)."[73] The system was well-organized, seemingly everywhere, and exceedingly profitable.

It also served as one of the steadiest source of jobs for black people within their neighborhoods. Drake and Cayton's data on the employment numbers generated by the policy syndicate was drawn from calculations made in 1938, when the syndicate had a weekly payroll above twenty-five thousand dollars and was, in total, employing more than five thousand people. Moreover, while policy as a true community institution had found its legs during the Depression,

---

[71] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 482.
[72] Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 90.
[73] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 470.

the authors estimated that the World War II-era economic boom had expanded its popularity. By 1945, Drake and Cayton estimated that the policy racket was doing triple the volume of business it had in the previous decade.[74] In addition to putting thousands of people to work, it was also keeping legitimate businesses alive, charities open, and pride intact in the possibility of black autonomy, with policy king's windfall profits, expenditures, and willingness to invest back into the community often serving as at least minor countervails to the hit and aftershocks of the Depression.[75]

And yet many members of the black community saw the explosion of policy gambling as a functional failure on the part of the CPD and a moral failure on the part of many of their community counterparts. Organizers of the policy racket came under frequent and heavy criticism for exploiting desperate people and siphoning precious dimes and dollars away from them. Newspaper writers, business owners, and many others argued that "most of the players are poor people who can't afford to gamble; those people on relief and WPA who haven't anything and always hope they'll win more."[76] And no doubt, to some extent, they had a point. With earnings in the community so low, there were doubtlessly poor people getting poorer while riding on dreams of gambling wealth. Others slid toward addiction the more that they played, with Drake and Cayton writing that the game, "organizes, to some extent, the daily lives of its participants."[77] Meanwhile, to many black leaders and citizens, the legions of policy stations in operation across the South Side, coupled with houses of prostitution and other "evils," represented another example of the same disrespectful and discriminatory policies that had concentrated vice into their neighborhoods for years. A *Defender* letter-writer in October 1935

[74] Ibid., 478-480.
[75] Ibid., 486.
[76] Ibid., 490.
[77] Ibid., 474.

complained about the proliferation of policy stations, prostitution houses, and gang hangouts in the southern part of Bronzeville (near 44th and Calumet), lamenting the fact that "if these places are reported to our policemen, they are not molested."[78] A week later, a cross-denominational council of South Side ministers, social workers, and citizens arranged a meeting with CPD Commissioner James Allman to try to address policy gambling, prostitution, and other vice operations working seemingly with impunity in their community, although the meeting yielded few tangible results.[79]

What angered many of these community opponents of gambling and other forms of vice was that these activities had become so profligate and so public, that the city was so transparently in bed with vice syndicate operators. While CPD officers were arresting people for playing policy, or even at times for operating an individual wheel, the people at the top of the chain – the organizers of the syndicate and overlords of the whole system – went unpunished. The arrangement that the syndicate had put together with city leaders and political machine operatives (dollars and votes for protection and blind eyes) mirrored the deals that mob bosses had struck with police officers during the 1920s that had allowed prostitution and bootlegging to proliferate in the Black Belt. Worse still, those same deals, or ones that looked awfully similar, continued into the Depression and New Deal decade. Vice as a whole, as Gunnar Myrdal put it in *An American Dilemma*, "is carried on in the Negro sections [far more than in white ones] because they are disorganized, without adequate police protection, but with police and politicians looking for graft."[80] For those who saw gambling and other forms of vice as detrimental to the community's health, the city's unwillingness or inability to do anything meaningful about such activities was a constant source of irritation and frustration.

---

[78] *Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1935.
[79] *Chicago Defender*, October 19, 1935.
[80] Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 332.

Saying that the city took little meaningful action to eliminate vice syndicates is not, however, the same thing as saying they let everyone get away with anything. Although Ed Kelly's administration did little to target top vice barons, the police still logged plenty of arrests of players on policy gambling charges. Gambling arrests in 1934 (the first year after Cermak's death and the end of the raids he demanded) fell to roughly a third of what they had been the preceding years, but they bounced back quickly. That year, the CPD was averaging only about three and a half arrests on gambling charges per day (1,243 total); by 1937, they had increased those numbers nearly fivefold to sixteen per day and, during a wartime high in 1944, to twenty-one daily.[81] No disaggregation of these statistics by race appears to exist for these years, but if anecdotes and 1931 statistics (the last year during this period that the CPD reported stats by race) are indicators, they probably skewed overwhelmingly against black Chicagoans. That year, eighty-five and ninety percent of Chicagoans arrested on charges, respectively, of being "inmates of a gaming house" or "keeping a gaming house" were black.[82] And while it betrayed logic that in a city where fewer than one in twenty residents were black, nine out of ten arrested for gambling were African American, those patterns spoke to the particular vulnerabilities that black Chicagoans faced when it came to the way that policing was conducted in the city.

Further exemplifying those vulnerabilities was the way that a relatively new practice called *stop-and-seizure* evolved during the early 1930s. Stop-and-seizure in Chicago was born out of the particular context of the late 1920s Prohibition wars, as a way to stem the bloodshed of years worth of intense mob warfare. The theory behind it was that police officers would be able to stop and question men that they knew or suspected to be gunmen for the mob, working under

[81] CPD Annual Reports: 1933 – 1945.
[82] CPD Annual Report: 1931.

the assumption that they would then find concealed guns, arrest the men, and remove both dangerous men and deadly weapons from the streets.

Even so narrowly drawn, such methods were of questionable legality, prefiguring challenging legal questions that would haunt stop-and-seizure and, later, stop-and-frisk, for years. From the outset, people within the criminal justice community were sharply divided on what was lawful and what was extralegal when it came to matters of stopping citizens in the streets and searching their persons and property. Many judges declared that such measures violated the Constitution, including the one who tossed out the earliest high-profile charges against a mob gunmen where the case relied on such tactics, after Al Capone affiliate Frank Maritote was arrested in the lobby of a Loop hotel. Others, however, disagreed, and, unsurprisingly, police officials chose to side with the latter. CPD Commissioner William Russell, who had taken over as department head in 1928, was adamant that police prerogatives included the right to search known or suspected gangsters, and that it was impractical to ask police officers to take the time to secure a warrant (thus surely losing their target) in such instances. Asked whether, in the face of intense criticism, the CPD would discontinue such practices, Russell insisted that they would not, saying they would keep doing so "no matter what the state's attorney or the judges do about it."[83]

They did indeed keep doing it, and increasingly, not only to people suspected as mob gunmen. While data on the matter is scattered, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that in both 1931 and 1932, a third of citizens interrogated and arrested by the police in Chicago in firearms seizures were black.[84] This despite the fact that African Americans were still less than ten percent of Chicago's population, that the ostensible purpose of these crackdowns was to cut

[83] *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 1930.
[84] *Chicago Tribune*, November 25, 1932; *Ibid*, January 2, 1933.

down on gangland killings of which black people rarely played a part, and that no evidence existed suggesting higher rates of firearms possession among African Americans. (Indeed, even the racist stereotypes of the day depicted black people carrying knives, not guns.) In 1935, the widely reported case of black stop-and-seizure target Joseph Gillespie, wrongly accused by CPD officers of attempted murder of a police officer after himself being brutalized by the same officers, showed that Gillespie had been stopped in the street and arrested at least three times in a single month by a white officer who, simply put, didn't like him. Ordering the officer in question to stop using his powers to harass Gillespie, the bench judge in the case issued a terse reminder of the proper relationship between race and justice: "Whether [Gillespie] be colored or anything else, he is entitled to the same protection, to the equal protection of the law, as the rest of us."[85] In other words, race-neutral matters of policy were not race-neutral matters of fact, and African Americans were significantly more likely to be viewed as suspicious and treated in kind.[86]

The expansion of such practices set two important precedents that would deeply shape policing practices and police-community relations in the future. Writing in 1969, the eminent legal scholar Kenneth Culp Davis issued a cautionary note about the expansiveness of police power—namely, that because American police forces were finding themselves invested with so

---

[85] *Chicago Defender*, July 13, 1935.

[86] In Harlem throughout the decade, ample evidence suggested that NYPD officers were using their own version of stop-and-seizure as a means to arrest people on charges as paltry as possession of gambling receipts. . In 1938, the black-owned *New York Amsterdam News* editorialized about the pervasiveness of search-and-seizure by the NYPD in Harlem, "where," the editors wrote, "hundreds of people's homes are ruthlessly entered and searched [without warrants] and the owners often beaten and thrown in jail for no reason at all." The editors cited one case at length in which a plainclothes NYPD officer demanded warrantless entry to a Harlem woman's house, pushed past her when she protested his right to entry, and arrested her for possession of what he thought were policy slips. (The slips in question ended up being work records from the garment factory where she labored.) Though the officer was wrong about the possession of gambling receipts charge, the dismissal of her case did not, of course, recompense her for her humiliation at being carted off to jail nor for the time she lost from her job during the ordeal. Speaking on the general situation in that city, the *Amsterdam News* pulled no punches: "The poorer citizens are always the ones to suffer because of the lack of proper constitutional safeguards. Seldom is a home on Park avenue entered and searched without a warrant. But it is a daily occurrence on Lenox avenue." *New York Amsterdam News*, June 25, 1938.

much discretionary power, they were becoming less *enforcers* of policy than *makers of it*.[87] As we will see, that warning was particularly true in the context of the 1960s, when police officials pushed the state legislative agenda hard toward tougher law-and-order stances. But these search-and-seizure practices that were becoming more widespread during the 1930s were cut from the same cloth. The questionable legality of search-and-seizure was something that law enforcement officials were well aware of, with the cases in which their preferred charges were tossed out by judges serving as extra reminders of that. The choice to choose procedural expedience over seeming constitutionality (and it was exactly that – a choice) anticipated a range of future decisions and questions facing CPD officials and officers.

A second precedent lay in the disjointed degrees to which nonwhite people and the poor fell victim to these abuses. Many scholars of the post-Civil Rights era have rightly commented on the inordinate rate of black and brown people falling prey to constitutional violations under stop-and-frisk in the 1970s and beyond. But as we see here (and will see again in intervening decades), racial disjuncture in these matters was hardly new or specific to the later twentieth century. As a suspect body of people and the section of the community with the least amount of social power, perhaps it isn't surprising that black people would feel the weight of these practices disproportionately. But with search-and-seizure constituting a clear precursor to stop-and-frisk, it is worth making note of the way that racial disproportion was in abundance well before stop-and-frisk as a lexical term and controversial practice was an issue of great conversation.

*

While individual attitudes on vice, Communism, and other matters caused rifts in black public opinion over how police should (or should not) deal with the challenges of the 1930s, those divergences closed around the ongoing problem of police brutality. Although police

[87] See Davis, *Discretionary Justice.*

violence had indelibly marked the lives of some black Chicagoans during the prior decade, it had yet to come under sustained and widespread public scrutiny prior to the Depression years. That changed during the Depression decade, however. Already in 1931, at least one *Defender* news reporter had adopted the language of "terrorism" to talk about the CPD's treatment of black Chicagoans. The context behind that report was a month's worth of acute tensions between the police and the community, anchored by a widely protested incident in early November in which a police officer beat a black woman over the head with a flashlight, ongoing investigations by the NAACP into five other brutality cases, and a large protest meeting on police brutality at Wendell Phillips high school at the end of the month. The week after the Phillips meeting, then-Mayor Cermak and CPD Commissioner James Allman agreed to a meeting with community members, with NAACP member Herbert Turner warning the officials present that failing to reign in abusive police risked precipitating a race riot. Cermak responded graciously enough, telling those at the meeting that he would do everything in his power to root out lawless police, and promising to meet with all district captains overseeing police operations in black neighborhoods. Perhaps most impressively to those in the room, Cermak asked those present at the meeting to be part of an advisory council on issues of police abuse against black South Siders going forward.[88]

But the issues did not abate. Less than two months later, a South Side realtor named Melville Kolliner wrote an impassioned warning to Cermak (furnishing a copy to the *Defender*, as well) after, he alleged, one of his janitors was beaten and robbed by two CPD officers on the near southwest side. Speaking on behalf of his employee, who was hesitant to describe his attackers for fear of future retribution from them, Kolliner wrote about the issue of brutality as a problem more expansive than the immediate case. "From time to time I get reports of incidents similar to this," he wrote. "The result of these incidents is breeding among the people of the

[88] *Chicago Defender*, December 5, 1931.

South side not only a very great and strong animosity toward the police department, but also a very great disrespect and lack of regard for police power. That is but natural."[89] Kolliner might have had in mind any number of "incidents." Perhaps he was thinking of Hattie Shaw, who was verbally assaulted at 42nd and Indiana by a drunken police officer while waiting for a streetcar two months prior, with the officer threatening to beat her or have her arrested if she didn't get off the street and out of his sight. Or maybe he was remembering the charges against Patrolman James Kerrigan, who, reportedly while drunk, assaulted one man on the South Side and attempted to rob a newsboy.[90] Or perhaps he was reflecting on the situation of a drug store porter who was passing out advertisements on the far South Side when a white police officer called him a nigger and told him to get out of the area. When the porter protested, the officer reached for his gun and warned the man not to give him any attitude or that he would "give you something" in return.[91]

Whatever evidence guided him, what Kolliner was angling toward in his letter to Cermak was a rendering of police abuse as not aberrational, but systematic. The "great disrespect" and "lack of regard" and "strong animosity" with which he colored community attitudes toward the police were birthed not by one incident but by the totality of the situation – by fear and anxiety and anger about the ongoing humiliations and violence to which black Chicagoans were finding themselves subjected. The *Defender* editorial board reiterated these sorts of sentiments several months later in an angry comment on the wanton use of fatal force by CPD officers – "men who think that their badge and gun give them the right to kill citizens at will." Citing the consistency and quickness by which police resorted to gunplay within their daily routines, the paper called on the State's Attorney's office to investigate these shootings, which were being routinely dismissed

[89] *Chicago Defender*, January 16, 1932.
[90] *Chicago Defender*, October 31, 1931.
[91] *Chicago Defender*, December 27, 1930.

on the basis of the victim having had a criminal record. Echoing the power of such ubiquitous violence to systematically militate public opinion against the police, the editorialists wrote that, "the marauding type of policeman who patrols his beat with his finger on the trigger is responsible for the disrepute in which the department of police is now held by the public."[92] They would echo similar sentiments throughout the remainder of the decade, perhaps best captured by their comment in 1938, after the brutal fatal beating of a man by four police officers, that, "The Chicago police have enjoyed for some time the reputation of being ruthless to the point of bestiality, particularly to unarmed and helpless people."[93]

The condemnations that editorialists launched along these lines were important, but so too were the editorialists themselves as both conduits and crafters of community opinion. Activism coming out of the CP and protests out in the streets could be (and was) dismissed by city officials and powerbrokers as the work of radical minds and outside agitators. But alongside those more militant forces were emerging these others—ones that, while more subdued in strategy, were no less powerful in their ability to both reflect and shape community members' views on the police. When the *Defender* board wrote about police "marauders," this was not a hardscrabble group of Communists, but the editorial board of the most influential black newspaper in the United States. When Kolliner wrote to Mayor Cermak about systematic police violence, it was not a desperate person being evicted from their home, but a successful realtor. When Earl Dickerson, Joseph Bibb, A.L Foster, and others called for a meeting with City Hall over the issue of brutality, it was no destitute marchers, but, respectively, a respected attorney and future City Councilman, editor of the *Chicago Whip* and future Illinois Director of Public Safety, and the Chicago Urban League Executive Director. To their ranks were added other

[92] *Chicago Defender*, April 30, 1932.
[93] *Chicago Defender*, July 23, 1938.

clergymen and professionals. When the NAACP issued demanding letters to CPD Commissioner Allman that he investigate racist and abusive officers, it was no particularly radical group but a branch of perhaps the most respectable civil rights organization in the United States.[94] Although at this remove there is no reason to find more meaning in their statements on these issues than in the articulations of less contemporaneously respectable sources, at the time, their words carried extraordinary weight both in and outside of the black community.

This mattered in the immediate sense of reflecting and shaping public opinion at the time, and also in that the involvement of the NAACP, Urban League, and the rest of black Chicago's elite political machinery constituted important antecedents for later iterations of protest and challenges to the functions of the police in the city. Because issues of crime and racial representation were so important to so many people in African America during the early and middle decades of the century, organizations like the NAACP and Urban League were often cautious about how to approach matters of police harassment especially. But that does not mean, as a range of observers have suggested either explicitly or through silences on the matter, that they were removed from community efforts to mitigate police abuses, and brutality in particular. Although as we will see in the coming chapters, such activism often remained either behind the scenes or couched in broader protestations over racial injustice, the fundamental fact was that these groups could never altogether avoid using their powers to try to effect change on this front – particularly because so many of the people in the constituencies that they served carried so much concern about those issues.

Between the challenges to the police lodged by the Communist Party and its affiliates, the NAACP, the Urban League, the *Defender*, individual citizens, and others, what we see unfolding during the extended Depression moment is a tapestry of concern and activism surrounding the

[94] *Chicago Defender*, June 23, 1934.

work of the police. Quite contrary to one local historian's characterization of Chicago's black community "retreat[ing] behind a wall of stony silence and compliance to the system," submitting to the repressions of the police department from the 1919 riot until the mid-1960s, black Chicago was frequently animated by challenges to this system.[95] These ranged from street protests to what historians have called "indignation meetings" to placing demands on the city's political machinery to penning opinion pieces. Some even reflected a deepening militancy. In a deeply gendered 1934 letter to the editor, one Chicago man called for black men to "take militant and united action" against abusive police, particularly when those abuses rained down upon black women. "Let it not be construed," he continued, "that we are endeavoring to abet and defend criminals of our Race, but rather that we are resolved to see that the laws are enforced according to our statutes—instead of by the whims of a few uncouth, unmanly, and rabidly Negro-hating police officers….Peace must not be purchased at the price of abuse and our self-respect."[96]

*

Thus as Chicago pulled itself out of the Great Depression as the 1930s closed, the relationship between the black community and the police was embroiled in simmering tensions. With material conditions at their lowest ebb amidst the desperation of the Depression and black people seeking lifelines through protest and petty crime, the city had chosen a response that was punitive rather than ameliorative. In this respect, when material conditions would again turn sharply downward in the 1950s and 1960s, it was the Depression decade that served as the precedent for how the city would respond. Moreover, the construction of an expansive surveillance apparatus, embodied most clearly in the actions of the Red Squad, had thrown the

[95] Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect*, 154.
[96] *Chicago Defender*, August 18, 1934.

police department directly in the way of black political activism. Throughout the 1930s, many black people in the throes of the Depression had come face-to-face with a police system charged with suppressing their protests, and by extension, rejecting their grievances as illegitimate. Many emerged from these confrontations with animated opinions about the role of the police as a repressive system. Still others gazed at the booming vice trades of the South Side, policy gambling in particular, and lamented a department and city that appeared to not care at all about their desires to live in communities without such things within them.

Given that, it is no coincidence that the *Defender* editorial board framed the police-community relationship explicitly in antagonistic terms in an editorial titled "Chicago Police vs. the South Side" – ruminating upon "Chicago police [who] have never been slow about performing impromptu surgical operations upon Race citizens who fall into their clutches," "torture and wholesale police terrorism of Race neighborhoods," and the "policemen stationed in this community [who] wear their blue uniforms as ornaments [rather than] as symbols of a law which confers equal protection upon all citizens."[97] Written late in 1939, that editorial captured the tenor and content of police-community relations in Chicago at still another critical moment, coming on the eve of a second and even larger wave of black in-migration to the city. Known popularly as the Second Great Migration, this new flood of people to the city was prompted by the opening salvos of the Second World War, the revival on a grand scale of the city's munitions manufacturing, and the rekindling of promises of a better life than that offered in the rural South. All told, over the course of the next three decades, hundreds of thousands of African Americans would arrive in Chicago and make the South and West Sides their home. Much like the migrants of a generation prior, they came in search of new opportunities and to flee scorched earth. And much like their predecessors, they would find a decidedly mixed lot awaiting them.

[97] *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1939.

Speaking in a particular moment of anguish while simultaneously prefacing things to come, Illinois State Senator Christopher Wimbish, an African American man and accomplished lawyer, gazed out upon the stunted opportunities available to black people in Chicago during the war and saw a community that the city and nation had abandoned. Despite the promises of the war economy, he saw people wracked by poverty, despair, and alienation, and thus a community on the verge of chaos. And he saw a police force only too primed to respond with violence and repression. To him, the evils of police abuse in this context were serpents dancing in the shadows, rearing to strike not only against black rights, but against the very ideas and ideals of American equality and democracy. "It pains me," he declared in oral arguments in a court case defending young black men who had had a confession tortured out of them by police officers, "when I think in the sunlight of the beautiful boulevards and the parks of Chicago[, that] as we drive along we do not even suspect that in the dark back rooms of police stations a thing like this could happen in America[,] where the tree of liberty spreads over us all and where we bask in its shade and in its protection, and we do not find the evil things, this vicious crawling snake thing that we have here crawling in Chicago, in America."[98]

The chapter that follows is about that snake.

[98] Transcript of Wimbish oral arguments in *The People of the State of Illinois vs. Hilbert Paul, Andrew Rhinehart and Louis Neustadter*, April 28, 1944, in Christopher Wimbish Papers (hereafter, Wimbish Papers), box 1, folder 4, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

3

'No Negro Has Any Rights': White Rage and Black Rights, 1940-1959

*

In the eyes of the police, no Negro has any rights that a policeman is bound to respect.
-*Crusader*, March 1958[1]

*

The family stood in their living room, the windows black in the October morning's predawn darkness. The six children stood huddled around their parents, the mother and father shaking in their nakedness. Around them stood a cadre of Chicago police officers, commanded by Deputy Chief of Detectives Frank Pape, an officer famous for his temper and handiness with a gun. Minutes earlier, the family had been asleep, awakened suddenly by Pape and a dozen other officers breaking down their front door, charging through the house, and forcing the family from their beds while they searched the house. Pape slugged the father repeatedly in the stomach with his flashlight, hurling racial epithets at him. Other officers reportedly manhandled and kicked at least three of the children. They had no warrants, and refused requests to contact an attorney. Instead, police hauled the father, a man named James Monroe, to a district station, held him without any contact with lawyers for ten hours, and beat and interrogated him as a murder suspect in a case in which a white woman in the midst of an extramarital affair had killed her husband and told police that a black man had broken in and done it. (She and her lover would subsequently recant their story about a black man having been the killer, admitting that they'd done it to try to collect the husband's life insurance.)[2]

James Monroe sued the officers and the city of Chicago for this autumn 1958 raid, seeking $200,000 in restitution for the various violations of the family's rights—his own wrongful arrest, the extensive holding time without contact with the outside world, the brutality

[1] *Crusader*, March 22, 1958.
[2] *Chicago Tribune*, August 28, 1960.

and humiliation. He was initially rebuffed by the courts on procedural grounds, Chicago's corporation counsel successfully arguing that "unlawful search and seizure, unjustified batteries, and unjustified secret detention" did not constitute a violation of the 1871 Civil Rights Act under which Monroe sought redress, and that he was therefore not entitled to file suit.[3] Undeterred, Monroe appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where he won his case, *Monroe v. Pape* enshrining into law a citizen's rights to sue state agents such as police officers. (Although the Court denied Monroe's right to sue the city of Chicago itself.)[4]

The years during and after the Second World War, bracketed here as 1941 to 1959 to encompass the experience of members of Second Great Migration until the advent of critical administrative changes within the CPD in 1960, provided key turning points in the history of policing and police-black community relations in Chicago. A range of the central issues animating police-community dynamics during this time found distillation in the case of James Monroe: his blackness casting him as a worthy target of suspicion; the presumption of his guilt; the abusive treatment he received; his prolonged detention in violation of due process. But more critically, what began to happen during this period, especially during the 1950s, was the merging of what had previously seemed two parallel, if not divergent, outlooks on the police by various members of the community: overpoliced, underprotected. While those two sentiments had churned through black Chicago for decades, they had largely (though not always) occupied different intellectual spheres—some people articulating their major grievances with the police as ones orbiting around harassment and abuse, others around failing protection and flagging interest in the well-being of the black community. Within the context of postwar America, however,

[3] *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 1960.
[4] Ibid.

these began to converge more and more recurrently, the lines between them becoming blurrier and blurrier, their contours appearing more and more to be two sides of one coin.

The context for this shift was heavily rooted in the new social orders and demographic arrangements made manifest in Chicago during and after the war. The promise of Chicagoland's manufacturing jobs, the ongoing horrors and indignities of the Jim Crow South, and the continued collapse of the agricultural economy in the southern states collectively reignited old patterns of migration during the 1940s that had withered during Depression. During the Second World War and for more than two decades after, hundreds of thousands of black southerners poured into the Windy City. While many of those new migrants carried similar hopes and aspirations as their forebears of a generation earlier, they arrived perhaps slightly more chastened to the realities of the North. And if they did not, they soon came to be.

Predictably, many white Chicagoans interpreted and articulated this human influx as an invasion. This was especially true when that new migration threatened to spill out of the traditional black ghettos and outward into white parts of the city. In those instances, the responses of whites ranged from the quietly indignant to the brazenly violent. In either case, their primary interest was in racial separation – in reassuring themselves that Chicago's often fiercely rigid color line remained intact. The end to that story, in the broad sense, is one well-known, its moral still carved into the segregated edifices of Chicago and dozens of other American cities. The vast majority of black people ended up without the opportunity to secure supposedly fundamental rights of free movement and preferred residency. To a stunning degree, the only new places that incoming and old black residents alike found themselves able to live were areas southwardly attached to the previously constituted Black Belt, and, during the 1950s and 1960s,

increasingly, West Side neighborhoods like North Lawndale and East Garfield Park that were already showing signs of white and resource flight as old residents headed for the suburbs.

As the city's racial demography transformed and thousands of white Chicagoans responded violently, the CPD emerged as both arbiter of and proxy for the color line. With the city ill-equipped and unwilling to reckon with inequality and deal with integration in other meaningful ways, the police became its primary vehicle for responding to the challenges of racial transition. While nominally supposed to maintain order during the many tense moments of racial hostility that racial succession conjured, individual officers and the department as a whole would struggle to consistently fulfill those obligations of duty. Racial fealty often percolated within officers' responses to crisis moments across the color line, much as it had a generation earlier during the 1919 riot. Moreover, in the context of these moments, the police in some respects themselves became symbols of the broader struggles over what Henri Lefebvre would call *le droit a la ville*, or "the right to the city."[5] Indeed, while black Chicagoans bristled, as both citizens and taxpayers, at the city's failure to protect them, white citizens expressed disbelief and fury that, within the context of interracial turmoil, the city would deploy officers against white people *at all*.

Within these conversations were rooted larger questions about rights to control and leverage the police – ones in some ways distillable to, simply, *whose police force is this*? To a great degree, that five-word question – deceptive in its brevity – would remain at the center of the battle over Chicago's color line for decades still to come. They would be explicit in moments of cross-racial violence not just in the 1940s and 1950s, but in the 1960s, as well. They would hover at the periphery as much of white Chicago looked on with approval as matters like stop-

[5] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), translated by Elenore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas.

and-frisk were implemented and formalized by the CPD over the loud protestations of black Chicagoans. Similarly so when white Chicagoans came to the defense of the police department in its repression of black dissident groups in the 1960s. Indeed, in some ways, that question and corollary ones about who does and does not have the ability to leverage control over the police, continue to shape debates about the function of law enforcement to this day.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the CPD's inability (and frequent unwillingness) to protect black people trying to move into previously white neighborhoods was one of several factors (legal pacts, disproportionate black poverty, and usurious real estate practices) contributing to the effective reification and reconstruction of ghetto boundaries. The consequences were vast. Conditions in Chicago's impoverished and isolated black neighborhoods had already been declining over the course of the previous decades due to resource deficiencies and overcrowding, giving rise to the types of state-defined criminal behavior (underground economies and property crime, namely) that had often been associated with deprived populations, irrespective of color and nationality. But unsurprisingly, as thousands more people piled into these areas during the Second Great Migration, underground economies grew more prolific, including, worst of all, a flourishing and often devastating heroin trade that descended upon the city's black neighborhoods after the war. Property crime, robberies, and holdups increased markedly, fueling community anguish and rage at the city's flagging response, while simultaneously feeding racist characterizations of black people as criminally inclined from those who refused to consider broader contexts.

The effects of those processes were compounded by worsening police politicization and corruption, which dampened the ability of the department to respond in any meaningful way to things like the heroin outbreak and the spread of vice deeper into black Chicago. The ascension

of the Democratic Party machine to full-blown political supremacy brought both more politicization and more corruption to the CPD. As political scientist William Grimshaw noted in his history and analysis of the machine, under machine control, the police commissioner was so badly hampered by a tiny administrative staff that, while he could direct major policy decisions such as implementing new units and responding to major crises, he had little oversight capacity over the day-to-day functions of a department that numbered over seven thousand people strong. And those oversight capabilities would grow worse, not better, as the department grew. This had the effect of rendering the commissioner, as Chicago Crime Commission Operating Director Virgil Peterson put it, in "a figurehead appointed by the Mayor."[6]

This was not happenstance, but was how city aldermen and party committeemen preferred it. Under this decentralized system, extraordinary power was placed into the hands of CPD district commanders, who machine bosses assumed could be controlled to meet their ends; "the police department," as Grimshaw put it, "thus was effectively administered by the ward committeemen."[7] Through such an arrangement, machine operatives, many of whom had financial pacts with vice operators, ended up effectively holding in their hands many of the department's hiring powers and transfer capacities for officers or officials. Reports from confidential informants within the police department, hired by watchdog organizations or explicitly described a prevailing culture in which officers expected their colleagues to be available for the take; one wrote in his daily journal of being told he didn't belong in the district in which he was working if he wasn't going to be willing to take payoffs and bribes.[8]

---

[6] Virgil Peterson, "Re: Chicago Police Department," January 28, 1947, box 57, folder 11, Virgil Peterson Papers (hereafter, Peterson Papers), Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.
[7] William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 84.
[8] Unknown Author, "Diary – 2nd District," May 1953, box 58, folder 3, Peterson Papers.

Under this arrangement, black abilities to make claims upon the police were almost totally circumscribed, and the trickle-down effects on black neighborhoods were profound. Vice was profitable in both political and economic senses, so it was very likely a result of political considerations and economic kickbacks, for example, that during the heroin outbreak, black CPD officer Milton Deas, who came from Englewood and claimed to know most of the men involved in the trade, told superiors that he could probably do something to curb it, only to find himself promptly transferred far away from the district instead. As a consequence, the Englewood drug trade was no longer under his jurisdiction, and, Deas remembered, "there was nothing more I could do."[9] Meanwhile, when the public outcry over heroin became so loud that it required a response from the city, what often happened were large sweeps through black neighborhoods that seemed to have little effect besides to generate arrest numbers. The extent to which those sweeps were indiscriminate (and discriminatory) would be crystallized with the implementation of tactical units within the CPD that relied heavily on racial profiling, neighborhood saturation, and stop-and-seizure as tools for, depending up where you stood, either crime prevention or racial repression.

Increasingly expressed through various channels of community opinion, the failures of protection, the bolstering of segregation, the seemingly arbitrary surveillances and arrests, and so on all bespoke a system that was deeply, perhaps irrevocably failing black people. And on top of it all was the violence – the bitter, terrible police violence that burdened all the worse because of its guise as something sponsored by the state. Such violence in Chicago echoed nationwide trends, perhaps best captured by the Civil Rights Congress' 1951 submission to the United Nations Genocide Convention of its historic document *We Charge Genocide: The Historic*

[9] Interview with Milton Deas, Jr by Timuel Black, in Timuel D. Black, Jr., *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration: An Oral History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 419.

Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People. The document, comprised in large measure of evidence of police brutality toward black people across the United States, scandalized white America ("shameful lies," the *Chicago Tribune* somewhat predictably called it), but it spoke in tones that much of African America would recognize. *"*Once the classic method of lynching was the rope," its authors wrote. "Now it is the policeman's bullet. To many an American the police are the government, certainly its most visible representative. We submit that the evidence suggests that the killing of Negroes has become police policy in the United States and that police policy is the most practical expression of government policy."[10]

In the coming decades and amidst frustrated hopes for a more equitable racial climate, "police policy" would increasingly come to be articulated as one of public policy's "most practical expression[s]" for growing numbers of black Chicagoans and Americans. Whereas many white observers and critics of police abuses would point to such abuse as flaws in the system, many black people could counter that they instead *were* the system. That, for instance, the hyper-surveillant and intrusive practices of a newly implemented CPD task force were not outside the boundaries of normative policing, but that they were the logics of racial suspicion and stop-and-seizure distilled down to a science and hurled aggressively into the departmental culture of the CPD. Or that when CPD Commissioner Timothy O'Connor went on record as saying that black people should stop moving into white neighborhoods – for a while, at least, because doing so provoked uncontainable racial tension – that his words reflected the segregationist impulses

---

[10] William Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York, 1951): 8-9. Also see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

and political concerns of his formal bosses in City Hall and his *de facto* superiors in the Democratic Party machine. Or that when African Americans requested more effective police protection, the lack of meaningful response reflected broader assessments of the rights to which black people were entitled. Or that when white citizens asked for the exact same protection upon having blacks move into their neighborhoods, the city's positive response to their demands spoke volumes. Or, most terribly, that when police officers beat or killed black people without cause, their actions perhaps did not seem antithetical to an imagined better national self at all, but rather, a frank expression of precisely how much value the United States placed upon black life.

*

Like much of the country around it, Chicago was molded in the years during and shortly after the Second World War, in ways that are still recognizable today. The manufacturing demands spurred by the war effort rolled forward into the second half of the 1940s and into the 1950s, creating a robust and diverse economy that employed hundreds of thousands of workers at living wages, in industries ranging from machine manufacturing to consumer electrics. Consumer power grew exponentially, and suburban doors flew open for those graced with the proper skin color and religious affiliations. Thousands of white Chicagoans poured from the city proper into the suburbs, and ascended into the middle class; in 1947 alone, more than four times as many housing units were constructed in the suburbs as in the city itself.[11] The Selective Service Readjustment Act (more commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights, or simply the GI Bill) catapulted millions of young men into the cushions of the middle class, throwing wide the hallowed doors of universities and colleges, homeownership, and entrepreneurial opportunity.

[11] Devereux Bowly, *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago*, Second Edition (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012 [1978]), 49.

Here was a time, Ira Katznelson wrote, in which the American middle class was created.[12] If ever there were a moment when American dreams became American realities, it was now.

But these economic and spatial remappings—the fashioning of the American middle-class, as it were—happened in remarkably unequal ways. Although federal policymakers developed the framework for the GI Bill using colorblind language, they did so, holding true to broader patterns in the New Deal Era and at the insistence of southern Democrats, in a way that allowed administration of the GI Bill's benefits to take place through states, municipalities, and private institutions.[13] This arrangement deeply attenuated black people's chances of securing full access to the program's perquisites. In housing, blacks generally found it extraordinarily difficult to secure loans from banks, leaving all but the most fortunate locked out of the suburbanizing tide waves that cultivated so much white wealth from the midcentury onward.[14] Similar patterns held in access to education benefits and small business loans. In the final analysis, in Katznelson's words, the postwar era was a time "when affirmative action was white."

The extension of a new socioeconomic ladder to hundreds of thousands of whites in Chicago, and the accompanying withholding of its rungs from others, happened at a particularly cruel moment in terms of black Chicago's growth and development. Between 1940 and 1960, Chicago's black population grew nearly threefold, from roughly 280,000 to more than 812,000, and from 8.2 percent of the city's population to just under 23 percent.[15] The geography of black Chicago changed with the shift. For generations, the South Side had been black Chicago's anchor and hub. To be sure, black people had lived in other areas of the city, mostly in scattered

---

[12] See Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White.*
[13] For the larger New Deal analogues and context, see Katznelson, *Fear Itself*.
[14] The black population in Chicago's suburbs grew by 53,000 between 1940 and 1960 – a not-insignificant number, but one that pales in comparison to the more than 500,000-person growth to the city proper. Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 118.
[15] Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1983]), 17.

fashion outside of a small cluster around Maxwell Street on the near West Side. But with the coming of the Second Great Migration and concomitant hyper-crowding and overtaxing of possible residencies on the South Side, new migrants and displaced South Siders increasingly looked toward the West Side for places to live. The transformation of the West Side from white to black happened in stages, and in some areas would not be complete until the 1970s and 1980s. But in other places, it happened earlier and, to some stunned and none-too-pleased white residents, seemingly overnight. East Garfield Park and North Lawndale, straight west of the Loop and today cut through by the Eisenhower Expressway, were the first to change – the former ballooning from 4.54 percent black to 61.46 percent from 1940 to 1960, the latter from 0.35 percent to 91.11 percent over the same time period. By the end of the 1950s, more than 150,000 black people made their home on the West Side—in North Lawndale, East and West Garfield Park, and Austin—which had in 1940 been home to just a few thousand African Americans.[16]

Regardless of whether on the South or West Sides, black Chicagoans new and old were desperate to secure housing, but they encountered a landscape that had forged deep and renewed commitments to limiting their options for residential mobility. Systematized, widespread white violence and antagonisms joined legal codes and financial machinations as some of the prime agents of such restrictions. So too did the powerful machinery of federal, state, and local governmental apparatuses play important roles in the hypersegregation of Chicago. Denied equal access to home loans, redlined out of certain neighborhoods by the Federal Housing Authority and hemmed into others by the Chicago Housing Authority, the sepia-toned middle-class dreams of homeownership to millions of Americans were feverish ones for blacks in Chicago and

[16] Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 34.

elsewhere.[17] "Slum clearance" and the erection of public housing mid- and high-rises would become the most popular solutions for dealing with the black housing crisis—developments initially greeted with optimism by many black Chicagoans. Yet in the short term, those would prove to be inadequate to the task of meeting the community's needs, while simultaneously reifying the city's spatial segregation, since none of the city's policymakers wanted to deal with the political consequences of putting black and mixed-race housing in white neighborhoods. Meanwhile, in the long term, the reliance on public housing projects would have lasting consequences, the units over time morphing from places of hope and community into ones of deprivation and neglect, projects like the infamous Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor Homes becoming synonymous in the public sphere with chaos and violence. In total, the most lasting effect of these attempts to resolve the black housing crisis was the production of what historian Arnold Hirsch called "the second ghetto"—one born from the old ghetto of the early twentieth century, but that assumed more rigid spatial borders.

Calling the housing situation a crisis was no abstraction. Impoverished black people shunted into dilapidated tenement housing often paid a terrible price for the mobility restrictions they faced. The quotidian struggles that one might expect from living in overrun and out-of-code buildings were there, to be sure – densely crowded accommodations, oftentimes no running water, and so on.[18] But they manifested in markedly more awful ways, too. Consider, for instance, the case of 28-year-old widow and mother of eight Flossie Crenshaw, who woke up one morning to find one of her twin nine-month-old daughters, Lottie Mae, chewed to death by the

[17] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck In Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[18] For an account of these conditions, and the broader deprivations that black Chicago faced even at the outset of the Second World War, see Elmder Henderson, "Governmental Services and the Negro Community," January 8, 1941, box 30, folder 21, Illinois Writers Project Records, Chicago Public Library, Woodson Branch, Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago, IL.

rats that infested the fifteen-dollar-a-month flat where the family lived. In an interview with the *Daily News* after her daughter's horrific death, Crenshaw showed a living space in which the rodent occupants assumed as much spatial control as the human ones. Despite significant monthly expenditures on rat poison, Crenshaw admitted that the problem was insurmountable: "Those rats are devils," she said. "I knew they'd get one of the kids. They all were bitten at sometime or another."[19]

As thousands of black Chicagoans seethed under these conditions, others burned. In the close quarters of the city's scarred tenement buildings, electrical fires and others ignited by unsafe stoves and flammable building materials consumed lives by the dozens every year in the late 1940s and 1950s. A *Daily News* investigation of slums in the summer of 1953 reported that one hundred and eighty people had been killed by such fires between 1947 and 1953 – often as a result of housing arrangements patchworked together by "cardboard partitions" and "a maze of makeshift extension cords."[20] When Louana Walker awoke one night in January 1958 to find her apartment building burning, she ran to break a window through which she and her baby daughter Stephanie could escape, only to discover that Stephanie had crawled away while she was doing so. Her baby was one of four people to burn in the fire. Within the next week, two other massive fires would rip through South Side tenements, killing nine more children.[21]

Chicago's newspapers, and not just the black ones, ballooned with reportage of these sorts of tragedies. The *Daily News* devoted extensive space to a months-long series on slum housing in 1953, and that only expanded on reports that that paper had been making for years. The *Defender* and *Crusader* talked at length about the mercilessness of the ghetto. Even the

---

[19] "A Story of Rats—and Death," *Chicago Daily News*, March 31, 1953.
[20] "Slum Horror is Challenge to Conscience of Chicago," *Chicago Daily News*, June 16, 1953.
[21] Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 60.

Tribune, traditionally no friend to African America, offered comment on the dangers and sorrow, both dormant and realized, in the housing crisis black people faced.

Press attention to the problem failed to provoke meaningful attitudinal shifts among massive blocs of white Chicagoans, however, particularly those living in ethnic enclaves that were seen as being the most at-risk of black invasion. Anti-black sentiment coursed like venom through numerous Chicago neighborhoods, nowhere more than those that appeared on the brink or in the midst of black "invasion." As a white man named Alton Baird, a resident of the South Side Oakland neighborhood, put it, "I've been living here nigh on 12 years and now I got nigger neighbors on the north and on the south of me….[B]ombing don't do no good. We—er—they bombed and burned the niggers on Michigan Boulevard and they bombed 'em and burned 'em on Grand, and now the niggers are there anyway."[22]

Baird's talk of bombs wasn't idle. Indeed, while redlining and restrictive covenants and punishing inequality all helped to circumscribe the possibilities for black escape from dangerous tenements to safer and cleaner homes in nominally white neighborhoods, the most immediately apparent and psychologically horrifying factor was white racist violence. Bombings in the style of the 1910s and 20s were recurrent, but so too were more organized modes of violence. Indeed, while "riot" in the post-World War II context has absorbed particular racial connotations, Chicago in the fifteen years after the war saw a torrent of collectivized white violence against black neighborhood interlopers that would indeed best be described as *riots*. Spread especially across the South and Southwest sides of the city, white communities bent on terrorizing black people out of them resorted to any number of tactics to accomplish their goals – from racist chant gatherings on yards adjacent to black homes to bombings, harassment to gunfire. A series of

[22] Mary Patillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 49.

particularly furious white-led riots erupted over the span of ten years from 1947 to 1957 around the neighborhoods or building projects of Fernwood Park, Park Manor, Englewood, Trumbull Park, and Calumet Park. During these, white resisters of racial succession and integration overturned cars, threatened violence, threw rocks, and beat African Americans trying to move in.[23] And while these represented the worst and most vicious responses in Chicago to the reality of racial succession and the idea of racial integration, they were far from such racism's only expressions.

This recurrent violence presented to the city something of a protracted civic crisis. The waves of black migrants kept coming and the tides of white anger kept rising in response, cultivating both constant violence as well as a larger culture of hostility. Even prior to the 1947-'57 torrent of mass white protest against black neighborhood in-migration, such patterns were being well-established. The borderlands of black and white neighborhoods were turned into minefields in the immediate postwar years. In May 1945, the home of a black minister was bombed.[24] In November of the same year, whites smashed windows and vandalized a property in Woodlawn after black tenants moved in; police made no arrests.[25] A string of twenty-seven bombings of black homes between 1945 and '46 similarly provoked barely any meaningful response from the police.[26] Racist mobs gathered at 71st and St. Lawrence to protest a black family moving in in 1949, with the Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination characterizing the police's ability to "diagnose" the problem and disperse the crowd as "totally ineffective."[27] Eight years later and in the aftermath of white rioting in Calumet

---

[23] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, esp. 40-99.
[24] *Chicago Defender*, May 19, 1945.
[25] *Chicago Defender*, November 10, 1945.
[26] *Chicago Defender*, July 6, 1946.
[27] Waitstill H. Sharp, "Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination: Annual Report Essentials for the Year 1949," box 208, folder 1929, Martin Bickham Papers (hereafter, Bickham Papers), Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Park, Chicago Urban League Executive Director Edwin Berry would write a request to then-Mayor Richard Daley that he "make it unmistakably clear to all police officers from top to bottom that Negro citizens and all citizens are to be protected to the fullest extent of the law."[28]

Despite such requests, Chicago's political powerbrokers tried to dodge the matter as best they could during the 1940s and most of the 1950s. (Daley would more assertively protect black neighborhood integrators during the late 1950s and the 1960s.) Mayor Martin Kennelly, who held the office during most of the worst of the postwar racial violence, tried to play the matter in both directions. Constantly reticent to speak against white vigilantes for fear of alienating blocs of white ethnic voters, one of his greatest political dances was to skirt this particular issue. Opponents of racial succession often thought Kennelly to be on their side, such as during the Fernwood riots, when a delegation of white community members sought counsel with the mayor, coming away with the impression that "the unwanted blacks [in their neighborhood] would be removed if the whites kept 'quiet.'"[29] Meanwhile, after the city's response to the Englewood riots in 1949 provoked nearly universal condemnation, including coverage in national press outlets like *The Nation*, Kennelly would try to speak from the other side of his mouth, declaring that "there is no such thing as a white neighborhood in Chicago."[30]

Kennelly's vacillation frustrated everyone involved, but that was precisely the point. The mayor was willfully adopting more pose than stance, concerning himself more with politics than substance. Nor was he alone. Racial inclusion was a losing issue politically in Chicago regardless of party, and with precious few exceptions, white politicians' commitments to it were usually slippery at best. The black writer Chandler Owen hit on the point precisely in his assessment of

---

[28] Edwin Berry to Richard J. Daley, July 30, 1957, box 499, folder 1, ACLU Records.
[29] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 95.
[30] Homer A. Jack, "Chicago's Violent Armistice," *The Nation*, December 10, 1949; *Chicago Defender*, September 2, 1950.

the Trumbull Park riots in 1954, writing that, "Whether Republicans or Democrats, the leaders feel that the white residents are generally opposed to Negro residential invasion. These politicians are not going to take a course which they fear will retire them to private life."[31] In a city dominated by machine politics, moreover, the politics of neighborhood integration were even more potent: the machine's primary concern was its own self-sustenance, and anything that risked slippages in support for it was a proverbial third rail.

Intellectually, encircling these mob actions and the inconsistent responses to them was a deceptively simple question: *Whose police, and whose city, were these?* As interracial conflict became more aggressive and widespread, many white participants in such conflicts talked about the police department as though it were a proxy for the color line. For instance, during the Trumbull Park disturbances, white residents of the South Deering neighborhood, lacking the armaments of an overtly legalized Jim Crow system but desperately wanting such an arrangement when it came to residential segregation, responded with horror and rage to the vision of white police holding guard on behalf of black neighborhood integrators. To many of them, police standing as proper lines between violent whites and black people trying to integrate the neighborhood was equal parts shocking and abhorrent. The most radical expression of this disbelief and anger came from a man named Joseph Beauharnais, founder of a hate group called the White Circle League of America. Responding to the racist chaos in South Deering that erupted after the black Howard family moved in at the Trumbull Park project, Beauharnais wrote an open letter to Kennelly that stretched five single-spaced type-written pages, and that included standard rants about the "BLACK PLAGUE," its "cancerous tentacles," its ability to destroy sections of "the white man's community," and so forth. But his wrath was most steadily

[31] Chandler Owen, "A Program for Solution of the Trumbull Housing Conflict," 1954, box 21, folder 9, Robert Merriam Papers (hereafter, Merriam Papers), University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, Chicago, IL.

unleashed not on black people, but against the law enforcement apparatus that would not let whites expel the "plague" from "their" community. He (without irony) decried the fact that whites in South Deering were currently living in a police state, seething about black intruders being afforded such protection from the city. "The negro's intrusion into the intimate community life of white people," he wrote, "is an ACT OF WAR and when an impotent, flabby, anti-white government uses the POLICE POWER to forcibly infiltrate the negro into the very blood stream of white community life, you strike at the FIRST LAW OF LIFE, THE LAW OF SELF-PRESERVATION."[32]

But it wasn't just the histrionics of men like Beauharnais, a known American Nazi Party affiliate, that demonstrated the point, however. During the Park Manor riots of 1949, an observer from the Catholic Youth Organization working on behalf of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations recorded a conversation in which two white men stood in a state of total disbelief that the police officers trying to contain the violence had any legitimate interest in doing so:

> *"These cops would like to let us go in their and break their [sic] backs of [expletive] niggers."*
> *"Yeah, sure they would. They don't like this any more than we do."*[33]

Similarly, during a 1957 incident in which white mobs attacked black men trying to use the Tuley Park swimming pool, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations captured one of the white men loudly condemning the police for "arresting white men and allowing Negro persons to use the pool."[34]

Those sentiments were occasionally lent credence by overt affirmations of racial solidarity on the part of white police officers – one of the most potent reminders of the CPD's

---

[32] Joseph Beauharnais to Martin Kennelly, August 14, 1953, box 21, folder 12, Merriam papers.
[33] Chicago Commission on Human Relations, "Documentary Report of the Anti-Racial Demonstrations and Violence Against the Home and Persons of Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Johnson, 7153 St. Lawrence Ave., July 25, 1949," single file, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.
[34] Chicago Commission on Human Relations, "A Preliminary Report on Racial Disturbances in Chicago for the Period July 21 to August 4, 1957," single file, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.

failure to protect black citizens. For instance, while media and activist attention during 1951 focused on the white riots in suburban Cicero,[35] another one broke out in the Irish neighborhood of Bridgeport (the home of both then-Mayor Martin Kennelly and his successor, Richard Daley) where a black family was rumored to have moved in. An observer on the scene there reported to the Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination that one of the white officers on the scene advised young rioters to "hold your rocks until night comes." One white man sympathetic to the black people barricaded inside the house, who had gone in to meet with the family at one point, was beaten on the street by a rioter before being promptly arrested, briefly jailed, and threatened with a disorderly conduct charge.[36] As the *Sun-Times* editorial board wrote in 1949, responding to the "provocative" conduct of the police during the riots at Peoria Street, "The fact seems to be that in this case the sympathies of the police were very largely with the mob."[37] In 1957, more of the same, with the same editorial board saying of the Calumet Park riots that, "One of the reasons for the outbreaks is police inefficiency and the undisguised sympathy of some policemen for the race-haters who are stirring up antagonism and kindling passion at every turn."[38]

The police response to residential conflict undermined black rights to equal protection in other ways, as well. No less than CPD Commissioner Timothy O'Connor himself, testifying before the hastily convened Committee on Racial Tensions in Housing Projects in 1953, argued that any further plans to integrate the projects should be put on hold, as he feared that continuing

---

[35] The riots in Cicero have been largely omitted from this history, even though they completely embody all aspects of this particular problem. (A grand jury actually charged police officials with conspiracy.) But although the area would later be absorbed into Chicago proper, it was, at the time, still a suburb with its own municipal functions and organization, including an autonomous police department. On the grand jury charges, see United States of America vs. Erwin Konovsy, Henry J. Sandusky, Theordore H. Wesolowski, Nicholas Berkos, Roland Brani, Frank Janecek, and Frank A. Lange, box 499, folder 5, ACLU Records.
[36] Waitstill H. Sharp to Edgar Bernhard and Edward Meyerding, July 26, 1951, box 499, folder 2, ACLU Records.
[37] *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 16, 1949.
[38] *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 31, 1957.

to let black people move into white areas "could mean great difficulties for the police department in meeting their other responsibilities; traffic, crime and general policing, if they had to allocate too much of their force to racial problems."[39] Every department head from then through at least the 1970s would at one point or another repeat this argument, suggesting that black people requiring such extraordinary levels of protection imperiled other citizens and taxpayers, because integration protection pulled police from jobs and assignments elsewhere.

In arguing that black attempts to desegregate the city stood the chance of endangering the well-being of the rest of the city, police officials like O'Connor tacitly gave rhetorical ammunition to those would rather have not seen the ghetto walls break at all. When coming from the mouths of O'Connor or other officials in power, the message bore little of the overt malice that Beauharnais's did, but carried significantly more weight. To people looking for a reason to oppose neighborhood integration, the message was interpretable as being an affirmation that desegregation and black striving constituted actual threats to white communities in the city. And it was twistable. The logic would constantly be used as a bludgeon against black demands for racial inclusion over the course of the next two decades. It could and would be deployed to tell black people to temper the tenor of their expectations and the pace at which social change might be effected. (Indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, this very same argument, when it was advanced by O'Connor's successor, would be the crux of Richard Daley's argument for issuing an injunction against Martin Luther King and other civil rights protestors during the Chicago Freedom Movement in the summer of 1966.)

Such stances by top-ranking police officials posed obvious problems for black people. Beyond simply denying them the protection that their citizenship supposedly entitled, the

[39] Notes from the meeting of the Committee on Racial Tensions in Housing Projects, November 3, 1953, Merriam Papers, box 21, folder 9.

framing of black assertions on inclusion and equality as a zero-sum game—one that imperiled the safety of others—implicitly positioned blacks not just on the margins of a legitimate claims-making citizenry, but as oppositional to the majority's safety and interests. As a result, it is no coincidence that questions of belonging and citizenship burned through black Chicagoans' assertions of their rights to police protection from white violence, as they couched their demands for protection in their positions as taxpayers and Americans. Examples of this are innumerable. Consider, for example, the protestations of the black-owned *Crusader* editorial board over the violation of black rights to free movement through the city without being harassed, in which they pointed toward the fact that the police were paid "out of the taxpayer's money" as a cornerstone reason why rights violations committed by officers were inappropriate.[40] Or a stunning 1958 editorial by the same paper about police brutality and harassment, in which editors conjured the ghost of Dred Scott and the attending questions of the content and meaning of citizenship: "in the eyes of the police, no Negro has any rights that a policeman is bound to respect."[41] In the wake of that tumultuous postwar decade of racial terrorism, and in the face of a wave of racially motivated arson, Dempsey Travis repeated the logic, declaring that, "Nothing short of positive police action on the part of the city can stop this terrorism toward American citizens who are entitled to live anywhere they can afford to purchase or rent."[42]

While such "positive police action" proved elusive, black Chicago nevertheless tried vigilantly to secure it. Considered in the context of ongoing racial terrorism in the mid-1940s, the questions posed by the *Defender*'s editorial board in early 1946, responding to declarations of violent intent by white extremists, weren't simply rhetorical. After Alton Baird, president of the White Independent Citizens' Committee, championed "force and violence" to keep black people

[40] *Crusader*, May 12, 1956.
[41] *Crusader*, March 22, 1958.
[42] *Crusader*, August 2, 1958.

out of the Oakwood-Kenwood neighborhood, the *Defender* board inquired as to the limits the CPD would let Baird go before stepping in. Invoking the specter of Hitlerism, they asked whether men like Baird would "have free reign until it is too late? The Chicago Police Department," it concluded, "should have an answer for that question that haunts some 400,000 Negro citizens of this community."[43] Other community members tried similarly to get the police department to answer that question, through word or action. In July of 1946 after more than two dozen unresolved bombing cases, community leaders affiliated with the NAACP, CIO, Socialist Party, and other organizations demanded counsel with Police Commissioner John Prendergast, who characteristically pledged much while delivering little.[44] Meanwhile, the interracial Chicago Civil Liberties Committee (CCLC), an early progenitor of the Illinois ACLU, devoted resources toward trying to solve anti-black hate crime, in much the same fashion that the NAACP had done two decades earlier. In doing so, they specifically positioned themselves as doing police work that the police themselves would not or could not do.[45]

So shallow was community members' faith in the police protecting them from white violence that on multiple occasions, murmurings arose among African Americans as to the wisdom of taking up arms to do what the police would not. During the Fernwood riots of 1947, after police routed traffic through side streets cluttered with angry and violent white mobs, dangerously exposing blacks to abuse, black alderman Archibald Carey found himself having to talk down a visibly incensed crowd from organizing what Arnold Hirsch called an "avenging expeditionary force."[46] Two years later, the same. After the Peoria Street mob violence of the autumn of 1949, black leaders and Commission on Human Relations personnel reported "on

[43] *Chicago Defender*, February 16, 1946.
[44] *Chicago Defender*, July 6, 1946.
[45] *Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1945.
[46] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 95.

visiting Negro homes lately finding people armed and ready to repel persons whom they presume to be invading their rights."[47] And while black retaliatory violence and armed self-defense rarely materialized out in the streets of Chicago during the 1940s and 50s, these inklings of its potential during the postwar years are suggestive in part of why black organizations offering armed protection during the 1960s in Chicago, whether the Deacons for Defense or the Black Panthers, found strong support in certain sections of the black community. Logically if not tactically, such 1960s impulses toward community protection were born not just from the depths of violence current at the time, but were also drawn from traditional wells of responsive violence and self-protection.

On the whole, the crux of the matter was not so much that the police *always* failed to protect black people from white violence, as it was that black people had could never *expect* protection from one situation to the next. The cause for this lack of confidence was written out everywhere in the city's responses to racial violence. On the one hand, city leaders from Kennelly to O'Connor to Daley themselves publicly appeared unconvinced that black people had a right to protection when it came to integrating the city. And on the other, even despite a late-1940s bundle of administrative programming nominally designed to better-equip the CPD to respond to anti-black terrorism, the department still continuously failed in that task. Following the 1947 Fernwood riots and the wide condemnation of the city's handling of those riots, police

[47] Unknown (Commission on Human Relations) to Edgar Bernhard, November 19, 1949, box 551, folder 3, ACLU Records. It is surely little coincidence that this pivot toward picking up arms happened when it did. A new militancy had percolated through Black America during the 1940s, especially among the hundreds of thousands of black men who had fought for their country in the Second World War. For instance, this was the period of the radicalization of Robert F. Williams, recognized by many as one of the intellectual and tactical forebears of Black Power. This willingness to pick up arms is even more unsurprising when considered in light of the fact that so many of those most immediately threatened by white violence were those seeking a places to live. This meant that many of those affected were new migrants from the Jim Crow South, which, in large measure due to its rurality (contra modern arguments in favor of there being a *black* "tradition of arms") carried a unique tradition of arms ownership and use. On "the black tradition of arms" see Nicholas Johnson, *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms* (New York: Prometheus, 2014).

officials constructed a plan specifically targeted toward dealing with mass disorder and codenamed it Plan Five.[48] The core of Plan Five was to have a special system in place to coordinate fast arrival times for large numbers of squad cars to the scene of a civil disturbance, and it was bolstered twice more before the decade was done, in an effort to disrupt dangerous and large assemblages of white protestors. Sometimes these responses proved up to the challenge, but mostly they did not. The fact that some of the most prolonged and vicious anti-black protests, such as those at Trumbull Park and Calumet Park, unfolded in the decade *after* these tactical shifts and bolsterings speaks loudly to this.

It would be unfair to say that the police department's failure to consistently protect blacks integrating white neighborhoods kept Chicago segregated, but it certainly didn't help. When white violent opponents of racial succession rhetorically or implicitly asked the question of whether or not they could get away with what they were doing, rare was the occasion in which they would have felt forcefully dissuaded from doing so. In any case, as a product of some admixture of these failures to combat white violence, persistent redlining, economic deprivation, and restrictive covenants, Chicago during this period assumed the particular segregated contours that it retains to this day.

*

A broad range of consequences attended these reifications of ghetto boundaries on the South Side and the construction of others on the West. Among the most devastating was the fact that as those neighborhoods became more and more isolated, overcrowded, and impoverished, and as work opportunities started leaving during the 1950s, those areas also became more dangerous and crime-ridden. Commentators on the crime problem ran the gamut in terms of their social position and level of influence. Many stood outside the black community, others firmly

[48] Hirsch, *Building the Second Ghetto*, 96.

within it. The Chicago Crime Commission (CCC), the preeminent white-dominated watchdog organization over the police (though exclusively for police laxity rather than police abuse) issued report after report decrying police negligence and inefficiency in high-crime (and inevitably black) districts. As early as 1945, in a widely distributed study of "Crime Conditions in the 5th Police District," the commission reported that the 5th District – covering the South Side Grand Boulevard and Washington Park neighborhoods, and pieces of others – contributed one-fifth of Chicago's reported murders, one-ninth of its robberies, and one-quarter of its rapes. The commission's assessments, while dire, also reflected broad understandings of the criminogenic consequences of racial inequality and the city's persistent ghettoization. Writing on the CCC's behalf, its Executive Director Virgil Peterson attributed the inordinate amount of crime in the Fifth District to a number of factors: to the fact that that area warehoused 200,000 people in an area of less than three square miles; that the district had absorbed forty to fifty thousand new residents in the first half of the 1940s and the aggravations born from so many people living in such close quarters; segregated schools which led black children to have far more hours of idle time than most white children; abhorrent disparities in access to recreational outlets; disproportionate poverty; and so on.[49]

Many of Peterson's contemporaries spoke with similar nuance. To be sure, deep and troubling assumptions of innate black criminality remained legion, soldered as they were to the girders of pervasive white supremacy. (Indeed, Chicago NAACP leader Henry McGee accused CPD Commissioner John Prendergast – and this is remarkable if it is true – of explaining away high crime rates on the South Side as the result of "a spirit of restlessness with you people."[50])

---

[49] Virgil W. Peterson, "Crime Conditions in the Fifth Police District: Survey Made in 1945 to Determine Reasons for High Crime Rate," *Criminal Justice: Journal of the Chicago Crime Commission*, May 1946.
[50] A.W. Wright, "Memorandum for the Operating Director Re: 5th Police District," September 30, 1946, box 58, folder 4, Peterson Papers.

But it would be remiss to not appreciate the fact that so many of the people talking about crimes committed by black people understood such crimes as ones borne of deprivation and desperation: intense poverty as black people struggled to consistently secure good jobs; illicit economies (gambling, especially) borne from hopes puncturing hopelessness; segregated schools that left black children profoundly disadvantaged; furies conjured from the discomforts and frustrations heaped upon ghetto residents trapped by circumstances into a particular station in life. The Chicago NAACP worried over whites concluding "that the high crime rate was the cause of the negro as a class," rather than something attributable to the actual causes thereof – "housing, policing, recreation, sanitation, etc."[51] So too did most of the writings of black citizens themselves echo such understandings, many of whom would have tacitly or explicitly agreed with J. Hamilton Johnson's bundling together of crime rates with segregation and, above all else, with the effects of the "great lie"—"white supremacy."[52] Or as attorney and State Senator Chris Wimbish put it in a 1945 radio address, prefiguring many similar debates of the 1960s:

> Can we adults of the 20th Century, who spend billions of dollars to wage a war to kill, and have not spent a fraction of such amount to provide a wholesome environment to the living – hold the criminal responsible for our social negligence?...It is not my contention that all crime originates with the low paid and ill housed group,…but what I am stressing is that…crime springing from misery and poverty, disillusionment and frustration, is a condition for which society is responsible, although we hold the criminal accountable. We must strike at the cause – the roots – the source of the thing – if we are to have a real and last solution to the problem of CRIME PREVENTION.[53]

[51] A.W. Wright, "Memorandum for the Operating Director Re: 5th Police District," September 30, 1946, box 58, folder 4, Peterson Papers.
[52] *Chicago Defender*, July 27, 1946.
[53] Christopher Wimbish, "CRIME PREVENTION—THE SOLUTION—A NEW APPROACH, Broadcast by State Senator Christopher C. Wimbish, Third District, Illinois, Monday, November 13, 1945, Station W.H.F.C., at the Request of the Illinois State Division of Crime Prevention, Lawrence Morrell Gross, Superintendent," box 1, folder 6, Wimbish Papers. Emphases are in original.

In the end, in other words, whatever problems of elevated crime rates that existed within black neighborhoods came back to the doorstep of a system that would not allow black people the same accesses and opportunities as the rest of the population.[54]

Wide cognizance as to the roots of escalating crime didn't foreclose many people from wanting police to respond to it, of course. Writing his report for the CCC, Virgil Peterson's sternest words were reserved not for structural inequality but for local law enforcement, which he deemed "totally unsatisfactory" in responding to the problems at hand. According to Peterson, many of the local residents that the crime commission interviewed complained about the fact that they rarely saw police officers on the streets, which contributed to a general sense of lawlessness. The class biases of Peterson and the CCC, the leadership of which was comprised almost entirely of wealthy white men, meant that the lot of people he targeted for interviewing was probably not representative. At the same time, his accusations was corroborated by citizen accounts in local newspapers, where black South Siders complained about everything from unchecked juvenile delinquency to "loud talking," littering to general "police laxity."[55]

These enforcement issues were partly resource-based, with many observers constantly complaining about the police department being under-funded and short-staffed.[56] When Richard Daley took the mayor's office in 1955, he successfully lobbied to hire two thousand additional police officers, suggesting the degree to which the department was short on manpower in the years prior. But the problems were also premised upon the corruption of many officers who *were* on the ground in those communities. While stories of white motorists slipping police cash to get

---

[54] A broad range of scholars – William Julius Wilson, Robert J. Sampson, Patrick Sharkey, and Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, to name a few – have documented many of the long-term consequences of this in the present day. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Sampson, *Great American City*; Sharkey, *Stuck in Place*; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

[55] *Chicago Defender*, December 8, 1945; *Chicago Defender*, August 23, 1947; *Chicago Defender*, June 19, 1948; *Chicago Defender*, February 26, 1949.

[56] *Chicago Defender*, August 7, 1948.

out of a ticket have embedded themselves in Chicago lore, it bears remembering that more serious forms of police corruption abounded, and had real consequences upon real people's lives. This was particularly true of those without resources, and especially those in black communities that had comparatively little sociopolitical power to combat it. Reports from the late 1940s and 1950s, both from community members, newspaper accounts, and (perhaps most damningly) from informants within the police department itself constantly pointed out the frequency with which CPD officers in black neighborhoods extracted money from residents as a way to supplement their own income. Consider the case of Joan Fox, for example, a young woman said to be between twenty and twenty-two, 5'3" or 5'4" in height and of slight build, "color chocolate brown," according to an investigator piecing together her story. Fox, the reports went, had grown up with a mother who worked as a prostitute, and had followed her into the trade. One night in 1952, she found herself with another prostitute and two men when they were promptly busted by two plainclothes officers. According to Fox, the officers told her they would let her go if she cooperated in setting up a sting of a drug dealer that they were after. But when she did so, the officers simply took the dealer's money and drugs and arrested Fox anyway.[57] Or consider what happened to people swept up in policy gambling raids, who would often be questioned by officers on their way to the police station to see how much money they had on them. According to an informant within the department, "those who are able to pay five or ten dollars apiece to the officers will never get to the station," having received a "pass." Everyone was in on the take, in this officer's rendering, from the arresting officers to the desk sergeant doing the booking to the bondsman. One South Sider even found it impossible to get police to tell him where his stolen

[57] Anonymous Informant, Report of Investigator #1, May 19, 1952, box 18, folder 13, Merriam papers.

car was located unless they gave him ten dollars first.[58] As the Chicago Crime Commission put it, these "constant shakedowns" amounted to "one big racket and shakedown proposition."[59]

*

While some people in black neighborhoods tried in vain to get more effective, less corrupt police work done in their communities, white Chicagoans in neighborhoods experiencing postwar racial transition worked to get more police to their communities in general. The most striking example of this was in Lawndale on the West Side, which underwent extraordinary racial succession during the 1950s, entering the decade as a predominantly Jewish neighborhood and exiting it overwhelmingly black. As this happened, a group of Lawndalers—interracial, though mostly white—organized themselves as the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission (GLCC) for the purposes of "preserving the community," with one of their primary concerns to get more police sent to the district.[60] The organization's local alderman parlayed with newly elected Mayor Richard Daley after the 1955 election to try to get more intensive patrols in the area, and was one of the most aggressive backers of Daley's plan to hire thousands of new policemen.[61] So effective was their lobbying that by 1956, GLCC members claimed to have been the reason behind a dramatic new invention in policing strategy in Chicago, with formal implementation of flying "Task Force" squads.[62] And they continued to file petition after petition after petition with city officials, consistently trying to achieve "intensified patrolling" of the neighborhood, especially after dark.[63]

---

[58] Anonymous Informant, Report of Investigator #1, May 7, 1952, box 18, folder 13, Merriam papers.
[59] Virgil Peterson, "Memorandum Re: 5th Police District," October 12, 1946, box 58, folder 4, Peterson Papers.
[60] Jerome Braverman to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 11, 1956, box 3, folder 4, GLCC Records.
[61] Sidney D. Deutsch, Address to the meeting of the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission, April 19, 1955, box 1, folder 6, GLCC Records; Allan C. Williams to A.R. Cox, August 3, 1955, box 2, folder 1, GLCC Records; *Lawndale Times*, December 15, 1955; *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1955 and May 7, 1955.
[62] Jerome Braverman to Joseph Lohman, November 23, 1956, box 3, folder 4, GLCC Records.
[63] Progressive Block Club to Police Commissioner O'Connor, October 29, 1958, box 7, folder 7, GLCC Records; Resident Petition to Richard J. Daley, Mayor, March 15, 1959, box 9, folder 5, GLCC Records;

To be sure, even at the outset and especially as Lawndale transitioned from white to black, claims on such anti-crime initiatives and demands for greater police protection in the neighborhood were not the lone province of white residents. But what is striking is the degree to which an organization like the GLCC, back when it and the area it represented were majority-white, were able to leverage police power to their envisioned benefit in ways that most black communities found themselves totally incapable of. By most conceivable metrics, in the early- and mid-1950s, Lawndale would have failed to top the charts of places in the city where the greatest amount of crime was happening. But it was there, rather than in all- or majority-black neighborhoods with greater rates of crime, that citizens were able to exercise influence over the city machinery.

And indeed, despite changeovers in the racial demographics of the neighborhood, the community's exertions were far from devoid of stark racial contours. In June 1959, for instance, members of the GLCC met with a CPD official from the Lawndale District, who assured them, after they had presented their case, that he was "aware of the difficulties that the *white families* on this block" had been facing.[64] And as late as 1960, a point by which Lawndale was less than fifteen percent white, white Lawndalers on certain blocks were meeting privately amongst themselves, their black neighbors uninvited, to discuss crime in the community and communicate their concerns with members of the CPD.[65] Their confidence that such concerns would be heard bespoke a subtle but telling bundle of privilege.

More concretely, while it is impossible to verify the legitimacy of the GLCC's claim to have been the primary driver behind implementation of the CPD Task Force, the Task Force's creation was nevertheless a matter of extraordinary consequence. Whether the product of the

[64] Unknown Author, "Case 58-70," box 10, folder 4, GLCC Records. Emphasis mine.
[65] Unknown author, "Meeting with white residents of south side of street on 4100 block," July 13, 1960, box 14, folder 2, GLCC Records.

activism of a small group of predominantly white Chicagoans, or of forces much bigger, the unit's emergence was nevertheless a crucial aspect of the long postwar shift toward more aggressive surveillance and more invasive policing strategies. The genealogy of the Task Force itself actually began in the summer of 1946, when, amidst heavy black in-migration and responding to that scathing CCC report on Fifth District conditions, newly minted CPD Commissioner John Prendergast sent three hand-picked "flying squads" of four men each charging through that district, with directives to do what was necessary to clean up crime. In translation, that ended up meaning that these men made a lot of arrests, with the *Defender* crowing that "these crime-smashing squads" each had jailed fifty "hoodlums[,] many who carried knives and had previous police records" during just the first couple days that they were in operation.[66]

Had the *Defender* known the full content of these flying squad actions, they may not have been so enthusiastic, for what those actions amounted to was breathing new life and new commonality into the use of stop-and-seizure. The sheer number of weapons that these officers claimed to be removing from people, for instance, is one testament to this, since weapons possession arrests required finding cause to search someone for a weapon in the first place. (The weapons possession arrest, it bears noting, is an entirely different beast than the use of a weapon in the commissioning of a crime.) In 1946, the first year in which the flying squads were operative, arrests for such weapons charges jumped nearly sixty percent from the previous year, from 631 to 1,004 – a level at which they would roughly remain for the next decade.[67] Gleaning the racial breakdown of these numbers in the early period is impossible, Prendergast having filed maddeningly data-less reports as far as race was concerned, and his successor, Timothy

[66] *Chicago Defender*, July 6, 1946.
[67] Chicago Police Department, Annual Reports: 1945 and 1946, single files, Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library (Washington Branch), Chicago, IL.

O'Connor, following in his footsteps throughout the first half of his term. But when such data began to become available in 1955, the contours of what these stops and arrests looked like were plain, with 653 of the 951 people arrested for weapons possession – or nearly sixty-nine percent – categorized by the police as black.[68]

While these flying squads weren't doing all of this work on their own, their labors coincided with a larger uptick in targeted stop-and-seizure-style tactics throughout the department. That 1955 annual report – the first to show racial breakdowns of arrests during the postwar years – offered remarkable evidence of the ways such practices were being shaped in racially specific ways. Perhaps the easiest way to understand this is to consider the arrest statistics for narcotics possession and gambling, which, in addition to weapons possession, were perhaps the two charges most likely to result from a search-and-seizure process. (Other than in raids of gambling houses, the most common context in which people were arrested on gambling charges was after they were discovered to be carrying policy slips – discoveries that resulted from searching a person for contraband.) The numbers astound. That year, 83.9 percent of people arrested on drug charges, and 84.5 of those arrested on gambling charges, were black.[69] Even conceding the likelihood of higher rates of drug use (the heroin wave hitting black Chicago at this time will be covered momentarily) and gambling play in black neighborhoods, the disproportion is impossible to ignore.

These trends were exacerbated with the 1956 implementation of "flying squads" as a formal, permanent, and large feature of the department's crime prevention measures—the

[68] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1955, single file, Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library (Washington Branch), Chicago, IL.
[69] Ibid.

aforementioned Task Force.[70] The squads on the Task Force looked something like Prendergast's of a decade earlier, but with a steroid injection in every conceivable sense. Rather than squads of four, these new ones consisted of eleven people each, one patrolling on a three-wheeled motorcycle, nine walking beats covering just three to six blocks each, and one designated sergeant commanding for every ten-person squad. Rather than three individual squads, there were instead twenty, and four lieutenants and a police captain collectively were charged with overseeing the whole enterprise. All told, the new unit comprised 225 members of the police force, and they were detailed night after night to augment normal forces in "high crime" areas, with orders to "fight crime until it is knocked out."[71] It saturated black neighborhoods with officers. An analysis by the police department in April 1958, reported upon to much comment in the *Defender*, showed that black districts like Englewood, Woodlawn, Fillmore and Lawndale had received Task Force visits at a rate *twenty to twenty-eight times* that of white neighborhoods.[72] Within those narrowly targeted districts, the Task Force's operations primarily consisting of taking stop-and-seizure methods, expanding them dramatically, and using them indiscriminately. A typical Task Force mission would have looked like this: Task Force officers assigned to cover, say, Woodlawn on a particular night would set up a series of traffic stops in order to ensnare the greatest number of people passing through. When a vehicle would arrive at the stop, officers would direct the driver and any passengers to get out of the car, occupants would be frisked for weapons or drugs, and the cars would be searched. Passersby on the sidewalk were subject to receive the same treatment – being stopped, frisked, and arrested if officers found anything illicit on their person.

---

[70] Summary of the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission Second Annual Meeting, April 17, 1956, box 2, folder 6, GLCC Records; Richard J. Daley to Jerome Braverman, April 16, 1956, box 2, folder 6, GLCC Records.
[71] *Chicago Tribune*, March 23, 1956; *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1956; *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1956.
[72] *Chicago Defender*, April 26, 1958.

Prefiguring intense debates over stop-and-frisk that would explode in the following decade, these Task Force tactics predictably ignited strong opposition. Black Chicago recoiled from the Task Force's presence in large measure because they were, as the *Crusader* suggested, overwhelmingly the population most likely to have to interact with Task Force units. Alongside issues of police brutality, here was a law enforcement matter that galvanized an unusual cross-section of the black community across lines of class and social standing, for even black elites began to quickly appreciate, through bitter experience, the fact that their social station would offer them no quarter in such matters. Within weeks after the Task Force's formal implementation, the *Crusader* was offering to sponsor attorneys for black readers whose rights had been violated by the Task Force. "Our community is for good law enforcement," its editors wrote, "but for the life of us we can't see why policemen who are being paid out of the taxpayer's money must run roughshod over Negroes. Cars are stopped regardless of who you are [in black neighborhoods], lights flashed in the driver's face, he and his car is searched without a warrant. This is in violation of his or her rights."[73] A rather more impassioned letter writer to the *Defender* editor the following year (who did not name the Task Force, but the methods described therein suggested that it was the unit being implicated) complained of having his car and person searched after being stopped for a brake light violation. The writer, a man named Clarence C. Carraway, Jr., wrote of feeling as though he had been treated "like a murderer" by the police.[74] Making few distinctions in terms of who they stopped, questioned, and searched – from preachers to panhandlers – Task Force missions, as a local attorney unguardedly put it, constituted "a definite violation of basic civil rights."[75]

---

[73] *Crusader*, May 12, 1956.
[74] *Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1957.
[75] *Chicago Defender*, April 26, 1958.

Rights violations or no, O'Connor's CPD continued to lean heavily on the Task Force as a matter of crime prevention, increasing hostilities over the matter between police and community. By early 1958, black alderman Sidney Jones was receiving such strong pressure from his constituents concerning the Task Force's stop-and-seizure methods that he introduced an ordinance to the City Council to stop the Task Force's "illegal searches." In defending Jones' ultimately doomed effort, members of the black press deployed the idiom of terrorism to talk about Task Force actions in the community. In an editorial published under the title "The Task Force Terrorists," for instance, the *Defender* compared O'Connor to a Soviet police chief, citing, among other things, that he "ignores the question of rights of citizenship and speaks only of the 'effectiveness' of the illegal searches." "The terroristic tactics of the Task Force," the editorial board continued,

> particularly the public searching of a citizen who has been stopped for a minor traffic violation, represent a basic infringement on the right of citizenship and a threat to individual liberty. The object of curbing crime, as laudable as it is, does not justify such means, not in a democracy anyway.

Warning that those practices were causing "hatred and resentment" within black communities, the editorialists argued that such strategies, contrary to any crime-stopping impulses underlying them, were instead increasing the likelihood of frustrated violence.[76]

The questionable constitutionality of these strategies also formed the crux of one of the Illinois ACLU's most substantive interventions into black concerns in the late 1950s. A month after the Jones ordinance's introduction and the *Defender*'s angry comment on O'Connor and the Task Force, a subcommittee of the ACLU's Police and Criminal Law Committee convened to collect information on the precise scope and contours of the Task Force's strategies.[77] The following summer, their Task Force report, circulated to politicians at the local and state level

[76] *Chicago Defender*, May 20, 1958.
[77] Kenneth Douty to Charles Liebman, Ernst Liebman, Don Moore, Charles Pressman, and Bernard Weisberg, June 30, 1958, box 508, folder 3, ACLU Records.

and reprinted in its entirety in the *Crusader*, offered stern warnings about the violations taking place in the context of such practices.[78] In a statement that would reverberate through many more years worth of conversations about police prerogatives and civil rights, the League wrote that, "It is as much the duty of the police officer to refrain from harassing a person as protecting him and his community. These twin objectives of individual and community security need not be in conflict."[79]

But in practice, they *were* in conflict, and had been for a long time. The police considered stop-and-seizure – whether practiced by the Task Force or otherwise – to be a healthy dose of "preventive medicine." Citizens, meanwhile, considered it to be a fundamental derogation of their liberties. These debates in the late 1950s recalled those surrounding the initial implementation of stop-and-seizure during the days of Prohibition, but they were renewed with fresh vigor in the hands of the ACLU. At the heart of the matter, according to the League's report, was the fact that there was no definitional precision whatsoever in terms of what legitimated or deligitimated such searches. Illinois law, as interpreted by the courts, had long implied that any detention by a police officer in which the detained person submitted to the officer's authority constituted an arrest. It did not matter whether or not the individual was forcibly detained, whether any charges were placed against them, or whether the person was later convicted on any charges. The way that this was interpreted by officers on the streets, as the ACLU pointed out, was that anyone who had been stopped and engaged by police officers—even if the proceedings never went further in terms of leveling charges or bringing them in to the station—had been the subject of a "valid arrest."[80]

---

[78] *Crusader*, July 11, 1959; Cecil A. Partee to Kenneth Douty, July 13, 1959, box 508, folder 3, ACLU Records.
[79] Illinois ACLU, "Police Practice in the City of Chicago of Stopping Drivers of Automobiles for Traffic Offenses Followed by Search of Their Persons and Property," ca. 1959, box 571, folder 3, ACLU Records.
[80] Ibid.

Similar ambiguity colored what was "reasonable" in terms of the search that could follow. In a particularly frustrated passage in their report, ACLU writers contended that, "A 'reasonable' search would seem to include, under present law, the person and property, including the automobile, of the one searched. To date, the courts and legislature have made no distinction between an arrest for a traffic violation and one for other offenses." Going on to note that virtually no limits had yet been placed on what was fair game for searches, they wrote that, "An enormous power has thus been placed in the hands of the individual policeman. An arrest for even the most trivial traffic offense allows a complete search of the property and person of the citizen involved…*The actual object of the arrest is the search itself.*"[81] In other words, the point of these sorts of arrests – meaning, again, any moment in which someone had submitted to the authority of the police – was less a response to wrongdoing than an effort to *seek out* wrongdoing.

When it infringed upon people's bodily security and personal privacy, of course, this was not the way that the law was supposed to work, but the degree to which the department insisted on these sorts of searches as critical to the job lends credence to the idea of arrests as pretext for searches, rather than the other way around. And the effects of these practices in real time were difficult to miss. In 1957, the first full year that the Task Force was operational and with its operations primarily concentrated on stopping and searching motorists, 13,515 of the 24,679 people arrested on traffic and parking charges were black. (Driving under the influence – a category in which whites predominated – notwithstanding.) This was an astounding statistic: in a city that was roughly fifteen percent black, and in which a great many black residents were too poor to be able to afford a car in the first place, nearly *fifty-five percent* of people arrested in

[81] Ibid.

incidents that required them to be driving a car were African American.[82] Black arrests on charges tethered to street stops and searches, such as gambling (eighty-eight percent of the total), narcotics (eighty-three percent), and weapons (sixty-three percent) predictably stayed at remarkably disproportionate levels.[83]

These patterns constitute crucial prefigurations of what was to come with the formalization and legalization of stop-and-frisk in the next decade and beyond. The coming debates over stop-and-frisk (as it came to be called in the 1960s) revolved around precisely the fact that the practice was so profoundly bound up in patterns of profiling and racial targeting. Even granting the disproportionate levels of crime in some black neighborhoods, the disproportion was unexplainable. Black Chicagoans were neither the only perpetrators nor victims of violent crime, but anywhere from sixty-three to seventy percent of people arrested on weapons charges were black. While policy gambling was a largely black-patronized enterprise, much of its ownership and direction was by this point in the hands of white syndicate operators – not to mention that it belied reality to imagine that white Chicagoans were not playing their own card games and other forms of gambling, even if in more private fashion. And yet nearly ninety percent of people arrested on gambling charges were black. In other words, even before "stop-and-frisk" as such became a formal matter of public policy in the 1960s, years before it became subject to extensive debate in the public forum and the halls of the Illinois legislature, patterns of intense racial disproportion had already been inscribed into its essence.

*

Although the Task Force was not particularly concerned with narcotics, the evolution of its early progenitors in the late 1940s and early 1950s coincided the explosion of an intense

[82] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1957, single file, Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library (Washington Branch), Chicago, IL.
[83] Ibid.

heroin trade in Chicago. Both nationally and locally, the trade in and use of heroin and other opiates—powerfully (though not totally) stymied by World War II-era booms in employment, the shipping of men of young age overseas, and restrictions on international travel that strangled lines of drug importation—surged in the late 1940s. Before the war, narcotic addictions had been most commonly identified with white middle-to-upper-class women and Chinese immigrants, before sifting downward on the socioeconomic ladder in the early twentieth century. In the postwar epidemic, however, poor African American urbanites emerged as the new characteristic heroin addict. Harlem was the heroin tide's epicenter, but it crashed hard on Chicago's South Side, as well.[84]

As the heroin trade mushroomed in Chicago after the war, and as the drug epidemic pounded black neighborhoods, community members agonized over the influx. Community members in the Southside Community Committee organized a "Dope Must Go" campaign that included educational measures, law enforcement coordination, and literature drops throughout the community.[85] The *Defender,* meanwhile, ran a massive, picture-laden article about "Dopeville, USA" – the area where Oakwood, Drexel, and Cottage Grove intersected on the eastern edge of Bronzeville near Mandrake Park, where reporters placed the epicenter of the South Side drug trade. Posed against pictures of track-marked arms, violently ill heroin addicts, and drug paraphernalia, the newspaper asked how exactly it had come to pass that this is where the heroin problem had settled with such fury. Citizens complained constantly about the vast proliferation of narcotics and the seeming inability by the city to do anything about it.[86] Many fumed over the easy access to heroin that seemed unique to black communities, while others

[84] David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001 [1982]).
[85] See various documents authored by the "Dope Must Go" Committee in box 32, folder 14, Merriam Papers.
[86] Unknown Author, Report of Investigator #1, May 12, 1952, box 18, folder 13, Merriam papers.

bristled at the fact that the larger processes of racial exclusion and ghettoization sequestered hundreds of thousands of law-abiding people into the same spaces as dope addicts and peddlers.[87]

Like the broader national response, local officials struggled with how to respond to the problem. Scholar David Courtwright has ably demonstrated the ways that at the federal level, postwar policy toward opiate use migrated from treatment to punishment over time and, perhaps not coincidentally, as the stereotypical opiate addict and user shifted from being a white woman to black man.[88] In 1951, Congress passed the Boggs Act, which leveled mandatory minimums (of two, five, and ten years for, respectively, first, second, and third violations) upon violators of narcotics laws; and five years later, it passed the 1956 Narcotic Control Act, which increased fines for narcotics violations and more aggressively specified possession as a criminal offense worthy of lengthy prison time. At the state level, the Illinois legislature passed mimic bills of both pieces of legislation, and down at the level of the streets, officials and police officers responded similarly in increasingly punitive ways.[89]

Even before enactment of the Boggs Act and state-level copycat legislation, however, the CPD was beginning to turn toward responses to addiction that prioritized arrest and incarceration (or quasi-incarceration, with some addicts receiving treatment for their heroin shivers within the confines of the jail) – mostly because there was such a crippling dearth of adequate treatment options in Chicago. For example, early 1949 found CPD Commissioner John Prendergast and State's Attorney Boyle seeking reinforcements in this "war on drugs" (the *Tribune*'s words), whether by expanding (dramatically) the size of the CPD's narcotics detail, or getting help from

[87] Ibid.; *Chicago Defender*, July 7, 1951.
[88] Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*.
[89] Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 156.

federal agencies in order to wage it.[90] By the fall of that year, Boyle estimated that ten thousand Chicagoans had become addicted to narcotics, and announced that he would seek counsel from the Chicago Board of Health, affiliates of the American Medical Association, and other health experts to try to find medical solutions to the problem.[91] Meanwhile, Prendergast was estimating that addicts, broke and desperate for a fix, were literally robbing their neighbors of millions of dollars. Moreover, he pointed out, even those who *did* received treatment seldom stayed off of drugs, since there was no institutional support for them upon their return and since they came back to communities in which they could access drugs so easily. And thus in spite of his pledge to reach out to the medical community for help, Boyle seemed primed to concede the point as well, warning that, "If the medical profession can't end the dope habit we'll have to consider locking up these unfortunate people for life, as a crime prevention measure."[92]

As treatment failed and addict-related crime crept upward, city police began logging more and more arrests on narcotics charges, a vast majority of them on possession charges. In the South Side Fifth District alone from March through December of 1949, an aggressive drive against narcotics found more than eleven hundred adults and sixty-two juveniles arrested on drug use charges – eleven times as many as people arrested as sellers.[93] The outcome of such charges was rarely innocuous – many of those so arrested were hit with monetary fines, while still many others received jail time. On his way out of office in the fall of 1950, Prendergast announced a new narcotics detail based out of the CPD detective bureau that he anticipated would be more effective at controlling the sale and spread of drugs on the South Side.[94] (His successor, Timothy O'Connor, made his support for the new unit an early feature of his commissionership several

[90] *Chicago Tribune*, January 20, 1949.
[91] *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1949.
[92] *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1949.
[93] *Chicago Tribune*, December 3, 1950.
[94] *Chicago Tribune*, November 10, 1950

weeks later after taking over the department.[95]) That newly established narcotics section would prove tremendously effective in terms of increasingly police-civilian contact and logging arrests, if not in solving the actual problem of the heroin deluge. In January 1951, the *Defender* reported that in the first five and a half weeks of the narcotic section's existence, from just prior to Thanksgiving to New Years, its officers had made five hundred and seventy arrests of addicts and dealers, five of whom were turned over to federal agents as larger-scale dealers. The rest, all of them users or petty dealers, were arrested for prosecution.

By 1955, the police department's attention to the drug trade had grown monumentally. That year, the section preferred narcotics charges against 7,454 people – only 230 of them, or three percent, for selling. The police department's own data set demonstrates the profound degree to which drug enforcement was almost exclusively confined to black neighborhoods, with 86.6 percent of preferred charges listed as having been against "colored" persons. Moreover, the narcotic bureau reported that its statistics represented just 23.3% of the total drug arrests in the city, putting the full number of the arrested nearer to 32,000.[96]

Despite such high arrest figures, the fact that punishment seemed to center on users, and that few of those at the top of the heroin hierarchy were being brought down, provoked suspicion from some African Americans. While few such accusations are readily verifiable, *Defender* journalist Chuck Davis articulated that failure as a matter of corruption. Everyone knew, Davis wrote, kids included "before they know long division," that at least some portion of the police department was on the take. And much as it had been during Prohibition (the last great lucrative economy premised around criminalized substances) there was a tremendous amount of money to be made if the police simply looked the other way, and even more of it if they actively helped

[95] *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1950.
[96] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1955.

protect drug dealers and suppliers. A "Dopeville"-centered narcotics supplier named Neary "Thin Man" McNeal, for instance, boasted loudly about keeping his enterprise going through payoffs to the police, until finally offering a four thousand dollar bribe to the wrong officers, who sent him off to the penitentiary.[97]

While it was certainly no fault of the police that few treatment options existed, the punitive course that the department took proved totally inefficient. Thousands of people, and young black men especially, ended up stuck on what researchers studying Chicago's postwar drug boom called "the treadmill of addiction": "cold-turkey withdrawal; the punitive actions of the police, courts, and institutions; and re-addiction in the community."[98] The cog in the middle was crucial: those same researchers, studying data sets from Chicago's "black ghetto" (which one is unclear) in 1957, found that the average addict between the ages of ten and twenty-five-years-old had spent nearly fifteen percent of their life incarcerated. (This pales in comparison to some present-day sentences, but it does mean that the average addict spent nearly fifty-five days incarcerated in a given year.) Moreover, many of them suffered tremendously high rates of re-addiction upon their release, hurling back upon that treadmill. And as everyone from those social scientists to the State's Attorney to the Police Commissioner noted, the high price of drugs brought on by narcotics prohibition, coupled with such high rates of recidivism, was deeply criminogenic – compelling untreated addicts toward other crimes of all different sorts. The impact on community life, both in the immediate context and future ones, was incalculable.

*

Yet throughout all these turns, the most egregious alienation of black community members vis-à-vis the police continued to involve violence, as the police during the postwar

[97] *Chicago Defender*, July 7, 1951.
[98] Arnold Abrams, John H. Gagnon, and Joseph J. Levin, "Psychosocial Aspects of Addiction," *American Journal of Public Health*, 58:11 (1968): 2142-2155 (2148).

years morphed, in the remembrance of one teacher and community leader, from "our protectors" to "our attackers."[99] In suburban Evanston in the spring of 1946, a police officer approached 18-year-old expectant mother Lois Motten while she sat in a balcony seat in a movie theater, accused her of causing a disturbance, and shook her, telling her to be quiet. When she protested that there must be some mistake, the officer dragged her from her seat, down a flight of stairs, and sent her off to the Bridewell jail in the city proper. According to her attorney and to the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, she lost her child as a result of that rough treatment.[100] In October of 1947, a drunken off-duty police officer pounded a black World War II veteran named Cleotho Macon in the face with the butt of a pistol, an assault for which Macon tried to sue in federal court.[101]

As they always had, these stories came like waves. By the early 1950s, advocates and attorneys (most likely with the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee) were circulating handbills with brutal images of black men beaten or shot by police officers, asking witnesses to come forward with any knowledge they had of the incidents. Here was World War II veteran Tommy Melson, gazing into the camera in a suit just a little too big, having survived a bullet from CPD Officer Walter Green a few nights after Christmas in 1951. And here was Joseph Murray, a young railroad worker, his downward-turned face not hiding how swollen and disfigured it was, bandages covering the cuts and bald spots on his scalp where batons and hands had worn away the skin and hair during an incident in July 1952. There was Joseph Clay, a hint of a smile on his face below nattily quaffed hair and above a sharp leather jacket – also having been fortunate to

[99] Black interview.
[100] *Chicago Defender*, March 30, 1946.
[101] *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 1947; *Chicago Defender*, October 18, 1947.

survive a gunshot from CPD Officer Walter Green at the corner of 43rd and South Parkway in September of the same year.[102]

And on and on. In January 1958, a *Defender* photographer captured photos of twenty-four-year-old Air Force veteran Junior Jackson lying prostrate on the concrete being kicked and beaten by four police officers. Jackson suffered a broken jaw and multiple other injuries.[103] Letters to the editor consistently implored an end to police brutality, while some of the victims took the matter into their own hands and challenged the city for financial restitution for such abuse. In the second half of 1957 alone, according to Don Moore with the Illinois branch of the ACLU, the city of Chicago paid out over $156,000 worth of settlements in cases involving police beatings, illegal arrests, or detentions. In a 1958 editorial, the editors of the *Crusader* tackled the issue head-on: "We know," they wrote, "that far too many complaints of police brutality and insolence to Negro citizens are fast lessening the general respect for law and authority the system must command if it is to be of service to the people."[104] The editors encouraged citizens to take every opportunity they had to pursue wrongful police treatment through the courts, in the hopes that it would put an end to it. Several months later, in an extraordinarily fiery editorial about "police terrorism," the paper doubled-down, framing the entire piece around advocacy of mass litigation – "SUE HELL OUT OF 'EM", ran the title – in order to stop police brutality and harassment.[105]

A common refrain from some sources was that more black police officers would solve the problem, but as was evident to many others, good treatment from black police was little more

---

[102] Copies of all handbills, creators unattributed, are found in box 565, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[103] Kenneth Douty to Benjamin Adamowski, January 27, 1958, box 534, folder 4, ACLU Records; Kenneth Douty to Benjamin Adamowski, February 6, 1958, box 534, folder 4, ACLU Records; *Chicago Defender*, January 21, 1958.
[104] *Crusader*, March 22, 1958.
[105] *Crusader*, April 19, 1958.

of a given than it was from white ones. Black police sometimes struggled to gain authority within a department that consistently Jim Crowed them, and in dealing with white citizens who constantly disrespected them.[106] (A white man facing arrest in 1952, for instance, asked a white officer to take him in rather than his black colleague, since he'd "just die if a 'Nigger' cop arrested me."[107]) Most importantly, black officers were routinely confined to working in black neighborhoods, and their skin color did not magically make them exist outside of a system and departmental culture that emphasized violence as a method of dealing with criminal suspects. This was, indeed, the heyday of the most brutal police officer in Chicago's history prior to the 1970s—a black man named Sylvester "Two-Gun Pete" Washington, who in the 1940s was the constant terror of residents of the South Side. Before he traded his badge in in 1951 for a life as a bar owner, his trigger temper had claimed as many as a dozen lives during his career. As former deputy CPD superintendent Rudy Nimocks told the *Tribune* in a recent retrospective, Washington "kind of epitomized the worst of policing, where police officers were totally brutal and had no regard whatsoever for some of the professionalism that people demand now. You'd crack a guy, you'd smack some guy in the mouth. You'd knock them down the second they disrespected you."[108] A federal narcotics agent in 1952 alleged that Pete was a heroin user if not dealer, which may have added to his unpredictability.[109] And public lore alleges that when Washington opened the Hilltop Tavern in the early 1950s, it became a haven for police officers to glean wisdom from the legendarily ruthless Pete on methods of force.[110]

---

[106] The numbers of black officers were appallingly low throughout this period, sinking to an abysmal, 185 out of 7,541 officers in 1949. For a larger history of the experiences of black police officers in the United States, see Marvin Dulaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
[107] *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1952.
[108] *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 2013.
[109] Unknown Author, Report of Investigator #1, May 21, 1952, box 18, folder 13, Merriam Papers.
[110] Black interview.

Nor was it just Pete. An unidentified informant for the Chicago Crime Commission working within the CPD wrote in a 1953 journal entry of being partnered one night with a black officer named Marion Byrd. In one incident, Byrd pulled over a black man for having no license plates, essentially demanding money from the man and his friends under threat of arrest. Byrd, the officer wrote, "was abusive and threatening, once more bearing out my contention that the Negro policemen are tougher on their own people than white officers."[111] Indeed, many years later, Timuel Black speculated that the violence of black police toward African Americans actually emboldened white officers to act in kind – that white police who committed acts of brutality often took their cues or learned their tactics from their black counterparts.[112]

Brutality in the streets often prefaced torture at the station house. Under Timothy O'Connor, the Illinois state law requiring that prisoners be taken before a judge as soon as possible following arrest slacked into total disregard as far as the CPD's adherence to it was concerned, with officers routinely detaining people without charges for grueling long periods and under extraordinary duress while they tried to extract confessions. Many people arrested by the CPD in this fashion faced a multi-day ordeal of being held *incommunicado* – no charges, no contact with the outside world; in 1957 alone the Illinois ACLU reported that more than twenty thousand Chicagoans arrested annually were held in such circumstances for more than seventeen hours.[113] The situation was especially bad over weekends, when people would be brought in on Friday, and not sent before a judge until the following Monday or Tuesday. And it was

[111] Unknown Author, "Diary – 2nd District," February 1953, box 58, folder 3, Peterson Papers.
[112] Black interview.
[113] As reported in a pamphlet by the national ACLU circa the late 1960s. See American Civil Liberties Union, "Police Power and Citizens' Rights," ca. 1967, box 571, folder 4, ACLU Records.

particularly the case for the poorest, blackest, and least politically connected members of society that had to deal with such practices most consistently.[114]

These prolonged detentions often served the purpose to police of giving them extended time with and access to suspects in order to extract confessions from them. This often meant physical and psychological abuse that bordered on (or toppled over) lines of torture. Two high-profile cases at nearly opposite ends of the 1950s illustrate the point. At the back end of the spectrum was James Monroe—whose subsequent lawsuit served as that landmark decision allowing citizens to sue city agents. At the other end of the decade was the January 1952 case of Oscar Walden, Jr., a 21-year-old ironworker and minister, who was accused of raping a white woman on the South Side. When police arrested him, they brought him in for three days worth of illegal detention and interrogation, which included being threatened with rubber hoses and a hanging rope in the style of a lynching noose, and having the fingers on his hand bent so far back that, sixty years later, the scars still showed.[115] The police strategies worked, to the extent that "worked" meant the extraction of a confession, however erroneous.[116] Walden was prosecuted on the basis of his own (coerced) confession, and was sentenced to seventy-five years in the penitentiary. He appealed for a new trial on the basis of the physical and psychological terror that

---

[114] People deep in the Chicago legal system at the time remember this well. In the context of a recently prosecuted case concerning police torture in 1952, retired attorney, Circuit Court Judge, and 1st District Appellate Court Judge R. Eugene Pincham was asked by People's Law Office attorney John Stainthorp to assess the frequency of both torture and such illegal detention during the early 1950s, when he was working at an attorney's office before opening his own private practice in 1955. Of illegal detention, he wrote, "The Chicago Police Department practice of secreting arrestees from their family, friends, and attorneys, and keeping these arrestees incommunicado, was well established in 1952….The law [calling for quick access to a judge] was consistently ignored by the Chicago Police Department, since it allowed them time to interrogate the prisoner." R. Eugene Pincham to John L. Stainthorp, August 6, 2007. Letter is in author's possession, provided by Flint Taylor of the People's Law Office, Chicago, IL.

[115] Rob Warden, "Oscar Walden, Jr.," Bluhm Legal Clinic Center on Wrongful Convictions, Northwestern University, http://www.law.northwestern.edu/legalclinic/wrongfulconvictions/exonerations/il/oscar-walden-jr.html [Last Accessed: January 19, 2015]

[116] For a brief legal history of coerced confessions and their veracity or reliability relative to the Supreme Court, see Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 227-231.

underpinned his confession, but the appeal was denied by the criminal court. Walden was sent downstate to the penitentiary and spent fourteen years behind bars before being paroled. Sixty years after the fact, in 2012, he finally received restitution from the city for the hardships he endured, to the tune of $950,000.

A 1960 exposé by John Bartlow Martin in the *Saturday Evening Post*, still at that time reaching an expansive national audience, provided extensive investigation into these conjoined practices of illegal detention and the "third degree"/torture at the national level.[117] In the high-profile piece, Martin explicitly pointed to Chicago as a place where the nexus of illegal detention and torture was particularly problematic. Based upon information received from the Chicago ACLU, Martin wrote that "the police, while holding [prisoners] incommunicado, extracted confessions from them by touching their genitals with an electric prodder, a metal rod which emits an electric shock and was devised for herding cattle."[118] If less sensational (in the way that beatings are less sensational than cattle proddings), clear evidence of police violence during questioning was a story still older. Consider the case of James Halsell, for instance, a young black man of nineteen who was stopped and searched by police officers one day in May 1957 while he was walking to work. (Halsell had been similarly stopped and searched three times previous, with no charges or arrests ever being made.) While Halsell himself held no contraband, he walked with two other young men, one of whom carried a handgun that police found during the search. Halsell and the others were taken to the Police Station in the Fillmore District. Police directed Halsell toward a windowless room, where they placed a jacket over his head like a hood,

[117] While it had been at issue in Chicago for years, the matter of police torture had resurfaced nationally in 1957, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the rape conviction and death sentence of a young black Philadelphian named Andrew Mallory. Basing their decision on the fact that the only evidence against Mallory was his own confession and that that confession had been extracted after prolonged detention without charges, justices unanimously ruled that procedural rules had been violated and the conviction made in error. Added Justice William O. Douglas, "There is convincing evidence that the third degree still flourishes in police stations of the nation." John Bartlow Martin, "The Rights of the Accused," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 20, 1960.
[118] Ibid.

zipped it so he could not see, and beat him with fists and feet and unidentified objects to the point that he vomited from the pain. Officers held him incommunicado and untreated for forty-eight hours before trying to charge him with disorderly conduct. (A judge rejected the charge the next day.) Halsell missed a month's worth of work while he convalesced. [119]

*

So it was that as the 1950s closed on Chicago, relationships between black Chicagoans and the police force around them had grown strained to a point of breaking. Continuous warnings of brewing tensions were infused throughout late-1950s comments about the wages that police abuse were reaping in the city's black ghettos. Prior to the war, community opinions on matters of failing protection and hyper-surveillance and –aggression by the police had rarely occupied the same intellectual and experiential spheres. But during the 40s and 50s, that changed, as black elites began to fall increasingly victim to the aggressive tactics of rapidly expanding police powers on the one hand, and as black Chicagoans and newcomers, regardless of their class or social station, bore witness to the torrents of white rage and violence that cascaded upon black bodies while the CPD all too frequently neglected to meaningfully intervene. These conjoined facts placed black Chicagoans in the difficult position of wishing for more effective police protection, while at the same time knowing that expanding police power carried with it the risk of greater and greater abuse. As the ACLU wrote in early 1959, "often police abuses are tacitly condoned because of general dissatisfaction with ineffective law enforcement," but increasingly and for wider and wider cross-sections of black Chicago, the assessment of cost and reward was shifting away from such condoning.[120]

[119] Unknown author, "James Halsell," box 565, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[120] Bernard Weisberg to *Chicago Daily News* Editor, March 4, 1959, box 591, folder 12, ACLU Records.

As for the police department itself, it exited the 1950s much bigger than it had been, but saw very little corresponding changes in its internal culture. When he ran for mayor in 1954 and early 1955, Richard Daley had made much of the state of law enforcement in the city. At the same, time, Daley had come up through a Bridgeport community which channeled thousands of police officers onto the CPD's employment roles, the neighborhood's young Irish men seeing a police uniform as a way out of the stockyards. Both he and his wife had multiple family members on the force, and he sympathized deeply with policemen's dangerous work and low pay. As one of his biographers summarized the consequences of these personal entanglements, "the mayor's extensive connections to the police department made it easy for him to overlook the shortcomings of some of its members."[121] And so he did very little to shake the department up, even choosing to retain Timothy O'Connor as CPD Commissioner – a rare move in a city where mayors generally handpicked their own top officials, and a particularly telling decision given O'Connor's miserable record as chief. (In addition to the various complaints from black Chicagoans about the O'Connor CPD's performance, the Commissioner's regime had been so ineffective that white liberal South Side alderman Robert Merriam had tried to have him indicted.[122])

The particular scope of that misery, of O'Connor's ineffectiveness as department head, would be born out when a scandal of epic proportions hammered the department at the outset of 1960. In the autumn of 1959, a young break-in artist by the name of Richard Morrison, the self-proclaimed greatest burglar in the world, was arrested by CPD officers and interrogated as to how he had managed to pull off so many heists of such great value. The answer was that he had been joined in his schemes by eight members of the police department operating out of the

[121] Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 65.
[122] John Gutknecht to Martin Kennelly, March 19, 1955, box 18, folder 19, Merriam papers.

Summerdale district on the city's North Side, who would serve as lookouts for the crime before helping Morrison carry away the contraband and cash, to later be divvied between them. Morrison spilled his story in August 1959, but word of the "Summerdale scandal," as it came to be called, didn't hit the newsstands until January 15 of the following year. When it did, it predictably scandalized the city, and served as the final nail in O'Connor's professional coffin.[123]

It is, of course, an open question as to how much of this was truly news to many Chicagoans. The fact of police corruption was a Chicago tradition by this point, and one that was barely concealed. And certainly, to black people living in the ghettos and transitioning neighborhoods of the South and West Sides, there would have been no great shock value in the revelations. African Americans living in those areas had been facing constant shakedowns – what amounted to petty robbery – by some police officers stationed in their neighborhoods for years. The fact of widespread corruption and dereliction of duty, for innumerable reasons, would have come as no surprise.

Indeed, the contours of the Summerdale Scandal, in an odd way, may have seemed relatively benign in comparison to what many African Americans had been forced to contend with during recent years. The state of police-community relations had become markedly worse since before the war – departmental policies toward blacks more sweeping and imprecise, handling seemingly more abusive and cruel. The postwar CPD, under both Prendergast and O'Connor, but especially beneath the latter, had been steeped in a departmental lineage that, as the *Defender* described it, considered "the Negro public," to be "separate and apart from the body politic." It treated them in kind, adhering to an old ethic, dating back decades, that perceived African Americans as a suspect population. "O'Connor," the *Defender* wrote, "has won the unwelcome reputation of being generally hostile to Negroes, to programs to benefit

[123] Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect*, 295-317.

them and dedicated to the proposition that all a Negro is good for is to be locked up wherever found."[124]

This was the legacy that the CPD carried into the 1960s when it came to how it was perceived by black Chicagoans. It was not for this reason that O'Connor was quietly asked to resign his post, but handling an increasingly volatile relationship with the black community would presumably be a factor in the selection process of his successor.

And the coming decade would, indeed, be volatile.

[124] *Chicago Defender*, January 17, 1959.

4

"A Dual System of Law Enforcement": Order and Justice, 1960-1967

*

An increasingly visible aspect of today's growing social revolution is the conflict between the majority community's concern for law and order as against the minority groups' and the poor's concern for law and justice.
-Illinois ACLU Report, 1966[1]

*

[If one ventures out] on the streets [of Chicago] one learns that there is bitterness and hatred of police. Those feelings just didn't come from nowhere.
-Martin Luther King, Jr., July 1966[2]

*

The stately activist stood before the Citizens' Committee to Study Police-Community Relations (CCSPCR) looking comfortable in his suit and tie, his close-cropped hair graying thoroughly, his sharp eyes penetrating. Serving as Executive Director of the venerable Chicago Urban League (CUL), historically one of the most conservative civil rights organizations in the city, Edwin "Bill" Berry had emerged as one of the most respected and progressive voices in black Chicago ever since the CUL had convinced him to move from Oregon to head the League in 1956. The Urban League that he represented had turned increasingly toward social activism under his leadership, while Berry himself had remained deft at approaching interpersonal dealings and public engagements with cordiality and grace.

But on this particular late-November day in 1966 – the day before Thanksgiving, in fact – Berry breathed fire. Asked to offer his opinions on the eroding relationship between the CPD and huge swaths of the black community, Berry lashed out at Chicago's race-based "dual system of law enforcement." The problem of police-community relations, Berry seethed, was unequivocally "not, as [reformers seem] to suggest, the result of misunderstanding or

---

[1] Unknown Author, "Proposal for Citizens Alert," box 571, folder 4, ACLU Records
[2] Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 213.

unfamiliarity of the Negro community with their responsibilities in the maintenance of law and order." It was rather, he continued, a problem with "two very real roots":

> First, in a society without racial justice, the police must bear the burden of policing an unjust order. And second, the way in which the police have operated within Negro neighborhoods, the brutality with which Negroes have been handled by the police, and the separate standards of law application and enforcement that have been used in the ghetto, have all left indelible marks in the Negro community.[3]

During the 1960s, the inequities in law enforcement that had been compounding for years became fully realized. By mid-decade, the federal government under President Lyndon Johnson would craft a federal "War on Crime" that, as historian Elizabeth Kai Hinton has shown, would endure over the long term as perhaps the most influential public policy initiative of the Great Society era.[4] As Johnson himself put it in introducing the Law Enforcement Assistance Act to Congress, "I hope 1965 will be regarded as the year when this country began a thorough, intelligent and effective war against crime."[5] While both the intelligence and effectiveness of the ensuing 'war' would be tremendously debatable, its thoroughness would not be; as a system of social control, the expansiveness of the federal anti-crime network would prove to be overwhelming. And while in 1965 and over the coming decades, those federal initiatives would be offered and passed in language that elided their racial impulses, the degree to which they were responses to black challenges to the status quo, political militancy, and civil unrest spoke volumes about their animating logics.

Yet to a large degree, the federal government followed the cities in taking tougher and more punitive stances toward marginalized communities during the decade. From the beginning of the 1960s, under the direction of new CPD Superintendent[6] Orlando Wilson, some of the most controversial tactics of the 1950s would be inscribed as formal public policy and constitutive,

---

[3] Testimony of Edwin C. Berry before the Citizens' Committee to Study Police-Community Relations, November 23, 1966, single folder, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, Illinois.
[4] Hinton, "From Social Welfare to Social Control."
[5] Ibid, 23.
[6] For administrative reasons, the title of CPD Commissioner was changed to Superintendent in 1960.

sanctioned strategies of police work. Wilson was widely acknowledged as a generally fair-minded individual in his private dealings and racial worldviews, and was universally hailed as one of the sharpest criminal justice minds in the world. But the deep irony at the center of his CPD tenure was that while at the broad level, his innovations produced some of the most important technological and organizational modernizations that the CPD had ever seen, they had at their center the formalization of practices like stop-and-frisk, profiling, and neighborhood saturation – strategies that in views both short and long, derogated black rights and dramatically undermined police-community relations.

The effects of these were compounded by the profound inequalities that had molded the economic, social, and racial arrangements of Chicago for generations, and particularly after World War II. Socially isolated and often glaringly poor, black Chicagoans sat decidedly on the losing end of the "unjust order" that Bill Berry argued police were being tasked with maintaining. It is not that CPD officers were uniformly unsympathetic to these conditions; indeed, under Wilson, the department hired hundreds of black officers – many of whom came directly *from* those conditions. Wilson himself understood, too, the economic and social plight of Chicago's black neighborhoods. But at the same time, he and the system that he both governed and was part of would brook no notions that systemic inequalities and the criminogenic qualities of segregated, under-resourced ghettos in any way mitigated citizens' responsibilities. In Wilson's worldview, causal explanations for crime that rested on "conditions in the perpetrators' backgrounds" only ensured that "crime will continue to rise" – a tendency he deplored as being "prevalent in the homes, in the schools and in the community."[7] Whether it was inequality driving up crime rates, in other words, made no difference. By occupational definition, those conditions were far afield from law enforcement officials' concerns. Their guiding impulses,

[7] Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 19 November 1964, CPD Collection.

rather, lay in determining and enforcing what was legal and what was not. Individual accountability and responsibility were paramount, and it was the obligation of the police to take individuals to task for their criminality, socially conditioned or otherwise.[8]

The broader context of 1960s social tumult exacerbated these challenges to police-community dynamics. As they had during the 1940s and 1950s, white Chicagoans continued to revolt against black incursions into white areas, and eventually, to launch angry and violent protests against civil rights activists fighting to democratize the city. At the same time, many of Chicago's black ghettos seethed under the weight of worsening inequality, particularly on the West Side, which had been most severely ravaged by the flight of jobs and the overcrowding of schools and homes, and where entire blocks lay in ruin as the collateral damage of resource flight, disastrous public policies and exploitative real estate practices. In response, a robust (though ultimately doomed) movement for racial equality, commonly called the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM), emerged during the early 1960s. It did so initially around the issue of segregated and underfunded black schools, and eventually around a far more immense constellation of grievances and inequalities. The institutional power of the CFM reached its peak in 1966, when Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King moved into a pair of wreckaged apartments in Lawndale on the West Side, hoping to draw attention to the miserable conditions there, and when King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference joined its labors to more established local groups in a campaign to try to resuscitate the urban North's broken promises. As battle lines of protest grew deeper, the CPD found itself pulled in as arbiters of public order and defenders of the status quo. In this sense, and heavily echoing Depresison-era radicalism and response, the "unjust order" to which Bill Berry referred might also have been about the ways

[8] Ibid.

that the police mandate to preserve *order* stood, irrevocably, in fundamental opposition to black claims on *justice*.

A trio of related, central issues animated the tenure of Orlando Wilson, who presided over the CPD from 1960 to 1967, when it came to Chicago's black community. Two of them involve the "very real roots" to which Bill Berry pointed. First was the codification—as public policy and common practice—of invasive, hyper-aggressive surveillance and arrest that Wilson successfully oversaw. Stop-and-frisk and profiling, and Wilson's ambitious plan to measure police officers in black neighborhoods based upon the number of stops they made, stood as seminal violations of black rights in the eyes of virtually everyone within Chicago's African American community. Wilson's lobbying for these measures to become formal public policy, over the loud protestations of nearly all of black Chicago, sent potent reminders to many black people about the lack of seriousness with which public officials took their concerns regarding the police. Second was the CPD's positioning during the battles over open housing, desegregated schooling, and other issues animating the freedom struggle in Chicago. Within the context of civil rights battles, the police not only were dragged in as unwilling arbiters; they also battled back against black freedom activism through the revitalization and dramatic growth of the infamous Red Squad. In the immediate sense, this had the intended effect of undermining civil rights activism and destabilizing, to at least some degree, the movement for black freedom in Chicago. In the longer term, it taught the department tremendously unfortunate lessons about their own abilities to blur lines around ethicality, morality, and efficacy—lessons that would come home to roost most assertively at the end of the decade in the CPD's violent war against Black Power activists. Third, and garnering less attention here because of the degree to which the matter spilled forward into the late 1960s and after (and thus into the next chapter) was the rise

of street gangs in black Chicago, the explosion of violence in the decade's second half, and the questions these events posed in terms of protection, public health, and moral forms of dealing with these issues.

In sum, as Wilson sought ways – both proactive and reactive – to offer a stable system of law and order to Chicago, the consequences for the city's most marginalized would end up being disappointing, at best. Black Chicagoans had looked to the new superintendent with understandable optimism when he entered office (Bill Berry himself had initially called Wilson's hiring "the greatest thing for Chicago since the discovery of Lake Michigan"), and the community and the city at large benefited from an array of reforms implemented during his tenure.[9] Wilson would not face quite the same level of criticism from black Chicago as his predecessors had at the time, but time has not been kind to his tenure and the consequences of it. And at the end of the day, black Chicago's hope for CPD reformation would crumble as the decade progressed, burdened under the intense weight of the long-entrenched and now legally codified "dual system of law enforcement." By the gloaming hour of Wilson's time with the force, they were no longer crumbling, but had, rather, collapsed almost entirely.

*

As the 1960s dawned on Chicago, the Windy City's public façade stood fundamentally altered from the way it had looked just a short decade earlier. After winning the mayoralty in 1955, Richard Daley had wasted little time putting an aggressively pro-growth vision for the city into practice. The scale of Daley's vision, particularly for the Loop, was awesome. Throughout downtown, Chicago turned increasingly vertical, skyscrapers appearing everywhere and seemingly overnight. Just to the south, plopped upon more than a half dozen acres of pristine land along the Lake Michigan shoreline, the hulking mass of the McCormick Place Convention

[9] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), August 6, 1960.

Center opened in 1960 after two years of construction. The groundbreaking of the Dan Ryan Expressway had already taken place, the first leg of which would open in 1961, carving an imposing edificial boundary between white Bridgeport on the west and black Douglas and Bronzeville on the east. On the northwest side, construction crews had broken ground on the main terminal complex for O'Hare Airport in 1959. Within five years, it would become the world's busiest airport. By 1960, if Chicago was still the "city of neighborhoods," those neighborhoods now huddled around what could only be considered a bona fide global metropolis.

Huddle was exactly what many of those neighborhoods would have to do. While the construction boom solidified Chicago as a global hub, it failed to herald a new day for some of the castaway neighborhoods at a remove from the downtown. Nowhere was this more true than in the city's black neighborhoods. As the postwar years progressed, Chicago found itself becoming, ever faster, a metropolitan stand-in for the Kerner Commission's coming observation that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." This was particularly true for the ballooning West Side ghettos—Lawndale especially. To be sure, conditions in South Side slums that had attracted so much newspaper attention and liberal outrage in recent decades persisted, but they paled in comparison to those in and around Lawndale. As one news reporter described the streets there, from whence city services had fled along with white residents, "Strewn glass crunches underfoot. The curbs are piled with broken-down autos. In the old buildings, the rats grow so vicious they run the cats out of business."[10] When Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King moved to Lawndale in January 1966, King's assistant, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, could hardly believe his eyes as he gazed around the

[10] James R. Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 48.

Lawndale ghetto. "The apartment homes reminded me of buildings I had seen in Europe right at the end of World War II," he remembered, "windows broken out and mounds of rubble instead of yards. And the odor was unbearable….There was no escaping it. The hallways were filled with rotting food and piles of feces, and always you could see the rats patrolling." The Kings' new residence, Abernathy concluded, represented "the epitome of filth and despair."[11] St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton probably had those conditions in mind when they appended a short assessment of contemporary conditions in Black Chicago to their 1962 reissue of *Black Metropolis*:

> As the slums are cleared, and the physical locus of the lower class is shattered, individuals and families are forced to scatter into middle-class neighborhoods and onto the margins of those areas….Enterprising realtors in middle-class neighborhoods are always ready to convert houses and apartment buildings in order to accommodate new tenants in crowded discomfort, while the most marginal families huddle in dilapidated buildings awaiting demolition within [urban renewal] clearance areas. An occasional tragedy, as when a firetrap burns or a baby is bitten by a rat, excites a spate of excited newspaper comment and sometimes an expose….Bigger Thomases, as Richard Wright described them in *Native Son*, keep on being bred, and the frying pan is still useful against the rodents.[12]

The rats and the firetraps and the frying pans: all stood as symbols of the deprivation continuously shaping the material and social lives of thousands of poor black people in Chicago. That deprivation was the consequence of the processes wrought throughout the postwar years – of those intense segregationist impulses by white Chicagoans, redlining, resource flight, and so on. New movements toward slum clearance and "urban renewal" abetted the process by scattering people from their neighborhoods and clearing far more housing than they replaced. Rapacious real estate interests compounded the matter through a variety of usurious mechanisms often resulting in the near-total loss of black wealth and property – a theft of the black

[11] Satter, *Family Properties*, 182.
[12] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 799.

community approximating a million dollars *every day*, in the estimates of one attorney fighting such practices. Such was the cost, he said, of "being black in Chicago."[13]

That flood of money and resources out of neighborhoods like Lawndale in turn made the entrenched inequality in those places even worse, bringing with it worsening crime conditions. Echoing what black citizens and civic leaders like Chris Wimbish alike had been saying for years, in their 1962 reprise to *Black Metropolis*, Drake and Cayton lamented that while "the middle classes insist upon police protection, [they]…realize that arrest and punishment solve no problems. There is a general feeling that all social work efforts are merely 'holding operations' until complete job equality and adequate housing provide a new physical and economic framework of existence and new incentives for young people."[14] As in the past, those frameworks showed no signs of coming, and frustrations built in their stead. And the city would respond less with amelioration, and much more with punishment.

*

It was into this breach that Orlando Wilson stepped when he took over as head of the CPD in late February of 1960. Wilson—lean, gray, "scholarly appearing," according to the *Tribune*—was widely expected around Chicago to be an extraordinary improvement over his predecessor, Timothy O'Connor.[15] By all appearances and certainly by all credentials, Wilson was a good candidate to meet the challenge of dragging the police department into the modern era. The founding dean of the University of California-Berkeley's School of Criminology, Wilson had previously steered the police departments of Fullerton, California and Wichita, Kansas on the path toward modernization. In both cities, he had implemented an array of criminological and technological improvements that would make police work more uniform and

[13] Satter, *Family Properties*, 59.
[14] Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 799.
[15] *Chicago Tribune*, February 24, 1960.

effective, introduced new methods of crime detection and streamlined crime reporting, improved communication operations, and reworked the patrol system. Along the way, he earned a reputation as a serious disciplinarian who would brook no misconduct by his officers, and who despised political influence on police work. So widely recognized was his integrity and style that Wilson was called upon to play a central role in the process of rebuilding the German police forces during post-World War II de-Nazification. In the law enforcement world, his star had risen so high by the late-1950s that he was rumored to be on the very short list to replace J. Edgar Hoover (who he hated) as head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation if ever Hoover vacated his post. Wilson was, in short, considered to be one of the top minds in law enforcement administration both domestically and internationally.[16]

Holding true to that form, from the moment he stepped into office, Wilson began bending the CPD towards functionality. He fired all seven of Tim O'Connor's deputy commissioners and completely reorganized the department, creating less bureaucratic chains and simplifying lines of authority. A strong believer in technology as a friend of law enforcement, he brought with him innovative new communications and intelligence methods. A meticulous record-keeper, he presumably kept many a lumber mill in business, expanding by several degrees the paperwork load and organizational requirements of CPD officers. A dedicated disciplinarian, he established an Internal Investigations Division (IID) within the CPD in an effort to bolster accountability and root out police misconduct and corruption. And, perhaps to Richard Daley's dismay, he insisted upon the de-politicization of the CPD, cleaving the department from its decades-long entanglement with the Democratic Party machine by redrawing police district lines so they no

[16] William J. Bopp, *O.W.: O.W. Wilson and the Search for a Police Profession* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977)

longer conformed with political boundaries and by making district commanders report directly to him, rather than to local aldermen and party committeemen.[17]

Despite such reforms, Wilson still had thousands of people at his command with which to contend, many of whom had grown comfortable in the CPD's established culture and deeply resented Wilson's reforms. Indeed, the constituency that perhaps most publicly resisted Wilson's efforts to modernize law enforcement practice in Chicago was the CPD rank-and-file itself. So stiff was officer resentment toward his reorganization initiatives that no less than the president of the Chicago Patrolmen's Association (CPA), representing nine thousand CPD officers, publicly went to war with Wilson over his reform efforts in the superintendent's early years. A resident of the Beverly neighborhood on the far South Side and a career police officer with twenty-five years of CPD service under his belt, CPA President Frank Carey emerged as Wilson's most vocal critic almost immediately upon the latter's ascendency to the superintendency. After regularly and publicly badmouthing his boss, Carey was finally suspended in March 1961 for his insubordination. Carey's response was to call for Wilson's resignation.[18]

Some of this resentment was perhaps predictable. Officers and officials complicit in organized crime, or who frequently took bribes and shook down citizen, had clear perquisites to protect. And while only a minority of officers were entangled in such corruption, even those who labored within the confines of the law were accustomed to a particular status quo and a way of doing police work that Wilson's schemes threatened. They were unaccustomed to entertaining questions about their authority, and the idea of the IID especially chafed many of them.[19] More generally, the solidarities between officers, the famous "blue curtain," were designed to protect

[17] Bopp, *O.W*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 68.
[18] *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 17, 1961.
[19] Address by Col. Minor K. Wilson at the 11th Annual Conference of Citizens Crime Commissions, November 14, 1961, box 60, folder 6, Peterson Papers.

"against inquiry by anyone who did not himself rise through the ranks" – which Wilson, the bookish California transplant, had not.[20] Given that context, as Virgil Peterson put it, "Anyone familiar with local conditions knew at the outset that *any* reorganization program would be fought tooth and nail by a large number of officers on the force."[21]

While CPD insiders thus gazed at Wilson's hiring with trepidation, black Chicagoans on the whole greeted his hiring with distinct optimism. Recall Bill Berry's heralding of Wilson's hiring as "the greatest thing for Chicago since the discovery of Lake Michigan," for instance. Dempsey Travis, president of the local NAACP, similarly praised Wilson's qualifications. Social worker Pauline Reed approvingly noted that Wilson's "reputation for integrity and honesty are also impressive."[22] The *Defender* evoked the language of democratic renewal, seeing in Wilson's administration the coming of "a new deal…for Chicago and its law enforcement agency."[23]

Bold reformations of hiring and promotions practices by Wilson at the start of his tenure reinforced such optimism. Working to strip political influence from such measures, immediately upon taking office, Wilson put pressure on the Civil Service Commission to offer a new round of promotional exams in the hopes of bringing new blood into the higher ranks of the CPD. When the Commission finally acquiesced in September 1960, 137 patrolmen were promoted to sergeant, fifty of whom were black. Within two years of taking over the department, Wilson had hired five hundred new black patrolmen, bringing their total number to 1,200—still underrepresented in relation to their population in the city, but nearly double what it had been.[24]

---

[20] Unknown Author, "Prospectus for the Chicago Metropolitan Area Citizen's Alert," ca. 1966, box 571, folder 3, ACLU Records.
[21] Virgil Peterson to Lloyd Wendt, August 17, 1961, box 60, folder 2, Peterson Papers.
[22] *Chicago Defender*, Februrary 24, 1960
[23] *Chicago Daily Defender* (National Edition), February 29, 1960
[24] Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect*, 312.

And he consistently pushed for integrated patrol squads, pairing off white and black officers to work beats side-by-side rather than in racial isolation.

Black citizens had already seen the ways that an officer's skin color was no guarantor of good conduct, but such moves nevertheless had meaning. For one thing, many citizens did hold out hope for more equitable treatment by black officers. This was especially the case when black officers were afforded an opportunity to work in the communities from whence they came, with familiarity between police and citizenry helping soothe some of the roughest points of contention between the two. The increase of police jobs for African Americans further provided middle-class work to communities where such opportunities were dwindling. And the increasing presence of black law enforcement officials on Chicago's streets seemed to suggest at least some level of civic respect. This was particularly true of black police officers working white sections of the city, which inverted the traditional racial dynamics of control and power as they had played out for most of Chicago's and the nation's histories.

But while these sorts of reforms, Wilson's broad slate of prior accomplishments, and his own racially progressive personal views led to the sort of enthusiasm effused by Berry and Travis, his philosophical and practical views on the everyday stuff of police work perhaps should have bridled it. At the center of Wilson's professional worldview was a sharp disdain for civil libertarians, and for the national criminal justice apparatus' growing interest in defendants' rights at the expense of police prerogatives. He hated the landmark decisions handed down by Earl Warren's Supreme Court in cases like *Escobedo v. Illinois* and *Miranda v. Arizona*, both of which expanded the rights of criminal suspects.[25] He insisted that the current structure of criminal justice administration in the country protected the guilty and allowed them to go free

[25] Bopp, *O.W.*, 111.

because of "the fancy rules of the game."[26] More or less, Wilson's logic when it came to civil liberties was distillable to this: the rights of crime victims should be paramount, police prerogatives should be protected, and the "philosophy of excuse" by which civil libertarians like Warren and the ACLU washed away the sins of sinners was both ethically suspect and a sagging weight around law enforcement's neck. Such beliefs sparked admiration from many, and enmity from many more. Conservatives especially appreciated his tough stance on these issues. Liberals, as progressive independent alderman Leon Despres summarized, thought that "his views on civil liberties are wrong."[27] Although Wilson's door was open to speak with Despres and others who disagreed with him, these attitudes would profoundly shape Wilson's superintendency and the relationships his department had to black Chicago.

The clearest policy manifestation of that worldview was a deep investment by Wilson in seeing the police department generate more interaction with citizens through measures like stop-and-frisk. The logic undergirding this ran that in high-crime areas (or those unironically labeled ones "of selective enforcement"[28]), the more people that police interacted with, the greater the likelihood that they would root out crime. As a matter of practice, of course, this was not new, stop-and-seizure (virtually the same as stop-and-frisk, but with a different name) having been standard practice in fairly substantial ways since at least the middle of the 1950s. But what concerned Wilson was the fact that there remained no particular legal clarity surrounding the practice. As a consequence, he would spend years lobbying for the codification of stop-and-frisk as state law, while in the short term working to further entrench it as widespread departmental practice. Already in May 1961, for instance, the *Southeast Economist*, a neighborhood newspaper serving communities along the south shore, captured Wilson at the Woodlawn police

[26] Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 19 November 1964, CPD Collection.
[27] *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1960.
[28] Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 5 March 1964, CPD Collection.

station instructing patrolmen there to get more "aggressive" in "stop and search."[29] Wilson's expectation was that officers would conduct intensive field interrogations, stop "suspicious persons" walking the streets, make on-view arrests no matter how small the infraction, and so on.[30] Responding to reports that some patrolmen previously had been restrained in their use of such measures, claiming legal repercussions, Wilson promised that they would have the full resources and might of his office backing them in these efforts.[31]

Over the coming years, he continued to relentlessly pursue legal codification of stop-and-frisk as Illinois law. In 1963, he lobbied for it before the Illinois State and Chicago Bar Associations, disavowing the idea that, "police ought to have the power to stop and question citizens indiscriminately," but claiming that, as officers "develop thru experience and training an ability to detect indications of criminal activity which would not be readily apparent to the untrained person," they ought to be afforded greater flexibility to question and search people, and greater protections under the law to do so.[32] By the 1965 biennial legislative session, he had recruited Mayor Daley to the cause after conservative politicians from Chicago's north shore introduced a stop-and-frisk bill into the legislature.[33] With Daley's support, the bill passed through both houses before being vetoed by Governor Otto Kerner on the grounds that it was unconstitutional; unswayed and in contravention of the gubernatorial veto, Wilson pledged to continue his efforts and issued a formal directive for CPD officers to continue to stop and interrogate suspicious persons.[34] District commanders underneath Wilson similarly continued to

---

[29] *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1961; *Southeast Economist*, May 18, 1961.
[30] Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 15 March 1963 and 19 April 1963, Chicago Police Department collection (hereafter, CPD collection), Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.
[31] *Southeast Economist*, May 18, 1961.
[32] *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 1963.
[33] *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1965; *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1965.
[34] *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 17, 1966. This move on Wilson's part was perhaps the most literal incarnation of legal scholar Kenneth Davis's depiction of police-as-policymakers, and of police exercising "an unlawful assumption of power." See Davis, *Discretionary Justice*, 87.

direct their officers to continue stop-and-frisk "until the Supreme Court declared it illegal."[35] The same process repeated in 1967, with Wilson and Daley strongly supporting the bill, and the measure passing the legislature before Kerner vetoed it. But by 1968, Kerner had moved on to a federal post. The political groundswell of support for stop-and-frisk won out, and Kerner's successor, Samuel Shapiro, signed it into law.

Procedural descriptions occlude the racial implications that were at the heart of the matter. As with many other public policies, this one—race-neutral in language—was profoundly racialized in practice. From its inception, stop-and-frisk has been framed politically as a commonsense measure with minimal social costs, eliding the intrusions into personal space that are its essence. It was, after all, only particularly defined districts that were subject to these measures, and only patrolmen working in specific areas that were to be evaluated directly by the number of stops and arrests they made.[36] Recognizing the potential damage wrought by such measures as they worked their way through the legislature, countless women and men across black Chicago balked at the codification of such invasions into their mobility and privacy. As Karen Sims, a saleswoman on the South Side, told the *Defender* before the bill became law, "If this proposal ever became the law in Illinois, it would lead to infringements of the rights of individuals and would result in the practice of shaking down innocent people."[37] Louis C. Jenisen, in a more pointed letter to the *Defender* editor, asked: "Can anyone imagine Sen. Percy or Sen. Dirksen [both white supporters of the bill] being stopped and frisked? Solid citizens of

[35] CPD Commander Edward Egan is quoted in Ward Wallingford to Jay Miller, January 11, 1967, box 566, folder 2, ACLU Records.
[36] Chicago Police Department, "A Review of Foot Patrol Utilization and Distribution in the Chicago Police Department," 10 May 1961, Municipal Records Collection, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL; Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 21 February 1964, CPD collection.
[37] Interviewed in the *Chicago Defender*, December 7, 1967.

the black community are constantly undergoing this experience. The proposed laws are simply seeking to legalize these procedures before they are challenged in court."[38]

Black politicians echoed these sentiments, with every member of the (rarely unified) state legislature's black caucus voting against stop-and-frisk when it came up on the legislative agenda. After the bill's passage, House member and future Chicago Mayor Harold Washington commented, "One thing that most of our white friends do not understand is that measures like 'stop and frisk' in practice are seldom applied in the larger white communities. They are used only against Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Appalachian whites, the uneducated and uninformed."[39] The ACLU echoed Washington, noting that those most likely to be affected by stop-and-frisk were people living in "the south and west side ghettos, the Division Street Latin-American area and the uptown Southern-white area." The ACLU proceeded:

> These young people know that three of them standing on a corner on a hot night will invariably lead to their being chased off by a passing policeman, and if they don't move fast enough they are likely to be lined up over the squad car or against a brick wall and searched. They also know that if they are stupid enough or humiliated enough to object to the procedure (even though they know that kids in "better" neighborhoods can stand on the corner with impunity) they are likely to get pistol whipped and arrested for their big mouths. The usual charge – resisting arrest (arrest for what?) or disorderly conduct.[40]

Among the questions swirling in the subtext of stop-and-frisk and companion expansions of police power was whether or not they were making Chicago's streets a demonstrably safer place. Wilson and Daley built their case on suggestions about a rising tide of violent crime in Chicago, which, by the end of Wilson's tenure, was actually true. But at the beginning of their push, it was not. Homicide rates in particular would jump during the 1960s, but not until the gang crisis of the late part of the decade began to settle in. James Mercy, an Emory University dissertator in sociology studying correlates between social control and criminal behavior in

---

[38] *Chicago Defender*, May 20, 1967.
[39] *Chicago Defender*, August 24, 1968.
[40] Unnamed Author, "The Police, Riots, and the Committee System," box 571, folder 2, ACLU Records.

midcentury Chicago, found that the appearance of an uptick in crime at the outset of the 1960s was not the product of actual increased crime that proponents of a more aggressive police force said it was, but was instead far more attributable to changes in police reportage and statistics-keeping. Not naming Wilson but talking directly about him and his administration, Mercy wrote that "the leadership, organizational and procedural changes coming about in 1960, accounts for the increased reporting of approximately 138.19 offenses per 10,000 to the police that year and for each year thereafter."[41] In other words, crime statistics leaped higher early in the 1960s not because of more crime, but because of Wilson's own innovations in data collection and record-keeping.

While stop-and-frisk was not, then, necessarily making the streets safer, it was assuredly making them a more legally hazardous place for certain people. By 1967, the last year in which O.W. Wilson's influence would be felt most directly, black arrest rates had risen ten percent from a decade before—partly a product of ongoing migration, but also of contact between police and citizens that was more frequent in its occurrence and more intensive in its nature. Black Chicagoans that year accounted for 102,043 of the CPD's 198,974 (or slightly over fifty-one percent) recorded non-traffic-related arrests—a figure twenty percent higher than African Americans' representation in the city population as a whole.[42] This was a feature rather than a bug. Despite his own racial politics and sympathies, this was the system operating in alignment to (rather than opposite to) how Wilson envisioned it working.

And so while Wilson pitched stop-and-frisk as a necessary component of enhanced police functionality, it evidently did little to affect crime rates, and had the counter effect of

---

[41] James A. Mercy, "Social Control and Criminal Behavior in Chicago, 1940-1973," Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 1982, 112-114. Microfilmed copy held at the Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

[42] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1967, Municipal Records Collection, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL. In 1958, one year before Wilson took over the department, black people constituted 81,409 of the CPD's 192,380 non-traffic-related arrests—just over forty-two percent.

dramatically undermining trust between police and community. As those violent crime rates escalated later in the 1960s, citizens increasingly refused to talk about who it was that was committing those crimes, out of a mistrust of the police and a fear of reprisal from violent criminals. Indeed, by the end of the decade, police officers were working "in an environment where the code of silence prevails. This code of silence reflects the people's fear within the community. Very few residents cooperate with the police; and any assistance given the police, they must have earned."[43]

*

With police-civilian contact on the rise as a result of Wilson's efforts, other complications rose alongside. Indeed, there is an acuity to that phrase – *the people's fear* – that serves to capture a broad range of community concerns about the expanding palette of police powers that Wilson sought. Being arbitrarily stopped by the police violated both proper notions of civil liberties and civil rights. It provoked humiliations and indignities, as well as unnecessary tickets, false arrests, verbal abuses, and worse. In Woodlawn, local citizens—recognizing the inversion of normative practice—commonly complained that "the police treat suspects as guilty until proven innocent."[44] For an example of how this played out on a personal level, consider the case of Milton Davis, an Alabama migrant living in the South Side Chatham neighborhood. One night in the spring of 1962, Davis was running to get to his car to make an appointment when three plainclothes CPD officers yelled for him to stop. The officers proceeded to search Davis and two of his friends that had been waiting for him in his car, telling the men that they were "looking for contraband." The officers held the men on the street for more than half an hour

[43] Daniel D. Howard Associates, Inc., "A Study Defining the Selection Problem of the Task Force," February 1969, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL, 38-39.
[44] Charles Andrew Pfeiffer, "The Police and the Woodlawn Community," box 10, folder 23, Records of the Woodlawn Social Services Center, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL (hereafter, WSSC Records).

before hauling them to a police station, where they detained them uncharged and without explanation before ultimately writing Davis a ticket for driving with out of state license plates.[45] Another man, M. Zimbalist Hayes III, reported a similar story to the Illinois ACLU after he was stopped on the street by two CPD officers on a February evening in 1966. The officers would disclose no information to Hayes as to their cause for stopping him, other than to say that he fit the description of a man who had "robbed a store in the area." When he declined to give his name and address to the officers, he was brought to the station without explanation and eventually released without charges.[46] White social justice worker Mike James, threatened with a beating by Uptown police officers in August 1966, was asked by one of the officers whether he wanted his "mother to fuck for niggers."[47] Montgomery Williams and Karen Herter, a black man and white woman keeping each other company one night in March 1962, were stopped and searched by CPD officers who subjected them to verbal abuse and rough physical handling on pretense of charges that were spurious by all appearances.[48] In Williams' recollection of the incident, the officers' hostility toward the pair as an interracial couple was difficult to miss.

For others, the abuse stemming from unwarranted stops would be much worse. Samuel Wallace reported being stopped and searched by two white officers while on his way to work one December night in 1963. According to Wallace, what began as a routine stop escalated into the officers beating him with fists and nightsticks on the street where he was stopped, in the squad car on the way to a police station, and in the officers' locker room at the station. Six months later, one officer's words to Wallace still screamed off the page of the report that the ACLU submitted, on his behalf, to the CPD's Internal Investigations Division: "Nigger, I will kill

[45] Milton Davis to John McKnight, April 4, 1962, box 565, folder 5, ACLU Records.
[46] Report of M. Zimbalist Hayes III, February 12, 1966, box 571, folder 6, ACLU Records.
[47] Uptown Goodfellows, "Fact Sheet on Policeman Sam Joseph, Badge Number 11383," August 11, 1966, box 566, folder 2, ACLU Records.
[48] Statement of Montgomery H. Williams, ca. March 1962, box 566, folder 13, ACLU Records.

you."[49] 16-year-old Regina Spikes threw herself between her father and a gun-wielding police officer who, according to Spikes, proceeded to club her on the head and push her down a flight of stairs before arresting both her and her father.[50] For protesting to a police officer over the towing of her car, Lillian Brown reported being manhandled by three white male CPD officers. At the police station, a white policewoman told the handcuffed Brown that she looked "like one of those Alabama bitches."[51] For the high crime of making faces at a police officer, fifteen-year-old James Pitts was kicked and beaten about the head with nightsticks, punched in the stomach, and sprawled prone on the concrete in front of a crowd of neighbors.[52] In 1961, CPD officers picked Harold Dillard out of a crowd of citizens who were observing the police as they dealt with a "minor disorder," and proceeded to beat and kick him to the point of needing stitches for lacerations to his head.[53] John Johnson, Jr. claimed to have been handcuffed to the back end of his car by a CPD officer who proceeded to bash his face into the car's rear deck while Johnson's wife and young children watched.[54] Carnel Bates took sixteen facial stitches worth of beating from an Englewood officer in June 1964.[55] Ralph Bush, age 23, was taken into police custody in October of 1962 after being arrested for loitering and accused of stealing a bottle of whiskey.[56] He never made it out alive, suffering fatal head injuries from a beating delivered while in the custody of police. The city settled a civil suit with Bush's family for $20,000, and paid five

[49] Howard N. Gilbert to CPD Internal Investigation Division, May 8, 1964, box 567, folder 6, ACLU Records.
[50] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), October 14, 1961.
[51] Lillian Brown, "Complaint Against Various Police Officers for Wrongful Arrest and Physical Abuse," ca. June 1963, box 566, folder 1, ACLU Records.
[52] Lawrence Block to Illinois ACLU Subcommittee on Police Brutality, June 4, 1964, box 567, folder 6, ACLU Records.
[53] Unknown Author, "Harold Dillard," ca. June 1961, box 565, folder 3, ACLU Records.
[54] *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 20, 1964.
[55] *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 1, 1964.
[56] Unknown Author, "List of Police Brutality Complaints Made to the Chicago Branch, NAACP During Twelve Month Period Beginning December 1, 1962 and Ending December 1, 1963," box 565, folder 3, ACLU Records.

thousand more to a friend of Bush's whom the CPD initially tried to pin his death on.[57] Stanley Reed reported watching police shoot his son, handcuffed after being stopped on a traffic violation, in the back in October 1966; Reed could do nothing but watch as his son cried "Dad" twice with his last breaths.[58] And on and on.

Stories like this played out repeatedly in 1960s Chicago. As it had been in preceding decades, police brutality was ubiquitous, and it was vicious. And to be sure, each incident is individually important in its own right, for these are the types of stories that people would carry with them for the rest of their lives. But when considered together, when the portrait of brutality is drawn as a composite rather than fragments, it becomes easier to understand how such repeated instances of police brutality yielded sharp opposition among black Chicagoans to any further expansion law enforcement powers. As black people became increasingly surrounded by reportage and anecdotes and family histories of police brutality, many began to understand the risks involved in even the most quotidian points of contact with police. John Johnson's kids, after all, surely learned lessons from watching their father's face beaten into the rear bumper of the family car during a routine traffic stop. If Regina Spikes ever had kids of her own, she surely would have passed on to them her own experiences getting tossed down a flight of stairs by a CPD officer. And $20,000 may have bought the Bush family's quiescence on the matter of a civil suit, but it most certainly would not have bought forgiveness in their hearts and minds, nor in their mouths as they told Ralph's story to friends and family and neighbors. Through these stories and the totality they represented, citizens became all too terribly aware of how quickly things could escalate in their dealings with police. And they understood that by imparting further

[57] *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 25, 1964.
[58] *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 3, 1966.

power and legal shelter to police, measures like stop-and-frisk posed legitimate physical dangers by exposing citizens to still more contact with potentially abusive officers.

Outside the black community, awareness of the severity of these problems was mixed. In the decade's early going, Wilson and supporting organizations—the Chicago Crime Commission especially—made claims that brutality was, if not a dead letter, then certainly something that was both infrequent and sliding into the past.[59] Many civil rights watchdog groups agreed. In 1961, the federal Commission on Civil Rights "lauded the diminished brutality by Chicago policemen under Wilson's administration," while the ACLU reported a similar decline in brutality incidents.[60] But others were slower to praise. Early in 1961, attorney George Leighton, Chairman of the Chicago NAACP's Legal Redress Committee, tersely corrected the ACLU's declaration of brutality's decline with a rejoinder that his office had actually witnessed a marked increase in it.[61] And while Wilson and Daley and law-and-order supporters maintained a line of public denial surrounding police abuse, African American citizens, organizations within the black community, and civil libertarians grew increasingly assertive in pushing back to reshape the public conversation about these issues. George Leighton, again, this time in 1963: "[I]n the sixteen years that I have practiced law I have never had as many serious charges of police brutalities on citizens of this community brought to my attention as I have had during the last six months."[62] Starting in 1963 and onward through the rest of the decade, the ACLU compiled extensive case files on incidents of brutality, and continuously urged investigation by the CPD

[59] For example, see *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 5, 1960.
[60] *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), November 25, 1961.
[61] Lorraine Greenhouse, Recorders Reports: Police and Criminal Law Workshop, ACLU Annual Meeting, May 13, 1961, box 47, folder 3, ACLU Records.
[62] George Leighton to Alexander Polikoff, November 30, 1963, box 565, folder 4, ACLU Records.

into such violence. "I am sorry to say," wrote Southside alderman Leon Despres in 1964, "that my files are now filled with documented cases of police brutality upon arrest."[63]

The CPD itself knew more about the raw realities of brutality than it publicly let on, particularly after 1963 as the avalanche of complaints tumbled down in greater and greater numbers. In June 1964, Wilson circulated an internal memorandum to all CPD personnel instructing them to "avoid any semblance of brutality, rough treatment, or discourtesy." "Brutality is wrong," he offered, "both morally and legally. When practiced by police officers it is cowardly and inexcusable." To be sure, Wilson's notations leaned toward dismissing most claims of brutality as unfounded, stemming from a reckless black press that misunderstood situations where "the complainant has resisted arrest, thus necessitating the use of force." But he also labored to emphasize to those under his command the extent to which the CPD was something less than above reproach, and that it would suffer worsening relations with the community until it was.[64] The case of Ralph Bush—the twenty-three-year-old who went into police custody alive and came out dead—is particularly significant in this regard, since it is one of the few instances in which a record survives of CPD internal discussions surrounding police brutality. At a meeting Wilson convened with his division heads in December of 1963, the Superintendent used Bush's case as an example of "evidence of brutality within the department," and suggested that an inability to *prove* such abuse might be less a function of its nonexistence than of "inadequacies in [IID] investigations." After all, given the circumstances surrounding Bush's death, "there is no other logical explanation" than that he died from injuries sustained while in custody.[65]

---

[63] *Woodlawn Booster*, January 29, 1964.
[64] Orlando Wilson, "pax 501," June 1, 1964, box 565, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[65] Minutes of the Chicago Police Department Staff Meeting, 10 December 1963, CPD collection.

Conversations about brutality were animated by a still darker matter. In one such meeting, Wilson raised pointed questions about accusations that CPD officers were actively engaged in torture: beating prisoners with a paper bag over their head, shocking them with cattle prods and electric probes, and simulating drowning by dunking their heads in slop sinks. Some of those present, either unaware or dismissive of the CPD's long record of torture, shrugged off the accusations as self-interested or inconceivable—apparently not inconceivable enough, however, to keep the conversation from quickly turning toward tossing officers' lockers in search of torture devices.[66] The accusations immediately under debate came from George Leighton, but the urgency with which Wilson considered them may have been compounded by similar stories coming out of the woodwork in various ways. Earlier that year, a letter had arrived on the Superintendent's desk from a man too scared to sign his name, who testified that when he was locked up at the Shakespeare Avenue Station, "every night" men would be brought in "who were beat up so badly they required medical treatment." Suspects were chained to a radiator and beaten. Their heads were dunked in ice baths. The letter-writer claimed to have been kicked in the stomach until his ribs broke.[67] A year later, further accusations of torture splashed across the *Defender*'s pages, after "a reputed small-time dope peddler" accused two police officers, one of them notoriously brutal, of forcing his head into a water-filled bathtub and robbing him of $1,400.[68]

There may seem to be dissonance between the ubiquitous direct and anecdotal evidence of abuse and torture on the one hand and, on the other, Orlando Wilson's deserved reputation as a reformer and administrator with a professed abhorrence of police violence. But if one accepts Wilson's professed ideals on police violence (and there is little reason not to), the story is less

---

[66] Ibid.
[67] Anonymous to Orlando Wilson, January 14, 1963, box 565, folder 4, ACLU Records
[68] *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 24, 1964.

about an *unwillingness* to see such ideals realized than about an *inability* to make that happen. When it came to such violence, perhaps Wilson was being naïve for not considering the possibility that his push for expanded police powers and institutional protections might embolden abusive officers, particularly given the extant culture of violence within the CPD before his ascension. It is, however, far more likely that what Wilson was guilty of was underestimating the degree to which the CPD rank and file would resist him. From the outset, Wilson had assumed that he could bend officers toward a more just approach to policing, just as he had ushered in new technological and organizational innovations. But as the ferocity of Patrolman Association President Carey's response suggested, wide sections of the rank and file were set on resisting proposed reforms coming out of Wilson's office—particularly ones that appeared to threaten the sanctity of police officers' standard operating procedures.

Wilson had put machinery in place at the outset of his tenure that theoretically was meant to deal with such incalcitrance. He had established the CPD's IID in April 1960, charging it with "finding out if the department is as clean as the driven snow…or of making it as clean as the driven snow if it isn't."[69] Lofty metaphors aside, the IID's abilities proved to be profoundly uneven. Nominally organized to investigate corrupt police officers in a famously corrupt police department, its investigators failed to discover a single instance of corruption during the first five months of its existence. Wilson publicly interpreted this as a signal of the decline of malfeasance, though more likely it stemmed from some admixture of corrupt officers' fear of discovery, and investigations that were incomplete, stonewalled, or undertaken with something less than full vigor.[70] On the other hand, the *Tribune* reported that traffic stop extortions had plummeted, and that with organized crime syndicates having more difficulty securing police

[69] *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 1960.
[70] *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1960.

protection for their illegal activities, mob killings had fallen off completely.[71] So while a sizeable cross-section of CPD members complained about the intrusiveness and methods of the IID, for a department desperately in need of an image boost, the IID offered some benefits in terms of public impressions.

But by the mid-1960s, most people within the black community and inside of civil liberties/civil rights organizations accused the IID of being far more concerned with those public impressions that with actual police misconduct. To counter such accusations, Wilson requested a review of IID investigatory practices by the Chicago Bar Association. The appointed investigator, Harold Smith, reviewed 469 IID files over an eight-month span that concerned charges of police brutality – which by mid-decade, constituted such an overwhelming amount of the IID's investigatory tasks that administrators implemented a dedicated Excessive Force Section.[72] Of the 469, 440 had been dismissed at some point or another in the investigatory process (a dismissal rate of nearly 94 percent), with disciplinary charges suggested and approved in 9 others. (This totaled 449 rather than 469; Smith failed to explain the remaining twenty cases.) In Smith's determination, of the 469 cases investigated by the IID, only one of the investigations could be found lacking. He editorialized: "It is very easy to charge brutality without any basis for the charge….My review of all these cases has convinced me that in the overwhelming majority of cases the charges were prompted by persons who were deliberately seeking to cause trouble for the officers involved or who resisted the officers when an arrest was attempted."[73]

---

[71] Ibid.
[72] Richard A. Crane and Gregory J. Schlesinger, "Citizen Complaints of Police Misconduct and the Internal Affairs Division of the Chicago Police Department: Analysis and Evaluation of the System," May 15, 1971, box 533, folder 8, ACLU Records.
[73] Harold A. Smith, "Report to the President and Board of Managers of the Chicago Bar Association and to the Honorable Orlando W. Wilson, Superintendent of Police of the City of Chicago," August 23, 1966, box 571, folder 4, ACLU Records.

Wilson, Daley, and the rest of the Chicago law enforcement community took Smith's study as vindication, but others slammed it as an effectively worthless piece of reporting. As independent investigators Richard Crane and Gregory Schlesinger reported, Smith's praise of the division's efficiency focused entirely on whether IID investigators followed proper investigatory procedures in order to arrive at some classification or other. So focused was Smith on procedure, in fact, that he never even got around to considering whether or not the final classification—whether charges against an officer were unfounded, unsustainable, actionable, and so on—was valid. Put another way, Smith was unconcerned with *what* determination the IID had made in various cases, so long as they had followed the division's self-imposed investigatory rules.[74]

Other observers pointed out the degree to which Smith's methodological logics were deeply flawed. According to black CPD Sergeant Earl Davis, formerly an IID officer for five years, assuming the classifications were right if procedure was followed was a fatal flaw because the IID's entire classification system was molded by "purposeful and deliberate malfeasance." More broadly, in Davis's estimation, the division devoted "75% of the effort and time to window dressing which protects the police image in the eyes of the public." For all intents and purposes, the IID served as "an eyewash operation not vitally concerned with changing improper police behavior or serving the public interest." Researchers from the University of Chicago-based Center for Studies in Criminal Justice concurred.[75] So too did the ACLU, whose independent reviews of IID practices suggested that "in a high percentage of [police brutality] cases…it has appeared to our investigators that substantial evidence of the alleged acts of brutality exists,

[74] Crane and Schlesinger, "Citizen Complaints of Police Misconduct."
[75] Crane and Schlesinger, "Citizen Complaints of Police Misconduct."

while the Police Department has uniformly determined in these same cases that the complaint was unfounded."[76]

Despite deep objections from the police department to civilian influence in departmental matters, the community's lack of faith in the IID provoked repeated calls for expanded transparency and citizen involvement in the review process. The ACLU's Bernard Weisberg, for instance, wrote to Wilson in March 1965 that his office "has received a continuing flow of [brutality] complaints. So have other community organizations. Nor do these organizations have confidence that these complaints are being handled in an appropriate manner….Suspicion on this score naturally exists because the situation is one in which the accused (police officers) investigate themselves (i.e. through other police officers). Such natural suspicions could be allayed only if the public were given some means of ascertaining for itself that investigations of brutality complaints are in fact conducted with impartiality."[77]

*

Such calls for greater police transparency dovetailed with, and helped animate, the black freedom struggle brewing in Chicago during the early and middle 1960s. While the southern civil rights movement's labors against legalized Jim Crow ground onward, capturing international attention, Chicago citizens and activists organized and protested around a set of issues unique to their context: failing and overcrowded schools; a paucity of meaningful political representation due to the tight reins the Daley machine kept on black politicians; *de facto* housing segregation; rapacious real estate agents; and deplorable slum conditions.[78]

---

[76] Alexander Polikoff to Members of the ACLU Police Brutality Subcommittee, March 17, 1965, box565, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[77] Bernard Weisberg to Orlando Wilson, March 8, 1965, box 539, folder 11, ACLU Records.
[78] In addition to the sizeable corpus of literature on postwar inequality in Chicago specifically, referenced throughout this chapter and the last, Thomas Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty* works to capture these dynamics in the broader context of the urban North. See Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the Urban North* (New York: Random House, 2008). The literature on the southern civil rights movement

Organizations and activists leaned on institutional levers at their disposal. They staged demonstrations to expose Chicago's ugly racial and economic inequality, as well as sympathy pickets out of solidarity with southern blacks and protestors. Citizens wrote flurries of editorials, lodged complaints with civic leaders, and organized themselves into ad hoc affiliations to try to better their condition.

Although it was rarely a singular issue, concerns about the police influenced the course of the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) in multiple ways, both conceptually and logistically and in ways that embodied the black dual experience of being underprotected and overpoliced. In one sense, police abuses and harassments served the movement as a mobilizing pivot. The legalistic approach of George Leighton and the NAACP, in coordination with the ACLU, represented one of the methods by which black Chicagoans sought to battle that set of issues. The direct action protest strategies of local branches of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), SCLC, and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) were another. As early as 1964, CORE's executive committee was discussing the viability of police brutality as an issue around which to

---

and the context in which it evolved, meanwhile, is immense. Among many others, see Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in America* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1991); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1989); Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage, 2010); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Visions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: NYU Press, 2010); Akinyele Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2014); Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: Norton, 2014); Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds., *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2001).

organize the community, although such actions never really materialized for the organization.[79] By contrast, in the first week of 1965, when a black man name Richard Garner was gunned down by a CPD officer, SNCC held a rally in Bronzeville to demand justice. Fliers condemned the officer as "a killer-cop, with a gun in his hand. He has killed your brother and the city is still paying him to 'protect' you!"[80] Four months later, SCLC held a demonstration in Englewood over police brutality in general, and in particular concerning the reinstatement of notoriously brutal CPD Captain Frank Pape (of *Pape v. Monroe* infamy) to the police force after a four-year self-imposed leave of absence following the Supreme Court's concurrence in the case finding him guilty of gross brutality.[81] At a similar "March for Justice" action a week later, a flier distributed by SNCC provided an extensive list of demands concerning the CPD's relationship to the black community:

> 1. An end to all forms of police harassment and brutality.
> 2. Integration of all police cars – all over Chicago.
> 3. Fire those policemen who refuse to integrate.
> 4. All police officers to serve all the public – black and white together.
> 5. Stop false arrest of poorer citizens without warrant or cause.
> 6. Stop the improper reinstatement of Frank W. Pape.
> 7. Integrate all shifts in the Englewood Police District.
> 8. The return of policemen 'walking a beat' in problem areas such as Englewood.
> 9. The formation of a 'Citizen's Review Board' to receive and investigate all citizens' complaints brought or referred to us.[82]

Other community groups rallied around the issue of police protection. For example, The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), a Saul Alinsky organizing project premised around the idea of community control and empowerment and heavily rooted in the black ministry, pushed for a more effective police presence in Woodlawn virtually from the organization's inception in 1961. Their goals were not "spasmodic and sensational vice raids" but "consistent, vigilant, and

---

[79] CORE, Minutes of the Executive Committee, March 18, 1964, box 1, folder 5, CORE Records (Chicago Branch), Vivian Harsh Research Collection, Chicago Public Library Woodson Branch.
[80] SNCC Flier, box 135, file 939-A, Red Squad files.
[81] *Chicago Daily Defender*, April 24, 1965.
[82] SNCC Flier, box 137, file 940, Red Squad files.

effective law enforcement."[83] However, just as this did not mean sensational and high-profile busts, it also did not necessarily mean simply flooding the neighborhood with more police. TWO clarified this position in a lengthy critique of the city of Chicago's plan for rehabilitating Woodlawn in 1962, countering the city's suggestion of "increased activity by the Police Department" with an emphasis on "a constructive and positive approach to the community's rehabilitation potential." In other words, investment in the community and its people, coupled with enough police protection "to insure [sic] basic safety," was a far more preferable way to spend resources than simply sending increasing numbers of police officers out into the streets.[84]

But arguably the most critical way in which the police would come to bear upon the CFM lay not in the internal drivers of the movement, but in the ways that the CPD reacted to it. The police department's relationship to the CFM would, in the final summation, turn out to be one of steady inconsistency – public sympathy coupled with private enmity, studious protection coupled with gross dereliction of duty. Even before "the movement" as such had emerged, for example, in the summer of 1961, nearly one hundred black Chicagoans seeking asylum in a white church after their apartments burned were mobbed by whites who protested their presence in a traditionally white neighborhood. Police ushered the hapless residents through the mob, though they did not disperse it, eliciting "vigorous disapproval" from the NAACP.[85] A few days later, white youth attacked some black counterparts in Garfield Park, with the incident momentarily turning into a free-for-all before police officers subdued the participants. But when the officers made their arrests, they hauled in only black participants. According to one woman, the officers

[83] Untitled Document, ca. 1961, box 1, folder 3, The Woodlawn Organization Records (hereafter, TWO Records), Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.
[84] *Woodlawn Booster*, July 25, 1962.
[85] *Chicago Defender*, July 1, 1961; *Chicago Defender*, July 3, 1961.

were loose with the word "niggers" to describe their arrestees.[86] The same month, black activists tried to integrate Rainbow Beach, a Southside beachfront to which whites had tried to lay exclusive claim, when "a taunting, rock-throwing mob" attacked them. A staple of police officers had been on the scene, but determined that they would be unable to effectively control the mob and instead suggested that the activists give up for the day.[87] The consequent public criticism prompted the CPD to publicly affirm its commitment to integration, and to station two hundred officers at the beach on each of the following Sundays when interracial teams of "Freedom Waders" arrived to use the beach.[88]

Once the freedom movement began in earnest, officers found themselves placed in a difficult position by civil rights activists' direct action protests, which intentionally violated the assumed relationship between order and justice. But they often reacted in ways that deeply troubled black activists and leaders. In the summer of 1963, the foundational issues driving the nascent freedom movement were conditions in segregated and under-resourced public schools and the intransigence of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Superintendent Benjamin Willis to respond in a meaningful way to their demands.[89] In launching protests against CPS, activists found themselves squarely and increasingly facing off with CPD officers. Ron Woodard, a participant in one action at 73rd and Lowe that August, later remembered this as a formative moment for him as an activist, in part because of his experience being arrested twice in one day and being beaten and kicked by CPD officers charged with breaking up the demonstrations.[90] So severe was the police violence toward demonstrators during these days that it drew

---

[86] *Chicago Defender*, July 8, 1961.
[87] *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 5, 1961.
[88] *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 18, 1961; *Ibid*, July 24, 1961.
[89] See Kathryn M. Neckerman, *Schools Betrayed: Roots of Failure in Inner-City Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[90] John Stuckey interview with Rafike (formerly Ron Woodard), October 12, 1988, box 2, A/V file 001, CORE Records, Vivian Harsch Research Collection, Chicago Public Library Woodson Branch.

condemnation from local clergy and politicians, and accusations that it conjured "shadows of Mississippi."[91] And even absent that sort of violence, demonstrators like Woodard repeatedly found themselves criminalized and locked up for their participation in such protest actions.

Tensions and stakes grew during 1965 and 1966, the pinnacle years of the local movement. On the West Side in August of '65, a fire truck from the local fire station—which employed white firefighters only despite being in the middle of a black ghetto—hit a stop sign, which fell over and killed a black woman. When community members gathered to protest the incident, they were met with a wall of police officers, and the situation quickly turned toward a full-blown riot in which more than one hundred people were arrested and dozens more injured.[92]

The following year, Martin Luther King, Jr. brought his spotlight to Chicago, having chosen the city as the most viable site for targeting the intricate constellation of northern racial inequalities. 1966 was to be the seminal year for the Chicago Freedom Movement, and with King in Chicago, the CPD and City Hall knew that it would be a year of high publicity and higher tension. Yet in the beginning, Wilson and Daley worked closely with movement leaders in an effort to demonstrate their support and, well aware of Chicago's historic volatility to black protest, to assure King and others that they would do what was in their power to keep the peace. In January 1966, Wilson reached out to King to invite him to discuss the upcoming Chicago campaign, with both parties expressing satisfaction with the cordiality and tenor of the meeting. For King especially, who had grown accustomed to the rough edges of southern law enforcement, the meeting seemed a revelation, with King remarking that it was "refreshing to engage in a dialogue [with police] in good faith….This was a first for me." [93]

---

[91] *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 13, 1963.
[92] Satter, *Family Properties*, 169.
[93] Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 88.

The détente between activists and authorities in Chicago, however, proved short-lived. In those early months of 1966, city officials could be comfortable with the fact that freedom movement talk of large-scale demonstrations and civil disobedience remained *just* talk. The lack of an obvious starting point to mobilize against, fear or apathy on the part of ordinary citizens, internal divisions within the freedom movement, and resentment at SCLC for intruding on Chicago all hampered the CFM in the early months of the year. But as spring gave way to summer, momentum for an actual direct action campaign increased, with activists like King, James Bevel, Jesse Jackson, and others deciding (over the objections of some others within the freedom movement) on open housing as a morally appealing and tactically feasible rallying cry.

The public launching point for that summer of direct action came on July 10, with a massive rally at Soldier Field that was attended by some thirty thousand Chicagoans. King was the featured speaker, and he spoke in familiar tones of a national black community "tired of being seared in the flames of withering injustice," recasting the protest themes of Selma and Montgomery to SCLC's new surroundings in the urban North. The rally concluded with a five-thousand-person march from Soldier Field to City Hall, where King taped a list of the CFM's demands to the front door—ones that included open housing, equitable access to quality education, and approval of a citizen review board for assessing complaints against the CPD.[94]

The following day, King, Chicago teacher and movement leader Al Raby, and others met with a contingent of city officials that included both Daley and Wilson. In addition to further explaining the stakes involved in achieving open housing, King reiterated the demand for citizens' right to be involved in a police review board. Wilson was nonplussed, explaining that such a board would only get in the way of his administration's renewed determination to root out abusive and bad officers. Raby pushed the issue, telling the Superintendent that he knew of "at

[94] Ibid, 105-107.

least fifteen men who contribute to the bad image of the department." Wilson bristled that he was "sure there are more than fifteen and I am trying to rid the department of these men."[95] As the contingent of activists repeatedly emphasized the need for more concrete action on their entire slate of issues, no one on the city's side would make firm commitments. According to historian James Ralph, King threatened the possibility of "massive civil disobedience, which included the possibility of staging sit-ins on the Dan Ryan Expressway," the busy eight-lane highway cutting southward from the Loop through Chicago's Southside. Later that day, he told reporters that the CFM would have to "escalate."[96]

Before movement activists even had the chance to do so, however, conditions beyond their control escalated things for them. The day after the tense meeting at City Hall, the fifth in a row with temperatures spiking above ninety degrees, confrontation between the CPD and black residents on the Near West Side exploded into violence. It began with black kids, seeking reprieve from the heat, opening up a city fire hydrant to play in the water—a Chicago tradition and an act so banal that even Daley admitted to having done it when he was a child coming up in Bridgeport. CPD officers passing by took issue with the violation, however, and closed the hydrant. When the children reopened it, officers again closed it, and were soon met with a hostile crowd of local residents. Bricks and bottles flew as residents and officers exchanged pushes and shoves. A swarm of CPD officers flooded the scene, but the entire neighborhood went up in chaos. For several days, violence persisted intermittently on the Near West Side and in the neighboring communities of Lawndale and East and West Garfield Park, conjuring fears of "another Watts" as some community members partook in looting and arson. For their part, according to observers, the police were loose with use of their nightsticks and guns in their quest

[95] Ibid, 108.
[96] Ibid, 108-109.

to restore order.[97] After days of violence, two people lay dead, hundreds had been arrested, and millions of dollars of property damage incurred.

In the wake of the uprising, freedom movement activities intensified, with talk of marches morphing into actual direct action. As they did so, questions again arose about the police department's obligations and abilities to protect civil rights demonstrators who, by their own admissions and despite their own commitment to non-violence, relied upon confrontation in order to advance their cause. The CFM wanted to upend the status quo, even if it meant sometimes breaking "a particular law to reach the higher law of brotherhood and justice" and publicly encouraging the wrath of mob racism. Such goals stood in opposition to those of City Hall, where Mayor Daley's prerogatives, for most intents and purposes, *were* the status quo. Daley's primary concerns were political stability; anything that threatened to cause civil unrest was anathema to his interests. (Case in point: when the city was forced to send police officers into white ethnic neighborhoods to defend civil rights marchers in an election year, those neighborhoods revolted by turning toward the Republican Party in unprecedented numbers.[98]) And despite his political independence from the mayor's office and his sympathies for the goals of racial equality, Wilson's interest in maintaining order and upholding law above all else hewed far more closely to Daley's goals than to those of the freedom movement.[99] He was, indeed, an archetype of the white moderate as Martin Luther King would sardonically characterize them: someone "interested more in order than justice."[100]

For the remainder of the summer, the tension between order and justice lay at the heart of the CFM and CPD's relationship. At the end of July, less than three weeks after the West Side

---

[97] Ibid, 109-111.
[98] Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*, 270.
[99] Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 87.
[100] King quoted in Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic*Civitas*, 2014), 106.

uprising, movement activists launched open housing campaigns on the city's Southwest Side. The responses from the local communities—famously comprised of working-class, tightly knit white ethnic enclaves—were vitriolic, and unabashedly so. With the antagonists in these instances always being white counter-protestors, the mettle of officers would be tested in even more intense ways than it had during the 1940s and 50s housing protests. In one late-July action, as five hundred demonstrators marched through the streets, white mobs surrounded them, throwing rocks and bottles and cherry bombs, and chanting such invectives as "I'd like to be an Alabama trooper / That is what I'd really like to be / For if I were an Alabama trooper / Then I could hang a nigger legally." Fifty demonstrators were injured; they and the rest were forced to retreat to the safety of their own neighborhoods. After the fact, activists wondered openly at what exactly the police were doing, since the number of officers had seemed small, and those on the scene had shown remarkably little interest in protecting the bodies and property of the marchers. King and Raby issued a statement condemning the lack of police protection for the marchers.[101] A week later, however, King, Rabbi Robert Marx, and other local clergy led five hundred marchers through the white neighborhoods of Marquette Park and Chicago Lawn. Shortly after the march started, a rock "as big as a fist" that had been hurled from amidst the mobs of counterdemonstrators lining the street struck King in the head, dropping him to his knees. As the march proceeded, rocks and knives and other objects continued to rain down upon the demonstrators, but the damage and casualties would have been far greater had the police not done a commendable job protecting the marchers.[102]

Eventually, the city renewed its dedication to offering proper police cover for demonstrators, a move driven primarily by politics. As political scientist and long-time Daley

[101] Ibid, 120-1.
[102] Ibid, 123.

machine observer Milton Rakove wrote, one of the core tenets of the machine was "don't make no waves," and waves was exactly what the freedom movement made.[103] By 1966, anyone who had paid attention to the nonviolent southern freedom movement knew that confrontation and chaotic violence from its opponents only emphasized the movement's moral righteousness and breathed further life into it. Thus for reasons of civic calm and, by extension, political stability, Daley had a concerted interest in not offering the freedom movement any greater legs on which to stand than it already possessed. Visibly putting the city police to work protecting freedom movement marchers and ensuring that the movement couldn't draw life and appeal from mob brutality would help suck the requisite air from the movement. The mayor didn't have to like the approach, but there were undeniable benefits to be reaped from it.[104]

Although Daley faced recrimination and political backlash from white ethnics for offering shelter to civil rights workers, that approach did turn out to at least partially have the desired result. By denying the freedom movement the sort of spectacular confrontation in the streets that it needed, it left CCCO and SCLC searching for alternatives that had so far proved elusive. But while the city administration had hoped that such strategic uncertainty would draw the movement out of the streets completely, those hopes were harpooned when movement leaders announced their intentions to continue the open housing marches.

With the announcement that the marches would continue, Daley and Wilson had had enough. Echoing the complaints of his predecessors, Wilson publicly warned about the drains on departmental resources that protecting movement activists presented. By mid-August, he had gone all-in on this thesis, pointing toward a thirty percent spike in the crime rate from mid-July to mid-August 1966 compared to the same period the year before, and blaming it directly on the

---

[103] Milton L. Rakove, *Don't Make No Waves…Don't Back No Losers: An Insider's Analysis of the Daley Machine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 9.
[104] Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 142.

fact that as hundreds of police officers were forced to protect marchers, they were drawn out of other districts where criminals subsequently ran wild. Taking a hardline stance against the continuation of the demonstrations, Wilson braided the freedom movement's activities with dangerousness, recklessness, and disregard for the greater good of Chicago; the high crime rate, he concluded, "can be expected to continue as long as we have these demonstrations."[105]

Wilson's assignation of higher crime and greater social risk was a rhetorical move of extraordinary consequence. Not only did it delegitimize the freedom movement, but it also provided Daley with the firepower he needed to shut the movement down. The Superintendent's assessment of the risks to the rest of the city if freedom marches were allowed to continue was the single most important factor in Daley hitting the freedom movement with an injunction to finally force an end to its street actions. The injunction was a bold move in a blue-collar union city, and at his press conference announcing it, Daley explained that while he "hated" injunctions, he was being forced to choose between one group's right to petition versus the entire city's right to adequate police protection. Because the civil rights demonstrations "adversely affected" the CPD's abilities to perform its functions throughout the rest of Chicago, Daley lamented, he had no choice but to pursue legal action to make them stop.[106]

The injunction jolted King and the freedom movement, and for most intents and purposes, had its desired effect. CFM leaders came to the bargaining table with the city and came away with a battery of promises regarding open housing initiatives—promises with which King expressed satisfaction and which more militant leaders in Chicago derided as being just as empty as anything that had come before. While Black Power militants in SNCC and CORE went

[105] Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 164-165.
[106] Ibid, 160.

forward with a widely publicized march through the southwest suburb of Cicero, the work of King and the CFM had largely come to a standstill.

*

The city's strategy of conceding protection to freedom movement activists in the hope of undermining their strategic impact was abetted by an intense, secretive war on the movement being waged primarily by a CPD Red Squad rejuvenated by the rising tides of radicalism. Its attacks on black radicalism had begun expanding in earnest in response to the growth of the Nation of Islam during the 1950s, but its scope of surveillance widened significantly during the 60s. Early in the decade, organizations from the Negro American Labor Council to The Woodlawn Organization all came under surveillance and infiltration by the Squad, with officers checking license plates outside meeting sites, hotel registrations, phone records, and political affiliations, and sending officers into such groups as informants working from the inside out.[107]

By 1964, the Red Squad was working its way into the more major civil rights organizations in Chicago, making habit of sending undercover agents into public meetings of Chicago's SNCC branch and its sister organizations—a task to which black police officers especially were assigned.[108] When SCLC was conducting its open housing mobilizations in 1966, the CPD had informants so prominently within the movement that one strategy session with King, Raby, Jackson, and others was held at the home of one such informant.[109] And infiltration begat raids, as when the CPD raided SNCC's 1966/'67 New Years Eve party in a move that one SNCC member called "a continuation of the harassment tactics by the police

[107] [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], Intelligence Division Report, September 12, 1960, box 106, file 496, Red Squad files; Untitled Report, Undated ca. early 1961, box 133, file 902, Red Squad files; Untitled Report, November 1961, box 106, file 496, Red Squad files.
[108] [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], HR Section, August 10 1964, box 135, file 939-A, Red Squad files; Intelligence Division Investigator's Report, October 6, 1964, box 135, file 939, Red Squad files.
[109] CPD Intelligence Division, Investigator's Report of October 7, 1966, box 138, file 940-G, Red Squad files. (The meeting to which the report refers was held on August 31, 1966.)

against SNCC and its affiliated groups."[110] Other activists accused the CPD of still more severe forms of coercion and disruption, presaging the brutal repression that would mark the CPD's response to Black Power dissidents late in the decade. For example, the Chicago branch of the Louisiana-based Deacons for Defense and Justice accused CPD officers of firing ten rounds of ammunition into the front window of its Southside storefront office during the long, hot summer of '66. The Deacons filed a complaint with—what else—the CPD; the report disappeared down the IID's bureaucratic black hole.[111]

Few things garnered more attention from the Squad during the mid-Sixties than the freedom movement's engagement with black Chicago's street gangs. Gangs had rarely appeared as a notable problem from within black Chicago prior to the 1960s before becoming, by the later parts of the decade, demonstrable and destructive problems for broader sections of the community. Early in the decade, the violence of the gangs was a story still in the making, however. Certainly, gangs like the Blackstone Rangers and Vice Lords brought some share of chaos and tragedy to the South and West Sides during those years, but contrary to preconceptions of gangs as unwaveringly anti-social organizations, some gang leaders during these early years were still publicly dreaming of a better world for their constituents—one perhaps achievable through normal societal frameworks.[112] If that surprises, consider this: in December 1961 members of two streets gangs (and the retired "war counselor" of another) crashed a budget hearing of the Chicago Board of Education, making an appeal to the board to "help to curb gangs such as theirs and reduce juvenile delinquency."[113] Claiming to represent over five thousand members in total, nineteen-year-old Theodore Williams of the Senior Vice Lords, nineteen-year-

[110] *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 3, 1967.
[111] Intelligence Division Investigator's Report, August 18, 1966, box, 94, file 432H, Red Squad files.
[112] For an example of gang violence in the early part of the decade, see "6 Street Gang Members Get 20 Yr. Terms," *Chicago Tribune*, October 4, 1960.
[113] *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1961.

old Melvin Lilly of the Egyptian Cobras, and seventeen-year-old Cleveland Smith of the Midget Vice Lords insisted on the need for better resources, more funding, and smaller class sizes at CPS schools in low-income neighborhoods, as well as improved educational facilities and programs at the county and city jails. Because schools were the formative place of children and teens' engagement with the broader society, they said, it was incumbent upon the city and the board to ensure that those engagements were nourishing and useful. Painful hopelessness and frustration scarred the experiences many black students had in the public schools, to a point where they were simply passing time until they dropped out. "When this happens," Williams said,

> they are out on the street with nothing to do and nothing to look forward to. They have a need to feel that they are a part of something; that they are wanted and needed by someone or something.
>
> It seems that the only place they can get this feeling of need or want satisfied is from the rest of the gang. And now no one matters except the group, and to keep this mutual feeling for each other they often try to hurt anyone who is not connected with the group or doesn't sympathize with them in some way.[114]

In response, saying merely that the issue was tangential to budgetary issues, the board banished them from the hearing; the young men were left simply to give their statements to the press instead.

A broad conception of gangs as organisms conjured from inequality and desperation propelled the freedom movement toward engaging gang members in the hopes of turning their frustrations toward socially productive ends. This impulse was consistent throughout the late spring and summer of 1966 during the CFM's heyday, and was demonstrated with particular clarity at a remarkable meeting in June of 1966, when Martin Luther King, Jr., local clergy, and colleagues in the freedom movement convened in a Loop hotel ballroom alongside the leadership of the most prominent South and West Side gangs. The Gangster Disciples, Vice Lords, Blackstone Rangers, Peacemakers, Del Vikings, and others all sent representatives; and while

[114] Ibid.

their sincerity may have been up for debate, gang leaders possessed a keen understanding of the challenges that their young members—males especially—confronted on a daily basis. There in the Sheraton Blackstone, the *Defender* reported, the meeting "combined a workshop of non-violence conducted by Al Sampson, SCLC, and testimony from the gang members on their experiences in a 'closed-out society' that includes police brutality and poverty."[115]

Intellectual give-and-take, political analytics, and movement strategizing characterized the conversations. The question of power sat at the center: social power, economic power, political power. As they debated the importance and attainability of each, they also made a checklist of all the things that sent young people into the clutches of the corner in the first place. To listen to gang leaders at the meeting talk was to hear as much about the desperation of present conditions as about the hope for future ones. For example, an unidentified man representing the Vice Lords, speaking in sweeping terms about a desire to help his members turn toward more stable and socially productive lives: "We want to set up our own agencies for jobs, health, information and recreation," he said. "We would hold meetings and tell our younger members how important it is to remain in school. We've had training in painting, carpentry and plastering. We can put grass in every yard and paint the porches. If a guy gets out of jail we can put him on our payroll and give him something valuable to do in the community."[116] King, for his part, was thinking even bigger, urging the young men toward nonviolence and constructive channels of protest but simultaneously placing demands upon the government to assemble a "massive Marshall Plan" for the uplift of Chicago's poor people.[117]

---

[115] *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 13, 1966.
[116] Ibid.
[117] *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 13, 1966; *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 12, 1966. One other point of interest to come out of that meeting was rooted in the fact black gang members and poor white radicals were sharing stories about the systematic challenges shaping their lives, and that this was particularly true around the issue of police brutality. Tom Mosher, a white man working with the JOIN Community Union out of Uptown, told the gang members to not look at each other as the enemy, but instead to turn their rage toward "the system," which in Chicago included everyone

The CPD was furious with the freedom movement for offering the gangs any semblance of legitimacy. The department labored extensively to undermine the relationship between the movement and the gangs, and tried to use SCLC's relationship especially with gangs to undercut the credibility of the CFM. Indeed, freedom movement activists saw no coincidence in the fact that the CPD became interested in the gangs at the exact moment that the movement was trying to activate them for political ends. And, indeed, the flurry of action and intelligence-gathering surrounding the gangs begins to riddle the Red Squad's files at precisely this time. An unnamed writer affiliated with Woodlawn's First Presbyterian Church—which served as both literal and figurative sanctuary for the Blackstone Rangers in their early years—summarized their interpretation of the timing of the CPD's interest in the Rangers in 1966 thusly:

> The first Presbyterian Church became intensively involved with the Rangers in late May. At that time, SCLC had staff working with the Rangers in an attempt to involve them in their program. It was at that time that SCLC announced its plans to pacify the Chicago gangs and to involve them in the Civil Rights Movement. As a result interest in the Rangers began to snowball at City Hall. City officials outside the community became involved, and the pressure on the Rangers began to mount. Their main concern was focused on the fact that SCLC had held a meeting with the Rangers, in which movies of the Watts riots

---

from Mayor Daley to the business class to slumlords to the police. When a police officer busted a young person's head or when a slum went up in flames, "the man on top is as responsible," Mosher said. "He's as guilty, as much a criminal—as one of us who puts a blade in someone." Reverend Al Sampson, who spent many years working with the gangs, proposed the formation of a Committee on Police Services—not so subtly acronymed as COPS—whereby the gangs could channel their energies into pushing for reforms to the law enforcement wing of "the system." And gang members continued to wonder at the efficacy of nonviolence "when the man (policeman) is beating you in the head." The point here is not that members of the Blackstone Rangers or Vice Lords or whoever else were entering into any long-standing relationship, or even dialogue, with JOIN and similar organizations. But it is to point out that this here was a fleeting bit of precedent for the "original Rainbow Coalition" that would emerge at the end of the Sixties, wherein the Black Panthers, led by Fred Hampton, allied with the Puerto Rican Young Lords and white organizations like the Young Patriots and Rising Up Angry in order to build a movement to challenge the economic, social, and racial status quos. Significantly, many of the cords binding together the perhaps unlikely coalitional components were woven out of frustrations and anger with police abuse and misconduct, just as they were at the Sheraton meeting in 1966. (We turn to that story in the next chapter.) On the original Rainbow Coalition, see especially Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2013). For more on such coalitional politics, see Gordon K. Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition & the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); James Tracy and Amy Sonnie, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times* (New York: Melville House, 2011); and Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 226-246.

> were shown as an illustration of the negative effects of violence. The fear on the part of City Officials was that the SCLC was stimulating violence rather than curbing it.[118]

Police interest in these alliances predictably morphed into efforts to prevent them, to create instability within gang organizations and between the movement and the gangs. In early May, an undercover CPD officer surveilled a meeting at First Presbyterian, tape recording it for the listening use of his superiors. After screening the much-discussed footage of the rioting in Watts before a crowd of some three hundred, Bevel took to the microphone and declared himself to be "looking for 3,000 people who will demonstrate anytime and anyplace in Chicago. He then stated not to start any incident with policemen because they were looking for trouble and want you to spend your time fighting them rather than demonstrating properly."[119] Two days later, commanding officers at the Englewood station sent uniformed officers into a meeting at the Englewood Methodist Church to watch a meeting between SCLC and local gang members. There, according to confidential reports,

> Rev. Sampson [made] derogatory remarks about [the police officers] to the youths. He stated that the police, the detached workers and the YMCA officials were trying to contain them for the [sake] of the power structure of the city government. He also stated that his purpose was to organize 3,000 gang members in order to use them for involving Martin Luther King Movement. He further stated the gangs would reconstruct the police department, YMCA, the welfare and the schools because they did not give a damn about gang members in Chicago. He directed most of the remarks at the police, stating that they were only concerned with beating people and keeping them in their place.
> […]
> It is the feeling of the undersigned that the movement is having difficulty getting started in [Englewood] due to the intensified activity of the police in the last few months. They are beginning to run out of meeting places. All of the meeting places in [Englewood] have been poorly attended.[120]

Whether he was right or not, the officer's conclusion, in other words, was that police action was succeeding in keeping SCLC and the gangs apart. It is difficult to imagine city and CPD administrators being displeased.

---

[118] Unknown Author, "History of Ranger Activity, ca. Summer 1966, box 423, v. 1, Red Squad files. Although hard to say for certain, it is quite possible that the author was First Presbyterian's Reverend, a white man named John Frey, who had a long-standing and highly protective relationship with the Rangers.
[119] [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], Informational Report, May 10, 1966, box 137, file 940-A, Red Squad files.
[120] [REDACTED], box 137, file 940-A, Red Squad files; also see *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 12, 1966.

With few clear alliances developing between the freedom movement and the street gangs, violence by the latter increased markedly during and after 1966. Much of this was, as those gang leaders who crashed that Board of Education meeting insisted and as others in the community echoed, the endgame of a system that had deep inequality and structural violence at its center. We will turn more fully to those stories of gang violence in the next chapter. It is, however, worth appreciating at this point just how much black community members understood the CPD to be utterly failing in its responses to the problem, even at this very early juncture. On the one hand, this was evident in those police efforts to cleave the gangs and the freedom movement from one another. On the other hand, the department apparently rebuffed explicit, commonsense offers for help from black members of the force. Many of the black men recruited to the Wilson-era CPD had come from the same neighborhoods as many of the gang members getting swept up in gang recruitment, and a number of them requested transfers into gang turf, believing that they could work constructively with the young men and steer them away from destructive acts. But according to local memory, the CPD administration rejected such overtures, restricted transfers into the district by black officers, and sometimes even transferred those *out* that were there.[121]

Why the CPD would have refused the pleas of black officers to put their community knowledge and relationships to use is a matter of some speculation; there is little written record from which to work. Possibly it was the end point of a lousy set of bureaucratic norms—the product of coincidence and procedural rigidity. But it is worth noting that among older black Chicagoans, suspicions run deep to this day that this mishandling of the emerging gang crisis was deliberate. Timuel Black, certainly no conspiracy theorist, flatly suggested that the CPD was colluding with the Daley administration and private interests who hoped that the gangs would rip the black community apart at its seams. Black described the sequence thusly: "[clearing the land

[121] Black interview.

for private interests] became easier, keeping the black cops out of there, who knew how to handle the gangs; bring the white cops in, who knew *not* to handle the gangs."[122] The animating hope on the part of city hall and private entities, in this view, was that the gangs might turn Woodlawn into a violence-addled wasteland, black-owned businesses would leave, and the area could be slated for urban renewal in a vein similar to how other parts of Hyde Park and Woodlawn had been during the 1940s and 1950s.[123]

The suspicions that the city was less than fully invested in productively dealing with the growing negative influence of gangs were further rooted in police responses that seemed designed to sometimes exacerbate gang tensions and worsen the quality of life of young people. In responding to the gangs during Wilson's last year heading the force, the police utilized a wide range of strategies. In one figurative pocket sat the traditional exertions of police power: aggressive, rigorous, and sweeping arrest efforts; harassment; raids on gang strongholds and safe houses; blunt physical force. Alternatively sat negotiation and community engagement: weapons turn-ins; police-community meetings; and so on. Still further, coercion and subversion: infiltrating gangs; exacerbating inter-gang tensions; cultivating a veritable war of extirpation. By this point in time, there was precedent for the CPD to use pretty much any and all of these strategies. And while the secretive nature of the CPD makes it challenging to know every aspect of how it was approaching the problem, the composite tactical approach that emerged turned out

---

[122] Ibid.

[123] The particular case of the gangs aside, there was strong precedent for that community decline/razing/renewal sequence. Construction of the United Center and the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois constitute just two notable examples from recent history, while the most striking instance is mapped out in historian Arnold Hirsch's classic study of housing, public policy, and racism in Chicago, *Making the Second Ghetto*. In that book, Hirsch illuminates how officials at the Hyde Park-based University of Chicago used the university's institutional weight to leverage urban renewal designations for the surrounding area—most prominently hitting at poor black neighborhoods in Hyde Park and Woodlawn. In the case of the University of Chicago, such policies were meant to buffer that institution and its adjacent residential section from the encroachment of crime and dilapidation scarring nearby neighborhoods, with the relational rupture between the university and the black community around it calculated as acceptable collateral damage. See Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto.*

to be a strange, often contradictory admixture of them all during the last year of Wilson's tenure. Recurrently, gang members reported being picked up by police officers who demanded information from them and, if they failed to give them what they wanted, would drop them, vehicle-less, in a rival gang's turf. In black Englewood, home to the Gangster Disciples, CPD officers were instructed to "break up any gathering of four or more teenagers."[124] In Woodlawn, the CPD raided First Presbyterian Church after clergy and federal officials had brokered a deal with gangs to turn in their weapons to the church. Church Reverend John Fry decried the actions of "swaggering, verbally nasty policemen with carbines and magnum pistols at the ready," for damaging bonds of trust with the gang members that were already hanging by a thread—if there was indeed any connective tissue left there at all.[125] In June 1966, an Englewood informant told a federal investigator trying to coordinate a weapons turn-in by the gangs there that some Englewood CPD officers had "suggested that the boys turn their weapons over to them [rather than to the Feds] and that they would see to it that the Federal Officers were notified. When the boys began bringing in the weapons, they were placed under arrest for possession of illegal weapons. The reason for this was that since the police needed the statistics they did not want to write this abandonment of property off as a lost and found case, but rather charge twenty-two individuals."[126]

A desire to better coordinate these diffuse responses, and the growing gravity of the gang situation, finally prompted Wilson toward the implementation of a Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU) on his way out of office in 1967. Announced late in March, the GIU was initially slated as a ten-detective unit, and was headed by a black CPD Lieutenant named Edward Buckney, who would

[124] U.S. Government Special Investigator to Supervisor, August 4, 1966, box 423, folder 2, Red Squad Files.
[125] Natalie Y. Moore and Lance Williams, *The Almighty Black P Stone Nation: The Rise, Fall, and Resurgence of an American Gang* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), 63.
[126] U.S. Government Special Investigator to Supervisor, August 4, 1966, box 423, folder 2, Red Squad Files.

expand the Unit and adopt increasingly aggressive tactics for it after James Conlisk replaced Wilson as Superintendent.[127] Indeed, it would take little time at all for the GIU to prove itself to be an unflattering mixture of ineffective, abusive, and wildly controversial, which will be explored further in the next chapter. But it bears understanding that, while the CPD's response to black Chicago's gangs would turn increasingly worse and less productive in the late-1960s and after, the infrastructure for the GIU and the CPD's broader approach to gangs was put in place during Orlando Wilson's years helming the police department. For a significant number of black Chicagoans, that remains a part of his legacy.

*

When Edwin Berry stood before the Citizens' Committee to Study Police-Community Relations in 1966 and lamented Chicago's "dual system of law enforcement," he was less describing something that had *emerged* during Orlando Wilson's tenure as CPD Superintendent than something that had been given booster shots and *codified into law* during that period. Much of the history described up until this chapter has demonstrated the inequalities in protection and rights allotted black Chicagoans relative to other constituencies within Chicago throughout a variety of historical contexts. But through the formalization of stop-and-frisk, the selectivity with which it was applied, the consequent racial disparities in arrests, the tensions between police and community over the rights of protestors during the freedom movement, and more, that dual system became engrained during the early and mid-1960s. This was an ironic development given Wilson's stature as the most innovative and racially liberal head that the CPD had ever had.

Importantly, the formalization of these racial repressions happened at the same time as the CPD's greatest modernization. Wilson had inherited a department that was, by all accounts, dysfunctional and corrupt, and that had been for the majority of its existence. Facing resistance

[127] On the founding of the GIU, see *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1967.

from the rank-and-file, he nevertheless pulled the department forward to a place where it could land on (at least near) par with that of other major cities. By reconstituting the department's organizational arrangement from the ground up, making greater use of new technology and communications, and wrenching it from some of its entanglements with the Democratic Party machine, Wilson proved to be the astute and modernizing mind that many people had hoped he would be. But racially selective – and ultimately racially repressive – measures were part of this modernizing bundle, as well. One cannot talk about the positive changes Wilson brought to the department without acknowledging that things like stop-and-frisk and freedom movement subversion came right alongside them. Despite his own nominal racial liberalism, when Wilson was reimagining a new day for the police force, he was doing so with a vision focused most keenly on the maintenance of law and order. Modernization and racial repression, in this fashion, were joined at the hip.

As Wilson exited the Chicago scene in the middle of 1967, black politics in the city, mirroring nationwide trends, were bending increasingly radical and increasingly militant. For all the decidedly raw deals that black Chicagoans were dealt during the 1960s—by the CPD, by city hall, by realtors and speculators and by their white neighbors—Wilson had at least approached black communities with a philosophical degree of compassion that marked a break with traditional departmental culture. His replacement, James Conlisk, would serve as a return to form. As tensions between impoverished black communities and the institutions around them spiked in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Conlisk would guide the CPD in brutal new directions as the city sought to crush dissent and warehouse the poor. By the early 1970s, many black people, especially young men, would be dead from police bullets, and the department and the city would face floods of bad press and lawsuits. And a vibrant Black Power Movement would

emerge in the wake of the CFM, in large measure as a challenge to the authority, legitimacy, and abuses of the police.

Those stories serve as the focus of the next chapter.

5
The Dying Ground:
State Repression and Community Resistance, 1967-1973

*

You had to understand that the police didn't care who killed who in the ghetto, long as they were both black; the police just let the one on the ground die and bust the one still standing…[I]f you kept in the neighborhood, brother against brother, you weren't going to do more than five, six years in the joint anyway.
-Brothers Black and Poor – A True Story of Courage[1]

*

The picture of a policeman with his arm upraised against the Negro, Puerto Rican, and Mexican-American has come to symbolize the confrontation of the most alienated members of society with representatives of the social order.
-American Civil Liberties Union, ca. 1967[2]

*

Chicago's black communities are the most overpatrolled and underprotected in the city.
-Howard Saffold, CPD officer, Afro-American Patrolmen's League, 1972[3]

*

The congressman sat at the front of the assembly, his neat mustache matching his close-cropped and graying afro, his trim gray suit and tightly braided tie serving as a sartorial reminder of the seriousness of the occasion. Surrounding him in the room was a wide cross-section of Chicago – black doctors and Latino service workers, unemployed white laborers and career politicians. They gathered to tell stories: ghost stories of beloveds dead and gone; horror stories of torture and violence; indignant stories of harassment and abuse. They agonized over a police system that they saw as unpredictable, and totally out of their control. And they hoped – against history, perhaps – to foster change by their testimony.

The congressman was, in many ways, an unlikely candidate to have orchestrated the meeting and presided over the assemblage. A former Olympian and quintessential member of black Chicago's middle class, Ralph Metcalfe had ascended to an aldermanic position on the City Council through the graces of the Daley machine – a path that required ingratiating himself

---

[1] Sylvester Monroe and Peter Goldman, *Brothers Black and Poor – A True Story of Courage* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1988).
[2] American Civil Liberties Union, "Police Power and Citizens' Rights," ca. 1967, box 571, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[3] Quoted in "The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago:" A Report and Recommendations Based on Hearings Before the Blue Ribbon Panel Convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, on June 26, July 17, July 24, and July 31, 1972, 20

to Daley and the machine's other powerbrokers. During the 1960s, Metcalfe had been one of the famous "Silent Six" – a group of black aldermen who, within the context of the City Council, were understood to be little more than a rubber stamp for Daley projects and wishes.[4] In 1970, that loyalty had propelled him to the Democratic nomination to take William Dawson's seat representing the South Side in the U.S. House of Representatives. He remained active in local matters while in Washington, but almost never on issues that would make waves with the machine. While people close to him – most notably his son, Ralph Metcalfe, Jr., whose politics were deeply shaped by Black Power currents – urged him toward more responsive positions concerning community grievances around policing, the closest he had come had been to involve himself in various anti-crime initiatives. Confronting police violence and abuse was a perilous political issue; it meant, many suspected, political suicide. Metcalfe wasn't interested in political suicide.

And then a friend of Metcalfe's, a prominent black dentist named Dr. Herbert Odom, was stopped one night in March 1972 by two Chicago police officers who tried to stop and frisk him. After Odom requested that he be searched at a station rather than out in the street, the officers handcuffed him, bent him over the hood of the car, and searched him there, before taking him in and charging him with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, battery, and driving without a rear license plate light.[5] While the treatment Odom received was relatively mundane compared to that meted out to other black Chicagoans by the police, the dentist's social position made his arrest and forceful handling a lightning rod for Metcalfe and other community leaders. And the outrage over his case would quickly be compounded by that of another friend of Metcalfe's, Dr. Daniel Claiborne (another dentist), who just a month after Odom's arrest, died after suffering a stroke

[4] Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 95.
[5] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 82; *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 15, 1972.

while driving, losing control of his car, being arrested by CPD officers who assumed that he was drunk, and placed unconscious in a police holding cell for six hours without any medical attention while he died.[6]

Outraged himself and responding to a groundswell from his constituents and the people around him, after these incidents, Metcalfe demanded meetings with police department officials and with City Hall. When those requests were stonewalled, Metcalfe convened a series of four public hearings in July of that year, at which community members and other officials would give testimony about the police system and the treatment that it meted out. Response to the announcement of the hearings was overwhelming – so overwhelming, in fact, that they had to be delayed in order to gather more information, in order to properly respond to the avalanche of complaints and accusations that emerged at the first of the four. In sworn testimony, citizens lodged complaints that spanned a gamut of abuses, from harassment to intimidation to violence to murder.[7] The refrain was familiar, pulsing with the same tenor of outrage of decades past. Richard Leftridge protested too loudly when a police officer hit a woman friend of his in the head with his blackjack, and reported being turned upon by seven other officers. They struck him with such force around the head that his left eye had to be removed three days later.[8] Widow Bennye Moon's son and daughter-in-law got into an argument one day that was loud enough for neighbors to call the police. Arriving officers became abusive toward her son, and when Ms. Moon protested, she was pistol-whipped by an officer, breaking two of her ribs. Her pregnant seventeen-year-old daughter told the officer not to hit her mother; the officer turned around and slugged her in the stomach. The daughter reported suffering blackouts from then until her baby

[6] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 83-84.
[7] *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 3, 1972.
[8] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 6.

was born prematurely – blind and with a perforated heart.[9] Such violence, according to testimony, was systematic: brutality as a part of the everyday; murder by police as commonplace.[10] Fear pervaded. As Lester Jackson, a contractor and community leader on the West Side, testified, "When I leave my home in the morning, I don't know if I'll ever see it again."[11]

And still, as in years past, the city and the police department failed to take seriously the idea that there was much of a problem at all. Law enforcement officials refused to testify at the hearings. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Daley's office and that of CPD Superintendent James Conlisk continued to skirt meaningful engagement or conversation on community grievances. Instead, the constant focus, at virtually all layers of governmental administration, was on *perception* – as though the fundamental problem involved in the wreckaging of relationships between police and community was that black people apparently didn't trust the police, not that the police had given black people ample reason not to trust them. What limited attempted reformations there were from within the department took the form of tampering around the edges rather than digging into the system. The powerful Illinois Law Enforcement Commission of Illinois talked about the public needing to "be taught to understand that crime affects them whether they think about it or not" – to be "additional eyes and ears for the police" rather than thinking of the police as "oppressors."[12] During Conlisk's tenure, spanning from mid-1967 to 1973, the CPD launched and continued a number of community outreach programs, ranging from "Officers Friendly" programs in Chicago schools to police-

[9] Ibid., 7.
[10] *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1972; *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 18, 1972.
[11] *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 18, 1972.
[12] Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, "A Beginning Blueprint for Crime and Delinquency Prevention and Control in Illinois," June 1969, Chicago Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Chicago, IL.

community workshops and newsletters.[13] Conlisk himself made public proclamations about the necessity of bringing better racial integration to the department and ensuring that all citizens felt equally protected by the police.[14] But there was profoundly little substance behind the words. Under his administration, accusations of police violence and harassment grew to extraordinary degrees. The repression of black dissidents – most famously in the police-orchestrated execution of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton – loomed large. The number of police killings of black people exploded. And as if to put the strongest possible stamp on the matter, within the rank and file, various extant racial animosities found embodiment in a Ku Klux Klan cell discovered within the department late in 1968 – a cell that included the Illinois Klan Grand Wizard.[15]

Little wonder, then, that, during this time, the language of foreign forces and occupation prevailed when black Chicagoans talked about the police. In addition to the heavy consequences of killings, abuse, and invasive practices like stop-and-frisk, technological shifts that may seem rudimentary today – namely, the expansion of vehicular rather than foot patrol – had profound impacts on familiarities between police and community.[16] One researcher in 1968 described officers as "a 'foreigner' who all too often fails to stop the ever-growing crime problems and insults the citizen's dignity….This 'foreign' policeman is all too easily transformed into the symbol of White authority."[17] A source as unexpected as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, studying Chicago in 1970, wrote that there was a "substantial separation of the department from…the community, which reduces the effectiveness of the department and the

---

[13] *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 3, 1967; *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1969; *Chicago Police Department Community Workshop Reporter*, various dates, single files, Chicago History Museum Research Center.
[14] *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 3, 1967.
[15] Chicago Police Department, List of Charges against Donald Heath, January 23, 1968, box 536, folder 1, ACLU Records; *Chicago Defender*, December 29, 1967; *Chicago American*, December 30, 1967; *Chicago Daily News*, December 30, 1967; *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 30, 1967.
[16] James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part II," *The Atlantic*, June 1969.
[17] Charles Andrew Pfeiffer, "The Police and the Woodlawn Community," December 1, 1968, box 10, folder 23, WSSC Records.

quality of life in Chicago….[In] some areas, the police have all the outward appearances of an occupational force."[18] To the extent that they had ever held together, things, as Chinua Achebe might have said it, had fallen apart.[19]

Those fractures, abuses, and repressions form a core aspect of this story, but just as importantly, the story of the late Sixties and early Seventies in Chicago was deeply contoured by black people pushing back against them. One culminating point were the Metcalfe hearings, which precipitated the cleavage of the black Democratic submachine from its larger Daley-headed political host. Another was an effort spearheaded by the Black Panther Party in 1972 and 1973 to harness control of the CPD and give it to the community – a battle waged through coalition politics that spanned the breadth of the black political spectrum and the depth of local New Left politics more generally. Still another was a struggle waged within the confines of the police department itself, with black patrolmen organizing as the Afro-American Patrolman's League (AAPL), through which they labored to improve the quality of police protection in black neighborhoods, overturn policies like stop-and-frisk, and check the abusive excesses of officers. In less concentrated ways, concern over police abuse and neglect also began to bleed into, if not

[18] Quoted in Barbara A. Caulfield, "The Chicago Police Department: Access to Information, Personnel Practices and Internal Control – A Review of Major Reports: A Report of the Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group," 1973, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.

[19] The battle lines between the state and dissidents, between that conservative traditionalism and new political visions, would be drawn and crossed most famously at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August of 1968. Late in that month, thousands of mostly white demonstrators converged upon Chicago's streets and parks when the DNC descended upon the city, staging days' worth of marches and protests against the Vietnam War and what they more generally understood to be the proscribed democratic vision of the Democratic Party. As the stand-off between protestors and police grew more and more tense, the result was what is today often called a police riot – the CPD appearing to come unhinged, engaging the protestors with extraordinary hostility and unflinching violence. That violence, and the subsequent show trials of counterculture leaders, loom large in the iconography of the Sixties, but are actually of little significance within the context of policing and race. Few black Chicagoans had taken part in the protest actions at the DNC, despite persistent rumor-mongering that said that either the gangs or the Black Power organizations were coming downtown to join the fray in the Loop. Meanwhile, both in everyday interactions and in chaotic flash points, black Chicagoans themselves had been reckoning with the traumatic effects of state-sanctioned violence, and were fighting their own, far more sustained, battles during this period. On the 1968 DNC riot, see David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Kusch, *Battleground Chicago*.

saturate, the political platforms of numerous other black institutions and organizations, ranging from Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH to the comparatively staid Chicago Urban League.

Molding the intellectual essence of this revolt were the same conjoined grievances – overpoliced, underprotected – that had been entangling tighter and tighter for decades. Testifying before the Metcalfe hearings in the summer of 1972, Howard Saffold, a member of the AAPL, was explicit: "Chicago's black communities are the most overpatrolled and underprotected in the city."[20] Concerns with one or both of those things were reflected countless times in black activisms. The AAPL held both at its center – criticizing the department for the long (sometimes fatally long) times to respond to calls for help in black communities, its seeming lack of concern for violent crimes if they were committed against black people, its disrespect for black women, and the rampant brutality that churned through the departmental culture.[21] Meanwhile, the Urban League's tellingly named "Survival Line" – a community phone line – was initially designed to field phone calls about crime and flagging police protection, but League officials reported that more than a third of the line's calls ended up instead revolving around police abuse. Elsewhere, in the declining infrastructural landscapes of the city housing projects, grassroots activism among residents rotated around trying to ensure better public safety and protection from growing gang violence and crime.

In the end, few of these activisms would have their intended effects. But that does not rob them of the historical significance buried in their legacies and afterlives. There is, for instance, no small significance to the fact that police brutality was what eventually began to fracture the

---

[20] Quoted in "The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago": A Report and Recommendations Based on Hearings Before the Blue Ribbon Panel Convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, on June 26, July 17, July 24, and July 31, 1972, 20

[21] For a brief analysis of the AAPL and its influences, see Tera Agyepong, "In the Belly of the Beast: Black Policemen Combat Police Brutality in Chicago, 1968-1983," *Journal of African American History* 98:2 (Spring 2013): 253-276

Daley machine – a party machinery that had, since its inception in the early 1930s, relied in various ways and to varying degrees on the police department as an enforcement mechanism. It is not a coincidence that, within ten years of that fracturing, Chicago would elect its first African American mayor, and that that black mayor, Harold Washington, was able to win office while framing himself explicitly as an anti-machine candidate. Similarly, the ethics and logics undergirding calls for community control of the police that emerged during this time continue to reverberate among activists today. And the minds' eye dreamings of better horizons would shape the ways that people responded to an expanding carceral state in the intervening years from then to now.

*

By the late 1960s, Chicago was a city asunder. Like the larger nation around it, the Windy City existed in a state of division – its politics, worldviews, and cultural mores all deeply divided. The fissures revolved around touchstones – the war in Vietnam, civil rights and Black Power, "hippies" and the counterculture – but they exposed much deeper and broader anxieties and rages, ones that cut across lines of race and age and class and sex. The civil rights activisms of 1963 to 1967 in particular had scandalized much of the city's sense of itself as a place of decency and tolerance – like the larger American North, Chicago seemed desperate to think of racism as something that happened *somewhere else*. Many white ethnic communities were enraged by the Chicago Freedom Movement's efforts to crash the gates of white schools and neighborhoods. ("This is not civil rights," as one Chicago man angry with open housing put it.[22]) Worse in the minds of such critics was the general sense of lawlessness that they saw present in the blackness in their midst – embodied most clearly in gangs and riots and, eventually, in the

[22] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 105.

person of people like Black Panther Chairman Fred Hampton, who refused to toe traditional lines of etiquette. Coupled with broader senses that the normative lines of deference and authority were being dismantled by hippies, young dissidents, and anti-war heretics, millions of more conservative-minded whites, as well as some older and more conservative blacks and Latinos, saw a culture coming undone. The evidence, to them, was everywhere: in the subversion of traditional dress and music; casual drug use; the sexual revolution; the loud demands for true radical democracy reverberating around the country; the growing opposition to American foreign policy, particularly its war in Vietnam. "I'm getting to feel," one Chicago ad salesman told *Time* magazine in 1968, "like I'd actually enjoy going out and shooting some of these people. I'm just so goddamned mad. They're trying to destroy everything I've worked for—for myself, my wife, and my children."[23]

Among the most iconic defenders of such men was the stolid and husky figure of Richard Daley. The loquacious journalist (and frequent Daley-baiter) Mike Royko once described Daley, prodigal son of Irish Bridgeport, as embodying both the best and worst of ethnic Chicago's rigid traditionalism and cloistered insularity. "Daley was a product of the neighborhoods," Royko wrote, "and he reflected it in many good ways—loyalty to the family, neighbors, old buddies, the corner grocer….But there are other sides to Chicago's neighborhoods—suspicion of outsiders, intolerance toward the unconventional, bigotry, and bullying. That was Daley, too."[24] Year after year, as political radicalism and social upheaval churned forward, the mayor's public face moved more and more toward the second half of Royko's calculus. His politics tracked in evermore politically conservative directions, particularly – and with an eye on maintaining political supremacy after bleeding white ethnic voters in previous elections – surrounding matters of race,

[23] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, xi.
[24] Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: Plume, 1976).

integration, and social activism.[25] Deeply mistrustful of poor people, and the black poor in particular, he fiercely resisted the call within Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty for "maximum feasible participation" of poor people in the planning and implementation of local antipoverty organizations. Comparing the idea to handing over control of a major newspaper to an office janitor, he accused the Office of Economic Opportunity of channeling millions of federal funds to "subversives" and to people who threatened both civic order and his own political supremacy. As he often did, Daley mostly won these battles; over the course of the late-1960s, he successfully lured millions of War on Poverty dollars to the city, where it was channeled through a hand-selected and highly politicized Committee on Economic Opportunity that mostly funneled the money to bureaucrats, and that almost completely ignored outside voices.[26]

Those impulses, the mistrusts of poor people and black people, and the deeper hostilities that lay beneath them were doubly reflected in public fears of crime and in the actions and attitudes of the police force that Daley oversaw. The ambit of police power pivoted in more and more aggressive directions under Wilson's successor as CPD Superintendent, James Conlisk, who many people saw as mostly a Daley lackey. The independence from City Hall for the department that Wilson had largely accomplished evaporated after his departure. As Royko wrote, with the ascension of Conlisk, "Daley could now pick up the phone and issue an order that would be obeyed by the police chief.…[Conlisk] would say 'yes sir' when Daley told him what to do." With the shift in authority well understood by everyday patrolmen, "out on the street, the police sensed what Daley wanted and began pushing blacks harder."[27]

---

[25] Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 229-232.
[26] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 50-52.
[27] Royko quoted in Frank Kusch, *Battleground Chicago: The Police and the 1968 Democratic National Convention* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2004), 9.

What Daley *wanted* in this respect, joining both liberals and conservatives around the country, was a stronger law-and-order apparatus for both Chicago and America. The political context of the late 1960s molded these attitudes in specific ways. While subversive threats seemed everywhere at once, few things scandalized worse than northern black insurgencies, especially Black Power politics and the torrent of urban rebellions/riots in places like Watts, Detroit, and Newark.[28] The backlash to these militancies was deep and intense, running strong through large swaths of white northern communities in which people had little interest or skill to interpret them as meaningful political actions reflecting real grievances. Those trends toward backlash were put on particularly precarious edge in a city like Chicago, one of the United States' most segregated and unequal cities and a place where the isolation of many of the ghettos kept other citizens from seeing them with any nuance at all. Lacking much understanding of what animated black grievances (other than the basest knowledge presented by the *Tribune*, which highlighted little besides the nominal 'pathology' of the ghettos) or contoured black lives and joys and fears, it was easy for white Chicagoans to dismiss black grievances as illogical, unnecessary, and anti-American. Increasingly, when people spoke of "law and order," the visions in their heads were often of angry black people, irretrievably wayward juveniles, and buildings aflame.

Such visions, both locally and nationally, were intimately bound up in strong fears of crime, with which President Lyndon Johnson would declare the nation to be at war by the mid-1960s. These fears were, of course, heavily racialized. Long encoded into the circuitry of how

[28] For some overview and analysis of these urban rebellions/riots and their impact on localities and the nation, see, among others, Kevin Mumford, "Harvesting the Crisis: The Newark Uprising, the Kerner Commission, and Writing on Riots," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Heather Ann Thompson, "Understanding Rioting in Postwar Urban America," *Journal of Urban History*, 26:3 (March 2000): 391-402; Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997).

white Americans thought about black people, perceptions of a moral decay within the black community spread widely during the second half of the 1960s. Articulations of this idea were splashed constantly across the headlines and opinion pages of Chicago's newspapers and in public degradations of the lifeways of poor African Americans. Nationally, it found intellectual root and respectability most infamously in governmental reports like Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family*, which first began circulating internally within the White House in 1965.[29] Framing black urban poverty (and by extension, black crime) as in large measure a function of familial disorder, Moynihan's report, hugely influential within the Johnson administration, famously served as a backbone for the War on Poverty. But it also, as Elizabeth Kai Hinton points out, served as part of the foundation for the War on Crime. With the report providing some of the intellectual fodder, Johnson declared a federal "War on Crime" and corresponding establishment of the Office of Law Enforcement Administration in 1965, later followed by the Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. Through these policy actions and choices, federal officials erected a policy framework that foregrounded crime and "law and order" on the domestic agenda. By weaving together federal, state, and local law enforcement interests – primarily by offering federal investment to help states and municipalities fund law enforcement training, technological advances, prison construction, and so on – these policy innovations would, over time, fundamentally alter the expanse and influence of law enforcement apparatuses across America.[30]

In Chicago, as elsewhere, there is little question that such federal investment was, in hindsight, a vital turn in shifting the surveillance and technical capacities of the CPD,

---

[29] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: A Case for National Action," March 1965, Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor.

[30] The best treatment of the evolution of the War on Crime at the federal level is Elizabeth Kai Hinton's recent Ph.D. dissertation. See Hinton, "From Social Welfare to Social Control."

particularly over the long term. Through block grants given by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA, and its predecessor, OLEA) and administered at the state level by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission (ILEC), the CPD was able to invest in new facilities, new technologies (its first computerized crime system, for instance, in 1972), and new training procedures.[31] And to be sure, the Chicago Police Department's budget exploded in rough chronological symmetry to the advent and expansions of LEAA in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, from 1967 to 1975, the department's budget grew by just under one hundred and fifty percent, from just over $113,000,000 to around $283,000,000.[32] But correlation and causation are two different things, and the immediate impacts of federal funds on the CPD were comparatively small; in the two year period from July 1969 to June 1971, for example, total LEAA grants to the city of Chicago amounted to a little more than $7,600,000, or an average of $3,800,000 annually.[33] Certainly less than all of that was directed toward the CPD, since LEAA funds also went toward facilities construction and other projects, but even if that total were directed toward the department, it would have represented less than two percent of the CPD's total budgetary allotment. By 1974, the total amount of LEAA grant moneys being administered by the ILEC had expanded to close to thirty million annually across Illinois, but only eighteen percent, or a little less than six million, went toward law enforcement – and of that six million, only a portion went to Chicago.[34] So while undoubtedly, those monies served as a valuable revenue stream for the city and the department, the vital organs of the police and crime control system – from every perspective – remained almost entirely locally based and locally funded.

---

[31] Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, *Bulletin*, volume 3:1 (April 1972), Chicago Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Chicago, IL.
[32] Chicago Police Department, Annual Reports: 1967 – 1975.
[33] Scott Lassar, "The Administration of Law Enforcement Assistance Administration Grants in Illinois, 1969-1971: A Report of the Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group," ca. 1972, single file, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago, IL.
[34] Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, Annual Reports: 1969, 1970, 1971, 1973, and 1974, Chicago Municipal Reference Collection, Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Chicago, IL.

Within the department, meanwhile, huge chunks of the employment base were products of conservative white neighborhoods that remained tradition-bound and ethnically organized; many officers, indeed, were the sons and grandsons and nephews of police officers, and they shared their families' and neighbors' condemnatory outlooks on black radicalism and what they took to be black "culture." Increasingly, they interpreted black political opposition to both American foreign and domestic policies as attacks upon the fabric of America itself. Lumping black cultures and politics together with the radicalisms of the broader New Left, officers recurrently spoke to one another (and to future historians) about black people in the idiom of warfare and of knowing the enemy. One officer later recalled that "Blacks used their plight to attack the country and the war [in Vietnam] and we saw them the same as any of those longhairs that were ruining the country."[35] Recalled another: "They were all against our society; blacks and the antiwar crowd, they were all the same….[They] had declared war on us."[36] And another: "we were told not to take any prisoners, that we were in a war, and that the taxpayers were not going to pay us to watch their city go down the shitter."[37]

The terrain on which that 'war' unfolded was one scarred by increasing, irretrievable inequality. The social and economic divisions between black Chicago and much of the white majority had grown evermore yawning, year after year. Rather than getting better, ghetto conditions that had haunted hundreds of thousands of black Chicagoans in the 1950s and early 1960s had only grown more dire by the late part of the decade. Housing conditions and city services on the West Side in particular had eroded precipitously. Schools in these poor black neighborhoods continued to face crises both of funding and overcrowding. The collapse of the industrial economy, the decline of many other job opportunities within black neighborhoods, and

[35] Kusch, *Battleground Chicago*, 28.
[36] Ibid., 27-28.
[37] Ibid., 25-26.

the flight of the black middle class to the suburbs had decimated the already perilous economic condition of majority-black areas. And endemic poverty and profound inequality had conjured increasing urban crime. Although crime rates in Chicago (as elsewhere) grew far less than the panic surrounding *perceived* crime, by the late 1960s and onward through the next two decades, criminal incidences undeniably proliferated. As a tremendously influential study by Judith and Peter Blau demonstrated, not published until 1982 but that relied upon data from 1970, criminal violence in the nation's 125 largest metropolises (including Chicago) was tethered deeply to those cities' rates of racial and economic inequalities—both from "lack of advantages" and, even more so, "being taken advantage of."[38] The Kerner Commission's report noted that some poor black neighborhoods in Chicago, at the bottom end of an inequality spectrum, had serious crime rates thirty-five times that of upper-class white neighborhoods elsewhere in the city. Feeling removed from opportunities toward self-betterment through standard channels and alienated from most traditional institutions of upward mobility (schools, especially) because of deep resource inequalities, thousands of black youth turned toward gangs, or toward less organized and unaffiliated forms of petty crime.

The frustrations of deep inequality boiled over in other ways. In addition to the West Side riot in the summer of 1966 in the midst of the Chicago Freedom Movement, twice more in the late 1960s, the black West Side and parts of the South Side erupted in riotous violence. Both were largely a product of profound frustration with institutionalized racism and structural inequality, one of them during a blizzard in the winter of early 1967 that immobilized the city and the police department, and the other the following spring after the assassination of Martin Luther King. The first destroyed an estimated 1.5 million dollars worth of property and claimed

[38] Judith R. Blau and Peter M. Blau, "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," *American Sociological Review* 47:1 (February 1982): 114-129 (126).

the life of a ten-year-old girl (who the *Tribune* insisted on calling "a looter") who was caught in the crossfire of police and rioters and killed by a stray bullet.[39] The second tore Lawndale and Austin in particular at the seams; more than a hundred buildings burned, and as many as eleven people – all of them black – were reported to have been killed. While many outsiders wondered over what was "wrong" with black people, social workers interviewed by the *Defender* after the blizzard looting reframed the question of *why people loot* into one of *why people in power* "*uphold the conditions that give rise to the looting.*" They particularly pointed toward community members' anger with the storeowners they looted, who, "for the most part, have shown very little concern with the community and its problems, and like absentee landlords have been satisfied to take their profits and run." One sociologist called what had happened "another opportunity for the depressed and oppressed people of the community to let off steam and show resentment against ghetto living."[40] Meanwhile, in the midst of the King riots, Mayor Daley made city priorities explicit, placing public order and private property as paramount when he infamously ordered police to "shoot to kill" arsonists and "shoot to maim" looters.

Despite the denouement of the CFM, a range of organizations in Chicago continued to labor to remedy the deepening inequalities pummeling black Chicago and provoking such explosive responses from citizens. The most assertive force responding to the disregard for black life that many saw crystallized in Daley's shoot-to-kill order, as well as to the broader deprivations of black Chicago and the abuses of the Chicago Police Department, was the Chicago branch of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Chaired by a young man named Fred Hampton, formerly an organizer with the NAACP Youth Council in west suburban Maywood, the Chicago Panthers emerged as a formally recognized branch in November of 1968. With

---

[39] *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 1967; *Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 1967; *Chicago Defender*, January 31, 1967
[40] *Chicago Defender*, January 31, 1967.

incredible speed, the Party established itself at the vanguard of the local radical Left, as well as at the forefront of the larger national and global BPP. The chapter was perhaps the best model of an actual functioning BPP branch. In Chicago, many of the excesses and rough edges found in other branches were sanded down, while the Party maintained a sharp intellectual and political militancy. Under Hampton's leadership and through the sustained action of a dedicated rank-and-file, many of them women, the Chicago Panthers organized around a broad range of principles, including providing free breakfast to impoverished children, establishing free medical centers for community members, free busing programs to prisons for people to visit incarcerated relatives, free ambulance services, and so on.[41]

While broad concerns with global capitalism, empire, and American racism guided the Panthers' political vision more generally, concerns with the police loomed most immediately on the local chapter's agenda. Matching the rhetorical logics that pulsed through much of the larger Black Power moment, Hampton and others around him spoke often in twinned languages of community uplift and resistance toward police power – of the police as an illegitimate occupying force, and of the need for community members to educate themselves on their rights and responsibilities to check the power of that force. These concerns were central, not peripheral. As Hampton explained the party's intellectual essence, the BPP was "dedicated to the overthrow of the brutal, racist American system. The only way to deal with the system is to deal with the enforcers of the system. The pigs are the enforcers. They come into the black community and brutalize and victimize black people. We intend to put a stop to that kind of violence."[42]

The combination of the Panthers' assertive interracialism, bravado, and unflinching radicalism marked them as a steep threat to Chicago's political order, and many people misread

[41] Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*.
[42] Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 92-93.

(or misrepresented) the Panthers' message as one whose essential element was hatred. Such misunderstandings were the standard responses to the Panthers and similar organizations everywhere. Black Power's opponents – particularly law enforcement officials and political leaders – had painstakingly built depictions of these organizations as fundamentally dangerous and anti-American in large measure because of their strident opposition to the police and "law and order." This was especially true of the Panthers.[43] While such efforts to discredit the organization were most famously embodied in J. Edgar Hoover's declaration of the Panthers as "the number one threat to the internal security of the United States" and the FBI's myriad subversion tactics under COINTELPRO, there were sharp local iterations along the same lines, as well.[44] The *Tribune* in particular made dishonest assessment after hysterical rendering of the Panthers throughout the BPP's existence. Joseph LeFevour of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, meanwhile, justified violent police actions against the Panthers thusly: "The Black

[43] For accounts of the Panthers' rise, rhetorical and pragmatic appeals, and responses to them, see, among others, Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*; Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt, 2007); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Murch, *Living for the City*; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005); Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000); Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Judson Jeffries, ed., *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 174-211.

[44] Among others, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1990); Nelson Blackhawk, *COINTELPRO: The FBI's War on Political Freedom* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1988); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

Panthers preach, every day, hate: Kill Whitey. Kill the police. Kill the pigs. Hate, hate, hate. That's all that you hear from 'em."[45]

Not quite. Chicago actually heard many things from the Panthers (to the extent that it was willing to listen). At the core of Hampton's vision, and of the Panthers' engagement with the community, was a socialist analysis of America and a compassion for "the people" around them. Moreover, contrary to caricatures of the Panthers as an inherently anti-white, racist organization, the Chicago branch's rendering of "the people" was capacious. In the hands of Fred Hampton, the traditional Panther axiom "Power to the People" emerged as explicitly inclusive: "White Power to white people, Brown Power to brown people, Yellow Power to yellow people, Black Power to black people, X power to those we left out, and Panther Party to the Vanguard Party."[46] In Hampton, Chicago's black and radical Left communities found a twenty-year-old man with rare gifts for movement and coalition-building, particularly across racial lines. Through notable alliances with the Puerto Rican Young Lords and groups like Rising Up Angry and the Young Patriots comprised mostly of poor whites in Uptown and Logan Square, the Panthers spearheaded a cross-racial political movement that, in their minds, would combat the fundamental socioeconomic repressions of American capitalism and the political system that undergirded it.

Moreover, among the things that such caricatures elided in painting them as concerned only with fomenting hatred was that the Panthers were as much *articulators* of community grievances as they were *shapers* of them. Although they perhaps analyzed the problems facing the community through different lenses and articulated those grievances through different idioms, many of the things that concerned the Panthers were the same things that concerned the

[45] PBS Home Video, "Eyes on the Prize" 1992, "A Nation of Laws?"
[46] Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011), 4.

larger community that they represented. In characterizing the Panthers as inciting the community against city, state, and nation, what the caricatures of LeFevour or Hoover or whoever else were implicitly doing was disavowing the reality and history of the community grievances that the Party reflected and vocalized. And this was especially true in terms of the community's relationship with the police, toward which hostilities were deep, historically informed, and undeniably organic. Put differently, the Panthers didn't have to *tell* community members to dislike or distrust the police, as if those sorts of sentiments were foreign to West or South Chicago. Those sentiments were, rather, embedded in the experiences and ethos of wide swaths of those communities, particularly – but certainly not exclusively – among young men most disenfranchised from the rungs of mobility and most likely to be cast and treated as suspicious by the state and the police.

But because, in the moment, nuance and historical considerations were lost within the interpretive matrices of the state, the official response to the Panthers in Chicago was little besides aggressive repression. Coordinated efforts between the FBI and the CPD began almost immediately after the Panthers' incorporation in Chicago. Throughout the winter of 1968-1969, and growing increasingly more aggressive during the summer months of 1969, law enforcement executed constant raids on the Panther offices, often damaging property and, Panther leaders alleged, destroying cereal and other things earmarked for the Party's community programs. That July, two Panthers who were out hocking copies of the *Black Panther* newspaper approached police officers questioning a line of black people about a theft at a nearby market. The officers told them to leave, reported that the two became belligerent, and a confrontation ended with one of the Panthers, Larry Roberson, shot three times. (He survived his initial wounds, but died of

complications surrounding them six weeks later.[47]) As the tensions surrounding these police actions escalated, less disciplined members of the Party fell into the trap of provocations – on at least one occasion that summer, CPD officers trying to raid the office were met with gunfire from rank-and-file members. (No Panther leaders were at the office at the time.)

A tipping point came later that fall, in the only readily documented case in Chicago of a Panther engaging in offensive violence toward the police. In mid-November, a nineteen-year-old Party member named Jake Winters, enraged by the death of his friend Larry Roberson earlier that year and the larger context of police repression, entered the abandoned Washington Park Hotel at 58th and Calumet with a cache of weapons. How the police ended up at the scene is unclear, but when one police officer approached the building, Winters picked up a rifle and shot him dead. Winters proceeded to battle with the police for twenty minutes, wounding nine other officers and destroying five police cars. He killed a second officer in disturbingly cold blood; making a last stand of sorts, Winters wounded and grounded the officer before walking up to him and shooting him in the face. Finally, Winters was taken down in a hail of bullets.[48]

Although Winters appeared to have been a man unhinged, and certainly acted without any direction from Panther leadership, his violent rampage inaugurated a tragic, awful, and enduring sequence of events. Using photographs of the two police officers killed in action as rhetorical firepower to do so, FBI Special Agent Roy Mitchell convinced Chicago Panther chief of security and longtime informant William O'Neal to help him with a plan to gut the Panthers. O'Neal drew detailed maps of Fred Hampton's apartment for Mitchell, described weapons kept there, and detailed the comings and goings of various people in and out of the place. (Racked with guilt about his involvement for years afterward, O'Neal eventually committed suicide.)

---

[47] Special Committee of Black Congressman, "Exhibit No. 1: Arrests and Harassments," December 20, 1969, box 26, folder 6, Richard Newhouse Papers, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL.
[48] Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 236-237.

Using this information, FBI agents, CPD officers, and officers assigned to state's attorney Hanrahan's Special Prosecutions Unit executed a tactical raid one frozen Midwest winter night, one that would dramatically alter the landscape of radical politics in the city. With the temperatures well below freezing, the sidewalks laden with ice and salt, the snow piled up on the curbs in front of the row houses, officers swarmed to Hampton's Monroe Street home, into which they unloaded nearly one hundred rounds. Finding Hampton badly injured, laying in bed with his life leaking out of him, officers, according to Hampton's fiancé Debra Johnson, shot him twice more where he lay.[49] The Party would officially remain intact, but as a shell of its former self.

*

Echoing the city's response to potential alliances between the CFM and gangs several years earlier and beyond the political threats posed by the Panthers in and of themselves, part of what animated such severe state repression were fears by law enforcement that the Party might successfully expand its influence further outward among other disenfranchised black youth, particularly to the gangs. It is no coincidence that the first state action against the Panthers was an attempted move to incite violence between Fred Hampton and Jeff Fort, leader of the Blackstone Rangers, after Hampton approached Fort late in 1968 about a possible alliance. The CPD balked, quickly undertaking efforts to cleave one group from the other, conspiring with the FBI to drive wedges between the two. Federal agents sent Fort an anonymous letter from "A black brother you don't know," falsely warning him that the Panthers had put "a hit out for you," believing and hoping that Fort might order – as Bureau documents put it – "retaliatory action

[49] On the assassination of Fred Hampton, see Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 167-190.

against the Panthers."[50] As Howard Saffold, a black CPD officer and founding member of the Afro-American Patrolman's League, remembered CPD alarm over possible collaborative efforts between the Panthers and the gangs:

> The Panthers were pursuing an ideology that said 'we need to take these young minds, this young energy, and turn it into part of our movement in terms of black liberation and the rest of it.' And I saw a very purposeful, intentional effort on the part of the police department to keep that head from hooking up to that body. It was like, you know, 'Do not let this thing become part of what could ultimately be a political movement.' Because that's exactly what it was.[51]

It's unclear how likely a successful effort to bring the gangs into the Panthers' political fold really was, but given the fierce pride of Fort and other leaders, it seems fairly doubtful that they would have submitted to the leadership of Hampton or anyone else. Records show that the police knew this, but it didn't stop them from choosing the particular paths that they did when it came to inciting and executing violence as a preventive measure.

Meanwhile, the gangs were busy cutting their own paths – ones with much murkier ethical underpinnings and blurrier political visions than the Panthers. Chicago's gangs were, by and large, complicated organisms, bred from the severe inequalities of the city and engaging the community around them in ways that were both preservationist and destructive. The Blackstone Rangers, which had grown into the city's biggest and most influential gang, conjured the greatest attention from the city, with conjoined focuses on both "illegal activities, which included drug trafficking and extortion," as well as on "community building."[52] In 1967, the Rangers and their rivals, the Gangster Disciples, were the recipients of a large federal block grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (Daley was nonplussed), designed to provide job training to South Side youth with or without gang affiliations. They established cultural programs in churches and some ramshackle community centers in Woodlawn, and accounts of the social life at such

[50] PBS Home Video, "Eyes on the Prize" 1992, "A Nation of Laws?."
[51] Ibid.
[52] Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 227.

centers are filled with descriptions of children coming in and out, having found a rare safe space to play and hang out in a neighborhood often lacking such places. They collaborated with The Woodlawn Organization, other community groups, and affiliated churches to harness better opportunities for their members and the community.

Fellow travelers of the gangs continued to point out that the gangs' rise was a product of young men and women feeling the pains of circumscribed choices and plans, and of the city's failure to keep black neighborhoods safe. Much like gang leaders had in the mid-1960s, before violence began to escalate so severely, people talked of the gangs as having been conjured from the fires of a punishing socioeconomic system. As a 1968 profile in (of all places) *Presbyterian Life* magazine that detailed the Woodlawn-based Rangers put it:

> [Ranger supporters] in Woodlawn believe that in both their specific intentions and in their absent-minded effects, the schools, the welfare centers, the political clubs, and all the other cogs of the machinery powered at City Hall are designed to keep ghetto blacks poor, dependent, and powerless. They don't believe that the good, compassionate people in the legions of schoolteachers, social workers, policemen, and ward heelers are able to change the basic effect of the system. That is a severe judgment; it is the result of living a severe life. Woodlawn people live between bursts of gunfire…The world they see is, in any perspective, a place of violence….Children in such neighborhoods are interested in protection, and they form gangs at a tender age to get it.[53]

But the gangs as much as anything precipitated that sort of violence. Regardless of self-framing and whatever positive impacts and efforts the gangs might have had or made, aside from the causes behind their origin stories, the bodies they began to stack in the late 1960s and early 70s didn't lie. Violent crime escalated constantly from 1966 onward, and particularly after 1968. During the first four-and-half months of that latter year, the *Tribune* attributed twenty-nine shooting deaths to South Side gang violence, mostly a result of the Blackstone Rangers' battles with their rivals over turf.[54] From 1965 to 1970, homicides in the city increased by a horrifying

[53] *Presbyterian Life*, February 15, 1968.
[54] *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1968; *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 26, 1968.

one hundred and four percent, from 396 to 810, before peaking at 970 in 1974.[55] In the Second Police District, where the Blackstone Rangers made their home, murder statistics were thirty percent higher than the next highest district – which, not coincidentally, was the district covering an Englewood neighborhood also heavily wracked by gang violence.

Residents struggled to figure out how to respond. Although many black people and some white allies understood the relationship between structural racism and gang proliferation, strong support for finding ways to curb the violence still existed. The fact that there were either not enough police to respond to the gang crisis, or not enough effective strategizing to do so, emerged as one of the clearest indicators of the city's failing ability to ensure proper public safety and protection to black communities. The only clear strategy that emerged on the part of the city was a dramatic expansion of the controversial Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU), which had absorbed all of the harsh anti-gang measures of the mid-1960s as part of everyday strategy. As the gangs grew in number, so did the unit, beginning 1968 numbering thirty-eight police officers officially in its ranks and exiting the year with plans firmly in place to expand it to two hundred.[56] That numeric increase was accompanied by growing power. One of the most careful contemporaneous interpreters of the relationship between the Rangers and the police, a black writer for *The Atlantic* named James Alan McPherson who spent six months researching a two-part long-form piece on that relationship, implied that the GIU was in many respects a "para-political force"—one whose influence and resources extended well beyond the realm of traditional police powers. "The relative ease with which its members operate within the police department," McPherson wrote, "and the cooperation they receive from the State's Attorney's Office and the Cook County jail, the influence they seem to have in the courts, and the easy

[55] Chicago Police Department, Annual Reports: 1965, 1970, 1974.
[56] McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part I."

willingness of the press to publicize incidents about the Rangers all suggest that members of the Unit have more than ordinary police powers."[57]

The unit's tactics, planted in the soil of those powers, bloomed without mercy. The GIU's strategic outlooks, coupled with the old refrain that concern for broader social inequalities was not within departmental purview, was perhaps best embodied in unit captain Edward Buckney comment that, "Our approach is the hard-line police approach. We're not concerned with sociological approaches."[58] The strategies the unit deployed ranged broadly, from alleged infiltration of gangs to harassment to abuse. Ranger leader Jeff Fort's attorney, Marshall Patner, estimated in 1969 that Fort had been picked up by the GIU or other CPD officers more than one hundred and eighty times, often with little apparent legal justification. Patner found such procedures to be so intrusive that he attempted to file a suit for injunctive relief in federal court.[59] As other gang members had done in prior years, Ranger members alleged that the GIU made common practice of picking up gang members, driving them into enemy territory, and pushing them out of the car.[60] Reports of gang unit officers profiling and rough-handling any young black men in the neighborhoods most closely under watch proliferated constantly. One white Catholic priest who worked with the Rangers talked of the GIU as having been given "the power to determine what is good and bad for the community—what services should be subverted—what laws are to be enforced and what laws are to be ignored—what groups should exist and what groups should be destroyed."[61] A Catholic priest named Tracy O'Sullivan accused the GIU of spreading rumors between gangs in order to foment discord between them; in O'Sullivan's

[57] McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part II."
[58] James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part I," *The Atlantic*, May 1969.
[59] James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part II," *The Atlantic*, June 1969.
[60] *Presbyterian Life*, February 15, 1968.
[61] McPherson, Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part II."

estimation, community safety had deteriorated dramatically since the gang unit had begun operating.[62]

In this way, the GIU actually pushed many community members away from support for its position; even people adamantly opposed to the gang presence in their neighborhoods, and who wished that the police would do more to get rid of them, were thrown into an uncomfortable defense of the gangs because they so strongly disagreed with the GIU's tactics. As Abner Mikva, a white state representative from the South Side and future Congressman and White House Counsel, put it at the time: "The police insist on using direct, terrorist, violence methods and only succeed in polarizing people. They force people like myself to come out pro-Ranger because of their tactics. I come out saying more in defense of the Rangers than I would like to."[63]

While few people approved of the GIU's tactics, and while most people understood the roots of gang violence, not everyone was willing to defend the gangs. With gangs functioning as a proxy for growing crime in general, the range of organizational and grassroots efforts to demand better police protection for black communities that ballooned during the late-1960s and early-1970s was broad and multifaceted. Among the earliest were ones spawned out of the Chicago Urban League. The first of these revolved around a position paper and program called Action for Survival, established in the summer of 1970 and focused on building coalitions to combat crime in the black community. Cultivating alliances with more than three dozen other organizations across black Chicago, through Action for Survival, activists initially planned to lean on the department to reestablish foot patrols in black neighborhoods (believing auto patrols kept hard walls between residents and officers), hire more minorities to the force, and build more

[62] Gang Intelligence Unit Surveillance Report, March 26, 1968, box 133, file 902, Red Squad files.
[63] McPherson, Chicago's Blackstone Rangers, Part II."

bridges of communication with the black public to collaborate on crime control measures.[64] An offshoot of Action for Survival called the Black Crime Commission, meanwhile, was constructed as a mirror of the Chicago Crime Commission, spurred by the belief that the black community needed an advocacy group of its own to deal with problems of crime and failing city responses. Similarly so for the Third Ward Committee on Crime Prevention, whose agenda focused on community uplift through combatting criminal activity in the South Side Third Ward.[65]

More informally, citizens organized themselves outside institutional channels in order to combat growing problems of crime. Perhaps nowhere was this more apparent than within the scope of tenant activism of residents of the city's housing projects – vertical manifestations of the city's broader landscapes of racial and socioeconomic inequality. City policies sculpted by white racial attitudes, and aldermanic fears of political backlash if they placed projects in white communities, had long forced the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to plot the landscape of public housing along starkly segregated lines. The consequences of this, as numerous scholars have determined, were severe, concentrating poverty into denser and denser areas that existed on a different tax and resource plane than did much of the rest of the city.[66] By the late 1960s, those problems had exploded most forcefully along matters of public safety. With some street gangs shifting their base of operations into the mid- and high-rise apartment projects (most famously, the Cabrini-Green Homes on the Near West Side and the Robert Taylor Homes on the South), and with non-gang-affiliated crime also on the rise, residents of the projects increasingly identified safety as their primary concern in a long litany of grievances. In a two-year-long study

[64] Laplois Ashford to James Conlisk, October 1, 1970, series II, box 218, folder 2157, CUL Records.
[65] Third Ward Committee on Crime Prevention, "Program for Action," October 1971, series II, box 218, folder 2155, CUL Records.
[66] For the consequences of public housing's vision in Chicago, see, among others, Bowly, *The Poorhouse*; Alexander Polikoff, *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005); David T. Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures* (Chicago: W3, 2000); Audrey Petty, ed., *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2013).

of CHA housing, conducted by the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago and released in the summer of 1970, residents repeatedly cited fears for the physical safety of them and their families as of utmost concern.[67] An August 1970 *Tribune* profile of one Cabrini-Green building, detailing its two-year devolution since 1968, described the project's transition as one from a "calm, friendly…place where a child could be raised" into "a Hydra's head of problems" – the worst of which was "gang terror."[68] Within the projects, heavily populated with juvenile men, gangs found fertile recruiting ground, and the anecdotal evidence is ample that they frequently resorted to threats of violence in order to get young men and teenagers to join, causing families to either fear deeply for their relatives or to be forced to simply send them to live elsewhere.

At both the Robert Taylor Homes and the Cabrini-Green development, tenants responded to these challenges in a range of ways. Leaders of tenant councils – project residents elected by their neighbors – often had direct lines of communication to CHA workers and officials, and used them as best they could. For them, the problem during the early years was that the city police maintained no consistent presence within the projects, despite the fact that both Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor had populations as big as any number of Chicago's suburbs or medium-sized towns in downstate Illinois. Instead, public safety was outsourced to private firms that consistently proved themselves to be overwhelmed by the task, both in terms of their training and their enforcement powers. Through those tenant councils, residents could lobby politicians and police officials alike for more and better protection within the projects, although the CPD wouldn't establish any meaningful presence in the buildings until the summer of 1970, after two CPD officers were murdered at Cabrini-Green. By the end of that year, CPD "vertical patrol units" had begun running around-the-clock at Cabrini-Green, with two-man patrols

[67] *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1970.
[68] *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1970.

working the project's elevators, stairwells, halls, and grounds.[69] Their labors were augmented by the installation of expensive security camera systems in commons areas within the projects, resident action groups, and other smaller security measures. These efforts would be replicated at Robert Taylor and other projects in the city.

As out in the streets, however, increased surveillance and a more aggressive police presence in the projects was a poor substitute for actual ameliorative measures. The communities within the projects embodied some of the best and most compassionate aspects of humanity, but within the project walls were also distilled some of the worst elements and consequences of structural neglect. Inequality, racial antipathy, partisan politics, and public policy had mandated the isolation of these spaces and conjured the conditions within them, and as black CPD Officer Charles Glass described it, it was these, ultimately, that were to blame for the severe problems of public safety. A commander at Cabrini-Green beginning in 1970, Glass described the constellation of forces at work in shaping community life, opportunities, and fears, at the time that he took over: "The main complaint is a lack of simple police service…[but] the problems are more than just crime and violence. The problems are those of a poor community. There are not enough jobs. There is not enough recreation. There is not enough maintenance. There is not enough of anything."[70] Ethnographer Sudhir Venkatesh similarly summarized the "ubiquity of hardships" facing late-1960s public housing tenants in his elegiac analysis of the South Side Robert Taylor homes:

> At the root of the changes [in the projects] was the deteriorating material status of black ghetto dwellers. The heyday of postwar national economic prosperity was over. The economy was stagnating and employment rates for workers at all educational levels were falling as a result of mechanization, plant closings and relocations, and recessions. For urban blacks who did not have access to education or training, there was little chance to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the white-collar trades. Lodged in the unskilled, service, and operative sectors, they experienced far greater job attrition than other demographic groups in the 1960s. The prospects for blacks to reenter the labor market were minimal; only a few of those

[69] *Chicago Tribune*, January 16, 1971.
[70] *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 1970.

> displaced would find immediate employment, and even fewer would find work that paid a living wage. Many simply dropped out of the labor force altogether.[71]

Because of these realities, even after the CPD began sending police into the high rises on a regular basis, the quality and content of protection remained profoundly unpredictable. As Officer Glass' testimony pointed out, by this point, the problem of public safety facing black Chicago was irretrievably bound up in the city's broader failures to do anything about the problems of inequality scarring its landscape and pummeling its minority communities. The decades-long processes of warehousing the poor into ghettos (both vertical and horizontal) had wrought myriad consequences, one of which was excruciatingly dangerous conditions for people – kids especially – who lived there. But meaningfully addressing poverty and inequality was a third rail for the Daley machine. No one would touch it. Instead, the city threw more and more money toward the police department (tens of millions more, in fact, each and every year), seeing a solution that simply wasn't there.

The results of those choices lay on the failing end of mixed. The collective voices in the group memoir *Brothers*, which documented life growing up in the Robert Taylor Homes in the 1960s and 1970s, recalled the police as having grown weary with the task of proffering good protection: "the police didn't care who killed who in the ghetto, long as they were both black." Tenants fought valiantly for better protection, but often had to go outside the bounds of standard political channels in order to do so. Interviews with former tenants of the Taylor Homes showed that the most common and effective arrangement was for tenant councils and residents to broker cooperative arrangements not with the city or the department, but with individual officers, who would do their best to keep tenants within a particular project block safe. One-time Taylor resident Tom Jenkins, for instance, became a CPD officer in the mid-1970s, and the connections

---

[71] Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 45.

he had with people still residing in the homes allowed them to call on him to ensure public safety there. After he agreed and began coming around that high-rise on a regular basis, gang recruitment in the building reportedly evaporated.[72] While it perhaps helped hold things together in the short term, this was hardly an approach that could be called sustainable.

Even before the precipitous drop in conditions at the projects, the failures by the city to invest itself in meaningful ways to reduce crime in black neighborhoods was one side of the coin propelling the formation of perhaps the most striking manifestation of black police reform activism during this period. Formed in 1968 by a small group of officers within the CPD, the AAPL emerged explicitly from the ashes of the King riots, Daley's "shoot-to-kill" order, the rise of stop-and-frisk, and worsening crime. Arising from the same context and at the same time as the Black Panthers, the Afro-American Patrolman's League (AAPL) was deeply animated by some of the same Black Power ethics and ideas. (Indeed, the group's logo was a clenched fist inside of a police star, its slogans variously "Black Power Policing" and "Black Power through Law."[73]) Members of the organization spoke in idioms similar to the Panthers, equating policemen in black ghettos with slavery-era plantation overseers, framing themselves as "protectors of the citizenry," and determining to work inside of a "white power structure to improve the lives of black people."[74] As AAPL member Edward "Buzz" Palmer put it at the announcement of the League's establishment, "We will no longer permit ourselves to be relegated to the role of brutal pawns in a chess game affecting the black community in which we serve."[75]

---

[72] Venkatesh, *American Project*, 73.
[73] Peter C. Pihos, "Black Police and Black Power in 1970s Chicago," presented at "The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power Across the Twentieth Century and Beyond" Public History Conference, September 22, 2012, Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
[74] Tera Agyepong, "In the Belly of the Beast," 258-259.
[75] *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1968.

At the broadest level, the League's twinned visions for ensuring community safety were to eliminate police violence and harassment toward black people on one hand, and to fight crime and intracommunal violence through more effective policing on the other. They attacked police violence by working to eliminate the carrying of shotguns inside of patrol cars, beginning a referral service for police brutality complaints so that they wouldn't get lodged in the machinery of the IID, widely publicizing critiques of the CPD leadership and Daley, and so on.[76] They battled other abuses and harassments – from stop-and-frisk and unwarranted arrest to name-calling and brutality. And they did constant community outreach via black newspapers and public forums to inform citizens of their rights vis-à-vis the police.

The AAPL was also the most aggressive pragmatic force in trying to force the issue of more representative hiring practices upon the CPD, believing, in Renault Robinson's words, that "we weren't gonna change these white guys….We needed more black cops. Our belief was that more black cops would have empathy for their own community and would have more respect for black women and black kids and black people in general."[77] Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson and others had placed demands upon Daley and the department to remove white officers from black neighborhoods, but had attached no particularly meaningful activism on that front to those demands. The AAPL, however, leaned on the department by trying to hit at its financial resources – namely, the federal funds beginning to funnel in through LEAA. In order to qualify for those funds, municipal police departments were supposed to employ clearly unbiased hiring and promotional practices, and in 1971, the AAPL filed a complaint with LEAA documenting the myriad ways in which the CPD failed to do so. A three-month investigation by LEAA affirmed the League's accusation, finding the CPD to be well short of even minimal compliance

[76] Tera Agyepong, "In the Belly of the Beast," 260-264.
[77] Ibid, 271.

with federal regulations.[78] LEAA declined to cut off funds to the department, however, instead urging the CPD to come into voluntary compliance. When that directive went ignored by the department, LEAA still refused to cut the city's funding, instead referring the matter to the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, where the issue floundered.[79]

The AAPL wasn't alone in supporting increased minority hiring to the department, and the range of groups and activists doing so were motivated not primarily by an interest in securing jobs for black people, but because of fundamental concerns about protecting the black community from abusive white officers. Beyond the history and afterlives of past abuses, there was overwhelming evidence to justify those fears in the immediate context. As early as 1967, studies showed that twice as many black Chicagoans as whites had seen the police use force or threat of force in handling civilians, although anecdotally, those figures seem profoundly low.[80] The Metcalfe hearings of a few years later were flooded with reports by black Chicagoans of pistol whippings, punches, beatings, and so on. In the years between, meanwhile, constant reports of civilian deaths at the hands of the police scandalized the community. Linda Anderson, a nineteen-year-old army wife and mother of two, was killed in August of 1969 when police responded to a report of a rape-in-progress at her apartment by blasting through the her thin plywood door with a shotgun, peppering her with buckshot. The CPD ruled the case an accident and suspended the officer for one day.[81] Six weeks later, sixteen-year-old John Soto was shot in the back of the head by a CPD officer on the Near West Side. Eyewitnesses from the community

---

[78] Renault Robinson to Jerris Leonard, June 2, 1971, box 534, folder 1, ACLU Records.
[79] Afro-American Patrolman's League, "Narrative Statement Concerning LEAA's Findings of Racial Discrimination in the Chicago Police Department and the Unsuccessful Attempt to Secure Voluntary Compliance," ca. 1973, box 8, folder 2, AAPL Records.
[80] Excerpt from Albert J. Reiss, Jr., "Public Perceptions and Recollections about Crime, Law Enforcement, and Criminal Justice," in box 570, folder 7, ACLU Records.
[81] Ralph Knoohuizen, Richard P. Fahey, and Deborah J. Palmer, "The Police and Their Use of Fatal Force in Chicago: A Report of the Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group," 1972, single file, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

insisted that Soto had been shot without provocation; police claimed he had been abusive toward the officer and that the bullet had discharged in an ensuing scuffle.[82] Five days later, Soto's older brother Michael, a decorated Army sergeant home on leave to attend John's funeral, was also shot dead by Chicago police. Department officers claimed the elder Soto had tried to rob a man and confronted police with a gun when they tried to arrest him.[83] Both killings were ruled justifiable homicides by internal departmental review. A month later, eighteen-year-old Steven Dixon died after an officer's bullet pulverized his chest as the officer worked to secure handcuffs on him. Witnesses said he lay wounded in the street for an hour before being taken to the hospital. He died on the way there. Justifiable homicide.[84] On and on.

All told, between 1969 and 1970, fifty-six black men and three black women were killed by the CPD, a civilian death rate at the hands of the police that was six times what it was for white Chicagoans, that was the biggest in the nation, and that was markedly higher than ones seen in the modern day. Even controlling for arrest differentials across race, black people were significantly more likely to have fatal force used against them. At the inquests that procedurally followed fatal force cases, officers routinely claimed self-defense as a rationale for having killed their suspects; in 58 of the total of 76 cases over those two years involving fatal force, police alleged that the deceased had displayed a weapon. Yet in only six of the fifty-eight was fingerprint or ballistic evidence actually offered as evidence. Meanwhile, according to legal analyses of these fatal force cases conducted by the Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group, in twenty-eight of the cases, there appeared to be "substantial evidence of police violation of administrative standards of conduct." Moreover, in ten of those twenty-eight, "the evidence also

[82] *Chicago Defender*, October 7, 1969.
[83] *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 7, 1970.
[84] *Chicago Defender*, November 10, 1969; *Ibid.*, November 11, 1969; *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 11, 1970.

indicate[d] a substantial likelihood of criminal misconduct by the police officers during the fatal incident." Internal reviews exonerated the officers of any wrongdoing in all but two of them.[85]

According to numerous analyses, these problems of violence had burrowed bone deep within the CPD under James Conlisk's watch. Two psychologists who had done consulting work for the CPD testified to extraordinarily high rates of psychological and behavioral disorders among applicants for the department (as high as twenty percent, as opposed to eight percent in the larger community) during these years. Under Conlisk, the department dealt with such applicants and officers not by rejecting them or relieving them of duty, but by assigning them to "high stress" areas (mostly poor, minority, high-crime districts) in order to "make or break" them.[86] Placing potentially dangerous officers in the field was exacerbated by the fact that there was zero accountability for such conduct. Police Sergeant Arthur Lindsay testified to a "marked decline in the quality of investigation" being done by the Internal Affairs Division (IAD, renamed from the Internal Investigation Division) under Conlisk's watch.[87] The Metcalfe Report excoriated the IAD for working more as an operation to protect officers than functioning as an actual tool of discovery. And the following year, a Community Conference on Police Personnel Practices reported rampant abuse, a totally ineffectual conduct review system, and the urgent need for psychological testing.[88]

But as the Metcalfe hearings in particular bore out, the fundamental problem involved in these matters was that the police department didn't really seem to consider them to be particularly serious problems at all. Reflecting on the general turns toward a more and more punitive and aggressive police culture, the post-hearing report argued that, "It is the basic law

---

[85] Ralph Knoohuizen, et al, "The Police and Their Use of Fatal Force in Chicago," 55-56.
[86] Testimony of Dr. Avrum Mendelsohn and Dr. Arnold Abrams, "The Misuse of Police Authority," 22-24.
[87] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 20.
[88] Community Conference on Police Personnel Practices, "Draft for Discussion," July 28, 1973, box 572, folder 1, ACLU Records.

enforcement policy of the police department that aggressive police conduct toward citizens is desirable and legitimate. Abusive treatment of a citizen is viewed as merely over-zealous conduct within the scope of accepted police behavior."[89] In other words, these sorts of abuse weren't flaws in an otherwise well-operating system. They were, rather, the natural outcomes of the system working as could be expected.

The assessment at the core here – of the CPD's "basic law enforcement policy" as preternaturally aggressive – continued to be confirmed time after time in the CPD's methods in and postures toward black Chicago. The department's reliance upon heavily invasive patrolling and surveillance that had expanded in the 1950s and been formalized under Orlando Wilson came into full bloom under James Conlisk. More and more, the CPD emerged as the face of a system that black citizens and political insurgents identified as antagonistic to black freedom and opportunity. Already at mid-decade, as the ACLU reported, in poor and minority neighborhoods, "it is the Police Department more than any other agency with which the average citizen comes in contact."[90] A few years later, the Metcalfe Report would respond with an echo: "Very few young Blacks and Browns have been spared the experience of having to swallow their pride and take a bullying insult from a police officer."[91] One young postal worker complained in 1968 of having been stopped by the CPD on twenty separate occasions over the previous eighteen months.[92] Another young man, identified only as "James," had by 1969 already accumulated fourteen listed offenses with the CPD, the majority of them for curfew violations.[93] As a black man named

---

[89] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 34.
[90] Unknown Author, "Proposal for Dealing with Police Practices on the West Side of Chicago to be Sponsored by the Illinois Division of the ACLU," ca. 1966, box 571, folder 4, ACLU Records.
[91] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 31. Echoing Chicago, a national study conducted by the National Crime Commission by the Institute of Defense Analyses in 1967 predicted that if current patterns held, nine out of ten "urban negro boys" will be arrested sometime in their life if present trends hold. *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 4, 1967
[92] Unnamed Author, "The Police, Riots, and the Committee System," box 571, folder 2, ACLU Records.
[93] Unknown Author, "Housing Problems (Interviews with Family of Mrs. R)," ca. 1969/1970, box 7, folder 4, WSSC Records.

Jackie Turner put it, after being manhandled by police while trying to do youth outreach and violence prevention in a South Side ghetto, "[If you're] a black man in his twenties living on the South Side…[and] you haven't met a cop by the time you're 18, you're a dude with a charmed life."[94]

Black people – young people especially – had to "swallow their pride and take" this sort of constant harassment because they risked getting real criminal charges pinned upon them if they did not. With stop-and-frisk's passage having given officers wide latitude to conduct field interrogations, the police were armed with an ability to arrest people who protested such treatment. Lawyers in town began increasingly to shorthand disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and battery against a police officer as the "holy trinity" of charges officers would prefer against people protesting or resisting abusive treatment.[95] The Metcalfe hearing testimonies and numerous other anecdotes supplied reams of stories of people being hit with such charges. In 1968 and 1969 each, the CPD made roughly 100,000 arrests on disorderly conduct charges alone –a 140% increase from ten years prior.[96] And in both of those years, roughly sixty-four percent of those arrests were for non-white people (fifty-four percent of them of African Americans), far outpacing minority representation in the general population.[97] Those patterns would hold or grow more divergent into the mid-1970s.

*

Thus the patterns of overpolicing and underprotection that had been building and congealing for decades were made manifest. As bodies piled up by the hundreds due to ineffectively checked criminal violence, citizens' fears of violent crime sank deeper and deeper

[94] *Chicago Tribune*, April 16, 1972.
[95] "The Misuse of Police Authority," 31.
[96] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1969; Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1958.
[97] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 1969.

into the marrow. Community members' senses of alienation from the police force around them had reached full crescendo, lodged in broad impressions that most police officers were uninterested in black crime so long as black people were the ones affected by it, and that the department and city were less than fully committed to providing the necessary resources to adequately protect African Americans. At the same time, grief-stricken and fear-addled communities found themselves consistently under a state of hyper-surveillance, facing disproportionate rates of harassment, and arrest on charges seemingly detached from the broader issues.

The various strands of community activism throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s had been attempts to respond to these issues in one way or the other, whether within the context of the AAPL, the Black Crime Commission or Action for Survival or the Black Panthers. In some ways, they had collided in a 1971 civil lawsuit, co-sponsored by the AAPL, the Chicago Urban League, and the Concerned Citizens for Police Reform, against the CPD for "abusive and arbitrary police misconduct, particularly excessive use of force, depriving them of their civil rights."[98] (The lead complainant in the case, for example, a woman named Ardale Calvin, complained of having been punched in the mouth by an officer after he stopped her in a routine traffic stop. Her medical bills and other costs amounted to a couple hundred dollars; no officer was reported to have been disciplined.) *Calvin v. Conlisk*, as it entered the legal cannon, not only sought to hold individual officers accountable for abuse and violations of citizen's Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights, but also alleged that the department itself was culpable for having "failed to fulfill [the] duty…to prevent such misconduct and to discipline police officers who engage in it."[99]

---

[98] *Calvin v. Conlisk*, series II, box 218, folder 2155, CUL Records.
[99] Ibid.

Yet, arguably, the most historically significant community-based challenge to the police were the 1972 hearings organized by Ralph Metcalfe, because while they failed to much alter the trajectory of police-community relations, they nevertheless constituted the first chink in the armor tearing the black political submachine away from the Daley Democratic machine. For years, Metcalfe and others, understanding the requirements of maintaining legitimacy in a machine-run city, had bent themselves to Daley on most matters, which makes it all the more telling that when that relationship began to fracture, it was the issue of police misconduct and abuse that started the rupture. From the moment of the hearings until Daley died in office in the winter of 1976, Metcalfe, a former Daley acolyte and once one of Daley's favorite aldermen, would be a strident opponent of the mayor's, particularly on law enforcement policy but also on other issues affecting the black community. He would oppose Daley's picks for top offices, including successfully ousting State's Attorney Ed Hanrahan, who had been widely recognized as one of the key orchestrators of the assassination of Fred Hampton. Emboldened either by Metcalfe or the general climate of political revolt he had helped foster, other black aldermen increasingly rebelled against the machine, injecting new life into black political power that would carry over past Daley, and through to the election of black former alderman Harold Washington as Chicago's mayor in 1983.

While it would fail to harness the same neat historical import as the Metcalfe hearings and their aftermath, a final surge of community activism to reshape the CPD, emerging at almost precisely the same time as those hearings' close, would constitute perhaps the most radical and fully configured challenge to police power in postwar Chicago. In August of 1972, the Black Panther Party – a husk of what it had been during the Hampton years, but still active in the community under the leadership of Bobby Rush – announced an enormous and well-conceived

citizen-oriented police reform effort. Known as the Chicago Campaign for Community Control of Police (CCCP), the effort grew from seeds planted at two community conferences on the North and South Sides of the city. After those conferences, which the CCCP claimed had been attended by more than eight thousand people total, a drafting committee labored to map out a vision of "principles for a more humane, effective community controlled police." The vision of what this would look like was as capacious as it was radical, essentially transferring control of and oversight of the police fully out of the hands of the city administration, and into the hands of the people. Among the requirements fleshed out by the CCCP were the following:

> that all police officers live in the district where they work because it was felt that a policeman will more effectively reduce crimes in a district where he not only works but LIVES; the creation of local district boards, elected from the community, which would administer the police in their specific districts and have authority to hire and fire, review the budget and hold grievance hearings; and the creation of a city-wide board composed of representatives of each district which would set general city-wide policies and supervise the training of qualified personnel.[100]

All told, over one hundred different organizations signed on to support the basic principles of the CCCP's document, including the NAACP, Operation P.U.S.H, the American Indian Movement, and the Midwest Latino Conference.

On the three-year anniversary of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark's murders, the CCCP used the occasion of memorial services for the slain Panthers to formally launch their effort outward into the broader community, beyond the core cross-section of supporters they had already accumulated. In June, they held a large conference at the University of Illinois-Chicago to increase their organizational profile and draw more people in. The speakers rostrum was a who's who of 1960s black activists – Julian Bond, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ralph Abernathy, Huey Newton, and others all there to lend their support. At the core of the CCCP's vision for the next phase of action was a massive voter registration campaign in order to put a referendum about the

[100] City-wide Conference for Community Control of Police, Conference Program and Conference Schedule, June 1 & 2, 1973, box 89, folder 18, Timuel Black Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago Public Library Woodson Branch, Chicago, IL.

issue on the ballot by the 1975 general election, and ultimately to pass it through.[101] Observers warned that such a task would likely be insurmountable, and ultimately, they would be proved right. Just to get the referendum on the ballot, the CCCP would have needed more than 100,000 signatures, which is to say nothing of getting a majority of voters to pass the measure. Warnings also flooded in that the forces of law and order and organizations supporting the police would aggressively fight such initiatives. While it's unclear what exactly derailed the drive for community control of the police, the end result was the quiet denouement of the CCCP drive. It would be twenty more years before even the most baseline precepts undergirding the group's vision – consultation between citizens and police officers about neighborhood policing – would be adopted in the form of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy. Arriving in the early 1990s, that program would, in the assessments of much of the community, be far too little, far too late.

*

In the fall of 1973, Jim Conlisk resigned his post heading the CPD. The celebration within the black community was muted, but real. As the *Defender* put it, "A sigh of relief that could be heard across Lake Michigan, greeted the long, overdue resignation of Police Supt. James B. Conlisk. Riddled with endless corruption and unabated racism, his administration was unquestionably the worst in the city's police history."[102]

But history was still being written. In 1972, a young Vietnam veteran and Chicago policeman named Jon Burge was promoted to detective and placed in charge of a group of men working on the South Side.[103] A native of Merrionette Manor, a white housing development on

---

[101] City-wide Conference for Community Control of Police, Conference Program and Conference Schedule, June 1 & 2, 1973, box 89, folder 18, Timuel Black Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago Public Library Woodson Branch, Chicago, IL; *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 5, 1973; *Chicago Defender*, June 9, 1973.
[102] *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 11, 1973.
[103] The following descriptions of Burge and the tortures by his men are taken from John Conroy, "Tools of Torture," *Chicago Reader*, February 3, 2005.

Chicago's Southeast Side, Burge had been a bright student, active with ROTC and a variety of other activities. He had volunteered for the army in 1968 before being honorably discharged in 1969, returning to work at a gas station before landing a job with the CPD in the spring of 1970 at the age of twenty-two. His native neighborhood, once all-white, had been transformed into a virtually all-black one; his parents were among the last of the white people to leave.

It appears that Burge and the men at his command began torturing black men on the South Side at roughly the same time as Metcalfe hearings, and as the Campaign for Citizens' Control of Police was gathering steam. According to a chronology of events organized by the Chicago-based People's Law Office, the first was Anthony Holmes, who reported that after he was arrested on the South Side on a suspected murder charge, the arresting officers took him to an interrogation room, were he first met Burge. According to Holmes' testimony, detectives put a plastic bag over his head, and when he bit through in order to breathe, Burge placed a second one over the top of it. Electrical wiring was attached to Holmes' genitals, and as Holmes struggled, Burge told him "You going to talk, nigger, you going to talk." A crank turned, and Holmes felt what was perhaps the worst physical pain of his life:

> 'It feel like a thousand needles going through my body,' Holmes said. 'And then after that, it just feel like, you know--it feel like something just burning me from inside, and um, I shook, I gritted, I hollered, then I passed out. . . . They put the bag back on me, took me through the same thing again. They did that I don't know how many times. . . . I said to myself, 'Man, he trying to kill me.' And I thought I was dead because all I could see was blackness, and I said, 'Man, this is it. I'm gone.' When I looked up, they brought me back again. Burge was the one that was . . . bringing me back. Every time I come to, he be the one standing over me.'

While no one knows for certain what mechanisms Burge was using in these situations, it is alleged that it was something that he had imported from his time in Vietnam – a contraption, perhaps using the wiring of a field telephone, that he had been used in the interrogation of prisoners of war. The *Chicago Reader* published a long-form piece in 2005 about the Burge torture cases in which writer John Conroy sought out people who had served with Burge or in

similar circumstances in Vietnam, and many of them readily identified the electrical shock treatment Burge was said to have used as something straight from Vietnamese prison camps. Whether through these sorts of electrical shocks, beatings, suffocation, or other abuses, lawyers estimate that Burge and his men tortured at least 118 different people between 1973 and the mid-1980s. The city is still paying settlement claims for torture victims of both Burge's crew and other units across the city, as well as a three-thousand-per-month pension to Burge.

So perhaps, in some ways, Conslisk's administration would not be the "worst [administration] in the city's police history" when it came to its treatment of black people. Or perhaps it was, Burge's early tenure slightly overlapping with the end of Conlisk's career, and the horrors he committed being one more strike to the dismal record of Conlisk and the department when he headed it. Either way, by the mid-1970s, a huge cross-section of black Chicago stood fundamentally alienated from the police department that was nominally charged with protecting and serving them. The city seemed to have little ability (or interest, some would say) to deal with the escalating tumult of violence claiming hundreds of black lives every year, and as the tax base eroded further with the flight of much of the black middle-class to the suburbs, material conditions and feelings of insecurity in many of those neighborhoods only got worse. Meanwhile, as the testimonials in the Metcalfe hearings and in so many other places showed, as the onset of the Burge torture scandals demonstrated with searing intensity, and as the wide use of stop-and-frisk and invasive tactics confirmed, those same peoples' lives would be increasingly, dramatically contoured by interactions with – tensions with – antagonisms with – the police.

Thus, as the War on Crime escalated and as the War on Drugs emerged as a glimmer in policymakers' eyes, the templates for what execution of those wars in urban communities would

look like were already being realized. What are often thought today as dramatic reformations of policing strategy and logics, augured in the final decades of the last century, were far from the radical departures that they have been taken to be. Without question, the technological and financial investments by the federal government into departments like the CPD since the escalation of the War on Drugs have been critical policy choices. Coupled with dramatic punitive turns in sentencing policy, and the late-twentieth-century emergence of prisons as possible big business, those wars ravaged communities like Lawndale and Englewood and Austin and Woodlawn. But they didn't reshape the relationship between the police and the community to the degree that people have since assumed, nor did they fundamentally alter a system that had previously been well-functioning and less discriminatory. At the level of the streets, those wars simply enhanced patterns and poses that had, for decades, been building, growing, and entangling.

Conclusion

"Chairman Fred Lives"

*

If ever you find yourself on Chicago's West Side, go to the north side of Monroe Street opposite the building where the Chicago Police Department and the FBI killed Fred Hampton. If you look eastward, particularly on a winter's day when the branches of the oaks have been stripped of their leaves, you can see the jutting spires of the Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower) and, beyond it in the distance and just to the north, the John Hancock Building. Below them sits Chicago's Loop – today, still one of the prettiest of major American downtowns, a center of commerce, cultural entertainment, and tourism. Further east are Grant and Millennium Parks, and beyond them, the vast and beautiful expanse of Lake Michigan. Just three miles apart as the crow flies, the neighborhood where Fred Hampton lived today feels a world apart from the wonderments of the downtown. The house in which Hampton was killed is gone now, replaced by a handsome-enough red brick two-story rowhouse in the style that seems to be the choice of new-model gentrifiers everywhere in the city. Much of the block is a strange mix of this – boarded-up old buildings that sit alongside ones that have been either revitalized or newly built.

There is a degree of surreality standing here today beyond the odd effects of gentrification. It is a simultaneous sorrow and love, terror and brilliance. There is something eerie in the first place about standing there, reimagining the chaos of that December night Hampton was murdered – the dozens of police bullets riddling the walls of the since-demolished house and the people inside; the squad cars outside in the streets; a community's terror and grief. But time doesn't stop like that for long. In the actual lived reality of this moment, people still find ways to reclaim lives and possibilities. If you're there in the springtime, you'll see flowers. All the time, you will see children and parents, friends giving dap and laughing on the corners. In

brick and mortar, you will see the community's resilience in a towering mural of Fred Hampton painted on the side of a brick building at California and Madison, less than a mile's walk from the Monroe Street house and across the street from Wallace Davis Jr.'s (deservedly) legendary soul food joint. If you sit in a west-facing window seat at Wallace's, you'll stare at Hampton's face – rendered in blue and gray hues splashed against the faded red brick of an old three-story building. The mural occupies two of those stories, the words "CHAIRMAN FRED" looming over his shoulder. His muralist captures him as so many remember him—leaning in toward a microphone, mouth open, concentration flashed in his eyes. To some, this is known simply "The Wall." Here, Chairman Fred lives, as the 1969 comment after his murder went – even if he lives in brick and paint and memory rather than in blood and flesh. At once a celebration of the brilliance of Hampton's spirit and a reminder of the brutalities of state repression, it is beautiful – elegiac but somehow hopeful.

And yet to look past the challenges facing the community would be dishonest. If you leave the Monroe Street house and, rather than continuing further west to The Wall, hang a short left onto Western Avenue, you quickly find yourself amidst reminders of the endemic poverty to which much of the West Side is subjected. The story of inner-city poverty, in Chicago and elsewhere in America, is a narrative a thousand times told. But when it comes to this history of policing and crime and infrastructural decline, there are some particularly powerful visual cues as to the history at work in the present. In the area surrounding Hampton's old home, as elsewhere in the city and particularly on the West and South Sides, you are always being watched. Literally. If you look up at certain street corners, you will see a flashing blue light attached to a high-efficiency camera. Acronymed as PODs, these Police Observation Devices

have been installed in designated places (including some schools[1]), primarily as a means of detecting and deterring gang-related crime and its companion violence. While the CPD hailed the network of surveillance cameras as a valuable new tool in its operations, the aptly-termed "Operation Disruption" has been criticized from many angles, from its overtly Big Brother-ish qualities to the deleterious impacts on the property values of homes that no one wants to buy on account of the flashing blue cameras looming overhead. Regardless, by 2010, more than nine hundred PODS were in use in Chicago.[2] The ironies of such cameras staring down upon the block where Fred Hampton lived, where he held forth on the dangers and repressions of police power in Chicago and the United States, is difficult to ignore.

You will also see police squad cars flitting about the city's poor black and brown neighborhoods, particularly on the peripheries where they jut up against areas of commerce and greater affluence: surrounding the University of Chicago; near U.S. Cellular Field where the White Sox play; around the United Center on event nights. If you spend a bit of time, you are likely to see officers engaged with civilians in any manner of ways. In 2010, the police in Chicago logged more than 160,000 arrests, of which African Americans constituted nearly seventy-two percent. Black arrest rates were incredibly high for serious crimes such as homicide and other public-safety measures, but included as well seventy-eight percent of people arrested on narcotics violations, ninety-nine percent on gambling charges, ninety percent of those taken in for "other municipal code violations," and similar rates for other minor, quality-of-life crimes.[3] And that's just a small piece of the story. Over one four-month span in the middle of 2014, the

---

[1] For a brief overview of modern trends toward the criminalization of school spaces and the students within them, see Heather Ann Thompson, "Criminalizing Kids: The Overlooked Reason for Failing Schools," *Dissent*, October 2011: 23-27.

[2] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 2010, https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/News/Statistical%20Reports/Annual%20Reports/10AR.pdf [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]

[3] Ibid.

CPD logged more than 250,000 stop-and-frisk encounters in which no arrest was made – police encounters with men and women who, Langston Hughes might have said, the law simply "had a bad opinion of." Spread out over a full year, this places no-arrest stop-and-frisk's frequency somewhere around three-quarters of a million people. Unsurprisingly, according to the Illinois ACLU, black people, still roughly a third of the city population, accounted for about three-quarters of those stopped and frisked. Chicago's per-capita rate of stop-and-frisk ledgers sits more than four times greater than that of the New York Police Department – the department that often comes under greatest comment for such practices.[4]

There are other markers of the fraught landscapes on which police and community interact. If you had been in Chicago prior to 2012, for instance, you could have walked the block from Hampton's old Monroe Street address to Western Avenue, hung a left, gone two blocks south to Jackson, and found a curiously named hot dog joint by the name of Felony Franks. Painted large in vibrant colors on the side of the building, the restaurant's logo was there to be noticed, depicting a prison-stripe-clad hot dog behind bars, manacled to a ball and chain, giving passers-by a grin and a thumbs-up. Above the logo, the slogan: "Food so good it's criminal." The signature dog: "the misdemeanor wiener." (Other menu items: "Probation Burger," "Pardon Polish," and so on.) A variant of the Miranda rights hung on the wall inside the entryway: "You have the right to remain hungry. Anything you order can and will be used to feed you here at Felony Franks." (Subtlety is not part of the mission statement.) Not part of the pun, but adding a sad stamp to it: the bulletproof glass through which customers had to order their food.

From the moment it opened in the summer of 2009, Felony Franks sparked controversy. The shop was owned by a white restaurateur named Jim Andrews, and the site selection for this

[4] Don Babwin, "ACLU: Chicago Police Had Higher Stop-and-Frisk Rate than NYC," March 23, 2015, http://news.yahoo.com/aclu-chicago-police-had-higher-stop-frisk-rate-185824002.html?soc_src=mediacontentstory&soc_trk=tw [Last Accessed: March 25, 2015]

prison-themed restaurant in a part of the city mostly populated by low-income African Americans – the very population most subject to *actual* crime and contact with the criminal justice system – struck many as deeply offensive. Local ward alderman Robert Fioretti fought the restaurant every step of the way, claiming opposition based upon thematic concept alone. Dr. Christopher Reed, a longtime Westsider and professor at Roosevelt University, declared the theme to be "offensive." Father Michael Pfleger of St. Sabina parish, a famous anti-violence and social justice activist, accused Felony Franks owner James Andrews of "pimping" the people.[5]

But on the other hand, as Andrews pointed out, his shop was constructed around a very specific vision of community betterment – namely, that at Felony Franks, he exclusively employed ex-cons, almost all of them black, believing in their right to a second chance and in the tangible benefits of giving them jobs. As he told a local reporter in 2010, "They deserve a second chance, if society beats them down and don't give them a second chance, they're going back to jail. They're going to do what they know how to do…sell drugs, steal your purse." One of Andrews' employees, a man named Darnell Mardis, reported that after he got out of prison in 2006 following a drug charge, he searched for work for three years – fruitlessly, because of his criminal record. Felony Franks gave him his first stable job opportunity since his release.[6]

The Felony Franks controversy on the surface may seem silly, but it offers a telling reminder of the complex ways and the degree to which the criminal justice system has been implanted into and normalized within the fabric of cities like Chicago today, particularly in poor black neighborhoods. The reach of the police and the broader surveillance apparatus into those communities is tremendous. Advocates of community-controlled policing in 1973 who said that the police budget was too big would surely be dismayed today to have seen it grow to more than

---

[5] *Chicago Journal*, August 26, 2009.
[6] Ashley Kohler and Charlotte Eriksen, "Felony Franks Gives Ex-Cons a Second Chance," *The Redline Project*, June 9, 2010, http://redlineproject.org/jacksonfelonyfranks.php [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]

1.2 billion dollars annually at the beginning of this decade.[7] Illinois has the second-highest incarcerated population in the Midwest (trailing only Ohio), and black:white racial disparities within that population are more than 9:1 (roughly average for the Midwest, which is the worst region in the nation for such disparities).[8] Because current policies destroy ex-convicts' opportunities for success post-incarceration, as Michelle Alexander so deftly demonstrated in *The New Jim Crow*, the collateral and direct damage to the community's economy and social fabric is great. In the debates about Felony Franks, the stigmatic consequences of incarceration swirled everywhere in the subtext. When people opposed the restaurant, they were also inadvertently subverting the employment possibilities for people like Darnell Mardis, a man whose life options had been dramatically circumscribed by a petty drug charge. And the fact of Andrews' site selection for his restaurant, in a dangerous neighborhood in which fear is constantly in the background, similarly floated about – a reminder that the palate of public policies contouring Chicago's infrastructure has largely failed the communities most in need of.

The stories of Chicago reverberate. Public policy in dozens of American cities today surrounding crime and policing in low-income, majority-black neighborhoods traverses a web of hyper-surveillance, containment, and neglect. The costs are tremendous in both material terms and in human life and possibility. Beginning in the last decade, the Brooklyn-based Justice Mapping Center began tracking and mapping what it called "million-dollar blocks"—census blocks that send so many people to prison that the cost of incarcerating them annually exceeds a million dollars.[9] In cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, and many more, if you were to overlay a map of the city's blackest neighborhoods with those million-dollar blocks, you would

---

[7] Chicago Police Department, Annual Report: 2010.
[8] The Sentencing Project, Corrections Populations, http://www.sentencingproject.org/map/map.cfm#map [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]
[9] See the many maps at the Justice Mapping Center, http://www.justicemapping.org/ [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]

be unsurprised at the synchronicity. But these neighborhoods at the same time remain profoundly unsafe. There is a sense with deep currency in many of those communities that city governments, police forces, and the broader society are loathe to care much about black deprivation and unsafety, so long as the violence is confined. The journalist Mark Binelli, in his recent not-quite-autopsy of Detroit, captured this dynamic well: "Short of fundamentally changing the underlying conditions producing such high levels of violence and illegal activity in the first place, policing could only do so much, so the best-case scenario amounted to hoping the criminals stuck to killing one another and kept the collateral damage to a minimum."[10]

These are, of course, in part the stories of the War on Drugs and of mass incarceration, but they are not stories without context. Across the country, the growing shift toward explicit law-and-order politics during the War on Crime, toward aggressive drug law enforcement, and toward mass incarceration in the last forty years was prefaced by generations of inequitable law enforcement at the local level – a system heavily freighted against the best interests of black communities. The combination of public policies and private antagonisms pummeling the infrastructural integrity, economies, and resource bases of black neighborhoods have always been (and remain) criminogenic in their very essence. The suspicions of blackness at the center of American racial thought have been irretrievably lodged in the logics and practices of policing for more than a century, and have been made manifest in a century-long tradition of disproportionate arrest, harassment, and death. And for nearly as long, black Chicagoans and their counterparts elsewhere have been struggling to attain the levels of safety and service to which their status as citizens and taxpayers nominally entitles them.

---

[10] Mark Binelli, *Detroit City is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 223.

The problem is not, nor has it ever been, that all (most, even) police officers are animated by malevolence or conscious racism; that isn't true. The problem is that modern police work is inseparable from its broader present and historical contexts. A product of traditional hiring practices that privilege whiteness, police forces remain disproportionately white, particularly in the Midwest. A 2014 analysis by the *New York Times* of racial representation among police forces showed that the police force serving Chicago proper was twenty-three percent more white than the city itself. Eight police departments serving the city's suburban areas were between fifty and seventy-six percentage points more white than the populations they served.[11] While black police officers have never been immune to enthusiastically embracing the system and precipitating the same abuses as some of their colleagues ("Cops is a race all its own," as Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlings put it), there is little doubt that divides between police and community continue to be riven by broader racial divisions and disparities, which might be alleviated some by more representative hiring.[12] But regardless of the skin color of a particular officer, the system of which they are a part remains disentangleable from the long patterns of violence and abuse that are woven into the fabric of American cities, ever since those cities began absorbing large black populations. That system is inseparable from the larger patterns of ghettoization that have been constructed over time by public policy and white supremacy. It is impossible to sift it from the problems of jobs and education and public resources and gun access that are the attendants of those processes of ghettoization. And it is impossible to cleave it from a century-long tradition of oversurveillance and underprotection of black communities that has only built and worsened over time.

---

[11] Jeremy Ashkenas and Haeyoun Park, "The Race Gap in America's Police Departments," *New York Times*, September 4, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/09/03/us/the-race-gap-in-americas-police-departments.html?_r=0 [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]

[12] Walter Mosley, *A Little Yellow Dog* (New York: Norton, 1996), 142.

*

And yet, present and past live together in this moment in other ways, as well. From the time that I began this project to the time that I finished it, dramatic new waves of attention to the issue of police negligence and abuse bloomed around me. I have spent most of the last fourteen years working, living, and building community in two of the most racially segregated and socioeconomically unequal cities in the United States – Chicago and Madison, Wisconsin. Over the past year, both have been the site of extended community activism surrounding seemingly systematic police abuses. In Madison, the Young, Gifted, and Black coalition (YGB), sparked by the nationwide Black Lives Matter campaign that emerged in 2014, has centered racial disparities in incarceration, opposition to new prison construction in the Madison area, and police brutality at the core of their concerns. Full decarceration hangs in the mind's eye, as in an open letter the group addressed to the Madison Chief of Police stating that their preferred interactions with the police were "no interaction." They adopted similar language to that heard ever since the 1950s in regard to the police in the black community – "Our ultimate goal," the coalition wrote, "is to be able to hold our own communities accountable and to expel what we consider an occupying force in our neighborhoods. Our people need opportunities for self-determination, not policing."[13] In Chicago, meanwhile, groups such as the We Charge Genocide coalition and other local affiliates of the nationwide Black Lives Matter campaign have spent recent months campaigning against police violence – the former explicitly modeling itself on the Civil Rights Congress's 1951 petition to the United Nations and issuing a similar report to the U.N. on the issue of police torture and abuse in Chicago.[14] Meanwhile, a grassroots campaign to

[13] Young, Gifted, and Black Coalition, "Open letter to Madison Police Chief Michael Koval," *Wisconsin Gazette*, January 9, 2015.
[14] We Charge Genocide, "Police Violence Against Chicago's Youth of Color: A Report prepared for the United Nations Committee Against Torture on the occasion of its review of the United States of America's Third Periodic

the city has coalesced around the issue of granting reparations to victims of police torture historically, most notably the victims of Jon Burge and his men during the 1970s and 1980s.

The spirit of these movements, and their broad base, harkens back forty years to the late-1960s and early-70s coalition-building, and to the attending pushes for police reform and community control. Then and now, those efforts serve as reminders that state power is not immune to challenge, state violence not inoculated to opposition. In other words, Jon Burge lives, as does the system of which he was a part. But so, too, does Chairman Fred Hampton, and the spirit of the radical moment of which *he* was a part. They sit entangled, as they long have been, and they struggle over the direction of our future.

Report to the Committee Against Torture," September 2014, http://report.wechargegenocide.org/about.html [Last Accessed: March 9, 2015]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL
- Afro-American Patrolman's League Records
- Alliance to End Repression Records
- Claude Barnett Papers
- Joseph Bibb Papers
- Chicago Commission on Human Relations Records
- Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights Records
- Chicago Crime Commission Records
- Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group Records
- Chicago Police Department Collection
- Chicago Police Department Red Squad Files
- Harold Gosnell Papers
- Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission Records
- Richard Newhouse Papers
- Virgil Peterson Papers
- Joseph Sevick Papers
- Christopher Wimbish Papers
- Chicago Police Department Red Squad Records
- The Woodlawn Organization Records

Chicago Public Library, Carter G. Woodson Brach, Vivian Harsh Collection
- Timuel D. Black Papers
- Horace R. Cayton Papers
- Chicago SNCC History Project Records
- Congress on Racial Equality Records (Chicago Branch)
- Illinois Writers Project Records
- Ishmael Flory Papers
- Alice and Edward Palmer Papers
- Howard Saffold Papers
- Reverend Al Sampson Papers
- Reverend Addie and Claude Wyatt Papers

Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Branch, Municipal Reference Collection
- Chicago Law Enforcement Study Group Reports
- Chicago Police Department Collection
- Illinois Law Enforcement Commission Records

Library of Congress, Washington, DC
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records (microfilm)

The Newberry Library, Chicago, IL
Victor Lawson Papers

People's Law Office, Chicago, IL (provided to author by Attorney Flint Taylor)
Court Transcripts and Legal Briefs Surrounding the Case of Oscar Walden

University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center
American Civil Liberties Union, Illinois Branch Records
Citizens' Police Committee Records
Ernest Burgess Papers (and Addenda)
Charles Merriam Papers
Robert Merriam Papers
Julius Rosenwald Papers
Woodlawn Social Services Center Records

University of Illinois-Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections
Martin Bickham Papers
Chicago Urban League Records
Martin Kennelly Papers

NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES

Atlanta Daily World
The Atlantic
Chicago American
Chicago Daily News
Chicago Defender
Chicago Journal
Chicago Reader
Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago Tribune
Common Ground
The Crisis
The Crusader
Detroit Independent
The Guardian
The New Republic
New York Amsterdam News
New York Times
Phylon
Pittsburgh Courier
Presbyterian Life
The Redline Project
Saturday Evening Post
Wisconsin Gazette
Woodlawn Booster

GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Chafee, Zechariah Jr., Walter H. Pollak, and Carl S. Stern. *The Third Degree: Report to the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement*, New York: Arno Press, 1969 [1931]

Chicago Commission on Race Relations. *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922

Citizens' Police Committee, *Chicago Police Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931

Johnson, Ryan S, Shawn Kantor, Price V. Fishback. "Striking at the Roots of Crime: The Impact of Social Welfare Spending on Crime During the Great Depression." National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper #12825, 2007

Katzenbach, Nicholas deB. et al. *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society: A Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967

Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*. Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965.

Metcalfe, Ralph H. *"The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago:" A Report and Recommendations Based on Hearings Before the Blue Ribbon Panel Convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, on June 26, July 17, July 24, and July 31, 1972*

Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. New York: Bantam Books, 1968

Report of the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement. Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1931

Smith, Bruce, et al. *A Reorganization Plan for the Chicago Police Department: Report No. 4 of the Citizens' Police Committee*. Chicago, IL. 1930.

United States Department of Justice. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Uniform Crime Reports

ORAL INTERVIEWS

Rafike (formerly Ron Woodard), interview with John Stuckey, October 12, 1988, on file in Chicago CORE Records, Chicago Public Library Woodson Branch, Harsh Collection

Timuel D. Black, interview with the author, August 21, 2013, Chicago, IL

BOOKS, ARTICLES, AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

Abrams, Arnold, John H. Gagnon, and Joseph J. Levin. "Psychosocial Aspects of Addiction," *American Journal of Public Health*, 58:11 (1968): 2142-2155

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Agyepong, Tera. "In the Belly of the Beast: Black Policemen Combat Police Brutality in Chicago, 1968-1983," *Journal of African American History* 98:2 (Spring 2013): 253-276

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010)
Als, Hilton. *White Girls* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2014)
Anderson, Alan and George W. Pickering. *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986)
Anderson, Carol. *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
Arsenault, Raymond. *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
Asimov, Isaac. *I. Asimov: A Memoir* (New York: Bantam, 1994)
Bachin, Robin F. *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civil Culture in Chicago, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
Baldwin, Davarian. *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007)
Baldwin, James. "A Report from Occupied Territory," *The Nation*, July 11, 1966
_____. *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983 [1955])
Balto, Simon. "'Occupied Territory': Police Repression and Black Resistance in Postwar Milwaukee," *Journal of African American History* 98:2 (Spring 2013): 229-252
Beeley, A.L. *The Bail System in Chicago* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1927)
Berger, Dan. *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
Bernstein, Nell. *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* (New York: The New Press, 2005)
_____. *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison* (New York: Perseus, 2014)
Bernstein, Irving. *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1969])
_____. *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1940* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1969])
Biles, Roger. *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly in Chicago* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984)
_____. *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995)
Binelli, Mark. *Detroit City is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012)
Biondi, Martha. *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)
_____. *To Stand and To Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)
Black, Timuel D. Jr. *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration: An Oral History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003)
Blackhawk, Nelson. *COINTELPRO: The FBI's War on Political Freedom* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1988)
Blackmon, Douglas. *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America, from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008)
Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," *American Sociological Review* 47:1 (February 1982): 114-129

Blair, Cynthia M. *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Bloom, Joshua and Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013)

Bone, Robert and Richard A. Courage. *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011)

Bopp, William J. *O.W.: O.W. Wilson and the Search for a Police Profession* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977)

Bowly, Devereux. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago*, Second Edition (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012 [1978])

Branch, Taylor. *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007)

_____. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1989)

_____. *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Taylor Branch,

Bukowski, Douglas. *Big Bill Thompson, Chicago, and the Politics of Image* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997)

Burns, Robert E. *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang!* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997 [1932])

Butler, Paul. *Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice* (New York: The New Press, 2010)

Cayton, Horace R. *Long Old Road: Back to Black Metropolis* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishing, 2010 [1963])

Chafee, Zechariah Jr., Walter H. Pollak, and Carl S. Stern, "The Third Degree: Report to the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement," (New York: Arno Press, 1969 [1931])

Churchill, Ward and Jim Vander Wall. *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1990)

Clear, Todd. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Cobb, Charles E., Jr. *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014)

Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003)

_____. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1990])

Collier-Thomas, Bettye and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2001)

Countryman, Matthew J. *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006

Courtwright, David T. *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001 [1982])

Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991)

Curtin, Mary Ellen. *Black Prisoners and Their World, Alabama, 1865-1900* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000)
Davis, Kenneth Culp. *Discretionary Justice: A Preliminary Inquiry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969)
Dennis, Michael. *The Memorial Day Massacre and the Movement for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)
Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995)
Doliner. Brian, ed. *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013)
Donner, Frank. *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)
Drake, St. Clair and Horace R. Cayton. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1945])
Drucker, Ernest. *A Plague of Prisons: The Epidemiology of Mass Incarceration in America* (New York: The New Press, 2011)
Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)
Dulaney, Marvin. *Black Police in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)
Dyja, Thomas. *The Third Coast: When Chicago Built the American Dream* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013)
Farber, David. *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)
Forman, James, Jr. "Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow," *New York University Law Review*, 87 (April 2012): 101-146
Frampton, Mary Louise, Ian Haney López, and Jonathan Simon, eds. *After the War on Crime: Race, Democracy, and a New Reconstruction* (New York: NYU Press, 2008)
Frazier, E. Franklin. *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932)
Garland, David. *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002)
Gellman, Erik. *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012)
Gilje, Paul A. *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)
Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008)
Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)
Goffman, Alice. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
Gomez, Michael A. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
Gosnell, Harold F. *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935)
Gottschalk, Marie. *The Prison and the Gallows* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
Green, James. *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006)

Greene, Christina. *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005)
Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn.*"Or Does It Explode?: Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
Grimshaw, William J. *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)
Gross, Kali. *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)
Haas, Jeffrey. *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011)
Herbst, Alma. *The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat-Packing Industry in Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932)
Hicks, Cheryl. *Talk with You like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)
Hine, Darlene Clark and John McCluskey Jr., eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012)
Hirsch, Arnold. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1983])
Hopkins, Ernest Jerome. *Our Lawless Police: A Study of the Unlawful Enforcement of the Law* (New York: Viking Press, 1931)
Horne, Gerald. *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997)
Hughes, Langston. *Not Without Laughter* (New York: Scribner Paperback, 1995 [1930])
Jeffries, Judson, ed. *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)
Jeffries, Hasan Kwame. *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: NYU Press, 2010)
Johnson, Karl E. "Police-Black Community Relations in Postwar Philadelphia: Race and Criminalization in Urban Social Spaces, 1945-1960, *The Journal of African American History* 89:2 (Spring 2004): 118-134
Johnson, Marilynn S. *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004)
Johnson, Nicholas. *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms* (New York: Prometheus, 2014)
Jones, Charles E., ed. *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005)
Jones, LeRoi. *Home: Social Essays* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1966 [1961])
Jones, Patrick. *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010)
Joseph, Peniel E., ed. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006)
_____, ed. *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)
_____. *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic*Civitas*, 2014)

_____. *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt, 2007)
Jones, William P. *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: Norton, 2014)
Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013)
_____. *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005)
Kelley, Robin D.G. *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990)
_____. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994)
_____. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80:1 (June 1993): 75-112
Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
Kennedy, Randall. *Race, Crime and the Law* (New York: Pantheon, 1997)
Kirby, John B. *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980)
Klarman, Michael J. *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
Kornweibel, Theodore Jr. *"Seeing Red": Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998)
Krist, Gary. *City of Scoundrels* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012)
Kusch, Frank. *Battleground Chicago: The Police and the 1968 Democratic National Convention* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2004)
Kusmer, Kenneth L. and Joe W. Trotter, eds. *African American Urban History Since World War II*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)
Lazerow, Jama and Yohuru Williams, eds. *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)
Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), translated by Elenore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas
Lewis, Robert. *Chicago Made: Factory Networks in the Industrial Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
Lichtenstein, Alex. *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London: Verso Books, 1996)
Lindberg, Richard C. *To Serve and Collect: Chicago Politics and Police Corruption from the Lager Beer Riot to the Summerdale Scandal* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press)
Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia and Renia Ehrenfeucht. *Sidewalks: Conflict and Negotiation Over Public Space* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011)
Mantler, Gordon K. *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition & the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013)
Marable, Manning. *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in America* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi)

Massey, Douglas and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)
Mauer, Marc. *Race to Incarcerate* (New York: The New Press, 2006 [1999])
McGuire, Danielle M. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage, 2010)
McLaren, Joseph. *Langston Hughes: Folk Dramatist in the Protest Tradition, 1921-1943* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1997)
McWhirter, Cameron. *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2011)
Monroe, Sylvester and Peter Goldman. *Brothers Black and Poor – A True Story of Courage* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1988)
Moore, Leonard. *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010)
Mosley, Walter. *A Little Yellow Dog* (New York: Norton, 1996)
Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010)
_____. "Where Did All the White Criminals Go?: Reconfiguring Race and Crime on the Road to Mass Incarceration," *Souls* 13:1 (March 2011)
Mullen, Bill. *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-1946* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999)
Mumford, Kevin. *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)
_____. *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007)
Murch, Donna. *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)
Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962 [1944])
Neckerhman, Kathryn M. *Schools Betrayed: Roots of Failure in Inner-City Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)
Nelson, Alondra. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013)
Nelson, Jill, ed., *Police Brutality: An Anthology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000)
O'Dell, Jack. *Climbin' Jacob's Ladder: The Black Freedom Movement Writings of Jack O'Dell* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), Nikhil Pal Singh, ed.
O'Reilly, Kenneth. *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America* (New York: Free Press, 1991)
Okrent, Daniel. *Last Call: The Rise & Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010)
Oshinsky, David. *"Worse Than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: The Free Press, 1996
Pager, Devah. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)
Parenti, Christian. *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (New York: Verso: 1999)

Patterson, William, ed. *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York, 1951)

Patillo, Mary. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

Payne, Charles M. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

Perkinson, Robert. *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire* (New York: Picador, 2010)

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008)

Petty, Audrey, ed. *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2013)

Pihos, Peter C. "Black Police and Black Power in 1970s Chicago," presented at "The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power Across the Twentieth Century and Beyond" Public History Conference, September 22, 2012, Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996)

Polikoff, Alexander. *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005)

Rakove, Milton L. *Don't Make No Waves…Don't Back No Losers: An Insider's Analysis of the Daley Machine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975)

Ralph, James R. *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)

Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Visions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

Reckless, Walter C. *Vice in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933)

Reed, Christopher Robert. *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011)

_____. *The Depression Comes to the South Side* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011)

Reed, Touré F. *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League & the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

Rhodes, Jane. *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007)

Rios, Victor M. "The Hyper-Criminalization of Black and Latino Male Youth in the Era of Mass Incarceration," *Souls* 8:2 (September 2006): 40-54

_____. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (New York: NYU Press, 2011

Royko, Mike. *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: Plume, 1976)

Sampson, Robert J. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)

Sandburg, Carl. "Chicago," *Chicago Poems* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1916).

_____. *The Chicago Race Riots: July 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1969 [1919])

Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009)
Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr. *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Older Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957)
Self, Robert O. *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
Seligman, Amanda I. *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)
Self, Robert O. *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
Shapiro, Karen. *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)
Sharkey, Patrick. *Stuck In Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)
Simon, Jonathan. *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
Singh, Nikhil Pal. *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)
Sitkoff, Harvard *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1981])
Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003)
Spear, Allan H. *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967)
Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)
_____. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the Urban North* (New York: Random House, 2008)
Sullivan, Patricia. *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996)
Terkel, Studs. *Chicago* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986 [1985])
_____. *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon, 1986 [1970])
Thompson, Heather Ann. "Criminalizing Kids: The Overlooked Reason for Failing Schools," *Dissent*, October 2011: 23-27
_____. "Understanding Rioting in Postwar Urban America," *Journal of Urban History*, 26:3 (March 2000): 391-402
_____. "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History, *Journal of American History* 97:3 (December 2010): 703-734
_____. *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)
Tonry, Michael. *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
Tracy, James and Amy Sonnie. *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times* (New York: Melville House, 2011)
Travis, Dempsey J. *An Autobiography of Black Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Urban Research Institute, 1981)

Tuttle, William M. Jr. *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970)
Umoja, Akinyele Omowale. *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2014)
Van Deburg, William. *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)
Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)
Wacquant, Loïc. "Class, Race and Hyperincarceration in Revanchist America." *Daedalus*, 139:3 (Summer 2010): 74-90
_____. "The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *Ethnography* 3:4: 371-397
_____. *Prisons of Poverty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)
_____. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009 [original French version, 2004])
Wendt, Lloyd and Herman Kogan. *Big Bill of Chicago* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press)
Western, Bruce. *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007)
Whitaker, David T. *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures* (Chicago: W3, 2000)
Wiese, Andrew. *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010)
Williams, Jakobi. *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2013)
Williams, Rhonda Y. *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015)
Williams, Yohuru. *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000)
Williams, Yohuru and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)
Wilson, William Julius. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
Wolters, Raymond. *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood)
Wright, Richard. *Black Boy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993 [1944])

DISSERTATIONS

Chase, Robert T. "Civil Rights on the Cell Block: Race, Reform, and Violence in Texas Prisons and the Nation." Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2009
Hinton, Elizabeth Kai. "From Social Welfare to Social Control: Federal War in American Cities, 1968–1988." Ph.D. diss.: Columbia University, 2013
Mercy, James A. "Social Control and Criminal Behavior in Chicago, 1940-1973." Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1982

Neptune, Jessica. “The Making of the Carceral State: Street Crime, The War on Drugs, and Punitive Politics in New York 1951-1973.” Ph.D. diss.: University of Chicago, 2012

VIDEO RECORDING

PBS Home Video, "Eyes on the Prize"