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The Making of the Classic Period of the Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles,
California

By

Sherwin Keith Rice

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Sherwin Keith Rice as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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Abstract

The Making of the Classic Period of the Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles,

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By

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Claremont Graduate University: 2022

It is often believed that the Black Power Movement started after civil rights/black power activist Stokely Carmichael declared, “We want Black Power” in Greenwood, Mississippi on June 16, 1966 and ended in the 1970s. Similar to the Civil Rights Movement the Black Power Movement is often examined through a dominant narrative short movement view. Some scholars suggests that “Black Power” stood for a change in direction away from the nonviolent civil rights approach. But Black Power is an enigma and it means different things to different people. It is just one element of the Black Freedom Struggle. Black Power uses many methods to liberate Black people from oppression. It shares some of the same methods and goals with the Civil Rights Movement. However, there is one major difference. Unlike the nonviolent struggle for civil rights, participants of Black Power are not opposed to meeting state sanctioned violence with violence.

Drawing on both primary and secondary sources, this dissertation challenges the idea of a dominant narrative short Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, California. Although Black Power and the Black Power Movement are experienced in cities across the nation this study is being undertaken because African American participation in Black Power in Los Angeles is often overlooked. Rebellions in many cities outside of the South during the 1960s may have

appeared to come out of nowhere to people outside of the Black communities. However, to people in the Black community those storms were a long time in the making.

In the first half of the twentieth-century the United States government created policies that limited where Black people could participate in home ownership. Those policies maintained grading systems based on a government created myth that Black people lowered property values, which added more value to white neighborhoods. Those lower-ratings also promoted the idea that Black neighborhoods had more crime, which resulted in over policing. In Los Angeles that over policing involved the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the Sheriffs Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The use of Black Power and the development of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, California during the twentieth-century are examined in chapter one through governmental housing policies that imposed spatial restrictions on the movement of Black people. In the second chapter I examine the importance of pre-1960s incidents of state approved brutality that occurred within the walls of Black communities both locally and nationally.

In chapter three I examine the growing popularity and power of the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles and its history of resistance and how that impacted the Black community. In this chapter I also address the importance of the years between 1955 and 1960 in establishing the classic period of Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Chapter four examines significant events in the early stages of the “classic” period 1961-1971 of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Incidents involving the Nation of Islam and the LAPD play a major role in this examination because of the organization’s resistance or appearance of resistance to police brutality.

Chapter five investigates what led up to the Watts Rebellion and what happened to the

Movement in its aftermath. I address why Watts is not the beginning of the Movement and suggest it is the second part of the “classic” period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Chapter six exposes the continuing abuses committed by local law enforcement agencies and the federal government’s covert operations directed against the Black community, Black Power organizations, and Black students in academia. This chapter reveals some of the factors that led to the demise of the “classic” period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

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Introduction

This dissertation has been a painfully rewarding odyssey of examining the classic period of the Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. The Black Power Movement is just one element of the Black Freedom Struggle. Black Power is hard to describe. It is an enigma and several things at once. It is the use of educational, art, financial, legislative, physical, and any other means necessary to assist in the liberation of Black people from oppression. It shares some of these elements with the Civil Rights Movement, which was given its name in the 1950s. The Civil Rights Movement is a nonviolent mass movement against racial segregation and discrimination. Black Power is an act of self-defense that is no different than any other group that defends itself against oppression and especially violence. In this case it just happens to be employed by Black people.

Crispus Attucks, a Black man, was one of the first to die in the American Revolution but it is highly doubtful that it would ever be considered Black Power or a Black Power Movement. He was a Black colonist that resisted British colonial oppression along with whites. That would be “Colonists Power,” and perhaps someone at the time uttered those words and it just never caught on in the way that Black Power did centuries later. That we will never know. Colonists employed acts of violence that turned into a movement that turned into the Revolutionary War. It is resistance and a reaction to violence. It becomes a movement when it is representative of a group and their commonalities such as the American colonists or the Black youth of the Emmett Till generation.¹

¹ Major scholarship on the subject of Black Power in the United States include but are not limited to: Peniel Joseph’s *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* and *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, Charles Jones’s *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, Scot Brown’s *Fighting For US: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, And Black Cultural Nationalism*, Joshua Bloom and Waldo Martin’s *Black Against the Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, Kerry Pimblott’s *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois*, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, *Black*

The primary difference between the Civil Rights Movement and the use of Black Power before and after it is given that name and/or called a movement is its participant's willingness to use violence against violence to protect the Black community. The Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles contains acts of abuse by law enforcement agents and the violent responses to those acts of abuse from the 1920s to the present. There are only a few documented incidents of Black Power or violent responses to state sanctioned violence prior to the Watts Rebellion, even though there were several cases of law enforcement brutality against Black folks.

Another element of Black Power in its most overt form that separates it from the Civil Rights Movement is the refusal to always try and work within the oppressor's so-called legal framework to exercise rights of citizenship in the United States. For example, in 1967 the Black Panther Party for Self Defense daringly employed elements of both. They went to the California State Capital to verbally protest the "Mulford Act" which is within the civil rights framework, however some of the Panthers openly carried firearms, which crossed over into Black Power.

I argue and provide evidence that both the Civil Rights and Black Power methods are employed by African Americans in Southern California decades before both terms come into existence in the 1950s and 1960s. Sometimes wars and movements are assigned names and labels after time has passed. For example prior to World War II, World War I was known as the Great War or simply the World War. The movements in this dissertation are no different. Prior to being named they were acts of civil rights protest and Black Power resistance. I too employ names created after these actions had taken place in early twentieth-century Los Angeles. So, I retroactively apply "Long" to both Civil Rights (nonviolent action) and Black Power (violent reactions) actions in Los Angeles beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively.

Power 50, Akinyele Umoja's We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement, and Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar's Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity.

This dissertation was inspired by scholars such as Steve Lawson, Robert Koorstad, Glenda Gilmore, and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, all of whom argue that a “long civil rights movement” originated in the 1930s with a biracial alliance in the South among labor union radicals.”² According to Lawson, white organizations such as the local CIO textile and tobacco workers in North Carolina; the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW) and its successor, the Southern Conference Educational Fund; the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax; Highlander Folk School; and the Communist Party were joined by largely black groups such as the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC) and the National Negro Congress.

The biracial alliance peaked in 1948 with the last place finish of the independent presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, who ran on a platform that opposed economic inequality and racial segregation.³ In her article “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” Hall successfully challenges the dominant narrative of a short civil rights movement that spanned from the 1954 Supreme Court decision on school desegregation until the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which civil rights leader Bayard Rustin defines as the “classical” phase of the civil rights movement.⁴

The dominant narrative’s short civil rights movement timeline is from 1954’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision through the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁵ Hall argues that the

² Steven F. Lawson, “Long Origins of the Civil Rights, 1954-1968,” in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 12.

³ Steven F. Lawson, “Long Origins of the Civil Rights, 1954-1968,” in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 12.

⁴ Bayard Rustin, *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 111.

⁵ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1234, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

dominant narrative both elevates and diminishes the movement simultaneously. The nonviolent struggle for justice and equality for African Americans known as the American Civil Rights Movement began with the arrival of enslaved Africans to North America and it will continue as long as racial injustices and inequalities against African Americans in this country continue. For example, in 1829, abolitionist David Walker encouraged Black people to take civil rights action in his book, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829.*⁶ Therefore, limiting the Movement to a neatly packed ten-year time frame presents a false narrative for the accomplishments achieved throughout the Long Civil Rights Movement. The dominant narrative also ensures the status of the classical phase as a triumphal moment in the larger American progress narrative but undermines its *gravitas*.⁷ Hall's goal is to, "trace the contours of what she takes to be a more robust, more progressive, and truer story--the story of a "long civil rights movement" that took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s..."⁸

One could go so far as to argue that the Civil Rights Movement spans the entire timeline of the African experience in the Western Hemisphere. However, it is mostly defined by the period of technological advancements that allowed the imagery of oppressive and violent responses to nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience campaigns to be broadcasts around the globe. This short or classical phase fits in so neatly with the technology advances that it makes it

⁶ David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*, (Boston: David Walker), 1830.

⁷ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1234, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

⁸ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1235, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

easier to re-label and condense the long movement into a very short decade, which is not sufficient enough to explore many of the significant events.

The classical phase's narrative contains a defining figure in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. However, some of King's most defining moments are minimized or omitted in the dominant narrative.⁹ Hall suggests under the dominant narrative King is frozen in time, locked in 1963 with his "I have a dream" speech on the National Mall. According to Hall, we hear little of the King who believed race was a national problem, not a sectional one.¹⁰ Nor do we hear of the King who opposed the Vietnam War and linked racism at home to militarism and imperialism abroad, states Hall.

Scholars have also begun to venture outside of previous narrow timelines. For example, in *The American Civil Rights Movement 1865-1950: Black Agency and People of Goodwill*, Russell Brooker writes about people of good will involved in the civil rights movement.¹¹ Brooker's people of good will are described broadly. According to Brooker, "Some were saints who suffered terribly, for their advocacy for justice: others were selfish and worked for justice only when it was in their interest... The only common denominator is that all of them supported the movement and therefore advanced the cause of justice."¹² Brooker's timeline runs from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement in 1950,

⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1235, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

¹⁰ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1235, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

¹¹ Russell Brooker, *The American Civil Rights Movement 1865-1950: Black Agency and People of Goodwill* (Lanham: Lexington Books), 2017.

¹² Russell Brooker, *The American Civil Rights Movement 1865-1950: Black Agency and People of Goodwill* (Lanham: Lexington Books), 2017, xii.

during the preparation of the five cases of *Brown vs. Board of Education*.¹³ Brooker's timeline ends several years before the beginning of timelines in 1954 and 1955.

However, Hall challenged the dominant narrative of the short civil rights movement almost twenty years ago in 2005. Nevertheless, some scholarship has continued to confine the Civil Rights Movement to the well-established narrow passage of time between roughly 1955 and 1965. In *Charleston in Black And White: Race and Power in the South After the Civil Rights Movement* Steve Estes considers the years since 1970 to be the post-civil rights era. According to Estes in post-civil right era Charleston race relations took two divergent trajectories with growing opportunities for middle class and elite Blacks and increased segregation and disempowerment for lower income Blacks.¹⁴ His use of the term post-civil rights movement means just that. For Estes the Civil Rights Movement existed only during the 1950s and 1960s even though he acknowledges there were limitations to the changes wrought by the movement he defines as a watershed moment in the history of Charleston.¹⁵

In *Lighting the Fires of Freedom* Janet Dewar Bell introduces her readers to women in leadership positions in a narrow civil rights movement beyond familiar names such as Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King. Lesser known leaders include Diane Nash, of SNCC and Leah Richardson who defied Jim Crow and provided food and safe haven for civil rights workers. Although Bell acknowledges the participation and leadership roles of women in the civil rights

¹³ Russell Brooker, *The American Civil Rights Movement 1865-1950: Black Agency and People of Goodwill* (Lanham: Lexington Books), 2017, xii.

¹⁴ Steve Estes, *Charleston in Black And White: Race and Power in the South After the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3.

¹⁵ Steve Estes, *Charleston in Black And White: Race and Power in the South After the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 172.

movement she also limits the time period of the movement to bookends specifically around the 1960s. According to Bell:

The Civil Rights Movement was one of the most dramatic periods of American history, marked by rapid and profound change. During this short span of time—from the 1950s to the 1970s—African Americans led the fight to free this country from the vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow.¹⁶

In direct opposition to Hall’s “Long Civil Rights Movement” Bell suggest that the work and sacrifices of individuals such as Ida B. Wells and the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs founded in 1896 were not a part of civil rights but laid an aspirational and practical foundation for women’s leadership during the Civil Rights Movement, by recognizing social responsibility and community organizing.¹⁷ The significant roles played by women in what was part of a long civil rights movement prior to the mid century movement was just refereed to as a “struggle for racial justice.” The ongoing denial of the existence of a long civil rights movement diminishes the contributions of the courageous men and women who made sacrifices without the technological benefits afforded the classic period of the movement.

This dissertation is inspired by Hall’s venturing out beyond the dominant narrative of the short civil rights movement. However, it is disappointing that she does not acknowledge the same possibility in the Black Power Movement. Hall suggests that the new medium of television brings scenes of the civil rights movement that seem to come out of nowhere, with no precedents, and no roots as a distortion compounded by the national press. Where the Civil Rights Movement is nonviolent and peaceful, Black Power is not opposed to using violence to protect the Black community, which makes it less socially acceptable. She suggests that the national press’s overwhelmingly sympathetic and misleading coverage abruptly ended in the

¹⁶ Janet Dewar Bell, *Lighting the Fires of Freedom* (New York: The New York Press, 2018), 8.

¹⁷ Janet Dewar Bell, *Lighting the Fires of Freedom* (New York: The New York Press, 2018), 8.

mid-1960s with the advent of Black Power and uprisings in the north.¹⁸ She writes as if unlike the civil rights movement, the Black Power Movement had no “classic” period within a longer movement.

One of the elements of Black Power in its most overt form is the refusal to always work within the oppressor’s so-called legal framework to exercise rights of citizenship in the United States. One of the first acts of oppression committed against Black people can be found in the Declaration of Independence. It states:

All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.¹⁹

Additionally, amendments one and two of the Constitution which are very important to many white folks have been denied or responded to violently when exercised by African Americans. The desire for segregation posed by the Nation of Islam is an example of the hypocrisy of the United States. In expressing their desire for a physical portion of the country some members of the NOI and their ancestors fought for was consistent with the philosophy of the founding fathers. But white media labeled them anti-white, anti Christian and the Black equivalents of the Ku Klux Klan who wanted to destroy the white race.²⁰

¹⁸ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1245, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172>.

¹⁹ U.S. Declaration of Independence.

²⁰ “Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962.

Like the Civil Rights Movement the Black Power Movement is a long movement as well. Unlike nonviolent protests in the south brought on by abuse of the legislative and judicial system, Black Power is overwhelmingly a reaction to brutal police action and inaction alike. Although police brutality is the common denominator timelines can vary from city to city and region to region. Hall's scholarship is an inspiration to examine the idea of a Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles rooted in police brutality that has existed in the Black community as early as the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Prior to gaining national exposure in 1959, Black Power quietly arrived in Los Angeles in 1957 in the form of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (NOI). The Nation of Islam brought Black Power to Los Angeles in the form of Black Nationalism embedded in its religion. The Nation's form of Islam is an African American hybrid of mainstream Islam. It incorporates themes such as self-sufficiency, separatism, self-defense, Black pride, self-determination, and even science fiction. The NOI was the first organization to publicly promote self-defense for Black people against anyone wishing to do them harm as stated by their national spokesman Malcolm X.²¹ During and after his time in the NOI Malcolm X was heavily responsible for the militant growth of Black people. Examples of Black Power in the in the South include the armed resistance of Robert Williams, and the Deacons for Defense.

In the Midwest some Christian religious leaders were active in the Black Power movement. In 1963, Albert Cleage, an ordained minister in the United Church of God moved away from the integrationist model of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and toward the Black separatism/nationalism of Malcolm X. He was the founder and first holy patriarch of the Pan-

²¹ Malcolm X, *Speech About Self Defense*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkoIgpU_DCU, accessed September 26, 2022.

African Orthodox Christian Church of the Black Madonna in Detroit.²² Malcolm X delivered his “Message to the Grassroots” speech at the closing of Cleage’s Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference on November 10, 1963. According to David Maraniss in *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story* in Malcolm’s accusation and criticism of the “March on Washington” being controlled by white members of government, Walter Reuther and others marked a break from the past and laid out a path for the Black Power movement to follow from then on.²³

Kerry Pimblott’s *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois* also provided inspiration.²⁴ Pimblott reveals how in Cairo grassroots activists recruited and sustained black church, clerical, and lay support for Black Power struggles at the local, state, and national levels. Pimblott also introduces the process of *framing*, the process by which a social movement organization links individual and group grievances to a broader interpretative framework that helps potential participants understand their experience, recognize that it is unjust, and envision specific ways in which they remedy it collectively. Unfortunately, in Los Angeles Black church support for the Movement stalled early in the classic period as examined in chapter four.

Borrowing from the language of Rustin and Theoharis, this dissertation posits a regional “classic period” of 1961-1971 of the long running Los Angeles Black Power Movement that both predates and encompasses the Watts Rebellion. It is bookended by local police abuse against the NOI in 1961 and 1962 and the exposure of the FBI’s attack on Black Power organizations

²² David Maraniss, *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 274.

²³ David Maraniss, *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 274.

²⁴ Kerry Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois* (Lexington: the University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 9.

through the release of documents taken from a nondescript Media, Pennsylvania FBI office in 1971.²⁵

The classic period of the Black Power Movement that began in Los Angeles in the early 1960s was a reaction to decades of racial injustices and police abuse. It did not start in 1965 by the single act of California Highway Patrol motorcycle officer Lee Minikus pulling over Marquette Frye, for suspicion of being intoxicated while driving his mother's car. The Watts Rebellion was the pressure valve that finally released after decades of anti-Black police brutality. But the pressure had been especially high for the Emmett Till generation that had access to the teachings of Malcolm X.

I argue that Black Power existed decades before and after the Watts Rebellion in 1965. It is a form of resistance or a confrontational response to physical and nonphysical abuse by members of law enforcement, security agents, and or employees of businesses. In the cases examined in this dissertation they have been reactionary responses to the actions of white men. Originally titled *The Rise and Fall of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles*, the title had to be reconsidered following a conversation with Black Panther Ericka Huggins. In January 2020, Huggins questioned that title and suggested that the Movement had not fallen. She pointed out that we were at UCLA standing in the middle of a room filled with young activists carrying on the work she had started 50 years earlier. Four months later there was a resurgence of the Black Power Movement in response to the killing of George Floyd and so many other Black people at the hands of police. Ms. Huggins, Black Lives Matter, and other organizations protesting in 2020 proved that the Movement had never fully ended in Los Angeles and that it persists.

²⁵ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>,

Los Angeles shares some characteristics of the Long Black Power Movement with other cities outside of the south. In major cities whites protested living near Black people, made it almost impossible for Black people to attain home ownership, and ignored the brutality inflicted on Black people by law enforcement agencies.²⁶ The difference with Los Angeles is that the city's racist and discriminatory actions were not as widely known as in some other cities prior to the 1960s. It had no citywide riots or mobs of white people on a large scale going into Black neighborhoods and attacking Black people. In Los Angeles the LAPD and eventually the FBI conducted oppressive and brutal actions in the Black community. Although these policing actions were unknown to most suburban whites, Black people experienced it constantly and eventually they responded to the violence with violence on a large scale.

Prior to the 1960s, several cities in the Midwest and East experienced deadly encounters between Black and white people. In Detroit, Michigan on March 6, 1863, Thomas Faulkner, a mulatto or a dark-skinned white man of Spanish-Indian descent was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for raping Mary Brown, a white nine-year old girl and for possibly molesting her Black friend Ellen Hoover in his tavern on February 26th.²⁷ As Faulkner and his guards were being attacked by an angry white mob, a bystander Charles Langer was shot and killed. The angry crowd moved to a black neighborhood and began burning and looting property. As black people ran from homes engulfed with flames they were attacked. During his dash to safety, Joshua Boyd, was struck in the head with an axe and later died. Langer and Boyd were the two

²⁶ Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, "Special Focus: Sojourner Truth Project," 12th Street Detroit, accessed September 22, 2022, https://projects.lib.wayne.edu/12thstreetdetroit/exhibits/show/beforeunrest/sojourner_truth.

²⁷ "The Trial of the Negro Faulkner," *Detroit Free Press*, March 7, 1863.

fatalities resulting from the riot.²⁸ In 1870 both girls recanted their stories and Faulkner was released. In response to the riot the Detroit Police Department was created.

Eighty-years later on June 20, 1943, racial violence visited Detroit again. This time following a dispute between Black and white motorists on the Belle Isle Bridge which connects Detroit to Belle Isle Park located on the Detroit River. The police department created in the aftermath of the 1863 riot was complicit in the violence against African Americans in 1943. Like Los Angeles, Detroit had its own Long Black Power Movement rooted in an anti-Black police department. According to Walter White, the head of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in *What Caused the Detroit Riot: An Analysis*:

During the 30's especially when there was keen competition for jobs because of the depression, Southern whites sought and secured jobs on the police force of Detroit and in the courts. There was a period of years when cold-blooded killings of Negroes by policemen were a constant source of bitterness among Negroes. Eventually, protest by such organizations as the Detroit branch of the NAACP and other Negro and inter-racial groups led to a diminution and eventually a practical cessation of such killings. But a residue of distrust of the police remained. When the riot of June, 1943, broke forth, this suspicion of the police by Negroes was more than justified when 29 of the 35 killed were Negroes, 17 of them shot by police and a number of these shot in the back.²⁹

There are too many examples of police brutality during the riot, which lasted from June 20-22, 1943 to list here, but police inaction also served as a form of police brutality. When four African Americans left a bus under the protection of Detroit Police officers they were either taken from the police by the mob and beaten unmercifully, or were turned over to the mob by the police.³⁰

There were also race riots in other cities throughout the country such as Harlem, New York and

²⁸ "The Trial of the Negro Faulkner," *Detroit Free Press*, March 7, 1863.

²⁹ Walter Francis White, *What Caused the Detroit Riot: An Analysis* (New York, NY: NAACP, 1943), 8.

³⁰ Walter Francis White, *What Caused the Detroit Riot: An Analysis* (New York, NY: NAACP, 1943), 8.

Mobile, Alabama because of the large influx of African Americans moving into urban areas searching for better treatment and better jobs.

Detroit serves as a comparison to Los Angeles because both of their African American populations exploded as a result of the war effort. But there was one major difference between the two cities. During the first half of the twentieth century Los Angeles had no history of race riots involving African Americans and whites. In the weeks before the riot in Detroit, Los Angeles experienced its own race riot. On June 3-8, 1943 American servicemen and white Angelenos attacked and stripped children, teenagers, and youths predominately of Mexican descent who wore zoot suits, because they considered the outfits, which were made from large amounts of fabric, to be unpatriotic during World War II.³¹

Although the rioters focused on members of the Mexican American community Black people in Los Angeles were victims of police brutality throughout the twentieth-century. Los Angeles was perceived as a safe haven for Black folks, but Black Angelenos had known otherwise. On the outside-looking-in-Los Angeles would seem like the last place in need of a Black Power Movement. How and why Black Power and eventually the Black Power Movement developed in Los Angeles between the 1920s and 1960s deserves a closer look.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one examines how the lack of access to property ownership orchestrated by the United States government relegated Black Americans to the underclass in society, which led to more discrimination, racism, and the unjust policing of the Black community in so-called liberal Los Angeles. Under these restrictive conditions similar to actions in the South, Black people faced discrimination and racism throughout the city. Policing of concentrated Black

³¹ Alice Gregory, "A Brief History of the Zoot Suit Unraveling the jazzy life of a snazzy style," *Smithsonian*, April 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/brief-history-zoot-suit-180958507/>.

neighborhoods often led to beatings and the death of innocent Black people. For the most part the Black community did not respond with violence to abusive policing. However, as early as the 1930s there were incidents that resulted in Black people responding other than nonviolently by arming themselves and exhibiting physical Black Power.

In chapter two I examine the importance of pre-1960s incidents of state approved brutality that occurred within the walls of Black communities both locally and nationally such as the murder of Emmett Till to the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. I also examine scholarly definitions and alternate timelines of Black Power, the history of riots in Los Angeles, and how and why the Black Power Movement developed in Los Angeles. Spatial limitations impact on financial success for Black Americans also empowered them within their communities. Finally I show how the impact of the limits placed on spatial freedom for Black people that would manifest itself in the rebellious 1960s had its origins in the 1940s and 1950s.

In chapter three I examine the growing popularity and power of the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles, its history of resistance and how that impacted the Black community, and its relationship with traditional Black religious organizations. I seek to advance the idea that the rise of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles intersected with the development of local street gangs/organizations and how some of their members responded to the murder of Emmett Till, the trauma of the penal system, and white rejection of integration of “their” so-called neighborhoods. This chapter also shows how the death of Emmett Till, racism, and discrimination practiced by white people inspired members of his generation in Los Angeles to use physical Black Power to take revenge against white people for Till’s execution. And finally, I address the importance of the years between 1955 and 1960 in establishing the classic Black Power Movement in LA.

Chapter four examines significant events in the early stages of the “classic” period 1961-1971 of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Incidents involving the Nation of Islam and the LAPD play a major role in this examination because of the organization’s resistance or appearance of resistance to the brutality practiced by members of the LAPD against Black folks. To give the anti-Black brutality practiced by law enforcement context I unpack how similar incidents involving white people in white neighborhoods are handled.

Chapter five investigates what led up to the Watts Rebellion and what happened to the Movement in its aftermath. The rebellion is sometimes referred to as the genesis of the national Black Power Movement. I address why Watts is not the beginning of the Movement and suggest it is the second part of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, which signaled the changing of the vanguard of the Movement away from the NOI. I also explore how the assassination of Malcolm X, who had been a consistent voice against anti Black policing in Los Angeles, led to the rise of the Emmett Till generation’s participation in the Movement in Los Angeles. I also make the distinction between a race riot and rebellion, which is what Black people do to get the attention of the dominant society when they burn and loot buildings.

Chapter six exposes the continuing abuses committed by local law enforcement agencies and the federal government’s covert operations directed against the Black community, Black Power organizations, and Black students in academia. This chapter reveals what led to the demise of the 1960’s classic period of the Movement. I examine evidence provided by the break in, theft, and exposure of over 1000 documents from an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania. The FBI ignored the rights of Black citizens who wanted to end the abuse they suffered at the hands of police officers. The atmosphere around the killings of two Black Panthers on the campus of UCLA provides examples of the questionable tactics employed by law enforcement agencies to

put an end to the Black Power Movement. Activities at UCLA also provided an example of the nationwide development of successful Black Studies Department and programs in spite of the actions of the US government.

Chapter 1

The Manifestation of Systemic Racism Against African Americans During the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Introduction

The US government and real estate industry created a market that forced Black people to live in a constant state of spatial occupation that also excluded them from the benefits of owning real estate. While extending almost all their lending capital to white suburbs and equating African Americans with risk, the FHA produced a lending drought for Black borrowers and created isolated Black neighborhoods that suffered from a housing shortage. These actions created the conditions for over policing in Black communities, anti-Black brutality, and murder in the case of Sam Faulkner in 1927.

Civil rights and Black Power actions are both responses to the actions of the white dominant society in America. Whereas it is formal and informal policies that tend to lead to civil rights actions it is outright violence by the state that ignites the sometimes physical and violent resistance associated with the Black Power Movement.

There are fewer numbers of reported physical abuses by police and resistance to that abuse in early twentieth-century Los Angeles. But it does happen, as shown later in this chapter. The Black Power Movement is not isolated from nonviolent actions associated with civil rights activities. The indignities suffered by Black folks in nonviolent encounters are just as important to the need for Black Power as abusive policing. Black Power is also the release of pressure but the contents that produce that pressure are numerous. Although the control of spaces occupied by African Americans in Los Angeles were less restrictive than other parts of the United States it was, nevertheless, still oppressive.

Los Angeles and other west coast cities were passed over during the great Black exodus out of the South to the Midwest and Northeast during World War I. By 1920, the African American population in Los Angeles had increased 86.3% to 15,579 to make up less than 3% of the 576, 673 total population.³² When the Black population began to expand into double digits during the 1910s and 1920s, whites began employing racial restrictive covenants; contractual agreements imposed in a deed that prohibits the purchase, lease, or occupation of a piece of property by a particular group of people, usually African Americans.

The challenges African Americans faced to occupy spaces and move freely throughout Los Angeles during the first half of the twentieth century are well documented in the collective memory of the African American community, Black press, and in legal proceedings that challenged segregation and discrimination in real estate, state sanctioned assaults, and the murder of unarmed African Americans.³³ These documents and personal accounts provide evidence that protests against discriminatory practices in housing, eateries, the entertainment business, recreational facilities, and law enforcement did not provide long-term equality but instead a continuous cycle of action followed by disappointment that mounted over years, before manifesting itself in an aggressive and proactive and prolonged form of resistance in The Black Power Movement. The control of spaces occupied by African Americans by non-Blacks during the interwar years (1918- 1939) through the end of World War II were met with various degrees of resistance, protests, and even armed confrontations by African Americans.

³² GPA Consulting and Alison Rose Jefferson, SurveyLA Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey, Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: African American History of Los Angeles (City of Los Angeles, Department of Planning, Office of Historic Resources, 2018), 19. <https://planning.lacity.org/preservation-design/historic-resources/ethnic-cultural-contexts>

³³ “Celebrities in Spotlight As Sugarhill Trial Begins,” *The California Eagle*, December 6, 1945, 4., “Irate Police Attack, Beat War Veteran: Loss of Eye May Result from Attack,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1934, 1., “Widow Disputes Police slaying: Says Husband Asked Escort to Hospital” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1966, 1.

The Setup for Housing Segregation in Los Angeles

The growth of Black Power is often defined only through the African American experience with police brutality. At the highest level of government, housing discrimination was used as the weapon of choice to confine Black people to certain areas throughout the country. In Los Angeles during the first half of the twentieth century those areas were the Central Avenue district and Watts. The Central Avenue district continued to be the center of the Black community even as people began to leave the area in the 1960s. It would become the base of operations for some Black Power organizations, such as the Black Panther Party³⁴

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, racially biased home ownership zoning was an accepted practice in real estate throughout the United States. In Southern California during that time racially biased homeowner zoning was not practiced because of African Americans' low population numbers. According to George Beavers, one of the cofounders of Golden State Mutual Insurance Company in commenting on his family's move to Los Angeles in 1903, stated, "it was a very small Negro population in California at that time. And they couldn't follow the patterns of segregation as they, as had been done in the South, because there just were not enough black Americans here. That was to come later when they learned, learned from the South how to promote segregation."³⁵ Although the Black Power Movement is mostly associated with the 1960s and 1970s, the great migration of African Americans from the southern United States to Southern California during the first half of the twentieth century played a significant

³⁴ Wayne Pharr, *Nine Lives of a Black Panther: A Story of Survival* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2014), 1.

³⁵ George A. Beavers, "Black Leadership in Los Angeles," interview by Ranford B Hopkins, UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research, May 4, 1982, audio 40:24, <https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz0008zdpb?counter=1&q=George+Beavers>.

role in its creation because the children of the great migration would become the activists in the movement.

Walls Around the Village

In the early twentieth century the Central Avenue district or South-Central Los Angeles was established as the center of the African American community. Long before Crenshaw and Leimert Park on the West side became the center of Black L. A. there was Central Avenue. It should be noted that the negative connotations that would later be associated with the name “South Central” had nothing to do with a comparison to a “nicer” North Central Avenue because it did not exist. Central Avenue unlike many other streets that run north-south in Los Angeles begin at 1st Street. Central Avenue only runs south from 1st street thereby getting its name South Central. It is a geographical reference to the main street that ran through the African American community at that time.

In the 1920s many African Americans lived in the Central Avenue district, but it was not exclusively Black. That took several decades to happen, and several factors contributed to that development. According to historian Douglass Flamming in *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*, in 1920, African Americans at the most only constituted twenty percent of the population in the Central Avenue district.³⁶ The district was mostly white with large numbers of Asians and Mexicans. So how did the area become the hub of Black LA?

The Central Avenue district was constructed by surrounding white neighborhoods that barred minorities from living in them. The white neighborhoods created a buffer for wealthy whites living on the west side of town. The white neighborhoods functioned as an instrument of containment during the long twenty-year cycle of using racial restrictive covenants for housing

³⁶ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 93.

discrimination. Located on the Eastside of the city, the Central Avenue district was bounded by two north-south streets, San Pedro on the west and Alameda on the east. The Westside included everything north and west of Main and the Alameda corridor was east.

In 1910 the district's southern boundary was in downtown at Washington Boulevard but by 1920 it had moved south to Jefferson Boulevard. According to Flamming, the Southward push of blacks was more acceptable to Westside whites.³⁷ Wealthy Westside whites used blue-collar whites to maintain a buffer zone a few blocks west of Central Ave at San Pedro/Avalon Street. Some miles south in Watts, the Black community continued to grow. The use of restrictive covenants allowed the geographic, economic, and financial opportunities of African Americans in Los Angeles to be controlled by white people.

Unwelcome to the Neighborhood

It is much easier to control a group of people if they have distinctive features such as Black skin. This is one of the reasons that made Black people so valuable to the growth of America. You can label them and know where they are, or should be 24 hours a day. Black people in this country have been labeled everything from Black to Colored to Negro and much worse since their arrival in 1619, to what would become the United States. Federal, state, local governments and citizens in the dominant society played a major role in the construction of those oppressive labels and in turn the pushback that would become the civil rights and black power movements.³⁸

These movements were born out of the insistence of some people in society and government agencies in treating Black people as non-citizens. The use of racial restrictive

³⁷ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 98.

covenants cannot be overlooked as an instrument of wealth building for white America while restricting wealth accumulation and space occupation for Black people. It began and ended with the United States Supreme Court. Prior to World War I, Mid-Atlantic States along the border of the South began to adopt zoning ordinances that enforced residential segregation in response to the migration of blacks from the “Deep South” states. Baltimore enacted the first zoning law in 1910. In Louisville, Kentucky the ordinance was entitled:

An ordinance to prevent conflict and ill feeling between the white and colored races in the city of Louisville, and to preserve the public peace and promote the general welfare by making reasonable provisions requiring, as far as practicable, the use of separate blocks for residences, places of abode and places of assembly by white and colored people respectively.³⁹

The ordinance declared it unlawful for any colored person to move into and occupy in the future any house on any block upon which a greater number of houses were occupied by white people than by colored people. Likewise, white people were forbidden from moving into any block where there were more colored persons' residences than white. On the surface this appears to just be white folks exercising white supremacy ideology. But in the long run this separation of the races creates an “other” that will suffer at the abusive hands of the police. Every little piece of the puzzle of oppression contributes to the eventual Black Power response.

Restrictive covenants could have never been possible without the support of government entities and willing members of society to deny African Americans the right to occupy certain spaces through the purchase of real estate. Richard Rothstein probably said it best in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Rothstein writes, “I think it can fairly be said that there would be many fewer segregated suburbs than there are today were it not for an unconstitutional desire, shared by local officials and by the national leaders

³⁹ T. B. Benson, “Segregation Ordinances,” *The Virginia Law Register New Series*, 1, no. 5 (1915): 330, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1104063>.

who urged them on, to keep African Americans from being white families' neighbors."⁴⁰ The economic and physical ghettos created by federal and local institutions also created the conditions for movements that would change the course of racial history in the United States.

Rothstein convincingly argues that "Without our government's purposeful imposition of racial segregation the other causes-private prejudice, white flight, real estate steering, bank redlining, income differences, and self-segregation still would have existed but with far less opportunity for expression."⁴¹ But some individuals willingness to participate in the government's discriminatory practices should be acknowledged. From the founding fathers to the small farm slaveholder to World War II veterans, individuals in this country have often ignored morality for financial gain.

In 1910 Henry and Texanna Laws left their native Rosenberg, Texas, southwest of Houston, for Los Angeles in search of better jobs. In 1919, the family moved to Gardena and later to the Imperial Valley, to work in cotton fields. In 1921, the family returned to Los Angeles. Henry worked odd jobs, including gardening, while Texanna cleaned houses. With the money they saved, they bought two adjacent lots in a black community now called Willowbrook near Watts. According to the Lawses daughter Pauletta Laws Fears, "Watts was a little white town, north of where we lived, "The mayor was white, and all the schoolteachers and police were white. Imperial Highway was then called Lynwood Road, and it was the dividing line."⁴² In 1936, the Lawses bought two more vacant lots, this time on 92nd Street. But blacks did not live

⁴⁰ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 54.

⁴¹ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 54.

⁴² Cecilia Rasmussen, "Family Stood Up to Restrictive Covenants," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-dec-03-me-then3-story.html>.

in the neighborhood because there were restrictive covenants on the houses. Black people could own property, but the deed barred anyone who wasn't "Caucasian" from living in it.

Thirteen years later and their children grown the Lawses built a two-bedroom, one-bath house at 1235 E. 92nd Street. They moved into their new home in October 1944, along with daughter Fears, whose husband was serving in the war. Within weeks, white property owners filed suit in Superior Court to enforce the covenants. The case went to trial in November, with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People defending the Lawses.

According to the *LA Times* Henry stated in court, "Why should I move? I bought this property 13 years ago and I built this house.... I am a free-born American citizen. My sons are fighting ... in the South Pacific. I buy war bonds. I am working for a defense plant, and so is the rest of my family. No judge will ever put me out, and the United States government will never put me out."⁴³ But a Superior Court judge upheld the restrictive covenants, ordering the family to move by December 1st or face a fine and five days in jail. In December, sheriff's deputies arrested Henry and Texanna Laws. When Fears returned from work, she too was arrested and tossed in jail. The NAACP bailed them out in three days.

Civil rights attorneys John T. McTernan and partner Ben Margolis linked the Laws case with more than half a dozen similar cases in a class-action suit that went all the way to the state Supreme Court. In the meantime, the Lawses stayed in their home. "People drove by and made threats, but there was never any violence," Fears stated.⁴⁴ On May 3, 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a similar case, *Shelley vs. Kraemer*, deeming restrictive covenants unenforceable.

⁴³ Cecilia Rasmussen, "Family Stood Up to Restrictive Covenants," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-dec-03-me-then3-story.html>.

⁴⁴ Cecilia Rasmussen, "Family Stood Up to Restrictive Covenants," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-dec-03-me-then3-story.html>.

The ruling also applied to the Laws case. Four months later, the California Supreme Court reversed eight lower-court judgments, including the one against the Lawses, clearing them to stay in their home.

The federal government made it very difficult for African Americans to obtain home loans by associating them with a higher risk of repayment. Real estate agents controlled who saw what was available in the form of new homes on the market. Agents steered whites away from Black neighborhoods and Blacks away from white neighborhoods. Banks used redlining to discriminate against African American buyers by making it almost impossible for them to get mortgages.⁴⁵

Even returning Black soldiers were not beyond discrimination. After fighting for democracy abroad, Black soldiers returned home to confront a Veterans Administration that would reject them for loans because of their race. The government and financial institutions created an environment that falsely associated Black people with lower property values.⁴⁶ Private individual white prejudice grew out of the conditions created by government and financial institution's policies. Whites had every reason to believe Black people had a negative impact on their property values based on these policies. Legislation was eventually passed to end such practices.

The United States Government and the Black Housing Crisis

Although the United States government was instrumental in ending the use of zoning ordinances to segregate neighborhoods, it was complicit along with the real estate industry in

⁴⁵ US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), *Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act, February 1938*, 937, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.html>.

⁴⁶ John Kimble, "Insuring Equality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Ghettoization of African Americans," *Law and Social Inquiry* 32, no 2 (2007): 406, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20108708>.

restricting where African Americans could enjoy homeownership. The United States government used racially explicit policies to geographically separate African Americans from whites. The FHA mortgage insurance provides lenders with protection against losses if a property owner defaults on their mortgage. The lenders bear less risk because the FHA will pay a claim to the lender for the unpaid principal balance of a defaulted mortgage. The 1938 revision of the Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual describes the techniques used by the FHA to determine whether or not mortgages are eligible for insurance under Title II of the National Housing Act.⁴⁷

The FHA strategically exploited these policies to the benefit of white homeowners at the expense of African Americans. Richard Rothstein states, “When we wish to pretend that the nation did not single out African Americans in a system of segregation specifically aimed at them, we diffuse them as just another people of color.”⁴⁸ Rothstein makes an important distinction about using the term “people of color.” Native Americans and Black people are so called “people of color,” but their experiences are not the same and cannot be assessed collectively.

This dissertation is in part about those methods of attempted eradication that had to be confronted with the Black Power Movement. After making this distinction between African Americans and the term “people of color” Rothstein proceeds to not offer novel historical interpretations but summarize existing, though no longer popular literature.⁴⁹ Where Rothstein

⁴⁷ US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), *Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act, February 1938*, 934, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.html>.

⁴⁸ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), loc. 189 of 6945, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), loc. 195 of 6945, Kindle.

uses his sources to show how nearly every aspect of contemporary racial inequality has its roots in state action, sources here show how the ongoing Black Power Movement in Los Angeles also has roots in those state actions.

The National Housing Act in 1934 coincided with a period of significant African American migration into urban areas. The FHA's racialized vision played a crucial role in shaping changes in the supply for urban housing engendered by this demographic shift. As the government body responsible for both ensuring the market's operation and ensuring its growth, the FHA sought to eliminate all elements of risk that could potentially destabilize real estate development. While extending almost all their lending capital to white suburbs and equating African Americans with risk, the FHA produced a lending drought for Black borrowers and created isolated Black neighborhoods that suffered from a housing shortage.

The FHA created and maintained discriminatory lending and planning practices at the expense of African American communities across the nation. FHA policies have been examined by scholars such as Thomas Sugrue in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Nathaniel Keith in *Politics and the Housing Crisis Since 1930*, and Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier*. According to John Kimble in his article "Insuring Equality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Urban Ghettoization of African Americans" all these scholars came up short in their examination of FHA policies. Sugrue neglected the important role the agency played in undermining civil rights reform; Keith ignored the racial policies of the FHA; and Jackson's analysis of the FHA is incomplete because he neglects crucial evidence that suggests a significantly more top-down interpretation of how segregation evolved in America.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ John Kimble, "Insuring Equality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Ghettoization of African Americans," *Law and Social Inquiry* 32, no 2 (2007): 401, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20108708>.

Kimble's accusation that the scholars came up short may not be totally accurate. Sugrue admits that his approach is one of many to examine the unresolved dilemmas of housing, segregation, industrial relations, racial discrimination, and deindustrialization.⁵¹ What Sugrue may have left out in the examination of the FHA can be excused when Sugrue looks at how government at the local level disregarded the civil rights of Black people over housing. Sugrue argues that the mutual reinforcement of race, economics, and politics of the 1940s to the 1960s, set the stage for the fiscal, social, and economic crisis, of today. This chapter suggests that housing and law enforcement discrimination during the first half of the twentieth century helped create the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Other than the fact the massive Black migration reached Detroit decades before Los Angeles both cities shared the same cause and effect of police brutality and rebellion influenced by limited access to housing.

Kimble's accusation that Jackson's lack of evidence to signify a more top-down interpretation of segregation should be overlooked. Jackson acknowledged that the FHA feared that an entire area could lose its investment value if rigid white-black separation was not maintained.⁵² Jackson also stated that the Underwriting Manual openly recommended "subdivision regulations and suitable restrictive covenants" that would be superior to any mortgage. Furthermore, he stated that the covenants were a common method of prohibiting Black occupancy until the United States Supreme Court ruling in 1948 (*Shelley v. Kraemer*) that they were unenforceable as law and contrary to public policy.⁵³

⁵¹ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 5.

⁵² Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (Oxford: University Press New York, 1985), 208.

⁵³ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 208.

There is a commonality between some authors on the subject of the role of the government in creating housing policy that is beneficial to whites and not African Americans. Kenneth Jackson does not absolve individuals for their racist practices. Jackson writes, “Bigotry has a long history in the United States, and the individuals who bought and sold houses were no better or worse than the rest of their countryman.”⁵⁴ The more the discriminatory policies of the FHA are revealed the more the voices of the victims of those policies are suppressed when discriminatory practices are viewed as business as usual.

The FHA committed unthinkable crimes against African Americans in the real estate market. Its racism and discrimination were openly displayed in the pages of the 1938 FHA Underwriting Manual. The FHA constructed blackness into a unique financial class based on the barrier of blacks being able to be absorbed into the dominant white society. It openly called for the confinement of African Americans to designated residential neighborhoods in order to establish stable communities of all white homeowners. The Manual instructed its operatives how to deny Black people the ability to enjoy the advantages of home ownership. According to Kimble, applying miscegenation to real estate, the property values in neighborhoods of entirely homogenous racial composition behaved in ways the FHA believed it could understand and predict.⁵⁵ Applying this ideology to real estate negatively impacted the land values of mixed and all Black neighborhoods. The FHA gathered extensive data on the racial demographics of neighborhoods and instructed financial institutions not to lend to households in integrated or predominantly African American areas.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 198.

⁵⁵ John Kimble, "Insuring Equality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Ghettoization of African Americans," *Law and Social Inquiry* 32, no 2 (2007): 404, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20108708>.

⁵⁶ John Kimble, "Insuring Equality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Ghettoization of African Americans," *Law and Social Inquiry* 32, no 2 (2007): 405, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20108708>.

This section takes a brief look at examples from behind the disguise that the agency presented to the world. These examples are taken straight from the 1938 edition of The Underwriters Manual, which was in effect during the immediate post war years. Observation of paragraph 934 on Restrictive Covenants it almost seems insignificant when it comes to race.⁵⁷ But it does state how powerful covenants can be in comparison to zoning ordinances. While it mostly refers to structures and which improvements can be made it also mentions adverse influences and occupancy. This paragraph becomes more negative towards African Americans when you look at other paragraphs that connect it to race. For example, paragraph 938 states that if a neighborhood is to retain its stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.⁵⁸ The FHA literally created a handbook that outlined what would lead to unstable neighborhoods whether it would have happened organically or not. In the 1947 version of the Manual statements promoting racially restrictive covenants had been dropped.

Through its Manual the FHA also controlled the spaces that Black people could occupy before land was developed. Ratings to qualify for mortgages for new subdivisions were predicated on restrictive covenants not being piecemeal but applying to all lots in the subdivision in addition to such things as the installation of streets and utilities. Finally, paragraph 938 goes beyond other paragraphs by suggesting provisions to strengthen restrictive covenants. The provision relevant to this paper prohibits the occupancy of properties except by the race for

⁵⁷ *Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act, February 1938*, prepared by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Washington, DC, 1938), 934, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.html>.

⁵⁸ *Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act, February 1938*, prepared by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Washington, DC, 1938), 938, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.html>.

which they were intended.⁵⁹ The FHA used its power to ensure that Black people were limited in their prospects of owning property and sharing in the wealth created by owning real estate.

The FHA used additional mechanisms along with the Manual to manipulate the housing industry. Residential Security Maps provided additional demographic information. Residential Security Maps color-coded neighborhoods using racial composition as a primary indicator of their acceptability as candidates for mortgages. The maps graded the neighborhoods on a scale from “A” to “D,” with A being color-coded green and the most desirable and D guaranteeing rejection and color-coded in red, providing the name, “redlining.” This is a very simplified version of the 400-page manual, but it provides the necessary evidence of the federal government’s influence on local real estate markets. Denying mortgage insurance in Black areas prevented them from encroaching and destabilizing emerging FHA insured white suburbs and created Black ghettos. In 1938 the Los Angeles Sentinel published the following:

Americans who have been protesting Hitler’s despicable plan to herd German Jews into ghettos will be surprised to learn that their own government has been busily planning ghettos for American Negroes through the Federal Housing Agency... The American plan lacks the forthright and brutal frankness of Hitler’s plan, but in the long run it is calculated to be as effective.⁶⁰

Along with the flood of African Americans that came to Los Angeles during World War II so came southern whites bringing Southern codes of behavior with them. According to RJ Smith in *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Last African-American Renaissance* they even

⁵⁹ *Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act, February 1938*, prepared by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Washington, DC, 1938), 980, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Federal-Housing-Administration-Underwriting-Manual.html>.

⁶⁰ Los Angeles Sentinel, December 29, 1938, Box 6, Folder: Restrictive Covenants, 1938-1948, Commissioner’s Correspondence and Subject File, 1938-1958, Record Group (RG) 31, National Archives (NA) II quoted in Arnold Hirsch, "Containment on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 2 (2000): 158, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://journals-sagepub-com.libproxy.csun.edu/doi/abs/10.1177/009614420002600202>.

practiced acting out social hierarchy in the open, on the street, where it was policed.⁶¹ In 1943, Black neighborhoods were so overcrowded in Los Angeles that Mayor Fletcher Bowron urged federal officials to act on the need for emergency war housing. People were sleeping in display windows, garages, vacant lots and alleys.⁶² In the coming decades, the streets of the government created ghettos would give birth to movements and explode in violence in reaction to decades of forced mental, economic, and physical oppression and segregation.

Hello and Goodbye to Bronzeville

Black Power also includes economic power. There may have never been a need for a Black Power Movement if the African American community had more financial power. By the 1940s, the center of the Central Avenue district had moved further south to 41st and Central. Its southern border had extended to the next white neighborhood at Slauson Avenue, before turning Black again at 92nd street in Watts. This is an example of how the FHA's governance over who received mortgage insurance not only dictated where Black communities existed but also how, if, when, and where they expanded. To the north lay Little Tokyo. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the incarceration of Japanese Americans, German Americans, and Italian Americans in U.S. concentration camps. The incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II emptied Little Tokyo whose Southeastern border started at 1st and Central Avenue.⁶³ According to former Congresswoman

⁶¹ RJ Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Last African-American Renaissance* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 86.

⁶² RJ Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Last African-American Renaissance* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 145.

⁶³ Japantown Atlas, *Los Angeles Little Tokyo Japanese American Businesses of 1940*, map, accessed April 18, 2020. <http://japantownatlas.com/map-littletokyo1.html>.

and Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, “it wasn’t talked about, I went to school one day, and all of my Japanese American classmates were gone.”⁶⁴

The executive order created a new housing supply for African Americans seeking better lives working in the defense industry, but those living conditions were no improvement. Beginning in 1942 and lasting until the early 1950s Little Tokyo became known as Bronzeville, when African Americans moved into properties vacated by Japanese Americans. African Americans opened nightclubs, restaurants, and other businesses but like the Japanese before them most did not own the property. With ninety-five percent of the neighborhoods carrying racial restrictions against African American residency, and Central Avenue severely overcrowded, an empty Little Tokyo proved to be convenient.

Black wartime migration almost tripled Little Tokyo's pre-war population, with some 80,000 new arrivals taking up residence there. Geographically located just south of Union Station, Little Tokyo became a new port of entry for African Americans. According to Josh Sides in *L. A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, “Most migrants came from Texas (24.2 percent), Louisiana (18.8 percent), Mississippi (7 percent), Arkansas and Oklahoma (6.2 percent), Georgia (5.2 percent), Alabama (4.2 percent), Missouri (3.4 percent), Tennessee (3.2 percent), and Kansas (2.4 percent). Many of the new arrivals found a much different Los Angeles than what they had heard and read about. Prohibited from buying and renting in most parts of the city by restrictive covenants, the area soon became severely overcrowded. Like many African American communities in other cities, overcrowding created health and sanitation problems for both Central Avenue and Little Tokyo/Bronzeville. In May 1944 the Los Angeles Times reported that Blacks comprised the bulk of 79,800 people

⁶⁴ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke (former congresswoman and county supervisor) in discussion with author, December 16, 2013.

living in the area, which previously housed closer to 10,000 residents. In *the Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* Scott Kurashige estimates the one-square mile Little Tokyo was home to 25,000 people during the war.⁶⁵

According to Dorothy Baruch:

In place after place children lived in windowless rooms, amid peeling plaster, rats and the flies that gathered thick around food that stood on open shelves or kitchen-bedroom tables. Ordinarily there was no bathtub; never more than a single washbowl or lavatory. Sometimes as many as forty people shared one toilet. Families were separated only by sheets strung up between beds. Many of the beds were “hot,” with people taking turns sleeping in them.⁶⁶

It is shocking that the city would allow its citizens who contributed to the war effort to live in such squalor. During this time Los Angeles still had an abundance of open land. Unfortunately, that land was in the forthcoming suburbs designated for whites only.

As the war came to an end the spaces that African Americans were allowed to occupy once again were mostly limited to the Central Avenue district and Watts. According to Hillary Jenks in “Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post War World II Los Angeles” Anglo and Eastern European Jewish landlords used supply and demand to determine which would survive, Little Tokyo or Bronzeville?⁶⁷ Having the control over which group would be allowed to live in Little Tokyo/Bronzeville determined what spaces African Americans would be allowed in.

Like the Japanese before them, most African Americans held leases to the businesses in Bronzeville but did not own the property. This sometimes led to bidding wars for spaces that had

⁶⁵ Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 99.

⁶⁶ Dorothy W. Baruch, “Sleep Comes Hard,” *The Nation*, January 27, 1945, 95-96.

⁶⁷ Hillary Jenks, “Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post War World II Los Angeles,” *Southern California Quarterly* 93, no. 2 (2011): 201, www.jstor.org/stable/41172572.

been occupied by successful businesses. Potential lessees would offer to pay more when a lease expired. Race would also be a factor in who could lease property. According to Jenks, “The property owners and their agents repeatedly allowed Japanese Americans to buy out the leases of African American tenants.” For instance, Kiichi Uyeda opened his store after buying out the lease of a black merchant, and Roy Kito was able to reopen the Fugetsudo confectionary after buying out a lease from Mr. Nash, an African American grocer. This allowed landlords to impose racial restrictions on tenants.

The Japanese were not entirely innocent in the housing discrimination practiced against African Americans. In some cases where Japanese owned the property, they could have extended leases to African Americans but chose not to. Jenks describes how Japanese Americans reclaimed Little Tokyo through complicated layers of leases:

One building at 109 N. San Pedro, for instance, was owned by Sarah Hersh but leased to E. Jay Bullock, the president of the Eastside Chamber of Commerce, who had apparently purchased the leases to several Little Tokyo storefronts inexpensively following the evacuation. Bullock had then subleased the building to Matsumi Sakamoto after the war, and in 1948 Sakamoto subleased it to Carl Tatsuo Kondo. Sakamoto could have chosen to sublease the storefront to an African American business but did not.⁶⁸

The finite amount of space in Little Tokyo/Bronzeville made it prime real estate. In addition to Japanese Americans only choosing to sublease to other Japanese which Reverend Kingsley of Pilgrim House, Bronzeville's main social welfare institution, referred to as a Japanese American policy of “unobjectionable infiltration” some African American businesspeople found subleasing to Japanese quite profitable. Japanese returning from interment camps paid 50, 75, 100, 200 percent more for the stores than they did before they were forced to leave.⁶⁹ As mentioned earlier

⁶⁸ Jenks, “Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race, 220.

⁶⁹ Nakagawa, “Blues for Bronzeville,” interview with Rev. Kingsley, September 16, 1946, Reel ro8, Bancroft Library; Nakagawa, 10.

many Americans make decisions based on the potential for profit not what is morally right. African Americans are no exception to the rule.

Ultimately it would be the landowners who decided the fate of who would inhabit Little Tokyo/Bronzeville, and they chose the Japanese. It was a commonsense business decision unfortunately based on prejudicial and racist policies that controlled real estate markets. With the connection to a joint Japanese American/Japanese threat of attack no longer a consideration, and smaller Japanese numbers compared to the growing African American population, it was logical to rent to a lower-growth demographic. Unfortunately, that was not the reason. Reverend Unoura of the Japanese Christian Church maintained that "the building owners wanted them [Japanese Americans] back there...and they preferred the Japanese because they kept the buildings up better and boosted the land value."⁷⁰ This was in direct contradiction of African Americans like Leonard Christmas who stated:

Soon after entering Little Tokyo that while "the property was practically being given away . . . it is difficult to secure help to paint and clean, but the operators are trying to clean...Christmas also emphasized the superiority of blacks as tenants over the Japanese. "The proprietors found filth when they moved into the community, and have been trying ever since to clean the premises," he said, wondering "why such filth was allowed among the Japanese."⁷¹

Eventually between the combination of profiteering African American businessmen, racist real estate practices, and the desire of Japanese Americans to return to their former homes and business centers Bronzeville would become a forgotten memory by the early 1950s. These decisions would not have an immediate impact on Black resistance in Los Angeles. However, the concentration of so many African Americans in one area during the post World War II baby

⁷⁰ Jenks, "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race, 221.

⁷¹ Meeting of the Little Tokyo Committee of the Council of Social Agencies, October 8, 1943, National Urban League records; quoted in Leonard, "Years of Hope, Days of Fear," 72-73. African and Japanese Americans opportunistically blamed each other for the neighborhood's run-down condition at different times.

boom would provide future soldiers in the Black Power Movement's battle against racist policies.

The legacy of Bronzeville/Little Tokyo is that it also provides an example of a sub-cycle within the longer cycle of housing discrimination. During the period that racial covenants controlled where African Americans lived, supply and demand in Little Tokyo relaxed those restrictions. When property owners no longer had tenants in Little Tokyo the covenants were ignored for the sake of business. However, no sooner than the formerly interned Japanese returned at the end of World War II, the temporary succession of covenants ended. Unlike many of the conflicts between African Americans and the white dominated society the transformation of Bronzeville back to Little Tokyo had no major protests or instances of violence. Unlike cities in the Midwest or on the East Coast the unfortunate treatment of Los Angeles's large Japanese population provided a look at how flexible racism could be during a national emergency.

African Americans in Los Angeles Challenge Racial Restrictive Covenants

World War II created an atmosphere for Black Americans' expectations for an urgency to change America in the aftermath of the war. That may well be the legacy of World War II for African Americans in the United States. By the 1960s those expectations would turn into demands by Black Baby Boomers and their allies on the streets of America. During the same time that Bronzeville was being transformed back into Little Tokyo, African Americans across the nation started to challenge racial restrictive covenants. Los Angeles stood at the forefront of that movement.

The movement against racial restrictive covenants did not start in just any neighborhood. The African Americans who wanted to live in this community had the financial means to hire the best attorneys and go to court and that is what they did. It began in an area of the city previously

desired by white homeowners. Sugar Hill is an elevated section of the West Adams District that stretches from Figueroa Street on the east to West Boulevard on the west, and from Pico Boulevard on the north to Jefferson Boulevard on the south.⁷² Combined with a western exodus of whites in Los Angeles during the 1910s and 1920s, and whites forced to sell their homes during the Great Depression, West Adams/Sugar Hill became more accessible to some African Americans in spite of the covenants in the deeds.

Originally known as West Adams Heights, Sugar Hill was at the center of the challenge of racial restrictive covenants in post World War II Los Angeles. Some wealthy African American families managed to buy property in unrestricted sections of West Adams in the early 1930s. Norman O. Houston, one of the founders of the Golden State Mutual Insurance Company bought a house in Sugar Hill in 1935. To avoid any racial confrontations with unhappy white neighbors, Houston rented the house to a white tenant even though his home was located on a covenant free lot.⁷³

Houston started occupying the home in 1941 after more African Americans such as Academy Award–winning actress Hattie McDaniel, actress Louise Beavers, former Los Angeles NAACP president J. A. Somerville and his wife Vada moved into the area. In 1946, members of the West Adams Heights Improvement Association filed a lawsuit in the California Superior Court arguing that whites who sold their homes to African Americans violated racially restricted covenants that protected the properties until 2035.⁷⁴

⁷² West Adams Heritage Association, “Where is West Adams,” About West Adams, accessed March 8, 2020, <http://www.westadamsheritage.org/about-west-adams>.

⁷³ “Celebrities in Spotlight As Sugarhill Trial Begins,” *The California Eagle*, December 6, 1945, 4.

⁷⁴ Josh Sides, *L. A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 99.

On Wednesday December 5, 1946, the “Sugar Hill” restrictive covenant trial began in front of Judge Thurmond Clark’s superior court No. 6. McDaniel, Beavers, Somerville and more were included in the lawsuit. Loren Miller, a leading attorney against housing and education discrimination defended the group. When Clark ruled that restrictive covenants were unenforceable the West Adams Heights Improvement Association appealed to the California Supreme Court, which Miller won. Miller’s activities in Los Angeles set the stage for his work at the federal level.

In 1926, in *Corrigan v. Buckley* the United States Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge to racially restricted covenants that continued until Miller entered the fight in the Federal Supreme Court in 1948. No documentation exist on the case, Loren Miller or Hattie McDaniel in the Los Angeles Times database from January 1945 to January 1947, only returned articles on Ms. McDaniel’s divorce on December 19, 1945, and one much lower profile restrictive covenant case Loren Miller won on January 17, 1946. Judge Frank M. Smith ruled in favor of the defendants because non-Caucasians already lived in the area, which voided the covenants.⁷⁵

In 1947, Loren Miller joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund and worked with Thurgood Marshall to strike down restrictive covenants. Racial restrictive covenant cases outside of Los Angeles did not have the high-profile actors, doctors, and musicians, which may have played a part in their defeat in lower level courts. Richard Kluger in *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* states, “In New York, the Legal Defense Fund staff, with Marshall at the helm and Loren Miller, the best civil-rights lawyer on the West Coast, imported

⁷⁵ “Negro Wins Right to Live in New Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1946, A3.

to do the bulk of the drafting, worked up an equally ambitious brief for the Detroit case.”⁷⁶ As future United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall’s co-counsel, Miller wrote the brief and argued the Detroit case *McGhee v. Stipes*, a restrictive covenant case bundle with *Shelley v. Kramer*, *Hurd v. Hodge*, and *Urciolo v. Hodge*.

On May 3, 1948, the Supreme Court ruled 6-0 that restrictive agreements, standing alone, cannot be regarded as violative of any rights guaranteed to petitioners by the Fourteenth Amendment. Private parties may abide by the terms of such a restrictive covenant, but they may not seek judicial enforcement of such a covenant, as that would be a state action. Because such state action would be discriminatory, the enforcement of a racially based restrictive covenant in a state court would therefore violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Shelley v. Kramer* rendered racially restrictive covenants unenforceable, but it was not until 1968 that the Fair Housing Act made them illegal. The “Sugar Hill” restrictive covenant case could be seen as a sub-cycle of the longer housing discrimination cycle. It did not organically end as in the case of Bronzeville. It required the judicial system to make a decision on local restrictive covenants that would help bring an end to state enforcement of covenants nationally.

Nevertheless, racial neighborhood segregation continued throughout the United States. Southern California subdivisions such as Lakewood, Westchester, and Panorama City were all government sponsored whites-only projects constructed between 1949 and 1953. In Los Angeles backlash to the decision took legal and extralegal forms. The Los Angeles Realty Board launched a movement for an amendment to the United States Constitution under which property

⁷⁶ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 253.

restrictions would be enforced.⁷⁷ Whites in the upscale neighborhood of Hancock Park chose intimidation to dissuade popular singer Nat King Cole from moving into the neighborhood. First, the Hancock Park Property Owners Association offered Cole \$25,000 over the \$75,000 asking price. When Cole declined and moved into the home on Muirfield Road a sign reading “Nigger Heaven” was placed on the lawn. When that did not scare Cole off someone came in the night and burned the word Nigger into the front lawn.

Scholarship on racial restrictive covenants often demonstrate how they were used to protect white neighborhoods from the so-called decline of residential property values associated with African American homeownership. Racially restrictive covenants can also impact home values negatively for white homeowners. When applying restrictive covenants it is not fully considered who would be potential buyers of restricted properties in transitional areas. In Richard Brooks, and Carol Rose’s *Saving the Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive covenants, Law, and Social Norms* the authors explore how covenants served as an instrument to enforce racial segregation without white homeowners actively having to appear in court.⁷⁸ The book looks at the racially restrictive covenant’s ability to serve as “signaling function” to show the intent and desire to discriminate which shaped behaviors toward potential Black homebuyers.

Saving the Neighborhood addresses what happens when white homeowners are stuck with property they cannot move. The authors introduce the idea of the underinvestment problem.⁷⁹ This is a result of the shortcomings of racial covenants. When a neighborhood begins

⁷⁷ “Constitutional Property Ban Requested: Realty Board Seeks Amendment Making Restrictions Hold,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1948, A1.

⁷⁸ Richard Brooks and Carol Rose, *Saving the Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive covenants, Law, and Social Norms*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁷⁹ Richard Brooks and Carol Rose, *Saving the Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive covenants, Law, and Social Norms*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) 58.

to have minority members or are in transition white homeowners with racially restrictive covenants find themselves in a tough situation. They are unable to sell or rent to the only group willing to buy or rent the properties. What happens next is that they engage in negative homeowner behavior associated with Black people in Black neighborhoods. According to Los Angeles city health official Dr. George Uhl, “Animals in the zoo have better housing than some of L.A.’s human residents.”⁸⁰ In a rooming house that sheltered 22 families a cracked sewer pipe caused waste to come up in a sink used for washing dishes in a ground floor restaurant. The building manager told Uhl that the owner told him and the owner of the restaurant that if they reported it the city might close them down and they would be the losers.⁸¹ Properties fall into disrepair because sellers and landlords choose not to keep up or invest in properties. And why would they when the properties are unsellable to the only people who might be interested in them? During the early twentieth century there was an abundance of land in Los Angeles. But the restrictions placed on where Black people could occupy spaces forced them to manage an existence within the confines of spaces already busting at the seams. In the following sections I examine how African Americans engage in actions against spatial racism and discrimination throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s that are both the civil rights and Black power movements.

Dining While Black

The influence of restrictive covenants appears beyond home ownership. Its impact can be felt in the denial of temporary ownership/occupation of spaces through spending one’s money in

⁸⁰ RJ Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Last African-American Renaissance* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 144.

⁸¹ RJ Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Last African-American Renaissance* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 145.

commercial establishments. One of the more blatant forms of discrimination in the United States has been in the spaces where Black people have or have not been allowed to consume food. Despite the popular belief that Los Angeles was a racial utopia, discrimination took place in restaurants just like it did in the South. The following remarks made by W. E. B. Du Bois after a visit to Los Angeles in 1913 are often used to present Los Angeles as a progressive city when it comes to racism against African Americans:

Los Angeles was wonderful. The air was scented with orange blossoms and the beautiful homes lay low crouching on the earth as though they loved its scents and flowers. Nowhere in the United States is the Negro so well and beautifully housed, nor the average efficiency and intelligence in the colored population so high. Here is an aggressive, hopeful group—with some wealth, large industrial opportunity and a buoyant spirit.⁸²

However, by the 1940s the large number of African Americans who had migrated to Southern California were not so beautifully housed as described by Du Bois. As a matter of fact, the population Du Bois described in Los Angeles during his visit was very small. At that time ninety percent of the African American population lived in the South, but it did not exempt whites in Los Angeles from engaging in racist practices. For example, in 1912, when Caleb Holden, an African American and his white companion ordered beer in a local bar, Holden was charged one dollar and his white companion only a nickel. The city attorney supported the rights of business owners to discriminate.⁸³

Compared to Caleb Holden's coffee overcharge in 1912 how much had the situation improved for African Americans by World War II? Since the early days of the twentieth century through the 1940s African Americans in Southern California continued to be oppressed. There

⁸² W. E. B. Dubois, *The Crisis*, July 1913.

⁸³ Josh Sides, *L. A City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 12.

are numerous primary source examples of racism and discrimination in Los Angeles, A large number of cases across different segments of society exist even though the *Statutes of California*.

Chapter CVIII (108), of *The Statutes of California and the Amendments to the Codes* state:

Section 1. That all citizens within the jurisdiction of this civil State shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, restaurants, hotels, eating-houses, barber-shops, bath-houses, theaters, skating-rinks, and all other places of public accommodation or amusement, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all citizens.

Sec. 2. Whoever shall violate any of the provisions of the foregoing section, by denying to any citizen, except for reasons applicable alike to every race or color and regardless of race or color, the full accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges in said section enumerated...shall be liable in damages in an amount not less than fifty dollars, which may be recovered in an action at law brought for that purpose.

Sec. 3. All Laws or parts of laws in conflict with this law are hereby repealed.⁸⁴

Discrimination in restaurants occurred outside of the South and Los Angeles was not exempt.

Presently, Duke's is a popular restaurant beautifully located in Malibu, California. But the ugly stain of racism exists with the building's past. In a prior incarnation during the 1940s it was known as the Las Flores Inn restaurant.

Although the country had struck down racial restrictive covenants in 1948, African Americans were still not accepted in some eating establishments. In Los Angeles it did not seem to be the blatant discrimination that occurred in the South. Different tactics were used, and it was disguised. In 1948 a party of five won a bias suit against the Las Flores Inn restaurant. Dooley Wilson, a Black actor known for his portrayal of Sam in the hit film *Casablanca*, his wife, and three others were refused service at Las Flores. They claimed that on July 25, 1947, when they requested dinner, they were told by the manager, George Brown, that the inn served patrons by

⁸⁴ California State Assembly, Office of the Chief Clerk, *The Statutes of California and Amendments To The Codes Passed At The Thirty-Second Session of the Legislature, 1897*, March 13, 1897, 137, <https://clerk.assembly.ca.gov/content/statutes-and-amendments-codes-1897>.

reservation.⁸⁵ However, attorney Vince Monroe Townsend Jr. proved that claim to be false because the establishment's license classified it as a café open to the public.

Estelle Wilson, the wife of Dooley Wilson had the unfortunate luck of being involved in two discrimination cases involving restaurants. On January 1, 1947, Mrs. Wilson and some friends were refused service at George's Café in Pasadena while waiting to view the annual New Years' Rose Parade.⁸⁶ According to the three claimants they were refused service by management when they stopped at the restaurant for breakfast on the morning of the Rose Bowl game. On April 1, 1948 Judge Leo Freund ordered George's Café to pay \$250.00 damages to each of the three defendants.⁸⁷

Black people in Los Angeles have consistently been on the front lines protesting discrimination, which is quite often overlooked in the history books. Almost all of the focus on desegregation of lunch counters centered on large chain stores in the South. Fourteen years before North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University students Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil started the Southern lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina Los Angeles was the site of a restaurant protest. Some sit-ins occurred in the decades leading up until the 1960s, but we have been led to believe that none had taken place on the West Coast. In fact, it was in the heart of downtown Los Angeles that African Americans made a stand against discrimination. Black Power and Civil Rights actions overlap because sit ins, marches, and boycotts are always one insult, shove, or hit, away from a violent response by Black participants. So, to possibly put one's life on the line by occupying spaces

⁸⁵ "Beach Inn Loses in Bias Suit," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1948, 1.

⁸⁶ "Dooley Wilson's Wife Wins \$250 in Service Suit," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 29, 1948, 3.

⁸⁷ "Dooley Wilson's Wife Wins \$250 in Service Suit," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 29, 1948, 3.

owned and managed by white capitalists is both civil rights and Black Power and Blacks in Los Angeles participated in those actions prior to the 1960s.

In the summer of 1947, several discrimination suits were filed against Bullock's 7th and Broadway store. On May 22nd the Los Angeles Sentinel reported that seven discrimination suits asking for a total of \$12,600 had been filed.⁸⁸ All seven cases charged refusal of service in the store's Tea Room restaurant. Mrs. Edith Cotterell filed the first report of refusal of service against the Tea Room.⁸⁹ Mrs. Cotterell, the wife of a city fireman and a Bullock's account holder and two other ladies stopped in the Tea Room on May 6, 1947. After being seated and served water twenty minutes passed without any other service.

Upon inquiry with the hostess as to why they were not being served Mrs. Cotterell was informed that their waitress "refused to serve Negroes and there was nothing that could be done about it."⁹⁰ When Mrs. Cotterell questioned the manager about the treatment they were receiving he informed her that the store did not discriminate but management could not do anything about it if a waitress refused to serve anyone.⁹¹ Bullock's attempted to break the law by letting the waitresses take the blame for the discrimination.

Mrs. Cotterell's encounter with racism at Bullock's was not an isolated case. Another case similar to Mrs. Cotterell's occurred on May 12th. Mrs. Violet K. Brown, the wife of a LAPD officer, and three friends received similar treatment at the eatery. On May 15th and 20th attorney Loren Miller filed suits for \$1800 against Bullock's for all seven customers.⁹² Although it was

⁸⁸ "Bullock's Faces \$12,600 Suits for 'No Service'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 22, 1947, 1.

⁸⁹ "Bullock's Faces \$12,600 Suits for 'No Service'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 22, 1947, 1.

⁹⁰ "Bullock's Faces \$12,600 Suits for 'No Service'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 22, 1947, 11.

⁹¹ "Bullock's Faces \$12,600 Suits for 'No Service'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 22, 1947, 11.

⁹² "Bullock's Faces \$12,600 Suits for 'No Service'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 22, 1947, 11.

not reported as a protest, on Monday May 19th several groups of African Americans showed up at Bullock's Tea Room and were denied service. One group of thirteen that was also refused service included *Sentinel* Publisher Leon H. Washington Jr. During the Great Depression Washington ran the "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" campaign in his newspaper.

Additional groups were denied service with some sitting for up to five hours after being seated by the hostess. One of those groups was served. It included Manuel Talley, the founder of the local Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), formerly known as the Committee for Racial Equality and his two white friends. Some whites who protested about the discrimination to the hostess were told that it was none of their business. Formed in Chicago, Illinois in 1942, CORE would become the vanguard in the fight against discrimination in interstate travel by starting the Freedom Rides in the early 1960s.

On July 10, 1947, CORE and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) started protesting against the discrimination in Bullock's Tea Room with African Americans and whites participating in sit-ins. The mixed groups occupied twenty tables during the Tea Room's busiest hours between 11:30 and 3:30. Leaflets were sitting on the tables indicating that Negroes were being refused service. At the bottom of the page, they urged that the policy of store management be protested and included the name of CORE as the organization that issued it. Manuel Talley of CORE and Glen Smiley of the FOR discussed the matter with the general superintendent of the store to no avail. They continued to be told that the store did not discriminate and that the waitresses decided who they would serve.

Part of the protest included the participation of whites. White customers told waitresses they would wait their turn until those who had been waiting longer were served. Then they were ignored. Some curious white customers not participating in the sit-in approached tables of

African Americans and whites to see what was going on. Some left the contact information to be notified of ways they could help fight discrimination. According to the *Sentinel*, “Not a single person walked out or refused to eat in the tearoom because of the presence of colored people.”⁹³

On August 9, 1947, after three months of protests Bullock’s finally altered its policy to serve Negroes. It took constant pressure from not only African Americans but also white allies to end Bullock’s racist practices. CORE and FOR joined forces with community members visiting the Tea Room week after week. The *Sentinel* reported that Bullock’s admitted defeat when a mixed group of 100 protestors returned to the store on August 9th and for the first time “Negroes were served promptly, even hurriedly.”⁹⁴

During the three months of protests the *Los Angeles Times* never reported on the discriminatory practices at Bullock’s. Twenty years later food would continue to be an issue in Los Angeles’ Black community. The Black Panther Party would be known for its photogenic Black militancy style of dress and community patrols of police officers, but what law enforcement feared most was the positive response to their food and health programs that served the African American community.

African Americans and Water Based Discrimination

Based on the limitations to where African Americans could live it also dictated the racial boundaries and spaces they could occupy outside of their designated communities. Spatial boundaries were and to some degree still a problem for African Americans because police guarded those boundaries, and they could be called into action for the slightest disturbance. African Americans even encountered racism and discrimination with regards to one of the most

⁹³ “Mixed Group Stages Sit-In at Bullock’s,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 10, 1947, 2.

⁹⁴ “Bullocks Alters Policy; Serves Negroes,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 14, 1947, 1.

abundant resources on the planet, water. With 840 miles of coastline and a large number of public swimming pools Black people in California still had to protest to enjoy access to water. Located in Manhattan Beach, California Bruce's Beach, was a small beach resort that was owned by Willa and Charles Bruce and operated for the benefit of the African American community. Segregation limited African American's access at other beach areas. According to Douglas Flamming in *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* the beginning of the end of Bruce's Beach came when the Bruce's hosted an eight-hundred-person party intended to impress a Race visitor from back East.⁹⁵

So many African Americans enjoying themselves in one space scared the white leadership of Manhattan Beach so much that in 1924 they confiscated the property by eminent domain to develop a public park. They leased the property to a white man, Oscar Bassonette, for one dollar a year, so that Black people could be excluded from its use. When local NAACP branch president H. Claude Hudson and others challenged going into the water and sitting on the former Bruce's Beach they were arrested. After protesting the charges on August 15, 1927, the city's trustees revoked Bassonette's lease and opened it to the public without restrictions forever. On June 2, 2021, the California State Senate approved a bill to return the property now valued at \$75 million to descendants of the Bruces.⁹⁶

Unfortunately, twenty-years after the confiscation of the Bruce property the access to water sports still did not extend to all parts of the city. In 1947, the city of Inglewood faced a lawsuit for barring Black people from the pool in Centinela Park. On July 12, 1947, Negro

⁹⁵ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 273.

⁹⁶ "State Senate Bill to Allow Return of Bruce's Beach to Family of Original Black Owners," *Daily Breeze*, June 2, 2021, 1.

employees of the Mission Appliance Corp. and their friends were denied admission to the Centinela Park pool while attending a picnic in the park. The picnic was sponsored by Mission Appliance Corp in conjunction with the Association of Gas Appliance Workers, an independent union in the plant. According to employee John H. Lewis, when the first group of Negroes approached the bathhouse to go into the pool they were informed by the caretaker, G. E. Thompson that the pool was for residents of Inglewood only.⁹⁷ When they returned to the pool for the scheduled swimming contest at 3 p.m. they were told by the attendant, “it is against the policy of the park to permit Negroes to swim there.”⁹⁸

Willie Green, another employee told the *Sentinel* that a boy and girl in the office told him that no colored people were allowed in the bathing pool. When Green checked with Thompson, he received the same response. Several others in the group were also denied entry to the pool. Just as in the case of discrimination at Bullock’s the Black employees of Mission Appliance had white supporters, according to The L. A. Sentinel. Many white union members left the pool in protest, others refused to go in, and some made apologies to them for the insulting treatment they received from the city of Inglewood.⁹⁹

In an attempt to deny their racist practices R. C. Coates, the director of the Inglewood Recreation department in a telephone interview stated, “We do not refuse admittance but we prefer that they do not swim here, that they go to Exposition Park pool, which is open to them.”¹⁰⁰ When Mr. Thompson was asked further questions he admitted that he acted on no specific instructions when he denied admission to Negroes, but that it was customary, because

⁹⁷ “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 1.

⁹⁸ “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 1.

⁹⁹ “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 8.

¹⁰⁰ “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 8.

the pool was for residents of Inglewood and there were no Negroes in Inglewood. When questioned if he asked whites if they were residents of Inglewood he said, “No.”¹⁰¹

Apparently denying so many Black people access to the pool at one time created an unprecedented situation. Obviously, the practice had never been challenged before or what follows would have happened sooner. Everyone involved assigned the instructions to bar Black people from the pool to someone higher up in the city’s administration who did not exist. After the group hired an attorney and threatened the City of Inglewood with a lawsuit, the custom of denying Black people entry changed rather quickly. After *The Sentinel* publish its story on the treatment of Blacks at the pool and the planned lawsuit Mr. Coates informed the *Sentinel* that, “the order has been issued that under no circumstances shall admission be refused to members of any minority group.”¹⁰²

As mentioned earlier all levels of government have been complicit in denying African Americans their natural born rights in this country. At some level of government someone knew the law was being broken and just kept quiet. Like Bullock’s they allowed the whites that Black people encountered on the front lines of racism to take the blame while management stood behind the scenes encouraging their actions with their inaction. Unfortunately, in the 70 years since these incidents of racism were documented, we continue to find the country facing deadly racism from another front-line enforcer of racist policy, the police. During the turbulent 1960s the children of the migrants who left the South in part because of racism had nowhere to run. They recognized racism all over the country. And they would have heroes such as Robert Williams, Malcolm X, and the Deacons for Defense as their role models.

¹⁰¹ “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 8.

¹⁰² “Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 8.

Timothy R. Tyson's *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* study of the president of the Monroe, North Carolina branch of the NAACP covers the period between the Brown v. Board of Education decision and the sit-ins, freedom rides, and marches of the 1960s. The study considers how skillfully Robert F. Williams challenged the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan by means of organized "armed self-reliance." Tyson establishes that there was a tradition of black self-defense before Stokely Carmichael called for Black Power.¹⁰³ Until then Black people were at the mercy of law enforcement.

The Destructive Pattern of Police Abuse

This section of the dissertation is being written in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. Despite the pandemic many people across the world are protesting, rebelling, and rioting over the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers on May 25, 2020. A new generation is born approximately every 30 years or so and many of the protestors were not born in 1991. On March 3rd of that year George Holliday was the first person to capture on video the savage beating of a Black man, Rodney King, by the Los Angeles Police Department. One of the longest cycles of discrimination against the Black community in Los Angeles has been at the hands of local law enforcement. As early as the 1920s the lives of Black people in Los Angeles came under attack for carrying out the simplest activities of life such as having guests in one's home or walking down the street. These specific examples will be examined later in this chapter.

Up until that time only African Americans in the United States seemed to be aware of the abuses committed by police officers, even though they had been protesting against it publicly. The video played on news outlets all over the globe and provided evidence for what Black people had been saying for decades. When the four police officers were acquitted a year later in

¹⁰³ Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Berkeley: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

1992, the city burned. At the time the Black Power Movement continued in a somewhat dormant stage. King survived, George Floyd did not and the Movement reawakened.

Los Angeles burned in 1965, twenty-seven years before the Rodney King beating because of the oppressive actions of law enforcement in the Black community. Now, twenty-eight years after Rodney King technology has brought something even more cold-blooded to our ever-present media devices, the killing of George Floyd. In Los Angeles each one of these events resulted in widespread civil disobedience, protests, and rioting. It appears that every thirty years or so the pressure valve is released in the streets when another Black person is at the receiving end of increasing police brutality. Now that everyone is armed with a video device more and more of these abuses are being recorded and broadcasts. However, for some people this is new. So, to understand why Black Lives Matter (BLM) exist now and the Black Panther Party (BPP) and other organizations existed in the sixties it is important to examine the changes that took place in the 1940s and how they contributed to law enforcement being one of the single most contributing factors to the creation of the Black Power Movement.

Social Control Masquerading as Crime Control in the U.S.A.

The concept of modern policing develops out of two capitalist ideals. In the Southern states the development of American policing started in the early eighteenth century with slave patrols. According to Gary Potter in “The History of Policing in the United States, “Slave patrols had three primary functions: (1) to chase down, apprehend, and return to their owners, runaway slaves; (2) to provide a form of organized terror to deter slave revolts; and, (3) to maintain a form of discipline for slave-workers who were subject to summary justice, outside of the law, if they violated any plantation rules.”¹⁰⁴ It must be a daunting task for Black people to try and reimagine

¹⁰⁴ Gary Potter, “The History of Policing in the United States Part 2,” accessed July 20, 2020 <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-2>.

reading Dr. Potter's explanation of the function of slave patrols without the influence of being Black.

The modern police in parts of the country grew out the need for making a financial profit as well. Before the early nineteenth century business owners carried the financial burden of having a private police force to protect their interests. Modern police forces developed as a response to "disorder." In reality the people with economic power defined what order should look like. According to Potter:

Anecdotal accounts suggest increasing crime and vice in urban centers. Mob violence, particularly violence directed at immigrants and African Americans by white youths, occurred with some frequency. Public disorder, mostly public drunkenness and sometimes prostitution, was more visible and less easily controlled in growing urban centers than it had been in rural villages. But evidence of an actual crime wave is lacking.
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In nineteenth century America mercantile interests defined "order" and through taxes and political influence they supported the development of bureaucratic policing institutions and transferred the costs to the state. The police force provided an organized and centralized body of men legally authorized to use force, to maintain the illusion of order under the rule of law. Economic interests were more concerned with social control than crime control.

In order to implement social control masquerading as crime control the economically powerful raised the threat level from the so-called dangerous classes. They suggested drunkenness, crime, hooliganism, political protests, and workplace riots were products of an inferior, uneducated, and easily identifiable underclass. Markings of the underclass included being poor, a foreign immigrant, and above all else being black. The criminalization of the "dangerous classes" as the embodiment of the crime problem created a focus in crime control

¹⁰⁵ Gary Potter, "The History of Policing in the United States Part 2," accessed July 20, 2020 <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-1>.

that continues.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, targets were placed on the bodies of African Americans, especially men.

Portraying Black people as a threat to society justified violent actions and manipulation of the law. According to Bryan Wagner in *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*, “This threat was invoked to win support for new police and prison systems, but it was also turned against the state by advocates who felt vigilante violence was the only way to proceed in extreme situations, where the well-being of individuals, or the peace of the society was potentially at stake.”¹⁰⁷ Wagner takes an approach to examining police and blackness that is extremely effective in looking at the relationship between the two, beyond what happens in the street. It is one example of institutional racism built into the governmental system in the United States. Wagner argues that in order to analyze the relationship one must look beyond the on-the-street practices and that police relate to blackness not as practice but simply as power.¹⁰⁸

Observing how judges and jurists debate police power they discuss which statutes should be counted as police measures not about the rightness of the police, states Wagner.¹⁰⁹ Wagner presents several examples of disagreements such as, over where to draw the line between federal and state government’s seemingly concurrent powers over commerce and welfare, or the proposition that the state has no business regulating individuals when their conduct poses risk only to themselves. Wagner’s analysis concludes that judges and jurists have often looked to

¹⁰⁶ Gary Potter, “The History of Policing in the United States Part 2,” accessed July 20, 2020. <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-2>.

¹⁰⁷ Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 8.

these limited cases to determine what does and does not constitute a legitimate application of the police power, but never have they doubted the function of police as a bedrock assumption in their thinking.

This was the thinking of at least two of the founding fathers. Wagner states, in the 1770s and 1780s, when pamphleteers and constitutional committees were actively railing against anyone who dared to doubt the need for “internal police... according to Thomas Paine, that “no sufficient objection can be made against it.” Wagner goes on to quote Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton writes that police discretion must be considered as axiomatic; he associates its existence with the rules of mathematics and with “other maxims in ethics and politics, ... Given that “securing the public peace against foreign or domestic violence” involves “dangers to which no possible limits can be assigned,” it is obvious that police “ought to know no other bounds than the exigencies of the nation and the resources of the community.”¹¹⁰ If we jump forward 150 years from the country’s founding, the legacy of the relationship established between police, power, and blackness is apparent in Los Angeles between World War I and World War II.

Setting the Precedence for the Cycle of Police Abuse in Los Angeles

The intention of this dissertation was to focus on post-World War II Los Angeles and later, but abuses in the Black community as early as the 1920s and 1930s cannot be ignored. They contribute to the pushback that explodes in the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles during the 1960s. The first documented case of a police officer committing murder of an unarmed Black citizen occurred on April 24, 1927. The killing of 21-year-old Samuel Faulkner at the hands of police is so reminiscent of what has happened over the

¹¹⁰ Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 9.

last 100 years, but it is eerily similar to the recent deaths of Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Atatiana Jefferson, Ahmaud Arbery, Brianna Taylor, George Floyd and more.

During Prohibition it was not uncommon for police to raid establishments suspected of serving alcohol, including private residences. According to the LAPD that is what officers Maceo Bruce Sheffield and Frank Randolph were doing when they entered the home of Clara Harris, the older sister of Mr. Faulkner. In the police department, Sheffield and Randolph were upheld as model officers for having been responsible for 3,038 arrests within two years. Chief of police, James Davis came to the officer's defense in an open letter of support and in response to criticisms leveled at the LAPD by NAACP President Dr. H. Claude Hudson. According to Davis in part of his written response to Hudson:

The investigation shows that Officers Sheffield and Randolph, going to the address in question upon a report that violations of the law were occurring there observed ample evidence of such violations and entered the house. While they were searching the premises for liquor to be held as evidence Mr. Faulkner entered and begin to shoot, hitting Officer Randolph in the arm. Officer Sheffield came to his brother officer's aid and in his defense Faulkner was shot.¹¹¹

In response to Davis, Hudson wrote that records in Davis's department did not reveal any hostilities from the African American community toward police officers, black or white. The lack of hostilities did not apply to Sheffield and Randolph. According to Hudson they had brutally beaten Black people needlessly when making arrests and had a habit of breaking into people's houses and terrifying them.¹¹²

Before the killing of Faulkner, citizens had issued complaints against the duo for breaking in and searching of a sick woman's house, and the putting of the woman on the floor while they searched under the bed at a time she was in such a low physical condition, that she

¹¹¹ "Chief of Police Jas. E. Davis Writes Open Letter to Dr. H. C. Hudson," *California Eagle*, May 20, 1927, 1.

¹¹² "Dr. H. C. Hudson In Scorching Reply To Chief Davis," *California Eagle*, May 27, 1927, 1.

died a few days thereafter, and to countless (so-called raids) in which houses were literally wrecked, and doors and windows broken, when they could have obtained admission by knocking, and in many of these cases, no-arrests were made at all, and that in none of them, did they carry search warrants, or proceed in anything like an orderly manner.¹¹³

On May 13th the *California Eagle* published Mr. and Mrs. John Faulkner's statements on what led to the murder of their son Sam. According to Sam's parents, "their son was the victim of a cold-blooded murder."¹¹⁴ Much of the evidence produced after their statements proved them to be true. The Faulknors and their son resided in one of two houses at 1358 E. 51st St in Los Angeles. Their daughter Clara Harris lived in the other house located in the front. While sitting in their front room on Sunday evening April 24, 1927, the Faulknors heard a commotion from the direction of their daughter's house. Sam, who had retired to his room jumped up and ran towards the noise, followed by his father who was eighty-six years old at the time. According to Mr. Faulkner, We peeped in the window but couldn't see inside."¹¹⁵ They called and asked what the trouble was and received no reply. It sounded like a big fight was taking place, stated Mr. Faulkner.¹¹⁶

The two men went around front and crawled through an open window, Sam first with Mr. Faulkner just behind him. According to Mr. Faulkner, "As soon as son stuck his head in the doorway of the next room a shot was fired and my son fell to the floor."¹¹⁷ After telling his wife, "They killed our boy!" Mr. Faulkner tried to enter the front door and a shot was fired at him. He

¹¹³ "Dr. H. C. Hudson In Scorching Reply To Chief Davis," *California Eagle*, May 27, 1927, 1.

¹¹⁴ "Parents of Raid Victim Give Version of Shooting," *California Eagle*, May 13, 1927, 2.

¹¹⁵ "Parents of Raid Victim Give Version of Shooting," *California Eagle*, May 13, 1927, 2.

¹¹⁶ "Parents of Raid Victim Give Version of Shooting," *California Eagle*, May 13, 1927, 2.

¹¹⁷ "Parents of Raid Victim Give Version of Shooting," *California Eagle*, May 13, 1927, 2.

then went to the store on the corner and called the police still not knowing the men in the house were the police. Mr. Faulkner stated that neither he nor his son had a gun. And to add insult to injury, when Mrs. Faulkner knelt next to her son's body one of the officers kicked her hand away and threatened to shoot her if she did not move.¹¹⁸

The statements given by both Chief Davis and the Faulkners were two very different yet simple explanations of the events that led to the death of Sam Faulkner. But as the case proceeded a very complex cover up staged by police officers started to unravel. Prior to the Faulkner case many upper middle class and elite Blacks supported the tactics of police officers as punishment for Black people engaged in illegal activities. These actions they hoped would improve the Central Avenue district.

The killing of young Sam Faulkner in his sister's home pushed middle class Blacks, Hudson, and the NAACP into perhaps the first protest against policing in the Central Avenue district. At a citizen's mass meeting held on May 1, 1927, a committee was appointed and did draft a letter protesting and condemning the actions of the two police officers in the killing of Sam Faulkner. The citizens condemned the ruthless killing of innocent citizens, the wanton destruction of property and the acts of cruelty done by the two men. The committee also desired that a thorough investigation be made by the police department and the district attorney's office and that their findings be brought before the police commission and the Grand Jury.¹¹⁹ This is a form of protest more in line with civil rights actions and not necessarily Black Power. Although certain details of these events may be lost in time, the Black community's oral "grapevine" not only passes information spatially but also temporally across time periods and generations. Every

¹¹⁸ "Parents of Raid Victim Give Version of Shooting," *California Eagle*, May 13, 1927, 2.

¹¹⁹ "Protest Officers' Brutality," *California Eagle*, May 6, 1927, 7.

event and response contributes to the breaking point that results in the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

What really happened that night and on other instances around the city was appalling, and the attempt at a cover up was equally despicable. Officers Sheffield and Randolph stories of what happened on the night of Sam Faulkner's killing had been in sync and consistent since the grand jury hearing. The officers received a call that Clara Harris was unlawfully serving liquor in her home during prohibition. Sheffield and Randolph looked through a window and saw Harris filling up a man's cup. They kicked down the door and searched for the alcohol. While performing the search, Sam Faulkner climbed in a window, dropped behind a table, and began shooting at the officers, wounding Randolph in the arm. Randolph returned fire, killing Faulkner. In further support of their story, two additional officers Buford Bewley and J. S. Brown, arrived and saw a gun near Falkner's hand.¹²⁰

Everything in the story told by Sheffield and Randolph were complete lies, supported by other lies. Randolph broke his blue bond with Sheffield by becoming a witness for the state. During the course of his testimony Sheffield never strayed from his lies. He continued to be supported by Chief Davis even against undeniable evidence and testimonies that proved his guilt. Following the reading of Sheffield's testimony, the prosecuting attorney asked the court to dismiss the case against Mr. Frank Randolph for the purpose of calling him as a state's witness. It was granted and Randolph was called to the stand to tell what really happened on April 24th.

Randolph told a revised story of what happened. After peaking in the window and seeing guests in Harris's house being served beverages, the two officers assumed they were alcoholic beverages. Randolph had previously testified before the Grand Jury that he saw Mrs. Harris pour

¹²⁰ "Two Negro Policemen Locked Up: Bench Warrants Served on Pair Indicted on Perjury Charge in Murder Inquiry," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1927, 6.

whiskey out of a pitcher. Under oath he admitted that he did not know what was in the pitcher. He could not tell if it was whisky or not. After going to the front door Mrs. Harris opened it and they showed their badges. After the two officers gathered everyone in the front room Sheffield went to the rear of the house.

When Mrs. Harris went towards the dining room window that is when the situation took a turn for the worse. Randolph started after Mrs. Harris because he saw her take a bottle of milk and a pitcher off the buffet, which he believed to be evidence. According to Randolph when he started for her, he was shot.¹²¹ At the same time Randolph also whistled to Sheffield which is what triggered several shots discharged by Sheffield. One shot struck Randolph in the elbow, and he fell to the floor where he noticed Sam Faulkner in the bedroom door in a crouching position. As he pulled his gun another shot rang out and Faulkner disappeared in the bedroom. Randolph saw Sheffield fire in the direction of the bedroom. After leaving the kitchen Randolph saw Mrs. Sheffield, Sam's mother leaning over his body. Between his body and the door was an automatic weapon.

Randolph was taken to Santa Fe Hospital. He was later joined by Sheffield and officers Brown and Bewly. Randolph was told by Sheffield that he had not shot him, the Faulkner boy shot him, and he (Randolph) had killed the boy. Additionally, Sheffield informed Randolph that Brown and Bewly had seen everything. Randolph repeated this story in his testimony for the Grand Jury knowing it was false. According to Randolph he changed his story because, "after thinking everything over he knew that he had not told everything right, so he wanted to tell the

¹²¹ "Randolph Case Dismissed; Testifies as State Witness," *California Eagle*, July 15, 1927, 6.

truth.”¹²² Evidence from the scene was presented for Randolph to identify. He identified three guns: Sheffield’s .38, his own .45 Colt, and the automatic found near Faulkner.

A milk bottle, a funnel, a glass pitcher and 3 bottles of whiskey were presented for his identification as well. Randolph identified the milk and pitcher but not the whiskey. Another possible reason for Randolph to change his story is that he faced a life sentence for murder and the amputation of his arm in order to recover bullet fragments to get to the truth. Instead, Sam Faulkner’s body was exhumed, and the cause of death proved to be a .38 bullet fired from Sheffield’s not Randolph’s gun.

Officers Brown and Bewly did arrive at the Harris home that evening but after the shooting occurred and Randolph had been removed to Santa Fe Hospital. More lies were revealed when Officer Brown took the witness stand. Like Randolph, he and Brawley were instructed what to say at the Grand Jury by Sheffield. The two officers were informed that Sam Faulkner shot Randolph and Randolph killed him. After arriving at the police station Sheffield instructed them to say that they had seen it all. They were instructed to say from their car they observed the two Faulkner men enter the window followed by gunshots. They were also instructed to say that they were with Sheffield when he found the liquor (three bottles of whiskey) in the driveway of the house. Finally, they were instructed to say they saw the automatic weapon beside Faulkner and that when Mrs. Faulkner picked it up Randolph snatched it out of her hand.

According to Brown the story supplied to them by Sheffield had the full support of Chief Davis.¹²³ When Officer Bewley took the stand, he repeated the story told by Brown. The irony of

¹²² “Randolph Case Dismissed; Testifies as State Witness,” *California Eagle*, July 15, 1927, 6.

¹²³ “Randolph Case Dismissed; Testifies as State Witness,” *California Eagle*, July 15, 1927, 6.

both their stories is that they ended how the night started with LAPD officers engaging in behaviors that put them above the law. They barged into a home recklessly looking for illegal alcohol, which resulted in the death of an innocent unarmed Black man. Just before the three men entered Santa Fe Hospital to meet with Randolph, they themselves illegally consumed a half pint of Cedar Brook whiskey. On May 9, 1927, both Brown and Bewley were indicted for perjury by the Grand Jury.¹²⁴ The cook Glasco Givens was also a part of the web of lives to criminalize Mrs. Harris. He was arrested on suspicion of inducing false testimony.¹²⁵

The courtroom and corridors were packed for the three weeks that the case lasted. Many of the attendees looking for justice for harassment and now murder at the hands of Sheffield and Randolph were eventually disappointed. On July 23, 1927, Maceo Sheffield was set free after the jury, which had been deadlocked for 34 hours, returned a verdict of acquittal. Sheffield returned to the police force with a promotion and Randolph fired, the latter probably for turning state's evidence. The outcome of this case established policing culture that continues to this day. Even after Sheffield conspired to cover up his poor policing tactics that resulted in the death of an innocent man, there were no consequences for his actions. Instead, his consistent supporter Chief Davis promoted Sheffield to lieutenant sergeant. Sheffield would continue to harass the residents of Central Avenue.

In 1929, Sheffield was indicted again by the Grand Jury for bribery and extortion.¹²⁶ This time he was convicted and lost his job with LAPD. Although his conviction would later be overturned on a technicality, he never returned to the LAPD. His protector on the force faced a

¹²⁴ "Two Negro Policemen Locked Up: Bench Warrants Served on Pair Indicted on Perjury Charge in Murder Inquiry," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1927, 6.

¹²⁵ "New Inquiry Under Way in Slaying," *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1927, B3.

¹²⁶ "Police Officer Arrested," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1929.

similar fate. In 1938, an investigation into police corruption on Central Avenue revealed that Chief Davis, the mayor, and several officers were involved in extortion, murder, and other illegal activities on Central Avenue. Chief Davis may have lost his job and been replaced but little changed. This chapter examined the early institutions, events, and individuals who contributed to the eventual need for a revolutionary Black Power movement in the 1960s. The latter part focused on the abuses committed by the LAPD. In the case of Sam Faulkner's murder, racism is three-dimensional; meaning it was not a case of just white versus Black. Sometimes it was white officers, sometimes black officers, but always blue oppression of Black people. All of the men involved in the murder and cover up in the Sam Faulkner case were black, excluding Chief Davis. It is not unusual for Black men in positions of power to inflict extraordinary amounts of physical and emotional pain on Black bodies. Additional examples of such behavior will be presented in later chapters. The actions of these men and the lack of consequences for their actions would begin a cycle of community outrage, protest against police abuse, acquittals, and more violent policing of Black bodies that continues until this day.

Samuel Faulkner's murder is one of many ongoing stories of deadly police abuse by the LAPD in Black communities that contribute to the Black Power Movement. The development of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles was only a surprise to people outside of the community because they had and have totally different relationships with police officers. It has not been until recent events that some police officers faced any consequences for their deadly actions against Black folks. Black Power resistance and/or confrontations are often viewed as just a response to the most recent cause of its activation and not the historical events that preceded it. Samuel Faulkner's murder is just one of many indignations Black people suffered in Los Angeles that would lead to the Black Power explosion in Watts. These events maybe lost for

a period of time, but they are not forgotten. Having occurred during prohibition with allegations of alcohol consumption Faulkner was put on the wrong side of the law, but in 1960s Los Angeles his death would have put him on the right side of Black Power.

Another cycle of police abuse, protests, and investigation occurred less than ten years after the murder of young Sam Faulkner, with the exception that perhaps for the first time Black men exhibited Black militancy in Los Angeles. It was originally planned to introduce examples of Black resistance or militancy during World War II, most noticeably through the Double V campaign. The Double V campaign was a slogan and a drive to promote the fight for democracy in overseas campaigns and at the home front in the United States for African Americans during World War II. During the course of research on the Ben Bowie Post of the American Legion located on Central Avenue an article about African American WWI veteran Fred Davis was discovered.

In 1934, Davis was a 50-year-old World War I veteran and member of the Ben Bowie Post of the American Legion. Davis regularly participated in the Legion drill team practice at Ross Snyder playground. A military drill team is a marching unit that performs routines based on military drill. They perform either armed or unarmed. On October 10, 1934, while in route to the playground the *Los Angeles Sentinel* wrote, "One of the most inconsiderate and uncalled for cases of police brutality occurred here last Wednesday night."¹²⁷ Police officers stopped Davis and asked him about his rifle and when he explained they began to beat him. Davis was hit so hard over the eyeball by a blunt instrument that loss of sight or wearing of glasses would be inevitable.

¹²⁷ "Irate Police Attack, Beat War Veteran: Loss of Eye May Result from Attack," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1934, 1.

Mayor Shaw invoked what would become standard practice in police abuse cases. He told *Sentinel* publisher Leon H. Washington Jr., “that he would conduct a thorough investigation into the matter.” Instead of the American Legion protesting the action of the police a citizens’ committee was formed to address the matter.¹²⁸ Members of the committee included Golden State Mutual Insurance Company founders Norman O. Houston and George A Beavers and Dr. H. Claude Hudson. Defense of the officers argued that Davis had been drinking and that he had pointed a gun at the police officers who were in plain clothes. Davis denied the charges and the committee countered the charges by pointing to the fact that no arrests were made.¹²⁹

The committee charged that the whole investigation was conducted as a white washing affair to clear the police involved. After all was said and done it was the same old story. A black man was brutalized by police officers, and they walked free. The story was only covered by the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and appeared in three articles. The final article on November 27, 1934, simply stated that the board failed to make findings in the case.¹³⁰

In the mere seven years since the death of Sam Faulkner the committee found the need to include other cases of police brutality in their review. They concluded that the police department was lax in protecting the rights of victims of their brutality. However, for one moment of the Davis case Black men refused to be just victims and supported their brother in arms. Davis’s fellow drill team members were highly indignant at the summary treatment of one of their

¹²⁸ “Irate Police Attack, Beat War Veteran: Loss of Eye May Result from Attack,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1934, 1.

¹²⁹ “Irate Police Attack, Beat War Veteran: Loss of Eye May Result from Attack,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1934, 1.

¹³⁰ “Board Fails To Make Findings in Davis Case: Brutality Charges Against Police Officers Heard Two Weeks Ago,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 27, 1934, 1.

members. Armed with rifles the drill team members appeared at the Newton Street police station soon after they learned of the incident.

The men had their weapons drawn when they met with a representative of the Central division. The men were finally convinced to let the matter be handled through proper police channels.¹³¹ Thirty-three years before the Black Panther Party made front page news for appearing at the California State Capital, a small band of War World I veterans most likely in their fifties took up arms at a local law enforcement agency in response to police brutality to one of their own. This is an example of resistance to systemic oppression that would come to be known as Black Power. Police officers involved in abusive behaviors against Samuel Faulkner to Rodney King faced little to no consequences for their actions.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a shocking revelation of systematic racism. The government literally built a real estate empire on top of Black people that created wealth for whites through home ownership, mortgage insurance, bank loans, VA loans, and home improvement loans that were all based on the unsupported and perceived idea that Black people could not or would not make their mortgage payments. Black people were tainted with this stigma and therefore denied equal access to wealth building opportunities.

In addition to the control over the spaces that African Americans could occupy the dominant society created and controlled a justice system that would ensure that Black peoples lives were dependent on the mercy of law enforcement agents. African Americans did not qualify for protection because of the color of their skin and fell victim to state sanctioned assaults and even murder by those sworn to protect and serve citizens. The documents and personal

¹³¹ “Irate Police Attack, Beat War Veteran: Loss of Eye May Result from Attack,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1934, 1.

accounts in this chapter provided evidence that early protests against discriminatory practices in housing, eateries, recreational facilities, and law enforcement did not provide long-term equality but instead a continuous cycle of action followed by disappointment that mounted the over years, before manifesting itself in an aggressive and proactive form of resistance, or Black Power.

As the American people have come to know for every exposed incident of police brutality there are many more that have been covered up. The examples of murder and brutality examined above are more than enough reason for Black people to resist in large numbers. Many African Americans had migrated from the South and had or knew of someone who had encountered the brutality of white people. They were not of a generation that possessed a sense of entitlement that they deserved more than what they had achieved in California, but their children would be. Their children would be aware of the inequalities between Black and white folks in Los Angeles. It is not until World War II and the years after its end that the generation of Black Freedom fighters who will drive the classic period of the Black Power Movement are produced. And it is through them that the classic period of the Black Power Movement is established in Los Angeles.

Chapter 2 **How Black Power Came to LA**

Introduction

The disadvantages built into the American real estate industry prevented Black people from having any kind of power. But the power possessed by white America is vast. Literally, they can socially, economically, and physically overpower and oppress nonwhite groups in this country. The physical power yielded by whites against natives over land and enslaved Africans over their bodies provided white America with its earliest and greatest paths to wealth. Black Americans ongoing struggle for power is a reactionary response to the systemic conditions that white power has created for Black Americans.

Nevertheless, racist and discriminatory practices did also empower Black people. Black businesses served the Black community and thrived. It was a microcosm of the dominant society in almost every aspect. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Bridget “Biddy” Mason, a former slave became one of the wealthiest landowners in downtown Los Angeles. In less than one hundred years most African Americans would be confined to one area of the city. That confinement created a thriving economy of Black financial power. For example, during the first half of the twentieth century Charlotta Bass, owner of the *California Eagle* newspaper made a living while also using the paper to fight injustices against all citizens of Los Angeles. Financial independence from white institutions is working outside the framework of the oppressor. Financial success also highlights racially based spatial restrictions. Abusive over-policing used to manage the movement of African Americans eventually result in the classic period of Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

William Nickerson Jr., Norman Houston, and George Beavers founded the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company on Central Avenue in 1925. During the mid twentieth century it

became the largest Black owned insurance company in the western United States with several hundred employees. Like Bass, the company's owners participated in the civil rights movement while being a source of economic empowerment for the Black community. In the absence of power within white institutions the Black community created its own institutions and sources of economic Black Power. Without the ability to use the aforementioned means Black Power could not exist. But the overarching theme that separates civil rights and Black Power is the latter's willingness to meet violence with violence. While members of the civil rights movement vehemently reject the use of violence.

One phrase cannot encompass all of the possible definitions for Black Power. As one element of the Black Freedom Struggle Black Power is a lot of things: not being quiet for the sake of your oppressors, Black Power is disturbing the peace, Black Power is not waiting, Black Power is knowledge, Black Power is tearing shit up emotionally, mentally, and physically, Black Power is uncomfortable, Black Power does not equal silence, it does not mean saying yes when you mean no, unapologetically pride in being Black, and does not believe in nonviolent action only. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that protest (civil rights which is a delayed reaction) and resistance (Black power which can be immediate and, in the moment,) existed in Los Angeles decades before the modern Civil Rights Movement exploded in the South during the mid 1950s and giving it its name. There is no beginning and end to one movement and the start of another. Movements are given names and bookends by historians who want to keep track of and document significant events and time periods.

Prior to Carmichael's reference to "Black Power" any references to force, power, or went against mainstream solutions and organizations such as the NAACP fell under the umbrella of Black Nationalism. Marcus Garvey formed a major forerunner to the Black Power Movement

under the banner of Black Nationalism in his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garvey described elements that also apply to Black Power. Garvey wrote about the United

States:

It is the commercial and financial power of the United States of America that makes her the greatest banker in the world. Hence it is advisable for the Negro to get power of every kind. Power in education, science, industry, politics and higher government. That kind of power that will stand out signally, so that other races and nations can see, and if they will not see, then feel. Pressure of course may asset itself in other forms, but in the last analysis whatever influence is brought to bear against the powers opposed to Negro progress must contain the element of force in order to accomplish its purpose, since it is apparent that this is the only element they recognize.¹³²

Marcus Garvey was distrusting of the NAACP and its proximity to whiteness similarly to the

Nation of Islam 30 years later. Garvey states:

The "colored" elements have arranged it so that the blacks are always kept down, so that they can use their dissatisfaction and disaffection as an argument to strengthen and further perpetuate their positions of social equality and economic privilege and preferment with the whites. Such is the game that is being played over in America by the DuBois, Weldon Johnson group of "colored" persons of the National Association for the "advancement" of "Colored" people. The Universal Negro Improvement Association stands in opposition to this association on the miscegenation question, because we believe in the racial purity of both the Negro and white races.¹³³

Both movements coexisted, ran parallel to one another both nationally and regionally, and both are constantly undergoing an evolutionary process based on the actions of the dominant society regionally, nationally and perhaps internationally. Both are components without boundaries that have some overlapping methods and expectations within the overall Black Freedom Struggle. They do have event timelines and peaks and troughs. This chapter examines

¹³² Garvey, Marcus, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Or Africa for Africans Volumes I and II*, (Dover, The Majority Press, 1986), 25.

¹³³ Garvey, Marcus, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Or Africa for Africans Volumes I and II*, (Dover, The Majority Press, 1986), 99.

events that occurred within Los Angeles's African American community that were instrumental in the development of the 1960s Black Power Movement in Southern California.

Exposure to Power

As much as Black Power is considered an ideology or movement it's role in society is dependent on many factors including exposure through the media and technology of the times. Both played a major role in the exposure of Black Power to the public. The Black Panther Party catapulted to the vanguard of the Black Power Movement in 1967 when armed Panthers were filmed entering the California State Capital to protest the Mulford Act, a 1967 California bill that repealed a law allowing members of the public to carry loaded firearms.¹³⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1934, armed Black veterans exhibited Black Power by making a stand against police brutality at the Newton Street police station in Los Angeles, but with television in the distant future the confrontation was only reported in the local Black press. Both were examples of physical power, but the Panther's actions at the state capital was also an example of an attempt to exert legislative power by exhibiting physical power that was documented on film for eternity. Exposure through the media was integral to the public's interpretation or misconception of what Black Power looks like. Interpretations will be discussed further in the next chapter while examining what law enforcement feared more; images of Black men with guns or with books and serving food to the community.

The earliest use of the term "Black Power" can be found in Richard Wright's 1954 book *Black Power*. New York politician Adam Clayton Powell Jr. used the term on May 29, 1966, during an address at Howard University. Powell stated, "To demand these God-given rights is to

¹³⁴ Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, (Baltimore, Black Classic Press, 1991), 156.

seek black power.”¹³⁵ The term was popularized and came to define one segment of the Black Freedom Struggle a little over two weeks later in Greenwood, Mississippi. Civil rights/Black Power activist, and Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) has been given credit for first using the phrase Black Power during a speech in Greenwood on June 17, 1966. Carmichael and other civil rights leaders had stopped in Greenwood while continuing James Meredith’s March Against Fear after Meredith was shot and wounded on June 7, 1966, the second day of the march. Carmichael said:

This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested and I ain't going to jail no more! We have been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothing the only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. What we gonna start sayin' now is Black Power!¹³⁶

Stokely Carmichael was a very intelligent man. He spent years in the deep south registering people who had been intimidated not to vote, to vote. In order to prevent the state and white people in general from brutalizing Black people, Black people had to control the means of force. He knew that they had to take control of the local government, sheriffs, local police and more. And what could be more Black Power than that.

Meredith, somewhat of an enigma, stated in 2002 he was not a part of the civil rights movement and defined his 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi as an assault on white supremacy.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the men who continued his march were members of both movements. Stokely Carmichael’s Black Power speech in Greenwood presents another example the role law enforcement played in inspiring the Black Power Movement. Carmichael’s

¹³⁵ Lea Esther Williams, *Servants of the People: The 1960s Legacy of African American Leadership*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 123.

¹³⁶ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael “Kwame Ture”* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 507.

¹³⁷ Shelia Hardwell Byrd, “Meredith Ready to Move On,” *Athens Banner-Herald*, September 21, 2002, <http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/092102/new20020921041.shtml>.

justifiable complaints were against going to jail and being beaten for exercising his rights as an American.

One could argue that the Meredith shooting, which occurred during his non-violent protest was an indirect cause of the Black Power Movement or at the least was responsible for the “branding” of the Movement. It intensified an ongoing Long Black Power Movement within the Black Freedom Struggle. Carmichael’s use of the two words, Black and Power would come to define for some people a transformation of the fight for Black liberation through civil rights protests to Black Power demonstrations, or from nonviolent to violent. According to Peniel E. Joseph in *Waiting ‘Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* “The national media seized upon Carmichael’s declaration of “Black Power” as the signpost of a new militancy.”¹³⁸

When Carmichael combined those two words together it struck fear in the hearts of many white and black people alike. Some people had their own way of negatively defining it. Roy Wilkins who served as both executive secretary and executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was an early attacker of the phrase. According to Carmichael, “The secretary called us racists. Black Power, he said, meant anti-white power. It meant black separation.”¹³⁹ The vice president of the United States, stated Racism is racism and must be rejected whether it comes from a white throat or black throat.¹⁴⁰ This is not a surprising accusation coming from the second most powerful man in the world,

¹³⁸ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006), 146.

¹³⁹ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael “Kwame Ture”* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 525.

¹⁴⁰ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael “Kwame Ture”* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 527.

sitting next to the most powerful man in the world, both who happen to be white. It is unthinkable to somehow make Black people complicit in their own less-than-humane treatment based on race.

Carmichael would spend the rest of his chairmanship of SNCC trying to define Black Power. Carmichael stated: we weren't talking about overthrowing the system and black folk taking over the country...This was simply about the power to affirm our black humanity; to defend the dignity, integrity, and institutions of our culture; and to collectively organize the political and economic power to begin to control and develop our communities.¹⁴¹ According to Carmichael Black Power in practice would be "Negroes taking over the government of the counties where Negroes have majority...Black Power is not Black nationalism or Black racism as many people, Negro and white, have charged." He also stated that Negroes must take over where they can because this is the only way they will be able to stop intimidation and murder and to oppose what had kept them down.¹⁴² The mission of the civil rights is one of humanity. Its goal was for African American people to be treated humanely in their homeland, to move about public spaces unencumbered, and to participate fully in American citizenship. In Carmichael's description Black Power is the participation of black folks in the management of the organizations that governed these activities. Perhaps Carmichael's most impactful comment on the phrase was "black power will make Negroes proud of being Negroes."¹⁴³

Carmichael's definition of Black Power has action-oriented themes of self-determination and racial pride. It was fitting that Carmichael also had a special connection to one of the most

¹⁴¹ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael "Kwame Ture"* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 531.

¹⁴² Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael "Kwame Ture"* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 510.

¹⁴³ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael "Kwame Ture"*, (New York: Scribner, 2003), 510.

powerful symbols of the 1960s Black Power Movement. In 1965, working to register Black voters in Alabama, Carmichael led the campaign that established the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), which used the image of a black panther in its logo. In 1966 it was adopted by the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and made famous the following year. The LCFO also used the slogan “Black Power for black people” for its political candidates.

Two Sides of the Black Freedom Struggle

Scholars such as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and Thomas Sugrue have placed Black Power within the chronology of the long civil rights movement, which carries the movement through the 1970s and into the 1980s. The arguments presented by Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang in their article The "Long Movement" as Vampire Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in *Recent Black Freedom Studies*, and the arguments for the Long Movement theory presented in Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard’s *Freedom North* both have valid aspects. The Long Movement theory does apply to the modern Civil Rights and Black Power Movement(s) in that they transcend the historical period of 1955-1975, both nationally and regionally, but they are one in the same. First, because this would suggest that one movement ended, and another started. Chapter one provided examples in Los Angeles of civil rights protests and Black Power resistance existing simultaneously during the 1920s in the 1930s.

Black Power and Civil Rights are not one single continuous struggle for Black freedom in Los Angeles. When Dr. King traveled to Los Angeles after the Watts Rebellion to mediate between local people and government officials, he received a less than warm reception from both white political leaders and Black community members. On August 18, 1965, he met with members of the Black community at the Westminster Neighborhood Association in the heart of Watts. When King climbed on a small platform to address the crowd a man shouted, “Get out of

here Dr. King! We don't want you." When King began to suggest that, "All over America Negroes must join hands and-" he was interrupted with the words "And burn!" shouted a young man."¹⁴⁴ After asking questions about the living conditions in the area and the riot he restated his firm belief in nonviolence "Sure, we like to be nonviolent," called out one man, "but we up here in the Los Angeles area will not turn that other cheek."¹⁴⁵

These types of comments and responses to Dr. King from Black people were probably unheard of in the South due to the strong religious leadership that follows the scriptures, "But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," and "bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."¹⁴⁶ In both the civil rights and Black Power there exist spatial and temporal differences. In *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement* Steve Lawson argues, "The concept of the long civil rights movement, though useful in locating antecedents, blurs the lines of the historic changes within the Black Freedom struggle that gave the period from 1954 to 1968 its distinct context and character."¹⁴⁷ The same concept can be applied to the Black Power Movement across regions. Dr. King's somewhat unpopular reception by some people in Watts in 1965 marked a change in both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. For perhaps the first time in 10 years Dr. King's nonviolent tactic was publicly being questioned.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-19568* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 296.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-19568* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 297.

¹⁴⁶ Matt. 5:38-42, Luke 6:27-31

¹⁴⁷ Steve Lawson, "Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968," in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Danille L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 14.

At the time of King's encounter with the young man in Watts there were not many alternatives to his nonviolent approach. Alternative organizations began to form after Watts. When Malcolm left the Nation of Islam it was no longer the vanguard of Black Power. The cultural nationalist US organization was formed immediately after Watts. It was a popular alternative to nonviolent organizations like the NAACP. Like Marcus Garvey, US's founder Ron Karenga felt Black people needed their own form of cultural expression. US gave African Americans a connection to their African roots through language, arts, and their highest profile accomplishment the creation of the African American holiday Kwanzaa in 1966.

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense did what no other organization had done previously. Its members went on the offense against anti-Black policing. Their practice of armed observation of police officer carrying out their duties against Black citizens inspired a young generation of African Americans to become revolutionaries. Although these actions were visually impressive it was their breakfast, food, community health care and educational programs that were their greatest accomplishments. Although both organizations and others like them became targets of the government their legacies live on.

A Tale of Two Riots

The Long Movement theory that civil rights and Black Power were a series of local struggles rather than a national social movement is possible with one caveat. How racism was practiced by law enforcement, informal community organizing, and individual actions in different cities contributed greatly to the rise of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles during the 1960s. Detroit, Michigan and Los Angeles are both outside of the south, but racism was expressed and responded to differently in each city during citywide race riots. In Detroit in 1863, there was a major riot of mostly ethnic Irish against Black people in response to the draft

for the Civil War. The Irish feared they would have to compete with the formerly enslaved for low-paying jobs. More than 200 people, mostly Black, were left homeless.¹⁴⁸

Another major race riot occurred again in Detroit on June 20, 1943, when white and Black youths fought each other at Belle Isle Park, located in the middle of the Detroit River. Similar to 1863 Black people suffered more casualties. Over ten thousand angry whites traveled across town to Paradise Valley and attacked Black people. Many Detroit police openly sympathized with the white rioters and were especially brutal with Blacks; police shot 17 Black people to death, no whites were shot. Over the course of three days, 34 people were killed, 25 of them Black, 675 suffered serious injuries, and 1,893 were arrested before federal troops subdued the disorder.¹⁴⁹

Two weeks before the race riot of 1943 in Detroit, the first and perhaps only large-scale multiday race riot took place in Los Angeles. The Zoot Suit Riots were a series of violent clashes during which mobs of U.S. servicemen, off-duty police officers and white civilians brawled with young Latinos and other minorities in Los Angeles. Instead of just going into Black neighborhoods, white Angelenos and military servicemen attacked Mexican American youth and smaller numbers of other minority groups wearing Zoot Suits throughout the city. Mexican zoot suiters were considered unpatriotic because the suits had been banned because of their excessive use of wool, which was needed for the war effort.

The history of resistance and protest persisted in Los Angeles's Black community during the Zoot Suit riots. Civil rights attorney Loren Miller recalled that when marauding sailors declared that they were going down to Central Avenue, blacks "sent back the word that said to

¹⁴⁸ "The Mob Its Origin," *Detroit Free Press*, March 9, 1863, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 29.

come over here and take somebody's trousers off over here, cut somebody's hair. We'll be ready for them. So, they never showed up."¹⁵⁰ The threat of using Black physical power against intruders during the Zoot Suit riots served as a deterrent to white aggression in the African American community in Los Angeles and from the same fate as Detroit's Black community.

There is a distinct characteristic of riots that are started by or involved whites. They are almost always an attack on the bodies of their victims. It is or may be accompanied by property damage but that is not the primary target. This is rooted in the inequities in real estate ownership in this country and it is quite simple. White people do not to destroy property because they own it and it has a financial value. But they have brutalized and murdered members of minority groups both in and out of their neighborhoods.as shown in the previous examples .

What do Black people riot against and destroy? Property in their community owned by white people. Why? Because some members of that community think law enforcement only exist to protect the interest of white people. And it brings attention to the actions of their police to the powers that be. Until recently Black people dared not go into a white enclave and attack buildings, let alone, white bodies. Interestingly, according to Josh Sides the "Zoot Suits" riots which had very little participation from Black folks only exacerbated whites' fear of Black violence which was exacerbated by the Navy's formal investigation with the racial friction, which it almost immediately assigned to the "Negro Problem."¹⁵¹ The fact that a race riot initiated by white servicemen that overwhelmingly targeted Mexicans in Los Angeles could be

¹⁵⁰ Loren Miller, interview by Lawrence B. de Graaf, March 3,1967, Oral History Program, California State University, Fullerton.

¹⁵¹ Josh Sides, *L. A City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 49.

categorized, as a Negro problem is just one more example of selective institutional racism and the need for a Black Power movement to pushback against white supremacy.

Black Power Within Civil Rights

Historically, Black people's grievances have not been heard unless they act in concert very loudly. One of white America's most effective tools in denying Black people their human rights is to tell them to wait or tell them now is not the time. Or let our legal system provide you with justice. It is the same excuse that has been given to Black people since they were stolen from Africa. Religion was used to delay happiness or more accurately to avert uprisings. A significant example of Black people being asked to wait to take action involved Dr. King. It is also a good example of how civil rights and Black Power could overlap or have similar responses.

On April 3, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference began the nonviolent Birmingham campaign against racism and racial segregation. On April 12th the *Birmingham News* published "A Call for Unity," a statement by eight white Alabama clergymen of different faiths against King and his methods. The clergymen made four specific accusations: (1) King is an outsider; (2) he and his followers should negotiate for change rather than demonstrate; (3) their actions are "untimely"; and (4) there is no justification for breaking the law.

The Black community summoned Dr. King and the SCLC to Birmingham to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program. The final two requests were the most insidious. The city had acquired the nickname "Bombingham" due to the 50 dynamite explosions in Black neighborhoods between 1947 and 1965. Nevertheless, the clergymen thought Dr. King's actions

untimely and saw no need for breaking the law in the form of peaceful protests against such vicious and violent acts by white supremacists.

Dr. King responded to “A Call For Unity” with one of the most important documents of the Civil Rights Movement, the “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” King wrote, “Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial" outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.”¹⁵² Dr. King succinctly and eloquently addressed each of the clergymen’s concerns assuring them that the SCLC and the Black community’s actions were moral and just.

“Letter From Birmingham Jail” in itself is an act of Black Power in accordance to Carmichael’s description that Black Power is about the power to affirm our black humanity; to defend the dignity, integrity, and institutions of our culture; and to collectively organize the political and economic power to begin to control and develop our communities.¹⁵³ Indirectly, the actions of Dr. King and violence perpetrated by white supremacy in the south, contributed to the Black Power Movement’s growth outside of the south. Although Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will always be associated with civil rights, the “Letter From Birmingham Jail” overlapped into Black Power. One theme of Black Power is that it does not always operate within what is acceptable to white folks. When the white clergy asked Dr. King not to break the law and protest, he resisted and continued to organize in Birmingham. Two weeks later Bull Connor unleashed fire hoses and police dogs on schoolchildren in Birmingham, which was broadcast around the world. It so

¹⁵² Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed November 26, 2020, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail>.

¹⁵³ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, Ready For Revolution: *The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael “Kwame Ture”* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 531.

embarrassed the nation it forced President John F. Kennedy to be a president for all Americans and deliver his address on civil rights on June 11, 1963¹⁵⁴.

The Migration of Black Power

The examination of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles requires a study of Black migration and its contributions to the movement. Josh Sides suggests, “The act of migration itself was the cornerstone of the new movement, bringing black people intent on equality to cities where that equality was conceivable.”¹⁵⁵ The Black Power Movement period that came in the 1960s was embedded within the children of that movement of Black folks across the country known as the Great Migration (1910-1970). In the case of Los Angeles, the Black Power Movement of the 1960s came with the Second Great Migration (1940-1970), which started with World War II. These children who were part of both the Silent and the Baby Boomer generations born in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s would see and hear of scenes of violent racism and discrimination that would drive many of them into the Black Power Movement.

In Los Angeles many of these young people would encounter the same treatment that their parents sought to escape from in the South. Jobs were plentiful because the United States was busy protecting the human rights of people on multiple continents. Meanwhile, Jim Crow was the law of the land for Black people in America. It would be twenty years before the youngest migrants’ voices and actions would sound the call for self defense against all of those who wanted to do them harm, which is eerily similar to what the United States has experienced in 2020.

¹⁵⁴ President John Kennedy, *Excerpt from a Report to the American People on Civil Rights* (June 11 1963), 16 mm; 14 minutes, accessed September 24, 2022 <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/televised-address-to-the-nation-on-civil-rights>.

¹⁵⁵ Josh Sides, *L. A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 131.

Los Angeles is often overlooked for its contributions to the Black Power Movement. Many of its key participants were either born in Los Angeles, migrated there as children or entered the Movement there as young adults. Both the Black Panthers and the Soledad Brothers were most often associated with the San Francisco Bay area of Northern California but have closer ties to L.A. For example, Eldridge Cleaver the Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party was born in 1935 in Wabbaseka, Arkansas. His family moved to Phoenix and eventually settled in Los Angeles when he was 12.

Soledad Brother George Jackson was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1941. In 1956 his father moved the family to Pasadena, California. Soledad Brothers Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette also hailed from Los Angeles. In 1968, Angela Davis began her activism in Los Angeles with the Black Panther Political Party (not to be confused with the more popular Black Panther Party for Self Defense). Franklin Alexander the Chairman of the Che-Lumumba Club of the Communist Party USA was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1941. He moved to Los Angeles with members of his family in 1952. This is just a sample of the many young Black Power Movement activists who lived in and/or began their activism in Los Angeles.

Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow L. A.

The African American population in Los Angeles tripled in size between 1920 and 1940, making it one of the fastest growing metropolis's in the country. In the 1940 census the African American population of Los Angeles County stood around 74,000.¹⁵⁶ By 1950 Los Angeles County's African American population had risen 111.8 percent to 218,000.¹⁵⁷ Who were these

¹⁵⁶ U.S. Census Bureau (1940), *Census of California Population*, Accessed November 28, 2020 <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1943/dec/population-vol-2.html>.

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau (1960), *Census - Population, Supplementary Reports: Negro Population, by County 1960 and 1950*, accessed November 28, 2020 <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1966/dec/population-pc-s1-52.html>.

people coming to Los Angeles during the 1940s? Many people migrate for better opportunities in the form of employment. However, during the Great Migration many Black people migrated to Los Angeles from the South to be treated as equals. Jim Crow laws were in full effect in the South and if Black people did not abide by them, it could cost them their life.

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke is both a former United States Congresswoman and Los Angeles County Supervisor, and attorney. Her family migrated to Los Angeles from Roxton, Texas in the 1920s. Congresswoman Burke was born Yvonne Watson in 1932 and is a member of the Silent Generation (1928-1945), which preceded the Baby Boomer generation (1946-1964). Many members of the Black Power Movement would spring from the earliest members of the Boomer generation, but also from the last years of the Silent Generation. Black Panther Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver was born in 1935. Malcolm X and Robert Williams were both active in the 1960s but born in 1925 and members of the so-called Greatest Generation, associated with winning World War II. The significance of Congresswoman Burke's family is that to achieve any kind of Black Power they had to move out of Jim Crow Texas. They represent many of the Black people who attained one of the most valued forms of power in the U. S., political power.

Burke's father James Watson left Texas just ahead of a lynch mob that was after him.¹⁵⁸ Her parents were farmers, and her mother was also a teacher. The land came down through the family from her paternal great-grandfather, so they were not sharecroppers. Burke stated, "They were farmers. And they got into a disagreement over a bill. My mother being a teacher, she tried to pay everything in terms of all things we needed for the farm as you went along."¹⁵⁹ James

¹⁵⁸ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

Watson dared to challenge the white owners of the store where he purchased his farming supplies. According to Burke:

And they, my dad, had the record showing he had paid as he went along. Apparently, he bought your flour and all your things as well as your seeds and everything else from the store. So, it was a disagreement. And my mother was a teacher. She had a contract there to teach and they disagreed on it and they organized a lynch mob to kill my dad.”¹⁶⁰

It was not unusual for white store and landowners to indiscriminately change the amount they were owed by their black customers. It was one of the many white privileges of living during Jim Crow. But what makes Burke’s story so complicated is that Burke’s father and the storeowners were distant relatives. “The white people who owned the store were distant, were relatives. I don’t know how distant. We were relatives,” stated Burke.¹⁶¹ Even people who shared the same blood did not matter when it came to black and white relationships. The ownership of land would have been a source of economic power for Burke’s family had they been white. Instead, they ran into the same problems with white business owners as Black sharecroppers; the inability to dispute charges for materials against a white person. For the Watsons Black economic and political power would have to be attained outside of Texas.

In another example of the challenges African Americans faced in the struggle to occupy a dignified space in this country actress Judy Pace-Flood described the impetus for her father’s decision to move his family west. It was the daily indignations that black people had to endure in the South that proved to be too much for Pace-Flood’s father. A Black man could be arrested or worse for eyeballing a white woman in the Jim Crow south. Black men were not supposed to look at them. So, when two white women were approaching Mr. Pace on a hot Mississippi day, he had to turn his face towards a wall and stood there until he heard them move away.

¹⁶⁰ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁶¹ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

Ms. Pace-Flood stated, "It's that -- it, it was not always "they tied me to a tree, and they whipped the hell out of me." It was not always that or "they beat the hell out of me." It's all of those indignities that happened that you have no control over, none whatsoever.¹⁶² Perhaps just as important if not more than gaining economic and political Black Power, was gaining the power over one's own spatial existence that drove many Black people out of the South to places like Los Angeles. Moving across country for no other reason than having the right to move through spaces without consequence was the first act of joining the Black Freedom Struggle's Black Power Movement for many people.

The Failure of the Double V Campaign in Los Angeles

One way to exemplify how white supremacy maintained a grip on African Americans in Los Angeles is to examine the little-changed actions of the LAPD in the post World War II Black community. The flagrant disregard for Black life exhibited by the LAPD would become a major contributor to the evolution of the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Prior to the rise of the movement in the 1960s, the ongoing actions of the LAPD against hard-working members of the African American community only compounded their already damaged relationship. Eventually, that continued treatment would contribute to deadly and destructive riots in 1965 and beyond. Riots have come to represent the most destructive forces of the ongoing Black Power Movement in Southern California. They release decades of frustration stored in the collective minds of the Black community over the atrocities committed against Black husbands, wives, sisters, brothers, parents, and children at the nightstick and gun wielding hands of police.

The previous chapter provided examples of the occupation of the Black community by the LAPD prior to World War II. In post war Los Angeles not much changed. Many returning

¹⁶² Judy Pace-Flood, interview by author, August 26, 2013.

Black soldiers believed having put their lives on the lines for the democracy of others they would finally enjoy the privileges of full citizenship at home. During the war many Black soldiers and civilians supported the Double V (V for Victory) campaign. The Double V Campaign was a slogan and drive to promote the fight for democracy in overseas campaigns and at the home front in the United States for African Americans during World War II. Unfortunately, that was not the case. The brutal police actions even intensified against Black servicemen.

Los Angeles had never been, nor had it become a racial paradise for Black people after the war. Their community continued to be painfully monitored, occupied, and punished by the agencies that restricted Black movement throughout the country. According to Josh Sides Los Angeles was a city where white supremacy was as central to white self-perception as it was in southern Mississippi but where anti-black violence was quite limited.¹⁶³ The availability of vast amounts of space permitted the illusion to exist outside of the Black community meanwhile another reality existed within it. Little had changed in the relationship between the African American community and the LAPD between the murder of Samuel Faulkner and post-World War II.

The lengths to which the LAPD inflicted emotional, mental, and physical pain on the Black community knew no bounds. What occurred in the early morning on August 21, 1948, near the La Vada ballroom, at 45th and South San Pedro is eerily similar to what continues to occur to Black men across the United States in the twenty-first century. They leave their homes, encounter the police, and never return. What occurred at La Vada ballroom is similar to the predatory stalking and murder of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in February 2020 by a former Glynn County police officer in Georgia. Following an altercation at the La Vada, Herman

¹⁶³ Josh Sides, *L. A City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 12.

(Buddy) and John Burns attempted to get their injured brother Julius to the hospital. Upon reaching the car John Burns stated:

Two special officers seized Herman and Buddy while three uniformed officers held Herman by the arms. The two special officers began to beat on him and handcuffed me. We told the officials to leave us alone because we were trying to get Julius to the hospital. They kept beating him. A tall heavy-set special officer beat Herman with his blackjack and club on the side of his head, on his neck and wherever they could get a blow. Two white uniformed officers beat him in the side and all over his body with their blackjacks until he fell helplessly to the ground.¹⁶⁴

After going out for a night of relaxation with his wife and brothers, Herman Burns husband, father, construction worker, and World War II veteran lay dead in the street, a victim of LAPD terrorism. Julius Burns was hospitalized, and John Burns was arrested.

The Burns's were upstanding and respected members of the community, and the LAPD and local government made a mockery of the life changing events that took place against their family on August 21, 1948. Disrespect and harassment by the police department continued for several months. In spite of eyewitness testimony Sergeant Dykes of the University Police Station said, "as far as the police are concerned, Burns died of a heart attack."¹⁶⁵ The city coroner ignored any signs of trauma to Burns body and as a trained professional declared that he didn't know the cause of the young man's death. He described it as, "one of the most mysterious cases he had ever heard of. Physically, the body was in perfect condition. No traces of liquid or ailments of any kind could be found."¹⁶⁶

How far city officials would go to protect the police did not end there. Chief autopsy surgeon, Dr. Frederick D. Newbarr opined that "Cause of death undetermined" was a medical

¹⁶⁴ "Police Beat Man to Death in the Street With Clubs and Billies," *The California Eagle*, August 26, 1948, 1.

¹⁶⁵ "Police Beat Man to Death in the Street With Clubs and Billies," *The California Eagle*, August 26, 1948, 1.

¹⁶⁶ "Police Beat Man to Death in the Street With Clubs and Billies," *The California Eagle*, August 26, 1948, 1.

possibility.” He also added that it was possible for a person to be literally “frightened to death” and leave no demonstrable evidence.¹⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, the coroner’s jury exonerated the officers, returning a verdict of death from undetermined causes.

Following the verdict, the black community spoke out and protested against the racial injustices they suffered at the hands of white supremacists in blue uniforms. Within the confines of the Black community according to Sides this should have never happened. He stated, “But more often black residents found comfort in public places where they were not feared and despised.¹⁶⁸ Once again the Black community tried to obtain some form of justice against the invaders of their social spaces but not through Black power. The Civil Rights Congress (CRC) was formed in 1946 succeeding the International Labor Defense, the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, and the National Negro Congress, serving as a defense organization. Although by my definition the reaction to the murder of Burns does not constitute Black Power but the civil rights losses do contribute to the pressure released during the forthcoming classic period of the Black Power Movement, when Black men may still be killed, but not without resisting.

The CRC became the first line of defense for many black victims of police abuse by organizing the power of Black people and institutions in the community. The week following Burns's death, the CRC invited several community leaders and organizations to join the “Justice for Burns Citizens Committee.” The committee included AFL and CIO unions, the Los Angeles CIO Council, black and white churches, and other community leaders. The First Unitarian Church and its racially mixed congregation hosted a panel discussion by members of the

¹⁶⁷ “Fright Can Kill, County Medic Says; Refers to Burns’ Case,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 23, 1948, 8.

¹⁶⁸ Josh Sides, *L. A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 21.

Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, a body of approximately forty independent ministers. The panel members agreed that the Burns case was the latest in a long line of police hostility toward the minority races within the city.

The coalition sent delegations to all city councilmen to demand action, raised funds for the prosecution of the officers responsible for Herman Burns's death, raised money for the defense of John and Julius Burns (who had been charged with disturbing the peace) and called for a grand jury after an eight-man, all-white jury declared there was no evidence of criminal blame against the officers in the coroners inquest.¹⁶⁹ In the Justice for Burns Citizen Committee's pursuit for accountability for the murder of Herman Burns they secured the services of five physicians and a court order to exhume the body. A series of x-rays showed the fractures to Burns's neck that could have only been caused by heavy blows.¹⁷⁰

The NAACP pursued the Burns case separately demanding grand jury action from District Attorney William E. Simpson. Black people mostly fought injustices of various degrees through peaceful protests and through a judicial system biased against Black people. During the executive board meeting of the Los Angeles branch on September 27, 1948, which included acting executive secretary Roy Wilkins, the decision was made to call for the probe.¹⁷¹ The board made the decision based on a report and recommendation on the case from Attorney H. I. Richardson, co-chairman of its legal department. The inquest was deemed mandatory based on the contradictory evidence at the coroner's inquest on the Burns case and in the interest of the

¹⁶⁹ "Pair Charge Brutal Special Police Killed One Brother; Beat Another," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 16, 1948, 1.

¹⁷⁰ "Burns' Neck Said Broken: Body Dug; Again Examined," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 14, 1948, 1.

¹⁷¹ "NAACP Asks Grand Jury Probe in Burns Killing: Urges DA to Open Up Case," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 30, 1948, A1.

victims of the numerous beatings and killings in which police were implicated.¹⁷² The NAACP conducted a long and thorough study of the case following the inquest. The legal committee conducted interviews with the accused officers and the Burns brothers that resulted in many testimonial discrepancies.

The murder of Herman Burns was a West Coast lynching on par with any of the atrocities committed against Black men in the deep South during Jim Crow. The difference between the murder of Emmett Till seven years later in Mississippi is that the butchers of Till's Black body ended his suffering with a bullet.

In the midst of such violence against Black people, Black Power would have to eventually take a physical form through the young generation witnessing the injustices. They were too young to provide any leadership during the pre-classic period of the Black Power Movement within the Black Freedom Struggle. That energy would be released in the 1960s. On Friday October 8, 1948, Mayor Fletcher Bowron was visited by a delegation from the Justice for Burns Citizens committee, Attorney Thomas L. Griffith Jr., head of the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP, and Burns family Attorney Fred Steinmetz.

The delegation advised the mayor that the re-examination and x-rays of Burns exhumed body revealed a neck fracture. Bowron had promised to rid the city of brutal police behavior when he assumed office following the recall of former mayor Shaw.¹⁷³ Bowron refused to discuss the general issue of police brutality. The mayor only stated that he would cooperate with the NAACP in attempting to determine the true facts in the case. He said he would take no action

¹⁷² "NAACP Asks Grand Jury Probe in Burns Killing: Urges DA to Open Up Case," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 30, 1948, A1.

¹⁷³ "Delegation Sees Bowron On Brutality," *The California Eagle*, October 7, 1948, 2.

until the grand jury had made its decision.¹⁷⁴ No grand jury was ever convened, relieving Bowron from having to take any action. If there ever was a time and reason for a Black Power Movement accompanied by violence in Los Angeles, the Burns case was it. As the United States marched its forces around the world fighting for the rights of other people, Black people died in the streets at the hands of its government agents.

Unrestrained, the LAPD continued its assault on the Burns family. Nelson Burns, the father of the Burns brothers was arrested on November 3, 1948. The reason for LAPD stopping the 48-year-old Burns appears to have become standard operating procedure as an excuse for stopping Black men, an issue with their tail lights. According to co-worker J. S. McGee, Burns was charged with drunken driving but refused to sign the complaint because he was not drunk. McGee had worked on a roof with Burns and doubted the officers' charges of Burns allegedly being drunk.¹⁷⁵ Prior to the arrest, Nelson Burns had reported to the CRC that police patrol cars drove slowly by his home indicating careful and unceasing scrutiny.¹⁷⁶ When Burns produced his license an officer asked if he was related to the boy who was killed. Burns was immediately arrested when he replied that he was the father.

While in custody at the University station Mr. Burns was beaten when he insisted that he be allowed his right to make a phone call. Writing this section at the beginning of 2021 evokes an overwhelming sadness and anger at what Black people have and continue to endure at the hands of law enforcement in this country. What kind of cold-hearted police join or are produced by law enforcement agencies and the LAPD in particular? What kind of police take the time to

¹⁷⁴ "NAACP Asks Grand Jury Probe in Burns Killing: Urges DA to Open Up Case," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 30, 1948, A1.

¹⁷⁵ "Herman Burns Father Alleges Police Beating," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 11, 1948, 9.

¹⁷⁶ "Slain Youth's Father Beaten," *The California Eagle*, November 11, 1948, 1.

harass the grieving father of a murdered veteran? And more importantly how do they expect the people they oppress to eventually respond? It is either a testament to the fear instilled in Black folks by the uncivilized tactics of the dominant society and its goon squads in blue or nature's desire to continue the bloodline that allows them to endure such, emotional, mental, and physical trauma over the centuries. The terrorism inflicted on the Burns family could have been more than an exercise in the sometimes ineffectiveness of civil right actions. It could have been a call to arms for the Black community to physically defend itself against the deadly practices of the LAPD, but the generation that was to make Black Power a full-time movement in Los Angeles had yet to come of age.

In *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. In the Sixties* Mike Davis and Jon Wiener suggests that in 1960 a young generation began to wake up despite the stunted character of political and intellectual life in the region.¹⁷⁷ According to the authors the year 1960 would preview social forces, ideas, and issues that would coalesce into “movements” over the next decade. This would be true if they were only describing mostly non-Black youth. During the middle of the twentieth century many Black members of both the Silent Generation and early Baby Boomers had or knew someone who experienced racially motivated social issues.

Those pre-1960 years made an impression on how young people would define the ways they would exert Black Power. On May 31, 1961, a display of Black Power occurred in Griffith Park. The merry-go-round attendant called the police because a 17-year-old Black male refused to pay for a ride. When the police attempted to arrest the youngster, they were confronted by a crowd of about 200 people. The crowd took the prisoner and he escaped during the disturbance

¹⁷⁷ Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. In the Sixties* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2020), 21.

that followed, according to J. D. Calderwood, one of the unsuccessful arresting officers.¹⁷⁸

Four officers were injured including Calderwood and a police car was overturned. According to eyewitness Hyman Hayes, “It was an ugly crowd. Some of them muttered ‘this is not Alabama.’”¹⁷⁹ On Mother’s Day May 14, 1961, two weeks before this incident in Los Angeles a mob of Klansmen attacked nonviolent Freedom Riders on Greyhound busses in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama.¹⁸⁰ There were other instances of Black Power style resistance against cops. Bill Lane writes in the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, “Los Angeles was the first city I ever saw where citizens quickly rise up, overpower police officers, chase them, take their guns and wreck their cars.”¹⁸¹ The author goes on to display a large degree of empathy for the actions of police without sufficiently recognizing the evil deeds perpetrated against the Black population by the police.

The Evolution of Black Power

Like many members of the Great Migration for James Watson and his family the north and west held the promise of freedom from Jim Crow. But as they would find out the promise was more like a dream and reality was a nightmare. Relative to what the migrants encountered in the South their children had it much better. But better is relative. And for many of those children discrimination was traumatic in all its degrees of enforcement. Sometimes, brutality is not the only measurement for how demeaning an event can be. It happened for future Congresswoman Burke in both elementary and high school. Burke’s mother realized early on that she needed

¹⁷⁸ “75 Policeman Quell Riot in Griffith Park,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1961, 1.

¹⁷⁹ “75 Policeman Quell Riot in Griffith Park,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1961, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2011), 96.

¹⁸¹ “The Inside Story: After-Riot Notes,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 2, 1965, B11.

more academic challenges than offered at the elementary school she attended. Burke's mother obtained her a transfer to 32nd Street School near the University of Southern California (USC). It was a school that trained teachers from USC's Education Department. Located on the west side of Los Angeles Yvonne Burke integrated the school in the fourth grade.

Being the first person to integrate an institution requires upending old stereotypes regardless of age. Mrs. Burke recalled not getting particularly good grades. In the 1940s students took an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test to determine how smart they were. Prior to taking the IQ test in which, she scored second highest in her class Burke recalled receiving all D's from her teachers.¹⁸² After the results of the IQ test were revealed Burke received all As. Burke described a grading process in which she would have never received an A without the IQ test. According to Burke:

And before that time, the people who got the best grades were the little blonde girls, you know, cute little blonde girls, they always got the best grades because they were Maryann who was blonde and cute, you know? The little brunettes didn't get A's.¹⁸³

Unknown to the non-Black community is the fact that just penetrating white spaces does not guarantee acceptance or equal treatment. For Yvonne Burke one of her most painful recollections occurred in high school. Burke was an excellent student, vice president of the student body, and in the Honor Society at the then integrated Manual Arts High School. It was not unusual for student government members to attend functions at the homes of their teachers or for social club members to go on weekend activities with teachers.

Burke eventually experienced Jim Crow first hand in Los Angeles. The Honor Society planned a Saturday morning trip to Pop's Willow Lake in the San Fernando Valley. When Burke

¹⁸² Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁸³ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

arrived at school to take the bus to the lake, only she and another Black girl in the Honor Society had arrived. They waited and waited, and no other classmates showed up. The both of them went to the other girl's house, which was close to the school. The girl's mother called out to Pop's Willow Lake to see if they allowed Blacks." And they said, "No I'm sorry, we don't allow Blacks here."¹⁸⁴ In 1949, in Southern California the school administrators knew that the establishment did not allow Black people in that space but held an event there anyway.

The vice-principal had done it. She changed the time and didn't tell them. They told the white students to meet at the school at an earlier time than the Black students to catch the bus to Pops Willow. Burke was humiliated and angry. Prior to this incident her parents would drop her off at the vice-principal's home so she could attend Philharmonic concerts with her.¹⁸⁵ Burke confronted the vice-principal on the following school day. And she said, "Well Yvonne, I just didn't want to embarrass you." I said, "Embarrass me? You humiliated me." Anyway, we had it out," stated Burke.¹⁸⁶ Burke realized her parents had attempted to shield her from such situations:

You know, I think they did like, my dad never, never discussed how he came to California with me. Only time I knew was I knew he was--the first time he was going back, and everyone was kind of nervous. And as we drove back to Texas, there were incidents as far as someone refusing to serve him at, you know, restaurant and so he'd just sit and he'd curse, you know, and went on... He didn't tell me he didn't go to his parents' funeral. My mother told me.¹⁸⁷

In 1949, at the dawn of the so-called Civil Rights movement the high school experiences of Congresswoman Yvonne Brathwaite Burke exemplify the continued impact of spatial racism for Black Americans in Los Angeles. As an attorney Burke would represent the real estate

¹⁸⁴ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁸⁶ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Yvonne Brathwaite Burke interview by author, August 26, 2013.

brokers who integrated the Southwest Realty Board in Los Angeles. The cases ended with the Justice Department settling it on an antitrust basis. Throughout her legal and political career Burke used her knowledge of the law as a form of legal Black Power to empower Black people. Black Power comes to fruition by the resistance of the children of Black migrants. Although Burkes' work is not Black Power it helps liberate Black folks from some of the effects of housing discrimination.

Burke worked as an attorney on the case that would lead to the integration of realty boards in the Southern California. Congresswoman Burke never disclosed if her work in making sure that Black people could occupy spaces in Los Angeles was related to her family's experience in Texas. Burke knew that leveling the playing field in acquiring real estate in Los Angeles would increase Black economic power in Los Angeles. People may not think of Yvonne Brathwaite Burke as a symbol of Black Power but as Stokely Carmichael suggests, "to collectively organize the political and economic power to begin to control and develop our communities" is to engage Black Power.¹⁸⁸ Congresswoman Burke considers herself to be a civil rights activist. She worked with the NAACP and also Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he visited Los Angeles.

In the 1950s racism is prevalent in Southern California. It manifests itself in personal and institutional interactions. The youngest of children are not immune from its touch. There is no equivalent for the word nigger that speaks to the status of any other race or ethnic group in America. What does it tell you about the non-black people in this country when so many Black people can tell you the first time a white person called them a nigger? No other race shares this experience and individually Black people navigate this horrible right-of-passage in their own

¹⁸⁸ Kwame Ture and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: The Life and Times of Stokely Carmichael "Kwame Ture"* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 531.

ways. The occupation of space has always impacted Black children all over this country. But in the West the consequences for resistance were not as severe as in the South. Children do not have the means to exhibit Black Power in many other ways than physical and many times it begins with the word “nigger.”

External Contributors to the Rise of Black Power in Los Angeles

Reasons for the 1960s eruption of Black Power in Los Angeles were not confined to Los Angeles. Although these families were geographically miles away from the South evolving technology kept them updated on recent events. According to some scholars such as the highly regarded Taylor Branch whose trilogy of books chronicle the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and much of the Civil Rights Movement between 1954-1968, date 1954 the year King became pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* as the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Other scholars consider 1955, the year of the brutal murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till and the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott as the beginning.

The death of Emmett Till in 1955 impacted many of the future members of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, therefore influencing the Black Power Movement itself. As described earlier it was not unusual for young African Americans to travel to the south to visit relatives. That summer, while Till was visiting his family in Money, Mississippi, two white men brutally murdered him. J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant pledged to “scare the Chicago out of him” after they heard he had flirted with a white woman, Bryant’s wife, Carolyn. Bryant and Milam stormed Till’s Uncle Mose Wright’s home, demanded “the one who did the talking,” and drove Till to an isolated shed, where they beat him ruthlessly and gouged out his eye. They then shot

him, tied a seventy-five-pound mill fan to his neck, and tossed his swelling body into the Tallahatchie River.

Upon retrieval of the corpse, Mamie Till Bradley insisted on an open-casket funeral for her son to display the sheer horror that men could be so cruel. Ngoma Ali, did not think much about racism in 1955 until he saw images of Till on the cover of *Jet* magazine. According to Ali who at the time was six years old, “they was saying they put a hose in him and blew water up in him and that made his head big. I mean, all kind of things, but I thought it was horrific. You know, why would they do something like that to this -- to this brother.”¹⁸⁹ Krystal D. Frazier examines what Ali and other Black children across the country were feeling in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*.¹⁹⁰ Frazier argues that the murder of Till helped inspire activism, moving young people to express and channel the very anger and defiance that many of their elders had taught them to suppress.

Till helped unite Black families and justice activists across the region because he was northern born, of southern heritage, and a product of migration and interdependent Black families.¹⁹¹ The interactions between black southerners and their relatives in other regions had an important impact on the country. The lack of a violent reply expressed by Ngoma Ali was a question asked by many young Black people at the time. According to Frazier, Till’s death forced black children in cross-regional families to recognize their shared vulnerability, and it influenced their decisions to become active in civil rights protests. Frazier failed to acknowledge

¹⁸⁹ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 6, 2015.

¹⁹⁰ Krystal D. Frazier, “Till They Come Home: Transregional Families and the Politicization of the Till Generation,” in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Danille L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 137.

¹⁹¹ Krystal D. Frazier, “Till They Come Home: Transregional Families and the Politicization of the Till Generation,” in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Danille L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 154.

that the violent death of a fourteen-year-old Emmett Till at the hands of two grown white men also influenced young black children to become active in the Black Power movement.

Joyce Ladner, a Mississippian who joined SNCC in the early 1960s did express how Till's murder made her feel. Ladner refers to herself and others who came of age in the 1950s as the Emmett Till generation. Ladner stated that she could name at least ten SNCC workers who saw the image of Till's body in *Jet* magazine. They all remembered it as the key thing from their youth emblazoned on their minds.¹⁹² At the time some of them thought about avenging his death, including Ladner. Only twelve years old at the time Ladner daydreamed about growing up and having sons who would right the wrongs done in Mississippi.¹⁹³

The hypocrisy in America runs deep. A fourteen-year-old boy may have whistled at a white woman and is brutally murdered. The white murderers are then set free by a white jury; then paid \$3150 for an interview in which they admit to the murder; and because of the double-jeopardy law they could not be tried again for the same crime. Meanwhile, during that same time period Black men, women, and children were called niggers whenever fourteen-year-old white boys chose to do so and absolutely nothing happened.

As the fight for civil rights in the South evolved and television brought images to Los Angeles some of the children of the migrants questioned the tactics of the civil rights movement. Ali described the response by civil rights organizations as if it they defied human logic: "They was taking freedom rides from our church. The bus that they went in got -- they got rocked. The bombing in Birmingham, you're starting to look at that and now you're starting to be affected by

¹⁹² Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 54.

¹⁹³ Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 55.

it because you're a child -- you want to -- why don't they fight back? What's going on?" asked the young Ali.¹⁹⁴ Many young people in Los Angeles asked that same question, why did they not fight back?

Although some of them had experienced racism traveling in the south and in Los Angeles, they had never had members of the white community come into their homes and take them or a family member away in the middle of the night. In Los Angeles members of the LAPD were known to carry out such actions. The oppressive actions of the LAPD would be a call to action for the children of the Great Migration in Los Angeles to fight back, but their actions were heavily influenced by images of Emmett Till.

Conclusion

Black Power was in low-key full effect in Los Angeles long before Stokely Carmichael yelled, "We want Black Power." Nevertheless, Carmichael's declaration did serve as a wake-up call to a generation of young African Americans in Los Angeles who mostly came of age in the post World War II years, far away from the Jim Crow ruled south. Many of them would choose not to willingly let their bodies be abused in the name of white supremacy and nonviolent protest. As with many of history's lessons they would not be making history but continuing an ongoing history of resistance that takes many forms. In Los Angeles, prior to the 1960s, the evolving Black Power Movement knew no bounds and did not operate under any particular label or definition. This chapter exposed decades of abuse to Black people in Los Angeles. Both Black men and women faced discrimination, physical abuse, and even murder. Although protest accomplish goals more in line with the nonviolent peaceful movement the pressure eventually leads to physically unleashing the frustrations of the young Black population in the name of Black Power.

¹⁹⁴ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 6, 2015.

Chapter 3 **How Los Angeles and Black Power Intersected**

Introduction

The organizations involved in the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements are very similar. Although they have different responses to the same traumatic events they are, nevertheless, called to action in similar ways and led by similar institutions. Several events are given as the genesis of the modern civil rights movement: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the murder of Emmett Till (1955), and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956). This trilogy of events that concluded with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, catapulted the Black religious leadership in the south into the forefront of the civil rights movement. This was no coincidence considering that the church has been the cornerstone of the African American community in the United States for centuries. This chapter seeks to advance the idea that the rise of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles was inspired by the growing popularity of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the development of local street gangs/organizations and their response to the murder of Emmett Till, the trauma of the penal system, and white rejection of integration of “their” so-called neighborhoods.

In addition to the developing civil rights movement in the south, on the West Coast the NOI inspired resistance. Religious leaders in Los Angeles such as Rev. Maurice Dawkins and Thomas Kilgore aligned themselves with Dr. King and supported and participated in the civil rights movement. Around the same time Islam was also beginning to appear in Los Angeles. Unlike other religious organizations the Nation of Islam rejected white supremacy in a less than nonviolent manner, and locally inspired the Black Power Movement under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. One of the Nation of Islam’s closely held beliefs is that

Blacks and whites should inhabit separate spaces within the United States.¹⁹⁵ In their resistance to brutality the Nation Islam was not averse to fighting back both nonviolently and violently.

In 1957, during the same time Malcolm was establishing the NOI in Los Angeles back in New York where he was the minister of Temple No. 7, he displayed the growing power of the Nation. As several NYPD officers were beating a suspect, Reece Poe for resisting arrest, NOI member Johnson Hinton shouted at the officers, “You’re not in Alabama. This is New York!” The officers then turned their nightsticks on Hinton cracking his skull. Alerted to the incident Malcolm X appeared at the precinct demanding medical attention for Johnson. During Malcolm’s negotiations with police a crowd of up to 4000 disciplined men and women of the Nation and non-Muslim Black folks assembled outside the station. Once Malcolm’s demands for medical attention for Hinton were met, he dismissed the crowd with wave of his hand. Provoking one white officer to say, “that was too much power for one man to have.”¹⁹⁶ Which probably meant too much power for a Black man to because white men throughout the country in police uniforms and otherwise could singlehandedly order attacks on black people.

The first incident of Muslims standing up against law enforcement in Los Angeles occurred four years later. On September 2, 1961, two white grocery store detectives (security guards) attempted to stop and then handcuff NOI members for selling their national newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* in the store’s parking lot. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “the two store detectives King Marsh, 40, and Fred Prendergast, 38, said they were stomped and beaten when they tried to stop distribution of a Muslim newspaper in the market.”¹⁹⁷ According to the guards

¹⁹⁵ “Muslims Aim for Negro Nation, Leader States,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1961, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006), 10.

¹⁹⁷ “Six Muslim Suspects Held in Row at Market: Muslim suspects,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1961, 1.

they were attacked by as many as twenty Muslims but only six were arrested when 40 police arrived to find a crowd that had grown to 200 people, mostly neighborhood spectators.

The guards accused the men of being on private property, bothering customers, and preaching their doctrine in the store.¹⁹⁸ When police arrived Prendergast was underfoot and trying to reach his gun and three other men had Marsh backed up against the wall.¹⁹⁹ Donald J. Caffey who appeared to be the spokesman for the NOI group told officers that the fight started in protest to being pushed around.²⁰⁰ This simple declaration is akin to Patrick Henry's, "Give me liberty or give me death," proclamation. These young men refused to bow down to the white patriarchy just because they had guns. It was a bold statement on behalf of those young men. For two white men to approach a group of 20 members of the Nation of Islam who the media presented as an anti-white racist cult exemplifies the lack of fear and respect they held for African American men. But this was a different group of black men. Five of the six men were ages 19 to 24 making them members of the Emmett Till Generation.²⁰¹ They were a younger generation of Black men who Malcolm X told they had the right to defend themselves against anyone trying to do them harm. The young men exhibited Black Power in reaction to unwarranted police action.

This could have been a deadly encounter like so many before and after. Unless the grocery store had a very bad chain of communication the men had to have known that the NOI had been given permission by the store's owner and manager to peddle their newspapers in the

¹⁹⁸ "Six Muslim Suspects Held in Row at Market: Muslim suspects," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1961, 3.

¹⁹⁹ "Six Muslim Suspects Held in Row at Market: Muslim suspects," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1961, 3.

²⁰⁰ "Six Muslim Suspects Held in Row at Market: Muslim suspects," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1961, 3.

²⁰¹ "Six Muslim Suspects Held in Row at Market: Muslim suspects," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1961, 3.

parking lot.²⁰² Surprisingly, an all-white jury acquitted the Muslims on all charges. Law enforcement's continued abuse of power in the Black community initiated both Malcolm's display of the power of the NOI in the black community in New York and the resistance to spatial oppression by members of the NOI in the grocery store parking lot. These are overt signs of the rise of what can be considered in Los Angeles as the classic period (1961-1971) of the Long Black Power Movement. In 1961, the NOI publicly resisted law enforcement officers and in 1971 the FBI was exposed for its illegal and deadly activities against individuals and organizations working to putting an end to police brutality.

Along with the Nation, social clubs/gangs in the Black community such as the Slausons and Gladiators were becoming politically and socially aware of the injustices the Black community faced across the country. It is important to mention here that these two groups did not monopolize the influence on Black Power in Los Angeles. Inspiration was drawn from other individuals and organizations such as the militant branch of the NAACP in Monroe, North Carolina led by Robert F. Williams, the Deacons of Defense in Louisiana, and Gloria Richardson, leader of the Cambridge Movement. It should be noted that whether in the north or south the violence perpetrated by these organizations and others like them acted from a position of defense to official and unofficial white aggression. Inspired and influenced by discrimination and violence perpetrated against African Americans both nationally and locally, violence would eventually beget violence in Los Angeles, in the form of mental, emotional, and physical Black Power.

The Nation of Islam

²⁰² Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 206.

In the mid to late 1950s, Black Power began to appear in Los Angeles in the form of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a Black religious organization, led by Elijah Muhammad, and his national spokesman Malcolm X. According to Garrett Felber in the *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State*, the Lost-Found Nation of Islam was founded in 1930 in Detroit, Michigan by a mysterious silk peddler named W. D. Fard who redefined what it meant to be Black in America.²⁰³ It is a form of Islam tailored for Black Americans in the United States.²⁰⁴ It has also been labeled a Black Nationalist organization, Black Muslims by the media, and a Black cult among other names.

Although the NOI was founded in 1930 during the Harlem Renaissance, and the New Negro Movement it was not a part of that movement. The New Negro Movement was named after the 1925 anthology edited by American writer, philosopher, educator, Alain Locke. According to Locke in *The New Negro*, “the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is a wake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phase of contemporary Negro life.”²⁰⁵ Locke did not include in *The New Negro* any reference to Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, the most important mass movement at that time. Locke, stated “for the present more immediate hope rest in the revaluation by white and Black alike of the Negro in terms of his artist endowments and cultural contributions.”²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Garrett Felber, *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 125.

²⁰⁴ Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, Penguin Random House, 2015), 170.

²⁰⁵ Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Touchstone, 1925), 3.

²⁰⁶ Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Touchstone, 1925), 15.

The NOI was informed by Marcus Garvey's UNIA and Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Temple Science. Zoe Colley writes in "All America Is a Prison": The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955-1965" the NOI was heavily influenced by the UNIA's brand of urban, anti-Christian zeal. The UNIA provided the cultural bedrock for the NOI.²⁰⁷ According to Michael Barnett in "Differences and Similarities Between the Rastafari Movement and the Nation of Islam" in his economic-nationalist thread of ideology, Garvey professed economic self-determination for Black people, and the economic nationalist thread of his nationalism has observedly made a major impact on the ideology of the Nation of Islam.²⁰⁸ The New Negro Movement, UNIA, and Moorish Temple do not serve as examples of Black Power because they lack the main component of self-defense against white supremacy and anti-Black policing in their ideology.

The Nation of Islam came into existence four years before Fred Davis's armed drill team comrades confronted police in Los Angeles. The NOI and any other so-called Black Power organization exist within the long Black Power movement regardless of when the term came into popular use. Boundaries around proto-Black boundaries are regional. In Los Angeles the actions of Davis's comrades constitute proto-Black Power, but the classic Black Power period begins with the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles in 1961. Proto-Black Power exists nationally prior to Carmichael's use of the words Black Power. Examples of proto-Black Power go back as far as

²⁰⁷ Zoe Colley, "All America Is a Prison: The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955-1965" *The Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014): 393, <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.csun.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=All+America+Is+a+Prison%22%3A+The+Nation+of+Islam+and+the+Politicization+of+African+American+Prisoners%2C+1955-1965%22>

²⁰⁸ Michael Barnett, "Differences and Similarities Between the Rastafari Movement and the Nation of Islam" *The Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 6 (2006): 880, https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.csun.edu/stable/40034350?searchText=%28%22Differences+and+Similarities+Between+the+Rastafari+Movement+and+the+Nation+of+Islam%22%29&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoAdvancedSearch%3Fgroup=none%26q0=%22Differences+and+Simila&ab_segments=0%2

the revolt orchestrated by Denmark Vessey and revealed by slaves in 1822 and Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831.

In addition to being a religious organization the Nation of Islam provided an attractive alternative for those African Americans who did not believe in a nonviolent approach to their experiences in white America. The clean, orderly, and disciplined lifestyle promoted by the Nation appealed to imprisoned young Black men, people involved in criminal activities looking to get out, and members of the community who had experienced racial injustices.

Monroe X. Jones is a soft-spoken youthful looking man who describes the emergence of the classic period of the Black Power movement as it appeared in Los Angeles. Between he and Mr. William Stokes their families were some of the first to join the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles in 1957. Jones refers to his family as the "first family" in regard to the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles. Both men were born in 1941, the same year as Emmett Till and were teenagers when their families joined the Nation. They described people imprisoned and on the streets who wanted to end their criminal activities and those who wanted an alternative to the teachings of Christianity. The NOI was the answer to both problems.

Malcolm X was instrumental in establishing Mosque No. 27 in Los Angeles. According to Manning Marable the blatant discrimination against African Americans by real estate firms, African Americans growing importance in trade unions and the general economy, and the fact that 468,000 people, 20 percent of Los Angeles County was Black were some of the reasons that Malcolm invested so much energy and effort to build the NOI's presence in Southern California.²⁰⁹ In the 1950s newly built suburbs were havens for white flight. Vestiges of the FHA policies continued to rule with most African Americans still living in South Central Los Angeles.

²⁰⁹ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, (New York: Penguin, 2011), 259.

Although Malcolm did not have a captive streetside audience as he had on the streets of New York, the forced location of most Black people near Central Avenue helped the temple membership grow. One of the few benefits of being forced into a ghetto is being with people who look and think the same.

Malcolm's visits to Southern California before establishing Temple/Mosque No. 27 were simple. He came as a minister, teacher, spokesperson and recruiter for Elijah Muhammad. According to Monroe (formerly X) Jones prior to recruiting and installing the mosque's leadership "Malcolm X was one of the first ones that actually came to the house and would teach Islam to the people that would come over to our house for the teachings."²¹⁰ Mr. Jones and Mr. Stokes made it clear that it was Malcolm speaking and teaching on behalf of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI in those early services. So much of Black Power scholarship focuses on Malcolm's extraordinary life of conversion that some significant contributions of Elijah Muhammad are overlooked. Malcolm was the voice of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. And in that voice Los Angeles met organized Black Power. Mr. Jones referred to those early interactions or lessons with Malcolm as the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, not the teachings of Malcolm X. Jones refers to Malcolm as no more than a messenger for the Messenger, Elijah Muhammad. As a young man Monroe Jones knew Malcolm X and does not speak of him as the mythic martyr we have come to revere. Malcolm's authority in the Nation was bestowed on him as a representative of Mr. Muhammad, which would change in 1959.

Malcolm X was not alone in introducing African Americans in Los Angeles to the Nation of Islam. Other formerly incarcerated Black men also spread the word about the Black Muslims. Oral history interviews with Jones and Stokes provides examples of some of those other entrees into the Nation of Islam. According to Monroe Jones, Malcolm was not his family's first

²¹⁰ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

introduction to the Nation of Islam. The introduction was similar to Malcolm's in that the source, a cousin of the Joneses had also been in prison. Jones stated:

And we was living with my parents when we first got married, because like I said, we was still in school and young. And during the time that I lived with my parents, I had a cousin by the name of TJ Huff that went to the penitentiary for I guess using or selling drugs, one or the other. And when he come out, he came out with news that he wanted everybody to hear and accept. And that was a new religion as far as I knew. I knew about Christianity only before my cousin came in out of the pen, and giving us the information that he had obtained and gathered while in the penitentiary. And it sounds pretty good to my parents because they jumped in it all hook, line and sinker. It was Islam. And it was under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad.²¹¹

However, it was through Malcolm X that the Jones family formally embraced the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation. The Joneses along with three or four other people were the first to attend meetings.

It is impossible to examine the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles within the wider Black Freedom Struggle without examining some of the NOI leaders who were imprisoned. In the 1940s the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sought to discredit the organization and its leadership. But the large-scale FBI investigation did not occur until NOI members refused to register for the draft during World War II. Decades before Muhammad Ali, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and others opposed the war in Vietnam, Elijah Muhammad and other members of the NOI in the Midwest had chosen prison over serving in the United States military. During the 1940s according to Matthias Gardell's *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and The Nation of Islam* beyond the industrial sites at the Great Lakes, however, the call of Islam barely resounded, except for one congregation in Cincinnati, one in Washington, D.C., and one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.²¹² In the 1940s the membership in the Nation had decreased

²¹¹ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

²¹² Matthias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and The Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 65.

considerably when Muhammad went to prison. Upon his release Chicago had replaced Harlem as the center of Black Nationalism.²¹³ Chicago would replace Detroit as the headquarters for the Nation of Islam.

In 1942, at age 44 Muhammad was convicted on eight counts of sedition and three counts of draft evasion and given a sentence of from between one and five years. The cutoff age for military service was 45. Andrew Clegg states in *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* that in almost every regard the government's case against Muhammad and his co-defendants was weak on several counts. The state did not find any documents to prove that the leadership in the Nation was subversive. FBI records revealed no Japanese influence in the Nation of Islam since the 1930s. And finally, the director of the selective service admitted that Black resistance to the draft was an individual problem and not any organized effort.²¹⁴ In order to satisfy its wartime political agenda Clegg also states that the U. S. government is not above using unreliable legal evidence.²¹⁵

Muhammad continued to proselytize during his four years in prison. Prison would become an effective location for recruiting new members because of the high rate of poverty and criminality in Black neighborhoods. But Muhammad's time in prison was equally impactful. It is possible the NOI may have ceased to exist without Muhammad's conviction. Muhammad's four years in prison contributed to his consolidation of authority over the Nation of Islam. The FBI had in fact, enhanced his power rather than diminish it. During his imprisonment he had become

²¹³ Matthias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and The Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 65.

²¹⁴ Claude Andrew Clegg, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 92.

²¹⁵ Claude Andrew Clegg, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 92.

the premier martyr of the NOI. It solidified his position as the organization's leader. Serving prison time for his belief in the doctrine of the Nation of Islam would add cache to his future efforts to expand the religion across the country and into Southern California.

Muhammad commanded an almost immeasurable loyalty from his growing following. Nevertheless, his prison conviction would plague him for the rest of his life. Clegg argues that for the next thirty years Muhammad would continue to perceive all state harassment in this light and resign himself to the role of public enemy in which the government had cast him at that time.²¹⁶ The Nation of Islam did not agree with the ideology of the civil rights activists, but it should be noted that Elijah Muhammad's tactics also overlapped into the territory of nonviolent protest. His willingness to go to jail instead of fighting a white man's war in 1942 was a precursor to the actions used in the Civil Rights Movement. Los Angeles members of the Nation such as Eldridge Cleaver, who staged nonviolent strikes within the prison system, would mirror his tactics years later. In 1946, the same year Muhammad walked out of FCI Milan prison in Michigan, his future disciple Malcolm Little would enter Charlestown prison in Massachusetts; undergo a prison transformation into a member of the Nation of Islam and exit Norfolk Prison Colony (also in Massachusetts) years later as Malcolm X, and the prototype for many of the future Nation of Islam members who had a criminal past.

Malcolm X is regarded as the godfather of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Shortly after his assassination organizations in Los Angeles emerged to carry his message forward. Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, prisoner 22843, and Satan had been some of Malcolm's monikers before his conversion into Malcolm X and later Malik-el Shabazz. All of the names had been issued by the streets or by the State. And depending on what one reads the adoption of

²¹⁶ Claude Andrew Clegg, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 92.

the X by Malcolm varies. According to Manning Marable the first time Malcolm signs his name with a X is in a letter to his brother Philbert in which he describes the effects of prison food on his body.²¹⁷ However, in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Malcolm states that it was after his release from prison and while living with his brother Wilfred in Detroit that he received his X. My application had, of course been made and during this time I received from Chicago my “X,” stated Malcolm.²¹⁸ Either way Malcolm became a voice to be reckoned with in the Black Freedom Struggle.

Like the making of the different incarnations of Malcolm outside of prison, Malcolm X was the result of several influences. Foremost, it was at the encouragement of his family that turned Little into X. Malcolm’s jailhouse mentor John Bembry is a source of intellectual transformation for Malcolm. In regard to Bembry, Manning Marable is suspicious of Malcolm’s declarations in his autobiography. He accuses Malcolm of incorporating the stories of his jailhouse mentor, John Bembry into his own life’s story.²¹⁹ As well as suggesting Malcolm was involved in homosexual activity. These accusations have hardly diminished the validity of the autobiography as a primary source of information because they add another layer to the complexities that gave us Malcolm in the first place.

During his time in prison Malcolm is synthesized into all of his past and present human encounters. Malcolm experienced the importance of education through the example of an older prisoner, John Bembry. Described with the pseudonym, Bimbi in Malcolm’s autobiography. Both names will be used interchangeably here. there is an article about Bembry authored by his

²¹⁷ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 96.

²¹⁸ Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (New York, Penguin Random House, 2015), 203.

²¹⁹ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 74.

nephew. According to Jerry Bembry in *The Undefeated* “The Untold Story of the Inmate Who Helped Shape Malcolm X’s Future,” uncle John Elton Bembry was Massachusetts Department of Correction, prisoner #22138 – a tall, slender “light Mulatto,” whose personality was described by his prison caseworker as “intelligent, studious . . . influential among other colored inmates.”²²⁰ Although this section examines some of Malcolm’s prison years, it seems appropriate to at least acknowledge the man responsible for igniting Malcolm X’s intellectual awakening with more than just his last name. Malcolm’s spiritual and intellectual awakening became an important example for imprisoned Muslims and non-Muslims alike to follow. Members of Black Power, Black Student Union, or Prison Movements in the California Penal system all reference Malcolm in their own awakenings and that provides a connection to Bembry.

Malcolm and his siblings found a certain familiarity in the preaching of the NOI. Self-reliance, racial pride, and Black separatism were all reminders of their late father. Earl Little was a Garveyite who preached sermons on those same topics. Wilfred, the eldest brother and the first to join the Nation explained, “We already had been indoctrinated with Marcus Garvey’s philosophy, so that was just a good place for us.”²²¹ Following Reginald’s visit with Malcolm, the Little family who consistently corresponded with Malcolm, visited him in prison and orchestrated his conversion to the Nation’s form of Islam. Unfortunately, their devotion to the NOI and Elijah Muhammad would eventually become a source of division within the family beginning with Reginald and later Malcolm’s expulsion from the organization.

Eldridge Cleaver discovered the meaning of Black Power as an imprisoned member of

²²⁰ “The Untold Story of the Inmate Who Helped Shape Malcolm X’s Future,” *The Undefeated*, ESPN, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://theundefeated.com/features/the-untold-story-of-the-inmate-who-helped-shape-malcolm-xs-future/>.

²²¹ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 77.

the NOI in the California Prison system. Cleaver was born in Wabbaseka, Arkansas and raised in the Rose Hills section of Los Angeles. He had his share of run-ins with the law and his path to prison was similar to Malcolm's. Like William Stokes, Eldridge Cleaver made a living in the then illegal marijuana trade and began serving his first sentence for a felony drug charge at the age of eighteen on June 18, 1954.

While serving his time in Soledad prison he too was impacted by the death of Emmett Till, but in a much more personal way. Cleaver surmised that he had been indoctrinated by the white man into believing white women were the epitome of beauty and inaccessible to people who looked like him. Cleaver wrote in *Soul on Ice*, "on seeing an image of Carol Bryant, the white woman Till was said to have flirted with, "I felt that little tension in the center of my chest I experience when a woman appeals to me. I was so disgusted and angry with myself."²²² Cleaver emotionally and mentally struggled with the hate and appeal he felt for the woman that caused the death of a Black boy. He suffered a nervous breakdown and developed hatred for white women that would return him back to prison. It does not seem unusual in these circumstances that one must first hit rock bottom either mentally, emotionally, or financially before they begin to transform, rise to a new potential, and or find growth and meaning in a Movement.

Malcolm X spent much of his time in Los Angeles during 1957 and 1958 addressing such feelings among Black people in his articles in the *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch*, a local Black newspaper. According to Garrett Felber in "Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Caceral State" one major theme in Malcolm's "God's Angry Men" series was that Black Americans needed to be awoken and politicized to their own

²²² Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991), 29.

history.²²³ Eldridge Cleaver was in need of being raised from what Malcolm described as being, “dead (morally, mentally, socially, politically, and economically), lying at the rich white man’s feet in the grave of ignorance.”²²⁴ Like Malcolm self-education and the Nation of Islam would be his salvation. Malcolm’s stories reached behind California’s prison walls and to those Black convicts such as Cleaver and the founder of the Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter who wanted a fresh start and were receptive to the Black nationalist pride, discipline, independence, and Black religion the Nation practiced.

Journalists Louis Lomax and Mike Wallace introduced mainstream America to Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and the Nation of Islam in the documentary television series *The Hate That Hate Produced* on "Newsbeat" (a program of New York's WNTA-TV) on July 10, 1959. Lomax and Wallace edited the program for maximum shock value by linking the NOI with "hate" in the public mind. The program played on white fear and contrasted the so-called "black racists" of the Nation with more liberal and non-confrontational Negroes.

For many incarcerated Black Angelenos the documentary had an opposite effect than it did on white America. It served as a valuable recruiting tool for the Nation, swelling the ranks with new converts. In 1958, Eldridge Cleaver was sentenced to six months to fourteen years at San Quentin after being convicted of two counts of assault with a deadly weapon and three counts of assault to commit murder. Cleaver first saw Malcolm X in the documentary *The Hate That Hate Produced* while imprisoned in San Quentin. Cleaver was one of those attracted to the NOI’s political and cultural power, and in it maybe for that time, he found a higher purpose for

²²³ Garrett Felber, *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Caceral State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 125.

²²⁴ Garrett Felber, *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Caceral State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 125.

his existence. The NOI gave Malcolm a voice and power. After the broadcast of *The Hate That Hate Produced* many Black prisoners including Cleaver joined the NOI and became a follower of Malcolm X. In Malcolm, he could see himself and his potential just as Malcolm saw his potential in Bembrey. According to Justin Gifford in *Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver*, “In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Nation of Islam was the most significant source of African American militancy within America’s prisons.”²²⁵ Disillusioned after a parole hearing Cleaver needed an outlet for the energy, he had put into being a model prisoner in order to receive an early parole.

Unlike Malcolm, Cleaver did not buy into all that Elijah Muhammad and the NOI were selling. Gifford suggests he didn’t entirely buy its mysticism, including the fable that a black scientist named Yakub created the white race six thousand years ago.”²²⁶ Most religions have some degree of mysticism or fantasy. But a Black scientist creating a race of white devils to terrorize Black people for 6,000 years is where some people drew the line with joining or even understanding the NOI. It was also the source of some of the splits within the organization. But Cleaver realized its political and cultural power and used it to protest conditions in San Quentin.

Eldridge Cleaver was a revolutionary by default simply because his original plan did not work out. It does not dilute his contributions to the Movement. In 1961, Cleaver’s active membership in the NOI eroded the clean record he had acquired during his three-year attempt at early parole. The more Cleaver protested, the more prison officials denied him privileges. When officials denied him jobs, he retaliated by printing Elijah Muhammad’s speeches and distributing them throughout the prison. He also wrote essays and shared them with other Muslims, which

²²⁵ Justin Gifford, *Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2020), 81.

²²⁶ Justin Gifford, *Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2020), 81.

further angered officials. Cleaver's membership in the Nation and conflicts with prison officials resulted in another parole rejection in 1962. Cleaver began an aggressive letter writing campaign to challenge discriminatory practices against incarcerated Muslims. Out of his conflicts with the San Quentin power structure Eldridge Cleaver the author began to emerge. Cleaver became a central figure in the classic Black Power Movement. He used both words and guns to fight white supremacy.

Cleaver learned from serving a previous sentence at Soledad prison that the pathway to freedom within the parole system was to keep a clean record and participate in educational programs.²²⁷ Cleaver's actual crime was raping women and white women in particular. Nevertheless, Cleaver immediately sought parole. After three years of denials Eldridge Cleaver sincerely began to educate himself for a purpose beyond his selfish needs, so he could serve the Nation of Islam and Malcolm. Cleaver's membership in the NOI provided him with a security that allowed him to grow intellectually and spiritually within the confines of prison. Like Elijah and Malcolm his time in prison transformed him into minister, teacher, and Black Power revolutionary.

Malcolm's followers were not just members of the Silent Generation or Baby Boomers. Unlike the young people who would rally around Malcolm's beliefs in the mid 1960s Jones and Stokes revealed that it was also their parents who were attracted to what Malcolm was saying. Criminal activity indirectly brought the Stokes family into the religion of Islam. Stokes's mother joined the NOI in 1958 while he was incarcerated for marijuana. Stokes mother Beverly 3X was born in 1924 and his father William Stokes Sr. around 1919.

²²⁷ Justin Gifford, *Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2020), 81.

Like some other NOI converts the Stokes family had a history of being involved in criminal activities. Stokes said of his mother, “She decided to straighten up. And she wanted to raise her family in a wholesome community.”²²⁸ However, his mother did not believe in nonviolent protest. Even though the NOI was a religious organization and a major influence on the Black Power Movement many of the members were or had been incarcerated. This may account for their unwillingness to turn the other cheek, both ideologically and physically as opposed to the traditional religious leaders associated with the Civil Rights Movement. It was an eye for eye for those early members of the NOI. According to Stokes:

The majority of the pioneers was gangsters in the Nation. The majority. That had flipped over. But they still had that “real” in them. “We ain't going to take getting beat upside the head by no peckerwood or nobody else. That's the Nation. That's why the police and the Negroes and the church. Everybody was scared of the Black Muslims.”²²⁹

Rejecting the idea of being physically assaulted in order to have equal rights is a consistent theme with children of the Great Migration in Los Angeles.

Although both Stokes and Jones eventually became members of the Nation, at the time they had access to Malcolm they were not all that interested in the organization. Jones and Stokes both admitted as teenagers they had little interest in the message Malcolm was delivering to their parents. As in many other cities outside of the South the street life had a strong pull on young Black men. The Nation provided a positive form of discipline outside of the military and prison system. Mr. Jones began his affiliation with the Nation during those early meetings in his home but did not get his X or become official until 1959 when he was 18 years old.

Stokes on the other hand would not become a practicing member of the Nation until 1963 while serving time for drug sales. “When Malcolm would come to the house, I would go out the

²²⁸ Monroe Jones and William Stokes interview by author, September 21, 2016.

²²⁹ Monroe Jones and William Stokes interview by author, September 21, 2016.

back door and hit the streets and get with the fellas... I was a youngster, you know. I wanted to be with the gang...I wanted to be with the fellas,” stated Jones.²³⁰ Stokes would have similar encounters. Being an enterprising young man in the then illegal marijuana trade Stokes was trying to retrieve his stash from his mother’s cellar only to find Malcolm and other high-ranking members of the NOI at the dinner table. Stokes stated:

My mother said, son I wanted you to meet Brother Malcolm. He said “As- salamu alaykum”, “wa’alaykumu s-salām” So you the head of the family huh brother? I said kind of. And then they said -- she said you going to sit down and eat with us, son. I said no momma, I got to go. I need the key... Mom, I need the key. And so Malcolm said, Brother, “haste make waste” and... So I said, As- salamu alaykum brother, Allah bless ya’ll. And I left. I said I got to go. He shook his head. And I went on down there. I said, “momma come get the key”. Jumped over the fence with a big old bag of weed and went around.²³¹

Although Jones and Stokes would become members of the NOI neither of them officially joined any other organization under the Black Freedom Struggle umbrella.

The Shoe is on the Other Foot

The lynching of Emmett Till caused many young white males to become suspect in the eyes of many young Black people. It is a rarity for men in the dominant society to be accused of any negative or criminal act as a group. For young Black men in Los Angeles following the killing of Till, social roles were reversed. Perhaps, for the first time, at least in Los Angeles, in some small way as a group white men stood accused and were punished for a heinous act committed by a few of them in Mississippi.

The years between 1955 and 1960 were significant to establishing the Black Power timeline in Los Angeles. Black Power is established on the streets of Los Angeles and in California’s prison systems both with and without the Nation of Islam. Neither Jones nor Stokes

²³⁰ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

²³¹ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

were members of the Nation in 1955, but in their response about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., like others they immediately recalled the murder of Emmett Till in 1955. They were quite candid about their sentiments and actions towards white people during that time.

Jones stated:

I wanted to say what I felt about the King situation. Is just like I felt when Emmett Till was killed and murdered. Is getting even with the white people when they killed King. And that's what we did when Emmett was killed. We got even with the white people here in Los Angeles, or wherever.²³²

Stokes agreed with Jones's comments. Jones believed at that time, "society realized the racism made us."²³³ Feeling that way both men acknowledged going after white males regardless of if they were prejudiced or not.

Mamie Till Mobley and the Johnson Publications presented these young Black men with a mirror to see what could possibly happen to them and it changed them forever. In 1955 Black boys and young men all across America saw in Emmett Till's gruesomely disfigured face on the cover of Jet Magazine what could happen to them at the hands of white America.²³⁴ And furthermore, they learned that white men who committed these crimes go free. So, if nothing else they learned that they could end up like Till whether they did nothing or chose to do something. In the next six years the necessary circumstances would begin to develop in Los Angeles that would lead to the opportunity for Emmett Till generation to act.

The Nation of Islam played a major role in rehabilitating the lives of many incarcerated Black men. It provided them with the discipline to endure prison but also the emotional and mental solace needed to educate themselves. In each example the men were presented with

²³² Monroe Jones and William Stokes interview by author, September 21, 2016.

²³³ Monroe Jones and William Stokes interview by author, September 21, 2016.

²³⁴ Cover photo, Jet Magazine, September 15, 1955.

circumstances that could have easily constrained their desire to grow. Had Elijah Muhammad surrendered to the status quo at that time it would have meant the end of the NOI. Continuing his recruitment practices within the prison walls provided the blueprint for saving and uplifting the lives of future members. Nation of Islam leaders such as Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver both impacted the emergence of intellectual Black Power in Los Angeles through their work in the NOI. Malcolm transitioned into a leader once his sentence was over and he returned to the real world. Cleaver transitioned intellectually and became a successful author and leader of men while in the California Penal system.

Mr. Stokes made a comparison of how his generation's actions relate to the present. It serves as an indicator that the physical aspect of the Black Power Movement continues, as suggested by Erika Huggins. Stokes stated, "But they was doing that through frustrations to get back. That's just like these courageous little brothers that's losing their life behind shooting at the police right now. They got heart. They know there ain't going to be no win, messing with them police. But they still going to do it."²³⁵ Stokes was referring to Micah Xavier Johnson's killing of five and injuring of nine Dallas, Texas police officers, on July 7, 2016. For many young African American's coming of age in Los Angeles during the 1950s the murder of Emmett Till was the genesis of their search for Black Power, just as the taken lives of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd continue to inspire young people today.

The Violent Legacy of Racial Segregation within the Black Community

The war within me is over. I battled my demons and I was triumphant. Teach them how to avoid our destructive footsteps. Teach them to strive for higher education. Teach them to promote peace and teach them to focus on rebuilding the neighborhoods that you, others, and I helped to destroy."

²³⁵ Monroe Jones and William Stokes interview by author, September 21, 2016.

Those were the last words of Stanley “Tookie” Williams played on tape to mourners at his funeral. Nobel Peace Prize nominee, International Peace Mediator, and author Tookie Williams died by lethal injection on December 13, 2005. One of the possible decisions made by Williams that landed him in San Quentin’s death chamber included forming an alliance with Raymond Washington in 1971, which established the Crips street gang. The legacy of racial restrictive covenants and redlining continued to impact Black people across South LA in the 1970s creating an environment for Crips and Bloods street gangs to flourish. When the Crips were formed African American street gangs were not new to Los Angeles. Stanley Williams and Raymond Washington’s story are now a part of American pop culture. But it also serves as a link to those earlier LA street organizations, which intersected with the Black Power Movement.

Tookie Williams accepted responsibility for the destruction he brought to the Black community in Los Angeles, but it was present long before his gangbanging days. In Los Angeles the legacy of issues around the spaces African Americans could occupy as a result of housing discrimination and redlining continues within gang culture. Violence is a constant theme that links the old and the new and white and Black. Some of the original gangsters interviewed for this dissertation professed that their organizations were less violent than post Black Power gangs. This is not true; violence linked the two together as the Nation of Islam started to gain momentum in California prisons after the airing of *The Hate That Hate Produced* in 1959. The following two examples of violence associated with gangs were reported in local Black newspapers. In 1960, 17-year-old Matthias Sentel died in a California hospital after being hit on the head with a club. Sentel was killed by one of 10 youths during a street fight that started after

two of the youths could not crash a party. The two returned with eight or 10 others and a fight started. Six suspects were arrested, and all were said to be members of the “Gladiators” gang.²³⁶

On December 14, 1961, the *Sentinel* reported the December 10th slaying of 45-year-old waiter Leon Coleman at a juvenile party at 5625 S. Figueroa. According to the *Los Angeles Sentinel* nine youths believed to be members of the “Gladiators” were booked on suspicion of murder.²³⁷ Coleman had been brutally beaten and shot in the chest.²³⁸ Following an investigation three youths believed to be “Gladiators” were arrested and two girls who witnessed the beating were questioned while being held in protective custody. The girls interview revealed that at least one member of the Slausons was a participant in the assault. While several of the youths beat the victim one of the girls stated, “I saw one guy named ‘Roach’ holding a gun against the victim’s head, as others shouted, ‘get him, Roach’ and Viva La Slauson’.”²³⁹ This type of violence is not unlike the gang violence Southern California has witnessed since the rise of the Crips and Bloods in the early 1970s. The gang violence reported in local papers during the rise of Black Power in the early 1960s served as a linked to the pre 1960s Black Power era social clubs, the Black Power Movement organizations in Los Angeles, and post 1960s Black Power era gangs.

Like the Nation of Islam and the Prison Industrial Complex, gangs in Los Angeles also played a significant role in the Black Power Movement. Interviews with children of the Great Migration who were in pre-Crips and Bloods gangs also indicate the murder of Emmett Till contributed to the transformation of gang members into Black activist. As a six-year-old child integrating a neighborhood, former Del Viking, Gladiator, and US member Ngoma stated:

²³⁶ “Teen Gang Quizzed in Boy’s Death,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 27, 1960, A4.

²³⁷ “Teen Gang Killing Laid to Gladiators: Waiter Beaten, Slain,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 14, 1961, A1.

²³⁸ “Teen Trio Held in Waiter’s Slaying,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 4, 1960, A3.

²³⁹ “Teen Trio Held in Waiter’s Slaying,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 4, 1960, A3.

I didn't think that much about it until Emmett Till got killed. Yes, and the Jet (magazine) -- I did not understand why this brother's face was so big. I mean, as kids... they was saying they put a hose in him and blew water up in him and that made his head big. I mean, all kind of things, but I thought it was horrific... They was taking freedom rides from our church. The bus that they went in got -- they got rocked...and now you're starting to be affected by it because you're a child -- you want to -- why don't they fight back? What's going on... And, you know, and you want to -- it infuriates you. You want to do something. You want to go protect them. Or, you know, you're like if they come down in our community you're going to fight. There ain't going to be no -- they're not doing us like this.²⁴⁰

The term “gang” is used interchangeably with social club, and street organization because some of the members of these organizations disapprove of the term “gang.” They expressed that people in the media assigned those types of names to them. Their organizations were representative of what they saw in white society such as lettermen clubs and fraternities. And like those organizations they had a hierarchy, a structure and a ruling body. In *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*, John Hafedorn reminds us that, “Certainly young people themselves do not get hung up over the terms gang, and most members of institutionalized gangs insist they are “organizations.” Others call their gangs “crews,” “sets,” or other terms.”²⁴¹

Louis Kontos, David Brotherton, and Luis Barrios, in *Gangs and Society: Alternative Perspective*, indicate some gang member street activists engage in the reconstruction of the gang as a political entity. In their attempt at reconstructing history, they borrow tactics, strategies, and structural arrangements from a broad array of organizations...such as the military, college fraternities, religious organizations and so on.²⁴² They all create a selective narrative of the

²⁴⁰ Ngoma Ali interview by author, November 6, 2015.

²⁴¹ John Hafedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 30.

²⁴² Juan Francisco Esteva Martinez, “Urban Street Activists: Gang and Community Efforts to Bring Peace and Justice to Los Angeles,” in *Gangs and Society: Alternative Perspective*, eds. Louis Kontos, David Brotherton, and Luis Barrios (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 109.

history and purpose for their organizations to maybe disassociate themselves with the actions of their youth. On the other hand, members of the Black Power Movement in the 1950s and 1960s set out to be more than just politically militant but also physically prepared to engage in violence. Organizations like the Black Panther Party, US organizations, and the Monroe Chapter of the NAACP stated that they armed themselves for defensive measures only, but nevertheless, they were armed.

Legend of the Spook Hunters

Some scholarship suggests that African American street organizations/gangs started in the 1950s as a response to being terrorized by a white gang known as the Spook Hunters. The Spook Hunters have come to take on mythological proportions in LA gang lore. But there is very little and often times conflicting evidence to prove they ever existed in any large numbers, as an organization, or for any significant period of time. Suggesting that Black gangs in L.A. are the result of a white supremacist's gang ultimately creates a false narrative for the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

Substantial numbers of Black gang members go on to join Black Power Movement organizations and that does not happen because of an organized racist white youth group. According to Alex Alonso in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, the Spook Hunters were a white teenage hate group that publicly expressed their animosity toward Blacks by wearing club jackets displaying an animated black face with exaggerated facial features and a noose hanging around its neck. Alonso also states that the Spook Hunters were active predominately in Compton, Downey, Huntington Park, Lynwood, and South Gate, to

prevent the Black population in the Central-Vernon community from moving into these white areas.²⁴³

In order to better understand the social club/gang culture and the legend of the Spook Hunters in Los Angeles, OGs (original gangsters) from that era such as Bird and Kumasi must be consulted. Bird was the last person jumped into the original Baby Slausons in 1955 at the age of twelve.²⁴⁴ The Baby Slausons had at least two sets or cliques ahead of them, the Slausons and Little Slausons.

Cliques are based on age groups and class grades. According to Kumasi social club membership is also based on what brings the members together, which most likely starts at school. And schoolmates tend to associate with each other based on their closeness in age. He also stated, “So, everything was based on the street that you lived on, the school you went to, the class that you was in and the grade that you was in, and the age group that you was in.”²⁴⁵ All gangs had this structure or hierarchy to distinguish between sets within the organization. This is really no different than the policies of the FHA or white anti-blackness because one neighborhood is deemed to be more important than the other based only on the prejudices of the inhabitants.

Members of these street organizations were usually of school age and did not have the income to afford a meeting space. So, their activities and meetings took place at school or local parks in their specific neighborhoods. For example, the Businessmen had South Park, the Gladiators had Van Ness and Harvard, and the Slausons had Slauson Park (now Mary McCloud

²⁴³ Alex Alonso, “Out of the Void: Street Gangs in Black Los Angeles,” in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, eds. Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 141.

²⁴⁴ Bird interviewed by author, March 25, 2016.

²⁴⁵ Kumasi interviewed by author, March 25, 2016.

Bethune Park). The names of these street organizations could also be based on local landmarks in their neighborhoods.

According to Kumasi the Gladiators got their name from being in the area around the Los Angeles Coliseum, a sporting venue located at the intersection of Figueroa and Santa Barbara (now Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.).²⁴⁶ Most Black gangs were located on the predominately Black east side of the city. But as Blacks migrated west following the decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* so did gangs. The Gladiators were a result of the ending of restrictive covenants. “Gladiators were east side dudes whose families moved to the West side,” according to Kumasi. Once these organizations started, they developed rivalries based on the schools they attended, the winners of school sporting events, and attending entertainment venues in rival neighborhoods.

So, what role if any did the Spook Hunters play in the creation of African American street gangs in Los Angeles? The Spook Hunters were not solely responsible if at all for the Gladiators, Slausons, Businessmen or any other Black social clubs in Los Angeles during the 1950s. African Americans in Los Angeles did meet resistance from whites when they tried to attend white schools or cross boundary lines into white neighborhoods. According to Kumasi it was extremely dangerous to go into neighborhoods across Alameda. Young whites would attack African Americans who dared cross Alameda.

Those young white men across Alameda were sometimes referred to as Spook Hunters. But according to Bird, Spook Hunters were known for coming into the Black community and attacking lone students or small groups usually walking home from school. Another interesting fact about the Spook Hunters according to Kumasi is that they were not kids. They were not

²⁴⁶ Kumai telephone interview by author, December 3, 2020.

young students like them, they were grown men who drove into their neighborhood and attacked them.²⁴⁷

According to Bird, Alex Alonso is incorrect. Black social clubs/gangs existed before the so-called Spook Hunters. Bird recalled an encounter he and Little Slauson Melvin “Roach” Jackson had with the Spook Hunters. While in route to Slauson Park they were confronted by the Spook Hunters and were about to be overwhelmed when back up arrived. They beat up the Spook Hunters and Bird thinks Roach took one of their jackets.

Bird’s description of a Spook Hunter jacket had different details than the one described in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. It had an image of a muscular black man being whipped by a white child.²⁴⁸ Like Slausons or any other gang Bird stated that there was more than one set of Spook Hunters, which could account for different images on the jackets. But more importantly Bird indicates that the Spook Hunters were not as significant as they are made out to be and only lasted about two years, from 1955-1957.²⁴⁹

Kumasi added more information to debunk the importance of the Spook Hunters. He stated, “any arrogant white boy or any that acted like they didn’t like blacks were called Spook Hunter.” In other words, the name Spook Hunter took on a life of its own. It is a scholar’s responsibility to use the voices of primary sources when available to set the historical record straight in the Black community. The most basic reason for examining the Spook Hunters is because it hints at the idea that in the 1950s young Black people alone were incapable of starting

²⁴⁷ Kumasi telephone interview by author, December 3, 2020.

²⁴⁸ Bird telephone interview by author, December 3, 2020.

²⁴⁹ Bird telephone interview by author, December 3, 2020.

organizations that would play a significant, albeit maybe contentious role within the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

In 1959, The *Los Angeles Sentinel* carried an article about the Spook Hunters that supports Bird and Kumasi's statements. The Commission on Human Relations of the County of Los Angeles conducted an investigation on the group and came to the conclusion that they did not exist and were the product of rumors. They were unable to unearth any conclusive evidence that the gang existed. Some of the numerous rumors about the organization included being violently anti-Negro and the existence of inflammatory character of the insignia that supposedly appeared on their jackets.²⁵⁰ They could find no proof of anti-Negro attacks or eyewitnesses for such attacks.

One law enforcement official said he felt it was possible there might be such a gang, but if there were it was nowhere near as large and powerful as rumor had reported. Another official suggested that the gang existed four years prior, which would have been in the 1955-time frame that Bird said they existed briefly. According to John A. Buggs, executive secretary of the Commission on Human Rights, the law enforcement officials had contacts in the community and that it would be highly unlikely that they would be unaware of such a gang.²⁵¹

Over more than four centuries Black people have been the victims of abuse and murder at the hands of white citizens who were assisted by white members of law enforcement. Or law enforcement uses their power to cover it up. So, it is quite possible to believe that with the cooperation of law enforcement that the Spook Hunters operated under extraordinary secrecy. Members of social clubs/gangs and organizations can easily be found in documentaries, on

²⁵⁰ "The Spook Hunters Declared Only Rumor," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 24, 1959, A3.

²⁵¹ "The Spook Hunters Declared Only Rumor," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 24, 1959, A3.

youtube, and in oral history interviews. But there is no documentation that reveals the name of one so-called Spook Hunter. If the Spook Hunters did exist there is no documentation to prove it.

The idea that these Black social clubs/gangs existed only to fight a common enemy is the romantic version of the birth of social clubs in L. A. but not true. According to both Bird and Kumasi, social clubs were representative of what existed in white society and presented in media as entertainment. During the 1950s some youth organizations were hostile to the idea of Black membership. Bird was not welcome to join the all-white Boy Scouts troop closest to where he lived in South LA. The troop master suggested that he join the all-Black troop some distance a way, which he did.

According to Kumasi, “gangs were a way to certify your identity. It was a form of self-identification not controlled by school. You are who you want to be. In schools they saw the lettermen clubs and in movies they saw the East Side Kids, Bowery Boys, Our Gang and the Little Rascals engage in gang like behavior. Black social clubs emulated the structure of those organizations by wearing club jackets, selecting officers, and collecting dues. Creating their own street organizations gave them a sense of belonging to society under their own terms. This ideology would be present in organizations within the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

Conclusion

Several events have been credited with initiating the modern civil rights movement: Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the murder of Emmett Till (1955), and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956). The murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi appears to have had a more than average influence on the participants of the early stages of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. The children of the Great Migration were especially affected by the

images in *Jet* magazine of the brutalized body of their young contemporary. Many of them are still haunted by that image.

As the children of the Great Migration came of age in the 1940s, 50s and early 1960s the death of Till influenced their decision to organize and fight back against anti Black racism. The Nation of Islam and gangs/street organizations gave them those opportunities. Many Christian religious leaders in Los Angeles aligned themselves with Dr. King and participated in the civil rights movement. However, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X the Nation of Islam intersected with the Black Power movement in its attraction to men and women of all ages who did not support the “turn the other cheek” ideology of the civil rights movement. At the same time young Black men in gangs/street organizations also intersected with the Black Power movement in their emulation of white organizations within the educational system and popularized in the media. Many of those young African American men and the women in their sister organizations discovered Black Power as a result of the murder of Emmett Till, the actions of law enforcement, and their own encounters with white supremacy.

Chapter 4 **The Nation of Islam Resists Police Brutality in LA**

Introduction

In the United States religions that do not look like white Protestantism have always had its legitimacy questioned by white America. That questioning can lead to deadly violence. In 1961 and 1962 law enforcement and security guards attacked unarmed members of the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles, California leaving several NOI members injured and one dead. Some examples of the push back against the Nation of Islam and other non-white non-traditional religious organizations can be seen in the press and the actions of Black Christians. In *New World A-Coming: Racial Identity During the Great Migration*, Judith Weisenfeld states, “When the NOI came to public attention in Detroit in 1932... Black and white journalists registered alarm that what the police dubbed a “weird Voodoo cult” was rendering members delusional and placing the city in the menacing “group of Voodoo.”²⁵²

For many of the members of the African diaspora in Detroit there was no other faith beyond the Christianity forced upon their African ancestors hundreds of years prior. These new revelations were being brought forth from fairly new organizations. Both whites and Blacks were resistant to the idea of a non-Christian religion and ignorant to the fact that Islam is rooted in Judaism and Christianity. Some Black clergy and church members could not entertain the thought of practicing a new religion and volunteered their services as spies. According to Weisenfeld, clergy and their congregants volunteered to conduct “private investigations among

²⁵² Judith Weisenfeld, In *New World A-Coming: Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 254.

their people” and inform the police of the degree to which the movement had made inroads in their communities in order to counter “the sinister influences of voodooism.”²⁵³

The Protestant clergy impressed upon their congregants their view that the NOI’s beliefs and practices were unacceptable and dangerous and that black people’s collective future depended upon the continued embrace of Christianity.²⁵⁴ In addition to embracing the positive aspects of Islam in the NOI, some African Americans were being awakened to the fact that for them Christianity continued to be an instrument of emotional, mental, and physical enslavement.

In Los Angeles during the early 1960s police brutality continued to exist in the Black community. However, the Nation of Islam resisted being indiscriminately beaten and manhandled by private security guards and/or official law enforcement agencies. The Nation of Islam’s Temple 27 in Los Angeles was at the vanguard of the Black Power Movement’s classic period in Los Angeles. Prior to the Nation of Islam’s highly publicized physical confrontations with law enforcement agencies, members of the Black community for the most part only engaged in nonphysical confrontation, maintaining the status quo. Not only did the Nation fight back, but they also believed they had the right to fight back. Although they did not carry weapons the organization said if they were attacked, they would defend themselves.

The Nation’s refusal to accept the status quo influenced members of the Black community in Los Angeles to confront police brutality through various forms of Black Power. Examined here are the incidents involving the Nation and law enforcement that initiates the classic period of the movement and a comparison with the outcome of similar incidents in white

²⁵³ Judith Weisenfeld, In *New World A-Coming: Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 256.

²⁵⁴ Judith Weisenfeld, In *New World A-Coming: Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 254.

communities. The decidedly different outcomes of these events show that police brutality did exist for Black folks living in South Central LA. Two confrontations between the NOI and LAPD in 1961 and 1962 are pivotal moments in the long Black Power movement in Los Angeles because they are the genesis of the classic period and inspire the Emmett Till generation to confront police brutality in 1965 initiating the Watts Rebellion.

Both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements have been bracketed by numerous timelines beginning with 1619 to the present. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall examines and describes the dance between the Civil Rights Movement's strategists and the media's response. According to Hall the media made the attacks on Christian protestors and the toppling of the South's system of disfranchisement and de jure or legalized segregation one of the greatest news stories of the modern era.²⁵⁵ The media selectively told the "good versus evil" story showing white villains brutalizing defenseless Black people in the South. In his three volumes on the Civil Rights Movement Taylor Branch bookends the movement's beginning in 1955 with the Montgomery bus boycott and ends with King's assassination in 1968. Both timelines begin with events born out of racism and brutality towards Black American citizens.

Some scholars point to Los Angeles, California as a starting point for Black Power. Jeanne F. Theoharis states in the Peniel E. Joseph edited *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, "In many postwar history texts and in the public imagination, the 1965 Watts uprising serves as the dividing line between the heroic civil rights movement and the movement's militant and northward turn, a literary device to signal the shift from civil rights

²⁵⁵ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2005): 1234, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172?seq=1#metadatainfoaboutcontents>.

to Black Power.²⁵⁶ To agree with the idea that civil rights ended and Black Power started is like saying when Black musicians created jazz, blues, and rock and roll other music forms ceased to exist. Which we know they did not. Black Power and civil rights did exist and co-exist beyond the bookends prescribed by some scholars. Police brutality is consistent in the Long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, and it began and was responded to long before Watts erupted in 1965.

The NOI Develops a Reputation As Anti-Police Brutality

The Nation of Islam included self-defense against whites in its doctrine. Eventually, it was tested by law enforcement and members of the NOI responded according to their teachings. Sometimes for reason we do not know people just snap and say, “enough is enough.” The following quotes are of incidents involving police officers and young Black men prior to, or around the time they joined the Nation of Islam. William Stokes recalled:

Police would raid the projects and always wrestle us up. One time I had beat a Federal beef, in a landmark decision in '61, smuggling, and I was out two days. I went back to the projects and they had arrested some brothers down on 55th... And I walked two blocks...So anyway they busted a brother with a bag of pills...So they was riding down Long Beach Boulevard, Long Beach Avenue, going to the glass house. And they stopped the car and there was three people in the back. And jumped out and ran up to me with a gun said you think you done beat the law. You're going to jail for possession of pills. I said I don't know how I'm gonna get in the car. They opened the car door up and they stomped me into the backseat and slam the door on my leg. That's why it's still messed up after all this time.²⁵⁷

When asked about his first encounter with racism Monroe Jones recalled a horrifying incident with the LAPD:

²⁵⁶ Jeanne Theoharis, “‘Alabama on Avalon’ Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black protest in Los Angeles,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

²⁵⁷ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

And I pulled up with my little Chevy to pick up John. Me and my girlfriend and the police pulled up behind me. I don't know why because I guess black and driving. I had a ugly ass Chevy. No paint job like them other guys did. I was roughing it. I was roughing it. [Laughter] And he got me out of the car and asked me a few questions. And he said what you doing with that white girl? And slapped me. And Johnny's mom seen it and she come out and said you leave him alone. Don't you hit him again. And that was the first time I knew of any racism. The point is, it wasn't a white girl. It's the lady that I'm married to right today, my wife. And she was just from New Orleans, light skinned.²⁵⁸

For some of us to continue to have these encounters we may decide to resist and say, “enough is enough.” It is much more noticeable and powerful when it is done by a group or organization such as the Nation of Islam.

Anti-Black policing was not unusual when police officers approached Nation of Islam members Monroe Jones and Fred X. Jingles on April 27, 1962. The LAPD was an occupying force that was never to be questioned in their Gestapo like tactics of keeping Negroes in line. But on this night Black Muslims in Los Angeles refused to be manhandled, setting off a decade of revolution spearheaded by the Emmett Till generation. The actions of several members of the NOI informed the Black community that the LAPD could be challenged, and they could resist being brutalized. It sent the message to law enforcement that Black people were willing to die to be treated equally and it told Black people it was worth it. And it put Malcolm X at the forefront of the fight against police brutality. The events of this night have been dissected, examined, and reconstructed by scholars such as Taylor Branch, Manning Marable, Peniel Joseph, Frederick Knight, Max Felker-Kantor, and others. Until this interview with Monroe Jones in 2016, no authors or scholars had contacted him. Jones’s voice has been a missing primary source of information in one of many instances where unarmed Black men are beaten and/or killed by the LAPD. Those scholars did not base their conclusions on the recollections of one of the principal participants of the incident.

²⁵⁸ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

After the two officers approached Mr. Jones and Mr. Jingles a physical altercation ensued.²⁵⁹ Six members of the NOI were shot and one member Ronald Stokes, was killed by LAPD officers. Mr. Jones was one of the NOI members shot that night. He was never interviewed by any of the scholars mentioned above and that is a problem. That night the LAPD attacked several members of the NOI killing one, all over some used clothes that the NOI members rightfully owned. They were attacked because only the LAPD officers were armed, not the members of the NOI. The lack of respect for Black lives was apparent when the officers pushed the situation looking for some form of guilt where it did not exist.

The *LA Times* got out ahead of the truth and used wordplay to label it a violent event involving Black people and police. Using terms such as riot and shootout the *LA Times* misinformed white and some Black members of the public. For example, the *LA Times* first reported on the attack at NOI Temple 27 on April 29th well ahead of Black weekly newspapers. The headline read “Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect’s Temple.”²⁶⁰ This portrayed the LAPD as victims and not aggressors. Within the article terms such as fanatical anti-white Muslim sect and cultist painted a negative picture of Black American citizens practicing their constitutional rights to engage in religious worship. But it cannot be overlooked that some people did not consider the NOI a religion. As a matter of fact, they were called Black supremacists and the Black equivalent to the KKK even though they did not participate in the lynching of white people, burn Islamic religious symbols in front of the homes of white people, or any other Klan like activity.

²⁵⁹ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

²⁶⁰ “Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect’s Temple,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962, D1.

More harmful and irresponsible were the allegations the *LA Times* printed about the events on the night of the shootings. For example, the paper stated, “As police reinforcements arrived from the University, Newton, and 77th St. divisions and the robbery and metropolitan squads, a man charged from the temple, firing a rifle.”²⁶¹ In the following line the paper states, “The first two cultists shot down were dragged into the temple...” leading readers to believe the armed rifleman was one of those shot down, when in actuality he never existed. The use of the word “cultist” rationalizes and justifies LAPD violence against Black members of a religious organization. He was never mentioned by any other newspaper, scholars, secondary sources, or mentioned in the court case. And none of the members of the Nation were convicted of assault with a deadly weapon.

In a survey taken by the *California Eagle* in the Black community on some local ministers withdrawing support for the NOI following the killing of Stokes, interviewee Melvin Bibolet, stated, “I agree with the ministers ...they can’t go along with what Muslims teach. The Muslims are a violent movement.”²⁶² The *LA Times* endangered the lives of all Black people in LA printing such lies because just twenty years earlier white people engaged in racial rioting against Blacks in Detroit, Michigan and Mobile, Alabama and against Mexican Americans in Los Angeles, California. Such lies get disseminated very quickly and widely so that the real victims are made out to be criminals as in the case of young Samuel Falkner almost 35 years earlier.

Interpretations of the Night Ronald Stokes Was Killed

²⁶¹ “Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect’s Temple,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962, D1.

²⁶² “Main-in-Street Views Split on Ministers,” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 4.

Other students of the Black Power Movement have examined the significance of the attack on the NOI members within the Black Freedom struggle in Los Angeles minus the voices of some its victims. Interviews provide in this dissertation are evidence of the then ongoing anti-Black policing in Los Angeles. The much-respected historian, Taylor Branch opens *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* with “Islam in Los Angeles” and the events surrounding the shootings that took place near and at Temple 27. This is where an interview with Mr. Monroe Jones becomes significant. Branch describes the beginning of the altercation with the sale of discarded items from S & M Cleaners being conducted by Mr. Jones.²⁶³ Mr. Jones was not selling clothes. He delivered dry cleaned clothing to members of the Nation and according to him:

And like I was starting to say, we would pick up the brothers' and sisters' clothes at their homes and take them and have them cleaned and pressed and would bring them back to their homes to deliver them. If we would miss them, we would bring them to the mosque because we knew we would see them at the mosque. And this happened often, we did it like that. And one particular night I brought the brothers' clothes to the mosque with me. And when the mosque was over, I went to the trunk of the car that I was delivering the clothes in, or that the clothes was in, the brother and myself walked to the trunk, across the street from the mosque, parked right there on Broadway under the light. And when I opened the trunk, the police pulled up behind me and they suspected us of selling stolen goods.²⁶⁴

The Muslim receiving the cleaned clothes was Fred X. Jingles. The police officers were Frank Tomlinson and Stanley Kensic. The men were searched for weapons and the car was checked against the stolen car sheet. Both came up negative.

Branch’s retelling of the events that night becomes noticeable for his choice of words to express a heroic depiction of the actions of the armed white policemen. According to Branch, Kensic decided to split Jones and Jingles up for questioning about the clothes to get individual

²⁶³ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 4.

²⁶⁴ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

accounts. Kensic later conceded that he detected no belligerence, flight, or resistance in Jingles while walking toward the front of the car.²⁶⁵ However, Kensic did object to Jingles' take-your-hands-off-me attitude or gestures which challenged his sense of command (and this is where if we read closely Branch's language becomes very pro-police) that he swiftly put Jingles into the police hold, twisting his arm behind him and wrapping an elbow around his neck to lift him in the air and fling him facedown across the Buick's hood.²⁶⁶ It is as if Branch were describing a ballet.

Jingles response to Kensic's actions show no such choreography. Branch writes, "Instead of going limp in submission. Jingles surprised Kensic by screaming and writhing. He managed to twist out of the hold and fought upward to get off the hood."²⁶⁷ Branch's report of Jingles' actions makes them sound almost unintended, clumsy and happenstance even though he wrote of his rejection to Kensic touching him. Neither one of these descriptions can be found in the transcript from the People v. Buice, the case Branch cites as a source for his depiction of events.²⁶⁸ Branch also list an interview in 1991 with Officer Frank Tomlinson, one of the officers involved in the attack as a source. And if Tomlinson is the source of Branch's colorful words they continue to justify and glorify the reign of terror the LAPD cast over the Black community in Los Angeles.

In his examination of policing in Los Angeles Max Kantor devotes little time to the event that led to the death of Ronald Stokes. According to Kantor, two members of the Nation of Islam

²⁶⁵ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 5.

²⁶⁶ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 5.

²⁶⁷ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 5.

²⁶⁸ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 620. Branch abbreviation BTT for Buice Trial Transcript. Justia US Law, People v. Buice, Accessed September 7, 2021, <https://law.justia.com/cases/california/court-of-appeal/2d/230/324.html>.

were removing clothing from a car across the street from the Temple. Two police officers stopped to investigate and within a few minutes LAPD flooded the area with seventy-five officers to disperse an antipolice demonstration.²⁶⁹ There is no evidence that there was a demonstration that night. According to the *LA Times*, when police restored order, a crowd of about 200 had gathered at the scene. However, most of them were spectators and not Muslims, according to police.²⁷⁰

Kantor examines the incident as an example of one of eleven “anti-police riots between 1961 and 1964 that LAPD officials brushed off as isolated incidents rather than a systematic problem within the department.”²⁷¹ According to Kantor, The deep roots of racist policing in Los Angeles had created a profound frustration and disillusionment with the possibility of fair treatment by the police.²⁷² Kantor argues that this history of discriminatory policing and matters of mistrust left Black people with few alternatives but to seek remedies to police misconduct in the streets. According to Kantor Black activists at the time urged the police to address the perceptions of LAPD as a professionalized version of “white man’s law in the South.

Kantor also suggests that the United Civil Rights Committee plea to “Men of Good Will” to alter police practices that left a “long smoldering resentment” were met with silence by Parker. Kantor uses different incidents of anti-Black policing in the African American community equally, as contributing to the people taking to the streets during the Watts Rebellion. The NOI’s

²⁶⁹ Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 25.

²⁷⁰ “Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect’s Temple,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962, D1.

²⁷¹ Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 25.

²⁷² Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 25.

altercations with law enforcement agencies showed the Black community that the LAPD could be confronted and that maybe respect and freedom were worth dying for.

Instead of rehashing the details of what happened the night Ronald Stokes was killed in *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, Peniel E. Joseph brilliantly examines some of the ways the incident impacted the Nation of Islam and the Black Community in Los Angeles. Joseph provides a most convincing analysis that although the Nation was established as a religious organization it had a significant secular presence because of the popularity of *Muhammad Speaks*, the speeches of Malcolm X, and the highly publicized killing of Ronald Stokes. Joseph argues that the killing of Stokes had a much bigger impact on initiating the classic Black Power period in just Los Angeles and being the genesis of the split between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad. Joseph writes, “Stokes’s death at the hands of police placed Malcolm X in the middle of a national controversy over police brutality, civil rights, and Black militancy.”²⁷³

Not only did it place Malcolm in the middle but also the Nation of Islam too. Joseph suggests that the lack of action by the Nation over Stokes’s killing was a source of embarrassment for Malcolm because of his close association with the militant wing of the NOI. And his only form of solace was his comments on the death of scores of whites from Georgia in a plane crash in Europe.²⁷⁴ There is a three-year delay before any kind of retribution takes place in August 1965. It takes place after Malcolm’s death when the Nation of Islam is no longer the vanguard of the Black Power Movement in LA.

²⁷³ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006), 63.

²⁷⁴ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006), 64.

Monroe Jones telling of what happened that night does not support the NOI's reasoning for not allowing Malcolm to launch attacks on the LAPD. Like Tomlinson, he too is a primary source. "I looked up to see Jingles and Kensic in a scuffle. And he was trying to handcuff him and he had put him over the hood of my car, for what reason I didn't really know," stated Jones.²⁷⁵ The incident at the grocery store was not as publicized as the event that led to Stokes's killing. But it is safe to say most if not all of the members of Temple 27 had known of the fight in the parking lot and felt emboldened to act because it was mentioned in a May 1962 issue of *Muhammad Speaks*.²⁷⁶

When Jones saw his fellow Muslim resisting being handcuffed he reacted instinctively. Jones stated, "My instinct was to go help the brother, in which I did. I went and grabbed the policeman that had ahold of him. And I disarmed him. I took his pistol from him. And he let the brother go of course. And then his partner was stunned I guess. He was standing there froze. I guess he had never seen anybody stand up for themselves, especially a black man."²⁷⁷ Although Jones never conveyed to me that this was an "enough is enough" moment for him, it may have very well been one for both he and Jingles. There are so many stories of police brutality in the Black community that there was no way for these to know if they would have ended up dead even if they had done nothing but fully complied.

Some of the Muslim brothers walking out of the temple saw the red lights and the police and went over to help Jones and Jingles. When Jones grabbed the gun, he started shooting, striking one of the officers in the elbow. Jones then ran across the street to the mosque and

²⁷⁵ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

²⁷⁶ "L.A. Muslims Sue Safeway for Millions," *Muhammad Speaks*, May 2, 1962, 5.

²⁷⁷ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

discarded the gun in the sewage. Instead of arriving at the scene of the fight police were converging onto the mosque and jumping out of the car and attacking. Jones stated:

I had one officer face-to-face with me. He happened to be a small officer, like myself. And that was a good thing because he was trying to shoot me. He had pulled his gun out and he had it about right to here till I could pull it right back to there. And then by that time Brother Ronald Stokes was diving at him. And I think that took his attention off of me for a minute. Because he turned and he shot Brother Ronald while he was in the air. And at that time, I just took off. Went straight to the mosque and over to the Shabazz restaurant and told them what had happened. And they took me to my parents' house because I had just gotten a flesh wound in the shoulder, and that was the extent of it.²⁷⁸

In other descriptions of this incident scholars have described Stokes as having his hands up and in the process of complying with officers before being shot through the heart. Prior to the shooting of Jones and Stokes there was a brief period of calm followed by more LAPD attacks. The Muslims had converged on the police saying "Allau Akbar, Allau Akbar!" (God is great! God is great!). Jones believes that saved a lot of lives. "But that's what I believe froze them, why they didn't kill everybody there. Because everybody -- no one backed up. We didn't have guns. They called it a melee. They was the only ones with guns."²⁷⁹

Historically, Black people in this country have not been allowed to defend themselves against white people, police or otherwise. On April 27, 1962, members of the LAPD continued the assault on unarmed Black men knowing there would be no consequences for their actions. By the end of the attack, the religious temple of the Nation of Islam had been ransacked and its members physically and verbally accosted and stripped of any shred of decency within its walls. Seven of the unarmed Muslims were wounded with William Rogers paralyzed and Ronald Stokes dead. It is unimaginable that this type of action would have occurred in, near, or to any white Jewish or Christian house of worship.

²⁷⁸ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

²⁷⁹ Monroe Jones, William Stokes, and Wallace Grissette interview by author, July 8, 2016.

The altercation became deadly for two reasons. Everything from redlining to the criminalization of Black men dictated to these white officers that in that Black neighborhood these men were up to no-good and needed to be questioned more to prove their guilt. Or else they could have simply let them go. And because a young Monroe Jones who had been previously brutalized by the LAPD decided that he would intervene before it happened to one of his fellow members of the NOI. Would the same procedure had been applied if negative police reports came back on two white men in Burbank or the notoriously racist Glendale at the time?

Jeanne F. Theoharis views this as an important moment in which ideological differences had to be set aside.²⁸⁰ Theoharis argues that even the autopsy that established officers kicked, stomped, and bludgeoned Stokes dead or dying body did not impact the decision of a justifiable shooting. Theoharis describes how that lack of justice forces the local and broader African American community to work together despite their ideological difference. Theoharis noted that Malcolm X worked with the local ministers, emerging politicians, and NAACP Branch to publicize the issue of police brutality in Los Angeles.

This was one of the riskiest and bravest acts of resistance taken by Black men against an overwhelming opposing force at the dawn of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. An unarmed Monroe Jones spontaneously went to the aid of his fellow Muslim brother's assistance, and they fought back before the situation possibly turned into just another act of police violence on two Black men. This was the second act of the Nation's resistance to police brutality. The third act would be the Watts Rebellion when the young rebels took to the street using guerilla warfare tactics to make a stand against police brutality.

²⁸⁰ Jeanne Theoharis, "'Alabama on Avalon' Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black protest in Los Angeles," in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38.

What Happens When White People Riot?

In order to know what police brutality looks like you have to see what it does not look like under similar situations. Look at how actual white rioters in Burbank were treated versus members of the NOI. On October 5, 1945, a strike over 77 set decorators turned into a full-fledged riot at the entrance gate of Warner Bros. Participants were knifed, clubbed and gassed before police arrived. The riot was precipitated by mass picketing by the striking Conference of Studio Unions led by ex-convicts, Hebert Sorrell, president of the Union and Anthony V. Schiavone. According to the *L. A. Times* during a special meeting the night before, “Some rank-and-filer, it was said, got the floor and asserted that ‘if we had 1000 pickets at Warners in the morning, they couldn’t open the studio.’” By 7 a.m. on October 5th there was an estimated 750 strikers at the employees’ entrance.²⁸¹

Trouble began when a studio policeman attempted to drive into the plant. His car was overturned in front of the gate as were two more cars a few minutes later.²⁸² The violence progressed throughout the day involving strikers, strikebreakers, and the women who supported the strikers by replenishing their ammunition of bottles, bricks, and stones.²⁸³ The *Times* reported, “one striker who swung his fist at a policeman was felled with a club and dragged away. Another who grabbed a motorcycle officer’s revolver from its holster was subdued by the policeman with the barrel of his recovered weapon.”²⁸⁴ The police who were armed with guns, tear gas, and clubs were finally able to clear the streets in front of the gate. Strike leader Sorrell and others were arrested and released that same day. According to the *Times*, the released men

²⁸¹ “Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners’ Entrance; Union Leader Arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 1.

²⁸² “Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners’ Entrance; Union Leader Arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 1.

²⁸³ “Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners’ Entrance; Union Leader Arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 2.

²⁸⁴ “Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners’ Entrance; Union Leader Arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 2.

attended a postponed strike strategy meeting. At that meeting Sorrell, reported to have condemned use of tear gas, fire hoses, and armed violence received an ovation from several hundred at the meeting.²⁸⁵

The point of examining this event is to show the contradictory responses by law enforcement and the media for similar kinds of actions by white versus black people. In the Burbank riot images that accompanied the *L. A. Times* report appears to be only white people involved.²⁸⁶ The main difference is that both events involved physical aggression directed at police officers, but only Black men were shot and killed. In Burbank not one shot was fired even when there was an attempt to disarm police. In a melee that lasted most of the day and involved over 700 people only nine arrests were made.²⁸⁷

The *L.A. Times* treatment of the Burbank event was noticeably different. There was no mention of any attacks on police while there was great detail reported in the injuries sustained by police at the mosque.²⁸⁸ Terms like cultist, fanatical, and anti whites were used throughout the reports on the shootings at the mosque. Although strike leaders Sorrell and Schiavone were ex-convicts no negativity was ever associated with their ex-con status. Schiavone was imprisoned for burglary. The times reported on Sorrel's involvement with Communist activities but never used terms like un-American to describe him.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ "Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners' Entrance; Union Leader Arrested," *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 2.

²⁸⁶ "Dozen Injured in Melee at Warners' Entrance; Union Leader Arrested," *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1945, 2.

²⁸⁷ "Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect's Temple," *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962, D1.

²⁸⁸ "Muslim Cultist Killed, 6 Hurt in Police Battle: Officer Shot, Others Beaten, Kicked in Blazing Gun Fight Outside Sect's Temple," *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1962, D1.

²⁸⁹ "Ex-Convict Led Pickets at Warners', Glendale Police Chief Testifies: Investigators Told of Striker's Asserted Record," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1945, A1.

In the examination of an actual riot led by whites there are actions that plainly show how similar offenses committed by white people do not garner a deadly response. It reveals the vast contrast between policing in cities occupied by a large population of Black people. Deadly police brutality is not a thing practiced on white people for equal or far greater offenses. In law enforcement responses to riotous white people, it is apparent that police engage in much less deadly practices. Redlining and other boundary defining tactics used to segregate Blacks allowed for more control over the response and narratives created by the actions of police.

The purpose of this section has been to provide evidence that Black people are indeed treated quite differently by police in Southern California. The riot in Burbank was a far more violent event instigated by whites than what occurred at Temple 27. However, the end results were much different. The shooting of Black Muslims by LAPD officers is proof of the brutal anti-Black sentiment that existed within Southern California law enforcement agencies.

Elijah Muhammad Sold Out Temple 27

Elijah Muhammad vetoed Malcolm's plans for revenge against the murderers of Ronald Stokes. Mr. Jones's recollection that Stokes was diving for the policeman when scholars such as Branch and Knight have written that he was walking towards officers with his hands up puts in dispute Muhammad's reasoning for the NOI's inaction for the killing of Stokes. In 1962, Elijah Muhammad a small soft-spoken uneducated man had led the Nation of Islam for almost thirty years. Muhammad himself had been harassed by the U.S. government and served prison time for refusing the draft. But he had never been involved in a physical confrontation with law enforcement agencies in defense of an attack on his organization.

Manning Marable wrote that Muhammad viewed the tragedy as stemming from a lack of courage by Mosque No. 27's members. Marable wrote that Muhammad was reported to have

said, “Everyone of the Muslims should have died before they allowed an aggressor to come into their Mosque.”²⁹⁰ There is no doubt that the unarmed members of Temple 27 attempted to defend themselves against the actions of the LAPD that night. Monroe Jones was at the center of the attack and saw Stokes diving through the air towards a policeman. Insinuating members of the Temple were cowards could have been an attempt by Muhammad to justify his decision to not let Malcolm mount a counterattack against members of the LAPD. Nevertheless, this event marked the beginning of the retreat of the Nation from the public eye as the defender of anti-Black police aggression.

Although the NOI and Malcolm X were at the forefront of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles, some members of the Black Power Movement such as the founders of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale also admired Robert F. Williams, the leader of the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the NAACP. The armed struggle of the Black Power Movement cannot be examined without referring to Robert F. Williams. In *Radio Free Dixie Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, Timothy B. Tyson states, this is the story of one of the most influential African American radicals of a generation that toppled Jim Crow, created a new black sense of self, and forever altered the arc of American history.”²⁹¹

Even in the South, which is associated with nonviolent protests, Tyson argues that the African American freedom movement had its origins in long standing traditions of resistance to white supremacy enforced by police. In that Williams was a member of the nonviolent NAACP but chose to practice armed self-defense Tyson uses his life to illustrate that the “civil rights

²⁹⁰ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, (New York: Penguin, 2011), 209.

²⁹¹ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press 2009), 2.

movement” and the “Black Power movement” emerged from the same soil, confronted the same predicaments, and reflected the same quest for African American freedom.

It could be argued that it was far more progressive than any other organization except maybe the Deacons for Defense, an armed African American self-defense group founded in Jonesboro, Louisiana in 1964. When Williams became the chapter’s president and revived its membership the Klan started a campaign to get rid of him and vice-president Albert E. Perry. According to Williams, “After their rallies they would drive through our community in motorcades, and they would honk their horns and fire pistols from the car windows. On one occasion, they caught a colored woman on an isolated street corner, and they made her dance at pistol point.”²⁹²

Monroe city officials supported the Klan’s actions by stating that they had as much right to organize as the NAACP. Unlike the Klan there is no evidence to suggest that members of the NAACP have ever armed themselves and gone into segregated neighborhoods to terrorize white folks. After his appeals to the local government and representatives all the way up to President Dwight Eisenhower were not answered Robert Williams took a very uncivil rights like approach. He started collecting arms, using that most precious second amendment right to bare arms. Williams wrote to the National Rifle Association (NRA) and received a charter. When an armed Klan motorcade attacked Dr. Perry’s house, Williams and his men met them with return fire. That ended the raids in the Black community and probably saved Black lives. Nevertheless, the Klan and white citizens found other ways to oppress, discriminate, and terrorize the Black community.

²⁹² Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 208.

Williams and his wife eventually fled to Cuba because of a trumped-up kidnapping charge. Malcolm was an outspoken admirer of Robert F. Williams. Working with RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement) Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, future founders of the Black Panthers, were exposed to Robert F. Williams, who served as RAM's honorary chair-in-exile. They would adopt Williams self defense principles for the Black Panthers. Employing principles of self-defense, the Los Angeles chapter of the BPP would play a significant role in the Black Power movement and the resistance to police brutality in particular.

The assault on Temple 27 is the zenith of the NOI as the vanguard of the Black Power movement in Los Angeles. Malcolm was preparing for the Nation to make the ultimate sacrifice for their slain brother Ronald Stokes. Jeffrey Ogbar has argued that the organization was the "chief inspiration" for the Black Power Movement and that we cannot understand the radicalism of the post-1965 era without a full understanding of the Nation's work during the 1950s and early 1960s. This is true but those were also the years that Malcolm was the face of the Nation. Even today Malcolm X is remembered by far more people than Elijah Muhammad or the founder of the NOI, Wallace D. Fard.

Elijah Muhammad was the leader of the Nation, but he relied on Malcolm's talent as an extraordinary speaker to be the voice and face of the organization. The ongoing popularity of the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* continues to introduce him to new generations of readers. The Nation of Islam provided the initial base for Malcolm to develop his Black consciousness and his oratory skills. That could have been accomplished in any Black organization in the broader freedom struggle had they proselytized more vigorously inside of prison walls and attracted Malcolm X. The same can be said of other larger-than-life leaders. Most people probably become aware of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) because of Dr. King's

association with the organization and not the other way around.

Malcolm X's plans to retaliate for the attack on the temple and the killing of Stokes were overruled by Muhammad. According to Marable, "Malcolm told Mosque No. 7's Fruit of Islam in New York that the time had come for retribution, an eye for an eye, and began to recruit members for an assassination team to target LAPD officers... and they rose to his cry."²⁹³ Nation members in Los Angeles also prepared to retaliate against the LAPD. Temple 27 member and Malcolm's cousin by marriage, Hakim Jamal writes in *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me*:

Many brothers had guns in their pockets, others were sharpening knives. Still others were in corners of the mosque limbering up and practicing judo and karate chops on imaginary devils' necks. We were ready to kill. Very few talked of dying. Everyone smiled at each other in a strange way. Most of us knew we would probably get killed, but we knew that we were at war with the devil. The time had arrived to kill.²⁹⁴

But no retaliation would take place. Captain Edward Sherill delivered Muhammad's plan of attack to Temple 27, and it was not what many members expected.

The message to officials in Los Angeles had been, "We are going out into the street now to begin war with the devil. Not the kind of war he expects...no, we are going to let the world know he is the devil: we are going to sell newspapers."²⁹⁵ Jamal wrote, "shock was on every face I looked into." Black men, hundreds of them, were ready to kill the devil. Many with guns and many more with enough hate, enough belief in Allah to face anything. We were betrayed! We were in fact being told...turn the other cheek.²⁹⁶ This was a significant event in the NOI's history

²⁹³ Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 208.

²⁹⁴ Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 194.

²⁹⁵ Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 196.

²⁹⁶ Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 196.

of resistance in Los Angeles because it diminished the reputation the organization had developed for standing up against police brutality.

Reputation Does Not Always Transform Into Action

The NOI's anti-police reputation in Los Angeles was not based on any large-scale anti-police actions. Other than the case involving the altercation at the Safeway grocery store a *Los Angeles Times* article suggests that most NOI disturbances took place within the prison system in California.²⁹⁷ So, what can we attribute the NOI's anti-police reputation to? The Nation's membership consisted of a large number of former criminals who found their way to the Nation while imprisoned. Prisoners have a reputation for being tough and hard. Then the Nation dressed them in uniforms (suit and bowties) giving them a distinctive look separate from other members of the African American community. The Black Panther Party would use this model later in the decade.

Additionally, some of those young active male members served in the FOI (Fruit of Islam), the security and disciplinary wing of the Nation. Images of disciplined uniformed young Black men in an all-Black organization created a visually intimidating and militant reputation that preceded their actions. The attraction to the NOI's presumed strength also brought attention from law enforcement. The reputation of the NOI could make the white male dominated LAPD appear weak. However, the actions of the LAPD on April 27, 1962, displayed the overwhelming power of the LAPD against the members of Temple 27.

Members of Temple 27 tried to make sense of Muhammad's decision but in reality, his response was no different than that of the civil rights leaders he often condemned. Malcolm did his best to carry out the orders of Muhammad. But over the course of the next two years Malcolm's celebration at the deaths of 120 white Georgians in an airplane crash in France and

²⁹⁷ "LA Confidential: What Goes, Chief Parker?" *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 1961, A4.

the assassination of President John Kennedy exacerbated the tension between him and Muhammad that started with the response to the attack on Temple 27. Malcolm did no more than express the old proverb, “you reap what you sow.” And in America’s case it was a small thing to say for hundreds of years of misery inflicted on Black people.

The killing of unarmed Black men by local law enforcement officers was a stark reminder to Southern migrants that anti Black police brutality was not uncommon in Los Angeles. In *From the Dead Level*, Jamal describes what his wife who never spoke much about growing up in Georgia shared with him following Malcolm’s comments on the plane crash that killed white Georgians. Dorothy Jamal recalled that in Butler, Georgia everyday after high school there stood a long line of pickup trucks and white farmers. As soon as they saw a Black girl they wanted they’d walk over or call her over, drag her to a truck, with all of the others laughing, and drive off into the woods.²⁹⁸ According to Jamal even if they told their father, there was nothing he could do, if he tried to tell the sheriff he’d go to jail, not the dirty white man, plus he’d lose his job.²⁹⁹ Most of the Black people who migrated to Los Angeles in the 1940s came from the Jim Crow south. The attack on the Muslims was a reminder that even in Los Angeles white men could come in the middle of the night and take the lives of Black men.

Some Black people in Los Angeles like Hakim and Dorothy Jamal expected the death of Ronald Stokes to bring about a racial reckoning in regard to police brutality. It did not. Instead, Muhammad responded by labeling Ronald Stokes and the men attacked at Temple 27 as cowards for not giving up all of their lives in protecting the Mosque. It is startling how powerful men can transpose and retell the truthfulness in an event in light of facts that prove otherwise, and their

²⁹⁸ Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 202.

²⁹⁹ Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 202.

followers believe it. There is no question that the unarmed members of the NOI in Los Angeles courageously defended themselves and the mosque, but Elijah Muhammad twisted the truth against them, or to put it bluntly-sold them out. Andrew Clegg provides a succinct explanation for Muhammad's actions regarding the killing of Stokes. According to Clegg:

The response of Muhammad to events in Los Angeles underscored both his increasingly pragmatic, conservative leadership style and ideological fault lines that were developing within the Nation. His attempts to defuse the conflict surrounding Mosque No.27 were quite understandable to those who could look beyond the rhetoric of the Nation and see the nepotism, materialism and fear of governmental censure that were shaping Muhammad's policies.³⁰⁰

Unfortunately, for the Muslims who followed the public program and did not look beyond the rhetoric, the call for patience was confusing.

Taken at face value the Nation projected an image that included themes of self-defense, retribution, justice, and redemption. The Nation of Islam was a religious organization and also a business. Elijah Muhammad was the head of a business enterprise that provided him, his family, and certain members of the Nation with above average lifestyles. Malcolm and many of the other members of the Nation were fighting for freedom at any costs and not money. The incident in Los Angeles was a small price to pay for the Nation of Islam to continue to exist. If we look at Elijah as the leader of a country, we would not expect him to take the country into a full-scale war because of a deadly confrontation between a few opposing soldiers. Countries have been guilty of shooting down civilian aircraft and have not gone to war. It is collateral damage for granting soldiers and police with the power and tools of life and death over other human beings.

The Black Community's Questionable Support for the Nation of Islam

³⁰⁰ Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 171.

As much as Malcolm disagreed with some civil rights activists, he knew he needed their support in L.A. Once again like in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s Black people had to mobilize against police brutality in their community. On Friday, May 4th, one week after Stokes's death, Malcolm and local leaders held a press conference at the Statler-Hilton Hotel. His press conference featured a poster-size photo of Stokes, proof, Malcolm claimed, that Stokes had been viciously beaten in the head with a nightstick after he had been shot. "The police went wild—went mad—that night," he claimed.³⁰¹

Malcolm received support from Executive Secretary of the NAACP, Roy Wilkins. Wilkins accused some members of the Black community in Los Angeles of being silent on police brutality because Stokes was a Muslim. He urged his Los Angeles branch to work towards holding the guilty police accountable and asked other groups to do likewise. Wilkins reinforced the NAACP's policy that police brutality needed to be contested and confronted regardless of religious affiliation.³⁰² In addition to support from the national level of Black organizations the local Black leadership put aside their differences with the Nation of Islam, at least momentarily.

Black Power has many different forms, but police brutality is always a catalyst for acts of physical Black Power: the desire of Black people to protect Black people from violence committed against them by the State both inside and outside of their communities. Police officers have and continue to murder unarmed Black men and women. Black people knew that in the 1960s, but they continued to fight on in whatever ways they could. In the North and South Black people in and out of the Nation had successfully used the press to try and embarrass the state into ending anti-Black brutality in this country. The press had been a powerful weapon for Frederick

³⁰¹ Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Press Conference on Deadly Police Raid in Los Angeles*, UCLA Film and Television Archive, accessed September 24, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdX10uPZmUg>.

³⁰² "Guilty Police Must Pay, Says NAACP" *Muhammad Speaks*, June 2, 1962, 5.

Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Mamie Till, Charlotta Bass, and others for informing the world about the plight of Black people in America.

The Nation of Islam used its own publication *Muhammad Speaks* to publicize police brutality against its members. It provided graphic images of wounded Black men handcuffed and laying on the ground.³⁰³ The article accused the police of beating and kicking the defenseless men as they lay on the ground bleeding from their wounds. To support their fight for justice the NOI also republished supportive articles from the local Black press. They also published letters of support from organizations whose tactics they had previously disagreed with and accused of begging whites to let them integrate their world. Trying the system in the court of public opinion in Los Angeles was perhaps the safest method collectively, but it did not stop the brutal killing of individuals. In less than a year Leonard Deadwyler was murdered by LAPD in 1966 while taking his pregnant wife to the hospital.³⁰⁴

There is really only one way to effectively combat an occupying force that appears to be picking off potential soldiers slowly and methodically one by one. And that is to go on the offense or level the playing field. White men went on violent offenses against Native Americans, Africans, and eventually the British to establish the United States. Taking a stance against the state is deadly, as we will see in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But Black people had been dying in the streets and sometimes in their own homes as in the case of Samuel Faulkner anyway. So, did they really have anything more to lose? No, it was always just a matter of whom they were going to lose next.

There were additional options of resistance available to the Black community that they did not pursue. When Ben Bowie's armed fellow drill team veterans appeared at the Newton

³⁰³ "Unite For Justice to Stop Race Murders" *Muhammad Speaks*, June 2, 1962, 1.

³⁰⁴ "Widow Disputes Police slaying: Says Husband Asked Escort to Hospital" *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1966, 1.

Street police station after he had been viciously beaten for absolutely no reason, Black Power in the form of an armed physical presence was a legally viable option until 1967 in California. In 1962, there was no law on the books that prohibited Black private citizens from openly carrying firearms in the California to deter the threat of state violence, similar to nuclear deterrence between countries. To openly carry firearms in public is the ultimate form of Black Power against brutal police officers. Violence through power is what the state perpetrates and what they understand.

The African American community could have responded with a show of force to possibly put an end to the LAPD's system of intimidation and violence that plagued their community for decades. It would have gone against the NOI's mandate of carrying weapons. However, it would have also been an exercise of their belief in self-defense. Malcolm X could have followed the strategy used by his "very good friend," Robert F. Williams, whose NAACP chapter in Monroe, North Carolina, received a charter from the NRA (National Rifle Association) and formed the Black Armed Guard to defend the Black community against law enforcement sanctioned activities of the KKK. The KKK's practice of going into the Black community to terrorize men, women, and children stopped. An often-used interpretation of the Second Amendment is that it allows citizens to bear arms for the defense against an oppressive government. What could be more oppressive than uniformed men paid by the state to go into Black communities to kill unarmed Black people?

On May 13, 1962, a mass meeting was held at Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles to protest the attack on the Temple. As mentioned before the media would manipulate and/or split public sentiment by controlling the narrative. Being a daily paper always gave the *LA Times* an advantage. The story it published the next day should have been a report on the details of the

meeting, but it quickly descended into a propaganda piece on and against the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and the lack of solidarity within the Black community.

The article reported that, “a Muslim leader was wildly cheered over the objections of the church’s pastor.”³⁰⁵ Malcolm X was the Muslim described as “wildly cheered.” It could be misunderstood to suggest that many of the 1200 people in attendance were pro Muslim, which like communism was a bad thing at that time. Malcolm was cheered because he expressed the rage that Black Muslims and non-Muslims alike harbored about police brutality. The article was full of inflammatory language aimed at the Black community, both Muslims and non-Muslims. According to the article the meeting was called by the Citizens Protest Rally Committee to inquire into the causes of the violence that erupted on April 27 when a Muslim was shot to death and six others were wounded.³⁰⁶

This type of omission of leaving the deceased Ronald Stokes and the other Muslim victims nameless in the *LA Times* reporting continues the practice of dehumanizing Black folks that was perfected during slavery. To continue and ensure negative sentiments toward the Nation they described the encounter between un-armed Muslims and white police officers as a gun battle even though they certainly knew at the time of the writing of the article that Ronald Stokes and none of the other victims were armed with so much as a butter knife. But this was the narrative pushed by the white press and LAPD.

The reporting by the *LA Times* on Malcolm’s participation in the meeting focused on the positive reception he received from the audience and his speaking to the truth of the conditions that Black people had endured in the United States for 400 years, as if it were fiction. The paper

³⁰⁵ “1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

³⁰⁶ “1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

highlighted the thunderous applause Malcolm received as he stood up to speak, and at his conclusion. For white America growing support for Malcolm X could induce fear about their future.

The *LA Times* also highlighted the response Malcolm's speech received from Rev. J. Raymond Henderson, minister of Second Baptist. Prior to Henderson addressing the crowd Malcolm had simply stated a truth that many Black people were starting to understand for the first time. According to the *LA Times*, Malcolm stated the following, "We were brought here 400 years ago in chains. Malcolm continued. "And it's been 400 years of undiluted hell. If we don't hate the white man, then you don't know what you are talking about."³⁰⁷ After Malcolm received his standing ovation at the end of his speech Henderson made an unscheduled talk. Henderson advanced the narrative created by the white press and the LAPD in what the *LA Times* described as Henderson criticizing "the inflammatory speeches today."³⁰⁸

Henderson made it quite clear what the terms for holding the meeting at Second Baptist had been and who was supposed to be in charge. It was a program to remedy "conflicts" between Negroes and the police.³⁰⁹ Merriam-Webster defines conflict as "competitive or opposing action of incompatibles." For this particular case the opposing actions is that Black people started to refuse to be victims of oppression enforced by the LAPD. It is difficult to comprehend that almost 60 years after the murder of Ronald Stokes the so-called conflict still exist. And it is still resulting in the death of unarmed Black people.

³⁰⁷ "1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality" *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

³⁰⁸ "1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality" *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

³⁰⁹ "1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality" *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

It is also difficult to comprehend why Rev. Henderson would make statements such as, “it was to be a peaceful assembly,” when the assembly was called because of violence. Both the Civil Rights and Black Power movements were responses to oppressive violence initiated by the dominant society. As Malcolm said, “400 years of hell.” Rev. Henderson’s response was not as simple as suggesting that Black people ignore their pain and suppress their hate, accept their 400 years and counting of oppression, or be peaceful towards the people who hated and murdered you.

It was a courageous move for Henderson to offer Second Baptist as a sacred space for protest against the attack on the Muslims. Overtly supporting the Nation of Islam was itself an exercise in Black Power. That was not new for Henderson. In “A Respectable Militancy:

Reverend J. Raymond Henderson and the Civil Rights Struggle in Los Angeles, 1941-1963”

David J. Neumann writes:

Reverend J. Raymond Henderson personified the tensions within the Los Angeles black community’s struggle for equality during his 1941–1963 tenure as pastor of the Second Baptist Church. While Rev. Henderson advocated the patient cultivation of respectability as a means of winning white acceptance, he also adopted a militant stance toward civil rights as a leader of the local NAACP, associate of more outspoken leaders, and the voice of an internationalist outlook, but a form of militancy that seemed increasingly inadequate by the early ’60s.³¹⁰

Henderson was in his sixties and close to retiring when the shooting took place. After arriving at Second Baptist in 1941 his aggressiveness had earned him the title “militant pastor” from the *California Eagle* newspaper.³¹¹ However, by the 1960s times were changing and a new generation of freedom fighters were captured by Malcolm’s even more militant form of Black

³¹⁰ David J. Neumann, “A Respectable Militancy: Reverend J. Raymond Henderson and the Civil Rights Struggle in Los Angeles, 1941-1963,” *Southern California Review* 100, no. 4 (2018): 471.

³¹¹ David J. Neumann, “A Respectable Militancy: Reverend J. Raymond Henderson and the Civil Rights Struggle in Los Angeles, 1941-1963,” *Southern California Review* 100, no. 4 (2018): 473.

Power. Reverend Henderson and Malcolm X provide the perfect example of what it is to subscribe to Black Power or civil rights. Neither man is just one or the other. Both ideologies live in a gray area. Reverend Henderson exhibits Black Power by inviting the Nation of Islam into his church. Malcolm practices civil rights by reaching out to the church leadership to address police brutality that impacts all Black people.

While Malcolm was saying you do have the right to be angry, to hate people who hate you, and to be violent to them as they have done to you, Henderson stated, “this is not the time to applaud anyone, we don’t want it said that the Muslims ran this meeting. We are not in favor of hating anyone.”³¹² It is not hard to understand why the *LA Times* would write such a story. It continued their control of a mostly negative narrative about Black people in Los Angeles. It makes sense that the white press would exploit any sign of disagreement among the Black leadership. Highlighting the smallest differences among Black people has been an instrument of manipulation and divisiveness of black people since the arrival of enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, it foreshadowed what was on the immediate horizon.

The Citizens Protest Rally at Second Baptist signaled the beginning of the end of the Black religious leadership’s support for the NOI in their quest for justice against the LAPD’s deadly attack on its unarmed members. On May 25, 1962, the Citizens Committee on Police Brutality met to repudiate a stand taken earlier that week by 150 ministers. The ministers denounced the Muslims as anti-law and anti-God and had taken an equivocal position on the existence of police brutality in Los Angeles. The ministers stated in their manifesto, “We want it clearly understood that we are no way related to the Muslim movement. We repudiate its

³¹² “1,200 Negroes Charge Police With Brutality” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1962, 2.

doctrine of black supremacy and the attempt to place one America against another.”³¹³ A resolution was passed demanding that letters rejecting the stand of the ministers be sent to Chief Parker.³¹⁴ For a brief period two ideologies within the Black Freedom Struggle operated in sync. For once, some of the members of the civil rights movement wholeheartedly supported the actions of the NOI. Even in situations that resulted in the abuse of nonviolent African Americans the civil rights movement never strayed from nonviolent action or supported any organization whose members fought the police. But even if only briefly they could not idly sit by when members of a religious organization and their temple were brutally attacked.

At another meeting on May 27, 1962, at the Garden of Prayer Baptist Church 700 people shouted angrily, “The ministers do not represent us,” and “Down With Uncle Toms who sold out to Yorty and Parker.” One woman called the ministers “handkerchief heads,” and said, “they have kept us in slavery ever since the Caucasians introduced Christianity to the Negro.”³¹⁵ The *California Eagle* received a number of calls and letters that attacked the statement of the ministers. One letter suggested that like during the plantation era the great white father could count on men of the cloth to quell any uprising towards any human rights and the dignity of the Black man...they have answered and petitioned their flock to denounce the Black Muslims...seconding the wave of police brutality.³¹⁶ The shooting of Muslims by LAPD officers is a pivotal moment in the Black Freedom struggle. We see the divisions begin to develop between followers of the civil rights movement and Black Power years before Watts ignites and deemed by some scholars and the national press as the beginning of the Black Power movement.

³¹³ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 1.

³¹⁴ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 1.

³¹⁵ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 1.

³¹⁶ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 1.

Confirmation that the LAPD, Mayor Yorty, and the *LA Times* worked in conscious concert to direct the narrative about Black people protecting their rights can be found in their actions as reported by the *California Eagle*. The *Eagle* stated, “Both Mayor Yorty and the *LA Times* commended the ministers for the stand they took. In an editorial on May 27 the *Times* commented, Negro ministers did a great service not only to Negroes but the whole Los Angeles community with their manifesto... We can all be thankful that they are influential.”³¹⁷ In their celebration of the Negro ministers the *LA Times* did not acknowledge how the community united in support of the Muslims.

The minister’s manifesto ended the unity the Black community had created with the NOI against police abuse. Earl Warren and Earl Walter, leaders of the local chapters of the NAACP and CORE, respectively, tried to keep the factions together but ideological differences ended the unity as other Black leaders were coopted.³¹⁸ But the continued metamorphosis of Malcolm X, his expulsion from the Nation, and his eventual assassination would create the stage for the most active period of the Black Power movement in Los Angeles. In addition to the murder of Emmett Till, Malcolm X was perhaps the single most driving force behind the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles during the late 1960s.

In June 1963, eleven of the fourteen members of the Nation of Islam were convicted on 37 of 42 counts. Most of the charges were for simple assault and interfering with a policeman. Monroe Jones was found guilty of interfering with a police officer in the performance of his duty by means of force and violence.³¹⁹ According to Mr. Jones:

³¹⁷ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 4.

³¹⁸ “Pastors Accused of Splitting Ranks in Fight on Brutality” *California Eagle*, May 31, 1962, 1.

³¹⁹ “To Seek New Trial For Four Muslims” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 13, 1963, A2.

I went to Wayside [Jail]. Brother Minister Randolph and I went to Wayside And they gave me the lightest the sentence of all and that was only six months. But the rest of the brothers went to the penitentiary, hardcore pen. Wayside was relatively, you know, mild mannered.

Although the attack on the members of the Nation was horrific, Mr. Jones stated that its membership grew as a result of the event. Soon after the trial ended Jones stopped attending the mosque. His immediate family members who had been early members had stopped going to the mosque before the attack. He gave no particular reason for ending their relationship with the Nation of Islam.

Anti-Black Police Brutality Continues

Even as the trial moved forward other cases of abuse against Black people were being levied at the LAPD. The national attention did nothing to reign in local law enforcement agencies. After the case was decided the number of reports of police brutality continued to grow. On June 20, 1963, Mrs. Dorothy Peete reported that her and her 15-year old son were arrested near their home in Richland Farms, a suburban area of Compton. When Freddy the son of a neighbor, Ruby, abandoned his horse after being pursued by teenaged whites in a car Mrs. Peete and her son Louis drove them to look for the horse. After retrieving the horse, the group was stopped at an intersection by a white neighbor, Carl Gaddis and a police officer. According to the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, “Mrs. Peete reports that Gaddis is one of the chief instigators in the area.”³²⁰

When the police begin to search the boys, their mothers inquired why they were being searched. The policemen told them it was none of their business and they began to argue. Gaddis had accused her son of stealing. When she told Louis to go to the car Gaddis grabbed him. Mrs. Peete went to Louis and grabbed his other arm, telling him not to hit Gaddis. The policeman

³²⁰ “Mother and Son Arrested: Charge Police Brutalities” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 27, 1963, A2.

grabbed Mrs. Peete and they fell. He got up and called for back up while Gaddis beat her son. More police arrived and arrested Mrs. Peete and her son. Why? Because a white man, Gaddis saw a boy on a horse ride through someone's yard and accused him of burglary. When the police and Gaddis searched the yard, they found nothing tampered with. Mrs. Peete and her son went to jail because Gaddis accused Louis of being a thief, knowing nothing had been tampered with in the yard. But Mrs. Peete exercised Black Power by protecting her son as much as she could against Gaddis and the police. Her being arrested with him may have protected him from further harm.

What does Black Power start to look like in Los Angeles after Malcolm's death and Watts starting in 1965? It is the traumatized Emmett Till generation employing the many teachings/ideologies of Malcolm X to resist a system of violent oppression. On May 6, 1962, Malcolm X made the following statement speaking at the Park Manor Auditorium:

Why you're the one that make it hard for yourself. The white man believes you when you go to him with the old sweet talk because you've been sweet-talking him ever since he brought you here. Stop sweet-talking him. Tell him how you feel. Tell him what kind of hell you've been catching. And let him know that if he's not ready to clean his house up, if he's not ready to clean his house up he shouldn't have a house. Should catch on fire and burn down.³²¹

And three years later Malcolm's words would echo with the Black youth of Los Angeles, and they would attempt to do just that.

Conclusion

A leading reason for rebellion by Black people in Los Angeles was and has been police brutality as presented in previous chapters. It finally faced a major black lash on August 11, 1965, with the outbreak of the Watts Rebellion. Coincidentally, it was almost ten years to the

³²¹ Malcolm X, Filmed May 6, 1962 in Los Angeles, California, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kboP3AWCTkA&t=25s>.

date of the murder of Emmett Till (August 25, 1955) and six months after the assassination of Malcolm X. During the Rebellion most of the social clubs united against their common enemy, the LAPD. That would last until the resources and oppressive tactics of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies overwhelmed the Movement. Slauson, CAP (Community Alert Patrol) member and Director of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) Los Angeles chapter Ron “Crook” Wilkins stated:

For me, it was my transition from Slauson to the movement is one of the most important things that has happened in my life. I can't think of anything more important than going from a, kind of hustlin' in the streets, and being a predator, and se- in a sense, and a self-hater; to transition from that to one that begins to defend the community, and build a community. And a major step for me was the South LA Rebellion, or the Watts Rebellion in '65, where we fought LAPD. I called them, I said then that they were just a white gang with badges, but that we were going to whip them and we were going to run them out of the community, and we did. And that's why they brought in the National Guard. So that was a, that was a very important transitional event for me, is the rebellion itself.³²²

Before Wilkins transitioned to being a member of the Black Power Movement he like many other young Black men, felt he was being hunted and harassed by the police. But when the Rebellion started, they “flipped the script and became the hunters.”³²³ Wilkins eyes lit up with his recollections of turning the tide and attacking the police. Wilkins described how he and others reached through police car windows trying to grab officers by their collars and pull them out as they cowered on the car floor.³²⁴ For six days and nights Wilkins said he felt truly liberated and free for the first time in his life.

Wilkins’s politicization through gang membership was not uncommon for Los Angeles. It was unusual because of its high number of Black gang members. And just like the NOI’s leadership had experienced the injustices of the legal and penal systems, leaders and members in

³²² Ron Wilkins interview by author, June 6, 2019.

³²³ Ron Wilkins interview by author, June 6, 2019.

³²⁴ Ron Wilkins interview by author, June 6, 2019.

the Black Power Movement encountered those struggles in the gangster lifestyle in Los Angeles. Gangsters and violence in the movement was unavoidable because of the territorialism that exists in Los Angeles. But it was dormant for one brief period of time during the late 1960s, and that phase started with Watts.

Many of the future leaders of the Movement had been Muslims and attended Temple 27. Some were more attracted to the teachings of Malcolm than Elijah Muhammad. And when Malcolm left the Nation, so did they. And when Malcolm was assassinated, they had to figure out a way to carry on his teachings. That list included Maulana Karenga formerly Ronald Everett, a Los Angeles transplant from Parsonburg, Maryland, and Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter born and raised in Los Angeles, California.

Previous chapters have documented violent acts of racism against African Americans in Los Angeles by whites employed by local government agencies, private citizens, and even Black men who valued their blue uniforms over Black lives.

The defensive actions of the Nation of Islam connected with many of the young men who wanted to stand up against violent white supremacists. Although there had been prior encounters with individual African Americans and the LAPD, in 1961 and 1962 the Nation of Islam stood up to the LAPD initiating the classic period of the Long Black Power movement in Los Angeles.

Chapter 5 What Did Watts Do?

Introduction

The Watts Rebellion ushered in the second part of the classic Black Power period (1965-1971) in Los Angeles. Prior to 1965 the Nation of Islam was the vanguard of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Its position was based on the reputation that had developed around their mystique, secretiveness, and association with a non-Christian religion more than with its few actual physical confrontations with police. Nevertheless, NOI minister and national spokesman, Malcolm X consistently spoke out against police brutality.

Malcolm believed Black people had the right to defend themselves against any type of brutality directed at them whether it was government sanctioned or not. He also believed that Black people should make others accountable for their attacks on Black folks. This included the members of the LAPD responsible for the death of Ronald Stokes. In the aftermath of Malcolm's death, starting with the Watts Rebellion, members of the Emmett Till generation in Los Angeles continued Malcolm's struggle against police brutality and the increasing level of violence employed by law enforcement agencies against African Americans and women in particular which in the case of Watts ignited the Rebellion.

In the aftermath of the Watts Rebellion members of the Emmett Till generation began to apply Malcolm's ideology in organizations that were rooted in eliminating police brutality and other systems of Black oppression. Most of these organizations were associated with one of two Black Nationalist ideologies, either Black cultural nationalists or revolutionary nationalists with the former being more closely associated with nonviolent organizations in the South, but both were members of the Black Power Movement. In some cases, nothing could be further from the truth. Other than the two incidents in Los Angeles between the NOI and law enforcement in

1961 and 1962, Black Power for the most part did not involve Black pushback or physical confrontation against police brutality and other forms of oppression. The cohort of Black baby boomers who took to the streets in Watts would form the leadership of the second phase of the classic Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. This examination of the cultural or revolutionary nationalist organizations that materialized just before the Watts Rebellion or grew out of it uncovers their shared lineage and similarities in objectives.

Race Riots vs. Police Brutality Provoked Rebellions

Prior to the 1960s riots were race-based and usually involved whites attacking African Americans as in the case of the Detroit and New York race riots of 1863, the Chicago race riot of 1919, Tulsa race massacre of 1921, and Detroit race riot again in 1943. Whites usually initiated these events based on rumors of white women being raped by Black men. Watts is a seminal moment in the long Black Power movement. The Emmett Till generation in Los Angeles changed the definition of riot. Watts signaled the transformation from white-raced base rioting and terrorism against Black communities often encouraged and supported by white officers, to a Black-led rebellious response to hundreds of years of brutality sanctioned and executed by law enforcement.

To some scholars Watts is the start of the Black Power Movement. No, it is one of many seminal moments in the long Black Power Movement. It is rooted in police brutality in Los Angeles and other cities throughout the country. Other seminal moments in the history of the long Black Power Movement rooted in police brutality in the last one hundred years include the 1964 Harlem Riot, which began after James Powell, a 15-year-old African American, was shot and killed by police Lieutenant Thomas Gilligan; the 1967 Detroit riot when police officers raided an unlicensed weekend drinking club (known locally as a blind pig) where 82 people were

celebrating the return of two local GIs from the Vietnam War; and again in Los Angeles in 1992 following the acquittal of four LAPD officers videotaped brutally beating Rodney King after he was pulled over for a traffic stop on March 3, 1991.

Police brutality continues to be an issue in Los Angeles almost 100 years after the killing of young Samuel Faulkner as demonstrated by the violent response and protests to the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota and a number of local black men in 2020. Each of these seminal moments are a reaction to law enforcement agents raising the level of violence they employ against Black people which would eventually lead to the videotaped execution of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in 2020.

Watts Rebellion

If you tell them right now what is in store for 1965, they'll think you're crazy for sure. But 1965 will be the longest and hottest and bloodiest year of them all. It has to be, not because you want it to be, or I want it to be, or we want it to be, but because the conditions that created these explosions in 1963 are still here; the conditions that created explosions in '64 are still here. You can't say that you're not going to have an explosion and you leave the condition, the ingredients, still here. As long as those ingredients, explosive ingredients, remain, then you're going to have the potential for explosion on your hands.³²⁵

Malcolm X, Detroit, Michigan, February 14, 1965

Malcolm's words would come to pass in Los Angeles in August of 1965, almost ten years to the date of the brutal killing of Emmett Till, because as Malcolm said, conditions for an explosion continued to exist. And like in other cities around the country the conditions in Los Angeles had existed for decades because of police brutality. Within a week of Malcolm's speech in Detroit the Emmett Till generation was further traumatized by his assassination in New York.

³²⁵ Malcolm X, "After the Bombing," speech, February 14, 1965, Detroit, available at malcolm-x.org. Davis, Mike; Wiener, Jon. *Set the Night on Fire*. Verso Books. Kindle Edition.

Malcolm's fight for justice in the Stokes killing had made him one of the most visible opponents of police brutality in Los Angeles.

The Watts Rebellion signaled a changing of the guard for the Black Power movement in Los Angeles. Even though it played no major role in the rebellion, the Nation of Islam Mosque once again became the center of an attack by law enforcement agencies based on a tip that pellets coming from the mosque struck a police vehicle.³²⁶ Earlier in the decade the Nation of Islam stood alone in opposition and confrontations with police brutality in Los Angeles.

Mostly in their teens and early twenties at the time of Malcolm's death the Till generation in Los Angeles took action later that year. Like the police action that resulted in the death of Stokes in 1962, on August 11, 1965, law enforcement agents continued to operate as an occupying force of Black Los Angeles. Although, we know that systemic racism exists and can contribute to riotous behavior, the spark for the Watts Rebellion is often attributed to the following people either individually or in various combination of groups: Marquette Frye (born Marquette Price), Ronald Frye, Officer Lee Minikus, Rena Frye, and Joyce Ann Gaines. Previous paragraphs have presented examples of indiscriminate police abuse against various members in the Black community. In 1965, law enforcement appears to go too far for a young Black generation that is large in numbers, organized, and unafraid to defend and/or attack forms of white oppression against their community.

On the evening of August 11, 1965, Marquette Frye and his brother Ronald were pulled over by California Highway Patrol motorcycle officers Lee Minikus and Bob Lewis on Avalon near 116th Street in Los Angeles, not Watts, and not far from their home. Marquette was stopped on the suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol after being observed driving

³²⁶ "Muslim Gunfight: 9 Injured As Officers Hunt for Arms," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, August 18, 1965, 1.

erratically. Frye failed a field sobriety test after admitting he had a few drinks earlier. At this point the story is either Ronald walked to their home and got their mother, or friends alerted Mrs. Rena Frye that her son was being arrested. She walked to the scene where her sons had been pulled over in her car. Upon her arrival to the scene Rena either began scolding her sons, or police officers for how they were handling them. According to the *Los Angeles Times* after Price scolded her sons they began to resist arrest and Mrs. Frye then joined them in berating the officers along with a crowd that had grown to 200 people.³²⁷

On September 2, 1965, Marquette and Ronald Frye changed their pleas from guilty to innocent. In addition to changing his plea Marquette gave his version of what happened, and copies were given to Judge Mary E. Waters and to the probation department. Marquette stated, “The officers were very nice friendly, courteous, and nice when they asked for his driver’s license and he told them he had lost it.”³²⁸ After advising the officer that he had two drinks many hours earlier Frye stated, “It appeared that the officer who was very friendly, was letting me go, when a California Highway patrol officer, in an automobile came around to see what was happening.”³²⁹ It is Marquette Frye’s version of what happened when this officer arrived that suggest that there was abuse by the police. Incidents of police abuse often begin with negative comments about Black people, racist remarks, or an overwhelming show of force that is only reserved for the Black community.

³²⁷ “1,000 Riot In L.A.: Police and Motorists Attacked,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1965, 1.

³²⁸ “Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

³²⁹ “Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

The new officer was very nasty and made some nasty remarks as he was passing me by, said Frye.³³⁰ When Frye's mother arrived on the scene, she and the new officer exchanged words. But it was when the new officer retrieved a shotgun from his car that the atmosphere changed. Prior to this Frye described the crowd which was growing beyond the original 10 to 12 individuals as, "friendly and joking and ribbing the officers a bit."³³¹ The shotgun infuriated the people, and they began to exchange words with the new officer. Similar to the treatment of Fred X Jingles three years earlier, Minikus twisted Rena Frye's arm behind her back and seemed to lift her off the ground and handcuffed her when she tried to explain that she was Frye's mother.³³²

When Rena started to cry due to the pain of the handcuffs, the crowd moved in hollering to "leave the old lady alone." According to Frye when his brother Ronald asked the cops not to hit his mother, they began to strike Ronald and Marquette. Marquette recalled regaining consciousness in a police car amid a crowd of 100 screaming at the cops to not beat them. Marquette Frye stated, "I was then struck again and kicked and passed out and it seemed a day or more before I knew what was going on."³³³ The California Highway patrol reported that officers Lee Minikus and Bob Lewis stopped the Frye car, the brothers resisted arrest and Mrs. Frye heaped abuse on the officers.³³⁴

Joyce Ann Gaines

³³⁰ "Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

³³¹ "Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

³³² "Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

³³³ "Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

³³⁴ "Watts Brothers Tell Incident that Triggered Riot," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1965, A1.

Joyce Gaines is an example of the crowd's perception in 1965 that police officers were increasing their level of violence against African Americans. The Fryes and the CHP are most commonly associated with starting the Watts Rebellion. Joyce Ann Gaines is often deleted from the Watts Rebellion narrative. Although her name and story are not well known, some participants in the Rebellion were aware of what happened to her but not specific details. Gaines worked as a barber in the Gaines Barber Shop, owned by her father at 11905 South Avalon Boulevard, about four blocks from where the Frye brothers were pulled over.

Drawn outside by the sound of sirens Gaines dressed in her barber's jacket joined a few acquaintances walking towards the scene of the commotion. Gaines arrived as the Fryes were being arrested and the crowd was becoming agitated at a police officer who allegedly kicked Marquette Frye while trying to detain him in a police car. The crowd's agitation turned hostile and eventually violent after the Fryes had been removed from the scene. According to witnesses in the crowd that is when law enforcement agents began brutalizing a young pregnant woman.³³⁵

Joyce Ann Gaines was that so-called pregnant woman. It was her barber's jacket that gave the crowd the impression that she was pregnant, which she was not. According to the *LA Times*, officer Gale R. Gilbert testified that he had, "seen a girl standing between two foul-mouthed women and that she stepped forward and spat at officers ahead of me."³³⁶ Gaines denied spitting and although investigators were convinced someone in the crowd did spit they found considerable doubt that it was Gaines.³³⁷ But what happened to Joyce Ann Gaines

³³⁵ "DA Discloses New Riot Cause: New Cause Revealed for Watts Riot," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1965, 1.

³³⁶ "DA Discloses New Riot Cause: New Cause Revealed for Watts Riot," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1965, 28.

³³⁷ "DA Discloses New Riot Cause: New Cause Revealed for Watts Riot," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1965, 28.

following the officers accusations is what the *LA Times* reporters and authors of *Burn Baby Burn* Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy argue started the Watts Rebellion.³³⁸

Similar to the depictions by Taylor Branch of heroic officers who could have chosen not to resort to manhandling Fred X. Jingles, Cohen and Murphy repeat the heroic police narrative even as they suggest those actions led to the Rebellion. Cohen and Murphy write, “Officer Gilbert, remembers that after leaping from his motorcycle and reaching for Joyce: She got back into the crowd and there were three or four people standing beside her. I grabbed her arm and just held on because there were several hundred coloreds trying to pull her away. I just held on until several other CHP and LAPD came over and broke the crowd away from her and I took her out in the street, and someone assisted me-I don’t know who.”³³⁹ In this heroic narrative it appears that one white policeman had just as much as, or more strength than several hundred Negroes in a tug of war over Gaines.

LAPD Officer Harvey L Eubank came to Gilbert’s assistance and observed Gaines cursing and trying to break away. According to Cohen and Murphy, Eubank heard Gaines’s snarl, “Take your hands off me, you white mother-fucker. You no-good son-of-a-bitch white cop-turn me loose. I haven’t done nothing.”³⁴⁰ Throughout this pre rebellion activity Eubank said, Gilbert continued gently walking her backwards. He was not dragging her. He merely had her unbalanced.³⁴¹

Joyce Gaines remembers it quite differently. She remembered turning to walk away because she had a customer waiting. After taking a few steps three officers grabbed her.

³³⁸ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966).

³³⁹ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 55.

³⁴⁰ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 55.

³⁴¹ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 57.

According to Gaines, I was still smiling, until they all grabbed me and was pulling me out in the street, I mean, just dragging me. He never told me I was under arrest or anything. He was just manhandling me.³⁴² Both versions of what preceded Gaines's arrest do state that there was a tug-of-war between the crowd and police with Gaines in the center. Contrary to the police version, Gaines stated that Gilbert was practically choking her to death.³⁴³

A witness to the attack on Ms. Gaines, Mrs. Lacine Holland stated that this was when the crowd became angry. According to Holland, "They resented this; they resented the kicking. But they went along with the arrest of the prisoner [Marquette Frye]'... It seemed the crowd accepted a man being arrested. But what really started it was, as I say, when the Highway Patrolman grabbed the girl.³⁴⁴ The billowing appearance of Gaines barber jacket gave the appearance of her being pregnant. The crowd began to protest, about how the police were treating a pregnant woman as she was subdued and led off. Minutes later bottles and other debris began to fly in protest against police brutality.

Although one of the witnesses suggested that the crowd was okay with the arrest of Marguette Frye, the crowd responded to the injustices that occurred in succession of one and other. The police officer did not need to brandish a weapon in front of a crowd that according reports were jovial. He started the string of events that resulted in the rebellion. It just proved one more time that white officers treated the African American community differently. It is quite unlikely that a white officer would pull out a weapon in a crowd of whites witnessing a somewhat jovial arrest.

³⁴² Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 58.

³⁴³ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 58.

³⁴⁴ Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn Baby Burn* (New York, E. F. Dutton and Co., 1966), 59.

But a white officer did do it to Black people and one thing led to another. This is much more plausible a reason for the rebellion than Marquette Frye driving under the influence. Although one of the witnesses suggested that the crowd was okay with Marquette being taken to jail, they were not okay with a Black woman being manhandled by white police officers. Gerald Horne states in *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* the significance of the manhandling of Joyce Gaines by police. Horne states:

The patriarchal, though comprehensible, complaint emerging from slavery that black men could not protect their families and “their” black women apparently enkindled a major twentieth-century insurrection. The black nationalism that emerged from Watts 1965 can be marked at this point.³⁴⁵

In November three days before Joyce Gaines was to appear for trial on battery charges her case was dismissed. Blame is never assigned to the actions of generations of lawmen that culminate in cities being set ablaze. The protocol for white America is to place blame on the inhabitants of government created ghettos who just wake up one morning and decide there is going to be an unprovoked riot going on when night comes, which this dissertation proves is far from true in its exposure of the crimes committed against Black folks in Los Angeles.

No Pause in the Abuse

The Watts Rebellion raged on for six days under the heat of the California sun and resulted in 34 deaths and over \$40 million in property damage. Over those six days the brutality against Black people by white cops intensified. According to Mike Davis and Jon Wiener in *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, all residents who talked to the newspaper were unanimous that the police and patrolmen had triggered the explosion.³⁴⁶ One witness spoke of seeing ten

³⁴⁵ Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville, The University of Virginia Press 1995), 55.

³⁴⁶ Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, (London, Verso, 2020), 248.

police officers beating one man and when her husband spoke up stating to the police, “You’ve got him handcuffed,” one of the officers answered, “Get out of here, nigger. Get out of here, all you niggers.”³⁴⁷ This is another example of white officers intensifying the level of violence aimed at African American women.

Some of the instances of police brutality that occurred during the rebellion suggest that these men had been occupying the African American community for so long and without restraint that they acted like Black people deserved such treatment. These attitudes still exist among some police officers. Presently, there are still non-Black policemen employing tactics that kill Black people in what should be non-lethal encounters. This occurs even when there are pending court cases all over the media involving the loss of Black life at the hands of white officers. They have gotten away with the abuse for so long they know there is only a small chance of them being held accountable.

In addition to verbal abuse Davis and Wiener provide evidence of abuse directed at women and children. A non-participating observer of the rebellion standing in a phone booth noticed a young boy about twelve years old walking with his mother carrying a lamp. About 20 police jumped out of vehicles and began an assault. The observer was hit on the leg with a club and told, “Get out of here nigger.” Another cop hit the boy in the head with the butt of a shotgun.³⁴⁸ Two cops then jumped on the observer when he grabbed the arm of the cop who struck the boy to keep him from beating the boy. The cops then beat the boy’s face to a bloody pulp, according to Davis and Wiener.³⁴⁹ Davis and Wiener provided daily accounts of police

³⁴⁷ Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, (London, Verso, 2020), 248.

³⁴⁸ Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, (London, Verso, 2020), 252.

³⁴⁹ Mike Davis and Jon Wiener, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, (London, Verso, 2020), 252.

brutality in the midst of a rebellion brought on largely by police brutality. Each of these examples show that the level of police aggression and violence against African Americans in Los Angeles continued to elevate and extend beyond men and women to children, on a level equivalent to what had been happening in the deep south.

In 1965, it was not members of the Nation or its military wing, the Fruit of Islam rebelling in the streets. Their job was done. They showed thousands of young Black people that you could fight back even if it meant losing your life in the process. It was the Emmett Till generation who had been listening and watching Malcolm take on police brutality on the behalf of Black people. Now with Malcolm gone if not them who would rise up in defiance against years of police abuse? They were self-chosen because many of them related to Malcolm most. When asked what he thought about the Civil Rights Movement in 1963 Ron Wilkins stated:

Well, we were watching- We'd also been watching, and in our back of our minds is Emmett Till. Even that, that had, had happened earlier. All of these things. Viola Liuzzo, the white woman that was killed and went down to Alabama, then- we hearing about SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] we hearing about stuff. And as- a lot of this is in the news, 'cause the Civil Rights Movement is- and then of course, is Malcolm, the voice that comes through the strongest for me, 'cause he's talking straight, you know, and Mal- Malcolm, when they say make it, when they say make it plain. You know, it wasn't, I wasn't all that excited about wanting to be with white people. I just want my rights respected. I don't want the police picking on me and, you know, that sort of thing.³⁵⁰

The *Herald Examiner* reported that after the so-called gun battle during the Rebellion a thorough search of the temple was conducted to determine if weapons were hidden in the building. The *LA Times* reported, “The only evidence of any shot having been fired from within the mosque.” [Judge] Jewell said, “are statements from some witnesses that they heard or saw flashes or reports of puffs of smoke.”³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Ron Wilkins interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁵¹ “Younger Defends Action Against Black Muslims *Muhammad Speaks*, September 10, 1965, 3.

Both newspapers reported that no weapons were found following the raid. City Councilman Billy Mills stated, “it is highly doubtful that any shots were fired at all before officers entered on a wild shooting attack resulting in heavy damage as Muslims were subdued and arrested.”³⁵² Police brutality extends beyond physical abuse of the body. In the case of the raid on the Nation of Islam Mosque police peppered the building with 500 gunshots, smashed a printing press, smashed furniture, left fire damage and kicked in doors and walls.³⁵³ A city council committee found that some witnesses of the raid on the temple were afraid to testify for fear of reprisals.³⁵⁴ This is another type of brutality encountered by the African American community. It comes in the form of fear from police reprisals.

Filling the Void

In the wake of Malcolm’s murder and the Watts Rebellion young African Americans found themselves at a loss for leadership against long-standing systemic racism and police brutality but out of the ashes many leaders appeared. The Watts Rebellion activated the second half of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. But missing from this segment of the classic period was the Nation of Islam. With Malcolm’s split from the Nation and his assassination six months before Watts, there was no one voice to represent Black America’s challenge to anti-Black brutality carried out by law enforcement agencies. However, out of the ashes of the pre-Watts NOI and Malcolm’s death grew a multitude of local Black freedom fighters to fill the void in Los Angeles. They are represented in such organizations as the Community Alert Patrol (CAP), US organization, Black Panther Party for Self Defense, Che

³⁵² “Reprisal Fears Slow Probe of Muslim Raid,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 23, 1965, A9.

³⁵³ “Guidebook Tour: Police Break Muslim Taboo, Enter Temple,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 1965, 24.

³⁵⁴ “Reprisal Fears Slow Probe of Muslim Raid,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 23, 1965, A9.

Lumumba Club, Black Student Union (BSU), Watts Labor Community Action Coalition (WLCAC) and more.

Community Alert Patrol

First and foremost, the Watts Rebellion liberated the Emmett Till generation from not responding to anti-Black policing in Los Angeles. Slauson member Ron “Crook” Wilkins stated, “But the rebellion was a major turning point for me in terms of my, in terms of my consciousness. Because, as I said, we call the police just a white gang, the police was almost all white then, the mayor was white, it made it easy to fight the system. You know, once you get a black mayor, and you start getting black police, and, and brown police, it makes it a little tougher.”³⁵⁵ Wilkins was also the co-founder of CAP (Community Alert Patrol) in May of 1966. CAP was one of the most significant reactions to anti-black policing on the West Coast. The patrols started in Los Angeles but received widespread attention in Oakland, California when the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, founded in October 1966, went one step further than CAP and armed its neighborhood patrols. CAP is a prime example of Black Power in their resistance to the status quo of allowing the LAPD privately to molest, brutalize, and kill members of the Black community. Each member of CAP put their lives on the line by observing the actions of law enforcement.

On May 7, 1966, Leonard Deadwyler was pulled over by LAPD officer Jerold M. Bova after running red lights while driving his pregnant wife, Barbara who was in labor to the hospital. Deadwyler used a common practice in Georgia of tying a white handkerchief to the car’s antenna to signify an emergency. Bova leaned in the car with his gun drawn and shot Deadwyler at point-blank range, killing him. Deadwyler’s killing was ruled an accidental homicide. In less than a

³⁵⁵ Ron “Crook” Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

year after the rebellion a Black man died at the hands of an LAPD officer threatening to rekindle the violence that had taken place a year earlier.

The Temporary Alliance of Local Organizations (TALO) was formed in May of 1966 in response to the Deadwyler killing. TALO's chairman, Robert L. Brock, stated that it was formed to keep peace in the community and to avert another riot.³⁵⁶ TALO was a loose confederation of groups ranging from the NAACP to Black Nationalist extremists such as Ron Karenga and Hakim Jamal, founders of US. TALO created CAP to observe police behavior, its sponsor said, and to cool any explosive situations.³⁵⁷ According to the co-director of CAP, Ron Wilkins, the members of TALO had some leadership in the community, but the people who would become the force in the patrol were street toughs from various parts of the city.³⁵⁸

Community Alert Patrol members were from rival gangs from areas such as the Imperial Courts Housing Projects in Watts. So, according to Wilkins the Black Power era in Los Angeles starts with Watts.³⁵⁹ Starting when Watts rival gang members and street clubs begin working together against a common enemy. Gladiator and former US member Ngoma Ali states, "The Watt's Revolt killed the gangs in L.A... All the gangs dissipated over night. There were no more gangs. We were all one now. And this was not because somebody organized it. It was because we participated in an act of rebellion against a system that we all wanted to fight against."³⁶⁰ Many of the people of the Emmett Till generation had already been participating in the yet-to-be labeled Black Power Movement for the previous ten years. Furthermore, in 1965, the phrase

³⁵⁶ "Negro Rights Alliance Racked by Quarrels," *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1966, A1.

³⁵⁷ "Fear Grows That Aid May Alter Alert Patrol," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1967, EB.

³⁵⁸ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁵⁹ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁶⁰ Ngoma, Ali, interview by author, November 14, 2015.

Black Power had yet to become a popular saying anywhere in the country. The term Black Power was popularized by Stokely Carmichael in Greenwood, Mississippi on June 16, 1966, which was after TALO, and CAP were formed in Los Angeles in May of that year.

The Community Alert Patrol accepted volunteers from any neighborhood regardless of gang affiliation. When asked if gangs started to work together during Watts Wilkins replied, yes, Okay. Because we were, we competed during the uprising. It was in a wake, right, after he was killed [Leonard Deadwyler] that we started meeting... it was organized by guys from different neighborhoods.³⁶¹ When African American men born and/or raised in Los Angeles speak of their neighborhoods it has a different meaning than in other cities.

In Los Angeles it has a much more serious meaning. It can mean the difference between life and death when enemies cross territorial boundaries. It means people from a different social club or gang. So according to Wilkins the gangs did not immediately stop after Watts because the Deadwyler killing occurred a year later. This lack of gang activity immediately after Watts served as incubation period for the organizations that developed during the second half of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

The Community Alert Patrol broke from the status quo. Their volunteers were from different gangs who used their own cars to patrol. They could not drink or have drugs in their system and had to have a valid driver's license while on patrol because it was expected that volunteers would be pulled over by the police.³⁶² The response by police to the patrols was to continue to harass Black folks and CAP in particular. On several occasions Wilkins had to take a shoebox full of tickets to Judge White to be dismissed. The police would write tickets for the

³⁶¹ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁶² Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

sole purpose of harassing the young patrollers. Wilkin states, they wrote me a ticket, because my front license plate was, the bottom of the license plate was 11 inches up from the ground, it has to be 12 or more inches. On another occasion Wilkins stated:

They wrote me a ticket, a parking ticket once, for being illegally parked at the intersection of thirty something and Jefferson, and of course, Thirty- They don't intersect nowhere in town. This is the kind of stuff. And so, I go to court, and the judge would have to recess the court, and call us in judge's chambers in the back, and look at the tickets, and he would say, he'd say, "Look, you know, I wanna do you right, and uh, so what I'm gonna have to do, Imma let you go on these eight, I'm gonna get these tickets, I'm gonna squash these. But these seven you got over here, I'm gonna have to send you to driving' school, you gonna have to go to traffic school, so, to keep your license." And he made sure I kept my license.³⁶³

The LAPD treatment of CAP members went beyond just writing them unwarranted tickets.

LAPD members continued their brutal anti-Black campaign against CAP members when possible. Wilkins described one such incident with members of the LAPD:

They started following me, and I tried to, I tri- I raced away trying to run from them. And they caught me on one of them side streets, one of them with all, with factories and nobody around, no witnesses and shit. And they ran up, and they reached- I had my window down- they grabbed me and snatched me through the window, pull me out the damn car, and slam me up against the telephone pole. One of 'em took his pistol out, and put it to my head, and pulled the trigger several times. I guess he had already unloaded, but he pulled the trigger, I said Damn, they're gonna blow me away. That's the kinda shit they did to me. And one time they stopped me, I had just dropped a friend off down by USC, and they stopped me, and they just took me out the car, and said, "You under arrest," I said, "For what?" they said, "You just under arrest." And they started beatin' me in the car- and that's when University was still Southwest, or Southwest was University precinct at the time- and they took me down there, and got me in the cell, and punch me a number times.³⁶⁴

The LAPD continued its brutality against Black people well after the Watts Rebellion. Even the members of CAP who in observing the actions of police hoped to reduce brutality were not immune to the violence. They became victims as well. According to Wilkins, see we were the

³⁶³ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁶⁴ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

first police surveillance group in the country we were the first ones to follow the police. Panthers got that from us.³⁶⁵

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense took community policing to another level in Oakland by taking advantage of the California law that allowed citizens to openly carry loaded weapons. Awareness of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense soared after their May 2, 1967, protest at the California State Assembly. The California State Assembly Committee on Criminal Procedure was scheduled to convene to discuss the "Mulford Act", which would make the public carrying of loaded firearms illegal. The group entered the assembly carrying their weapons, an incident which was widely publicized and led to an explosive growth in membership. Former Chairman and co-founder of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale makes no mention of the Community Alert Patrol in his description of how the Panthers began their patrols. Seale states in *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*:

So we just floated around the streets, and we patrolled pigs. We followed pigs. They wouldn't even know we'd be following them. That's the way that shit went down in the very beginning. That went on for a month, back there in December 1966. Sometimes we'd just be high, going to a party. We'd just be going to a meeting. We'd have our shit with us and while we were going to the meeting. We'd patrol those pigs, trying to catch them wrong.³⁶⁶

However, BPP member Richard Aoki in his biography *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki On Race, Resistance, and A Paradoxical Life* does acknowledge CAP.³⁶⁷ Shortly after the Panthers were formed, they passed out flyers to the community, which included their ten-point program, for feedback. According to Aoki:

³⁶⁵ Ron "Crook" Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

³⁶⁶ Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, (Baltimore, Black Classic Press, 1991), 77.

³⁶⁷ Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai among Panthers: Richard Aoki On Race, Resistance, and A Paradoxical Life*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 135.

“The one thing that came up time and time again was item number seven, about ending police brutality. Bobby had referred to the police as an occupying army and we had internalized that in the program. Now, how were we going to stop the police? Well, there was a community-based organization in Los Angeles called the Community Alert Patrol or CAP. In response to complaints of police brutality, they would follow police cars in their neighborhood and take along tape recorders and cameras to observe the activities of the police. Now, the CAPs people had a rough time ’cause the police did not like what they were doing. Huey went to the penal codes and found that a person has the right to have weapons as long as they were visible. Voilà! Bobby and Huey figured out the way to avoid the cameras and tape recorders from being busted up was we would back it up by armed self-defense. That’s when the first shotgun patrol started.”³⁶⁸

Afro American Association

It would be irresponsible and short-sighted to discuss post Watts Rebellion organizations without mentioning Khalid Abdullah Tariq al-Mansour (also known as Donald Warden) and the Afro- American Association (AAA). The AAA began in September 1960 when students at the University of California (UC) at Berkeley began holding regular meetings. The group's members included Donald Hopkins, Otho Green, Henry Ramsey, and Donald Warden. The Afro-American Association reached hundreds of young people in the Bay Area through street speaking, rallies, and study sessions. The Association grew out of the alienation and racism experienced by black students attending UC Berkeley. By 1962 the group's leader was Donald Warden, a young black nationalist and an attorney from Howard University whose speaking style attracted many militant black students.

The group primarily served as a consciousness-raising tool for African Americans in California, with a reading list that ranged from W. E. B. DuBois to texts on ancient African kingdoms.³⁶⁹ According to Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin in *Black Against the Empire: The*

³⁶⁸ Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai among Panthers: Richard Aoki On Race, Resistance, and A Paradoxical Life*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 135.

³⁶⁹ Peniel Joseph, “Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activities, and the Black Power Movement,” *The Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (2003): 187, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3559065>.

History and Politics of the Black Panther Party, Warden asserted a black nationalist perspective inspired by Malcolm X, emphasizing racial pride and embracing a transcontinental black identity rooted in Africa.³⁷⁰ An examination of Black Power on the west coast suggest all roads directly or indirectly lead to Malcolm X, but many of those roads pass through Warden in route to Malcolm. Warden believed in black capitalism for Black people in that they develop their own business plans where efficiency, thrift and sacrifice are stressed. Former AAA member Les Lacey recalled Warden:

Like a prophet calling for the millennium, he walked through the streets of Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco, in and out of schools and colleges, office buildings and coffeehouses, telling black people where they were. "The time has come to break with white America."³⁷¹

The AAA also produced the album *Burn Baby Burn*, a recording of Warden's views and set to a musical background.³⁷² In the recording Warden notes the distrust and lack of confidence the Watts community had for Dr. King and comedian Dick Gregory who went to intervene during the rebellion on behalf of white people. Warden castigates the civil rights movement and its leadership, including Dr. King for the lack of building Black economic power in black communities with the funding they received.³⁷³ Warden rightfully noted that the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement had not built one business, factory, school, or library in the Black community.

³⁷⁰ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, *Black Against the Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 22.

³⁷¹ Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro: An Autobiography*, quoted in Peniel Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activities, and the Black Power Movement," *The Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (2003): 187, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3559065>.

³⁷² Donald Warden, *Burn Baby, Burn* (Berkeley: Dignity LP, 1965), phonograph, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDeY1w76l5A>

³⁷³ Donald Warden, *Burn Baby, Burn* (Berkeley: Dignity LP, 1965), phonograph, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDeY1w76l5A>

To fully examine the contributions of the AAA to the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles would replace the emphasis of this dissertation on Northern California and not Los Angeles. Therefore as it pertains to Los Angeles Scot Brown states it best in *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*, when he says, “Warden though not specifically defining the group [AAA] as cultural nationalist, set in motion many of the cultural concepts and organizing principles that Karenga utilized in US... and Warden was a political force among other Black nationalist and radical activists in California during the early 1960s.”³⁷⁴

Although Warden does not physically challenge or confront law enforcement his commentary on the Watts Rebellion in *Burn Baby, Burn* is supportive of the Rebellion, extremely critical of civil rights, and fear instilling to white people. It is just as powerful to inspire people to action, as it is to physically confront law enforcement. Warden’s non-physical confrontational cultural nationalism initially attracted members of the Emmett Till generation. Some of those men who rejected his lack of physical action went on to form the most powerful Black Power organizations in California and the country, namely the cultural nationalist US organization in Southern California and the revolutionary nationalist Black Panther Party for Self Defense in both Northern and Southern California. Warden’s words were an exercise in Black Power because words alone are threatening enough to end the lives of powerful black leaders in America, and it does not matter to the powers that be whether they espouse civil rights or Black Power.

US

One of Warden’s followers included Maulana Karenga (formerly Ronald Everett) a

³⁷⁴ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 28.

Maryland transplant to Los Angeles. According to former AAA and SNCC member and co-founder of the Black Panther Party Political (not to be confused with the Black Panther Party for Self Defense) John Floyd, Warden's AAA arrived in Los Angeles in 1963 attracting most of the Black militants to its teachings.³⁷⁵ Karenga served as the organization's president. Its leadership included Ayuko Babu, Tut Hayes, Chaka, Jahid, Akida Kimani, Lloyd Hawkins, and Dadisi. According to Floyd, all mental giants. A lack of discipline and amongst such strong personalities led to the AAA's demise in 1964. However, brief its existence in Los Angeles its connection to Black Power is that produced leaders who would continue to work towards eliminating the abusive actions of law enforcement agencies during the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.

The US organization was established immediately following the Watts Rebellion, but it was not created in direct response to police brutality. It was formed by Maulana Karenga, Hakim Jamal, Dorothy Jamal, Tommy Jacquette-Mfikiri (Jalifu), Karl Key-Hekima, Ken Seaton-Msemaji, Famuel Carr-Damu (Ngao Damu), Sanamu Nyeusi, and Brenda Haiba Karaenga.³⁷⁶ US was chosen as a dual reference to the organization and the community its members chose to serve: us blacks as opposed to "them" Whites.³⁷⁷ US grew out of a study session called the Circle of Seven, led by Karenga, at the Black-owned Aquarian Book Shop in South LA.

Although what was to become the US organization had been formed prior to Watts, according to Scot Brown, "Advocacy of self defense was a central part of the US organization's

³⁷⁵ John Floyd, "Marcus, Marx, Malcolm, And Militants," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 20, 1971, 5.

³⁷⁶ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 38.

³⁷⁷ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 38.

posture, and was in large measure, a lasting consequence of the Watts Revolt of 1965.³⁷⁸ Just because the US organization was not labeled a Black revolutionary nationalist organization rooted in a response to police brutality does not mean it did not share similar reactions to Black oppression.

In the first issue of the organization's newspaper, *Message to the Grassroots* Karenga is listed as its chairman and Jamal as its founder. According to Brown Jamal led a push to situate Malcolm, his long-time associate and cousin by marriage as US's main ideological and inspirational leader.³⁷⁹ However, by the summer of 1966 the ideological differences between the two led to Jamal's departure. With Karenga as the organization's single leader Warden's cultural nationalism became its leading ideology.

Based on interviews conducted with former members of US and Warden's AAA Brown's description of the founding of US is not fully accurate. Jamal may have been just a figurehead and/or used to legitimize US because of his relationship with Malcolm. According to former AAA member Ayuko Babu:

Jamal became famous. Because when Malcolm would come—he was, he was a printer. And so, when Malcolm would come out here, he stayed at Jamal's house so he wouldn't have to stay around people in the Nation, around other people he actually had a family where we could come over their house and not be bothered with people calling Malcolm—that whole thing. So that's what Jamal's role was, he was he was a family member through Betty. But it was he was not involved. Okay.³⁸⁰

The assassination of Malcolm left a massive void in the Movement during the classic period in Los Angeles. Karenga wasted no time in filling that void.

³⁷⁸ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 38.

³⁷⁹ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 39.

³⁸⁰ Joseph "Lil Joe" Johnson, interview by author, October 18, 2018.

Karenga exploited Jamal's relationship with Malcolm X during this time of flux in the Black Power Movement. "So when Malcolm was killed, then everybody looked around to see who is going to be the next leader and so forth and so on. And Dr. [Maulana] Karenga went and got Jamal and said Jamal was Malcolm's cousin, and brought him into the US organization. That's how that happened. He became prominent in this organization. So, this was this printer, this little nice little brother, who all of a sudden, Joe, he becomes this celebrity," stated Babu.³⁸¹

Babu describes Jamal quite differently than Brown and Jamal himself. Jamal was far from a "nice little brother." In *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* Jamal describes himself and other members of Temple 27 as ready to kill and even die if Malcolm issued the order to retaliate against the LAPD's killing of Ronald Stokes.³⁸² However, Hakim Jamal was not Malcolm X. Like many members of the Nation, including Malcolm, he came from the streets. But there was only one Malcolm in the Movement.

There was only one Karenga in US, and it was his cultural nationalist vision for the organization that ultimately mattered. It became apparent that Karenga had used Jamal to legitimize US in the summer of 1966 just before Jamal's departure from the organization. According to Scot Brown sometime prior to the spring of 1966 it was not uncommon for members of US to wear t-shirts showing an emblem of Malcolm X's portrait. Between the spring and summer of 1966 Malcolm's face on t-shirts had been replaced with Karenga's face.³⁸³ Former US member Ngoma Ali recalled, "And we used to wear Malcolm X sweatshirts and t-shirts to the Simba meeting. And then one day, Karenga said something about Malcolm X, and

³⁸¹ Joseph "Lil Joe" Johnson, interview by author, October 18, 2018.

³⁸² Hakim A. Jamal, *From the Dead Level: Malcolm X and Me* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 194.

³⁸³ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 39.

we could only wear Maulana's t-shirts now.³⁸⁴ Hakim Jamal was not a cultural nationalist and did not believe teaching Swahili or rooting an African American movement in African culture was relevant in modern Black society. He left the US organization in 1966 and later founded the Malcolm X Foundation in Compton, California.

Karenga did not suggest overthrowing the government, at least not without a cultural revolution first.³⁸⁵ According to Alphonso Pinkney in *Red Black And Green: Black Nationalism in the United States*, "Unlike the revolutionary nationalists, the cultural nationalists do not advocate at the present time the use of revolutionary violence or even the stockpiling of arms."³⁸⁶ He even quotes Karenga stating, "To play revolution is to get put down... Violence in itself without consideration for time is as inadequate as nonviolence."³⁸⁷ In reality the US organization did not function like the cultural nationalist organizations Pinkney described. It was not violence averse and did engage in physical acts of Black Power.

Contradictory to US doctrine, they did not hide what membership entailed when recruiting. Like other members of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles Ngoma Ali cites Emmett Till and anti-Black brutality in the South as his motivation for joining the Movement and the US organization in particular. He was angry and felt that war was being waged against Black people. Watching people peacefully protesting being attacked by police, bitten by police dogs, and hearing family members discuss lynching and castration of Black men forced him into action.

³⁸⁴ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 14, 2015.

³⁸⁵ Maulana Karenga, "The Quotable Karenga," in *The Black Power Revolt: A Collection of Essays* ed. Floyd B. Barbour, (Boston: F. Porter Sargent, 1968), 164.

³⁸⁶ Alphonso Pinkney, *Red Black And Green: Black Nationalism in the United States* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976), 148.

³⁸⁷ Maulana Karenga, *The Black Power Revolt: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Floyd B. Barbour (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1968), 164.

Ali's choice of the US organization appears no more complicated than a young man choosing which branch of military service he might enlist in. It was about standing up to white supremacy. Ngoma stated, "I was attracted to the US Organization because I was told they were going to teach us how to be guerillas, that we were going to be fighters and that we were going, we were going to wage guerilla war against this institution here. And that's what attracted me there."³⁸⁸ While Karenga was publicly denouncing boisterous armed struggle in favor of creating a cultural center for African Americans the US organization did in fact effectively and under cover strike out against white oppression.

Unlike some other organizations US purposely kept a low profile in some of its actions in order to not draw attention from governmental agencies. Although the Oakland based BPP received the most publicity and notoriety for anti-police activities and considered the Vanguard of the Movement the US organization was quite effective in its clandestine battle against white supremacy. Some acts included financing the organization's so-called cultural revolution in underground criminal activity. After dark underground criminal operations included: bank robberies, raids of armories, the development of explosive materials and devices, and more.³⁸⁹ On August 19, 1968, Ngoma Ali began serving what would be a two-year sentence for four counts of armed robbery and five counts of kidnapping in his attempt to rob a Safeway grocery store.³⁹⁰ It was one of the few times his clandestine operations proved unsuccessful.

While Ngoma's comrades in the Black Power Movement are referred to as the Emmett Till generation, he refers to the Los Angeles cohort as the Children of the Watts Revolt. That

³⁸⁸ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 14, 2015.

³⁸⁹ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 90.

³⁹⁰ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 22, 2015.

experience empowered its participants who would go on to join post-Watts Black Power organizations in Los Angeles. Although Karenga did not publicly support physical violence as a cultural nationalist some of his recruits such as Ali did. To them Watts was all about proving to themselves that they could win battles against law enforcement agencies in their community.

Like their tactics in the Watts Rebellion those US organization members did not try to defend territory or protect buildings. They attacked guerilla style staying on the move. They trained hard, hit and ran, and did their best to avoid getting caught.³⁹¹ Today their actions might be considered terroristic because their objective was to incite fear in the white supremacist enemy.

Using Ngoma Ali as an example of the US membership and US as an example of other organizations before and during the classic Black Power Movement in LA their objectives did not seem that dissimilar. The United Negro Improvement Association, the Nation of Islam, the Afro American Association, The Republic of New Africa, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense all had an underlying theme of independence from white America and its oppression and brutality against African Americans. According to Ali, “But our ambition was to control our community. No more police brutality on us.”³⁹²

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense

There was no other group more associated with being created as a result of police brutality than the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP). Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, the founders of the Black Panther Party were followers of the AAA. Malcolm X and Robert Williams also influenced them. The thing about history is that it is usually told in a linear or

³⁹¹ Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 22, 2015.

³⁹² Ngoma Ali, interview by author, November 22, 2015.

chronological form. That is not how it occurs. The Black Panther Party is a case in point. The black BPP was formed in October of 1966 in Oakland California in response to police brutality in the Black community. Its Southern California chapter was officially formed a little over a year later in February 1968. However, its origins actually predate the BPP founding in 1968 and the Watts Rebellion. Nevertheless, events in 1965 had a profound effect on what the Southern California chapter of the BPP would become.

In *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. continue to repeat the rarely questioned start date. According to Bloom and Martin, “In January 1968, Eldridge Cleaver recruited Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter to organize a chapter of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles.”³⁹³ In *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* Judson L. Jeffries and Malcolm Foley write a little more flamboyantly of the Southern California chapter’s founding at the same time. According to Jeffries and Foley the formal arrival of the BPP on a Sunday afternoon at a community poetry reading at the Black Congress, sponsored by the BSA (Black Student Alliance) in February 1968 read like a made-for TV Hollywood story.³⁹⁴ Quoting BPP member Elaine Brown, a few hours into the festivities the double doors to the hall flung open and in walked Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter.³⁹⁵

Bunchy Carter was a charismatic poet, ex convict, leader of the Slauson Renegades set, activist, martyr and mythic figure in Los Angeles’s Black Power history. Carter is the most

³⁹³ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 2014), 84.

³⁹⁴ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, “To Live and Die L.A.,” in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 261.

³⁹⁵ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, “To Live and Die L.A.,” in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 261.

celebrated member of the Slausons or any other gang from the 1950s-1960s era as well as the Southern California Chapter of the BPP. He was one of the toughest young men in Los Angeles. He cannot be overlooked in the history of social clubs/gangs and Black Power in Los Angeles. To some people in the audience at the poetry reading the announcement of the Southern California chapter of the BPP came unexpectedly in a declaration made by Bunchy. According to Jeffries and Foley Bunchy stated:

I came here to make an announcement,” he said triumphantly. “We have just officially formed the Southern California chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.” “Right on,” yelled some of those in attendance. “I am here today to make it blatantly clear that we are the Black Panther Party, that there is but one Black Panther Party and that is the Party headed by minister of defense Huey P. Newton—ain’t that right John Floyd.” (Floyd was the head of the Black Panther Political Party, a different group.) “I said, ain’t that right John Floyd!” repeated Bunchy as Floyd sat silently. “And we don’t want to hear about another soul trying to use our name again unless authorized by the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party. Is that clear, John Floyd!”³⁹⁶

John Floyd co-founded the Black Panther Political Party in Los Angeles in 1966 after being disillusioned with an assembly race in Watts. Floyd was the campaign manager for candidate Gerald Stevens. Stevens a Watts native lost to Leon Ralph who was not from Watts and backed by white politician Jesse Unruh. According to Floyd:

So then, Babu and I - Ayuko Babu, the founder of the Pan-African Film Festival - he and I sat down and we, we must have talked eight hours, about maybe we ought to start our own just, Black political party. And that's what we started, we started the Black Panther, I had - by the way prior to that time I had been down in Alabama, and I had worked with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, which later became the Black Pan- everybody started calling it the Black Panther Party, that's really the original Black Panther Party, is the Lowndes County, Louisiana, [ed. clarification: Lowndes County, Alabama] uh, um, Party, anyway. Again, I'm rushing, it's just so much. - So, we decided that we were going to start our own political party. That we were gonna register people.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, “To Live and Die L.A. in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 263.

³⁹⁷ John Floyd, interview by author, April 13, 2019.

During the formation of the Black Panther Political Party Floyd knew nothing of Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, or the Black Panther Party for Self Defense.³⁹⁸ However, a year and half later their popularity and reputation had grown following the BPP serving as security for the widow of Malcolm X, Betty Shabazz, during a visit to Northern California, the armed entry into the California State Assembly in the capital building, and BPP Minister of Defense Huey Newton's killing of Oakland police officer John Frey.

Prior to Bunchy's announcement that no unauthorized organizations use the Black Panther name there were no problems between the two groups. According to Floyd prior to Newton being jailed for the killing of Frey the two men had a spoken agreement.³⁹⁹ However, things changed when Newton went to jail and the BPP started the Free Huey Movement. Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver became the voice and face of the Black Panther Party. Floyd stated, "Eldridge Cleaver said that we either had to join them, which we had no intentions of doing, or we had to change our name to the Pink Pussycat, something, or something, it's something insulting."⁴⁰⁰ At the same time SNCC had disassociated itself with non-violence and was forming a close relationship with the Oakland based BPP. Representatives from SNCC flew to LA and Oakland to end the conflict. Out of those conversations it was decided that the Black Panther Political Party would cease and become a part of SNCC.

So, prior to Bunchy's announcement it had been decided that Floyd would relinquish the Panther name. As mentioned before Los Angeles can be very territorial. It was not enough to just relinquish the name. The activist community needed to be publicly informed. Had these

³⁹⁸ John Floyd, interview by author, April 13, 2019.

³⁹⁹ John Floyd, interview by author, April 13, 2019.

⁴⁰⁰ John Floyd, interview by author, April 13, 2019.

decisions not been discussed prior to the poetry reading things could have turned quite violent.

Floyd States:

We had already made a decision that we were going to become SNCC, because all this is happening all at the same time. I was sitting in the audience, there must be about 50 people sitting in audience. Bunchy gets up (unintelligible) like frankly, I never met the brother before, never heard of him. But there's - and this is important, and you might want to go interview, he's in state prison, name is Wilbur Terry, okay? Okay. Wilbur Terry, who I know, is Bunchy's friend, because I know Terry, I don't know Bunchy, I know Terry. Bunchy starts running his mouth, attacking me, about, "You better change your name," and so, we'd already voted to change our name, frankly, and all of this is going on. And frankly, I think he - I think the brother was high - but anyway, he's up there talking this - I'm gonna be perfectly honest with you, I was armed, I had a gun, okay? I had nine millimeter on me - and he's there talking this, and I look over at Terry, and Terry's got his hand [laughs] like this, and he shakes his hand like this - now I know Terry from from the street - so, I say, "Cool," I jus- hey. After the speech, Bunchy and I went back in one of the rooms, and I told him, "Bunchy, we already had decided to you know, what's all this nigga bullshit, we don't need this confusion." That's the only time I ever saw Bunchy in my life. That was it. That's what really happened.⁴⁰¹

When John Floyd mentioned Wilbur Terry made a motion with his hand, he was letting Floyd know that he was ready to kill. According to Black Panther Elaine Brown in *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* Wilbur Terry and twenty other members of Bunchy's inner circle sometimes referred to as the Wolf Pack accompanied Bunchy to that poetry reading at the Black Congress.⁴⁰² According to BPP member Long John Washington, "Wilbur Terry was the first captain of the Southern California chapter of the BPP."⁴⁰³

Elaine Brown also recalled Bunchy-making statements that afternoon that defined what Black Power meant to the second chapter of the BPP. Bunchy went on to state, "I also came here to let you know that it is the position of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense that we are the vanguard of the revolution in the United States. We are the vanguard party. And the vanguard

⁴⁰¹ John Floyd, interview by author, April 13, 2019.

⁴⁰² Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Anchor Books, 1994), 123.

⁴⁰³ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

party is declaring all out war on the pig. We are declaring war, and we are declaring that from this point forward, nobody speak about Black Power or revolution unless he's willing to follow the example of the vanguard, willing to pick up the gun, ready to die for the people."⁴⁰⁴ Bunchy's public announcement of the Southern California chapter of the BPP exemplified what the assassination of Malcolm X and the Watts Rebellion had initiated three years earlier in 1965. But now it was taking shape in organizations housed under one roof in the Black Congress an organization for diverse groups which included the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), US, and others. The close proximity of groups with differing ideologies housed in the Black Congress would led to conflicts and gave law enforcement an easier point of entry for undercover agents and informants.

Jeffries and Foley include a quote from an interview with BPP member Roland Freeman, who recalled a less flamboyant beginning of the Southern California Chapter of the BPP. Roland Freeman, a section leader, "remembered that a small cadre was invited to a meeting and from that a committed nucleus was formed. This initial group took the oath of the Mau Mau, a tribe of dedicated Kenyans that resisted colonial power. The Mau Mau pledged that they would never give in nor give up. The initial core of Panthers pledged a similar oath."⁴⁰⁵

Recollections of members of the BPP and other primary sources reveal discrepancies with the often-celebrated BPP 1968 start date, which impacts the role Watts played in the formation of the Southern California chapter of the BPP. In 1968, the Mau Mau was not a new concept to the members of the BPP who had served time in prison with Bunchy and Eldridge Cleaver. According to Long John, Bunchy started the Mau Mau in Soledad based on Malcolm

⁴⁰⁴ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Anchor Books, 1994), 124.

⁴⁰⁵ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, "To Live and Die L.A., in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 263.

X's suggestion that "we need a Mau Mau to win freedom and equality for Negroes in the United States."⁴⁰⁶

Before Bobby Seale and Huey Newton formed the BPP in Oakland the seeds for a BPP type organization in Southern California were already being sown behind the walls of Soledad State Prison. Unlike Maulana Karenga these men were not academics they were convicted criminals like Carter and Cleaver. In *Nine Lives of a Panther: A Story of Survival*, BPP member Wayne Pharr recalls, "Ronald Freeman and John "Long John" Washington were field secretaries. Their job was to travel throughout the Southern California region to check on the offices and the work of all Panthers. Whenever they showed up, they were in charge."⁴⁰⁷ Long John was much more than a field secretary he was also a member of the prison inner circle that would become the founders of the Southern California chapter of the BPP.

Long John ended up in Soledad in 1964 for pushing back against police abuse.⁴⁰⁸ His '56 Buick started leaking oil on the manifold and was smoking on his way home. Police approached him after he had pulled into his driveway. According to Long John, "And they kept saying you know, come over here and trying to get me on the sidewalk. The guy, one of them reached over like that and said you heard me nigger and grabbed me in the collar pull me like that and I just got busy [fought back] and ended up in jail."⁴⁰⁹ Like other cases examined here what could have been a simple police stop and maybe the issuing of a ticket escalated into demeaning-racist-name-calling and police abuse. Although not politicized at the time Long John was a member of

⁴⁰⁶ "Malcolm Favors Mau Mau in U.S.: At Harlem Rally, He Urges Negroes to Even Score," *New York Times*, December 21, 1964, 20.

⁴⁰⁷ Wayne Pharr, *Nine Lives of a Panther: A Story of Survival* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 143.

⁴⁰⁸ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴⁰⁹ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

a new generation of young Black people who were not going to let white police officers disrespect them as they had done to Black people before. Long John was also a Slauson.

Bunchy Carter was serving a four-year sentence for armed robbery when Long John arrived at Soledad Prison. According to Long John, before there was any Black Studies, Cleaver and Bunchy who were cell mates, had a study group in Soledad Central wing, which gave them a connection to Black history.⁴¹⁰ Although Long John knew of Bunchy and his reputation, he did not meet Bunchy until he was transferred to North wing where Long John was housed along with other younger YA (Youth Authority) type inmates.

Long John recalled, “It was mostly, you know, the younger crowd when they sent Bunchy over, man, everything changed because then he started organizing and we started dealing with being the Mau Mau. So, when we get out all we was gonna do is rob, kill, steal, whatever you know.”⁴¹¹ These conversations are occurring behind prison walls in late 1964 prior to Malcolm being killed in February 1965, the Watts Rebellion in August 1965, and long before the Mau Mau is referenced in February of 1968. So, the Black Panther Party or some similar organization was in the making and not necessarily a product of the Watts Rebellion. And it does draw the attention of young men like Long John who had an encounter with abusive policing. Long John is released from Soledad on June 6, 1966, and Bunchy and Cleaver at the end of that year. By February 1967 Cleaver joins the BPP and convinces Bunchy to start the Southern California Chapter.⁴¹² This contradicts the February 1968 start date in both *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, and *Comrades: A Local History of*

⁴¹⁰ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴¹¹ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴¹² Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

the Black Panther.

Byron Booth, another inmate and future Black Panther who was imprisoned in Soledad prior to Long John's arrival confirms that the Black Panther Party was an idea being floated in Soledad prior to 1965. Booth was a member of the creative writing class along with Cleaver and Bunchy. Booth states, "I took a creative writing class. In that class, there was six of us, one was Eldridge Cleaver, one was Bunchy, myself, and two other guys I can't remember."⁴¹³ The group discussed more than just writing. When asked what they talked about Booth stated:

Well, actually, mostly what we talked about in the class, was forming an organization that would protect black people. Because at that time, black folks were marching down South, getting bit by dogs, whooped by white police, with billy clubs, getting shot, and hung, raped, and all kind of things. And it was just sickening to see this stuff on the news releases and things. ... The Black Panther Party that began here, before that, there was a Black Panther Party in Lawalls, Lowells, [ed. note: he means Lowndes County, Alabama] Mississippi, to register voters- Yeah. Yeah, called the Black Panther Party. This, we first read about, and we were saying, We need to name the organization, we wanted to build called the Black Panthers. And we decided that when we get out, each as we get out, we'd organize this thing. Not- knowing that Huey Newton had already started creating one on the outside.⁴¹⁴

In addition to being influenced by what was happening in the South the inmates also had access to and were influenced by Donald Warden's Afro American Association. According to both Booth and Long John the group that was developing in Soledad had the same goal as the US organization, to disrupt and destroy the oppressive system of government on behalf of the people.

The killing of Malcolm and the Watts Rebellion only increased the men in Soledad's desire to strike back and they did, violently. Interviews with Long John, reveal he is very much still living the life of an underground Black Panther. He is very careful in the words he chooses

⁴¹³ Byron Booth, interview by author, October 3, 2016.

⁴¹⁴ Byron Booth, interview by author, October 3, 2016.

and what he reveals. For example, when he was asked how they handled Malcolm's killing in Soledad, without hesitation he said, "We started killing."⁴¹⁵ Long John made it very clear that being locked up for assault meant that you could not get into altercations while serving that time. Nevertheless, he explained, "you could do it if you didn't get caught."⁴¹⁶ When asked whom they killed Long John answered equally as blunt, "White folks, Caucasians."⁴¹⁷ Long John recalled the following experience after Malcolm's death:

That one of them Alibino, he said when he said he said, "Malcolm dead, what you gonna do now nigger." I said, "Kill you motherfucker." And the tower guard said he seen the lips work, so they put me on lockdown, you know, confined to rooms where they let the long bar go in gotta come and unlock your door. I was on that but while I'm on that three or four people died around me. They was watching me, couldn't figure out how all that happened.⁴¹⁸

The retaliation against whites following the killing of Malcolm X from Long John's description sounded very personal. It seemed like revenge for losing someone close to him even though he had never met Malcolm X.

The Watts Rebellion showed them the power they possessed as an organized group. Long John and other future Panthers watched the Watts Rebellion on television while still in Soledad. For five days their contemporaries on the street showed them and the rest of the world how Black Power could be used against the LAPD. It was similar to what members of the Nation of Islam had done three years earlier, only on a much grander scale. Upon release their goal was to make all of California Watts. Bunchy was organizing men to procure money, guns, and drugs but not for personal reasons as they had done before. Their idea of the Mau Mau concept previously

⁴¹⁵ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴¹⁶ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴¹⁷ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴¹⁸ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

used to simply wreak havoc was transformed into being applied on the street for the benefit of the people.⁴¹⁹ Long John stated, “And then when we got out, instead of us doing, you know, arbitrary robbing taking things, he's bringing it together and do it for the people rather than ourselves.”⁴²⁰

Once Bunchy Carter was on the outside the Southern California chapter took shape rather quickly. As early as January 1967 they began organizing the people. According to Long John who sometimes served as Bunchy's driver they would recruit wherever people gathered. They recruited on street corners and at their own Black Panther Party parties, usually held on Saturday nights at the Black Congress. They had a captive audience so they would stop the music and talk about Black history to the people as they had done in Soledad and on the following Monday new recruits would join. Wayne Pharr suggests that 1968 was merely the “coming out” of the Southern California chapter. Now the local group could move from being underground to being a recognizable organization in full operation and ready to challenge the power structure,” according to Pharr.⁴²¹

Bunchy Carter appealed to a cross-section of the African American community. He embodied all the qualities of Malcolm X: former criminal, prisoner, a member of the NOI, gangster, and revolutionary for Black people. According to Judson and Foley he started with twenty men in February 1968 and by July of that same year membership had grown to 400 members.⁴²² Although it is suggested earlier that the Southern California chapter was founded in

⁴¹⁹ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴²⁰ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

⁴²¹ Wayne Pharr, *Nine Lives of a Panther: A Story of Survival* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 93.

⁴²² Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, “To Live and Die L.A., in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 267.

Soledad its membership was not totally made up of the formerly incarcerated. The chapter was also made up of Slausons, former prison mates, brothers from other gangs, college students and graduates, states Jeffries.⁴²³ But it also included men and women from lower-and working-class families. Many had completed high school, attended college, and graduated from college. Most had no history of activism. Others were ex-military some of whom had served in Vietnam such as John Huggins and Geronimo Pratt.

Unlike the US organization the overt actions of police resistance and oversight exhibited by the BPP drew many new recruits. It did not take long for the BPP to become the largest Black militant group in Los Angeles. But the increase in membership took more than just the efforts of Bunchy Carter. Some of the members who helped build the chapter included: Raymond “Masai” Hewitt, Gwen Goodloe, Elaine Brown, John and Erika Huggins, and Elmer “Geronimo” Pratt. It is important to mention here that the Southern California chapter has a reputation for having an overwhelming number of members who were Slausons. Slauson members Bird and Long John both men state there were no more than ten to twenty Slausons in the BPP in Los Angeles.⁴²⁴

On June 8, 1967, the Mulford Act became law. It prohibited the public carrying of loaded firearms by the time the Southern California chapter was formed. The reputation behind images of armed BPP members confronting police officers appealed to the Emmett Till generation. The cop-watching tactic continued but was much less volatile and less sensational. But there was significantly more to the Black Panther Party for Self Defense than just that. According to Jeffries the Los Angeles office had three components: the social/political element that worked closely with the community meeting the needs of the people. The work the Panthers did in this

⁴²³ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, “To Live and Die L.A. in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 267.

⁴²⁴ Long John Washington, interview by author, February 20, 2022. Bird, interview by author, February 28, 2016.

component allowed them to gain the support of the community, which they would need in the future.

The Panthers also had a military dimension. They were the soldiers on the ground who acquired weapons and trained themselves for revolution. These were the men Long John said were going to make California Watts. An example of their attempts to bring Watts to California was revealed during a Panther conspiracy trial on July 23, 1971. According to former Panther Melvin S. Smith (AKA Cotton) in November of 1969, he and other Panthers used to go into the sewer tunnels at night and make maps trying to find the 77th station. In November Elmer Pratt (Geronimo), head of the Los Angeles group gave orders to find a place under there close enough to blow the place up, Smith said.⁴²⁵ Wayne Pharr who along with Smith was in the BPP office when the LAPD attacked mentions the sewage system but nothing about a plan using it to blow up the 77th street police station. Pharr did acknowledge working on a tunnel to use as an escape route.

Although the Southern California chapter of the BPP went above ground in 1968 it still maintained a very powerful underground component. It is sometimes hard to distinguish where the military arm and the underground began and ended, which was probably intentional. According to Jeffries the underground consisted of men Bunchy could vouch for, men he had seen throw down in the streets of Los Angeles, men who had been tested-some by Bunchy himself.⁴²⁶ Interviews with Slausons confirm that those men were probably Slausons and not necessarily Panthers. According to Slausons Kumasi and Bird, Bunchy was always a Slauson first and Panther second. When asked if the Slausons became a part of Bunchy's revolutionary

⁴²⁵ Roy Haynes, "Ex-Panther Tells of Plan to Blow Up L.A. Police Station," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 24, 1971, A1.

⁴²⁶ Judson L. Jeffries and Malcom Foley, "To Live and Die L.A.," in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 267.

ring Kumasi replied, “They didn't give a damn about his politics. I'm with you. So, wherever you go, whatever you do, whoever you encounter, your enemy is my enemy.”⁴²⁷

The men recalled an incident between Panthers and Slausons at the Black Congress. Kumasi stated, “His squad was not Panthers. What happened one time when some Slausons went to the Panther headquarters and dudes at the doorway tried to jam them. Bunchy told them, "Man, they'll burn this place to the ground. Them is Slausons. They don't give a shit about no Panthers.”⁴²⁸ Before concluding this section there is another myth about the Slausons that continues to be repeated that should be addressed. Bunchy Carter was the leader of the Renegades set of the Slausons but according to Kumasi and Bird it never had 5000 members, maybe 500 in the Renegades and 5000 total Slausons.⁴²⁹

Jeffries provides examples of the ethical codes and types of activities the L.A. underground engaged in such as robbing institutions to finance their activities but no names. This is in line with what Long John said previously, that they needed to direct their criminal activities toward the white power structure and not the people. The general body did not know their identities so they could not reveal who they were.

The Black Liberation Army was an underground Black Power Revolutionary organization. Although its exact founding can be difficult to establish it has been suggested that members who left the BPP following Eldridge Cleaver’s expulsion in 1971 started it. However, in *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party*, Akinyele Omowale Umoja, quotes Geronimo Pratt who states that the BLA "as a movement concept pre-dated and was broader than

⁴²⁷ Bird, interview by author, February 28, 2016.

⁴²⁸ Bird, interview by author, February 28, 2016.

⁴²⁹ Bird, interview by author, February 28, 2016.

the BPP.⁴³⁰ Long John made a similar statement predating the BLA in respect to the BPP. Long John states that everyone in the Southern California chapter was Mau Mau and then Bunchy changed it over to the BLA and Southern California became the military arm of the BPP and Northern California the political arm. Umoja also suggest the Southern California chapter of the BPP had an underground almost from its inception.

Long John only mentioned attacks the BLA claimed responsibility for. He explained that the BLA was part of the underground and it operated independently with no centralization. However, it was used to carry out the works of the political arm. According to Long John' "if they say shut it down, shut it down; open it up, open it up; kill, kill. All the political arm had to do was make a statement and whoever could afford to carry it out did."⁴³¹ The BLA was responsible for several shootings and murders of law enforcement agents.

The BLA and the underground were perhaps the strongest overall responses to police brutality in Los Angeles. In 2022, Long John continued to be very vague and evasive about the activities carried out by the Mau Mau, the BLA, and the underground. We will probably never know every incident these organizations were involved in for the Black freedom struggle and that is how they had to be set up in order to be effective.

Conclusion

The Watts Rebellion had a profound impact on young African Americans in Los Angeles. They realized that they did not have to continue to be victims of police abuse. They responded like members of the Nation of Islam had done in 1961 and 62. The Watts Rebellion ushered in the second phase of the classic Black Power period in Los Angeles, which produced several

⁴³⁰ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," in *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party*, eds. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 6.

⁴³¹ Long John Washington, interview by author, June 16, 2018.

organizations that joined the Black freedom struggle but some organizations such as the Southern California chapter of the Black Panther Party had begun engaging in so-called posts Watts type activities much earlier than 1965.

In 1962, the Nation of Islam was the vanguard of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. Five years later things had changed drastically. Inspired by the NOI and the AAA several new organizations were in place to assume the position of vanguard. The Community Alert Patrol (CAP), US organization, and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense were the top contenders for the position. Ultimately the Black Panther Party would become the vanguard in Los Angeles, but not without problems and losses, that will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 The Demise of the Classic Period in Southern California

Introduction

Unknown to the members of the Black Power Movement in Southern California the FBI had initiated a full-scale attack against their organizations. Prior to the Watts Rebellion police oppression occurred mostly in the form of physical brutality in the black community. Following the death of Malcolm X and the Watts Rebellion in 1965, the Emmett Till generation began to organize and stand up to police brutality. Law enforcement could not beat or kill them all into submission or out of existence, so the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) began using sophisticated tactics developed in global intelligence and counterintelligence agencies to suppress the growth of a Black Power Movement at the local level across the country.

The FBI's assault on the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles serves as a sample of new abusive methods employed in Black communities and academia to suppress and/or destroy the growing movement. One of the most important developments to occur during the Black Power Movement was the creation of Black Studies centers and departments on college campuses across the nation. At the University of California, Los Angeles, the process of creating the Black Studies department became a flashpoint for the FBI instigated friction between the US organization, the Black Student Union, and the Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party. FBI actions contributed to the shooting death of two students who were members of the Black Panther Party and the demise of the classic period of the Long Black Power movement in Southern California.

The Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI

A small band of young white liberals masterminded the break-in to the FBI office in Philadelphia, which revealed the agencies actions against the Black Power Movement. The

shootings and the demise of the classic period of the movement may not have happened were it not for the FBI's role in exploiting differences and creating hostilities between organizations. According to Betty Medsger in *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI* violence was promoted by the FBI in Black organizations so often in the 1960s and 1970s that it is impossible, in retrospect, to know whether any given violent confrontation that took place in that era was instigated by genuine animosities among actual members of the groups or was instigated by FBI agents or informers, many of whom infiltrated such groups and promoted violence.⁴³²

White allies have been a consistent factor in the Black Freedom struggle whether it was participating in the Underground Railroad or the Abolitionist Movement during the nineteenth century. In 1971, mathematics professor and peace activist William Davidon organized the Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI (Citizens Commission). Davidon recruited seven other like-minded activists for the express purpose of exposing the FBI's abuses. The eight-person team consisted of Bill Davidon, Bonnie and John Raines, Keith Forsyth, Bob Williamson, Ralph Daniel, Judi Feingold, and another who wished not to be named.⁴³³ The members agreed to not expose their identities until the statute of limitations ran out.

The members of the team were all white so they would not draw too much suspicion when breaking into the Media, Pennsylvania FBI field office. The purpose of the break-in was to steal internal documents as evidence of the government's illegal activities towards its own citizens. Even though this does not occur in California it revealed what had been happening

⁴³² Betty Medsger, *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI* (Chicago, Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 348.

⁴³³ "How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors" *WHYY*, August 21, 2021, accessed March 6, 2022, <https://whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/>.

throughout the country. This event happened decades ago and has been overshadowed by other revelations of government abuses. But its story cannot be left out of any recollections of the Civil Rights, Black Power, Anti-war, and student movements throughout the country during the 1950s-1970s.

The burglary took months of planning and surveillance. It included sending Bonnie Raines posed as a student doing research to get a peek inside to get the layout. According to Raines, “The way we were going to get that information was to assign me the role of calling the FBI office and saying that I was a student at Swarthmore College, and I was doing research on opportunities for women in the FBI, and could I come in and interview the head of the office as part of my research.”⁴³⁴ The FBI agent never suspected a thing. Raines took note of a three-office layout, no alarms, standard locks on the doors, and unlocked file cabinets. They chose March 8, 1971, because people would be busy watching the heavyweight championship fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier.

According to Citizens Commission member Ralph Daniel, “But we took all the files that covered various people who were being investigated — a lot of Black Panthers, other Black groups that — civil rights groups and such. And we did, we ran across a document that later on became very, very important that documented a program called COINTELPRO.”⁴³⁵ They exited the building with suitcases filled with more than a thousand documents never to reconvene until the statute of limitations had run out. But first they had to complete their mission of using the documents to expose the abusive practices of the FBI.

⁴³⁴ “How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors” *WHYY*, August 21, 2021, accessed March 6, 20122, <https://whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/>.

⁴³⁵ “How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors” *WHYY*, August 21, 2021, accessed March 6, 20122, <https://whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/>.

They photographed the most incriminating files and sent them to three reporters ... at the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* and copies of the documents to two members of Congress,” Raines said.⁴³⁶ As mentioned in earlier chapters the media does not always print the truth. The media will lie and/or suppress certain information to protect the powers that be. The *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* both returned their copies of incriminating documents to the FBI without making them public (though they later did so). Copies sent to two members of congress were sent to the FBI.

So, without revealing their identities the group sent copies to Betty Medsger, a reporter for the *Washington Post*, whom the Raines had known since she was a reporter for the old *Philadelphia Bulletin* in the 1960s. She had no idea who sent her the files but once they were authenticated Medsger made the decision to protect the identity of her source and not hand over the documents to the authorities. Medsger had just joined the *Washington Post* when she received the first set of files. “When I received the first set of FBI files, the first file was the one that became sort of emblematic of the burglar’s files — a document that advised agents and informers to make people paranoid — that was their word. It said, ‘Behave in such a way that people will think there’s an FBI agent behind every mailbox,’” according to Medsger.⁴³⁷ For some members of the movement even their closest friends became suspect during the FBI’s illegal activities.

⁴³⁶ “How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors” *WHYY*, August 21, 2021, accessed March 6, 20122, <https://whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/>.

⁴³⁷ “How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors” *WHYY*, August 21, 2021, accessed March 6, 20122, <https://whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/>.

The FBI tactics employed against the black community in the late 1960s could have continued indefinitely if it were not for the Media break in. By the time of the release of some of the Media files in 1971 the damage to the Movement had been done, and the demise of many of its activities for that time period set in place. The files revealed how and why some of the young leaders of the Movement had been assassinated, imprisoned, or were living in exile. The assassination of the Chicago chapter of the BPP Chairman Fred Hampton in December 1969 is one of the most infamous of the FBI's dirty deeds. The FBI inflicted irreversible damages to the classic period of the Black Power Movement in LA and other cities throughout the country. But it did not put an end to the Movement. As we have seen in recent years the cycle of police brutality and resistance continues. However, some police officers (not most) have been held accountable and sometimes punished for their crimes against Black people. The ongoing Black Power Movement continues to contribute to the eventual demise of racial injustices carried out by law enforcement agencies.

The actions exposed in this dissertation reveal the hypocrisy of a country that prides itself on being a democracy and respecting the rule of law. In the Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book III Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, also known as the Church Committee Report, the FBI abuses were exposed in great detail as a result of the burglary in Media. The Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) provided the most incriminating example of federal law enforcement abuse employed by the FBI.

In August 1967, eleven years after the FBI created COINTELPRO they initiated the Black Nationalist program, one of five domestic programs to neutralize organizations the Bureau

characterized as “Black Nationalist Hate Groups.”⁴³⁸ The original list of organizations included groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and the Nation of Islam (NOI). It was expressly directed against such leaders as Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and Elijah Muhammad.

COINTELPRO’s goals were: prevent a coalition of militant black-nationalist groups; prevent the rise of a messiah who could unify and electrify the militant nationalist movement; prevent violence on the part of black nationalist groups; prevent militant black nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability by discrediting them; and prevent the long-range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth. The BPP was not originally on the list, but by July 1969 they had become the primary focus of COINTELPRO.

Although some historians who examine Black Power such as Charles Jones in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* and Justin Gifford in *Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver* spend more than enough time examining COINTELPRO, they spend very little if any time on the Media FBI break in. It is as if the evidence against the FBI just appeared out of thin air. The Media FBI papers did exactly what the Citizens Commission hoped for and more. They exposed the abusive practices used by the FBI against its own citizens.

It proved that the abuses carried out by FBI agents were not the actions of a few loan wolves or insubordinate agents, but that many of the abuses were ordered at the highest levels of leadership. For example, one memorandum issued by J. Edgar Hoover on November 4, 1970, states, “Increased campus disorders involving Black students pose a definite threat to the nation’s stability and security and indicate need for increase in both quality and quantity of intelligence

⁴³⁸ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 187.

information on Black Student Unions which are targets for influence and control by the violence-prone Black Panther party and other extremists.”⁴³⁹

Hoover’s orders put targets on the backs of young Black people who had two major goals. First, put an end to the violence perpetrated against Black people by members of law enforcement agencies across the country. Second, that the educational system recognizes the contributions of African American to the development and success of the United States by developing Black studies departments and programs in the educational system. The FBI Media papers revealed why and how the agency went beyond traditional law enforcement methods to destroy people and organizations aimed at achieving those two goals.

At UCLA the FBI created obstacles to the establishment of the Black studies department by sowing discontent among the leading organizations such as the BPP, US, and the BSU. The actions of the FBI posing as rival organizations taunting one and other and the use of informants and agent provocateurs played a major role in the demise of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles.⁴⁴⁰ Scholars are obligated to examine and expose the evidence produced by the FBI Media break in. In our inaction we continue to support the idea that ideological differences alone created the deadly conditions that brought about the demise of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Southern California.

Tyranny in The FBI

After 1965, the LAPD continued to use physical and confrontational low-tech forms of abuse. However, with the growth of activism spreading after the rebellion, suppression of the Black Power Movement needed to be managed covertly. It required the FBI working in the

⁴³⁹ Fred P. Graham, “F.B.I Files Tell of Surveillance of Students, Blacks, War Foes,” *New York Times*, March 25, 1971, 33.

⁴⁴⁰ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 194.

shadows where they could be effective using extralegal tactics. In Southern California the FBI's extensive resources made it impossible for Black organizations to achieve the goals of ending police abuse.

The Black Power Movement in Los Angeles faced an almost unbeatable foe in the FBI. The agency acted irresponsibly and immorally in its unsuccessful efforts to destroy the Black Power Movement. They ignored all the rules of decency to protect and maintain white domination across the country. The FBI never even considered they might be breaking the law. When the Church Committee asked Assistant Director William Sullivan whether tactics, such as placing female "plants," were common practices of the FBI, he testified that they were common practice among intelligence services all over the world... This is a common practice, rough, tough, dirty business... We have used that technique against Soviet agents. They have used it against us. Sullivan went on to state that it was not an isolated incident and that these techniques we learned in fighting . . . true espionage in World War II came to be used against some of our own American citizens.⁴⁴¹

One of the most unbelievable revelations to come from the Church Committee report is that none of these officers of the law ever questioned what they were doing. The Church Committee asked Sullivan whether he or any other employees of the Bureau ever objected to using these tactics. Sullivan responded:

Not to my recollection... I was not ready at that time to collide with him. Everybody in the Division went right along with Hoover's policy. I do not recall anybody ever raising a question. Never once did I hear anybody, including myself, raise the question, is this course of action which we have agreed upon lawful, is it legal, is it ethical or moral? We never gave any thought to this realm of reasoning, because we were just naturally pragmatists. The one thing we were concerned about will this course of action work, will

⁴⁴¹ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 135.

it get us what we want, will we reach the objective that we desire to reach?⁴⁴²

Tyranny is when leadership of the law enforcement agency at the highest level of government does not stop to consider if they are breaking the law. Sullivan stated that there only concern was would it work? And work for whom? Evidently not for Black people, who have always been considered an “other” even though they have been in the Western Hemisphere since its accidental discovery, and in this country since before it existed. The federal government in its actions against both civil rights and Black Power advocates were no different than the southern backwoods white local police who were also klansmen.

The Conflict over Black Studies Program at UCLA

But really the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] thing, it just it destroyed the movement in Los Angeles, I cannot tell you. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you right now, I carried a gun from the time I was about 12 years old, to the night that Bunchy and John Huggins got killed. I put the gun up that night because I was so fucking disgusted with niggas, just like I am about this rapper [Nipsey Hussle]- Just think about this Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, and now, I never heard of the brother, but, and all kill by niggas, okay? And I just - and I hate to say it that way - and we are doing our own worst destruction.⁴⁴³

John Floyd, April 13, 2019

The High Potential Program (HPP) at UCLA was one of the earliest efforts to broaden admissions criteria and recruit historically underrepresented students. It was an attempt to engage underprivileged African Americans and Chicanos in higher education and to have them return to their communities and participate meaningfully and effectively in their uplift. Many students with the potential for academic success had never had the opportunity to realize it based on academic standards they could not meet. The committee on entry programs was created and

⁴⁴² Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 135.

⁴⁴³ John Floyd, Interview by author, April 13, 2019

worked from the recommendations provided by the Black Student Union (BSA) and United Mexican American Students (UMAS).

Members of US and the BPP were enrolled in the HPP and attended regular and preparatory classes on campus. The cultural nationalist US organization was founded immediately after the Watts Rebellion in the fall of 1965. US grew out of a study session called the Circle of Seven at the Black-owned Aquarian Book Shop in South LA. Although its origins preceded the Watts Rebellion, self-defense was a central part of the US organization's posture. Like the Nation of Islam before it and the founding of the Black Panther Party a year later the US organization was not a nonviolent organization. It developed the Simba as the military arm of the organization to protect its members and engage in combat if necessary.

In January 1969, UCLA's Black Student Union (BSU) participated in the selection of a director for the new Black Studies Program. Maulana Karenga, the leader of the US organization, served on the Community Advisory Committee for the program. At first the lack of student participation in the newly formed student union allowed Karenga and the Community Advisory Committee to have almost total control over the development of the Black Studies program. The students became involved in the process before Karenga's motives and/or agenda could be revealed. Considering the Black students at UCLA did not initiate the creation of the Black Studies Program the lack of student participation does not seem so unusual.

The university's administration and Black faculty proposed the program in order to prevent the type of militant Black student activity that was occurring on other campuses across the country. According to Elaine Brown, "Ron Karenga on information provided by one of the Black faculty architects of the proposed Black Studies Program, seized the opportunity to take

advantage of the inactivity of the Black students.⁴⁴⁴ Karenga recruited Dr. Charles Thomas to serve as the head of the developing Black Studies Program. To make matters worse Karenga resorted to bully tactics against the administration and students, to ensure Thomas was selected for the position. He sent 50 US members to the university administration offices posing as BSU members, demanding that Dr. Thomas be hired by the beginning of the next semester.⁴⁴⁵

The program involved hundreds of thousands of university dollars for the benefit of students that Karenga tried to override and disrespect. If Charles Thomas were truly selected by Karenga because he could control him, it would have given Karenga access to those funds and to possibly push the cultural nationalist ideology of the US organization to students on campus. His backdoor dealings to hire Thomas managed to get the approval of the Vice Chancellor Charles Young. When the spring semester began in January 1969, UCLA had approved the funding for Karenga's Black Studies Program and its director, without any input from students.

Instead of the students submitting to Karenga's manipulative actions they were transformed into activists. When the injustices start to hit to close to home or are so graphically painful as in the case of Emmett Till people felt it was necessary to get involved. Members of the BSU demanded that the contract for the program be rescinded and that Karenga's decision as a Community Advisory Board member to almost solely hire Charles Thomas be explained in person on campus. The students also asked Panthers enrolled in the HPP to act as security when Karenga came to campus. According to Elaine Brown, they declined to act as bodyguards or openly oppose another Black organization.⁴⁴⁶ They did assure the students they would back up

⁴⁴⁴ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 161.

⁴⁴⁵ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 162.

⁴⁴⁶ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 162.

whatever decision the majority of Black students made about the proposed program.⁴⁴⁷ In *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization*, Scot Brown also accuses Karenga of similar tactics. Brown states, “Apart from its clash with the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, US was notorious for using violent strong-arm tactics against dissenting individuals and organizations that disagreed with the US position.”⁴⁴⁸

The Shortcomings of Youth

On January 15, 1969, Karenga showed up at UCLA with armed US members. Instead of explaining his actions to the students, Karenga, who had earned a graduate degree in political science from UCLA in 1964, degraded them by telling them he was the teacher, and they were the students and that he would advise them of what they needed. To add insult to injury he stated that US had taken the lead because they had shown themselves to be too weak. At that point a freshman addressed Karenga, “We are the students here, and we alone will determine our destinies.” Other students applauded his response to Karenga’s insults and at that point demanded that Karenga, “get out” of the meeting.⁴⁴⁹ Students and the community were in the midst of the Long Black Power struggle against police brutality and forcing Black representation in academia. Karenga represented more of the same control over the lives of the Emmett Till Generation with his heavy-handed approach. Karenga’s attempt to exercise intra-racial oppression through force was unsuccessful. By 1969 many of the students had come of age during an atmosphere of Black social pushback and were not going to take it.

⁴⁴⁷ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 162.

⁴⁴⁸ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 94.

⁴⁴⁹ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 162.

The students refused to be bullied by Karenga and his US members into accepting someone Karenga chose to head the Black Studies program without their input. After Karenga's exit from the meeting the students reformed the BSU and from then on began to heavily participate in the process of creating the Black Studies program. They advised the chancellor's office that an elected committee of BSU members would be the only group with which the university was to deal with on the issue of the Black Studies program.⁴⁵⁰ Students taking control of their destiny within a mostly all white institution had been a long time in the making. But even the smallest rebellions can use a catalyst to bring about solidarity. And in this case, it was not the white administration but Karenga, a Black community member who solidified the students resolve to play a vital role in the development of the Black Studies program at UCLA.

Black Power in the academic setting had to be employed against a Black person in the case of Karenga, the leader of an organization willing to use intimidation and violence. Former US member Watani Stiner, confirmed albeit somewhat reluctantly the recollections of Elaine Brown about what occurred at UCLA in *A Taste of Power*. According to Stiner, the Community Advisory Board and not Karenga alone had selected Charles Thomas. Stiner admitted that Karenga had the most influential voice on the committee and actively recruited Thomas. Stiner did not say the students did not want Thomas. Stiner stated, "Now, the Panthers, you know, didn't want him because he was not beholden-this was the initial thing. He wasn't beholden to their philosophy."⁴⁵¹ Stiner disagreed with Brown when she stated that the students came to the Panthers for help. Stiner stated that the Panthers were directing the students to elect someone else. Stiner did not disagree with the students deciding on the director since the students' thought

⁴⁵⁰ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 163.

⁴⁵¹ Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

Thomas was Karenga's puppet.⁴⁵² Stiner's recollection of the student's response to Karenga on January 15th did confirm what Brown described. Stiner truly appeared to be shocked at students responding so differently to Karenga than before:

And so he's talking to them and the students started questioning, you know. "You don't tell us what to do." So you know, so you have, so you have in this classroom, you have one set of people or students who are saying, Yeah, teach Maulana, La la, you know, and then you have the other side, No, you don't tell us what, you know. So it was, it was like this two—two, two divided room arguing about, you know, or praising him and the other one that's talking crazy. And it just didn't make sense to me...But this time, after the meeting's over, after they was, you know, they were questioning Maulana and then it was like, you know, he wasn't, he wasn't winning everybody over. That was clear. And that was the first time I saw something like that where he wasn't as persuasive.⁴⁵³

This meeting did not accomplish much. So, it was decided to meet on January 17th to continue addressing the students concerns. The two organizations almost had a conflict the January 15th because there was a lot of posturing between the Panthers and US members. Posturing is a tool sometimes employed by the young and immature. However, for the time being the conflict was avoided.

Posturing is often a reaction taken by people who have not developed their diplomatic skills. Even if you take the abusive actions of law enforcement being carried out behind the scenes out of the equation, youthful energy alone is not enough to make change without major setbacks. Organizations in the Black Power Movement for the most part lacked the structure, maturity, and a chain of command that involved anyone over thirty-years old. Examples of structure and chain of command can be easily seen in the Armed Services. In the military enlisted men are commanded by mostly college educated older officers with leadership skills.

⁴⁵² Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

⁴⁵³ Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

The civil rights movement had a host of veteran freedom fighters advising younger men like Dr. King who was twenty-six when he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Edgar Daniel “E. D.” Nixon one of the chief organizers of the boycott and critical to its success was 56 years old at the time. Wisdom and experience are immeasurable qualities in times of conflict and war. Wisdom and experiences of older advisors could have recognized that the federal government was playing the organizations against one and other. Or at the least made them take a step back to observe what was unfolding before they reacted.

At twenty-eight years old Karenga was one of the older members of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. That almost separates him from a college freshman by a generation. However, in some cases mentally and emotionally the differences are not that great between someone 18 and 28. The escalation of the situation to appoint a director of the program on January 15th is the result of Karenga’s paternalistic and at the same time immature attack on the students who questioned his power to make decisions without them, more so than who he chose.

Karenga lacked the foresight to recognize that the students were the future of the Black studies program. Instead of mentoring and positioning them to be an integral part of the developing program his ego or academic accomplishments emboldened him to scold them like children. Instead of explaining why he thought Charles Thomas would make a good director to de-escalate the situation. Instead, he verbally insulted and attacked their intellectual capacity to participate in the selection of someone who would contribute to their cultural and academic growth, and they rebelled.

The Black students in Los Angeles who came of age during the 1950s and 1960s possessed a Black power those previous generations did not. Members of the Black Power Movement on other campuses in Los Angeles were equally as active. Racial tensions erupted at

California State University, Northridge, then called San Fernando Valley State College with the take-over of the Administration Building on November 4, 1968. Charges of racism were leveled against a white football coach, Don Markham, and the Black Student Union called for his dismissal. Twenty to twenty-five black students (with the white coaches in tow) marched to the Administration Building to take up their grievances with acting President Blomgren. In subsequent action, the black students took over the fifth floor of the Administration Building in an attempt to have their demands met.

Murder at UCLA

The committee that the BSU created on January 15th after Karenga had been expelled scheduled another meeting that had deadly consequences for the BPP. In response to a suggestion by fellow committee member John Huggins, Elaine Brown called to adjourn the meeting on January 17th because things were not progressing. Everyone overwhelmingly agreed with Brown and adjourned. And then the end began. According to Brown, a US member she only described as a Karenga robot, who had drawn on his mustache with eyeliner approached her and said, “You need to watch what you say, Sister.”⁴⁵⁴ As Brown tried to move past him Harold “Tawala” Jones grabbed her so hard her button snapped off of her jacket. From Brown’s description it seems like a random event between two unconnected people. When Brown ascended the three flights of stairs in Campbell Hall, she was out of range to hear the gunshots.

Watani Stiner provided an alternative backstory to this maybe not so spontaneous meeting between Tawala and Brown. Stiner also describe Harold “Tawala” Jones as a young man who drew on a fake mustache with eyeliner. He was a young eighteen-year-old want-to-be ladies man and want-to-be intellectual. Stiner stated:

⁴⁵⁴ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 163.

So he was just this, he's just this guy that get—that's, you know, that's always challenging and saying things and, you know, at the wrong time, so. But he was, you know, he was good, somebody you just had to keep in control, so.⁴⁵⁵

The armed and uncontrollable Tawala was assigned a post in Campbell Hall by Watani and left it to approach Elaine Brown. According to Watani, Brown and Jones were already familiar with each other. Stiner had previously observed a flirtatious game between the two. Stiner stated, “I don't want to say relationship—they had a flirtation thing where they would always clown each other, and she used to make fun about his mustache and he's talking about, you know, taming her Panther... She didn't feel like playing, he felt like playing, and so, so he says he—according to her testimony, he pulled on her, her purse or something she had on there, and then she cussed him out and then left.”⁴⁵⁶ Whatever transpired between Tawala and Brown, Bunchy had observed it unfolding from across the room and approached Brown.

As she was leaving, Bunchy stopped and asked, “what did that nigga say to you?” Brown brushed it off as just another US threat. Bunchy's response was, “as long as you live don't let another nigga talk crazy to you or put his hand on you.”⁴⁵⁷ Watani then observed Bunchy and John Huggins approach Tawala and start pistol-whipping him. When Huggins's gun discharged Claude “Chuchessa” Hubert entered the room and shot John and Bunchy dead. US members Watani and Ali Stiner, Harold “Tawala” Jones, Claude “Chuchessa” Hubert, and Donald “Stadi” Hawkins all escaped.

The Stiners and Hawkins surrendered and were convicted for conspiracy to commit murder and sentenced to San Quentin. Chuchessa and Tawala went into exile in Guyana. Tawala

⁴⁵⁵ Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

⁴⁵⁶ Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

⁴⁵⁷ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, Frist Anchor Books, 1994), 165.

returned to the United States within a few months and went to Chicago where he died from an oxycodone overdose in 1989. The Stiners escaped from San Quentin in 1974 and went into exile in Guyana as well. In 1994 Watani Stiner turned himself in and returned to San Quentin to serve out the twenty years that he lived in exile. He was paroled in 2015. Chuchessa who went by “Gaidi” after the shooting along with Ali Stiner never returned to America. Both men died in Guyana.

We will never know what could have been accomplished by the Movement had the government not interfered. Throughout its long existence the Black Power movement has been a reaction to direct or government sanctioned abuse. Why would anyone expect the government to employ a nonviolent “love and peace” ideology to put an end to the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles? It would be short-sighted to think Black people expected a peaceful approach from law enforcement. This dissertation was originally titled the Rise and Fall of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles. It was proven early in tis process that this title did not represent the truth especially in light of events in 2020. Even when some of the members of the organizations in the Movement thought they were being infiltrated they carried on. Even in the midst of the chaos instigated by federal and local government during the 1960s they pushed forward creating and maintaining positive programs for the community. Previous examples have revealed that the civil rights approach is not always appropriate and was not always employed. Every twenty- or thirty-years extreme acts of violence on the part of law enforcement occurs that requires Black Power. And it has been proven since the 1960s that young Black people answer the call.

The Emmett Till Generation was born out of white hypocrisy. In 1955 African Americans across the country watched two of the murderers of Till, who allegedly whistled at a white

woman in Mississippi, set free by a corrupt judicial system that only worked for whites. The following year two of Till's murderers received \$3,150 for their version of what happened in the January 1956 issue of *Look* magazine. There were no consequences for what they did. The system allowed them to employ deadly violence where no threat existed and allowed them to get away with it.

A decade later in Los Angeles the FBI used and incited violence to supposedly protect white society against Black people who were responding to the violence inflicted on them by white people in the first place. Black nationalists were no threat to white society as a whole but by 1969, the FBI had mastered the art of deception to the point of making Black people pawns in the FBI's unsuccessful effort to destroy the Black Power Movement. In many ways the demise of the classic period was the result of a high-tech lynching carried out by the FBI against people who were merely trying to protect themselves out of instinct, before they became extinct. The demise just happened to begin at UCLA, but it was going to happen somehow and somewhere because the FBI was hell-bent on trying to destroy the Black Power Movement as evidenced in the findings of the Church Committee report.

The killings at UCLA derailed the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles but did not end it. Many members became disillusioned because of the violence. On the surface it looked like typical LA gang violence. It could be interpreted as members of the US organization who were cultural nationalists and possibly Gladiator gang members killing the founder of the revolutionary nationalist Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party, who happened to be the head of the Renegade set of the Slausons, and on the campus of UCLA no less. How does that look in the *LA Times* to a white reader on the west side? To some people it could define Black people as unable to leave their neighborhood squabbles back in South Central. And that

could be an easy position to take without the knowledge of COINTELPRO creating such a deadly atmosphere. To this day some people forget about the role the FBI played in what happened at UCLA. John Floyd states:

I start carrying a gun was about 12 years old. The night that Bunchy and John Huggins got killed, I put my gun down, and I, I stopped carrying a gun that, because I was so disgusted with niggas, because that shit fucked up so - that fucked up the Black Congress, it ended the Black Congress... we had gotten a commitment from Prudential Insurance Company to buy the Los Angeles Sentinel, which, and I was gonna be the editor of cause I was the editor of Black Voice and KGFJ radio station, the day after Bunchy and them got killed, 'cause they did that nigga shit on UCLA's campus, they called us and canceled the shit.⁴⁵⁸

Even the FBI was not clever enough to create every scenario that led to the end of the classic period, but they were extremely capable of capitalizing on every opportunity to put both organizations in tense and deadly situations.

We may never know if the actions of the FBI led directly or indirectly to the event at UCLA. But we do know that the incident between Tawala and Elaine Brown, which led to the deaths of Carter and Huggins revealed the fragility of the Movement in Los Angeles. Elaine Brown is known for speaking her mind. She had dismissed Tawala and the incident and had left the area. But for whatever reason Huggins and Bunchy chose to use violence to address the situation between Brown and Tawala without watching their backs. And that proved deadly for them and the classic period of the Movement.

In 1969, both inside and outside of the movement it appeared that Black Power violence in Southern California was totally inspired by ideological differences between revolutionary nationalists and cultural nationalists. But that alone should not have been enough to create the violence at UCLA. According to Floyd W. Haynes and Francis A. Kiene in *The Black Panther*

⁴⁵⁸ John Floyd, Interview by author, March 31, 2019.

Party [Reconsidered], “Disagreements between the Black Panthers and the US did indeed reach serious dimensions in January 1969. A collision occurred in the context of the campus-based Black Student Union’s participation in the selection for the director of the new Black Studies Program at the University of California at Los Angeles.”⁴⁵⁹ Missing from the essay is the smallest mention of the ongoing role played by law enforcement in creating the atmosphere of violence that led up to the killing of the two Panthers at UCLA and the violence that continued in the following years.

The FBI in Southern California 1969-1971

The files taken from the Media FBI office allowed the Church Commission to take an extensive look into the behavior of law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles and exposed their immoral and criminal acts. Prior to reading the Church Commission’s report it was much easier to view the killings of Carter, Huggins, and other freedom fighters as spontaneous and/or random. But as I have argued throughout previous chapters the violence and abuse carried out by law enforcement agencies in this country have played a major role in rebellions, nonviolent and violent protests, and Black social movements.

The demise of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles happened because of the manipulation of a system supposedly designed to protect all Americans. The Church report demonstrated that the chief investigative branch of the Federal Government, which was charged by law with investigating crimes and preventing criminal conduct itself engaged in lawless tactics and responded to deep-seated social problems by fomenting violence and unrest. In 1968, a memorandum from Hoover to 14 field offices noted a state of "gang

⁴⁵⁹ Floyd W. Haynes III and Francis A. Kiene III, “All Power to the People: The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party,” in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles Jones (Baltimore, Black Classic Press, 1998), 168.

warfare" existed, with "attendant threats of murder and reprisals," between the BPP and US in southern California.⁴⁶⁰

It is also quite possible that the FBI is directly responsible for what happened at UCLA. On November 25, 1968, a letter was sent to certain FBI field offices with BPP activity. They were ordered to submit "imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP. Proposals were to be received every two weeks. For the Los Angeles office particular attention was to be given to capitalizing upon the differences between the BPP and US, which had reached such proportions that "it is taking on the aura of gang warfare with attendant threats of murder and reprisals."⁴⁶¹ These directives by the FBI were issued just two months before the killings at UCLA. Capitalizing on differences would certainly include making threatening phone calls that appeared to come from ideologically opposite organizations.

Watani Stiner was convicted of the UCLA killings. The trial concluded that he was not armed at UCLA and therefore did not kill anyone, but he was convicted on conspiracy to commit murder. The killings continue to weigh heavy on his heart. The same cannot be said about Ali Stiner, Claude "Chuchessa" Hubert, or Harold "Tawala" since they are now all deceased. Watani did something none of the other men did. He returned to the United States and to prison to serve the remainder of his time. Tawala also returned to the U.S. and lived in Chicago until his death.

However, there was something suspicious about Tawala's life in Chicago. Watani stated:

I knew he was somewhere in Chicago because they dismissed a warrant that he had on him in 1984. And that was, that was kind of strange. I don't know what that was all about... because they had him in Chicago, and they wanted to extradite him to Back to LA, but the LA said, nah, you know, we've been released, which we—we were all still on

⁴⁶⁰ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 189.

⁴⁶¹ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 22.

exile. And that they didn't have any charges anyway. It was just weird.⁴⁶²

Leading up to the events at UCLA Bunchy Carter gave members of the Black Panther Party specific instructions concerning other organizations. Bunchy had obtained a letter sent to the US organization proclaiming to be from the BPP. According to Black Panther Ericka Huggins, “And we started looking at it and the cartoon was so hilarious. Anybody with a grain of sense would have known that a white person or a person that never been around Black people had drawn it, because it looked like brown, white people or something.⁴⁶³ The letter was taunting the US organization, which Huggins stated to me the Panthers never did.⁴⁶⁴ However, CAP and SNCC member Ron Wilkins did recalled some conflicts between the two organizations. Located on Seventy-third and Broadway the Black Congress was an organization set up to bring together black organizations in LA. The Panthers and US both had spaces in the Black Congress.

According to Wilkins:

Now, what was happening in the Congress, in the Black Congress is that Karenga's people used to use the big open floor in the building to do their physical workouts. Do their physical workouts, the Panthers would come in, and some of the Panthers had a habit, 'cause they didn't like Karenga's people, they had a habit; instead of walking along the edge of the wall in the Congress building, they walk right through the center Karenga's people trying to perform, trying to exercise and do their physical training stuff, which angered the US organization. And there began some little petty- I understand some of the earliest petty squabbles developed behind the Panthers just kind of disrespecting them.⁴⁶⁵

Carter informed the Panthers that he heard that the same kind of letters that went to them are coming to us, to the Black Panther Party.”⁴⁶⁶ The implications of the letter were much more

⁴⁶² Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

⁴⁶³ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

⁴⁶⁴ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

⁴⁶⁵ Ron Wilkins, interview by author, May 14, 2019.

⁴⁶⁶ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

serious than the cartoons implied.

Huggins emphasized the importance of what Bunchy said, “You do not tease. You don’t have political conversations with or otherwise treat any member of the US organization as if they are wrong.”⁴⁶⁷ In Scot Brown’s *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization and Black Cultural Nationalism* US members give testimony about how both Bunchy and John tried to calm the brewing tensions. Darryl Tkufuk said, “Bunchy and Huggins, they were the guys that were the friendliest to members of the US organization, to me they were trying to keep the peace between the two organizations. I really liked and had a lot of respect for both of them.”⁴⁶⁸ Regardless of Carter’s knowledge or gut feelings about outside forces at work, the government’s relentless pressure on members of both organizations succeeded in disrupting their growth.

The FBI carried out a much more difficult form of abuse to respond to the Black Power Movement in Southern California. Carter explained to the Panthers that something else was at play pitting them against each other. It was not them and it wasn’t the US organization. At that time, they were unaware of the name of what Ericka Huggins refers to as the “clandestine subset of the FBI counterintelligence program.” The word COINTELPRO was unknown and came later. Huggins stated, “And we knew it wasn't local police because they didn't they didn't take time to do something like writing and sending letters. We knew them well, because we were constantly stopped by them and threatened by them and stopped and threats spread eagle by them. Yes, women too.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

⁴⁶⁸ Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York, New York University Press, 2003), 99.

⁴⁶⁹ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

The revelation of what was occurring highly affected the Panthers gathered for Bunchy's explanation of what was happening. They became keenly aware of the price they may have to pay for their dedication to the liberation of Black people in Los Angeles. According to Huggins, "But we knew that something was about to dramatically turn for the Black Panther Party. We knew we weren't just being stalked anymore. We knew kind of, intuitively all of us at the same time that we could be murdered any day. And in the year 1960, well in the two years '68 and '69 about eight people, maybe more, who were members of the Black Panther Party were murdered in Los Angeles."⁴⁷⁰

The taunts went to both sides, but it was the US organization that responded to them most violently. Leading up to the UCLA shooting, members of the US organization also received taunts, supposedly from the BPP. Some were in the form of threatening phone calls right up until the day of the last meeting at UCLA. That is what also made the shooting less of a spontaneous event for some of those involved. According to Watani Stiner, "Yeah, that day, that day. We got some calls that, that we shouldn't, you know, better not go to. And one said they were gonna kill my brother...it's a lot of little things that's happening, you know, that made us more prepared. Because that would—that ordinarily wouldn't have been such a high security moment."⁴⁷¹

It is impossible to overlook the efficiency and expediency that the FBI worked to suppress the Black Power Movement and especially the Black Panther Party. On February 18, 1968, ten months prior to the FBI orders to capitalize on the differences between US and the BPP, Maulana Karenga and Bunchy Carter shared the stage in unity with speakers Bobby Seale, H. Rap Brown (Jamil Al-Amin), Stokely Carmichael and others at the Black Power and Free

⁴⁷⁰ Ericka Huggins, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.

⁴⁷¹ Watani Stiner, Interview by author, October 21, 2016.

Huey rally at the Los Angeles Sports Arena.⁴⁷² In less than a year Carter would be dead and the movement unraveling under the tactics employed by the FBI. A very short lifespan when you consider white nationalist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan continue to operate to this day.

The memorandums exposed in the Church Committee report provides examples of how abuses by the FBI continued to affect the movement after the killing of the Panthers at UCLA.

The Church Report states:

Similarly, in Southern California, the FBI launched a covert effort to “create further dissension in the ranks of the BPP.” This effort included mailing anonymous letters and caricatures to BPP, and an organization called the United Slaves (US). The “gang war” resulted in the killing of four BPP members by members of US and in numerous beatings and shootings. Although individual incidents in this dispute cannot be directly traced to efforts by the FBI, FBI officials were clearly aware of the violent nature of the dispute engaged in actions which they hoped would prolong and intensify the dispute, and proudly claimed credit for violent clashes between the rival factions which, in the words of one FBI official resulted in shootings, beatings, and a high degree of unrest... in the area of southeast San Diego.⁴⁷³

Following the shootings, the FBI reported that tensions between the BBP and US in San Diego appeared to lessen and that the two organizations in that Southern California city were trying to work out its differences. The San Diego field office reported that:

On 3/27/69 there was a meeting between the BPP and US organization ...Wallace [BPP leader in San Diego] ...concluded stating that the BPP in San Diego would not hold a grudge against the US members for the killing of the Panthers in Los Angeles (Huggins and Carter). He stated that he would leave any retaliation for the activity to the black community... On 4/3/69 there was a friendly confrontation between the BPP and US with no weapons being exhibited by either side. US members met with BPP members and tried to talk out their differences.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Howard Bingham, *Howard L. Bingham's Black Panthers* 1968, (Ammo Books 2009), 24-29.

⁴⁷³ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 189.

⁴⁷⁴ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 191.

The FBI's responses to the organizations' attempts at reconciliation were appalling to say the least. On March 27, 1969, when the San Diego field office learned that the local BPP leader had promised that his followers "would not hold a grudge" against local US members for the killings in Los Angeles-the San Diego office requested headquarters approval for three more cartoons ridiculing the BPP and falsely attributed to US.

When the San Diego office learned that the two groups would be meeting again they mailed the cartoons with headquarters' approval.⁴⁷⁵ The FBI's Special Agent in charge boasted that an informant advised him that the distribution of the cartoons had the following results: A confrontation on April 4, 1969, in Southcrest Park in San Diego in which BPP members ran US members out of the park; US members broke into a BPP political education meeting and roughed up a female BPP member; and stoked fears among Panthers that US was going to move on them. According to an informant the cartoons "were really shaking up the BPP."⁴⁷⁶ By May of 1969 any possibilities for peace had been defeated. It ended on May 23, 1969 when Southern California BPP member John Savage was killed by US member Jerry Horne, aka Tambuzi.⁴⁷⁷

On being informed that US gunmen wounded two Panthers on August 14, 1969 and the killing of BPP Sylvester Bell the next day, the San Diego FBI office began efforts to determine how the situation could be capitalized upon for the benefit of the Counterintelligence Program.⁴⁷⁸ In their memorandums the FBI wrote with pride about the pain they inflicted on Black citizens

⁴⁷⁵ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 191.

⁴⁷⁶ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 191.

⁴⁷⁷ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 192.

⁴⁷⁸ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 192.

in the Black Power Movement in Southern California who had banded together to combat the very tactics they continued to use. The FBI wrote: Shootings, beatings, and a high degree of unrest continues to prevail in the ghetto area of southeast San Diego. Although no specific counterintelligence action can be credited with contributing to this overall situation, it is felt that a substantial amount of the unrest is directly attributable to this program.⁴⁷⁹

Law enforcement cannot totally be blamed for the decline of the classic period of the Black Power Movement. There did exist uneasy relationships between some individuals and organizations outside of their ideological differences and between members within organizations. However, the FBI had intelligence and financial resources well beyond anything that all of the Black Power organizations combined could defend themselves against. The FBI never had to directly fire a weapon to bring about the closure of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Southern California.

Conclusion

The short but classic period of the Black Power Movement in Southern California lacked leadership experienced and mature enough to not be manipulated by external threats. Nevertheless, it achieved a major success in that it helped to establish Black Studies departments in the educational system. However, that process also took a major toll on the movement. Prior to the 1969 shooting at UCLA Black Power organizations both individually and collectively challenged the status quo when it came to police brutality. Organizations such as the Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party and US had worked in solidarity and supported each other in putting an end to police brutality, but the FBI managed to disrupt the possibility of any Black organizations permanently uniting.

⁴⁷⁹ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975-76, Church Committee Report, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>, 193.

As the Black Power Movement grew the FBI became increasingly involved in putting an end to the Movement. Using all its resources to create an atmosphere of distrust among the most influential Black Power organizations in Los Angeles they were able to contribute to the demise of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Southern California. The establishment of the Black Studies Program at UCLA provided the flashpoint to the end of the classic period.

The Media FBI break in and the Church Report exposed the reprehensible actions taken by the United States government against Black people in this country. None of their actions would have ever come to light in 1971, if it were not for the Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI bringing an end to the activities of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program. In the end the Church Committee only presided over and reported on high-ranking federal criminals confirming the details of their actions. That only occurred because the Citizens Commission exposed them and not to try and right any wrongdoings that they had willingly committed against the African American community.

Conclusion

This dissertation examines the existence of a long Black Power Movement in Los Angeles with an emphasis on the classic period of the 1960s. The act of Black Power existed in Los Angeles prior to Stokely Carmichael coining the phrase and catapulting it into a movement in 1966. Interpretations of Black Power have sometimes associated it with the possibility of unprovoked violence on innocent people. Black Power encompasses many actions and most are not associated with violence. However, it does include violence in response to violence perpetrated against innocent and mostly unarmed Black folks.

Prior to the 1960s some of the characteristics of Black Power would fall under the umbrella of Black Nationalism in organizations such as Marcus Garvey's UNIA, Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple, and Wallace D. Fard's Nation of Islam. Although these organizations did not outwardly call for armed self-defense they expressed their rights to self-defense and of gaining power through force. This dissertation has provided examples of the willingness of some Black Californian's to fight back physically against police brutality and to even bare arms to protect the rights of Black citizens of the United States.

Too often the event that blows the top off of a situation becomes the perceived sole initiator of that response. That has been the case in the Watts Rebellion of 1965. The examination of the Long Black Power Movement reveals that rebellions are not spontaneous one-off events. Acknowledgement and examination of a Black Nationalist/Long Black Power Movement reveals the conditions created by governmental agencies date back to the 1920s and 1930s. Those actions and conditions resulted in a violent response and the birth of the classic period of the Black Power movement in Los Angeles, California.

During these events there is always the nagging question posed by some white people. Why are they (Black people) tearing up their neighborhoods? At those times somehow white America's collective memory does not recall the last time a Black family member asked why was their unarmed loved one killed by a policeperson or an armed white man standing his ground against an unarmed Black man, woman, teenager, or child. There are so many cases that it is impossible to keep track. And even when things seem relatively quiet around this issue there is no way to know if some police department has been burying the case of innocent unarmed Black person being hunted and murdered in the street or killed while even sitting at home watching television.

There has been no justice for the families impacted by killer cops. Of course, there have been monetary payouts but that is not justice. These police agencies have funds set aside for these types of police killings so there is really no impact on the lives of these officers if the department can justify their actions. Modern policing descends from slave catching and capitalism. Hundreds of Black people can die at the hands of police but the powers that be could care less until their property or businesses are affected. That is when you can really see the role of the police in society. They have always protected and served the interest of wealthy Americans who are mostly white.

We will never know how things would have panned out if Elijah Muhammad had not told Malcolm to stand down when he was preparing to retaliate against the LAPD for the killing of Ronald Stokes. If nothing else the leadership in the United States understands and responds to violence. Had the Black populace stood in solidarity and responded with its own set of rules and consequences, Black people may be living a different existence in this country today. If you look at the cases of Emmett Till, Sam Faulkner, Ronald Stokes, and so many others it is obvious that

the people in charge of local, state, and federal levels of government will blatantly make whatever changes that are necessary, on a case-by-case basis in their so-called laws to benefit the people who matter most.

Housing discrimination leads to economic deprivation but equally important it can dictate what spaces a person can and cannot inhabit. For Black people in America during the twentieth century it could dictate where you lived and died. For Samuel Faulkner, Herman Burns, and Ronald Stokes it dictated that they died in Black neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are always over policed because they are associated with the low rating assigned to Black neighborhoods based on real estate redlining practices.

This dissertation has examined the role of the federal government in determining how white people in the United States were given certain financial advantages. Real estate is the source of most American's wealth. Although most Black people in America are Americans, they were purposely excluded from benefiting from wealth accumulation in real estate at the highest levels of governmental leadership.

The FHA was quite forthright in its decision to prohibit Black people from partaking in home ownership and all its benefits. It gave explicit instructions in its underwriting manual on how to rate the neighborhoods Black people lived in lower than white neighborhoods. This created a real estate industry based on Black people being on the bottom rung of the real estate financial ladder. This system allowed for the constant monitoring of the spaces occupied by Black people. Local police agencies are responsible for monitoring the spaces Black people occupy and move through. The evidence presented in the previous chapters explains how the relationship between the real estate industry and policing created a deadly atmosphere for African Americans in Los Angeles.

In response to the governmental constructed inequities Black people took several paths of resistance. The two most popular were the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement. These movements do not fit into nice little packaged timelines. The Civil Rights Movement did not start in the 1950s and end in the 1960s when the Black Power Movement appeared on the scene. Both of the Movements coexisted within the long Black Freedom Struggle and often overlapped and sometimes required the support of one and other.

Human rights activist Bayard Rustin provided a name that could be used to define the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles during the 1960s. The “classic” period. Some major events and experiences that would dictate the actions of the participants in the 1960s occurred in the 1950s. Black Power is a reaction to an abuse of white power. In the 1950s young Black people struggled with where they fit in with the integrated world their parents had brought them into. When not accepted by whites in their new neighborhoods and schools sometimes they fought back with physical Black Power. But it was the images of the brutal death of Emmett Till in 1955 that most impacted the decision for many Black youth to fight back with Black Power in Los Angeles.

Two years after the killing of Till, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam appeared in Los Angeles preaching its brand of a separatist ideology while redefining the status quo in the relationship between Black people and cops. The image of neatly dressed and organized law-abiding Black men and women who stood up to police intimidation put the fear of God in the mostly white policing community. At the same time young Black men were developing the organizational skills they would later apply in the Movement by joining and starting social clubs/gangs within their neighborhoods. Malcolm X is considered to be the ideological father of

the Black Power Movement. He is the soul of the Black Power Movement in its refusal to allow deadly policing to ever become normalized or accepted by Black communities.

Initiation of the classic period of the Black Power Movement in Los Angeles occurred because of two major incidents between police and NOI members. The second incident involved the killing of Ronald Stokes, which set up the atmosphere for the rebellion that came in 1965. Malcolm's pursuit for justice in Ronald Stokes killing and his leadership after the beating of a NOI member by police in New York established Malcolm X as an anti police brutality crusader. For a brief moment following the killing of Stokes some of the Christian church leaders supported Malcolm's fight for justice against the LAPD. Within a month of Stokes killing 150 Black ministers issued a manifesto denouncing the Muslims as anti-law and anti-God as an excuse to withdraw their support. The community responded negatively to the minister's actions calling them Uncle Toms and puppets of white leadership.

The Watts Rebellion was way overdue. I have provided some examples of police brutality occurring 40 years prior to Watts that were worthy of Black people rebelling in the streets. Nevertheless, it took four decades for the pressure in the teakettle of the Los Angeles basin to blow. News of the behavior of the LAPD towards Black women in front of a large crowd of young Black people did not take long to travel throughout the community. It quickly reached the members of social clubs/gangs. Many of them took to the streets exerting physical Black Power against the financial holdings of their oppressors and openly engaging in warfare with their sentinels on the LAPD and county sheriffs.

The Watts rebellion was a transitional period for the Emmett Till Generation. Confused by many as the beginning of the Black Power Movement, it was the beginning of the second part of the classic period. Out of its ashes and the death of Malcolm, the Emmett Till Generation

began to organize under the umbrella of Black Power. They produced organizations such as the Community Alert Patrol, US, The Black Panther Party for Self Defense, Black Student Union, and others.

The classic period of the Black Power Movement proved to be one of many cycles of the long Black Power Movement in America. In response to the organizations that were birthed by the Watts Rebellion the United States government used the FBI to commit higher levels of police abuses, including murder, to end a social Movement that local and state level law enforcement agencies helped to create. In 1971 their abuses were uncovered and exposed in the break in of a FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania. The documents revealed how its activities in Los Angeles were very successful in creating friction and deadly violence within the Movement in Southern California. The classic period of the Black Power Movement had been brought to a halt by the time the Church Committee had been formed. It exposed the full extent of the unscrupulous deeds carried out in the name of patriotism and white supremacy against its Black citizens, but alas there were no consequences for any of those involved. Nevertheless, the Black Power Movement carries on!

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Interviewees

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Byron Booth

Ericka Huggins

John Floyd

Joseph "Lil Joe" Johnson

Long John Washington

Monroe Jones

Ngoma Ali

Ron Wilkins

Watani Stiner

William Stokes

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