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Fred Ain't Dead: The Impact of the Life and Legacy of Fred Hampton

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FRED AIN'T DEAD: THE IMPACT OF THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF FRED HAMPTON

by

CRAIG MCPHERSON

Under the Direction of John C. McMillian, PhD

ABSTRACT

This research examines the life and legacy of Fred Hampton, Sr. Hampton was an African-American born in Chicago, in 1948. At the age of twenty-one, he was killed, by a joint operation between the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Beyond his assassination, and his involvement with the Black Panthers, Hampton transcended the lines of race and other socially constructed lines, and positively influenced many groups. His impact continued after his death, and therefore he should be remembered and studied as an important figure in the Civil Rights Era. I contend that he had the potential to become a major factor in national race relations and should be studied, remembered, and honored, along with many of the other leaders of the era.

INDEX WORDS: Fred Hampton, Black Panthers, Civil Rights Movement, Rainbow Coalition, Chicago, Maywood Illinois, NAACP, Assassination

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by

CRAIG MCPHERSON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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2015

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Wanda, Carmen, and Joshua. All that I do is for the three of you.

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I gratefully thank my main professors, John McMillian, Charles Steffen, and Mohammed Ali for their encouragement and direction through this project and the program. I would not have reached the end of this program and this project without their help. I must also thank professor Jacqueline Rouse for her firm words that helped to keep me focused. Along with my professors, I would like to thank Robin Jackson for her administrative support to the history department.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCPF	Baltimore Committee for Political Freedom
BPP	Black Panther Party
BSR	Black Stone Rangers
CPD	Chicago Police Department
COINTELPRO	Counter Intelligence Program
DNC	Democratic National Convention
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ILBPP	Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party
LADO	Latin American Defense Organization
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
RAM	Revolutionary Action Movement
RUA	Rise Up Angry
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
SWAT	Special Weapons And Tactics
UFBCO	United Front for Black Community Organizations
WUO	Weather Underground Organization
YLO	Young Lords Organization
YPO	Young Patriots Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

Hampton grew up in a time when racism was a major factor in many people's lives. How a person responded to the racism they encountered could often shape the direction of their life. In the mid 1900's African-Americans, had hard experiences to endure and Hampton showed a fiery personality, willing to take on injustice if it was to be overcome. His was not a singular voice crying in the wilderness of racial despair, but was a voice that was determined to be heard. His personal drive and motivation does not seem to have been selfish, but rather centered around his desire to help improve the lives and situations of those around him.

In the 1960's many black Americans were already speaking out for civil rights. Many of these blacks had already become established leaders in the black communities and were well known for addressing the problems that plagued their fellow black people, by speaking out with ideas and suggestions about what could be done to improve the plight of Blacks in America. In an examination of the Civil Rights Era, why might Fred Hampton be significant, when there were already Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and other prominent leaders? What could be the significance of this twenty-one year old in the context of the Civil Rights Movement? Is Fred Hampton someone worth mentioning alongside the great leaders of the era, or was he just lucky enough to have worked alongside great leaders like Dr. King and Andrew Young, at the right moment, that led to him getting collateral attention from the media and the authorities? Is there enough evidence to list the name of Fred Hampton as one of the civil rights leaders worth remembering? Scholars often mention his infamous murder and the cover-up that followed, yet if this twenty-one year old could gain so much attention from J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI, and the CPD, does he not deserve mention for more than just his murder? What about his achievements in life that led him to be targeted by the FBI and CPD? Did his activism, community work, charisma, diplomacy, and leadership leave enough of an impact to remember him along with many of the leaders that influenced him?

I repeatedly came across the story of Fred Hampton and this led me to my inquiry more about him. My project addresses whether or not Fred Hampton was a significant leader of the Civil Rights Era,

and if so how significant he was. I intend to illustrate that he was very significant in his local, hometown area of Chicago, and the level of his influence there extended his impact beyond Chicago. Sometimes people gain notoriety by simply being in the right place at the right time, and sometimes from being in the company of the right people. It is the purpose of my project to address which category Fred Hampton should be placed in history. Is the way that he is most often overshadowed by Dr. King, Malcolm X, or Medgar Evers, accurate, or should he be placed in the pantheon of great Black Civil Rights leaders?

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to use the questions already mentioned, combine them into a rounded picture of how altogether, the broader picture of the life of Fred Hampton and the legacy that lingers since his murder, portray an individual that truly was significant for the Black Power Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and has since been an inspiration to numerous people, across various social lines. It is my belief that this study offers a tangible benefit. Delving into this study, the life, death, and impact of Fred Hampton, should help encourage relations between groups, whether divided by class, religion, or race, to appreciate his leadership and possibly heed his, and other, 'prophetic' warnings of societal failings, without continuing the need for such a high price, that of blood, to be paid, in order for these leaders to become so revered. Deborah Johnson, Hampton's fiancé that survived despite being at his side during his assassination, in her interview in *Eyes on the Prize*, recalled that when the police were finished shooting one of the last things she heard someone say was "he's good and dead now."¹

1.2 Expected Results

It is expected that through this project it will be shown that through his impact, and legacy, Fred ain't dead.

¹ *Eyes On the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, DVD, directed by Henry Hampton (WGBH Boston: Blackside,

2 CHAPTER ONE: FRED IS BORN

We often think of the modern civil rights movement as beginning in Montgomery in 1955 because of the dramatic arrest of Rosa Parks and the emergence of Dr. King. But that is not so. There is a scientific theory that the earth was born through the big bang. One could make the case that Emmett Till was “the big bang”... of the civil rights movement.²

*Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.
Chicago
January 11, 2003*

September 3, 1955. Chicago, Illinois.

The body of Emmett Till lay in front of everyone. He was another victim of the violence born out of America’s racial problems. He had gone to visit relatives in Mississippi during the summer. A few days after his arrival, young Emmett went into a small, local, family owned grocery store and made a purchase. During that visit to the store something happened that caused Roy Bryant, the husband of the woman working in the store, to go looking for Emmett. A few days later his mutilated body was recovered from the nearby Tallahatchie River. His mother, Mamie Till, had his body returned home to Chicago for burial, despite the Mississippi authorities sealing his casket and attempting to cover-up what had truly happened. Fourteen years later another crowd was gathered. This time the people were gathered to honor Fred Hampton, Sr.

December 9, 1969.

It was the same city. It was the same funeral home. Some were family members, some were media representatives, and others were members of the community. People had pains of sadness, disappointment, and even anger in their hearts, along with questions about how could this have happened. As mourners moved through side by side with curiosity seekers, A.A. Rayner’s funeral home overflowed throughout the weekend, not just because of who lay dead in

² Mamie Till-Mobley and Chris Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003), foreword, xiii.

front of them, but how he got there. Despite the police version, which claimed self-defense on the part of the police, most people knew there was more to the story. For anyone that made a mental list of the reasons why this young man lay in front of them, most would include the color of his skin. He was black, and he was dead. Murdered, with attempts to cover the real story of just how brutal his death really was.

This chapter will give an overview of the early life and accomplishments of Fred Hampton for the purpose of illustrating he was moving towards becoming a leader of his community. An examination of his early school days, and his early involvement in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) will show that by the time he was finished with high school, he was already recognized by many as a person that was making a difference, and causing positive change in his community.

2.1 Early Fred

Fredrick Allen Hampton, affectionately known as Fred, was born August 30, 1948, in Chicago, Illinois, at Cook County Hospital, the youngest of three children. Hampton grew up in a time when racism was a major factor in many people's lives. How a person responded to the racism they encountered often shaped the direction of their life. Hampton showed a fiery personality, and he encountered problems with various authorities, yet he was willing to confront injustice in attempts to see that it was overcome. His was not a singular voice crying in the wilderness of racial despair; he came of age amidst the rising Black Power Movement. Hampton saw himself as a revolutionary and he saw the struggles of blacks throughout Chicago as a part of a broader revolution, which needed to be fought in order to bring about equality between the people of his community, and even this nation. He maintained that he wanted to help everyone,

not just blacks. Hampton expressed his ideas of empowerment for all by saying “We say all power to the people - black power to black people and brown power to brown people, red power to red people and yellow power to yellow people. We say white power to white people even.”³ Hampton wanted to see justice for all. According to Doris Strieter, a friend of Hampton, “it was clear ... that Fred was no racist. He embraced and welcomed all people who were committed to his vision of justice.”⁴ Fred had a style of speaking to the people of his community that met many where they were. He used the language of the people, which at times included profanity. This language would be distasteful to some and cause a controversial view of Hampton for others. The language of Hampton will be discussed later in this study. Yet despite his words that were at times harsh, but clear for many, he has often been portrayed as an angry black youth that was only out to fight against the civil authorities or as a racist black man that was out to only kill police officers. Todd Andrew Fraley states “according to the *Tribune* the Panthers and Fred Hampton had the following characteristics: extremely well armed and dangerous, at the core of Chicago’s troubles, the epitome of deviant, communist, and anti-American.”⁵ Yet his revolution included everyone.

From an early age Hampton was recognized as a person that had exceptional concern for helping others. His mother, Iberia Hampton noted, “he was always sensitive and caring... When Fred started school he was always observant.”⁶ As he began attending high school Fred was already expressing his plan for helping people by stating that he wanted to be a lawyer. His mother said, “that was his strongest aspiration in life. He always talked about being a lawyer to

³ *The Movement: 1964-1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 10.

⁴ William Hampton, *The Essence of Fred Hampton: An Attempt to Capture the Spirit of a Young Man Who Influenced So Many and to Pass It On to Those Who Didn't Have the Opportunity to Meet Him* (Chicago: Salsedo Press, 1989), 27.

⁵ Todd Andrew Fraley, *Fred Hampton, Revolutionary Leader or Deviant Thug: Race and Discursive Strategies of the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Daily Defender, Washington Afro-American, and Black Panther*, (University of Georgia, 2000), 57.

⁶ Hampton, 4.

help his clients.”⁷ Numerous friends and family members have echoed the sentiment of attorney and activist Thomas N. Todd, who remarked “Fred could have been a prominent attorney but chose to follow his sensitivity and lend his dedication, charisma, speaking skills and knowledge to uplift the community from racism, repression and other problems that plague our society.”⁸

Emmett Till and Fred Hampton also shared more than just their hometown of Chicago and A.A. Rayner’s Funeral home services. Both of these young men also faced speech challenges. At the age of six, young Till faced a bout with polio that left him with a speech impediment, which caused him to stutter. His mother, Mamie Till, determined that she would do all that she could to keep this “defect” from being a problem throughout her son’s life. She sacrificed to take young Emmett to speech therapy and was told that he would eventually outgrow the stutter. Despite his speech problem, his mother observed that young Emmett had a strong spirit that could face and deal with problems as they came to him.

Early in his youth, Fred had an accident in which he fell and landed on his face, and this loosened some of his front teeth. The result of this was a lisp or whistling sound sometimes when he spoke. His father, Francis, said that Fred “overcame this problem by practicing speaking as clearly as possible.”⁹

Both of these young men seemed to have learned at an early age not to let challenges in their lives limit them. Fred Hampton’s family knew the Tills, and Fred’s mother Iberia had sometimes helped babysit little Emmett Till.¹⁰ The murder, subsequent trial, and overall story of Emmett Till was surely a sad and serious time for the Hampton family, along with a great part of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 50.

⁹ Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 16.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

the nation, and the world. This is part of the background from which Fred Hampton would grow, to become an outspoken advocate for justice and equality.

Childhood friend Marvin Carters said, “Fred always took time with everybody. He talked on everyone’s level...Nobody was a stranger to him.”¹¹ In elementary school Fred’s caring for people began to show to more than his family. “At Irving Elementary School in Maywood, he was captain of the patrol boys, whose responsibility was to control traffic as they assisted fellow students to safely cross city streets.”¹² Along with working with the patrol boys, Fred conducted study sessions. Edward Penny Hatchett, another childhood friend, said that “in the mornings before we went to school, when his mother and daddy went to work, all of the kids (not just black kids, white kids also) came to his house to do their homework.”¹³

After his years at Irving Elementary, Fred went on to Proviso East High School, where he continued to grow as an advocate and activist for justice and equality. While there, he was involved in numerous activities that eventually even drew the attention of a recruiter for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). According to community activist Nancy Walker, Fred confronted negative situations with the teachers at the school where “they were using racial slurs with the children and he did not accept it.”¹⁴ He led protests against that. Fred was in secondary school during a time when there was intense racial conflict. His town of Maywood, Illinois was not immune from the tensions of the times. In the early to mid sixties, Maywood, was a “predominantly white suburb... race riots would break out during the school day, and teachers would have to lock the doors as police cleared the building

¹¹ Hampton, 50.

¹² Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 54.

¹³ Hampton, 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

floor by floor.¹⁵ Many would consider that these factors would have had a greatly negative effect on the route that Fred would take in life, yet instead they helped lead to his interest in civil rights and began his journey to activism against racial discrimination.

After applying for an administrative position unsuccessfully for six years, it was because of Fred that Charles Anderson said he was hired as dean in charge of attendance.¹⁶ Fred Hampton has been credited as having been instrumental in the hiring of more blacks at Proviso East, as teachers and administrators. In high school he worked various jobs including work as a grocery stock boy, a dishwasher, and factory worker, while he also helped other black teenagers find jobs.¹⁷ With his savings from these jobs, he enrolled in Crane Junior College, which is now named Malcolm X College.¹⁸ According to Harry McNelty, former pastor of the First Baptist Church in Melrose Park, Fred was “responsible for the swimming pool, Black teachers and coaches at Proviso East and West High Schools and Triton, village jobs and open housing. Many People are in positions today because of Fred Hampton.”¹⁹ Fred also led a student protest against the policy that only allowed white girls to be nominated for homecoming queen. This led to the students electing their first black homecoming queen.²⁰ Fred led campaigns against unfair treatment of black students and athletes at his school, and he was elected president of the Junior Achievement program.²¹ Paul Wade, a Proviso East schoolmate, recalls “an incident in ’65 here in Maywood, when one of our peers got locked up and we went down and protested for his

¹⁵ Sam Bouman, “Fed by Fear: The FBI’s Crusade Against Fred Hampton and the Black Panthers” (Baltimore, MD, 2003), http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/researchcourse/images/4_Hampton_NHD_paper.pdf (Accessed March 22, 2012). This essay placed sixth in the nation at National History Day in 2003.

¹⁶ Hampton, 19.

¹⁷ Haas, 19.

¹⁸ Flint Taylor and Dennis Cunningham. Fred Hampton 20th Commemoration, The December 4th Committee, <http://peopleslawoffice.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Hampton.-20th-Anniversary-Booklet-1989.pdf>, accessed September 30, 2014, 11.

¹⁹ Hampton, 46.

²⁰ Haas, 19.

²¹ Williams, 55.

release because he was locked up unjustly. He's a state representative here right now."²²

Reflecting back on his days of working with Fred, Eugene Moore wrote "I must admit Fred laid the ultimate groundwork for me being a state representative. I have to give him credit."²³

Although Fred Hampton's life was later cut short, it is clear that his influence as a leader, activist, and advocate for justice began at an early age. The range of activities that he was involved in to help the people of his community would be impressive as a lifetime of achievements for most people. Yet, the fact that these things were all accomplished before he graduated from high school in 1966 shows that Fred Hampton was no ordinary young man.

Hampton operated without regard or prejudice against anyone, of any race. Speaking about Fred, Darren Arnsen, another Proviso East schoolmate stated

He took me out of a world of ignorance to make me realize people were all equal and many white teachers at school refused to want to acknowledge that a black man like Fred had that kind of knowledge and charisma... As a Swedish American, I deeply understand what Fred Hampton, an African American, was doing for all of society.²⁴

By high school it was clear that Hampton's color or youth was not hindering him from already crossing racial lines and becoming a respected and valued leader that was working to make a positive difference in a society where there were so many lines of division, too often thanks to the construct of race.

During Hampton's Proviso days, NAACP recruiter Donald Williams had been interested in starting a youth branch of the NAACP in the area. Williams had been interested in a popular high school athlete named Al Newness. Newness declined to help him build a branch, but he suggested that Williams try to recruit Fred Hampton.²⁵ Williams successfully recruited Fred, and

²² Hampton, 10.

²³ Ibid., 51.

²⁴ Ibid., 47.

²⁵ Ibid., 12.

Hampton began to grow the Maywood NAACP Youth branch. “At one time there were about 100-125 members.”²⁶ Flint Taylor and Dennis Cunningham suggest “Fred was only fourteen years old when he helped to organize and grow this youth branch from these smaller numbers to about seven hundred members.”²⁷ Although Fred was more likely to have been about seventeen when he helped start the West Suburban Youth Chapter of the NAACP in 1965, Hampton was well on his way along the journey of activism which was to dominate the rest of his short life.

As a means of measurement, with a brief examination of the lives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, anyone should easily note that by the age of seventeen, the positive community impact of Fred Hampton far surpassed those of either King or Malcolm X. It is well known that Martin left high school and began college at the age of fifteen. He had skipped the ninth grade and passed college entrance exams in the eleventh grade. Martin possessed educational prowess and found success unmatched by Malcolm or Fred, and few others. As historian Stephen B. Oates explained, “due to the demands of World War II and conscription drawing off Negro college students, Atlanta’s Morehouse College started admitting exceptional high school juniors.”²⁸ The levels of schooling that he achieved helped to propel him into the national spotlight and become known concretely in history as “Dr. King,” after having completed his doctoral studies at Boston University. Educationally Martin and Fred did not compare. Yet by the age of seventeen, when Martin was a sophomore in college, the only accomplishments that had gained him any public notice was his having won an oratorical contest in the eleventh grade, by speaking on the “Negro and the Constitution.”²⁹ He would then go on to in the “oratorical forum, where he had won first prize in the Webb Oratorical Contest in his sophomore year” at

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Taylor and Cunningham, 1.

²⁸ Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr* (New York, N.Y.: New American Library, 1985), 15.

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

Morehouse.³⁰ This was the public's main knowledge of Martin by the age of seventeen. He was smart, getting a good education, and he was a good speaker. But he was no community activist – yet.

By the age of seventeen, in stark contrast to Martin, Malcolm Little (who would become known as Malcolm X) had his own growing reputation. But it was not a socially positive one. Nor was he working in any way to uplift his community. Malcolm had lost his father, due to violence, at the age of six. By thirteen he had unsuccessfully tried to start boxing, and he had been expelled from school, but would later be elected his seventh grade class president at another school during his “reform” period. Malcolm maintained some of the highest grades in the entire school. After being discouraged about his expressed interests in becoming a lawyer, and then being encouraged to become a carpenter, Malcolm gave up on education at that time. In the chapter Dashed Hopes, from his book *Malcolm, The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America*, author Bruce Perry writes “from class president to class carpenter was a comedown Malcolm understandably took hard” and according to Perry, Malcolm later admitted to having just given up.³¹ Malcolm soon ran into more problems in foster homes and in school and was then relocated from Lansing, Michigan to Boston by his older sister Ella. Upon moving to Boston, and soon onwards to Harlem in New York City, Malcolm began his life of numbers running, involvement with prostitution, drug use, drug sales, and gambling. All of this was a part of his normal day-to-day life, by the time he was seventeen. In his autobiography with Alex Haley, Malcolm stated, “everyday, I cleared at least fifty or sixty dollars. In those days this was a fortune to a seventeen year old negro.”³²

³⁰ David L. Lewis, *King: A Critical Biography* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 24.

³¹ Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 1991), 42.

³² Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 99.

In any discussion of the Civil Rights Era there are two pillars that are constantly and unanimously considered: Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Neither of these two greats made as much of a community impact as Fred Hampton had by the age of seventeen.

For Fred it had already begun. It may not have occurred like a “big bang,” but Fred Hampton, the activist, was evolving. His fight to improve the life of blacks in his community, while working tirelessly to educate other groups about the injustices and inequalities that were constantly experienced by blacks, at various economic levels, was underway. One friend, Henry English, stated, “His brain was like a sponge. He could read a book so quickly, he absorbed so much knowledge.”³³ Fred was an avid reader and as he transitioned from high school to college – and to adult life, his understanding and criticisms of society grew from local issues to national and even worldwide struggles of equality and injustice. And as his viewpoint expanded, so did his vision and fight for the equality of all people, not just blacks. He would eventually attempt to address the cries of justice for all people, of all colors.

In 1965 he started the West Suburban Youth Chapter of the NAACP.³⁴ Fred graduated from high school in 1966. Even before he left high school, it seems that he had found his niche in his community. He was already a recognized and outspoken leader. He was actively making a difference for the people of his community. Former Hampton family attorney and author Jeffrey Haas wrote

In 1966 high school senior Fred Hampton was working on his own version of black empowerment. He set up a black cultural center in Maywood with a black history section and continued his campaign to hire more black teachers and administrators at Proviso East.³⁵

³³ Hampton, 50.

³⁴ Haas, 20.

³⁵ Ibid., 28.

By the time that Fred Hampton was finished with high school, and shortly thereafter, he had made an impression on NAACP leaders, and he was already a recognized community activist. After Proviso, although he only had about four years left to live, new roles of leadership and recognition were opening up to him. In his role as an activist, he was coming alive.

2.2 The Pool

“Beat the heat and enjoy a summer with friends and family at the Fred Hampton Aquatic Center!”³⁶

*West Cook YMCA
Maywood, Illinois
Present day*

One of the major projects that Fred Hampton took on during his life was to have a pool built for the black children of Maywood, Illinois. By the summer of 1966, shortly after he had graduated from high school, Fred Hampton had taken note of the fact that there was not a public pool for the children of Maywood to use. He began to speak to people about this, openly expressing his feeling that this lack of a swimming pool was unfair to the people of Maywood, particularly the children. Although a town without a public swimming pool may not sound like a problem to arouse protest, some Chicago residents noticed the lack of access to public swimming facilities for those in lower economic situations. Hampton decided to take action.

Hampton had observed that the nearest public pool was located in Melrose Park, which is about two to three miles from Maywood. The problem was that the pool in Maywood was only open for white people. Because of this, Fred would gather the neighborhood children that wanted to swim and travel to Brookfield, which is about four to five miles away. According to his

³⁶ “Fred Hampton Aquatic Center - West Cook YMCA,” Fred Hampton Aquatic Center, <http://www.westcookymca.org/locations/aquatic-center/fred-hampton-aquatic-center/> (accessed October 12, 2014).

mother, “He would ride the buses every morning to Brookfield with the kids so they could swim there. Sometimes he would make two trips. He would ride the bus with one group and then come back and take another load.”³⁷ Fred was dedicated to the young people of his community, and his work towards an unrestricted swimming pool was one more example of this dedication. His mother also pointed out that his work for the pool was prompted because of his own desires to wade in the water. “When he was trying to arrange to get a pool for the children—he didn’t swim,” his mother said, “in fact he never swam.”³⁸

Some people like Jann Beauchamp, former school board president in Bellwood, Illinois, believe that Hampton was ahead of his time with his work for rights and benefits of others.³⁹ His work embraced the overall agenda of the Civil Rights Movement and as a northerner, he like others, may have been overlooked thus far by historians due to the general focus on the activists of the southern struggle. One might speculate that if Hampton had done the very same things during his life in a southern city like Birmingham, he may already be a much more studied and recognized Civil Rights figure. But Maywood, Illinois is where Hampton began to make his mark in history, as he fought against the racial barriers that hindered black Maywood childhood from enjoyable recreation. Fred recognized that having good outlets for the children would help to keep them out of trouble, especially during their summer school breaks. According to community activist Nancy Walker, Fred, along with other members of the Youth branch of the NAACP, “wanted activities for the children in Maywood.” Fred wanted to see a pool for the Maywood children, “plus a recreation center.”⁴⁰ Most people familiar with Fred Hampton are aware of his work to have a pool built in Maywood, but fewer people know that he was also

³⁷ Hampton, 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 25.

calling for a recreation center to be built. Beverlynn Ivory, grade school educator, echoes this: “What he wanted was a total athletic or recreation center, not just an outdoor pool,” she said.⁴¹ Apparently Fred was able to make the same correlation that other historians, sociologists, and journalists have made - it is a social benefit for communities with access to a pool, and other recreational facilities. Young people with more options are less likely to get into trouble or to cause any trouble.

In her 2012 *New York Times* article, author Martha Southgate states, “It has been documented that before slavery, many West Africans could and did swim. But a slave who could swim was a slave with another means of escape, so slave owners went to great lengths to make it impossible to keep this skill alive.”⁴² It has been documented that black people in America were discouraged from swimming while slavery was in place. In his article “Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World”, Kevin Dawson discusses the challenges of slaves that were used for specific, water related labors, such as divers, and the scrutinies they faced. In her discussion of slaves and the ability to swim, Marie Jenkins Schwartz states that swimming “increased a slave’s chance of escape in adulthood, because men and dogs found it difficult to track a slave who could traverse waterways. Some owners actively discouraged slaves from swimming, and others only tolerated it.”⁴³ It is from this background that segregation in the recreational activity of swimming took hold.

The segregation of public pools was not new or specific to the region of Chicago. During the post World War II years, across the United States, public pools became more and more segregated, as did society in general. In his book *Contested Waters, A Social History of*

⁴¹ Ibid., 21.

⁴² Martha Southgate, “Water Damage.” *The New York Times*, August 10, 2012.

⁴³ Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 130.

Swimming Pools in America, Jeff Wiltse says “the onset of racial segregation at municipal swimming pools was a part of a larger social and intellectual transformation that occurred in the urban North between the two world wars.”⁴⁴ This recreational racial divide worked to deprive many young black children all across the country of access to swimming pools during summers when high temperatures would frustrate residents in overcrowded and under privileged communities. Too often urban rebellions arose as a result of these types of frustrations. For instance, one night in Chicago in 1968, some children had been playing in an open fire hydrant, which was their only access to relief from the summer heat. Two police officers came and closed the hydrant. Residents defiantly reopened it, and this led to a confrontation between police and the community. James G. Allen, a worker for the community group, West Side Organization, explained:

There was a swimming pool, but they tore it up for Mayor Daley’s expressway. There are swimming pools in white neighborhoods that we can’t go to without being beaten so there is only the fire hydrant. Now they say it is against the law to use them for other than fires. The fire hydrants run all the time in the white neighborhood on Taylor street and the precinct captain has the wrench. But since the white man won’t let us exercise our right to go to the beaches, then are we supposed to suffer in this 100-plus heat? I say No!⁴⁵

Allen was a witness as rocks, bricks, and bottles bombarded the police and as the police retaliated by beating residents and then calling in fire and military reinforcements. The result of this show of force by the authorities included about 300 arrests, and police officers were shot and injured by the rocks and bricks. This outbreak drew attention from various levels. There were responses from local officials, and led to responses as high up as the White House. Locally, leaders began to examine what Jeff Wiltse describes as the “lack of municipal pools in Chicago’s

⁴⁴ Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 125.

⁴⁵ Allen, James G., Jr. 1966. Here's How Westsider Explains the Outbreak. *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)* (1921-1967), Jul 16, 1966.

black neighborhoods [which] dated back to the Progressive Era.”⁴⁶ After the three days of unrest and violence, at the state level, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner dispatched 1500 National Guardsmen, and authorized them to respond with deadly force if they attacked or fired on. At the national level President Lyndon Johnson announced “federal ‘anti-poverty’ grants would be used to fund swimming pools for ‘disadvantaged youth’ in cities across the country.”⁴⁷ The response from the federal government was swift because within 30 days funding was disbursed for pools across the nation, and the city of Chicago was included on the list of major cities that received monies. It is easy to reason that if news of the trouble in Chicago’s west side reached President Johnson, in Washington DC, the local leaders, like Fred Hampton of the NAACP’s youth division were informed as well.

It is my theory that these events, in Chicago, during July of 1966, helped to inspire Fred Hampton in his efforts to have a pool built for the children of Maywood, Illinois. The level of response that was used in this confrontation by the authorities may have well played a part of leading Hampton to take up a more radical, anti-police stance. For Hampton and others it may have been reminiscent of Little Rock and the Freedom Rides to see the National Guard called on residents – this time because of using a fire hydrant. From Hampton’s and the resident’s perspective, the rebellions, using weapons like bricks and rocks, may have seemed to be the only means of retaliation for limiting the community’s ability to simply find relief from extreme heat. This event could have been a factor that led Hampton to later adopt the Black Panther Party (BPP) practice of “policing” the police.⁴⁸ Whatever the motivation, Hampton was determined to

⁴⁶ Wiltse., 186.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 187.

⁴⁸ One of the common practices of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense was monitoring the police. This was due to the prevalence of police harassment and brutality that was commonplace in black communities across the nation. A reference often used by the Panthers to describe their monitoring of law enforcement was ‘policing’ the police. Often this led to confrontations between the Panthers and the police.

see more recreational options in Maywood. Unfortunately the pool was not built until after his death. In 1970, while addressing the Maywood Village board, about the name for the newly built pool, Ted Elbert said:

In earlier discussions about the name, someone said it should be a memorial. Unfortunately, now Fred Hampton meets that qualification also. If there's hesitancy about naming the pool after someone who's been in jail, then consider there would be no churches named "St. Paul" and no schools named after Thoreau, and the city of Chicago would not have named a junior college "Malcolm X."⁴⁹

At present the West Cook YMCA website greets everyone with the bright and happy salutation of "beat the heat...at the Fred Hampton Aquatic Center!"⁵⁰ Today, not only is there a pool, but there is also an entire aquatic center that is dedicated by name, to Fred Hampton in Maywood. This center is one of the tangible legacies that stand in honor of Hampton.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁰ "Fred Hampton Aquatic Center - West Cook YMCA," Fred Hampton Aquatic Center, <http://www.westcookymca.org/locations/aquatic-center/fred-hampton-aquatic-center/> (accessed October 12, 2014).

3 CHAPTER TWO: FOR THE PEOPLE

Why don't you live for the people? Why don't you struggle for the people? Why don't you die for the people?

Fred Hampton

After his 1966 high school graduation, the sands of time began to run out for Fred Hampton. He would be dead by the end of 1969. Yet so much was left for him to accomplish in his few remaining years. It might be noted that many of the people, through the span of decades that can be considered as part of the Civil Right Movement Era were often young when they got involved. Fred was not only involved while young, but was emerging as a serious leader. His efforts to have recreational options for black Maywood youths continued until his death. But so much more would fill his remaining days. Soul singer Tyrone Davis has told the story of how he first met Fred Hampton.

He and about eight or ten Black Panthers came into Mr. Ricky's on 55th street in Chicago. He had everybody stop the music and he came near the bar and I thought to myself, this is a stick-up or this man is crazy. Finally he started talking strongly and loud and I was amazed how he got those Black folks to stop partying and listen to him. I never even saw Dr. Martin Luther King do that. I mean he got their full attention and he made sense.⁵¹

Davis' story reflects the way that Fred Hampton was able to command the attention of those around him. It also reflects a degree of connectivity with the community that he lived and worked in. After joining the NAACP, Fred became a very popular, and well respected community figure in the Chicago area. His community presence grew out of his leadership with Maywood's West Suburban NAACP Youth Council and grew from there, as he later joined the Black Panthers. After joining the NAACP, Fred exposed himself to the community as an official leader. Also, it was during Fred's days as a youth leader of the Chicago NAACP that he began to show more of his organizing and leadership abilities.

⁵¹ Hampton, 52.

Hampton was a natural magnet when he appeared in public. According to Laura Whitehorn, a former member of the radical group known as the Weathermen, “He [Fred] was a wonderful speaker. And every time he would speak in Chicago there would be huge crowds. And he inspired people tremendously.”⁵² The individuals and groups that Fred connected with ranged from blacks, whites, and Hispanics, to church clergy and street gang members. Fred touched the lives of young and old alike. Three of the main ways that Hampton was able to make a community impact will now be discussed.

First, will be an examination of some of Hampton’s efforts on behalf the Chicago community. In particular, it should be recognized that a great portion of his work was on behalf of children. From his days as a part of the NAACP, young Fred organized and arranged recreation and entertainment for the young people in the area. This was something that he continued after his transition into the BPP. Also, Hampton was not only a major coordinator of the Panther’s now famous Free Breakfast program, that will be discussed later, but some credit him as the originator of this program, at least, in the area of Chicago. Hampton himself credits the national leader, Chairman Bobby Seale, as being the “father of the breakfast for children program.”⁵³ Along with his work to feed the underprivileged children of the area, Hampton also worked to have medical services established for the community. These services were not only for the children, but also were for adults. Entire families were helped. And one of the main reasons this was so appreciated by the community was no one was to be charged for any care. Entertainment, food, and medical care were just three ways that will be looked at to illustrate how Hampton lived out his own charge of living for the people.

⁵² *The Weather Underground: The Explosive Story of America’s Most Notorious Revolutionaries*, DVD, directed by Sam Green and Bill Siegel (Berkeley, California: The Free History Project, 2003).

⁵³ “I Am a Revolutionary - Fred Hampton,” NothingToBeGainedHere, <https://nothingtobegainedhere.wordpress.com/2011/08/30/i-am-a-revolutionary-fred-hampton/> (accessed February 12, 2014). Internet compilation of recorded interviews with Fred Hampton, Sr. and Bobby Rush.

Second, Hampton lived out his charge of struggling for the people. One of the major projects that he took on faced the entire city of Chicago: gang violence. He helped bring about not only a ceasefire within local gangs, but a coalition of cooperation between gangs. This was one of Hampton's accomplishments that is often mistakenly credited to Jesse Jackson, who later headed up a civil rights organization named the Rainbow Coalition. (The name was originally attributed to the organization that Hampton created.)

The third example of Fred Hampton's work may be the part that led to his fulfilling the third part of his prophetic charge – 'why don't you die for the people'. Hampton made a significant impact on the politics of Chicago. Not only through his community work, but also by his eventual assassination, Hampton helped the people of color in the Chicago area realize the power of politics at their disposal. This chapter will show how Hampton lived his own words of challenge. Through his work, struggle, and eventual death, Fred helped empower his community politically.

3.1 The Life

As mentioned already, Donald Williams was the person that recruited Fred Hampton to the NAACP. Donald Williams was able to see the potential for leadership in Fred and as Hampton helped to grow the Maywood Youth branch of the NAACP, Williams knew that he had found the right person. Williams was witness to Hampton's use of limited resources to grow organizations. Sometimes the limited resources were limited people. Williams stated, "When I met him he had about ten buddies."⁵⁴ From motivating these few, loose knit, friends, Hampton began to grow the West Suburban Youth chapter of the NAACP. Leaving the leadership and

⁵⁴ Hampton, 13.

recruitment to Hampton, Williams noted that Hampton's "stature as a civil rights activist was increasing and we would hear from time to time about some of the things he was doing...this particular charismatic ability that he had, transcended age, gender, race and ethnicity."⁵⁵

According to Hampton's mother, while he was still a member of the NAACP, "Fred gave parties for the children at Irving school every Friday night. He bought t-shirts for NAACP kids." It could be seen clearly that young Fred, even while still a teen-ager, had a real love for the youth of his community. From his days in the NAACP, more and more people in the Chicago began to hear about this young leader. In 1967, Fred led out in speaking up for improvements in employment and open housing for blacks.⁵⁶

While still in the NAACP, Hampton met, marched, and worked with numerous black leaders. William Taylor, labor leader and president of the workers union at the Corn Plant, is noted as having marched with Hampton and Dr. King on several occasions. But on one occasion, Taylor remembers that after a heckler spit in the face of a female marcher, Fred later told Dr. King "he couldn't keep marching for nonviolence in the face of the violent mobs around them."⁵⁷ Fred was an example of how many young black on Chicago's Westside were not sold on Dr. King's nonviolence stance. Hampton expressed "we don't need nonviolence with a violent people. You don't need to practice religion with people who don't practice it themselves."⁵⁸ Another time, Hampton met with Stokely Carmichael, when Carmichael was in Chicago working to help negotiations with the Blackstone Rangers, a black street gang found in numerous cities across the nation, and Hampton introduced Carmichael when he gave a speech at the Masonic

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Williams, 58.

⁵⁷ Haas, 30.

⁵⁸ Barbara A. Reynolds, *Jesse Jackson, America's David* (Washington, D.C.: JFJ Associates, 1985), 92.

Temple in Maywood, Illinois.⁵⁹ Jesse Jackson said that it during their work together on a boycott against local A&P supermarkets that he fully recognized Fred’s “charisma and leadership qualities and most of all his very strong sense of dedication.”⁶⁰ Besides Bobby Rush, another friend of Hampton’s that would become a United States Congressman is Danny Davis. Davis recalls that Fred “could excite audiences with the passion he displayed. I will always remember how one so young could be so profound.”⁶¹ John Conyers, United States Congressman for Michigan, is also a friend of the Hampton family and referred to Fred as “a very highly thought of young Black activist” in a 1988 interview.⁶² Fred’s days of NAACP activity were busy and brought him to the attention of many figures of varied types of celebrity, and all the while, he was still working, organizing, and even marching, to get the swimming pool and recreation center established for his Maywood youth.

Another activity that endeared Hampton to his community was numerous television appearances. He not only appeared repeatedly on the local television show *Russ Meeks Up in Here*, he also appeared on the local Warner Saunders’ television show.⁶³ Russell Meeks was a black journalist that had not only hosted local black talk shows, but he was also involved in the Harlem Civil Rights Congress, the Southern Christian Leadership (SCLC), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers, and PUSH.⁶⁴ Russell Meeks named his daughter Fredricka after Hampton, and then sent her to Hampton University in Virginia.⁶⁵ While on these shows, Hampton would be a natural and active recruiter for the NAACP, and later for

⁵⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: a Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2014), 250.

⁶⁰ Hampton, 48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶² “Interview with John Conyers,” Eyes on the Prize II Interviews, <http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eii/eiiweb/con5427.0541.034johnconyers.html> (accessed January 22, 2015). Interview with Rep. John Conyers, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on October 31, 1988, for . Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

⁶³ Williams, 58.

⁶⁴ “Our City: Social Activist, Journalist, Teacher Russell Meek Passes,” *Chicago Defender*, February 23-25, 2007, 6.

⁶⁵ Hampton, 44.

the BPP. As part of the NAACP, Fred worked to send food and clothing the needy in Mississippi, and he also helped to establish and run a black cultural center in Maywood that specialized in black books and black apparel. Much of this became popular to the youth of the area.⁶⁶

Hampton was known to spend much of his time reading and absorbing materials that probably would not have appealed to the average Chicago youth of his day. Some of the writings that interested Fred included material about communism, political revolution, and world leaders like China's Mao Tse Tung. It is from these types of readings that Fred's revolutionary ideas began to grow. As the title of one of his speeches says, "It's a Class Struggle, Godamnit", more and more Fred was developing ideas that looked at American society as unfairly stratified.

Fred spent a few years working with the NAACP. He continued with that organization until he met Lennie Eggleston, a member of the BPP. According to Jon Rice's article "The World of the Illinois Panthers", Fred considered himself a black nationalist while he was still a member of the NAACP.⁶⁷ It was in 1968 when Lennie Eggleston, on tour for the BPP, came to Chicago. Joan Elbert, a friend of Hampton's, was asked by Karl Lutze, the director of the Lutheran Human Relations Association, to house Eggleston. After being somewhat intimidated by Lennie, Joan asked Fred to come over and speak with him. This was the first Black Panther that the Elberts (Ted and Joan) and Fred had ever met.⁶⁸ Over the next days, Fred and Lennie went on to discuss the black struggle, but race was overshadowed by the discussion about the struggle of poverty.

Eggleston explained that black people, although a poor minority, still had the power to define their own reality and could use class solidarity as a tool to unite

⁶⁶ Williams, 57

⁶⁷ Jon Rice. "The World of the Illinois Panthers," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 50.

⁶⁸ Hampton, 30.

the poor and revolutionize America...Fred Hampton agreed that a movement that transcended race was revolutionary and original...Hampton envisioned a revolution of the poor, composed of warriors from all the “tribes” united to fight the dominant power structure.⁶⁹

This encounter led to Fred’s break from the NAACP and the formation of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (ILBPP), of which Fred Hampton would become deputy Chairman. Fred began to consider joining the BPP after meeting Lennie Eggleston but at that point in 1968 no official chapter of the BPP was in the Chicago area, but this would soon change.

Unbeknownst to Hampton at the time, young men on both the West and South sides had organized unofficial and separate entities of the Party. On the South Side, Bobby Rush and Bob Brown, former SNCC members, and workers for the Chicago Freedom Movement (which had been led by others including Dr. King) opened a BPP office, with the help of Alderman Sam Rayner. Meanwhile, on the West Side, Drew Ferguson and Jewel Cook also formed a BPP chapter. This West Side group included former members of the Deacons for Defense and Justice and some former Vice Lords (a local street gang). After the arrest of two Panthers on a flight from New York to California that made an emergency landing in Chicago, since the South Side branch was the only Chicago branch with a phone, BPP leadership in Oakland reached out the South Side group for help to gain the release of their Panthers from jail. For their successful action in securing the release of the imprisoned Panthers, the South Side group was granted an official charter, and became the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (ILBPP). On November 1, 1968 the West Side group was merged with the South Side group and they opened the ILBPP headquarters at 2350 Madison Street in Chicago. The founding members included Bobby Rush, Bob Brown, Jewel Cook, Drew Ferguson, Henry English, Bob Clay, Rufus Walls, and others. The ILLBPP formatted their branch according to structure of the main national

⁶⁹ Rice, 50-51.

leadership based in Oakland. The national leadership consisted of various departmental leaders, referred to as ministers. The hierarchy consisted of a minister for defense, education, finance, communication, and culture, to name a few. The national leader, Huey Newton, was recognized as the national chairman of the BPP. Following this structure, Rush, Brown, Cook, Clay and other took deputy positions for the same departments, and all agreed to appoint Fred Hampton as their deputy chairman and leader of the branch.⁷⁰

One of the main founders of the ILBPP was Bobby Rush. One of the main things that drew Hampton to the attention of Rush was his outspoken and fiery speech. Hampton stayed quite busy after joining the BPP and maintained a heavy calendar as the main, visible recruiter for the branch. Fred was the lead person that gave speeches as a means of recruitment. Much of the recruitment work led by Fred and Bobby Rush was through engaging students at high schools and various college campuses.⁷¹ In 1968, Chicago had a strong student presence in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement. Author and professor Jakobi Williams explains that it was as activists in this student-led movement that many of the Chicago Panthers, including Fred Hampton, first developed their grassroots organizing and leadership skills. In his book *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, Williams shares a list of eleven Illinois colleges and universities that were successfully targeted by the ILBPP.⁷² By early 1969 new branches of the BPP were springing throughout Illinois. The first new branch outside of Chicago was established in Maywood, Hampton's hometown. Others branches were soon started in Argo, Rockford, Joliet, Peoria, and later East St. Louis.

⁷⁰ Williams. 62-65. This structure is also explained by Jon Rice's chapter, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 52.

⁷¹ Williams, 74.

⁷² Williams, 77.

Fred Hampton worked not only as the main spokesman but also as the lead administrator of the branch, and took responsibility for its morale and spirit. Fred's common mantra was "power to the people." The Panthers thrived on a type of emotional rush and it was an empowering attitude, often originating from Fred's enthusiasm that seemed to have an uplifting effect in the community. Author Jon, Rice says, "When one became a Panther one wanted to serve the people. Pimps stopped pimping to serve the people, and the gang-bangers quit their gangs to join the Panthers."⁷³ Fred was very tuned to the people as he stood before them and had learned how to work a crowd. One of his repeat methods of stirring up the crowds that rallied before him was his discussion of what he called 'the beat'.

Just clap your hands for me. This is what we call—you don't have to clap too loud—This is what we call the people beat. It's a beat that was started in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. It's a beat that never stops because it's the beat they got because they knew it couldn't be stopped. It's the beat that manifested in you, the people... They can never stop the Party unless they stop the beat. As long as you manifest the Beat, we can never be stopped.⁷⁴

During the summer of 1968 Hampton was arrested for stealing ice cream from a local truck vendor. In April of 1969 he was found guilty and released on a two thousand dollar bond, pending sentencing on May 13. In May 1969 he was then sentenced to serve a two to five year sentence at the state penitentiary in Menard.⁷⁵ Iberia Hampton tells that Fred was busy cutting the grass when the police showed up. Still the local NAACP youth leader, Fred went over to see what was going on. She said that Fred told her that he knew who had taken the ice cream but

⁷³ Rice, 53.

⁷⁴ Fred Hampton Sr. Three Speeches by Fred Hampton: It's A Class Struggle, Godamnit! *Vita Wa Watu: A New Afrikan Theoretical Journal*, August 1987, 19. Speech given by Fred Hampton at Northern University, November 1969.

⁷⁵ "Panther Chief Freed by Jones," *Chicago Defender*, April 9, 1969, Cover story. This is also discussed by Flint Taylor and Dennis Cunningham in Fred Hampton 20th Commemoration, The December 4th Committee, <http://peopleslawoffice.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Hampton.-20th-Anniversary-Booklet-1989.pdf>, accessed September 30, 2014, on pages 3-4.

would not tell.⁷⁶ In August of 1969 Fred was released after the Illinois Supreme Court granted him bond on appeal. The day after his release from Menard, Hampton went before the people of his community that were gathered at the church of the epiphany, commonly known in the neighborhood as the People's Church. During the speech he gave that day, Fred talked about a point while he was in prison when he "was on the concrete floor and he put his ear to the ground and he heard the beat of the people."⁷⁷ Hampton went on during that speech to talk about being glad to be free again and then told every there that he was "high off the people."⁷⁸ Fred knew how to work a crowd. His studies of Dr. King, Malcolm X and others were paying off.

Yet Hampton's oratory was not without controversy. One of the clear differences between the styles of Dr. King, Malcolm X, and Fred Hampton, was Hampton's blunt use of common curse words throughout his speeches. Fred often referred to himself as a revolutionary, and his style of public speaking was revolutionary and revolting for many at the time. Some today still criticize him and are not able to get past the street language that Fred used in his public discourse. The speculation can be made that Fred was still a very young man, only twenty-one by the time he was killed, and the course language that he frequently used was a reflection simply of his youth. Developing the skill of public speaking is not only the ability to learn how to affect your audience with words, it also requires learning the command of the correct wording that most concisely expresses one's thoughts. Study, experience, and age add to the command of language and the discretion that may sometimes be called for in different settings. Had Fred Hampton had the chance to grow older, his unbridled and fiery speech may have become a bit tamed and less offensive in content. Fred's speeches, although impressive and moving to many, when examined from a literary perspective, showed clear limits in outline and

⁷⁶ William Hampton, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁸ Haas, 1.

structure. Many of his speeches seemed to lack order. In presentation he was often very successfully received, but this was mainly due to his boldness in saying things that many in the community felt, but would never say publicly, and due to his sincere challenging of the status quo on behalf of the people of his community. As discussed in Chapter One, many of his speeches included words that are considered as curse words. He freely and extensively used the racially charged word “nigger”. He often insulted other public figures, with words that would have led many young people into fistfights. It was common for Fred to not only insult but also threaten police and politicians alike. Author Jeffrey Ogbar shares “Fred Hampton explained that profanity in the Panther’s language was an effective way to relate to the people who would otherwise not relate to the message,” but Ogbar adds “the popular use of profanity deviated from all major black organizations.”⁷⁹ In his 1969 “Power Anywhere Where There’s People” speech delivered at the Olivet Church, Fred includes the terms “bullshitting”, “motherfucker”, and “goddamnit”, as a part of his emphatic close to the speech. Use of profanity in a church would still be considered bad judgment today. This type of rhetoric played its part in the mainstream media representing the Panthers as simply another angry, violent, street gang, with loud-mouthed Hampton at the helm in Illinois. In his thesis Todd Fraley states “the media was not going to be an ally in their fight since the media was not set up to assist an organization that was so far removed from the status quo.”⁸⁰ The Panthers and Hampton never received true objective mainstream media coverage during the days of Fred’s leadership. Simply put, newspapers like the Chicago Tribune were against the Panthers, while newspapers like the Defender gave an antithetical story of the BPP and Fred Hampton. The BPP went on to print their own periodical, *The Black Panther*.

⁷⁹ Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, Reconfiguring American Political History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 106-107.

⁸⁰ Fraley, 20.

While the black press and radical press attempted to raise issues and questions surrounding the relationship between the Panthers and the power structure, the Panthers did not have the support of the Tribune. As the conflict between police and Panthers gained attention and became a defining feature within its context, governmental/official responses to the Panthers problems (arrests, jailings, and death by government agents) were justified as a way to extinguish a serious ill for the betterment of ‘greater’ society.⁸¹

Critic or fan, whichever side one may end up on, Hampton made a great impact through his passionate words. Historian and author Jakobi Williams states, “Fred Hampton is perhaps best remembered for his oratorical skills.”⁸² Many great leaders of the past decades, subject to the coverage of the modern video and audio empowered media have shown growth in their choice of style and vocabulary as they progressed through their careers. Fred Hampton may have done the same had he had the chance.

3.2 The Struggle

Hampton endured many challenges as the ILBPP deputy chairman. It was during his this period of his remaining life that Fred may have faced the situations that could be classified as struggles. Even before his BPP days the local police of Maywood Illinois constantly harassed Fred. His mother Iberia said “he was treated cruelly by the police.” She continued to say “they harassed him about a Volkswagen car Francis (his father) had bought for him. They locked Fred in jail and tried to take away his car until they found out it was in Francis’ name... They messed with him so [much] about the car so Francis took the car and sold it.”⁸³ Because of all the police harassment Fred dealt with he simply stopped driving. Few people knew of all the harassment that Fred faced as a young man. His mother and father were the main witnesses to the extent of trouble the police gave Fred before he became an area wide figure. Iberia said she received

⁸¹ Ibid., 33-34.

⁸² Williams, 58

⁸³ William Hampton, 4-5.

constant warning calls to come down to the jail to get Fred or he would have been jailed. She said the police locked Fred up for the marches he led at the local high school while protesting for a black homecoming queen. Iberia's version of the ice cream truck incident says that by the time Fred got to the truck it had already been stuck up, but when the police recognized Fred coming over, they took him in.⁸⁴ At one point in 1967 Fred and an older friend Jim Ivory were charged with 'mob action' and arrested while leading a protest at the Maywood Village Board. According to author Jeffrey Haas, it was after Fred's arrest for mob action that Fred was placed on the FBI's Key Agitator Index. This was a list of activists that J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI director, instructed his agents to monitor closely.⁸⁵

Once the FBI put Fred on the radar of the agency, Fred's struggles intensified. It became a continual thing for Fred to be harassed by the police, and the FBI often aided this. Jeffrey Haas tells that "on January 24, 1969 the Chicago police arrested Fred following an FBI tip that he was appearing on a local TV station. In front of the live cameras he was led away on an old traffic warrant."⁸⁶ These types of harassment could probably have been enough to discourage and quiet many individuals. Public record now shows that the FBI began a covert project aimed at monitoring and eventually causing the demise of Fred. An extensive file of almost two hundred pages has since been released publicly and this compilation of formerly classified documents does not include documentation about the surveillance of Hampton and the BPP, prior to Fred's demise. In another FBI document, dated December 11, 1969, the "tremendous value" of intel received by an infiltrator of the Chicago BPP, now known to be William O'Neal, is discussed. A request for special payment for this valuable information is made in this letter, and is subsequently approved. It is also now known that this invaluable intel included not only a floor

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Haas. 32.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

plan of Fred's apartment, but also a list of BPP members that either lived at or worked out of that location.⁸⁷

This time period in Chicago, roughly 1967, onwards to the end of the decade, was quite hectic for law enforcement agencies, in regards to the minority population. The activities of the NAACP and the BPP were increasing the push back from blacks about police harassment, brutality, and killings. Yet the authorities were not only dealing with disgruntled blacks, because the Hispanic population in the Chicago area was also struggling with many of the same discriminatory actions by the Police. This was a time when it was not popular or easy to be black or brown in the windy city. Author Lilia Fernandez writes

The community accused police of inciting interracial violence between Puerto Ricans and African Americans and then [refused] to intervene. While such cases often went unnoticed by the mainstream and more conservative press (like the Chicago Tribune), incidents of police brutality were more frequently reported in more liberal papers and the Spanish-language press.⁸⁸

Fernandez shares that as early as 1965 there were major tensions in the Chicago Hispanic community. "In June and July of 1965, officers savagely beat several Puerto Rican men over neighborhood use of fire hydrants."⁸⁹ This of course shows the similar plight of blacks and browns during the era of the Mayor Daley regime, as minorities often viewed it. Urban renewal also became a new challenge for much of Chicago's Puerto Rican population. It is because of what was felt to be "racially based mistreatment at the hands of police, slumlords, social workers, and other authorities" that eventually led to the formation of the group known as the Young Lords Organization (YLO).⁹⁰ At the lead of this Puerto Rican group was a young man

⁸⁷ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 139-41.

⁸⁸ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 164.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

named Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez. To mainstream Chicago, the YLO was nothing more than another street gang. However, “the Young Lords distinguished themselves from other Latino gangs in other neighborhoods in that they found themselves more deeply immersed in a radical political environment in Lincoln Park.”⁹¹ Fernandez further states “through his contacts with Hampton and other informal political education, Jimenez and Ralph Rivera (another YLO leader) developed their understanding of race -and class - based inequalities and began sharpening their political awareness.”⁹² Fred and Cha Cha were two of the first minority, street leaders to work together to build what would later become a coalition of peacekeepers in the Chicago area. They found common ground with their common enemy, the authorities, and the abuse prevalent in their communities. “Fred Hampton and other Panther’s for example, marched with the YLO, LADO (Latin American Defense Organization), and other organizations in support of welfare rights for poor mothers.”⁹³ Also, when YLO member Manuel Ramos was shot and killed by an off duty CPD officer, and no charges were filed, the Panthers supported the YLO protests and the Ramos funeral, dressed in full regalia, carrying the BPP flag.⁹⁴ This alliance that was started and built by Fred Hampton grew to include numerous other ethnic organizations and even street gangs. The greatest time of cooperation in the streets of Chicago was achieved thanks to the efforts, persuasion, appeals, and struggle of Fred Hampton and other leaders like Jose Jimenez. This was the beginning of Chicago’s Rainbow Coalition. Although most often associated with Jesse Jackson and his Operation PUSH, it is well documented that the premise and use of the Rainbow Coalition first started with Hampton, not Jackson. This coalition of cooperatives was not only a marvel due to the various ethnicities that came together, but also

⁹¹ Ibid., 183.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 190.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 187-188

because of the agreed cease fires that were achieved by Hampton and the other leaders, when Mayor Richard Daley and his administration had failed to make any significant headway in reducing the violence in the streets of Chicago.

Fred Hampton viewed of the underclass of Chicago was limited to the struggling blacks of the community, but extended beyond race to all of the people that were left out of the power structure. As a student of history, Hampton, like other Panthers, pieced together the similarities of the struggles of the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution, as well as the struggles of African people due to European colonization. Like the philosopher Frantz Fanon, Fred believed that the underclass, or “lumpen proletariat” was made up of struggling workers, the unemployed, petty criminals, and even pimps, who once “urged on from behind, [would] throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers [would] by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nation- hood.”⁹⁵ Thus Hampton worked to gather people from different races and ethnicities that shared in the class struggle to be a part of an alliance that would be revolutionary and that he hoped would bring about change to Chicago, and beyond. Fred declared “we’re gonna organize and dedicate ourselves to revolutionary political power and teach ourselves the specific needs of resisting the power structure.”⁹⁶

The authorities were not only busy with the minority groups of the Chicago region. By June of 1969 the FBI was already monitoring the activities of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the outgrowth group that would become known as the Weather Underground Organization (WUO).⁹⁷ Both of these groups (SDS and WUO) would also be targeted by FBI

⁹⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics. (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 128.

⁹⁶ Fred Hampton Sr. Three Speeches by Fred Hampton: Power Anywhere There’s People. *Vita Wa Watu: A New Afrikan Theoretical Journal*, August 1987, 19. Speech given by Fred Hampton, Sr. at Olivet Church, 1969.

⁹⁷ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, *Weathermen Underground, Summary*, August 20, 1976, Part 1, 28. FBI Records: The Vault,

surveillance, along with the BPP. According to the FBI file on the WUO, they “obtained their revolutionary methodology from the Cubans and Vietnamese and, importantly, put into practice what they had learned from them.”⁹⁸ Clearly the WUO faction was of more concern to the authorities and this is evidenced and reasonably justified by the summertime activities dubbed “the Days of Rage” led by the WUO. The FBI summary of this WUO action is recorded this way:

October 8-11, 1969

The “Days of Rage” riots occur in Chicago in which 287 WUO members from throughout the country were arrested and a large amount of property damage was done. The four day “National Action” was kicked off by a bombing of the Haymarket police statue on Chicago’s near north side. Some of the current underground WUO members became fugitives when they failed to appear for trial in connection with their arrests during these four days.⁹⁹

The environment of Chicago was racially and politically charged by the summer of 1969 due to one additional factor, which was the Democratic National Convention (DNC) that was held in the city that year. Groups like the WUO felt that the national attention on Chicago thanks to the DNC offered an opportunity to make their own social and political statement to the world. One of the major themes that was prevalent among the college population at this time was criticism of the United States involvement in the Vietnam warfare. The SDS, WUO, BPP, and YLO all found common ground with their opposition to the fighting in Vietnam. Although all of these groups spoke against ill treatment of minorities in housing, employment, and otherwise, anti-Vietnam involvement was probably the most uniting topic amongst these organizations in Chicago by the summer of 1969. It was in this socio-political climate that Fred Hampton was able to lead out in unifying factions that were such unlikely partners. This was a part of the ongoing struggle of

<http://vault.fbi.gov/Weather%20Underground%20%28Weathermen%29/Weather%20Underground%20%28Weathermen%29%20Part%201%20of%206/view>, accessed February 3, 2015.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 29.

working and living for the people that became the life of Fred Hampton. What it took to keep motivated and inspired to bring such different groups of people to the table may never be understood, but this coalition of unlikely comrades is part of the legacy of Hampton that reflects he was a great figure in the Civil Rights storyline, and should be discussed and studied more.

Another group that Fred was able to negotiate an unexpected alliance with was the Young Patriots Organization (YPO). The YPO was made up of a group of “poor southern white migrants mostly from the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia, Kentucky and North Carolina.”¹⁰⁰ Commenting on the diversity that was produced by Hampton and the cooperatives that were established, Jeffrey Ogbar writes “the alliance produced a seemingly odd picture: Fred Hampton and Cha Cha Jimenez giving fiery speeches on revolutionary struggle, while white men wearing berets, sunglasses, and Confederate rebel flags sewn onto their jackets helped to provide security for them.”¹⁰¹ This partnership was evidence that Fred’s vision of harmony transcended the boundaries of race. Fred wanted power for all people. There were also numerous former members of the SCLC, former members of the Deacons for Defense, and former members of the NAACP, that Fred appealed to successfully to partner in the struggle against the power structure of the Chicago area that left blacks, Latinos, poor whites and other minority groups disenfranchised.

Of all the groups that Fred approached and negotiated with, none was more challenging than the Black Stone Rangers (BSR), and their leader Jeff Fort. Led by Fred, the ILBPP worked hard to try and bring the approximately five thousand Rangers into the BPP. The idea was simply if the Panthers could get the Rangers to at least join them in ideology, then together their “merger

¹⁰⁰ Williams , 131.

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, “Brown Power to Brown People: Radical Ethnic Nationalism, the Black Panthers, and Latino Radicalism, 1967-1973,” in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives On a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 267.

could solidify the ILBPP as a powerful and formidable political force.”¹⁰² The problem was that Hampton and Fort did not get along. Some suggest that this was simply due to the clash of two strong personalities, both of which held some desire to see a joint effort between their two group, but neither willing to succumb to the leadership of the other. Both men were quite direct and challenging with their interactions towards the other. Jeffrey Haas writes that Fort’s motivation for a union may have been motivated by money. “Fort told Fred that he could be rich if he and the Panthers joined the Rangers’ drug operation. Fred refused. Fred did not use drugs and he and Panther policy did not allow Panther members to use them.”¹⁰³ Later it was reported that the Panthers were not in a position of financial need thanks to the monetary (and material) support of the community, which Bobby Rush later estimated to be about \$1000 a day, most of which was used for the free breakfast program or the free medical clinic also established by the ILBPP.¹⁰⁴ Often enough while recruiting, the Panthers went into neighborhoods, high schools, colleges and universities, and other areas that the Rangers considered as part of their territory. With this repeated ‘trespassing’ by the Panthers, tensions grew and led to rumors that there would be serious conflicts and even bloodshed between groups.¹⁰⁵ In January of 1969, a member of the BPP was shot while selling *The Black Panther Community News* in Ranger territory. The Panthers responded by taking thirty armed Panthers over to Rangers headquarters. Fort, then summoned about 100 armed teens to his aid. Luckily, the day ended with no more bloodshed, however this showed the level of tensions between the groups. The Panthers were confrontation in their own approaches to towards the Rangers, later renamed the P Stone Nation. At one point while appealing to the Stones (formerly the BSR), Fred along with a few other Panthers looked

¹⁰² Williams 161.

¹⁰³ Haas, 44.

¹⁰⁴ Rice, 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ Williams, 74.

the Stones in the eye and said “Stop killing other black folks.”¹⁰⁶ Fred’s priority was not the drug money or profits that Fort had offered, but rather a renewed effort at community peace and a ceasefire to gang violence. This end to violence was one of the necessary steps to reach the end of oppression and disenfranchisement for the underclass of the community, according the ideas conveyed by Fred. Yet the tensions that were so prevalent between Hampton and Fort were eventually shown to have been no coincidence. Documentation uncovered and since declassified by the FBI has shown that government interference was fueling the discord between Hampton and Fort, and their respective organizations. In an FBI document, dated January 30, 1969, authorization was granted by the FBI for the anonymous mailing of a letter to Fort, with the “anticipation that its receipt by Fort will intensify the degree of animosity existing between these two extremist organizations.”¹⁰⁷ The letter, was to be mailed from a location that could in no way be traced to the Bureau and the letter was to say:

Brother Jeff:

I've spent some time with some Panther friends on the west side lately and I know whats been going on. The brothers that run the Panthers blame you for blocking their thing and there's supposed to be a hit out for you. I'm not a Panther, or a Ranger, just black. From what I see these Panthers are out for themselves, not black people. I think you ought to know what their (sic) up to, I know what I'd do if I was you. You might here from me again.

[Signed,] A black brother you don't know.¹⁰⁸

Much has been written about the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), but despite the suspicions of people from Dr. King, Malcolm X, and also Fred Hampton, solid evidence of this covert program of disruption and interference of Black organizations and leaders did not become public knowledge until the deaths of many leaders, including Fred Hampton. In a multi paged memo dated March 4, 1968, FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover outlined expansion of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 55.

¹⁰⁷ Churchill and Vander Wall, 138.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

the cities involved in COINTELPRO. His memo outlines the following five summarized points as the focus of COINTELPRO:

1. Prevent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups.
2. Prevent the rise of a messiah who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement.
3. Prevent violence on the part of the black nationalist groups.
4. Prevent militant black nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability by discrediting them.
5. Prevent the long-range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth.

As part of the second point above, Hoover's memo goes on to identify Malcolm X as a martyr of the Black Nationalist movement and lists Dr. King, Elijah Muhammed, and Stokely Carmichael as possible threats that could rise to the level of being the next black messiah. This same memo identifies SNCC, SCLC, NOI, and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) as major targets for COINTELPRO.¹⁰⁹

With the eye of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI on Fred Hampton, life for Hampton became a constant struggle – a struggle motivated by his love people. Once on the FBI and COINTELPRO radar, trouble increased for Fred that he even began to curb his normal interactions with his friends and associates, out of concern for their well-being. Pastor Ron Graham tells how he learned of these concerns of Fred from a mutual friend, Paul Wade. Graham was pastor of the First Methodist Church, where Fred had held some NAACP meetings. According to Graham, Wade delivered a message from Fred saying “Fred wants to tell you that he’s sorry he hasn’t made any contact or been to see you in some time. The reason is that he’s being followed, and he’s afraid for your safety if he would come to see you.”¹¹⁰ Paul Wade was a schoolmate, friend, and advisor to Fred. Wade recalls “I was his personal advisor at one time. I did advise him to stay local, but that wasn’t the destiny of Fred Hampton.” Wade continued

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 108-111.

¹¹⁰ William Hampton, 39-40.

sharing that he went on lecture tours with Fred and “as a matter of fact, the morning that Fred was killed, we were on our way to Jackson State to deliver an address. That’s right I was supposed to meet with him at five or six that following morning. I spoke to him at one in the morning. He was murdered at five in the morning.”¹¹¹ While reflecting on his memory of the last time Fred was in Maywood, Wade mentioned the harassment and dangers Fred was dealing with by stating Fred “escaped by climbing over fences and through alleys because he couldn’t endanger his family. They were after him.”¹¹²

Despite the struggles of FBI and CPD surveillance and harassment, Fred continued his works for the people. In particular, Fred cared for children. Ironically, - he was not much more than a child in the eyes of some. In an interview printed in the *Chicago Daily Defender*, dated April 14, 1969, Hampton discussed the free breakfast program that had been initiated by the ILBPP on April 1st of that year. Fred announced that some 1100 children had been served by the BPP’s free breakfast program. Fred went on to inform the media that other groups that the Panthers were in alliance with would soon be starting similar programs in their communities.¹¹³ The BPP breakfast program was a major public relations success for the Panthers. This was one of the actions that changed the minds of many people about the BPP. Mainstream media painted the BPP as a violent street gang, yet when people in the area began seeing things like children being fed, and later free health services made available by this street gang, some people that may otherwise have not thought twice about the image of the BPP, began to question and reassess who and what the Panthers were. Within sixty days, “by the end of May 1969, the Chicago Panthers had expanded their program to six more sites on the West and South Sides and were

¹¹¹ William Hampton, 10-11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹³ Faith C. Christmas, “Black Panthers Cite Persecution,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, April 14, 1969, 3.

feeding breakfast to approximately¹¹⁴ 4000 children daily.” Fred’s declaration that other groups would soon follow and begin their own breakfast program rang true. By the end of 1969 the YLO and Rise up Angry (RUA) a white-based organization, both followed the example of the BPP and started their own free breakfast programs.¹¹⁵ Despite the success and community appreciation of the Panther breakfast program, troubles continued for Fred and the Panthers.

“We’re being harassed constantly by the pigs,” Hampton said, “and they’re arresting us as fast as they can on any kind of charge, such as traffic violations, smoking on buses, carrying concealed weapons, just anything. But no matter how many of us they try to lock up, force underground or even kill, the vanguard of the people’s revolution, the Black Panther Party will still go on.”¹¹⁶

There were numerous projects that Fred was working on up to the time of his death. Richard H. Newhouse, who later became an Illinois State Senator, stated, “a month before he was killed, I met with him and other elected officials working on police brutality cases.”¹¹⁷ As mentioned, Fred and the ILBPP also established the first free health care services for the “lumpen” of Chicago. The clinic was opened in January of 1970, the month following the death of Fred, yet it was one of the projects that he was working to get going when he was killed. The clinic was named after one of the Chicago Panthers, Spurgeon ‘Jake’ Winters, that had recently been killed in a shootout with the CPD on November 13, 1969, less than a month before Fred was killed. Having done some carpentry at the BPP health clinic shortly before the assassination, Fred’s friend recalls the question Hampton posed to him, “how can people go to work sick?”¹¹⁸ Sadly Fred did not live to see the health clinic become fully functional. Actor and activist Ossie Davis recalls that “Fred was raising funds for the Black Panther Party free breakfast program and free

¹¹⁴ Rice, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South*, 58.

¹¹⁵ Williams, 146, 155.

¹¹⁶ Christmas, 3.

¹¹⁷ William Hampton, 6.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

medical and clothing programs for the needy” before he was killed.¹¹⁹ George O’hare, another friend to friend, and publicist for famed personality Dick Gregory, remembers, “just before his untimely death, he and I were putting together a plan to hire more Blacks at the Oakbrook shopping center.”¹²⁰ An of course the ongoing project that Fred was involved with up to the time of his death was the Maywood pool. Fred Hampton was a young man that seemed to give all himself to try and better the lives of those around him. Despite his effort he met hindrances and challenges, but he fulfilled his own words of living for the people, struggling for the people, and then came the morning of December 4, 1969.

3.3 The Death

Perhaps this is the most known aspect of the Fred Hampton storyline. His demise is mentioned, ever so briefly, in many history books, and articles. The events of December 4, 1969 are now public knowledge, despite efforts to cover up the truth. It has since become one of the more exposed assassinations involving government action of the 1960’s. Author Robert O. Self writes “the slaying by the Chicago Police of Fred Hampton, leader of the Illinois branch of the Party, remains one of the signature political assassinations of decade.”¹²¹ The simple facts about the death of Fred Hampton are that his apartment, located at 2337 West Monroe Avenue, in Chicago, was targeted for a weapons raid by the CPD. This planned raid was the result of information that was passed on to the CPD by the FBI. The FBI was able to gather enough evidence to justify the need for a raid, based on the information supplied to them by a BPP

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹²¹ Jama Lazerow and Yohuru R. Williams, “The Black Panther Party and the Long Civil Rights Era,” in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives On a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 45.

insider that was actually an FBI planted informant, William O'Neal. In an FBI document dated December 8, 1969, it is stated, "the raid on Hampton's apartment was ordered by State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan, a former United States Attorney who was elected State's Attorney at the last election. The raid was carried out by police officers assigned to the State's Attorney's office."¹²²

The actual Chicago officers were led by their sergeant, Daniel Groth, and included a notorious black officer from the area that Hampton had spoken against in some of his speeches, James "Gloves" Davis. This officer was reportedly given this nickname due to his use of gloves while beating up civilians.¹²³ It has been shown that there were about one hundred rounds fired in the "shootout" that morning, and only one or two shots came from any of the Panthers. It is also noted by most sources that informant O'Neal put a dose of secobarbital in Hampton's drink earlier in the night to ensure that Hampton would remain asleep during the raid.¹²⁴ According to public records and material released by the FBI, there were nine BPP members in the apartment, six men and three women. One of the women, nineteen year-old Deborah Johnson, the girlfriend of Hampton, would give birth to Fred Hampton, Jr. in a few weeks. Two of the men were killed in the confrontation. Along with Hampton, twenty-two year old Mark Clark, of Peoria, Illinois was killed by a single shotgun blast. Fred Hampton was still sleeping in his bed, and reportedly survived the barrage of gunfire. The assassination was completed by one of the officers that went

¹²² U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, *Subject: Fred Hampton*, File Number: :44-HQ4402 (Washington, D.C., 2003), 3. FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/Fred%20Hampton/Fred%20Hampton%20Part%201%20of%202/view>, accessed March 22, 2012, (Second page of document batch #17), 67.

¹²³ Fred Hampton, 14. Also, James "Gloves" Davis is identified as a member of the December 4, 1969 police raiders: Taylor and Cunningham, 6.

¹²⁴ Williams, 183.

into the bedroom. Based on later trial testimony, Officer Edward Carmody shot Hampton “with a .45 caliber pistol at close range in the head while he lay unconscious in his bed.”¹²⁵

“I hear a voice, an unfamiliar voice say ‘he’s barely alive, or he’ll barely make it’. Then the shooting started back again. Then I heard the same unfamiliar voice say ‘he’s good and dead now.’”¹²⁶

Akua Njere (Deborah Johnson)

¹²⁵ Taylor and Cunningham, 6.

¹²⁶ Henry Hampton, *Eyes On the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, DVD.

4 CHAPTER THREE: FRED AIN'T DEAD

*By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Despite the inability to identify one specific individual as having fired the supposed first shot of the American Revolution, poets and historians have used the reference of the shot heard round the world. The phrase could better be applied to the 1914 shot fired by Gavrilo Princip in Bosnia. Somewhere between the anonymity of the first shooter of the American Revolution to the specificity of Princip's 1914 shot, might lie the level of historic impact for the shooting of Fred Hampton. It was an action that spiraled a city into chaos and confusion, as city leaders battled in the press and on street corners to show their version of Hampton's death was accurate. Both aforementioned shots caused people to protest and rally together, along social and patriotic lines, raise their political voice, take up arms, and press forward for change and correction of injustice. On a smaller, community level, the shots that killed Fred Hampton accomplished something similar. And despite starting in a single community, the response to Hampton's death spread quickly, and spread far.

Numerous community figures and national Civil Rights leaders attended his funeral held on Tuesday December 9, 1969. Jesse Jackson, of SCLC's Operation Breadbasket was one of the main speakers. Ralph Abernathy, president of the SCLC was also in attendance and delivered the main eulogy for Hampton. Russ Meeks, the television figure was also one of the speakers at the funeral, along with community leader, Fred McNelty, pastor of the First Baptist Church, where

the funeral was held.¹²⁷ Hampton leadership status in the community drew these leaders, from even the national level.

Hampton leaves behind a legacy that will be examined in three phases in this chapter. The first phase will look at the immediate responses to his killing and the actions that were taken and how many of these responses reflected the impact Hampton left on various individuals and groups. The immediate responses will include community protests, Chicago's and other BPP branch strategy adjustments, and a brief lived event referred to as the Black Curtain that occurred in the Chicago area.

The second phase of examination will be the short-term effects. This section will look at how Hampton and his death influenced the political voice of blacks and other minorities to emerge, with the ousting of Edward Hanrahan, as one of the first political actions.

The last phase will look at the long-term effects of Fred Hampton's legacy. This section will discuss new minority political strategies, grassroots organizing, and also the campaigning methods of Harold Washington and President Obama. This last section will also examine changes to housing, jobs, police brutality, and government corruptions.

4.1 The Immediate Legacy

Once the news spread that Fred Hampton had been killed, responses began, in Chicago, and across the nation. Open protests occurred in physical form and written form. Physical protests began near and far. In Chicago protest began almost immediately. Silently protesting how Hampton had been vilified by the mainstream press, and despite the reports of the violence of the BPP, thousands of people filled the streets to line up and pass through A.A. Rayner's

¹²⁷ "Fred Hampton Rites: An Epitaph to a Revolutionary," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 11, 1969, 1.

funeral home and view his body over the weekend of December 6th. According to Jeffrey Haas, “on the following Monday, five thousand more walked past the open casket at Reverend McNelty’s church in Melrose Park.”¹²⁸ While thousands passed by his body to pay their last respects, the Panthers had opened the apartment for tours and hundreds of people were able to view the scene of the crime and draw their own conclusions about the wrongful death of Hampton. The police failed to close off the apartment and the Panthers used this as an opportunity to show the public the damage done by the police during the raid.¹²⁹ Newspaper writers from as far away as New York City wrote about the killing. After visiting the scene, a New York Daily News columnist, and BPP critic, Mike Royko, reportedly wrote “the Panther’s bullets must have dissolved in the air before they hit anybody or anything. Either that or the Panthers were shooting in the wrong direction-namely themselves.”¹³⁰ “Attorney Charles Garry told the press that these were the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth Panthers killed in clashes with the police during an eighteen-month period.”¹³¹ With so much information being distributed by Chicago Panthers, and the public, including members of the media, protests were rampant. Chicago saw the United Front for Black Community Organizations (UFBCO) come together, from a “coalition of more than 100 groups organized immediately after the slaying of Fred Hampton.”¹³² Led by the activist Rev. C.T. Vivian, this coalition put forth a nine point, open, written announcement to the people of Chicago in a press conference at the Congress Hotel. Of the nine points a few stand out. Point six called for a black watch to “scrutinize and observe all policemen while in [the] black community.” Furthermore, Point seven called for the

¹²⁸ Haas, 108.

¹²⁹ *The Weather Underground, DVD.*

¹³⁰ Haas, 102

¹³¹ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007), 279.

¹³² John Kifner, “Negroes in Chicago Impose a Curfew On Whites,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1969, 21.

establishment of a foundation to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Fred Hampton.¹³³ Probably the most forceful of the points was number nine:

Effective immediately, a 6 P.M. –to- 6 A.M. curfew is established for all whites in the black community. No whites will be permitted to enter the black community –for any reason- during those hours and all whites inside the black community must leave by the 6 P.M. deadline.¹³⁴

The action called for by point nine became known as the “Black Curtain”. This was a very ambitious form of protest started by the United Front. It lasted for about two to three weeks and caused disruption for many companies and was not appreciated by Mayor Richard Daley and his administration. Chicago journalist Lutrelle “Lu” Palmer, Jr. recalled the event in the following way:

That created so much consternation because that meant a lot of commerce would be interfered with. Illinois Bell’s people were very upset because it meant that their trucks had to out of the black community by six, and other companies. The publisher of the *Chicago Tribune* came to my wife’s home... because she was kinda like a PR person for the movement, and he came to her home to see what could be done to stop this black curtain, because the Tribune’s trucks were always in and out of our community. And she told him **nothing** could be done. The curtain had been announced and it was on. We had “warriors” to back it up. He kept up a lot of conversation so finally my wife looked at her watch and said to him, “Well it’s quarter to six, and I would advise you to get out of this community.” And he got out of the community.”¹³⁵

Curfews are not usually popular when they are announced, and generally less appreciated when they are enforced. This protest of shutting off the black community to whites after Hampton’s killing was somewhat unusual but spoke to the displeasure felt by the community at the violent loss of one of their leaders. There are numerous stories of black communities and individuals arming themselves to defend their homes against white mobs and attacks. One local example is

¹³³ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, *Subject: Fred Hampton*, File Number: :44-HQ4402 (Washington, D.C., 2003), 3. FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/Fred%20Hampton/Fred%20Hampton%20Part%201%20of%202/view>, accessed March 22, 2012, 7-10.

¹³⁴ Kifner, 21.

¹³⁵ William Hampton, 36.

the defense of the old Sweet Auburn district by the men of the community, including leaders like W.E.B. Dubois and others, during and after the Atlanta race riots of 1906. Since Hampton's 1969 death, there have been numerous widespread events that sparked urban rebellions, including numerous questionable killings and beatings of black men and women that caused the authorities at various levels to invoke curfews on the general population. Yet, this is the only time that this author has uncovered this type of unified, broad, community response by blacks in recent history.

Another example of written protest came from the Mattachine Midwest organization. In a letter dated December 19, 1969, signed by Jim Bradford, their president, the Mattachine group sent a scathing letter to Hanrahan's office saying "we wish to express our utter contempt for your vigilante raid on the Panthers' apartment." Continuing, Bradford says:

A visit to the blood-stained apartment and an inspection of the premises support the Panther's statement of what really happened, rather than yours... You and your officers deserve to be charged, tried and sentenced according to law as common wrong-doers... You are an enemy of the people.¹³⁶

Mattachine Midwest also sent a letter of support addressed to Bobby Rush as the new chairman of the ILBPP, expressing their solidarity with the Panthers through this crisis. Copies of both letters were sent to each office and released to the public. Mattachine Midwest was an organization "dedicated to the improvement of the status of homosexuals and the creation of a better life for homosexuals as homosexuals."¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Jim Bradford, Mattachine Midwest. Copies of these open letters were released through various media outlets, and by ILBPP and Hanrahan's office.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

The protests were not limited to the Chicago area. According to an FBI document dated December 10, 1969 a protest demonstration and march was planned over two thousand miles from Chicago, in Portland, Oregon, to protest the killing of Fred Hampton.¹³⁸

Immediately after the slaying of Hampton, Black Panthers across the nation went into a more conscientious state of self-preservation and self-defense. Members of BPP organizations across the country prepared for similar attacks by authorities. For example, in the Detroit branch early in 1970, Chuck Holt, “a panther with extensive military experience in the armed forces and an expert in small arms, explosives, and the martial arts”, replaced the head of security Michael Baynham.¹³⁹ This was their attempt to protect themselves from the police attacks like those in Chicago and Los Angeles.

In the case of the Los Angeles BPP, also over two thousand miles away, the police came, but met a more prepared and awake group, than in Chicago. According to The COINTELPRO Papers, the Los Angeles BPP main targets were not where the FBI informant said they would be, and the Los Angeles BPP, in a true four hour gun battle, was able to hold off the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) raid until the press and public were on scene as witnesses. The LAPD raid was only five days after the Hampton-Clark killings. Because of the shift towards more preparedness against police raids by Panthers across the country is why many believe that no one was killed in Los Angeles. Author David Barber wrote

From January 1969 to December 1969, Panthers were arrested or killed in San Francisco, Chicago, Salt Lake City, Indianapolis, Denver, San Diego, Sacramento, and Los Angeles, including four separate raids in Chicago, two in San Diego, and

¹³⁸ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, *Subject: Fred Hampton*, File Number: :44-HQ4402 (Washington, D.C., 2003), 3. FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/Fred%20Hampton/Fred%20Hampton%20Part%201%20of%202/view>, accessed September 17, 2012, 21.

¹³⁹ Yohuru R. Williams and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives On the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 195-96.

two in Los Angeles.¹⁴⁰

On the opposite coast, on May 1, 1970, the BPP branch in Baltimore was targeted. “According to the Baltimore Police Department’s own newsletter, seventeen Baltimore homes, offices, and nightspots were raided, with approximately 150 heavily armed policemen wearing bulletproof vests participating.”¹⁴¹ Not coincidentally, a ten-day injunction against the Baltimore distribution of the Panther newspaper was also secured on that date.¹⁴² These various activities suggested government repression was coming down on the Black Panther Party across the nation. To many inside the Party the killing of Hampton in Chicago was the alarm that sounded and was the action that undeniably illustrated the governmental targeting of the BPP.

In 1969, a group of concerned citizens (both black and white) formed the Baltimore Committee for Political Freedom (BCPF) because they feared that the Baltimore Police Department was planning to assassinate Panther leaders in their city, as Fred Hampton and Mark Clark had been in Chicago.¹⁴³

Hampton’s death led to the formation of various community watch groups, of which the BCPF and the UFBCO were just two examples.

The fact that BPP branches nationwide went into an extra defensive mode is also evidence of the widespread familiarity there was with Fred Hampton and his Panther leadership in Chicago. Nationwide, there had been many other Panthers that had been killed by police before Hampton. Less than a month before Hampton’s killing, police in a shootout on the South Side of Chicago killed Spurgeon “Jake” Winters.¹⁴⁴ Later the People’s Medical Center opened by the ILBPP would carry Spurgeon’s name, yet his death did not resonate a sense of alarm or

¹⁴⁰ Jama Lazerow and Yohuru R. Williams, “Leading the Vanguard: White New Leftists School the Panthers on Black Revolution,” in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives On a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 234.

¹⁴¹ Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 32.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor and Cunningham, 4.

attack, as did the death of Hampton. Hampton was a nationally recognized BPP leader by the time of his killing and thus his demise left a more significant sense of loss for the BPP, and led to a nationwide response of preparedness for more attacks by BPP members.

Panthers were not the only ones that ramped up their defensive methods. According to various sources, the present and popular use of Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) teams by police departments across the nation is tied directly to the December 1969 shootout that the LAPD had with the BPP. Matthew Fleischer wrote in his 2011 article for the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, “SWAT was born from the ashes of the Watts riots. [Darryl] Gates conceived of an assault team that could take out snipers and other suspects in fortified positions without having to shoot up entire neighborhoods crowded with civilians.”¹⁴⁵ Author Jim Fisher attributes the idea for “combat-trained paramilitary police units” to LAPD officer John Nelson, who passed it on to Inspector Darryl Gates.¹⁴⁶ Reportedly Gates originally wanted to call these special units the Special Weapons and Assault Teams, but with the direction of then deputy police chief Ed Davis, it was decided to use the present acronym definition. Despite already having organized select officers into specialized teams, “the first significant call out for the LAPD SWAT unit came on December 9, 1969 in a four hour confrontation with the Black Panthers.”¹⁴⁷ Fleischer states that BPP shootout did not fulfill the goal of the SWAT team in many ways. SWAT teams had been designed to contain armed urban conflict. In the case of the December 9th confrontation this was not accomplished. The LAPD also lost the element of surprise, which was also the practice of these raids. According to Fleischer “the result was a full-on battle in a crowded urban

¹⁴⁵ Matthew Fleischer, Policing Revolution: How the LAPD's first use of SWAT - a massive, military style operation against the Black Panthers - was almost its last., *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, April 2011, <http://www.latimesmagazine.com/2011/04/policing-revolution.html>. Accessed March 10, 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Jim Fisher, *Swat Madness and the Militarization of the American Police: A National Dilemma* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010), 3.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Bennett, “The Birth of SWAT,” *Officer.com*, <http://www.officer.com/article/10232858/the-birth-of-swat> (accessed March 10, 2015).

setting, played out before the entire nation – one that was sympathetic to the Panther cause after that point-blank killing of Fred Hampton in Chicago.”¹⁴⁸ After their capture on December 9th, the Panthers were put on trial in Los Angeles. Fleischer notes that one of the young lawyers that successfully defended the Panthers by getting all of them not guilty verdicts was Johnnie Cochran. The famous O.J. Simpson trial had not been the first encounter between Cochran and Gates, who later became the LAPD Police Chief. After the mistakes of the BPP shootout, the nascent SWAT units went to Camp Pendleton for intense military training with the United States Marines, in order to not be so unprepared for confrontations again. “By the time Gates died in 2010, the institution he started had spread to nearly every city in the country, to most federal agencies, to most medium-sized towns, and even to small and tiny towns.”¹⁴⁹

History runs a thread of relation between eras and entities. Most people would never put the growth or origins of SWAT policing together with the history of the Black Panthers. Yet their history is tied together. Just as many people would not put together the strict California gun laws of today and the Black Panthers. Yet, in April 1967, it was California state assemblyman Donald Mulford that told Bobby Seale and Huey Newton

He planned to introduce a bill into the state legislature to make it illegal for us to patrol with our weapons. It was a bill, he said, that would “get” the Black Panthers. - A few days later, the paper carried a story about Mulford’s “Panther Bill.” ... The Mulford bill passed the California legislature in July, 1967, by a huge majority.¹⁵⁰

This was the beginning of restrictive gun legislation in California, and also across the country. Again, not everyone might put the ongoing second amendment debate over the right to bear arms, together with the Black Panthers of the 1960’s. But they are tied to together in history. It

¹⁴⁸ Fleischer, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Accessed March 10, 2015.

¹⁴⁹ Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), 80.

¹⁵⁰ Huey P. Newton and J Herman Blake, *Revolutionary Suicide*, Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 153-60.

can be reasoned that the killing of Fred Hampton, which prompted the Los Angeles BPP to elevate their level of defensive preparedness led to the four hour gun battle, and in turn helped lead to the present support for SWAT policing. This is a legacy of Fred Hampton that most might miss, unless the connecting dots are examined.

Many people outside the Party also felt that the Panthers were under attack by authorities. Many responded with letters of complaint and threats of legal action. Found in the officially released and declassified FBI file on Fred Hampton are numerous copies of letters addressed either to the FBI or to the Attorney General of the United States, requesting an independent and thorough investigation into the death of Hampton. There are multiple requests from NAACP branches and representatives requesting an investigation. Also found in the same FBI file is a copy of a handwritten letter addressed to Director Hoover of the FBI. Interestingly, the letter is from a Los Angeles resident, the letter is dated December 11, 1969, two days after the early morning police raid on the BPP headquarters in Los Angeles. Despite the action against the BPP in their own city, and admitted recognition of the “unpopularity of the Black Panthers”, the author of this letter was focused on the point that “if Hampton was indeed murdered in his bed, then the murderers must be brought to justice.”¹⁵¹ Arguably it could be reasoned that the concern was not about the LA BPP raid, because no one was killed in that raid, but rather the killing and influence of Hampton seems to have motivated the concern for justice in this letter. “Within days, the Justice Department, under pressure from the NAACP, the Urban League, and the

¹⁵¹ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, *Subject: Fred Hampton*, File Number: :44-HQ4402 (Washington, D.C., 2003), 3. FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/Fred%20Hampton/Fred%20Hampton%20Part%201%20of%202/view>, accessed September 17, 2012, 90-91.

Chicago Defender, announced it would investigate the case, a decision that was announced on the front page of the New York Times.”¹⁵²

Betrayal permeated the Panthers. With bitter irony it must be noted that COINTELPRO was proving very successful against the BPP. Author Max Elbaum notes the success of J. Edgar Hoover and his order to intensify the work of COINTELPRO against the BPP. From 1968 on, Elbaum states, “over the next several years hundreds of Panthers were arrested and dozens were killed, including 749 arrested and 27 killed in 1969 alone.”¹⁵³ In the Chicago branch, it is now public knowledge now that the BPP head of security William O’Neal, was actually the main FBI infiltrator, and he provided information that led to the December 4th raid. It is also known that O’Neal received a three hundred dollar bonus on December 23rd for the floor plan and information he provided to the FBI, that aided in the raid.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps most distasteful to many is that O’Neal volunteered and served as a pallbearer for Hampton while he waited for his reward money.¹⁵⁵ In Los Angeles, Melvin “Cotton” Smith also became the head of BPP security and was also later found to be an FBI infiltrator that provided information that used to initiate the Los Angeles raid.¹⁵⁶ In the Detroit branch, the man that replaced their previous head of security, Chuck Holt, was also a government infiltrator.¹⁵⁷

With the death of Hampton fresh in the minds of people across the nation, many that may not have thought much of Fred Hampton before his demise, were beginning to witness various ways that this young man was leaving a living legacy.

¹⁵² Rhodes, 279.

¹⁵³ Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, Haymarket Series (London: Verso, 2002), 66.

¹⁵⁴ Churchill and Vander Wall, 358. Reference note #96.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor and Cunningham, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Churchill and Vander Wall, 141-142.

¹⁵⁷ Williams and Lazerov, *Liberated Territory*, 217.

4.2 The Short-term Legacy

Although it is documented that the FBI and the CPD were the agencies responsible for the assassination of Fred Hampton, many citizens in the Chicago area added one person to the list of having Hampton's blood on their hands. That person was Edward V. Hanrahan. He was the state attorney that had been recently elected to serve the Chicago area. Some have believed that in various ways Hanrahan incriminated himself in the murder of Hampton. Within days of the killing, Hanrahan released newspaper stories documenting his version of the raid that led to the death of Hampton and Mark Clark. Hanrahan also appeared on television giving statements, many of which, like the newspaper stories, were later found to be fabricated. On December 11, 1969 the *Chicago Tribune* appeared with "Exclusive Hanrahan, Police Tell Panther Story" as the main headline on the cover page. Not only did Hanrahan give a falsified version of the event, the Tribune reported in that article "Hanrahan made the policemen available for interviews to refute what he termed an orgy of sensationalism in the press and on television."¹⁵⁸ Hanrahan was challenging the alternate reports about the raid. History has shown that he, his police, and the Tribune, were the ones misleading the public. On page two of the *Tribune's* "exclusive" with Hanrahan was included two pictures that were supposedly showing the amount of gunshots taken by the Panthers and the damaged caused in the apartment.

Chicago's *Sun-Times* reporters went to the scene of the crime the next morning and took photographs as Panthers and their lawyers guided them through the apartment. In direct response to the Tribune's story, the Sun-Times ran their article entitled "Bullet Holes Were Nail Heads."¹⁵⁹ Having been shown by the tours conducted at Hampton's apartment that the police had falsified their reports, other reporters joined in accusing Hanrahan of producing a chorus of

¹⁵⁸ Edward Lee and Robert Wiedrich, Exclusive: Hanrahan, Police Tell Panther Story, *Chicago Tribune*, December 11, 1969.

¹⁵⁹ Haas, 106-107

lies to cover up what would be later shown as an assassination. Jeffrey Haas said that this blunder by the Tribune became their “most infamous front-page story since their misinformed headlines in November 1948” when they reported that Dewey had defeated Truman in the presidential election.¹⁶⁰ To the average person there was no bringing down a government agency like the FBI. Likewise, in Chicago, the Daley administration was just as impervious and many understood that Mayor Daley stood behind his police department. But Hanrahan was not an agency, he was a mere mortal politician. And some took aim at him for the crime against Hampton. No criminal indictments or charges were ever successful against those responsible for the raid. However, in June of 1971 an indictment was finally filed against Hanrahan for his involvement in the Hampton killing. The families and lawyers of Hampton, Clark and the survivors of the December 4th raid, to somehow hold Hanrahan and his group responsible, filed this indictment as part of a civil suit that ended up being the last resort.¹⁶¹ It took some time before the political punishment came against Hanrahan, but over the next three years various people would help to galvanize the black community and others against him. Of the many, two people made a significant impact in working against Hanrahan. One was Jesse Jackson and the other was the newspaperman Mike Royko.

For Jackson it became a crusade that he was able to keep alive through his access to the public by way of television and radio. “Hardly a Saturday Morning passed that Jackson didn’t impress upon his audience and radio listeners that any black who voted for Hanrahan was signing his own death warrant.”¹⁶² The civil suit and indictment failed and on October 25, 1972 Hanrahan was acquitted of conspiracy charges.¹⁶³ With that chapter finished for Hanrahan, he

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 107.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 152.

¹⁶² Reynolds, 268.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 270.

continued to survive the raid unscathed. Jackson then truly went on the offensive. Along with his media attacks Jesse began an anti-Hanrahan fund raising campaign to collect \$500,000 to defeat Hanrahan's next election bid. Along with that, Jackson urged his radio listeners to hit the streets distributing anti-Hanrahan flyers and documents. Jackson also worked to register new voters, many of which began their political experience as part of the anti-Hanrahan machine.¹⁶⁴

In his book *Royko, A Life in Print*, F. Richard Ciccone calls Hanrahan Royko's "first victim" as he discusses how Mike Royko used his writings against various politicians. Commenting on the results of Chicago's 1972 election results, Ciccone credits Royko in the following way:

On the Wednesday before the election, with the polls showing Hanrahan leading, Royko wrote a column about Hanrahan meeting privately with the same John D'Arco that Royko had labeled a stooge for crime-syndicate boss Sam Giancana. The column was devastating, inferring that Hanrahan, chief law-enforcement officer of Cook County, was cutting a deal with the crime syndicate to ensure his reelection.¹⁶⁵

Royko had already questioned Hanrahan's version of the December 4th raid, while calling the Panthers "racists...who hoard guns and preach violence."¹⁶⁶ Yet thanks to Royko, Ciccone states "Hanrahan's campaign was over."¹⁶⁷

Many were surprised on November 8, 1972, when Hanrahan was defeated. Minorities had not previously been able to deal a significant blow to the Daley administration, of which Hanrahan was unofficially a member. Until this election there had not been any real impact made by the minorities of Chicago in the political arena. But under the banner of revenging the martyrdom of the founder of the Rainbow Coalition, Hanrahan was ousted and a new revelation

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 270-271.

¹⁶⁵ F Richard Ciccone, *Royko: A Life in Print* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 217.

¹⁶⁶ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, citadel underground ed. (New York: Citadel Press, 1991, 1985), 224.

¹⁶⁷ Ciccone, 218.

was made by the underclass of Chicago. They could unite in a political coalition and put out offenders. For the common man in Chicago, supporters of the Fred Hampton, the BPP, and the Rainbow Coalition, Hanrahan had become Chicago's new public enemy number one.

The black vote was the man-in-the-street's way of saying that the slain Panther leaders, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark had not been forgotten. However, Hanrahan's defeat was not justice. Hanrahan lost an office. The Panthers lost their lives."¹⁶⁸

Fred was gone but his concept of coalition and unity among the struggling people of Chicago seemed to echo on with Hanrahan's removal. Was Hampton still impacting Chicago, years after his death? The election results seemed to say yes. Author Abe Peck agrees, saying "Fred Hampton became more powerful in death than in life."¹⁶⁹ Fred's legacy was continuing on.

From the experience of successfully ousting Hanrahan, many of the Chicago underclass began to realize in a more tangible way, the value and strength of the coalition approach that Hampton had promoted while he was alive. Hampton did not limit the idea of alliance to race groups. Hampton lived this approach during his life and through his legacy after death, the lesson was beginning to take hold. It is out of the newly discovered political power of Chicago's underclass that grassroots politics began to gain popularity. The Chicago grassroots politics owed its success to Hampton and his Rainbow Coalition approach that united people along the lines of their socio-economical commonalities, namely struggle, rather than merely race groups. Hampton's concept of a Rainbow Coalition "recognized that different minorities could unite along class lines to fight oppression" and this became a very effective political method that was able to defeat Hanrahan and the Daley political machine.¹⁷⁰

Hampton had been successful in uniting people of all groups in alliance.

¹⁶⁸ Reynolds, 272-273.

¹⁶⁹ Peck, 225.

¹⁷⁰ Rice, 56.

4.3 The Long-term Legacy

One of the main lingering legacies that evidences the work of Fred Hampton is free breakfast for children. Across our country, school districts include some type of free breakfast and some go further with free lunch. The first time that this was done on any national level was thanks to the BPP. According to Hampton, Bobby Seale was the father of the free breakfast for children program, yet without the success of this program in Chicago, it can be argued that this program might not have carried on across the nation, in different branches of the BPP. Speaking against the breakfast program, FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover states “this program was formed by the BPP for obvious reasons, including their efforts to create an image of civility, assume community control of Negroes, and to fill adolescent children with their insidious poison.”¹⁷¹ Eventually, despite the governmental undermining of the FBI, people across the nation began to see the value of providing breakfast for needy children. Later, studies were done, and public and private school districts began to adopt free breakfast as a part of their daily services. History makes it undeniable that the BPP model influenced the implementation of this practice in our educational system today. Crediting the BPP, author Jakobi Williams calls the free breakfast program “the most respected and utilized Panther community service project.”¹⁷² Despite the negative media persona of the Panthers, the breakfast program posed the greatest challenge to Hoover’s smear campaign. According to historian Ward Churchill, “Hoover was quite aware that it would be impossible to cast the party as merely ‘a group of thugs’ so long as it was meeting the daily nutritional requirements of an estimated 50,000 grade-schoolers in forty-five inner

¹⁷¹ Churchill and Vander Hall, 145.

¹⁷² Williams, 193.

cities across the country.”¹⁷³ The people of numerous inner cities nationwide began connecting with the Panthers, thanks to the free breakfast program, even if there were wary of Panther politics.

The sibling of the free breakfast program was the ILBPP’s free medical health service. This program was put in place to help the medical needs of the Chicago’s lumpen. As earlier mentioned in this study, the Spurgeon “Jake” Winters clinic, opened shortly after the killing of Hampton, carried the name of another Panther killed barely a month before Hampton. The Winters Clinic included obstetricians, gynecologists, pediatricians, and general practitioners, as a part of the medical staff. The clinic also maintained connections with local teachers, sociologists, speech therapists, and social workers. The Winters Clinic also was the first BPP medical center to offer all of these services, along with free sickle cell testing.¹⁷⁴ Until the work of the ILBPP culminated in the production of this medical center, there were no examples of blacks and other minorities having access to free services of this type. These “survival programs” models also spread to other organizations. The YPO, following the example of the ILBPP, also set up community service programs.¹⁷⁵ Not only were street gangs motivated to offer free medical care, but according to author Jakobi Williams, the Chicago Board of Health was inspired by the Panthers to open similar clinic in poor areas of Chicago.¹⁷⁶ The influence of the Panther community work is what endeared them to many would have otherwise considered them an anathema.

Today, government programs offer free breakfast and lunches to school children, numerous nongovernmental organizations and charities provide free health

¹⁷³ Ward Churchill, “To Disrupt, Discredit and Destroy”: The FBI’s Secret War against the Black Panther Party, in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*, ed. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 87.

¹⁷⁴ Williams, 96.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

clinics, and countless community centers are designed to supply an array of free services. Many such social services that target serving the poor, addressing hunger, combating police brutality, and working to strengthen education in underrepresented communities in the United States owe a debt to the BPP's survival programs.¹⁷⁷

The work of the ILBPP sits in history as one of the significant and more recognized branches of the national party. The success of the ILBPP cannot be separated from the diligent work of the leader of that branch, Fred Hampton. Jakobi William's book about the ILBPP does not include Hampton in the title at all, yet Hampton is one of, if not the main figure examined throughout the book. Williams even closes the book with the tributary statement to Hampton "the beat goes on." Any discussion of the ILBPP must be centered on Hampton. Thus, credit must be given to Hampton for his leadership to establish the free breakfast and free medical services programs in Chicago.

The free breakfast and medical programs for the underclasses of America is a part of the legacy of Hampton, but one other major piece of his legacy is found by again piecing the puzzle of history together and realizing Hampton is again in the midst of it all. Hampton's link to the emergence of SWAT policing is not an obvious link. Yet it is connected to the killing of Hampton and the defensive posture that was amplified within the BPP nationwide. Similarly, Fred Hampton is connected to the historic events of November 4, 2008.

In each generation there may be one or two singular events that are so significant that everyone can remember exactly where they were or what they were doing when news of that event broke. Reaching back with those that may still be alive, December 7, 1941 and the attack on Pearl Harbor is one of those types of events. November 22, 1963 is another one of those dates, when President John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas. April 4, 1968 and the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is another such date. More recently there is the infamous date of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 194.

September 11, 2001 and the attacks on the continental United States soil. For many black Americans, the date of November 4, 2008 is another date that stirs up memories with exacting detail, about what someone was doing or where they were on that night. It was election night, and at 11:00 pm that night, the results for the presidential election were in from one of the last key states, California. Its 55 electoral votes were cast for Illinois Senator Barack Obama. With the results from California, it was declared official that for the first time in United States history, a black man was elected president. New history had been made. Again, history runs a thread of relation between eras and entities. Research for this project suggests that the election of the first black President of the United States of America is linked to the life and work of Fred Hampton, Sr.

The theme of President Obama's campaign had been "change". What was he suggesting needed change? America. What about America needed change? The lives of the underclass needed to be uplifted, the middle class needed to be stabilized and empowered, and the upper-class interaction with the underclasses needed to be more assistive. As a person of mixed racial heritage, President Obama could have taken the campaign route that many expected. Play to the black population and the minority population of the nation. Yet, many analysts have since stated that what made President Obama's campaigns successful was how he spoke to people, by their class and not by their race or ethnicity. The title of one of Hampton's speeches echoed this approach forty years earlier, "it's a class struggle...". Hampton said "primarily that the priority of this struggle is class." He went on in the speech, addressing people hindered by race, by declaring, "as long as they're dealing with a race thing, they'll never be involved in a revolution."¹⁷⁸ Many believe that it took a political revolution to see a black man elected as president. Yet, many of the approaches and strategies used by President Obama in his

¹⁷⁸ Fred Hampton, Sr., 9.

campaigns, come from strategies birthed in Chicago, Illinois, and the ILBPP. Most specifically, much of the Obama strategy comes from the concepts of the original Rainbow Coalition.

In his early campaigns, including for the Illinois state senate, it is noted that he “echoed a message of inclusion and the need to lift everyone.” Authors Martin Dupris and Keith Boeckelman go on to point out that in recognition of the value of legacy, Obama aired a television spot “invoking the memory of Harold Washington, Chicago’s first black mayor.”¹⁷⁹ In his own book, *The Audacity of Hope*, President Obama states that he generally rejects “a politics that is based solely on racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or victimhood.”¹⁸⁰ Later in that same book, commenting on his appreciation of the diversity of Chicago communities, particularly the Latino neighborhoods, he concludes, “the fate of black and brown were to be perpetually intertwined, the cornerstone of a coalition that could help America live up to its promise.”¹⁸¹ All of these are akin to Fred Hampton and his vision of inclusion. In the revised foreword to Gary Rivlin’s book, *Fire On the Prairie: Harold Washington, Chicago Politics, and the Roots of the Obama Presidency*, Pulitzer Prize winning author Clarence Page shares the following comments from President Obama Harold Washington’s impact:

Watching him as a larger-than-life figure and seeing the impact he had on the confidence of the African American community, the hopefulness of the community, it had a lasting impact on me. And I suspect that was the first time when I fully appreciated the potentials of a political figure, not just to pass laws, but also to change people's attitude about themselves.¹⁸²

Harold Washington, the first black mayor of Chicago was clearly and admittedly an inspiration to Obama. Not only was he inspiring as the first black to be elected to that office in Chicago, but

¹⁷⁹ Martin Dupuis and Keith Boeckelman, *Barack Obama, the New Face of American Politics*, Women and Minorities in Politics (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008), 81.

¹⁸⁰ Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts On Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 11.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁸² Gary Rivlin, *Fire On the Prairie: Harold Washington, Chicago Politics, and the Roots of the Obama Presidency*, rev. ed., Urban Life, Landscape, and Policy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), vii.

the methodology used by Washington also became a pattern that Obama would follow in his later elections, including his presidential runs. One specific individual that served as the link between Washington and Obama was David Axelrod. Axelrod had a high profile role for the Chicago tribune during Washington's 1983 campaign, and offered Obama help and direction from his career "built in part on long familiarity with Rainbow Coalition politics."¹⁸³ As Obama's chief strategist, Axelrod, was the link from Washington coalition politics, to Obama's coalition approach, because he had "effectively and repeatedly utilized Rainbow Coalition concepts and methods he learned while studying and working with the group's organizers Harold Washington's campaigns."¹⁸⁴ According to Jakobi Williams:

Barack Obama's election to the U.S. Senate and as U.S. president is directly linked to the ILBPP's original Rainbow Coalition in Chicago by way of David Axelrod, who has used the methods and ideology of the group to achieve goals that neither the Panthers nor Harold Washington ever imagined were possible.¹⁸⁵

Following this argument, Barack Obama making it to the White House is thanks in part to the work and legacy of young, Fred Hampton and Hampton's vision of a coalition that could bring America together across racial lines. There could possibly be no greater political fulfillment of Hampton's coalition vision, than putting someone of color or from the underclass, into the White House. Perhaps, had Hampton survived December, 1969, he could have been the black "messiah", feared by Hoover, that could have instead been a forerunner to Washington and Obama.

The vision of Hampton's Rainbow Coalition was an inclusive vision. And because Hampton lived this in his life he drew people from a variety of groups. Many women report that Hampton did not run the Chicago BPP branch like branches in other cities. Lyn French, a former

¹⁸³ Williams, 209.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 210.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 212.

Panther, and ILBPP member, “maintains that she was not forced to defer to men in the Illinois Panther Party nor did she experience or hear of sexual harassment.”¹⁸⁶ Brenda Harris, another former ILBPP member recalls, “Some of the brothers hit on us. But not Fred, he wouldn’t allow women being put down, and he gave women a lot of responsibility.”¹⁸⁷ As President Obama has been shown to express an inclusive vision of politics that incorporated people, regardless of sexual orientation, so did Hampton. That is evidenced by the support received from Jim Bradford, and the Mattachine Midwest Organization after the December 1969 assassination. Appalachian whites, Puerto Ricans, blacks, and whites, all helped to make up what was the original Rainbow Coalition, founded by Fred Hampton. Later as mayor, Washington established what he called the “Rainbow Cabinet” that focused on housing, affirmative action, and other progressive, cross-racial issues, much like the ILBPP had tried to do, under Hampton’s leadership.¹⁸⁸ “Washington hired people who were never before welcome on the premises, let alone offered positions at City Hall. These were people excluded from power not only in Chicago but in just about any government in the country.”¹⁸⁹

This same “rainbow” approach applied politically in Chicago took down Edward Hanrahan, helped to elect Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago, and eventually helped in the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States of America. This is a major part of the Hampton legacy, despite how little the connecting dots are commonly realized. Gary Rivlin wrote, “on the surface Fred Hampton seemed an unlikely candidate for launching an electoral movement.” But Rivlin warns, “to dismiss Hampton as nothing but a fringe revolutionary is to

¹⁸⁶ Rice, 57.

¹⁸⁷ Haas, 352.

¹⁸⁸ Williams, 199.

¹⁸⁹ Rivlin, 246.

make the same sort of political blunder committed by Hanrahan.”¹⁹⁰ Hopefully this study leads to a more general avoidance of the same historic dismissal of Hampton. Fred Hampton may no longer walk with the people of his envisioned coalition, but his “beat goes on”.

¹⁹⁰ Rivlin, 26.

5 CONCLUSION

One after another, rallies with the cry of “no justice, no peace” seem to ring out across this country. Too often a killing, with a few common denominators, has prompted these rallies. The first common denominator has been that the killing was surrounded with questionable circumstances. The second common factor has been that the victim has been a black man, under the age of 25. The third commonality is someone outside of the black community caused the death. One last common denominator is that the life cut short, was ended with gunfire.

The recent high-profile list of black youths includes Michael Brown, 18, killed in Missouri; Jordan Davis, 17, killed in Florida; Trayvon Martin, 17, also killed in Florida. Recently, just examining within the last two years, the headlines of newspapers across the country have constantly included similar stories. All too sadly, the repetition of history is clearly found in these stories. With each of these stories, lives have been changed, some for the better, and too many for the worse. Yet some people have been able to take these negative events and turn them into inspirational moments that affected the direction of their lives. In one of his 1976, recorded stand-up routines that discussed negative race relations in America, Richard Pryor asked the question “how long will this bullshit go on?”¹⁹¹ That was almost forty years ago and Pryor’s questioning of race relations still seems valid today. The story of Fred Hampton speaks to this question and study of his life and work for the betterment of others offers an answer of hope. Hampton was not limited by his racial, economic, educational, or other societal boundaries. Spending time in jail could have been a factor may have led Hampton to leave the struggle to others. For his efforts, the authorities that surrounded him and kept him under surveillance murdered Hampton, un-armed, in his sleep. How long will these type of crimes continue against the outspoken of the underclasses? Presently, killings of men of color have not

¹⁹¹ Richard Pryor, comedian, *Bicentennial Nigger*, by Richard Pryor, Warner Brothers, LP. 33 rpm, 1976.

been limited to the outspoken. But Fred Hampton's story shows that these tragedies can trigger positive change and action.

The oft-repeated phrase Fred Hampton was known to use, "you can kill the revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution," was printed in his obituary. It is very fitting for this self-proclaimed "revolutionary" to be remembered with these words. His was a life that was filled with work and struggle for others. From about the age of fourteen, until his death, Hampton seemed to be constantly engaged with efforts to better life for others. He was diligent and dedicated, but he was no angel. This project does not attempt to portray that he was a person that could be canonized in the hagiographic manner of church saints. For example, Mark Rudd, former member of WUO, was hit with a single punch from Hampton, during a dispute about the Panthers not supporting the Days of Rage protest by the WUO in October of 1969. Rudd had just questioned the Panthers dedication and courage when Hampton leveled him to the floor.¹⁹² Hampton was no angel, but he was passionate about his convictions, sometimes to a fault. Still, the life and death of Hampton is part of a rich story that deserves more exposure and study.

By the death of Hampton, the lumpen class of Chicago was energized in community strength and voice. His story inspired and affected people from the man on the corner, to the woman at the clinic, to the man in the White House. People in congress, comedians, musicians, ministers, community leaders and others have been moved by the story of Fred Hampton, and his legacy lives on. Fred Hampton is a figure that should be remembered as making a significant impact on not only the Chicago area, but also the nation. By killing Fred Hampton, the agencies of the FBI and the CPD gave many individuals one of those pivotal moments - a moment that led to inspired actions, and outspoken cries for justice, equality, and balance in society.

¹⁹² David T. Dellinger, *More Power Than We Know: The People's Movement Toward Democracy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1975), 162.

Father George Clements, a friend to Hampton and minister to their community shared “I remember we had a memorial at my church after the murder of Fred Hampton. I began crying and I couldn’t stop. Then three kids jumped up and said they were going to be Fred Hampton...Fred Hampton still lives on to all generations. He will never die.”¹⁹³

Fred ain’t dead.

¹⁹³ William Hampton, 55.

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