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**BOBBY L. RUSH RISE OF A BLACK PANTHER POLITICAN:
THE LIMITS OF BLACK RESISTANCE IN AMERICA**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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MAJOR: HISTORY

Approved By:

Advisor

Date

DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to several people who have impacted my life in positive ways. In memory of my father Sammie Hogsette who never dreamed such a thing was possible. Black Panthers from Englewood High School Spurgeon “Jake” Winters and Walter “Brother” Johnson who exemplified the spirit of the Panther. Mentor Clyde Williams who helped me realize my full potential. To all the Members of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party.

Aluta' Continua.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who assisted me in this project. First, I acknowledge my mother Mrs. Nona Charles who so very long ago set me firmly on the path of historical inquiry and knowledge. Special thanks are due to Dr. Elizabeth Fae a superb editor and excellent advisor. Without her steady hand this manuscript would not have been possible. Thanks, and heartfelt appreciation to the committee; Dr. Fran Shor, Dr. Danelle McGuire, Dr. Jakobi Williams, Dr. Michael Goldfield.

Many people believed in me and this project encouraging me every step of the way. Thank you, Dr. Julia Smetanka, Schume' Harrison, fraternity brothers Marc Brown, Charlie Rivers, and the Nupes of Greater Beta Chapter Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. I would be remiss if I did not include my Black Panther Family.

Comrade Brother Blair Anderson, Comrade Brother Farooq Azzizidun, Minister of Education Billy 'Che' Brooks, Field Secretary Dr. Yvonne King, Comrade Sister Ann Campbell, Comrade Brother Bruce Dixon, Comrade Brother Lumumba Calloway, Comrade Sister Jackie Spicer, Comrade Brother Elmus 'Stick Man' Burkes, and Illinois Chapter Black Panther Party Co-Founder Bob Brown. My Panther mentors the late Spurgeon 'Jake' Winters and Comrade Brother Walter 'Brother' Johnson who were instrumental in my joining the Party in late 1970 as a Community Worker.

Understanding Chicago's black community internal politics would have been problematic without the skillful navigation of Martha Palmer, niece of 'Lu' Palmer and longtime friend. Martha helped me navigate people, polices, and organizations within the wider context of Chicago style politics. Her knowledge of Bobby Rush, Lu Palmer, Harold Washington, Donne Trotter, Madeline Haithcock, Geraldine Lowry, Conrad Worrill, CBUC, BIPO, and the Regular Democratic party was invaluable. My partner Latrice Smith and my two fabulous step children Ashanti and Terrance helped me stay on task. Special thanks to my daughter Jeri Leslie Villareal for believing in the dream. To my many students, family, and friends, I say Thank You.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation traces the political trajectory of Bobby L. Rush from his earliest political influences to the halls of Congress. I choose Rush after toying with the idea of writing about Kwame Toure and his political development and practice. Two reasons caused me to shift my focus. The first was the upcoming 2012 book by Michael Thewell *Ready for the Revolution*. Although I did not know exactly what that book would contain, I did not want to present the same or similar information. The second reason was, if I was to research and present a sound dissertation It would necessitate travel to West Africa specifically Ghana and Guinea and learn to speak and/or read French. Failing that I would have to hire someone to translate for me. This was problematic as I did not have the funds necessary nor the inclination to delve into the French language.

However, I knew that I wanted to write about a black political leader of the long sixties period who was a part of the radical phase of black liberation in America. This period was of interest to me because I like many thousands of young blacks in the Northern and Western cities had become radicalized in the 1960's because of several factors not the least of which was the Civil Rights Movement. The 1966 Greenwood Mississippi call by Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks for "Black Power" energized and emboldened us to mount challenges to the entrenched system of racism in this country. Many people of my generation like myself formed or joined Black Student Unions in high schools and colleges to articulate our version of black power.

This radical urge led me to the Englewood High School Black Student Union and more importantly a couple of interactions with two Illinois Chapter Black Panther Party members, Spurgeon "Jake" Winters and Walter "Brother" Johnson. Spurgeon directed me to come to 2350 West Madison Street and join the Illinois Branch of the Party. However, that meeting with the Illinois Panthers would transpire two years after his untimely death on November 13, 1969.

As a result of these influences as well as resistance to the imperial machinations of the American government. I did not want to fight in Vietnam, nor join the army of occupation elsewhere in the

world. Thus, in late December 1970 I became a Community Worker of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. I functioned in that capacity from 1970-1974.

Consequently, with this type of background and because of my understanding of the Party formed from my intricate knowledge and connection with the ideology and nuances of how that group functioned, I decided to write about the Illinois Chapter. However, like the Kwame Toure idea I discovered that another scholar had a forthcoming book. The book *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* by Dr. Jakobi Williams covered much of the narrative I wanted to examine. Furthermore, Dr. Jon Rice had written a 1998 PhD Dissertation at Northern Illinois University entitled, *Black Radicalism on Chicago's West Side: a history of the Illinois Black Panther Party*.

My quandary was how to tell a unique story of the Party without retelling the substance of the narratives covered by Jon Rice or Jakobi Williams. Also, how do I meet the criteria for a dissertation within the context of telling the Party story from my perspective? What would be my subject? What would be my argument? As I contemplated these and other questions, the answer came to me like a lightning bolt from the heavens. There was a compelling story arising from the Illinois Chapter that was untold. An interesting narrative that I could examine and write about that no one else had explored or written about. In telling this story I could meet all the requirements for a sound body of scholarly work and deliver an interesting and compelling narrative.

Thus, was born *Bobby L. Rush, Rise of a Black Panther Politician: The Limits of Black Resistance in America*. Prior to Bobby Rush it is safe to say that no other former Black Panther leader had reached so elevated a position in the American political system. Additionally, as Congressional Representative of the 1st Congressional District of Illinois, Rush represents the interests of the congressional district with the highest number of African Americans in the entire United States.

This dissertation follows the political trajectory of Bobby L. Rush with a bit of biographical information from SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and Chicago City Council, all the way to his current

postion on Capitol Hill. It will examine his politics and actions as a co-founding member of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party from 1968 to 1974, detailing how that participation informs and supports his subsequent political actions and involvement. Prior to my in-depth research it appeared that Rush had followed the blueprint to Congress already charted by his political predecessors from Chicago's Southside. Noted black Chicago politicians like Oscar DePreist, William "Boss" Dawson, and Ralph Metcalfe appeared to all have the same similar story as they moved from City of Chicago Alderman to Congressional Representative. However, while each of these black political icons has a compelling story none of them had quite the same saliency as that of Bobby L. Rush.

This work will not only introduce Bobby L. Rush from his earliest involvement with SNCC but detail how the Midwestern Coordinator of that organization Bob Brown, and Bobby Rush realized a Stokely Carmichael plan to start a Black Panther Party Chapter in Illinois. And how that chapter's foundation was molded out of the crucible of struggle exacerbated by the national and local conflagrations caused by the April 4th, 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The meteoric rise in the Illinois ranks of the onetime NAACP organizer Fred Hampton and the impact of his untimely murder on not only Rush but on the black community at large is highlighted. As these and similar events and interactions can and do inform and affect the development of radicalization and resistance leadership.

Also examined will be the shift in the party ideology from a Black Nationalist ideological postion to a Revolutionary Nationalist Marxism and how that shift impacted both the national and local Black Panther party. This change would have an impact nationally that affected Stokely Carmichael and locally Bob Brown. The Party's ideological philosophy would undergo additionally changes later in its post 1970 existence which would immensely contribute to Bobby Rush's mainstream political participation. A Marxist-Leninist Mao type of socialism would become the predominate ideological base of the Illinois Chapter with Bobby Rush a staunch voice in support of this

ideological position. In telling the story of Bobby Rush it is framed in context with the work and mechanisms of the Illinois Chapter and its signature achievements under his leadership. This work details the socialistic character of all the Illinois panther's work and principal contributions. In a very intentional manner this work is meant to correct previous scholarship which omits the Socialistic, anti-Capitalistic, and anti- Imperialistic nature at the ideological core of this preeminent chapter of the Black Panther Party.

I will also examine how socialist theory put in action as demonstrated by the efforts of Panthers Bob Lee and Odinga would bring together diverse elements such as Confederate flag wearing Northside Hillbilly's, Puerto Rican Gangbangers, young white Greasers, and Black Militants in a political coalition which would ultimately give rise to local political leaders and have a major impact in Chicago's electoral politics. Armed with political theory and practical application and the spell-binding oratory of Fred Hampton; Bobby Rush, Yvonne King, Anne Campbell, Billy Che Brooks, Chaka Walls, Bob Lee and others mounted a substantial challenge to the Daley Machine and the American Empire in that equipped Rush with the requisite skills that would assist his mainstream political career.

Ultimately the story of Bobby L. Rush and his political development detailed here is intricately intertwined in the struggle against the Cook County Democratic Party machine controlled by Mayor Richard J. Daley. It is out of this struggle that Rush will gain political capital and stature within Chicago's communities of color. This dissertation is replete with information which serves to debunk false assumptions about the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Chicago's black communities, and the power of the state to define the limits of radicalism within its political structures.

The uphill fight waged by the black community against the Daley machine is detailed and examined here as Rush established himself as a political force in the 2nd ward on Chicago's heavily black Southside community. Within the incremental political awakening of the black community is

the genesis of the electoral political strategy which propelled Rush and Harold Washington to political power and served as a springboard for Rush to gain admittance to the legislative branch of the U.S. government. Thus, this work contains information and lessons for those who would challenge the existing power structure and attempt that resistance from without and within the American political system.

Bobby Rush as a subject of this dissertation is not only a compelling story but a difficult one to tell as well. Because unlike many historical narratives that are written or explored he is present. Meaning he is alive not deceased and an evolving subject. I thought it would be relatively simple to interview and explore topics with Rush given my background and our shared associates from the Panther Party. Surely my radical credentials and contacts would afford me access to the Congressman. However, this has proven not to be the case. I have had to rely on books, articles, and oral histories as Rush has declined to be interviewed. The fact that this is a continuing story as Rush is a sitting Congressman means that I had to decide on where to end this narrative. After much debate I decided to end with the election in 2008 of the first black President of the United States Barack H. Obama. It is a fitting end point as the struggle in Chicago between Bobby Rush and a young Barack Obama is well detailed here. Additionally, this dissertation is a story of the increasing influence of the Democratic Party in coopting the resistance and energy of radical political forces and politicians. Not only is it a story of Bobby Rush but it also is a story of politics in America in relation to its communities of color and the sphere in which black elected officials must act and react in a fascist American political system.

This work is divided into an introduction and five chapters. Chapter one contains information about Bobby Rush earliest political involvement in SNCC and formation of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Chapter two looks at the black communities of Chicago and its relationship with the Richard J. Daley Machine from 1955-1968. Chapter three looks at the emergent radical political formations within Chicago. The struggle for the 2nd ward, the move to national office, and

Rush's defeat in the 1999 Chicago mayoral race. Chapter four looks at the political challenges mounted by Barack Obama, Donne Trotter, and Madeline Haithcock on an apparently weakened Bobby Rush. Chapter five examines and analyzes Bobby Rush's career after his toughest political challenge. It delves into the changes in his approaches within the context of the Democratic Party at a time when the entire US political spectrum has shifted to the right. And how despite this rightward drift Rush has maintained a position on the extreme left of the Democratic Party. And yet although he is on the extreme left of the Democratic Party his voting patterns and actions indicates he may have surrendered some of his former progressive edge thus becoming a Democratic Party functionary in the tradition of some former Chicago area black political leaders who held congressional office before him. However, given the 1972 shift in ideology of the Black Panther Party, Rush may very well remain closer to his Panther roots than he appears at first glance.

Chapter 1

Chicago in 1968, the year of Revolution was a divided city. It was a city of at least two worlds, one white and the other black. The southern-based Civil Rights Movement had won victories in the arena of public accommodations and voting rights, while the landmark Civil Rights Bill of 1964 was the law of the land. By contrast, in Daley's Chicago, defacto segregation was the order of the day, with the Daley machine and the police, actively targeting black citizens. According to Historian Jon Rice, it was "a time when radical ideas, brought on at least In part by the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War movement, are widely discussed and political movements are considered potent tools for changing the life of the poor."¹ In September of 1967, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee Midwest Director Bob Brown was in his office when a tall black man in an U.S. Army uniform walked into the office. The man was Bobby L. Rush, and he wanted to volunteer with SNCC to fight for black rights and dignity.²

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was created to provide inclusion for younger people in the Civil Rights Movement. Prior to 1968, "SNCC led the clear majority of the more active Civil Rights engagements in the south. It was SNCC who organized the freedom rides and were situated as the tip of the spear in many of the marches led by King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and together with CORE led in black voter registration initiatives in the south."³ In 1966, radical activist Stokely Carmichael assumed the leadership of SNCC and moved the organization in a more radical direction. Carmichael had previously worked as a coordinator in Lowndes

¹ Jon Frank Rice, *Black Radicalism on Chicago's West Side: A History of the Illinois Black Panther Party*. <http://commons.lib.niu.edu/handle/10843/10672>. Date: 1998.

² Bob Brown, Telephone Interview, November 13, 2015.

³ www.history.com/topics/black history/sncc.6/11/2016.

County, Alabama, where he created a political party with the logo of the Black Panther as its symbol. It was Stokely Carmichael and

Willie Ricks who first issued the call for Black Power on June 16, 1966, in Greenwood, Mississippi. However, by 1968 SNCC was under the leadership of Hubert Brown (H Rap Brown) as Carmichael had left

the organization in 1967.⁴ It was Carmichael's leadership style and prolific speaking which earned him enmity within the organization that contributed to his ouster.⁵

The organization for which Bob Brown organized and Bobby Rush served as a new volunteer was more militant than it had been under the previous leadership. The call for Black Power while it resonated with urban youth, did not have quite the same appeal with the older established Civil Rights leadership. The activists of SNCC were proponents of Direct Action and did not as such adhere to all the tenets of non-violence advocated by King and the SCLC. According to Bob Brown, "SNCC was set up not as a membership organization; rather it was organized with affiliates, and volunteers, so that it would not compete with the NAACP and the SCLC."⁶

The fact that Bobby Rush was a military man who wanted to participate in the black freedom struggle was not unusual. Many of the men who became involved in the Civil Rights/Black Power movement had military backgrounds. The Vietnam War, racial turmoil in the South and the nation's cities caused many black veterans to question their roles. In 1967 in Detroit the 82nd and 101 Airborne divisions were called to patrol a major American city because of the spontaneous uprising there. These soldiers had only been in the United States for two weeks, having newly arrived from the rice paddies and jungles of Southeast Asia. This event, Harlem, Watts, Newark, and other struggles politicized many of these soldiers.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Bob Brown, Interview.

⁶ Ibid.

In contrast to Rush's rather sparse Civil Rights background, Bob Brown had an extensive history in the Black Freedom Movement. He had functioned as a member of the Chicago Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.) from 1963-1967. In this position Brown had developed a keen organizing ability

and knew the major players in the Civil Rights Movement. Also, Brown was a faithful supporter of Stokely Carmichael supporting his views and carrying out his instructions. It was after his stint with CORE that Brown became the Director of the Midwest office of SNCC in 1967.⁷ What ultimately appealed to both men about SNCC was its focus on direct action.

By the year 1967 the Civil Rights Movement, despite having some apparent initial success, failed in a critical area. The movement had not addressed the most pressing needs of northern blacks. According to historian Jack M. Bloom, "With the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the Civil Rights Movement finished its program of legal gains. This legislation, and the process by which it was achieved, broke the thrust of black subjugation in the South."⁸ In the north, however, in cities like Chicago, the movement's focus was necessarily different, due to conditions not present in the largely rural south.

In the north conditions of crowded housing caused by the practice of redlining and restrictive housing covenants and the steady arrival of new migrants from the racial and economic challenges of the south presented a slightly different set of grievousness than that of the Southern black. Northern blacks were allowed and encouraged to exercise the franchise. Yet this voting power, despite the large blacks communities failed to alleviate black grievances. Blacks were concentrated in 'ghetto' areas. They suffered disproportionate levels of poverty, inferior education, and health care when compared to whites.⁹ As a result, by the 1960s, urban disturbances were escalating to the degree that federal, state, and local officials

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, & the Civil Rights Movement*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 186.

⁹ Ibid.

felt compelled to address some of the concerns expressed to preserve the appearance of order and stability within the nation.

It was becoming increasingly apparent that government programs such as HUD and the War on Poverty would not placate blacks' strident demands for a redistribution of wealth and power. The Civil Rights

coalition that had formerly fought alongside blacks in the battle against entrenched southern systemic inequality were reluctant to tackle the problems of the northern black urban dweller. Also, the preponderance of southern black leadership failed to attract the same level of enthusiasm in the north as they did in the south. In fact, "the northern middle class, the Democratic Party, and the federal government, refused to take the path asked of them. More concessions were ruled out."¹⁰

The coalition forces that took on the southern establishment were willing to assist blacks in the south, because the turmoil caused by the social upheavals was a political and business liability that southern business interests, the federal government, and multi-national corporations realized they could not afford. However, northern black rebellions sparked by rage and frustration together with the call for Black Power...." raised the specter of class upheaval and seemed to demand a redistribution of wealth and power, and this demand was unacceptable to those who had been the allies of the black movement."¹¹ Because of the systemic problems and the lack of allies who had previously been supportive, blacks in the urban ghettos of the north were forced to fight and develop new strategies and organizations to confront the oppression from which they suffered.

Urban rebellions commonly referred to as 'riots were the symptoms of the new militancy, a militancy borne of oppression and fear. The saying 'oppression breeds resistance,' seemed evident as city after city erupted in Urban rebellion. In the Harlem area of New York in 1964, blacks rioted in response to the police

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 187.

killing of a black man. “As elsewhere Harlem blacks reacted to racial discrimination, segregation. police brutality and social injustices that dominated their lives. They resorted to violence to express their disgust with the system. Ironically the Harlem Riot occurred just two weeks after the 1964 Civil Rights Act was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson.”¹²

One year later in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, blacks rebelled after an altercation between a motorist, his mother, and a white police officer. Crowds of blacks battled, police, and firemen. Stores were looted and burned. Many businesses in the area were destroyed. Often the people targeted those businesses seen as exploitive of the community.¹³ The largest and most destructive of the urban rebellion in the 1960s occurred in Detroit, Michigan, July 23, 1967. A police raid on a “blind pig” (illegal drinking establishment) led to a week of urban rebellion.¹⁴

The largest and most destructive of the urban rebellion in the 1960s occurred in Detroit, Michigan, July 23, 1967. A police raid on a “blind pig” (illegal drinking establishment) led to a week of urban rebellion and a police murder of three black teenagers. The initial demands of northern blacks began with a moderate middle class emphasis on desegregating housing, then progressed to other issues such as jobs, school desegregation, and an end to police brutality. Leaders like Malcolm X Shabazz, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown, articulated an increasing black anger at the vicious attacks perpetrated in the black community by city governments and the police. It should be noted that most of the urban disturbances began with police interaction with members of the black community. Additionally, many blacks chafed at the limitations placed upon them by their leaders who often did not move aggressively enough to address their concerns.¹⁵

¹² <https://blackpast.org/aah/harlem-race-riot-1964>

¹³ www.theseamericns.com/riotslos-angles-riots-1965

¹⁴ Joel Stone, ed. *Detroit 1967* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017),142 www.theseamericns.com/riotslos-angles-riots-1965

¹⁵ Bloom.197.

Against the backdrop of urban despair and militancy, Bobby Rush and Bob Brown forged a friendship and a comradeship dedicated to the fight against oppression. The Bachelor, Bob Brown often enjoyed a good meal at the apartment of Bobby and Sandra-Milan Rush who with their son Jeffery lived at 2040 State Street apartment 1818 in the Hilliard Homes development.

Although both men endeavored to maintain a semblance of normality; this was a tumultuous time for blacks in America. In the Spring of 1968 Bobby Rush went AWOL from his Army post and immersed himself in the work of resistance within the parameters of the SNCC organization. The Army post from which Rush went AWOL was one of Chicago's Nike Hercules missile bases designated C-41. "The site was in Chicago's Jackson Park with its radar tower at Promontory Point."¹⁶ Prior to going AWOL, according to Bob Brown, "Rush often worked with a racist sergeant in the day and him[Brown] at night."¹⁷

Both men had been exploring the possibility of forming a new organization that would reflect the changed nature of the black liberation struggle. When Stokely Carmichael stepped down as the Chairman of SNCC in July of 1967 and embarked on a world tour, he was replaced by the fiery Hubert Brown (H. Rap. Brown). Brown espoused an even more confrontational and militant agenda than had Carmichael. In response to the changed nature of the struggle, the mood of blacks in the north was one of restlessness and discontent at the pace of change. Although both Brown and Rush felt that change needed to be accelerated, neither man endorsed the leadership change in SNCC which removed Stokely Carmichael. In his book, *The Fruits of Integration: Black Middle-class Ideology and Culture, 1960-1990*, Historian Charles

T. Bonner-Haley explained... "What black urbanites could not attain revealed the true depth of oppression of the northern black masses: access to a superior education, the chance to acquire higher

¹⁶ [https:// www. wbez.org/shows/curious/city-what happened-to-nike-missiles-sites-around- Chicago/ b09ed69c-cdfo-4382-67ac-75480a3d4cb7#](https://www.wbez.org/shows/curious/city-what-happened-to-nike-missiles-sites-around-Chicago/b09ed69c-cdfo-4382-67ac-75480a3d4cb7#)

¹⁷ Brown Interview.

skills to secure meaningful work, and the ability to afford decent housing. Northern urban black communities came to

represent what the Kerner Commission of 1968 called the division of American society into two societies, one black, one white, one struggling, the other privileged.”¹⁸

Urban discontent coupled with the recent spate of national rebellions created a charged atmosphere ripe for continued upheaval. The damn burst on April 4, th 1968, with the news that Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot and killed in Memphis Tennessee. Many of the nation’s cities experienced significant upheavals as country-wide urban destruction was loosed in the aftermath of this man of peace’s murder. “The ramifications of the assassination were instantaneous and immense; riots broke out in at least 125 U.S. cities, and in the African American sections of several American cities, turmoil followed. The murder of Martin Luther King sparked riots in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Newark, Washington, D.C., and more than 100 other American cities.”¹⁹ Many leaders called for calm and peace in the wake of Kings murder. Senator Robert F. Kennedy presidential candidate in an impromptu speech in Indianapolis, Indiana was one such voice. He called for peace and a healing of the racial divide in America.²⁰ President Johnson used executive orders to call out National Guard units in cities around the nation.²¹

In Chicago, large areas of the business sections of the Westside were engulfed in flames. White owned businesses were destroyed. Stores that were hated symbols of exploitation were looted and burned. Both Bobby Rush and Bob Brown observed the uprising in Chicago and their observations increased the sense of urgency they felt for an independent black political party that addressed the needs of the black masses. They both risked their safety and freedom by traveling to the heart of the rebellion on the

¹⁸ Charles T. Bonner Haley, *The Fruits of Integration: Black Middle-Class Ideology and Culture, 1960-1990*, p 35.

¹⁹ www.globalsecurity.org.

²⁰ www.jfklibrary.org

²¹ Global security.

²⁵ Brown

²⁶ Ibid

westside of Chicago immersing themselves in the very heart of the upheaval.²⁵ The widespread and unorganized violence of the uprising appalled both men, yet they understood the deep reservoir of discontent from which it sprang. These two men, whom to the outward observer would see as very different, a U.S. Army soldier with a security clearance, and a radical organizer and draft resister. Yet these outwardly different men were now ready to take definitive action in the black freedom struggle. Approximately two to four weeks after the rebellion, Bobby Rush returned to the military and faced no apparent negative consequence for his AWOL as if it never occurred. Sometime thereafter, he was honorably discharged from the military, but the date of his discharge has never been established.²⁶

In July of 1968, Bob Brown traveled to Washington D.C. to confer with Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael had been drafted into the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, several former SNCC supporters became members of the Black Panther Party.²² According to Bob Brown the meeting with Stokely was eventful. Shortly before Carmichael just been purged from SNCC. In fact, this was the reason that Brown traveled to DC. At this meeting, Brown asked if Stokely wanted help in taking back SNCC. He shocked Brown by saying no, he needed Brown to do something else for the movement.²⁸ Brown states, "Kwame (Carmichael would later change his name to Kwame Toure') said no, go back to Chicago and found the Black Panther Party there. I was shocked and said that shits not going nowhere. I did not like Eldridge Cleaver, (Panther Minister of Information) when I met him, he was a gangster and a rapist, period."²⁹ Brown said he had reasons other than his repugnance for Eldridge Prime Minister. As such, he conducted speaking tours around the country. Discussions had been ongoing about a merger of the two groups SNCC and the Black Panther Party for Self-defense, and although this Cleaver, some of which were the fact that there had been several abortive attempts to found a local Panther Party. Also, he was

²² Brown.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

aware of at least three other Panther groupings in Chicago. Nevertheless, despite his misgivings he called Chicago from the airport and told Tommy Carter and Bobby Rush they were now Panthers.³⁰ Brown states that recruitment efforts began throughout the greater Chicagoland region. Bob Brown and Bobby Rush met Fred Hampton at a rally in Maywood in the fall of 1967. Bob Brown states, "Fred Hampton was with the NAACP, a young Turk. It was Sylvester Williams, history teacher and wrestling coach at Proviso East High School] in

Maywood who introduced me to Fred."³¹ This meeting had an enormous impact on the Panther formation and by the Summer of 1968, Fred Hampton was recruited as the spokesperson and one of the leading members of the fledgling Panthers. Recruitment efforts were ongoing among renegade gang members, colleges students, and ex-military members. In July of 1968 the founding meeting of what was to become the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party was convened at Little Johns Tavern on 59th and Ashland Avenue.³² South Ashland Avenue on Chicago's Southside in 1966 was an important boundary marker in the black community. Ashland was the dividing line between the black neighborhood to the east and the white neighborhood to the west. While black High School students traveled across Ashland by bus to Lindbloom Technical High School on 61ST and Wolcott, woe to the black student who walked that four blocks to reach the other side of Ashland avenue in daylight, let alone at night. Ashland was not only the physical manifestation of the racial divide in Chicago, but it was also a divide among the same class. The black neighborhood just east of Ashland was solidly working class as was the area of Ashland that was white.

The irony is that the Panther group founded by Brown and Rush was at its core working class and not the lumpen proletariat so often celebrated in Panther ideology. This group was more in line with the 'brothers off the block' lumpen- proletariat cadre than the Brown-Rush group. Although the Brown-Rush group had the blessing and sanction of Stokely Carmichael, it was not officially recognized as the Illinois

Chapter of the Black Panther Party. The Cook-Ferguson faction clashed with the Brown-Rush faction at a rally in August of 1968.³³

South Ashland Avenue on Chicago's Southside in 1966 was an important boundary marker in the black community. Ashland was the dividing line between the black neighborhood to the east and the white neighborhood to the west.³⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Brown Interview.

While black High School students traveled across Ashland by bus to Lindbloom Technical High School on 61st and Wolcott, woe to the black student who walked that four blocks to reach the other side of Ashland avenue in daylight, let alone at night. In one of those strange ironies of history, Ashland is named after the Kentucky plantation of Henry Clay. The eloquent Senator, and slave owner was a founding member of the American Colonization Society, which helped found Liberia as a place for free blacks to settle. This was not commonly known by the area residents.²³

The Senate Theater was where twenty former SNCC members turned Black Panthers, led by Rush and Brown, confronted the Jewel- Cook group to argue over which group was the true Black Panthers.²⁴ As mentioned before there were other groups competing to be the Illinois Chapter, the most prominent of these groups was the East Garfield collective of Drew Ferguson and Jewel Cook. Whereas, a significant core of the Brown-Rush group was ex-SNCC, the Ferguson-Cook group were comprised of former members of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, Vice Lords, and community members.²⁵ This group was more in line with the 'brothers off the block lumpen- proletariat cadre than the Brown-Rush group. Although the Brown-Rush group had the blessing and sanction of Stokely Carmichael, it was not officially recognized as the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. The Cook-Ferguson faction clashed with the

²³ Clement Eaton, *Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics* (Boston MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), p.7.

²⁴ Williams, p.63.

²⁵ Jakobi Williams. *From The Bullet To The Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), p. 63.

Brown-Rush faction at a rally in August of 1968. The Senate Theater was where twenty former SNCC members turned Black Panthers, led by Rush and Brown, confronted the Jewel- Cook group to argue over which group was the true Black Panthers.²⁶ According to Billy Che' Brooks, there were at least four separate visits by a mix of individuals to Oakland in efforts to obtain the endorsement of the national organization.²⁷ None of these visits were successful as the national organization was leaning towards the Ferguson-Cook group. However, the Brown-Rush Panthers did have an office equipped with a working telephone, whose number had been given to the national party.

The fact that the Brown-Rush faction had a phone was the deciding factor in their recognition as the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Flying on their way to the East Coast, Oakland Panthers Don Cox and Ray Masai Hewitt were removed from an airplane, detained in Chicago and needed assistance. Because the only number was the Brown-Rush group, Central Headquarters in Oakland contacted them. They rendered the necessary assistance to the California Panthers. The National Panther organization decided in favor of the Brown-Rush faction, and they became the recognized Panther Party in Illinois. According to Jakobi Williams, when the West Side faction (Cook-Ferguson) heard the news, they approached Brown and Rush and the two contingents decided to merge. On November 1, 1968 the combined group officially opened its first headquarters at 2350 West Madison street. The founding members included Bob Brown, Bobby Rush, Fred Hampton. Bob Clay, Rufus "Chaka" Walls, Jewel Cook, Drew Ferguson, Henry English, Tommy Carter, and others.²⁸

According to Bob Brown, the newly established Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party consisted of about 35 core members.²⁹ In keeping with the organizational structure of the national organization, the Illinois Chapter adopted the same leadership titles. Fred Hampton became Deputy Chairman, Bobby

²⁶ Williams, p.63.

²⁷ Billy Che' Brooks, Interview, July 2, 2016.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Brown Interview.

Rush, Deputy Minister of Defense, Rufus (Chaka) Walls, Deputy Minister of Information, Billy (Che) Brooks, Deputy Minister of Education, etc. Interestingly, Bob Brown held no titular position in the organization. When asked about this difference Bob replied, "I never wanted a title. I was from SNCC originally and the structure there was to organize and to move on. Also, I did not have a good relationship with Fred Hampton, he wanted to be the leader and I ain't no follower."³⁰ Several key members were recruited by Bob Brown, among them was Christina (Chuckles) May a former University of Illinois student and like Brown a Morgan Park area resident.³¹

In October of 1968, May was named Deputy Minister of Culture, which placed her on the decision-making central staff.³² Within the first year of its founding the Illinois Chapter had women in leadership positions throughout the organization. This contrasted with most civil rights and black nationalist organizations throughout the United States. In addition to Christina (Chuckles) May, Ann Campbell was Communications Secretary, and Yvonne King held two important positions, that of Deputy Minister of Labor and Field secretary. These three women all held positions on the Central Staff, the core leadership body of the Illinois Chapter. The fact that women held leadership positions in the Party did not in itself negate sexism or male chauvinism.

Bob Brown was displeased with and in opposition to the increasing influence of William O'Neal. He was a charismatic Panther recruit who also owned a car. This was significant because most of the Panthers including Fred Hampton did not have a vehicle. The antics and attitude displayed by O'Neal; Brown felt were detrimental to the organization. Per Brown, O'Neal proposed building an elevator to the roof of 2350 West Madison and an electric chair for informants and traitors.³³ Despite Brown's

³⁰ Brown.

³¹ Brown.

³² www.NAABPP.org.

³³ Brown.

objections and O'Neal's wild proposals, he gained prominence. He was appointed head of the security cadre. This was to have severe ramifications on the Illinois Chapter the following year.³⁴

The initial ideology of the Black Panther Party was black nationalist. The Panthers, after dropping the self-defense from their name, became the Black Panther Party. They aligned themselves with civil rights organizations such as SNCC, CORE, US, and others to form a united front in the black community. The Panthers viewed themselves as the heirs of Malcolm X and adhered to his racially- inclusive post-Black Muslim, philosophy. The first major challenge that the new chapter faced was ideological. Co-founder Bob Brown was a staunch black nationalist. In his own words, he did not advocate several of the Panther Party's proposed programs. Brown states that his reaction to the Free Breakfast for Children's program was as follows; "I don't feed no hungry children, Lyndon Johnson had a program for that."³⁵ In Brown's thinking his job was to organize and set things in motion. He did not see the usefulness of social service type programs in a revolutionary organization.

Nationally, the semi-merger between SNCC and the BPP began to unravel; but Stokely Carmichael continued to associate himself with the Panther Party. By February of 1969, Carmichael left the Party due to ideological differences. The Party ideology now emphasized class struggle as primary as opposed to a race-based ideology. The Marxist philosophy of class, rather than race, as the paramount approach saw the Panthers disavow racially divisive tactics and rhetoric and led to the estrangement of Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, James Forman, and Ron Karenga. In Chicago, Bob Brown decided to sever his relationship with the Black Panther Party's Illinois Chapter, the organization that he had helped found. When Brown told Bobby Rush of his decision to leave the Party, Rush responded, "Stokely Carmichael don't pay my salary."³⁶ According to Brown, it was not until the Party changed its ideology to Marxism

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Brown.

that the chapter and the Black Panther Party in general became fiscally sound. Brown said, The Illinois Panthers had few financial resources and as the treasurer he knew how much money the chapter had.³⁷ The departure of Brown was not lamented by several Panthers. Billy Che' Brooks said, "It was no loss because he only sat around the office doing nothing."³⁸

The Panthers distanced themselves from most black nationalist groups when they advocated a class struggle approach to combat systemic injustices perpetrated against communities of color. The Panthers were not the only black nationalist group that advocated a Marxist approach, but they were arguably the most effective. In January 1969, the first Breakfast for Children Program opened at St Augustine Church in Oakland, California, and in the Illinois Chapter on April 1st, 1969. The Free Breakfast for Children Program was only the first of the Panther Party's Survival Programs. Survival programs were meant to assist the people to survive pending revolution and to heighten the contradictions between the people the government by demonstrating what Socialism should look like. It was a challenge to build parallel institutions that would replace the capitalist structures after the revolution.

One method the Panthers used to explain Socialism was demonstrated by Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton of the Illinois Chapter. His pragmatic approach to theory and practice is included in *The Black Panthers Speak*. Chairman Fred says; "Our Breakfast for Children Program is feeding a lot of children and the people understand our Breakfast for Children Program. We sayin' something like this-we saying that theory's cool, but theory with no practice ain't shit. You got to have both of them-the two go together. We have a theory about feeding kids free. What'd we do? We put it into practice. That's how people

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Brooks, Interview.

learn. Last week they had a whole week dedicated to the hungry in Chicago. Talking 'bout the starvation rate here went up 15%. Over here where everybody should be eating. Why? Because of Capitalism."³⁹

About a month after the South Side Panthers received their charter from the national organization they were singled out for special 'attention' by federal forces. On September 8, 1968, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover announced that the Black Panther Party was the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States. This statement unleashed repression upon the Party. Locally, the Party caused concern in

the Daley machine, as well as, the state and federal government. Of concern was the Party's rapport with the large black urban street organizations that operated in Chicago.⁴¹

In the early spring of 1969, Fred Hampton negotiated the peace of Lords, Stones, and Disciples (LSD). This negotiated peace was a cessation of armed violence between three large Chicago street gangs acronym for Lords, Stones, and Disciples; together these three organizations had a combined membership of roughly nine-thousand members. Each of these urban organizations were comprised of neighborhood groupings with their own name identification within the larger group. One example would be the Disciples, they were composed of the Gonzantos, Eastside Disciples, Devils Disciples, Fugitive Disciples, Black Saints, Royal Disciples, Motown Disciples, Renegade Disciples, Ellis Rebels, Valley Boys, and Outlaw Disciples just to name a few. The LSD negotiated peace lasted in total a year without any major shootings or beatings.⁴⁰

The FBI and the Chicago establishment feared that talks between the Blackstone Rangers (with over five- thousand members) and the militant Panthers would result in a merger of the two organizations that potentially would put thousands of armed militants in the Panther ranks. Kenneth O'Reilly, In his book, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America 1960-1972*, states, "The 'ever present

³⁹ Phillip S. Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 139.

⁵¹ Billy Che Brooks.

⁴⁰ Personal Recollections

danger' as one Chicago agent later put it, was that this large Negro youth gang [might] develop Black Nationalism and align themselves [sic] with the black extremist BPP.⁴¹ Another problem from the standpoint of the FBI was the increasing influence of the BPP throughout Chicago in particular and the State of Illinois in general. As reported, "By early 1969, according to the FBI, the Panthers had about twenty-five to thirty members in Chicago. The Panthers were gaining increasing publicity and expanding their operations, especially the Free Breakfast Program, an attempt to provide free medicine for black families, and an attempt to form coalitions with black 'gangs'."⁴²The Illinois Black Panther Party formed alliances with other groups in a multiracial coalition aimed at fighting the systemic oppression directed at all peoples, regardless of racial identification. Bobby Rush, Bob Lee, and Fred Hampton traveled throughout the Chicago area promoting the Panther's message of self-determination for oppressed communities. One of the most remarkable alliances forged was between the Panthers and the Young Patriots Organization (YPO). It was a group of Uptown (4800 North) poor whites primarily from the deep South and Appalachia, who advocated white supremacy and wore clothing sporting Confederate battle flags. Bob Lee and Bobby Rush made deep inroads within the previously racially hostile Uptown area. By pointing out the similarities between the poor white community and the black community and the manner and method of their shared oppression. The Panthers also forged alliances with the Puerto Rican Young Lords, led by the charismatic Jose (Cha Cha) Jimenez, Rising Up Angry, a collective of young white greasers in the Logan Square area, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Young Socialist Alliance. In fact, this broad alliance was made public in a press announcement May of 1969.⁴³ These coalition represented a challenge to the status quo and the Daley machine in Chicago.

⁴¹ O'Reilly, 303.

⁴² Goldstein, 527.

⁴³ [Scribd.com/document/299931888/The-Black-Panthers](https://www.scribd.com/document/299931888/The-Black-Panthers)

At various times the Chicago Panthers had offices throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area. The main office was at 2350 West Madison. Other offices were in the Far Southside Altgeld Gardens housing development, South State Street, and West 63rd st near Sangamon areas. By the spring of 1969, the Illinois Chapter had branches in Rockford, Peoria, Carbondale, and East St. Louis. Also affiliates in Cairo, Champaign, the Quad Cities, and supporters in smaller communities throughout the State. The influence and activities of the Panthers increasingly seemed too much for the Daley administration, state and federal law enforcement to control.

Consequently, the forces opposed to the Black Panther Party began a systematic campaign to attack the organization. Fred Hampton was arrested, tried, and convicted of a \$70-dollar robbery of an ice cream truck in Maywood. It was alleged he held up the truck and distributed the liberated ice cream to children in Maywood. He had been sentenced to serve 2 to 5 years for the robbery. Imprisoned for three months at Menard penitentiary, but later freed on an appeal bond. Pressure increased when in June of 1969 indictments were returned on sixteen Party members following a secret session. The grand jury charged them "on 18 counts ranging from kidnapping to unlawful use of a weapon."⁴⁴ In late July 1969, the Chicago Police and FBI raided the Panthers main office at 2350 West Madison and destroyed food for the breakfast program, Black Panther newspapers, and office equipment. Then started a fire that engulfed the interior of the building destroying much of the first floor. In an August 1st, 1969 interview with the *Chicago Daily Defender*, Bobby Rush and Fred Hampton accused the attackers of causing damages that totaled-

\$ 6,000.⁴⁵

The Panthers used such incidents to raise the consciousness of the people and to demonstrate how the agents of the system were against the best interests of the people and black people in particular.

⁴⁴ Daily Defender, June 7, 1969.

⁴⁵ Defender, August 2, 1969.

The Daley administration increasingly depicted the Panthers as little more than a gang which threatened and employed tactics of intimidation against members of the black community. In the August 1st interview with the *Daily Defender* this question was posed, “What about the charges of Panther intimidation and threats made to black people? To which Bobby Rush replied, “Yes, we are armed but this is our constitutional right and it is only in self-defense. We don’t believe in harassing anybody to make them join our party and we purge individualists who are racists and don’t want to abide by our program. And if anyone has a complaint about this kind of thing he or she should come to the office and we’ll punish the person in front of the complainant.”⁴⁶

While the Illinois Party was facing severe external pressure, they also faced internal pressure. Due to its rapid national growth, the Black Panther Party had added chapters rapidly. At the national and local level, however, there was no vetting of members. Membership was open to almost all who showed up at Panther offices and wanted to join the party. This presented problems for the organization as it tried to implement programs and project a positive image in the community. In late spring of 1969, As Aaron Dixon wrote, “Huey Newton issued a decree calling for expulsion of all members involved in criminal activity.”⁴⁷ These expulsions were known as ‘The Purge.’ Members who were expelled had their name published in *The Black Panther Community Newspaper* with a description of their offense against the Party or community. The offenders might be labeled an ‘enemy of the people’, a jackanape, a fool, or an agent provocateur. In the case of the Illinois Chapter, the purge was used both in the traditional sense and silence dissent.

In Chicago, the Panther party was experiencing internal discord in several areas. Many of the cadre were opposed to the way that Bobby Rush was enforcing rules. There was talk that he was a police agent. And some members were involved in petty crimes and unauthorized clashes with police and

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Aaron Dixon, *My People Are Rising* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012),148.

others. Moreover, the party received funds from speeches, donations, and other activities, but there was no transparency regarding those funds.⁴⁸ Fred Hampton now used the purge to resolve the discord within the ranks. In an extreme action, he purged the entire Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, exempting only himself and Bobby Rush. According to Blair Anderson, Fred Hampton called a general meeting at the Southside office. In that meeting Fred said, "Any motherfucker who did not want to follow the rules and the structure could leave the party. 'All of you are purged, anyone who stays can be a member of the National Committee to Combat Fascism. You must earn the right to be called Panthers."⁴⁹

Those members who remained in the organization eventually called themselves the 'collective'. To the outsider, they were Panthers, but those on the inside knew the truth. In effect, there weren't other official members of the Black Panther Party in Illinois for the next three years. Membership was reinstated by Bobby Rush in 1972. In February of that year, two community workers were made the first new Panthers

since Fred Hampton issued his edict in the Spring of 1969. Community workers Nona Hogsette and a comrade sister named Vera became members of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party.⁵⁰ However, by this time the Party in Chicago was in decline and new members were non-existent.

The heart and soul of the Illinois Chapter was its rank and file members. They went to bed at 12:00 am or later and rose again at 4:00am to prepare for the Free Breakfast for Children Program. They provided security on the offices overnight, solicited funds for the breakfast program and legal defense, and went into the projects and other areas where even the toughest people feared to go.⁵¹ Emboldened by the strength and ideology of the Party and believing that as a party member one could and should go wherever black people were, the Panther rank and file did just that. The average age of a member,

⁴⁸ Anderson.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Nona Hogsette-Howard, Telephone Interview, July 29, 2016.

⁵¹ Ibid.

however, was only about 21 years old in 1969 and slightly older in 1974 when the chapter ceased to function.

Apart from the tasks of protection and provision, a member was expected unless otherwise assigned to sell *The Black Panther Community Newspaper*. The paper was a valuable source of revenue for the party and it directly communicated weekly with hundreds of thousands worldwide, without the censorship of the main stream media.⁵² The paper served another function as well. "The party asked total commitment and dedication of its members, but there was no way in those early days to provide comrades with money or the essentials needed to survive."⁵³ Most of the membership lived in communal arrangements called "panther pads." Duties were shared, and members often did not have employment. Members would pick up from the office at least one bag of fifty (50) Black Panther newspapers and sell them throughout the various communities. The paper came out every Thursday and cost twenty-five cents (25), an affordable cost for the information it contained. Members kept ten cents (10) of every paper sold with the remaining (15) cents turned into the office at the end of the day. Some members sold as many as 300 papers a day. The average number was closer to 100 a day. That ten dollars a day was an important source of revenue for members. A percentage of monies was used by the local offices, and a sum was forwarded to national headquarters in Oakland, California.⁵⁴

Amid severe repression, the Illinois Chapter managed to implement several programs that provided much needed services to the community. In a *Chicago Daily Defender* interview published August 23, 1969, Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton, Deputy Defense Minister Bobby Rush, and Minister of Health Ron (Doc) Satchel discussed plans for the opening of a free health clinic. The Black Panther chapter had secured a building at 3852 W. 16th st on Chicago's West Side, in the 'bucket of blood' area controlled by

⁵² Mumia Abu-Jamal, *We Want Freedom* (Cambridge, South End Press,2004), 229.

⁵³ Dixon.148.

⁵⁴ Recollections.

the Conservative Vice Lords organization. The Vice Lord Organization refers to the area as the (Holy City). "According to [Satchel], a survey of the Westside community indicated that residents wanted the center to provide, in order of importance, pediatrics, obstetrics, dentistry and general medical care."⁵⁵ Doc' went on to state that the free medical center needs doctors, and nurses in addition to donations of supplies from drug companies and others to make this community service work.⁵⁶ According to Jakobi Williams, in his book *From the Bullet the Ballot*, "... the success of the Panthers' health clinics persuaded the Chicago Board of Health to establish similar clinics in poor areas of the city. The Panther clinics were the first in the United States to offer free sickle-cell anemia testing."⁵⁷ By the time of its closing in Spring of 1974 the Illinois Chapter had implemented a wide variety of Black Panther Party community services commonly referred to as Survival Programs.

The continuing impact of the Panther Party in Illinois, its staunch stand against endemic police violence and advocacy of a non-racial ideology enraged the local and national police forces of the state. The Party experienced constant harassment and three raids in 1969. According to Jakobi Williams, Chicago Panthers were arrested 111 times during the summer of 1969 alone. The charges in most cases were dropped, only a few went to trial.⁵⁸ The repression of the Panthers by law enforcement was far more than the simple product of a local conflict. It also involved the active meddling of the FBI through its COINTELPRO program.⁵⁹ During the summer of 1969, Panther member Larry Robinson was severely wounded in a confrontation with two Chicago Police officers. About a month later he died in Cook County Jail's Cermak Hospital from his wounds. Robinson was the first Illinois member killed.⁶⁰

The FBI had infiltrated the Illinois Chapter as early as 1968. Its best-known infiltrator William O'Neal operating from a position as the primary bodyguard for Fred Hampton. "O'Neal furnished so much

⁵⁵ *Chicago Daily Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1966-1973)*; August 23, 1969, pg. 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Williams, 194.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 174.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 167

⁶⁰ Brooks

information that it consisted of a twelve-volume, 4,000-page surveillance file on Fred Hampton, among other intelligence..."⁶¹ State repression on the Panthers increased as did the conflicts between the party and the police. On November 13, 1969, on 58th st and Calumet, Chicago Panthers Spurgeon (Jake) Winters and Lance (Santa Bear) Bell were engaged in an armed confrontation with Chicago police. The result was deadly. "Panther Spurgeon "Jake" Winters, and two policemen, Frank Rappaport and John Gilhooly, were

killed during the incident. Both sides claimed to have been attacked first, and eight officers and Panther Lance "Santa Bear" Bell suffered gunshot injuries."⁶²

The death of Winters hit particularly hard. He was a bright and dedicated member of the Illinois Chapter. He was a former honor student at Englewood High School and had graduated a mere five months

earlier. The BSU at Englewood High School mourned his passing as he and Panther Walter (Brother) Johnson mentored the members at Englewood. They had a positive effect on the local Black Disciples members, who were ever-present presence around the school. In fact, the Illinois Chapter released a Special News Bulletin on November 19, 1969, signed by Deputy Minister of Information Rufus (Chaka) Walls detailed how the 18-year-old Winters had turned down five college scholarships to serve the community as a Party member.⁶³ Lance Bell was indicted and would not be freed until August of 1972.

The police department was particularly by the killing and wounding of their members by Panthers. Local law enforcement, with the active collusion of the FBI planned and executed a counter-attack on December 4th, 1969. The establishment retaliated by attempting to eliminate the head of the Illinois Chapter. The FBI SAC (special agent in charge) Roy Mitchell, "met with William O'Neal, a possibly psychopathic infiltrator/provocateur who had managed to become Hampton's personal bodyguard and

⁶¹ Ibid.176

⁶² Ibid.183

⁶³ panafricannews.blogspot.com/ Monday, December 04,2006.

chief of local BPP security, at the Golden Torch Restaurant in downtown Chicago. The agent secured from O'Neal the accompanying detailed floor plan of Hampton's apartment, including the disposition of and denotation of exactly where the BPP leader might be expected to be sleeping on any given night."⁶⁴

In the predawn hours of December 4th, 1969, fourteen members of the Chicago Police and Edward V. Hanrahan's State' Attorney's police raided the Hampton apartment located at 2337 West Monroe. Although it was purportedly a 'raid' to secure illegal weapons, it was many believed an assassination team. Inside the apartment were nine Panthers: Peoria Defense Captain Mark Clark, Deborah (China Doll) Harris a former University of Illinois at Champaign student; Deputy Minister of Health Ron (Doc) Satchel a former UIC medical student; Verlina Brewer, a 15-year-old student from Ann Arbor; Blair Anderson 18 years of age and a former member of the Blackstone Rangers; Louis Truelock who met Fred Hampton in Menard

Penitentiary and joined the party after his release; Harold Bell from Rockford Illinois a Vietnam Veteran; Deborah Johnson Fred Hamptons -nine-month pregnant fiancée, and Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton. The police raiders kicked open the front door and shot Mark Clark in the heart, causing him to reflexively fire his shotgun, which was the only panther shot fired. The police raiders then proceeded to shoot through the walls with a combination of semi and automatic weapons.

The raiders secured the apartment and then proceeded to the back bedroom. They pulled out Panthers Harold Bell and Deborah Johnson. According to Harold Bells account this exchange happened.

(First Voice): "That's Fred Hampton.

(Second Vice): "Is he dead? Bring him out."

(First Voice): He's barely alive; he'll make it."

(Two shots ring out and a third voice, believed to be Carmody's states)

"He's good and dead now."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 139.

⁶⁵ Williams, 185.

Harold Bell's account was included in Jakobi Williams book and excerpted from Curtis Austin's *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*. "All the other occupants of the apartment were shot except for Louis Truelock, Harold Bell, and Deborah Johnson. Ron Satchel's two bullet wounds to the stomach was the most serious of the wounded Panthers. Verlina Brewer...was shot in her left buttock and left knee, Blair Anderson.... was hit in both thighs and his penis...Brenda Harris... was shot two times in the thigh and her hand."⁶⁶ All the occupants were beaten and handcuffed.

Blair Anderson recounts how they had only recently discovered (1969) that Verlina Brewer was only fourteen years old. Verlina was staying with her older sister who was demanding that she return to Ann Arbor. Verlina called Blair to pick her up two days prior to the December 4th raid and it was he who delivered her to the West Monroe apartment. Blair stated in his 2016 interview, "I delivered her into hell."⁶⁷ People's Law Office (PLO) attorney Jeffery Haas, upon being informed of the early morning raid and subsequent deaths of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, went to the Wood Street Police station to interview the jailed survivors. Haas interviewed Deborah Johnson, Harold Bell, and Louis Truelock. During the Truelock interview as Haas was preparing to leave, "suddenly as though he had just remembered something, Truelock leaned over and whispered, look out for Rush" "What do you mean?" I whispered back. "one of the police officers here was bragging" Rush is next", and they said something about another raid."⁶⁸ If the police could get to Bobby Rush they would have eliminated much of the leadership of the Illinois Black Panther Party.

Jeffery Haas telephoned Bobby Rush at the Panther office at 2350 West Madison. He told Rush what Truelock said about a police raid on his house next.⁶⁹ It is important to note that the Panther office was

⁶⁶ Jeffery Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), 94.

⁶⁷ Anderson.

⁶⁸ Haas, 81.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 82.

a mere block away from the West Monroe apartment. Bobby Rush did not return to his apartment. It was in fact, raided the morning of December 5th with the police supposedly finding marijuana. However, Rush did not smoke marijuana and had never been associated with smoking (Brother Roggie) Panther parlance for marijuana. Subsequently the police issued a warrant for Rush's arrest on the marijuana charge.⁷⁰

However, before going into hiding, Bobby Rush made the following statement published in the *Daily News* on December 4th, 1969. "Bobby Rush, deputy minister of defense for the Black Panther Party said Thursday that Panther Chairman Fred Hampton was "murdered while he slept in bed. "We can prove that," Rush said at a press conference on the steps outside the blood-spattered first floor apartment at 2337 W. Monroe, the scene of Thursday's Panther police shoot-out, "This vicious murder of Chairman Fred and Mark Clark, our defense minister from Peoria, was implemented by that dog Nixon and Hanrahan and all the rest of the pigs. Hampton never fired back when the pigs came into his back room and shot Fred in the head. He couldn't have fired because he was asleep."⁷¹

Although the party was often at odds with many black organizations, particularly around their perceived lack of concern for the plight of the poor, the Panthers had influence throughout the black community. That influence was much in evidence as Rush surrendered to police, a (local black police commander), at Jessie Jackson's Operation Push televised meeting on Drexel Avenue. Rush was embraced by Jessie Jackson and accompanied by ACLU lawyer Kermit Coleman. Renault Robinson and three other members of the African American Patrolmen League also took the stage in support of Rush as Jackson said, "you belong to the community."⁷² The killing of Hampton and Clark caused intense

⁷⁰ Ibid. 96.

⁷¹ Ibid. 85-86.

⁷² Ibid.98.

outrage in the black and progressive community throughout Chicago. "Chicago black aldermen, state representatives, and Congressman Ralph Metcalfe-all loyal to and dependent upon the Democratic machine in the past-bolted, openly condemning Hanrahan.⁷³ Bobby Rush had the marijuana charges dropped but would serve a six-month sentence on a weapons charge for walking into a police station armed with a revolver.⁷⁴

In fact, because of the pressure the Daley Machine and State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan tried to control the damage by portraying the Panther raid as a pre-dawn gun battle. However, the police made a critical mistake in not securing the scene and the Panthers took advantage of this mistake. The Panther's conducted tours of the bullet riddled, blood splattered apartment for any who could brave the Chicago cold. A tour through the Monroe apartment gave lie to the police version of the events of December 4, 1969.

Subsequent evidence found that the police fired ninety-nine bullets in the apartment to the Panther one bullet. With the raid the police had their revenge. A civil rights case was made against the FBI, Chicago Police, and States Attorney; and after fourteen years of trials, plus appeals the case was settled in 1983. It was a long uphill battle that highlighted the lengths the state would go to silence dissent. The survivors and the Hampton and Clark families were awarded 1.85 million. This was the largest settlement of a civil rights case at the time.

The onslaught on the Party continued after the Hampton and Clark killings. Two more Chicago Panthers were murdered within a seven-month span. Sterling (Pinky) Jones, 17-years-old was murdered Christmas Day, 1969 after answering his door at the Altgeld Gardens housing complex on Chicago's far Southside.⁷⁵ Pinky was a key organizer in the Altgeld Gardens housing complex, the far Southside, and

⁷³ Ibid, 100.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ It'sabouttimebpp.com/chapter history/ Chicago/ black panther community news service/ Jan 10, 1970.

South Suburban area. His killer, or killers, were never apprehended. In the summer of 1970, one of the Party's best organizers, Clifton Morgan aka Babatunde X Omarwali of the Chicago Branch, disappeared after organizing National Committee's to Combat Fascism (N.C.C.F.) in the Downstate Illinois, East-St Louis, Cairo, and Carbondale area. Scheduled to return to Chicago in June, it wasn't until July 27, 1970, that his remains were found along the Illinois Central Railroad tracks outside of Chicago. Babatunde was 26-years-old when he was killed, and his killers have never been identified.⁷⁶

The Party downstate was also a target of police repression. In the early morning hours of November 12th, 1970, the Panther office in Carbondale Illinois was attacked and a shootout ensued. Miraculously no one was killed. After several hours the Panthers surrendered, and Bobby Rush contacted the Lawyers from the PLO. The defendants became known as the Carbondale Six. The rallying Cry was Free the Carbondale Six. After a three-week trial the Panthers of Carbondale were found not guilty of attempted murder and freed.⁷⁷

Some members of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party wanted to retaliate against the police for the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. Bobby Rush as Deputy Minister of Defense, however, sent some of the cadre members he could trust to collect weapons from members who wanted to mete out retaliatory justice.⁷⁸ That action helped blunt the drive to initiate an armed response by the Panthers. Rush appears to have been trying to save the life of Party members as an all-out war with the police would have undoubtedly decimated the Chicago organization. The Party was devastated by the untimely deaths of Hampton, Clark, as well as the death of some of its key personnel undeniably Hampton, Clark, Sterling, and Omarwali were all effective organizers. Despite these losses, the party did not stop functioning. It was somewhat effective in promoting its programs even in this challenging situation.

⁷⁶ Safiya Bukhari, *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther; Keeping the Faith in Prison & Fighting for those Left Behind* (New York: The Feminist Press, City University of New York, 2010),146

⁷⁷ Haas, 149.

⁷⁸ Anderson Interview. 2016.

Under the leadership of Bobby Rush and Yvonne King the Illinois Chapter continued its Survival Programs and even increased them. The Spurgeon Jake Winters Medical Center officially opened in January of 1970. It was managed by Ron 'Doc' Satchel, and its professional staff of doctors and nurses provided healthcare in a socialist manner, free of charge to the community. The Center provided health screenings for sickle cell anemia, prenatal care for pregnant women, and general health care. The medical center on the Westside of Chicago was replicated by the Young Patriots Party on the city's Northside.

After the release of Huey Newton from prison in August of 1970, internal contradictions among the leadership reshaped the organization. By contrast, the Illinois chapter was little effected by the machinations in Oakland, New York, and Algeria. The Panther Party split into rival factions in March of 1971. The two factions were the Newton and Cleaver factions. The Illinois branch stayed with the Newton

faction and adopted the new party line which deemphasized the gun, promoted the theory of Intercommunalism, and increased emphasis on Serve the People programs (Survival Programs).⁷⁹ During the summer of 1971 the Chicago branch centralized its efforts and moved the main office from 2350 West Madison street to its Southside location at 4233 S. Indiana Avenue. The West Madison office was retained as a storage facility for the Black Panther Party Intercommunal News Service (The name change reflects the party's change in ideology). Moreover, Panther ideology now included an emphasis on electoral politics, voter's registration drives, together with an increased sickle cell anemia screening campaign.⁸⁰

During the summer of 1971, the Illinois Chapter invited Ericka Huggins to be the introductory speaker at the screening of the movie, *The Murder of Fred Hampton*. The movie was shown at the Capital Theater 7941 S. Halstead St. Outside of the theatre, a medical van from the Peoples Clinic was testing

⁷⁹ Brooks.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

for Sickle cell anemia, and a table staffed by members of the collective were registering people to vote. The Chicago branch was full of activity with new programs and initiatives, including a Prison Busing Program that took relatives and loved ones to see their respective incarcerated people. People were bussed free of charge on a former Greyhound bus from the office at 4233 S. Indiana to prisons in Illinois, according to a set schedule. As noted, "The former Greyhound bus was valued at \$13,000, with a 39-passenger seating capacity, air conditioning and a washroom."⁸¹

In 1972, nationally BPP Chairman Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown announced they were seeking the Mayor's office and city councilwoman seat respectively in Oakland. One earmark of both the campaign and survival programs during this period was large food giveaways. In addition to the electoral movement in Chicago the Panthers organized a campaign for community control of police and a push for seats on the model cities board. In August of 1972, a conference was held at Holy Angels Church on the Southside of

Chicago. It was well attended as over 5,000 poor people were present. At that conference, the BPP gave away 5,000 bags of groceries, 3,000 pairs of brand-new children's, shoes and administered Sickle Cell Anemia tests. It is important to note that this conference escaped the mainstream media, but it occurred nonetheless.⁸²An organizational change at the national level had yet another devastating effect on the Illinois chapter. It was announced that the Black Panther Party would close its chapters outside of California and centralize its efforts to elect Bobby and Elaine. All BPP members were to report to Oakland to work on the campaign and local survival programs. Bobby Rush as leader of the Illinois Panthers held out against this order. The Illinois chapter sent only a few members to Oakland. Lynn French, Michael (Taps) Rhynes, and Minister Billy (Che) Brooks were some of the members who went to

⁸¹ Its abouttimebpp.com/ The Black Panther, Saturday, June 17, 1972.

⁸² Itsabouttimebpp.com/ Chapter history/ 1972.

Oakland. This order weakened the Party and many members simply walked away from the organization.⁸³

By June of 1973 a much-reduced Illinois Chapter organized a citywide campaign to push for community control of police; this campaign included the NAACP, the Illinois Black Political caucus, the American Indian Movement (AM), Operation Push, the League of Black women voters, and the National Defense Organization.⁸⁴ This proved to be the last major Illinois Panther initiative. In the spring of 1974 the Panthers offices and programs closed. The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party functioned from 1968-1974 but the national organization's history was longer.

⁸³ Brooks.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 1973.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter examines the political system and climate in Chicago and the black community during the period from through 1955-1976. The year 1955 in Chicago is the beginning of the Richard J. Daley era of machine politics. The year 1968 was the year of the founding of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party in Chicago. Chapter two also discusses the political climate in the Chicago area during the years of the Daley Political Machines domination of Chicago Politics until Daley's death in 1976. The events, interplay of groups, political and social strife extant in this period played a primary role in the political elevation of Bobby L. Rush from SNCC member to Black Panther Leader to Alderman, and ultimately to Congressman of the 1st Congressional District.

The political movement of Bobby Rush from Civil Rights and Black Power to mainstream politics was formed in the crucible of resistance to the plantation style system of government imposed by Richard Daley. Black Americans from the rural south flocked to northern and western cities beginning around 1914. This movement of African Americans' from the rural south to the industries of the cities is called the Great Migration. The black masses were leaving the south for two primary reasons. The first was to escape strict Jim Crow regulation and pervasive violence directed at blacks to maintain strict control. The second reason was economic opportunity.

In the early nineteenth century northern industries had relied on European immigrants to man their workforces. By the time of World War I in 1914, European immigration fell sharply, while the demand for workers increased. The Northern industries sent recruiters to the south to hire workers.⁸⁵ The results of their efforts and other factors saw the black population of Chicago increase almost two-fold during the period of World War I; 1914-1918. At this time in Chicago about 100,000 African Americans called Chicago home.⁸⁶ Because of the political climate in the Chicago Black community caused by neglect and marginalization under the Daley machine, the rise of a political entity in Chicago such as the Black

⁸⁵ Hana Layson with Kenneth Warren, *Chicago and the Great Migration*. <https://dcc.newberry.org/collections/>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Panther Party was a consequence of those conditions. In studies of the Chicago Black Community, three approaches have gained prominence. The first of these approaches is best exemplified by Harold F. Gosnell's study entitled *Negro Politicians*, published in 1935. This study focused on individual Black politicians and their inter-cine struggles within the Black community. During the period of Gosnell's study, his approach was essentially valid. However, there were parts of his analysis in which did not serve my purpose.

The second study was James Q. Wilson's *Negro Politics*, published in 1960. Wilson like Gosnell focused on the political personages in the Black community, as well as, the machine. However, his focus involved "organizational imperatives", structural interactions and "mayor and boss" roles.⁸⁷ Again, this type of approach did not align with my training as a historian. The third study is the one that is most effective in providing a well-defined insight into the workings of the Daley Machine. As a historian, William Grimshaw's historical perspective approach is more attuned with the historical project and provides a clearer view of the Daley machine and its interactions with the Black community during the years of its predominance in Chicago.

The Chicago Black community of the post-World War I era was a teeming ramshackle area of housing concentrated in several strips of land. The black Belt areas of the community extended from 22nd street on the North to 63rd street on the South. Wells Street on the west and Cottage Grove on the East defined most of the Southside black enclave. In fact, **"during the 1940s and 50s, the South Side of Chicago, was the creatively teeming area called Bronzeville. This was the home to poet Gwendolyn Brooks, playwright Richard Wright and dancer Katherine Dunham, and a lot more. Because of this, Chicago's South Side Bronzeville is said, by many, to be second only to Harlem in providing a legacy of African-American**

⁸⁷ William J. Grimshaw, *Black Politics in Chicago*. (Chicago: Center for Urban Policy, Loyola University, 1980), 2.

cultural gifts to America and the world.”⁸⁸ One of the more popular streets in Bronzeville was 47th with its clubs, restaurants, shops, the Jones brother’s hotel, and black economic life. The Kings of this area included policy operators like Edward and George Jones, the Black entrepreneurs like Samuel B. Fuller and Earl B. Dickerson, black entertainers, celebrities, and politicians. Politically the majority of Black voter’s pre-New Deal were Republican. But during the Roosevelt years many blacks had been won over to the Democratic Party.

The story of Daley and the black community does not begin in 1955, but earlier in the 1940’s, when the Kelly/Nash Chicago political machine decided to make a change of Aldermen in the city’s all black 2nd ward. Black lawyer William Dawson was the replacement for Arthur Mitchell. Dawson, however, wanted a national office, rather than a strictly local one. In 1942, he was elected a U.S. Congressional representative; but he also retained his local Democratic party committeeman position.⁸⁹ Dawson was the machine’s man. As such, he had power in the black community. The machine placed some blacks in positions on the Chicago Housing Authority board, in the police department in supervisory positions, a few judgeships, and school board positions. Tokenism, best describes the positions given to Chicago’s Blacks, but during the 1940s and 1950s, the awarding of these positions was unprecedented.⁹⁰ While the machine had existed in Chicago since the time of Mayor Anton Cermak it had been transformed by the New Deal and the surge of black voters which now identified themselves as Democratic. Thus, the machine responded accordingly.

As long as the Kelly political machine (Nash died in 1943)⁹¹ controlled the Cook County Democratic Party (CCDP), Dawson as a black power broker remained in control of his sector. Dawson delivered large pluralities for the Democratic party as an important agent of the machine. In the black community

⁸⁸ <https://chicagosouthside.weebly.com>

⁸⁹ Robert G. Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders: A History of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp.194-195.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 195.

⁹¹ www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages686.html

Dawson and the machine both were not averse to a little graft to make things run a bit smoother. According to former Alderman Dick Simpson, "Chicagoans, as always, were willing to put up with a little graft and corruption as long as city services were provided."⁹² Gambling and ties to organized crime reaped huge financial rewards for the Chicago machine. However, a series of exposes revealed the depths of the gangster city hall connection and the CCDP was on the defensive. The gangster expose's together with ethnic uproar regarding Kelly's ordering of Chicago Policeman to escort blacks in moving into previously all-white areas, incensed the CCDP's white supporters. The machine moved into a survival mode. It dumped Kelly in slating its 1947 Mayoral candidate. Kelly, ever the staunch party loyalist quietly conceded and faded from the political scene.⁹³

The CCDP slated Martin Kennelly for Mayor in 1947. Kennelly a safe alternative, with a reputation as a reformer allowed the machine time to recoup its loss of prestige and shore up its battered constituencies. He posed little threat to the larger workings of the machine but appeared competent and challenging. The relationship between Kennelly and the black community quickly devolved, because of the Mayor's attack on two mainstay black institutions, -jitney cabs and the policy numbers game. At this time, white cab drivers rarely ventured into the black Southside areas, so black-owned and unlicensed jitney cabs provided much-needed transportation in the black community. Kennelly saw the unlicensed cabs as a source of revenue that the city was not receiving.⁹⁴ Therefore, he sought to capture this revenue, which presented to the community as another insensitive policy from the white officials downtown.

It was the Mayor's attack on the policy operation, which ultimately had negative consequences for both Kennelly and Dawson. According to Robert Spinney, in *City of Broad Shoulders*, "A furious William Dawson had seen his political power shrink with the replacement of Kelly with Kennelly; now he saw

⁹² Dick Simpson, *Rogues, Rebels, and Rubber Stamps: The Politics of the Chicago City Council 1863 to the Present*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 111.

⁹³ Encyclopedia.chicagohistory

⁹⁴ Spinney. 207.

Kennelly deprive his political organization of money from the policy wheel operators, a chief source of its income.⁹⁵ The Dawson political organization had reaped as much as \$10,000 a month from the gambling syndicates operating in the black community. This was returned to the community in the form of informal assistance and welfare.⁹⁶ Because of the bragging black policy King Edward Jones did with his cellmate Sam (Momo) Giancana, underboss of the Chicago Crime Syndicate when both were imprisoned in Crown Point Indiana; Edward Jones policy empire was encroached by the Syndicate.

The policy wheel was a lottery system that produced a winning number that players could bet various amounts on. If the number came up there was a payoff. This type of gambling was big in the black community as a person could bet as little as a nickel and realize a sizeable return. Edward, George, and Mc Kissack Jones, were brothers who started a cab company, learned the numbers business from the bottom up and started their own policy wheel with a loan they obtained from their mother.⁹⁷ It was the eldest of the Jones boys, Edward who would rise to be dubbed the ‘Policy King,’ a title that he relished.⁹⁸ The Jones brothers put cash into legitimate business and real estate, making them the largest source of cash in the Black Belt. After the Chicago Mob got interested. The days of the black policy operations soon ended.⁹⁹

Dawson quickly struck back against the party. He called a meeting with the CCDP and Kennelly. In attendance at that meeting was Richard J. Daley, who watched as Dawson threatened to withhold his support in the 1951 election if Kennelly was slated to be mayor beyond 1954. The result of the meeting was a chastened and shocked Kennelly and a triumphant Dawson. Over time, this meeting was to have a detrimental effect on the Dawson organization. In 1952, when Richard Daley became the head of the CCDP, he set about limiting the power of the Dawson organization. Daley having witnessed the power

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ www.americanmafia.com/Feature_Articles_53.html

⁹⁸ Laverne Stephens Telephone Interview, 01 /17/2019

⁹⁹ americanmafia.com

of the Dawson organization decided that he would not allow the same leverage to be used against him that Dawson employed against Kennelly. As historian Grimshaw wrote, "Dawson suffered his first severe setback in 1952. One of his protégées Christopher Wimbish, who had secured his committeeman post four years earlier, was stripped of it as well as his seat in the state senate. Wimbish was replaced in the committeeman position by Daley's young protégé, Ralph Metcalfe."¹⁰⁰

Dawson now faced the problem of what did the future hold for him and his organization, now that Daley was head of the CCDP. It appeared that the slating of Metcalfe over Dawson's objections indicated that Dawson was in a tenuous position with the new party boss from the beginning.¹⁰¹ What Dawson did not realize was that Daley having observed Dawson successfully challenge the machine. He already had made the decision to reduce or eliminate Dawson's power so that he would not face the same type of challenge. Metcalfe slating was just the first of many moves by Daley to strip Dawson of power.¹⁰²

As head of the county Democratic Party, Daley decided to position himself as the Democratic candidate for Mayor in 1955. Ever the astute politician, he realized that holding both positions simultaneously meant that he could exercise tremendous political power. As Spinney wrote, "Daley also demanded that the city council transfer much of the executive power to the Mayor's office."¹⁰³ This meant that Daley could exercise more power than his predecessors could and in a more practical way. He could command a huge army of patronage workers. Yet another factor influenced the new Daley machine. That factor was the dual migration of blacks and whites.¹⁰⁴

Beginning after World War II, whites migrated to the suburbs in ever-increasing numbers. Simultaneously with white flight, Chicago experienced an increase in black migration from the South. In his book, *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent*, Irving Cutler illustrates the change, in the suburban

¹⁰⁰ Grimshaw. 18.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 19.

¹⁰² Spinney, 207

¹⁰³ bid. 215.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.208

metropolitan region due to the white exodus to the suburbs. The 1950 population of Chicago was 3,621,000, an increase of +7% over the 1940s figure. The 1950's figure of 1,557,000 represented the number of new residents in "metropolitan Chicago outside of city limits," representing an increase of +3% over the 1940's figure. By 1960, this figure would increase to +72%.¹⁰⁵ The impact of this movement was immediate as roads, infrastructure, and jobs moved to accommodate the influx of whites to the suburbs. It also challenged those in the black areas as the opportunities for employment and housing moved away from those who needed them the most.¹⁰⁶

According to Grimshaw, this dual migration had a profound effect on the newly formed Daley machine. He commented, "Beginning with Daley's first election in 1955, the poor black wards emerged as the machine's electoral stronghold, displacing the poor immigrant wards that had carried the machine through the 1930s and 1940s. In short, the two migrations transformed Chicago into a one-party city."¹⁰⁷ After securing his power position, and ensuring a strong electoral base, Daley attacked the problems of graft and corruption. He began with the City Council and their prerogative on driveway permits. Spinney details Daley's elimination of the driveway permit swindle: Daley took the power to issue permits away from city council members, who routinely charged between 500 to 20,000 for each permit. City Hall began issuing the permits for a uniform fee of \$2.75."¹⁰⁸

On the larger issue of City Hall connections to organized crime, Daley did not discourage or eliminate it. He knew that, on some level, he had to be mindful of and curtail embarrassing overt dealings with organized crime in Chicago. He had not forgotten the public outcry that occurred during the waning years of the Kelly machine. As noted, "Longtime First Ward Democratic committeeman John D'Arco was

¹⁰⁵ Irving Cutler, *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent*. 3d.ed. (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982), 277.

¹⁰⁶ Spinney, 209

¹⁰⁷ William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1939-1991*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 20.

¹⁰⁸ Spinney, 217.

a longtime associate of Mafia gangsters.”¹⁰⁹ This type of association needed to be hid from the public arena, particularly in the media. Daley felt that trying to eliminate vice was unrealistic, so he forced it to go underground, out of the public eye. Minor graft was tolerated. It was an open secret that Chicago police took payoffs from prostitutes, bookies, and even motorist’s to overlook infractions of driving violations.¹¹⁰ Having at least symbolically dealt with vice and corruption, however, Daley now turned his attention to Chicago’s architecture and infrastructure.

While many major metropolitan areas were suffering from urban blight and decay, Daley undertook a massive building campaign. The results gave Chicagoans a sense of living in a prosperous and growing city. Simpson discusses this phenomenon: “...In Mayor Daley, the city once again had a “builder Mayor” to push public works projects and private developments. There was ebullience and a sense of anything was possible for the America that had won the war and become one of the two great superpowers. For most Americans, it was time to buy a car and a home, and to live the good life.”¹¹¹

Conversely, how did the black community fare during this period of reinvigoration ushered in by the ‘New America’ and the new Daley machine? Although the Black community produced a huge plurality for the machine, it did not translate into improvements on par with the level of black votes. In fact, the black community continued to experience sub-standard housing, health care, education, and employment opportunities. Spinney discussed an aspect of Black life in the late 1950s. He wrote, “A system of de facto segregation thrived in the city that was every bit as discriminating as the de jure segregation that had prevailed in the South. For example, in the late 1950s blacks were only accepted in six of the metropolitan area’s seventy-seven hospitals, and five of those six hospitals treated African-Americans only on a quota basis.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 225.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Simpson, 171.

¹¹² Spinney, 231.

Given the black Democratic ward organizations, a black U.S. Congressman (William Dawson), and six black Aldermen in the city council, how could a system so unresponsive to the black community exist? Spinney again provides insight. He says, "The black wards were represented in the city council by aldermen so pliable, conservative, and pro-Daley that they were originally dubbed "The Silent Seven" {there were actually six} and "Daley's Dummies." The machine gave cash to loyal African-American pastors and their struggling churches provided they remained supportive of the machine.¹¹³ The city council as a whole was overwhelmingly supportive of Daley and his policies. For many years, the most consistent opponent of Daley and his policies was 5th ward Alderman Leon Despres. He was largely ineffective but maintained a staunch resistance to the policies and practice of the Daley Administration. Former Alderman Dick Simpson relates a quote by Chicago newspaper columnist Mike Royko that sheds light on the meetings of the Daley city council. Royko says. "It is his council and ...It has never once deified him as a body. Keene manages it for him, and most of its members do what they are told. In other eras, the Aldermen were known as the "Gray Wolves." His council is known as "the Rubber Stamp."¹¹⁴ This Rubber stamp never passed a resolution or bill without receiving Daley's blessing. Daley controlled the various departments of the city, and their patronage much as he controlled the city council.

An incident occurred in 1960, which demonstrated Daley's remarkable political agility. The police department was an important part of the machine's patronage; but when it jeopardized the machine, he would have to take some action. That is precisely what Daley did in the wake of "the Summerdale Scandal." City policemen were caught operating a burglary ring, and rumors abounded that the scandal might involve hundreds of city policemen. "Daley had long defended his police force from charges of corruption, the Summerdale scandal exposed Daley as ignorant, naïve, or a liar."¹¹⁵ Daley responded by

¹¹³ Ibid. 231.

¹¹⁴ Simpson, 130.

¹¹⁵ Spinney, 217.

firing the police chief and importing Orlando Wilson, a noted criminologist from UCLA to run the Police Department. Daley eliminated all police patronage positions within the department and halted even the small graft that had been tolerated. Wilson's reforms cost the machine patronage jobs, but it ended criticism and salvaged the rest of the machine.¹¹⁶

Daley managed to save the machine but faced several problems concerning the black Community. One of the problems was the lack of housing within the Black Belt area of the South Side. Arnold Hirsch in his book, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*, an increase in the black population of Chicago after 1940 coupled with housing discrimination created a severe shortage of housing. Hirsch states, "Between 1940 and 1950 Chicago's black population swelled by 214,534; between 1950 and 1960 it grew by 320,372. Although the percentage of growth during these two decades cannot compare with that associated with the Great Migration, the absolute number of new black residents represented a movement of unprecedented scale."¹¹⁷

As noted earlier this influx of blacks corresponds to a migration of whites out of the city. However, because of discrimination blacks were unable to take advantage and move into the newly abandoned white areas. The few blacks, who attempted to move into previously all-whites areas, met with violence. The black community was fairly bursting at the seams with nowhere to expand. According to Hirsch, "Where blacks represented only 4.1 % of the city's total population in 1920 and but 8.2% in 1940, they accounted for 13.6 % of the city's total in 1950 and 22.9 % in 1960."¹¹⁸ The solution that Mayor Daley provided was to demolish existing structures on the South Side and construct new housing. The Lake Meadows and Prairie Shores developments, however, displaced more residents than the new housing

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

could accommodate. Many former residents could not afford the rents in the new high-rise apartments.¹¹⁹

Daley's solution to black overcrowding was to propose construction along the Black Belt corridor. The first tract of land had been selected in 1949 by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). The initial land offering was only two miles along State Street.¹²⁰ Because of the intense residential segregation in Chicago, the housing market had developed a two-tiered structure. There existed one market for whites, and another for blacks. Moreover, the cost of housing for blacks was inordinately high, because of the restrictions on the supply of black housing and the huge demand for new homes. Combined, these factors inflated the cost of black housing.¹²¹ In 1944, eleven years before Daley took office, the Illinois Inter-Racial Commission wrote, "Rents in black areas ranged from 15% to 50% higher than that paid by whites for similar accommodations."¹²²

In 1955 to 1956, the next housing proposed by the Chicago Housing Authority came before the city council. Their program contained eleven prospective sites, six of which city aldermen rejected, despite being in outlying areas. All the sites finally decided upon were "Well within the main South Side Black Belt."¹²³ According to Hirsch, when the city council was questioned concerning the location of the proposed housing, they replied, if the people and the Alderman of a given ward objected to public housing in their area, it stood... "No chance of getting through."¹²⁴ The CHA commissioners also held similar views. According to Hirsch one of the commissioners stated, "We have gotten to the place, where we do not even try to sail non-ghetto sites past the city council."¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Christopher Manning, *William L. Dawson and The Limits of Black Electoral Leadership* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 148.

¹²¹ Hirsch, 29.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid, 241.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Decisions about where to place housing were in response to the level of white resistance to any integrated housing in previously all white areas.¹²⁶ Resistance by white ethnics, either first or second-generation, is ironic. Gary Rivlin, in his book, *Fire on the Prairie* discusses the irony of white opposition. Rivlin says, “In spite of all the firebombs, the bricks, and the harsh words and pain because whites looked upon blacks as intruders encroaching on their land, the fact was that the city’s first homesteader was a black man.”¹²⁷ And these same ethnics faced housing discrimination in an earlier generation.

Although the South Side community dominates political discussion of black Chicago, there also was a black community on Chicago’s Westside. What initially started out as a small community grew due to two primary factors, -continuing migration from the rural South and displaced Southsiders. In his book, *Chicago Politics Ward by Ward*, David Freeman describes what displaced the South Side blacks. He writes, “Daley in the early 1960s built Lake Meadows and Prairie Shores, Middle class high-rise complexes, and expanded the Illinois Institute of Technology-moves which displaced hundreds of middle-class black residents. William Harvey, the ward’s alderman, fought the displacement. Dawson did nothing.”¹²⁸

According to Hirsch, “On the Westside a minor enclave developed into a major ghetto, as black migrants from the South and displaced urban natives dispersed by the wrecker’s ball filled the vacancies left behind by a Jewish population in exodus.”¹²⁹ Both the Greyhound Bus station and the Illinois Central train station were located adjacent to the Westside “Jew Town “area, itself a testimony to past discrimination. New black arrivals had only a short distance to travel to a black neighborhood. On the Westside, the political situation for the black community was worse than that of the Southside wards. The exodus of whites from the Westside should have created a power vacuum that representative black leaders could fill. But, this did not happen. As Grimshaw explains, “After the West Side wards acquired

¹²⁶ Manning, 148.

¹²⁷ Gary Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie* (New York: Henry/Holt and Company, 1992), 3.

¹²⁸ David Freeman, *Chicago Politics Ward By Ward* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 30.

⁴⁵ Hirsch, 29.

majority black populations, they continued to be ruled by white ward bosses. For that reason, the black West Side wards came to be called the 'Plantation wards.' In most cases, white rule was indirect.¹³⁰ Indirect in that the ward boss did not live in the community he controlled.

The housing projects along the State Street corridor became by the mid 1960's vertical ghettos. In the mid-1960s, Civil Rights agitation had caused the walls of segregation to crumble, and upper and middle-class blacks who functioned as linchpins of the black community left in search of better housing. This black exodus was like the white protestant flight before it and had similar political consequences.¹³¹ These political consequences were not apparent until after 1967. In fact, the 'projects' initially appeared to the Dawson political organization as a boon. The vertical ghettos of the projects were like precincts. As such, each had a captain assigned to them. It was the job of a precinct captain to provide residents with whatever services they needed.¹³² This seemed to promise that blacks would see improved services. They did not.

Because of their commitment to the Dawson organization, most black Chicagoans felt that the organization had real political power. Christopher Manning says, "Apparently, the façade of leadership that Mayor Daley allowed Dawson combined with the very real presence of Dawson's political workers gave project residents and black Chicagoans generally, a false sense of Dawson's power on local politics."¹³³ The Dawson precinct captains did provide services to their wards in the best tradition of machine politics. That they could function at all without the support of Daley is a testament to the organizational strength and will of William Dawson. According to Manning, "Chuck Bowen, the top precinct captain in Dawson's organization between 1955 and 1966, proudly recounted the activities his organization carried out in his project precinct. His men regularly provided food baskets to needy

¹³⁰ Grimshaw, 120.

¹³¹ Bitter Fruit, 20.

¹³² Manning, 150.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 149.

families on Christmas and Thanksgiving.¹³⁴ The fact remains that the housing developments were intended to contain blacks within certain boundaries and those boundaries were entirely within the confines of the existing black community.¹³⁵

Available statistics provide evidence in support of a deliberate pattern of segregated housing. According to Hirsch, "Of the thirty –three projects approved between 1950 and the mid-1960s, twenty-five and a "substantial portion" of another were in census tracts containing a black population in excess of 75%."¹³⁶ The machine-backed Executive Director of the CHA Alvin Rose denied racial motivation in the location of the CHA housing developments in the black community.

Rose claimed that CHA had the "legal right and responsibility" to insure "sociological considerations" in the housing of elderly and those with low incomes. To move the elderly to new locations, which would break ties with friends and relatives was "needlessly destructive."¹³⁷ However, earlier Rose had rejected all sociological claims. This sociological argument was invoked throughout the 1960's to justify and support established "patterns of segregation."¹³⁸ The machine had been firmly on the side of "racial containment" as far back as the days of the Big Bill Thompson era in the 1920s. The issues around race surfaced in the 1960's because of the expansion of the black population and the conflicts encountered as that population sought to expand throughout the Chicago metropolitan area.¹³⁹

Although, the machine received huge electoral support from the black community, it rarely returned benefits to the community. In her book *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville*, Michelle Boyd comments, "Despite the fact "the Daley machine was a black machine "during the first half of his tenure, black constituents received far less than their fair share of benefits and arguably endured far

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Hirsch, 242-243

¹³⁷ Ibid. 245.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Grimshaw, 117.

more than their reasonable share of burden.”¹⁴⁰ The black wards consistently produced high numbers of votes for the Democratic party but received only token patronage jobs and benefits as a result. The “Plantation Wards” of the Westside, and the Dawson machine combined to affect the 1960 presidential election. Although the black Chicago vote was never credited with being one of the deciding factors in John F. Kennedy’s slim, win over Richard M. Nixon, Kennedy himself lauded Daley for bringing in the votes that led to his victory.

It was the national black vote which made the critical difference for Kennedy. Manning writes, “In the final analysis, the black vote played an important role in Kennedy’s slim victory over Richard Nixon. Of the 69 million votes cast, Kennedy received 34,221,463 to Nixon’s 34, 108,582... The black vote proved equally critical. In the key cities of Chicago, Cleveland, and New York, blacks gave Kennedy 82, 75, and 66 percent of their votes respectively.”¹⁴¹ Three years later, the black vote would once again prove crucial not nationally but on the local level, in Chicago when Daley faces a tough challenge to his position as Mayor in the 1963 election. It is clear that the large number of black votes tips the scale for Kennedy and yet there is no quid pro quo. On civil rights the Kennedys are slow to act and locally blacks are not rewarded tangibly for their votes.

Housing was not the only area in which blacks experienced poor treatment in Daley’s Chicago. The educational system and its response to students caused an outcry in the black neighborhoods of Chicago. The increased numbers of blacks were felt in the Chicago school system. Between 1950 and 1960, the State of Illinois experienced a 15.7% increase in population.¹⁴² A large percentage of this increase can be attributed to the migration of blacks to Chicago. The burden on the limited number of

¹⁴⁰ Michelle R. Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 2008), 42.

¹⁴¹ Manning, 147.

¹⁴² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960 Advance Reports. Final Population Counts pc(A-1)-15* (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2, 1960)

housing units also meant a burden as the segregated school system struggled to accommodate the accompanying influx of school aged children.

Manning provides a view of Chicago School Boards response. Manning says, “As blacks continued to migrate to Chicago, the number of children enrolled in the city’s schools grew from 375,000 to 520,000. Although white schools in neighborhoods surrounding the Black Belt functioned below capacity, school superintendent Benjamin Willis refused to violate “neighborhood integrity”, if it meant school integration. Instead, Willis instituted a double-shift program and installed mobile classrooms, dubbed “Willis Wagons, “near overcrowded black schools to alleviate overcrowding.”¹⁴³ His solution was not well received by the black community. In fact, significant portions of the black political establishment joined forces with community activists in opposition to the school board decisions. The community mobilized.

The black community decided to act and struck back to remove Superintendent Willis. According to Manning, “When the Citizens School Committee (CSC) nominated six whites to fill vacancies on the city’s already all-white school board in April 1962, Dawson joined local activists to protest for black membership.”¹⁴⁴ The community called two major boycotts that got the attention of City Hall. Daley still needed the black vote. He sensed the level of opposition and called a meeting of black leaders. After the meeting, Daley urged the CSC to consider adding black members.¹⁴⁵ The boycotts had an impact on the black community that was unseen in northern protests at the time. James R. Ralph explains the unforeseen consequence of the school boycotts. Ralph says, “...Both boycotts reflected an elemental shift in attitudes among black Chicagoans: they were now more likely to focus on the obstacles, rather than the opportunities, that Chicago presented than ever before. They were also now more likely to

¹⁴³ Manning, 150-151.

¹⁴⁴ Manning, 151.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

question white authority and to suspect dark and devious motives.”¹⁴⁶ At the same Daley faced a serious challenge to his mayoralty. This revolt meant Daley had a very real chance of losing his hold on the black votes necessary to retain power should he experience a significant challenge in the upcoming election. The 1963 election promised to be a substantial challenge to Daley’s chances for re-election. Chicago’s former state’s attorney and corporation counsel Benjamin Adamowski mounted a serious challenge to Daley. Ironically, Adamowski’s challenge was defeated by the output of votes in Daley’s favor from the black wards.¹⁴⁷ Regarding Dawson, Daley had been undercutting his power for years by dispersing patronage directly to his appointed black committeemen. This effectively curtailed Dawson’s source of political power.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, the school committee issue, which was a part of the “Chicago Freedom struggle,” was Dawson’s last issue. After this struggle, he was marginalized and ineffective. As he had little patronage and few cash reserves.¹⁴⁹

The Citizens School Committee recommendation by Daley did not end the fight for school desegregation. A year earlier, black community groups had founded ‘the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations.’ The avowed purpose of this collection of black groups was to “force the Chicago Board of Education to admit to segregation” and to “push for integration.” The composition of the council included a range of black organizations, from “traditional race advancement organizations, “such as the Urban League and NAACP, and the newer civil rights organizations like SNCC, CORE, to church groups, professional organizations, and grassroots organizations from the “South and West sides.¹⁵⁰

Traditional Civil Rights organizations had lost their appeal to many radical activists. The McCarthy era anti-communist frenzy had robbed organizations of their most effective and radical activists. The NAACP

¹⁴⁶ James R. Ralph, *Northern Protest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 22.

¹⁴⁷ Bitter Fruit, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Spinney, 231.

¹⁴⁹ Manning, 151.

¹⁵⁰ Boyd, 43.

is an example of an organization that lost many of its most effective organizers and members. Historian Thomas Sugrue wrote, “In Boston in 1950 the NAACP’s annual convention passed a resolution after two hours of acrimonious debate to take ‘necessary’ steps to eradicate communist infiltration—and if necessary to suspend, reorganize, lift the charter, or expel any branches that come under communist control. White issued a memorandum clearly defining the process by which those steps should be taken.”¹⁵¹

As the result of a suit brought against the Board of Education by the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO), the Board agreed to a desegregation program in 1963. Professor of African American Studies and Political Science Michelle Boyd wrote, “A year later, two reports confirmed the disparity in the education of blacks and whites and recommended integration. The school board and the Mayor nevertheless bowed to the vehement protests of the city’s white populations and voted against implementation of a mandatory program.”¹⁵² It was at this time that Mayor Daley ceased to rely on the black vote and began to rely on white ethnics to support his machine and political future.¹⁵³

The change in focus of the Daley machine reflected of a general pattern in the Democratic Party of the time, a policy of appeasement towards Southern interests and conservatism regarding civil rights as seen in the 1960 civil rights bill. Grimshaw explains the change when he says, “The Democratic machine no longer could maintain even a pretense of being a ‘New Deal’ party of the little man. As racial demands escalated, the machine increasingly took on the retrograde character of a Southern white supremacist Democratic Party.”¹⁵⁴ As the machine increasingly advocated an anti-civil rights stance, a younger, more aggressive type of leaders came to the forefront of civil rights and politics. In Chicago, the struggle was mainly focused on the southside areas. The westside wards were still ruled as “Plantation Wards,” and the recent memory of what happened to those who challenged the machine was fresh in

¹⁵¹ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2009), 105-106.

¹⁵² Boyd.43.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Bitter Fruit, 117.

the minds of black westside residents. In 1963, on Chicago's West side, two political assassinations of black men occurred. Black Alderman Ben Lewis and black aldermanic candidate Octavious Grandady were murdered. Grimshaw explained what happened: "When Lewis began displaying too much independence, threatening to replace some of the organizations white precinct captains, for example (*Chicago Defender, July 10, 1963*), and, more boldly yet demanding a larger share of gambling proceeds, he was murdered 'in classic gangland fashion,' as the newspaper put it."¹⁵⁵ According to a Channel 7 news report in 2011, the Lewis murder was the last politically motivated murder in Chicago.¹⁵⁶

These tactics only momentarily cowed the black community. Newer generations of civil rights activist were pushing direct action campaigns. Putting their lives on the line to awaken America and the world's eyes and consciousness in the 1960s, these activists challenged the older more establishment type of accommodationist leaders.¹⁵⁷ William Dawson was Chicago's primary black leader, and he believed in maintaining the status quo. Former Chicago Alderman Leon Despres provided an interpretation of Dawson during this period. Despres says, "Dawson was a great accommodationist. Personally, he had endured racial discrimination and could orate forcefully about it. But beyond seeking more offices and more jobs for blacks in wards he controlled he did nothing significant about racial discrimination."¹⁵⁸ His passive in-action did not sit well with the newer more direct-action activists. By 1965 Dawson's commitment to the old strategy divorced him from the newer more militant leaders and, at the same time, garnered few results with the national party.¹⁵⁹

As the Democratic machine became less attractive to black voters, many simply turned away from the electoral process. Even as the civil rights movement made inroads in the Chicago area, the foundation upon which the machine could obtain huge black voting majorities began to deteriorate. Grimshaw

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 120.

¹⁵⁶ Abclocal.go.com Feb 11, 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Manning, 140.

¹⁵⁸ Leon M. Despres and Kenan Heise, *Challenging the Daley Machine: A Chicago Alderman's Memoir* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 86.

¹⁵⁹ Manning 140.

states, "Many of the voters in the poor black wards grew disillusioned." Their disillusionment deprived the machine of votes, as many blacks withdrew from electoral politics.¹⁶⁰ Boyd provided an assessment of the consequences of the machines lack of attention to issues relevant to the black community. She remarked, "As the Democratic Party withdrew what paltry resources it had thrown to local black officials, it widened the breach between the machine and black voters, leaving the later searching for an alternative. That alternative was provided by community-based organizations, the establishment of which was the final and most significant consequence of these campaigns."¹⁶¹ These new community formations were posed to fight the machine in coalition with other groups to address the severe problems in the black community.

Established groups like the Friends Service Committee (Quakers), and the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations made an alliance with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to address several problems in the black areas of Chicago. As part of this alliance, the SCLC's which was not based in Chicago, decided to come North in 1966. Martin Luther King as a leader of SCLC and its most notable personage decided to move out of Dixie to address these problems. In 1966, Martin Luther King made the decision to come North to seek the "biggest challenge" he could find available. Although his top advisors felt he should not tackle Chicago, King overruled them. He wanted to take on the "most segregated" big city in America.¹⁶² This movement north was called the Chicago Freedom Movement to end slums, or the CFM. Building on the success of local groups that had been addressing housing and desegregation of the schools, King felt he had enough community support to challenge the Daley machine.¹⁶³ Arriving in Chicago, King confronted an adversary that he did not expect. Daley had developed a strategy to counter King. The strategy was simple, he was accommodating to all that King asked. The tactic deprived King of the confrontation, which he needed to "dramatize the conflict

¹⁶⁰ Bitter Fruit, 20.

¹⁶¹ Boyd, 46.

¹⁶² *Bitter Fruit*, 116.

¹⁶³ Jeffrey Hegelson, *Crucibles of Black Empowerment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 189.

between the movement and the machine. “Your goals are our goals,” the Mayor assured King luring him to the bargaining table.”¹⁶⁴

In Chicago, King’s Northern venture was received with lukewarm enthusiasm. Heretofore where in the South King had secured almost overwhelming support in black communities, but in Chicago the black establishment was not universally accepting. Differences between the “second generation” Westside and the more middle-class Southside prevented complete cooperation in Kings Crusade.¹⁶⁵ Also, many black preachers were beholden to the machine, viewing King as an intruder. However, some prominent blacks did give King support. During the twenty-three months that King was in Chicago in 1966 and 1967, Earl B. Dickerson (Supreme Life President) “led black businessmen in giving him financial and tactical support.”¹⁶⁶

Kings time in Chicago can be viewed as a defeat as he failed to meet his objectives. He experienced a level of hate he did not expect to find in a northern city. Having endured Montgomery and Birmingham, Selma, and Mississippi, it is ironic that King was hit in the head and felled by a brick thrown during a march to Marquette Park in southwest Chicago. Grimshaw relates a quote attributed to King, “The people of Mississippi ought to come to Chicago to learn how to hate.”¹⁶⁷ Ultimately the King –Daley meetings produced a face-saving agreement for King called the Summit. The agreement was just a piece of paper that King said committed City Hall to “the goal of open Housing.” After King’s departure from Chicago, Daley representatives stated that, there was no Summit agreement.¹⁶⁸ However humbled King might have been, the CFM was not a total failure as it spawned the Chicago branch of the SCLC’s Operation Breadbasket. The head of Operation Breadbasket was the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a King disciple and dynamic personality in his own right. Jeffery Helgeson has characterized Operation

¹⁶⁴ Spinney, 229

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Robert J. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson: A Voice for Freedom and Equality* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), xix.

¹⁶⁷ Bitter Fruit, 116.

¹⁶⁸ Spinney, 231.

Breadbasket as, “the CFM’s most direct organizational legacy.”¹⁶⁹ The liberal establishment as well as the black clergy were arrayed against the CFM. Its demands were moving a lot faster than many liberals were willing to go. white liberal supporters who provided financial support were less than enthusiastic to the Chicago Freedom Movement, and banks retaliated against those ministers and business leaders who supported the movement.¹⁷⁰

Despite the shortcomings of the CFM, there were calls of victory and touting of significant gains for blacks in the struggle to increase black employment in white collar positions. Perhaps because of the gains of the national civil rights movement the employment picture in Chicago for Middle class blacks improved slightly at this time. “In 1967 Chicago’s Commission on Human Relations emphasized the great gains in white-collar employment -an 80 percent increase in three years. But Operation Breadbasket activist George Riddick pointed to the limits of the gains.”¹⁷¹The results were minuscule as a closer examination revealed. Hegelson remarks that; “In the 606 firms surveyed there were 10,828 managerial employees, 202 (1.9 percent) of whom were black in 1967 compared to 126 (1.5 percent) in 1964. There were 8,563 professional employees, 152 (1.8 percent) of whom were black in 1967, compared to 60 of 5,578 in 1964 (1.1 percent). Of 4,084 technical employees, 244 (6.0 percent) were black in 1967, versus 141 of 3,787 (3.7percent) in 1964. And in the office force there was an increase from 6.8 to 9.1 percent. Riddick and Jackson thought Operation Breadbasket could do better.”¹⁷² They planned to pressure city government and contractors to increase minority representation in the building trades and in the private and public-sector job market.

The tone and tempo of black calls to action in the mid to late 60s moved away from the methods that characterized the civil rights movement as a new younger, more aggressive approach held sway, particularly in northern cities. Civil Rights activism morphed into Black Power and its strident demands

¹⁶⁹ Hegelson, 189.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid,192.

¹⁷¹ Ibid,192-193.

¹⁷² Ibid.

for fundamental societal change now. Chicago's Operation Breadbasket was rooted in the Chicago community and as such was more successful than Kings efforts. Breadbasket attempted to keep pace with the changes. "Jacksons Operation Breadbasket adopted this mix of employment, civil rights, and community-based activism to the Black Power era. First, Jackson connected the local struggle to broader movements for racial progress."¹⁷³ Jackson linked his organization to the movements in other cities that focused on issues of black employment. More importantly, Jackson linked the church based civil rights movement to the newer black power movements call for jobs and systemic inclusion. Jackson's organization would change its name to Operation Push in the 1970's and continue to advocate for black advancement but within a black capitalistic context.¹⁷⁴

The limits of Operation Breadbaskets success are explained by Hegelson in his examination of the group. He says. "Whatever success the organization had in opening new jobs to black workers, its employment politics remained fundamentally limited and like previous efforts. Operation Breadbasket remained firmly positioned within the main structure of capitalism which meant that the gains the organization made would still need to be distributed competitively.¹⁷⁵ While it is important to note that Breadbasket was successful in aligning with other groups to compel the inclusion of blacks in jobs in the building trades and other industries, it was not able and could not interject a power position over how those jobs were distributed.¹⁷⁶

Politically, the fallout from King's Chicago campaign merely exacerbated the movement away from black electoral participation as blacks realized few gains from political participation. Boyd states' "In 1967 (year of King's Departure), only three of the city's fourteen black wards were among the machine's top producers. In absenting themselves from electoral contests, black voters were expressing their

¹⁷³ Hegelson 192.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid,194.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 195.

disapproval not just of powerful white machine leaders, but for black elected officials as well.”¹⁷⁷ The year 1968 was significant in Chicago as well as around the world as peoples and groups clamored for new political alignments and greater freedoms. The clamor for an end to the Vietnam War and National Self-determination were echoing throughout the world as events from the Prague Spring, Paris Riots, and Mexico City Massacre heightened the contradictions between powerful entrenched political structures and those who would challenge the validity of those same structures to determine the destiny of those who they ruled. While 1968 Chicago was the place where two events were indelibly imprinted in the black community and the entire world. The first was the ferocious rioting in the wake of the April 4th assassination in Memphis of Martin Luther King that destroyed large areas of the city’s westside and damaged southside store’s, the second was the “police riot” during the Democratic National Convention.¹⁷⁸

By the year 1968, Mayor Daley, who had earlier been viewed as a liberal reformer, moved firmly to the right in his political approach. Simpson explained, “The forces of the status quo, symbolized by Mayor Daley, supported hierarchal control, publicly encouraging the President (United States) to continue the war, supporting law and order, conforming to social norms, and maintaining private control of property.”¹⁷⁹ It was this Daley that presided over Chicago in April of 1968 when the most severe rioting in Chicago history occurred. Observing from a third floor Chicago apartment the red-orange and black sky from the flames of Chicago’s westside, it seemed as if the whole world was burning.¹⁸⁰ The killing of King shocked many people because he was so universally viewed as a man of peace. To the young urban youth like myself, King was a symbol of passivity in the face of oppression, but also was viewed as a useful counterbalance to the systems heavy handed nature. Much of the

¹⁷⁷ Boyd, 45.

¹⁷⁸ Brown Interview

¹⁷⁹ Simpson, 132.

¹⁸⁰ Personal Recollections

destruction was borne from the despair and frustration of a community long oppressed and angry¹⁸¹. In Chicago, “the rampaging, looting, and destruction provoked an outraged Mayor Daley into issuing his infamous “shoot to kill” order to the police.”¹⁸²

In August of 1968, the *Chicago Riot Study Committee* released its report on the April riots. The committee interviewed 1376 people over the course of 10-days. From the three days of rioting, “total insured losses arising from the disorders were estimated at approximately 14,000.000 with actual losses running much higher.”¹⁸³ The study contained a section entitled “Are the April Riots Likely to Recur? The following sections are instructive. “The Committee is strongly of the opinion that it will help avoid violence and turbulence in the ghetto area if ghetto residents are given a direct means of communicating their needs to the governmental authorities of the city through an institution specifically created to respond to those needs.”¹⁸⁴ It should be noted here that what the committee proposes is exactly what the machine and its local ward organizations are supposed to do for its constituents. However, this was obviously not the case in Chicago.

Moreover, the committee merely stated problems that were the result of the pervasive systematic racism that black community residents faced. One such problem is the existence of “ghetto” areas in the first place. The report also says, “Negroes resident in the ghetto areas, and especially those on the west side of Chicago have a deep sense of frustration in the working out of their problems. Witness after witness before the Committee emphasized that the residents of the westside believe that they are not adequately represented in the political, the commercial and economic fabric of the city.”¹⁸⁵

The Committee contributed that, “The Committee is convinced that steps must be taken to provide a peaceful outlet for those frustrations and for the correction of the unacceptable economic and social

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Bitter Fruit, 116.

¹⁸³ *Report of the Chicago Riot Study Committee to the Hon. Richard J. Daley*. August 1, 1968.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 113.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 112.

conditions now prevalent in the ghetto areas.”¹⁸⁶ The twelve committee members knew that the conditions alluded to in their report were an integral part of the machine’s non-attention to racial discrimination in Chicago. They chose to act as if they only recently discovered the degree of discrimination in Chicago and its effects on the black populace. A few of the committee’s recommendations were followed; most were simply ignored.¹⁸⁷

In August of 1968, the city hosted the Democratic National Convention. In anticipation of demonstrations at the convention, Daley literally amassed an army. Discussing Daley’s preparation Spinney says, “He put his twelve-thousand-man police force on twelve-hour shifts, kept six thousand Illinois National Guardsmen in reserve outside the city, and outfitted his law enforcement people with rifles, bayonets, tear gas, flamethrowers, bazookas, and machine guns. It was the largest military presence in a U.S. city since the Civil War.”¹⁸⁸ What happened in the streets of Chicago is often referred to as the ‘Battle of Chicago,’ or a ‘Police Riot.’ The Chicago police charged the mainly young white demonstrators, brutally beating and dragging demonstrators, onlookers and newsmen indiscriminately. The charging, Billy club swinging police officers, were captured on television; the Nation and World saw Daley’s police force in action.¹⁸⁹

According to Simpson, “Daley’s opposition to the civil rights and peace movement and the ‘police riot’ of 1968 radicalized many liberals, moderates, and civic leaders in Chicago. It was the combination of Daley’s shoot to kill order, and the police action at the Democratic National convention that attributed to the creation of the “lakefront liberal” political movement that would challenge the Daley machine.”¹⁹⁰ Ultimately this lakefront liberal movement and the ‘Rainbow Coalition’ would combine to defeat the Machine and thus effect great political change in Chicago.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Brown.

¹⁸⁸ Spinney, 232.

¹⁸⁹ Spinney, 234.

¹⁹⁰ Bitter Fruit, 117.

It is in this climate that Bobby L. Rush made his decision to take a stand and attempt to effect a change. The black community of Chicago was the battleground in which Rush would battle against the Daley Machine and the system of Racism, Capitalism and oppression. He knew he needed the right political vehicle to take on the obstacles.

CHAPTER 3

Absorbing the lessons learned from the electoral campaigns of Elaine Brown and Bobby Seale, and the massive voter registration drives of the Black Panther Party in Oakland and Chicago, Bobby L. Rush embarked on a path that ultimately led to the halls of Congress. However, his journey was not an easy one, and he suffered electoral defeat. The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party ceased to exist in the early spring of 1974. Its membership had steadily dwindled since 1972 as Party members left the organization in ones and two's struggling to adjust in society. The post- 1970 Black Panther Party stressed the acquisition of 'bourgeois skills,' encouraging party and community people to improve their academic and technical skills. Like several other Panthers, Bobby Rush returned to school. In 1973 Rush graduated from Roosevelt University with a bachelor's in general studies, and in 1974, he received a master's degree in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). At UIC there was a small contingent of former Panthers who also heeded the call to return to school. The Illinois party's programs had closed, but resistance in Chicago's communities and the will to oppose the Daley machine remained strong and increased.

This Chapter will focus on the Black Community from 1972 to 1993. During these years Rush followed a political template established by the likes of Oscar DePriest, William Dawson, and Ralph Metcalfe. He first becomes a Ward Alderman and then a United States Congressman. At the same time, the multi-ethnic Rainbow Coalition, labor activists, black power organizations, and community activists combined to defeat the Daley machine. This dynamic and diverse coalition gained political power with the election of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, only to lose it shortly after his death in 1987 with the subsequent political ascension of Richard Daley Jr.

Although the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party ceased to exist. The fight against the Daley machine continued. The seven survivors of the December 1969, raid on the 2337 Monroe apartment, where Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton and Peoria Defense Captain Mark Clark were assassinated,

pursued a civil rights case. In Federal court, they fought against the FBI, Cook County, and Chicago Police Departments. In two trials the first of which was for obstruction of justice. Cook County State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan, his assistant Jalovec, and the fourteen raiders, ended with their acquittal on all charges. The second trial was the Civil Rights case against the same defendants as the previous trial. The Chicago black community was opposed to State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan, as he was viewed as the primary architect of the assassination of the two popular Panther leaders. The community responded by organizing to defeat Hanrahan's bid for reelection.

Hanrahan's case galvanized the black community, which began a more concerted attack against the Daley administration. Hanrahan's acquittal was a victory for him, but it soon soured in his mouth. John Kifner of *The New York Times* reported that, "Mayor Richard J. Daley's Democratic machine took a stunning blow yesterday with the defeat of Cook County States' Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan by Bernard Carey, a Republican, in Mr. Hanrahan's bid for re-election. Crucial to Mr. Carey's victory was the first massive defection of the black voters who have long been the mainstay of Mr. Daley's Organization... But it was the failure of the black, inner -city wards to provide their normal democratic margin that sealed his victory.¹⁹¹ The importance of this defeat cannot be understated. It occurred at a time when the Democratic party delivered a huge black vote for Dan Walker as Democratic Governor of the State of Illinois and returned a plurality for George McGovern in his bid for President of the United States. A Republican winning office in the City of Chicago was a tremendous anomaly as the Democratic Party's Daley machine was solidly in control of the city and county government.

It was not the attack on the Panthers and Hanrahan's complicity alone that contributed to this defeat. It was the combination of several factors which helped to begin to turn the tide against the Daley Machine and its control of Chicago and its plantation style political control of the black community. The recent movement of black activist into electoral politics resonated with many in the

¹⁹¹ John Kifner, *Defeat of Hanrahan for Prosecutor Is a Stunning Blow to Daley's Organization*. *New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/1972/11/09/achives.pg 39.

community. In 1972 a National Black Political convention was organized by Michigan Congressman Charles Diggs, Author/ activist Amiri Baraka, and Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher. This convention called together 8000 delegates from throughout America.¹⁹² This call was different from other calls to action as it encompassed a wide array of militant and civil rights organizations and encouraged blacks to form a third political party. The NAACP was not in attendance as the conference did not advocate for integration. Also, the black candidate for President Shirley Chisolm was not invited to participate in this convention. Possibly due to the radical nature of the convention's platform.¹⁹³

The theme of the convention was "Unity without Uniformity," and was billed a s convention to unite blacks politically around shared political goals and demands. The need for this type of action was explained in a declaration. Regarding the established political parties, the statement said, "None of the Democratic candidates and none of the Republican candidates -- regardless of their vague promises to us or to their white constituencies -- can solve our problems or the problems of this country without radically changing the systems by which it operates."¹⁹⁴ The convention advocated reparations for slavery, proportional congressional representation for blacks, an end to capital punishment, federal money to fight crime and drugs, a reduced military budget, and a guaranteed income of 6,500 for a family of four.¹⁹⁵ The call for an end to capital punishment was because of the disproportionate numbers of blacks on death row. The guaranteed income was based on raising the level of income past the national poverty level in 1970.

However, stirring the call to action was, it translated into little in the way of political victories in the short term. As many of the parties had very different goals and objectives and did not work together it

¹⁹² "Gary Convention", Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History. Encyclopedia.com) January 20, 2019).

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Black Past.org/primary/gary-national-black-political-convention-1972.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

never made an impact on the political scene. Having disavowed many of the groups participating as 'cultural nationalists,' the Black Panther Party only made a perfunctory showing near the end of the convention with the appearance of Oakland California political candidate Bobby Seale.

By 1974, it was an uphill battle for Rush to center himself after the demise of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Now Rush decided to challenge second ward alderman William Barnett for his aldermanic seat on the Chicago City Council. Emboldened by his recent experience with electoral politics, Rush understood that control of the second ward represented a tried and true pathway to power in the black community. Because he understood the power of the black vote. Statistically, in the 1970's the black vote was approximately one third of the Chicago electorate.¹⁹⁶ Because of the national party's shift in tactics the Illinois Chapter had implemented voter registration as part of every Panther event from 1972-1974. At the extremely successful sickle cell anemia testing drives of the Spurgeon Jake Winters Medical Center there was always a voter registration table. The more black registered voters, the better the chances of getting elected.

Historically the pathway to political power in Chicago's black community was gained by securing the second ward. For example, if Harlem was the head of the black community in America, then Chicago was its body, and the second ward its beating heart. In 1929 Oscar De Priest became the first black Congressman from the North since the Civil War by first consolidating power in the second ward. He won the office of alderman in 1919, and a mere ten years later he became Congressman of the First Congressional district. This made De Priest one the America most powerful black politicians in America.¹⁹⁷

Similarly, William "Boss" Dawson, was elected Second Ward alderman, maintaining that position from 1933 to 1939. From 1939 to 1943, Dawson held the position of Democratic Party Committeeman, a position that controlled the appointment of election judges. It had a significant patronage function as

¹⁹⁶ Spinney, 245.

¹⁹⁷ <https://blackpast.org/aah/depriest-oscar-1871-1951>

well. Following the same footsteps as De Priest, Dawson was elected First Congressional District Congressman in 1943. Dawson and Adam Clayton Powell remained the only two black Representatives in Congress for years. Later after the death of Dawson in 1970 Ralph Metcalfe gained higher political office by first becoming Alderman of the third ward and then to the halls of Congress as First Congressional District Congressman.

When he declared himself a democrat in 1974, Rush followed the pattern of those before him by running for Second Ward alderman. In Chicago politics aldermen with the political blessing of Mayor Richard J. Daley controlled patronage and city services in their wards. They worked in the interests of the machine. In exchange for jobs and effective city services they delivered their constituents votes from their respective wards to support machine designated candidates.¹⁹⁸

In 1974 William Barnett, the second ward incumbent was a machine politician, a Dawson man, and a member of a group of black aldermen known alternately as the "Silent Six," or "Daley's Dummies." They were a compliant group of politicians who quietly served the interests of the Daley Machine in part because the machine gave them access to power and jobs. They delivered the black vote consistently to the machine. They were rewarded with some patronage jobs that the organization dispensed. Barnett was proud to be known as Daley's man, and scoffed at Rush's attempt to unseat him. In a January 1975 *Chicago Tribune* article Jack Fuller described the upcoming Second Ward race as one of the more interesting races. He wrote, "The wards history of independent voting has not been entirely happy, however, because the time it defeated the organization it elected Fred Hubbard, who was later convicted of embezzling \$100,000 in federal job funds..."¹⁹⁹ Fuller was implying that the one time that resistance to the machine was successful in the ward, the elected alderman was not an effective leader, but rather a crook who was arrested and jailed.

¹⁹⁸ Spinney, 221-2222

¹⁹⁹ Jack Fuller, Alderman slate: Dem heavies vs, G.O.P. gadflies,
<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1975/01/02/page/137/artice/alderman>.

Rush had some reason to be hopeful that his challenge in the Second Ward would be successful. The Black Belt wards were the 2nd, 3rd, and 20th wards. These wards were perfect areas ripe for a challenge to the Daley machine. Recognized as the leader of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Rush was known to ward residents and associated within the Second Ward and the City at large with successful Panther programs, such as Free Breakfast for Children, Free Prison Busing Program, Sickle Cell anemia testing, and massive food giveaways.²⁰⁰

Additionally, there was a precedent in the Second Ward because of the defeat of the Daley backed candidate in the 1969 special election for alderman. The Aforementioned Fred Hubbard defeated Daley backed machine candidate Lawrence C. Woods, a former aide to the venerable William Dawson. This successful challenge, together with a string of anti-machine victories such as William Cousins election in the eighth ward, and Anna Langford's stunning 1971 defeat of Sixteenth Ward machine politician Paul Sheridan Jr, revealed to Rush that the impregnable wall that the Chicago machine presented contained weak spots. In fact, Langford's victory astonished many as it was accomplished with only a few resources.²⁰¹

Bobby Rush understood that to challenge William Barnett for the Second Ward aldermanic position he must have some type of financial backing and enough resources to run a winning campaign. The only former Panther who worked for Bobby Rush in his campaign to obtain the Second Ward seat was Bruce Dixon. Other former Panthers were either disillusioned or sought to find their way in the post-Panther Illinois environment. According to Bruce Dixon, the Rush campaign secured the use of a van from the Urban league and registered voters for one day at Lake Meadows shopping center on 35th street before

²⁰⁰ Bruce Dixon Phone Interview, November 2017

Dixon was a former Panther who worked on Rush's campaign for Second Ward alderman

²⁰¹ Ibid.

they were inexplicably denied further use of the vehicle. This mysterious change was attributed to the Daley machines influence.²⁰²

Rush employed 'Pantheristic' methods of funding and promotion to kick off his campaign. He called a press conference announcing his candidacy that showed him surrounded by pop bottles. Rush stated that it was the deposit gained from the return of these bottle that would be used to finance his campaign. While on the surface Bush's 'Pop Bottle' financing scheme may have appeared ludicrous, he communicated an effective subliminal message. Rush the 'Man of the People vs the machine style of politics. Theatrical? Yes. Outrageous? Yes. Effective? Yes.²⁰³

The Second Ward was home to the 7 ½ mile stretch of public low-income housing along the State Street Black Belt corridor. This area of the Southside contained the Hillard Homes, Prairie Courts, Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, Harold Ickes, and other smaller row houses on its western borders. To the east were the Ida B. Wells Housing Projects and the middle-income Lake Meadows and slightly upper level housing of Prairie Shores and the middle-class homes of the GAP. However, the Pop Bottle financing

scheme was designed with the poor, working-class, and reform-minded voters in mind. In Chicago, many residents remembered in the not-to-distant past in, Chicago parlance 'hustling bottles', as a means for many, of supplementing income. It was a tradition in the black community for children, teenagers, and young adults to grow up delivering groceries in their red wagons, shoveling snow, cutting grass, and emptying garbage for extra cash. Rush, the former Panther, whose mantra 'All Power to the People,' with its embrace of the lowest strata of society and its everyman/woman approach to the community was well -remembered. It was an approach which was also well- received within the black wards. This

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

was approach was especially welcomed in the Second Ward where the Panthers had offices at 5101 State Street and 4233 S Indiana.²⁰⁴

Rush's fight against the machine candidate William Barnett harkened back to Sunday school and Bible lessons about David and Goliath, the poor suffering underdog fighting against the gigantic monster. Despite the power of Rush's message, William Barnett defeated Bobby Rush and retained his seat. Rush, however, came close enough to let Barnett know that Rush could at some point win an election. The election result was 4,812 votes for William Barnett and 2,776 votes for Bobby Rush, with Barnett winning 55.21% and Bobby Rush 31.85% of the votes cast in the Second Ward. In fact, Rush was only 2,037 votes away from defeating Barnett.²⁰⁵

To come this close, to victory without much in the way of financing and organization gave Rush for future chances in the Second Ward. According to Bob Brown, the lure of electoral politics was never far from Bobby Rush's mind. His half-brother Freddie Peevy was a Republican committeeman, and early on, Bobby Rush was exposed to both radical and electoral brands of politics.²⁰⁶ Another bright spot in this foray into electoral politics for Rush was the addition in his life of Carolyn Thomas. Carolyn Rush was a housewife

back in 1975, watching TV one day when Rush came on screen, surrounded by soda bottles, to announce his candidacy for alderman of Chicago's 2nd Ward. "He said he was going to finance his campaign by redeeming all these pop bottles." She remembers. "Maybe I felt a little sorry for him... The next day I called his office and talked to his mother... She told me to come-on down."²⁰⁷ She volunteered on the Rush campaign because she was intrigued by the man who financed his campaign with pop bottles²⁰⁸. Later this political relationship would bud into a romance and ultimately a marriage in 1981.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ <https://www.ourcampaigns.com>

²⁰⁶ Bob Brown. Interview.

²⁰⁷ Mary Ann French, "The Radical Departure of Bobby Rush," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1993.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

While Bobby Rush was trying to find his way politically and secure a stable source of income, his on - again -and off again relationship with his wife Sandra Milan ended in divorce. Because of his high profile as a leader of the Illinois chapter Rush was not able to take a low profile as did many former members. Getting a job proved to be tough. Eventually, Rush found stability as an insurance salesman with W. Clement Stones Combined Insurance Company. He continued his plan to seek a political office that could address issues vital for the black community.²⁰⁹

By mid-1975 the battle lines in the black community were drawn, and the rising tide of black anger was crystalizing in an all-out attempt to defeat the Daley machine. According to Hegelson, "That festering anger created a reserve of potential political energy at the same time that black activists forged a movement for independent political power."²¹⁰ In the black community, not only were the issues of machine disinvestment in the community of paramount importance, but police brutality, a lack of decent housing, school desegregation, health care and unemployment had yet to be addressed. Because the machine no longer relied heavily on th black vote for its existence the services to the community suffered. The Chicago Democratic machine suffered a devastating blow when 'The Boss' Richard J. Daley dropped dead of a heart attack. While many in the city mourned his passing, it was not a mournful event in the city's black, Latino, and progressive communities. His death was viewed as an opportunity to finally break the stranglehold of the machine. Jakobi Williams wrote, "In 1976, Mayor Daley died in office, and Republican, Democrat, and independent politicians who once lacked real political influence under the weight of he Daley Democratic machine intensified their challenges to Democrat-held seats in almost every political office."²¹¹

If there was ever a doubt about the power wielded by Daley, his funeral dispelled any doubt. The funeral of Richard Daley, mayor and boss of Chicago, according to Robert G. Spinney, was a "national

²⁰⁹ Brown, Interview

²¹⁰ Helgeson, *Crucibles of Black Empowerment*, 240.

²¹¹ Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 195.

event, attended by the Vice President of the United States, president -elect Jimmy Carter, cabinet members, congressmen, governors, and mayors. Thousands of Chicagoans lined up in bitter cold weather to view Daley's body, which lay in state."²¹² The Chicago City Council promptly named Michael Bilandic to fill the post of interim mayor until a special election could be called. Bilandic was a Daley aide and Chairman of the Chicago City Council finance committee. He was moderately successful but lost to a relative newcomer Jane Byrne when he failed to deliver city services during the snow storm of 1979.²¹³ Meanwhile in the black community things were stirring up.

In December 1969, Illinois State Senator Harold Washington had toured the blood-splattered and bullet-ridden apartment at 2337 Monroe, where Hampton and Clark were assassinated. Washington wrote an open letter and remarked on the brutal killing of the two Illinois Panthers. Washington was raised in the Second Ward. He was a supporter of both the Black Panthers and the Rainbow Coalition they founded. His articulate and feisty nature made him a popular favorite son of the ward. In 1976, while Bobby Rush was attempting to gain stable employment. Harold Washington was planning his political moves in the wake of the death of Daley. The impending special election to fill Daley's seat seemed a prime opportunity to deal a blow to the machine and assume power for blacks and the powerless in Chicago.²¹⁴

Washington was a Southsider, for whom by his own admission- life was defined by living in the area comprised of city blocks from 42nd and Calumet to 62nd and St. Lawrence. His father was a Methodist minister and the son of a Methodist minister. Additionally, his father was a lawyer and a politician. In fact, at a time when most of the black community was Republican, his father was a Democratic precinct captain and an assistant state's attorney. Young Harold often accompanied his father as he took care of the business of his precinct. Harold was educated in politics at a very young age. He attended

²¹² Spinney 239.

²¹³ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michael-Antlony-Bilandic>

²¹⁴ Bullet to the Ballot, 197.

Forrestville Grammar School, Wendell Phillips, DuSable, and Wilson Jr. College. Washington then enlisted in the US Army, becoming a 1st Sargent. After the Army, Washington attended Roosevelt University and Northwestern University where he obtained his law degree. When he was in college Washington was involved in school politics, becoming the head of his class at Roosevelt. At Northwestern, he was involved in the student government.²¹⁵

In 1975, the election year that saw the defeat of Bobby Rush for alderman, Washington tried to persuade his political mentor and boss, Ralph Metcalfe to run against Mayor Daley. Metcalfe rejected the suggestion. Instead, State Senator Richard Newhouse ran. He was soundly trounced by Daley. Washington felt it was necessary to put together a coalition to deal with the machine. It had to be forced to change from the outside and, if that failed to remove it.²¹⁶ The fact that the community was becoming coalesced around the need to change the dominant political culture that had defined Chicago for so long was not unusual. “The 1970’s witnessed a stunning increase in the number of black elected officials nationwide. In 1941, there were only thirty-three black elected officials in the entire United States, 31 of them in the North and West. By 1965, 193 blacks held elective offices nationwide, the number rose almost fourfold by 1970 to 764. The biggest gains came in cities with black majorities or pluralities. Many councilmanic ward and state legislative seats and a growing number of congressional districts had black majorities—the consequence of racial segregation and of black pressure for black representation in areas where minorities were in the majority.”²¹⁷

In 1977, Harold Washington decided to run for Mayor of Chicago. Washington was already known as a fighter and for his legislative prowess as a state senator. In a 1977 interview on the John Calley Show, when asked why he decided to run for Mayor of the City of Chicago. Washington replied, “It was fortuitous that the Mayor passed as it accelerated the process by which I thought this machine should

²¹⁵ [www.pbs.org/video/Chicago-tonight—april-15-2013-web-extra-harold-washington-1977/John Calley Interview April 14th, 1977.](http://www.pbs.org/video/Chicago-tonight—april-15-2013-web-extra-harold-washington-1977/John%20Calley%20Interview%20April%2014%201977)

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: random House Publishing Group, 2009), 501.

be replaced, Ralph would not take the plunge, I waited until now to take that plunge.”²¹⁸ In this interview, Washington often repeated his slogan “Now’s the Time Here’s The Man.”²¹⁹ This Washington campaign slogan is very similar the Panthers Seize the Time slogan. Both slogans are meant to charge the electorate, to not wait but get out the vote now.

Despite Daley’s passing, Washington knew his candidacy would be an uphill struggle. His own past problems with taxes. (He owed the IRS \$500), which caused him to serve 42 days in Cook County Jail and suspension from the Bar would become issues. While Washington’s past mistakes were viewed by many as a negative, it endeared him to many in the black community. It was viewed as a political move by the Democratic machine. It was unusual to serve county time for a \$500 tax bill to the federal government. Washington stated, “I grew up in the ghetto where people have handicaps and fight to overcome them. I grew up in a race of people who are noted for struggle, elevating struggle to the level of a fine art.”²²⁰

Washington’s campaign organization included Renault Robinson, co-founder of the Afro- American Patrolmen’s League and winning plaintiff in a discrimination suit against the Chicago Police Department, as a precinct coordinator along with Jackie Grimshaw, popular WVON radio personality and community organizer Lu Palmer, and Lerone Bennett as his speech and position paper writer. Bobby Rush was one of his top precinct captains.²²¹

Lu Palmer and Bobby Rush both possessed radical credentials and had become well-known figures in the black community. Palmer was known for his commentaries on black issues and his unabashedly Black Nationalist stance and Rush for his Black Panther leadership and involvement in the Rainbow Coalition. Together with Renault Robinson, both men commanded respect and loyalty in the

²¹⁸ Calley pbs.org

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Martha Palmer Interview

community. Additionally, Slim Coleman of the original Rainbow coalition oversaw the North Side Washington for Mayor office, while Bobby Rush oversaw the 2nd Ward Near South Side office.²²²

Not surprisingly Washington was endorsed by a widespread coalition, including, Afro-American Patrolmen's League, the Westside Coalition, Independent Voters of Illinois, United Black Voters, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). Warren Bacon, Lerone Bennett, Georgia State Senator and civil rights veteran Julian Bond, 5th Ward Politician Leon Despres, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Trade Unionist Charles Hayes, Rev, Jessie Jackson, Black Publisher George E. Johnson (Ebony and Jet magazines), State Representative Robert Mann, Rev. Maceo Pembroke, Alderman David Rhodes, Attorney Thomas Todd, Mayor Coleman Young of Detroit, Rev. Claude S. Wyatt Jr. and Luis Davilla.²²³ This collection of powerful community influences demonstrated the wide community support throughout the city that Washington enjoyed. Of import for Rush, as he worked closely on the campaign with these individuals and groups he gained political capital for his later bid for office in the 2nd Ward.²²⁴

In the course of the campaign, Washington took on the Chicago Police Department, which was necessary if he was to be shown as a man of the people in Chicago's black community. Like the Panthers before him, Washington targeted Chicago's police misconduct. As part of his campaign, Washington previewed a press release. It read, "Washington Releases Spy File; Promises to halt Spying and Fire James Rochford. 'State Senator Harold Washington, Democratic mayoral candidate, today called on the Chicago Police department to "stop wasting taxpayer's money and valuable police time spying on public meetings"²²⁵ By using his own file he had become the first public official to do so. Washington bolstered his image in the black community at a time of increased scrutiny of the police department.²²⁶

²²² [https:// www.chicagoreader.com](https://www.chicagoreader.com)

²²³ [https:// mronline.org/2017 03/03](https://mronline.org/2017/03/03), Michael Hoover article includes Washington for Mayor Campaign Brochure; Chicago, 1977.

²²⁴ Martha Palmer Interview

²²⁵ Ben Javonsky, *The Reader*. "The Lost Harold Washington files." November 30, 2017. Washington for Mayor Press Release April 7, 1977. <https://chicagoreader.com>

²²⁶ Ibid.

At approximately the same time as the 1977 mayoral primaries, the federal trial regarding the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark was proceeding. The last witness called was Bobby Rush. His testimony reflected the deep problems the black community had with the police and the lengths the police would go to suppress and control that community, even to the extent of murder. Under cross examination for three days, Rush confronted the lawyers for the defendants. Attorneys Kanter, Coghlan and Witkowski attacked Rush, Fred, and the Panthers as a group. According to Plaintiff attorney Jeffery Haas, "Rush had said Fred often sounded like a preacher. Kanter asked him, 'ever hear a preacher say, 'You kill a few pigs you get a little satisfaction, but when you kill them all, you get complete satisfaction'?" Rush replied that he had not heard Fred say that, but by "pigs", the Panthers meant "police officers who had no regard for the constitutional rights of individuals."²²⁷ Rush elaborated by saying that only those who attacked first would be harmed.²²⁸ This was a reiteration of the Panthers ideology of self-defense. Although Harold Washington did not advocate violence towards police, he did call the Chicago police force out on its treatment of him as an individual and black community member. It is no accident that this occurred at the same time as the Panther trial. Washington was very attuned to the pulse of the community.²²⁹

Harold Washington's 1977 campaign for Mayor ended in defeat. The '77 campaign, like Bobby Rush's 1975 campaign for alderman, was underfunded. It failed in several key areas. Washington received only 11% of the vote, coming in behind front runner Michael Bilandic and Polish powerhouse Alderman Roman Puchinski of the 41st ward in third place.²³⁰ In fact, Washington failed to win much of the black vote. Washington did have support in the Hispanic community, but it was even less than in the divided black community. It was clear that in any future run for Mayor that Washington would need more

²²⁷ Haas, *Assassination of Fred Hampton* 284.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Martha Palmer Interview.

²³⁰ [www.our Campaigns.com/ Candidate Detail.html? Candidate ID=6568](http://www.our Campaigns.com/Candidate Detail.html? Candidate ID=6568)

endorsements, more funding, and must receive a majority black vote, a significant portion of the Hispanic vote and some white votes if he was to be successful in a race for Chicago Mayor.²³¹

Washington's 1977 Mayoral run did enable Bobby Rush to gain valuable experience in electoral campaigning and organization. Rush was now a veteran of Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown's 1972 campaign in Oakland, California, his own campaign for 2nd ward Alderman in 1975, and Harold Washington's 1977 campaign for Mayor of Chicago. Additionally, the campaign and Rush' position as one of Washington's precinct captains indelibly imprinted his face and name, particularly on the residents of the 2nd Ward. During the campaign, Rush connected himself firmly to the upsurge in black electoral politics in Chicago and the major Democratic party players in the black community. Although Rush understood the importance of voter registration, it was apparent to him as well as the Washington camp that a massive voter's registration drive had to be undertaken in the black and Hispanic wards for either him or Washington to win.²³² And, in the case of Rush, given the two thousand vote margin between him and Barnett, in earlier the campaign, an increase in 2nd Ward voters would be crucial in his quest for the alderman's office.²³³

In 1980 Harold Washington was elected Congressman of the First congressional district to fill the seat formerly occupied by Bennet Stewart. However, it was the plum Chicago mayor's seat that Washington coveted. Michael Bilandic had proven to be a mediocre Mayor. It was the winter of 1979 that spelled his demise. The city and surrounding area experienced severe weather with a cold spell and a series of large snowstorms. On vacation in Florida, Bilandic was asked about the snow and ice that was paralyzing the Chicago area; and he appeared clueless. It seemed he did not know about the snowstorms or what efforts would be needed to clear the city. The snowstorm of 1967 was still an- all- to recent memory for many Chicagoans. The much-vaunted plan developed in its aftermath proved totally ineffective in the

²³¹ Palmer Interview.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

blizzard of 1979. In *City of Big Shoulders*, Spinney, wrote, "The January 1979 snowstorms, paralyzed Chicago. City workers were unable to remove the snow before the ice set in. For almost two months, city life slowed to a crawl as snow and ice enveloped the city. Chicagoans might tolerate corruption or an occasional police riot, but they would not tolerate a failure in basic urban services such as snow removal."²³⁴

In the 1979 race for mayor, Jane Byrne took political advantage of the weak Michel Bilandic and defeated him and the machine that he had attempted to keep together. The Chicago machine had not suffered a defeat since 1931. Byrne had run against Bilandic as an anti-machine candidate and thus received a substantial amount of the black vote. In March of 1981 Mayor Byrne moved into the notorious Cabrini Green housing projects to demonstrate her willingness to understand firsthand the plight of black citizens from the poorer strata of black Chicago. This political stunt endeared her to many in the black community.²³⁵

Mayor Jane Byrnes honeymoon with the city's black community did not last long. Byrne made several attempts to address problems in the city but ultimately as a political necessity she courted the remnants of the machine she had helped to defeat. As Spinney wrote, "In the end, Byrne abandoned her anti-machine and reformist agenda. She made an alliance with Alderman Edward (Fast Eddie) Vrdolyak, the new head of the CCDP (Cook County Democratic Party), because she needed city council votes to accomplish anything at all."²³⁶ But it was Byrnes political misstep involving the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) board that united factions in the black community. It provided fertile soil for a resurgent challenge from the black community on city hall and the powers that controlled Chicago.²³⁷

Early in her administration, Jane Byrne had appointed Renault Robinson as a member of the CHA Board. This appointment was viewed favorably in the black community. As the 1983 election for mayor

²³⁴ Spinney, 242.

²³⁵ Ibid.243.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Spinney, 246

approached, however, a challenge from States' Attorney Richard M. Daley, son of the former mayor, arose. It appeared to damage Byrnes chances to retain the office of mayor. Spinney says, "Perhaps in an attempt to shore up her waning support in white ethnic communities, Byrne reversed course and reinstalled a white majority on the CHA board.²³⁸ Byrne's solution was the catalyst for the definitive black community challenge for the mayoral office. Black community leaders portrayed this as a betrayal of African Americans, a clear and easily understood event that they could use to mobilize black Chicagoans."²³⁹

Bobby Rush was not idle in the years between 1977 and 1983. He had established a fairly successful insurance and financial planning business. In 1981, he married Carolyn Thomas, his campaign worker, supporter, and later girlfriend from his 1975 aldermanic election bid. In 1982, Rush would renew his electoral hopes because of the candidacy of a reinvigorated Harold Washington. Washington had to be convinced to run in 1982 for the 1983 Chicago Mayoral race. He remembered the low black voter turnout from his previous attempt. He now required of his drafters that they register at least 50,000 new black voters to induce him to seek the office.²⁴⁰ It is doubtful that it was really very hard to induce a run from Washington. Washington was being a bit disingenuous. When he took his congressional seat, first refused to relinquish his Illinois Senate seat, demonstrating the importance he placed on retaining a local political presence. Savvy and politically astute, Washington was fully aware of the requirements to win in Chicago. This time he knew who the players were and what type of hand he held. Additionally, Chicago in 1982-83 was a much different political landscape than in 1977, when the machine had not yet been defeated.²⁴¹

Internally, the black community also was more cohesive than it had been in 1977. The years had produced a willingness between those who advocated a militant black nationalist approach and those

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Spinney, 246.

²⁴¹ Palmer, Interview.

who were moderate. They now worked together to challenge the existing structure to place a black candidate in a position to gain power. A stumbling block in the quest for the mayor's office was Jesse L. Jackson. In 1982 Jackson was one the most recognized black leaders in the country. However, in Chicago, his style demeanor, and approach was not appreciated by many within and without the black community. According to Spinney, "He (Jackson) continually reminded local black political leaders that he was available and deserving of the nomination. Whatever divisions plagued local black leaders, however, they agree on one thing: Jackson was unacceptable as a mayoral candidate."²⁴² Jackson was eventually convinced to acquiesce from seeking the nomination, and Washington was the chosen candidate.

Many observer's and writers of Washington's bid for Mayor in 1983 fail to credit Bobby Rush and Cha Cha Jimenez for their roles in facilitating the participation of the Rainbow Coalition in the campaign of Harold Washington. It was Bobby Rush and Bob Lee as Black Panthers who forged the links with the Young Lords, Young Patriots, and Rising Up Angry groups who comprised the original Rainbow Coalition membership. By extension, Rush and Cha Cha with their organizing and community contacts guaranteed that Washington had no trouble accessing it. These same groups produced members who were key players in Harold Washington's voter registration and campaign drives. Both Rush and Cha Cha, as original Rainbow Coalition members from the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Organization respectively, did not abandon per se their radical pasts but rather embraced those pasts in the service of electoral politics.²⁴³

In the 46th Ward of the Northside Uptown area, Helen Shiller and Slim Coleman developed the idea of canvassing prospective voters at public aid offices. Shiller and Coleman were former members of the Black Panther Intercommunal Survival Committee, which later became the Heart of Uptown Coalition. As such they served the people in the Northside Uptown area of Chicago. Young Lords charismatic Jose

²⁴² Spinney.

²⁴³ Billy Che Brooks Interview.

'Cha Cha' Jimenez, like Bobby Rush had an unsuccessful 1975 campaign for alderman running in the 46th ward. Cha Cha contributed his exemplary organizing skills in the Latino communities to the campaign.²⁴⁴ Mike James of Rising Up Angry worked for the Washington campaign in the Logan square and surrounding Northside area. According to Jakobi Williams, several other former Party members, in addition to Rush, provided their political organizing expertise, notably former Panther Deputy Minister of Labor and Field Secretary Yvonne King.²⁴⁵

The black nationalist camp was strongly represented by Lutrelle Fleming "Lu" Palmer, who like Rush, Robinson, Cha Cha, and others dated back to the 1977 campaign. The outspoken Lou used his radio show on WVON 1450 AM as a platform to promote Harold Washington. In fact, he was so pro Washington that the show's sponsor, AT&T, cancelled its sponsorship because of this stance. Palmer popularized the saying, "We Shall See in '83." This slogan came out of a 1981 conference at Malcom X College organized by Lu Palmer. As a community activist, Palmer founded in 1979 Chicago United Black Communities (CBUC) and, in 1981, Black Independent Political Organization (BIPO).²⁴⁶ He was noted for his direct and caustic remarks and was one of the first journalist to cast suspicion on the official narrative surrounding the deaths of Hampton and Clark. The *Chicago Tribune* in December 1969 quoted Palmer as saying, "The leadership of the Black Panther Party has been steadily, and some would say systematically, skimmed off."²⁴⁷ He was energetic, a firebrand. He also had media access and the gumption to push the Washington campaign throughout the black community.²⁴⁸

Washington knew that he required 50,000 registered black voters to make his run for mayor. According to Robin D.G. Kelley, "The movement not only waged successful voter registration campaigns, increasing the number of black votes by 180,000 in 1982, but enjoyed substantial support from liberal

²⁴⁴ From the Bullet to the Ballot, 196

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 197.

²⁴⁶ www.historymakers.org.

²⁴⁷ Articles.chicagotribune.com/2004-09-14

²⁴⁸ Palmer Interview

whites.”²⁴⁹ The lakefront liberal whites were a bastion of independent voters that had been opposed to both the Chicago machine and its remnants. The year of 1983 was to yield many surprises for the remnants of the Chicago machine. On February 22, 1983, the Chicago Democratic primary was held with six candidates vying for the office of Mayor of the City of Chicago. The six candidates were the incumbent Mayor Jane Byrne, Cook County State’s Attorney Richard M. Daley, 1st Congressional district Representative Harold Washington, Frank Ranallo, William Markowski, and Shelia Jones.²⁵⁰

Shortly before the primary, Ed Vrdolyak, chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party (CCDP)-warned that the two major white candidates Byrne and Daley would split the white vote, thus allowing a Washington victory. Vrdolyak then went on to demonstrate the racial nature of Chicago that so many people had fought against for so long and so hard. Vrdolyak said, “A vote for Daley is a vote for Washington. It’s a two-person race. It would be the worst day in the history of Chicago if your candidate...was not elected. It’s a racial thing. Don’t kid yourself. I’m calling on you to save your city, to save your precinct. We’re fighting to keep the city the way it is.”²⁵¹ Conversely Washington appealed to black, white, Hispanic, and Asians. According to Martha Palmer the Asian owners of Barbecue King restaurant in Chinatown were big Washington supporters.²⁵² Washington said, “I’m running to end Jane Byrne’s four-year effort to further institutionalize racial discrimination in this great city.”²⁵³

The primary election result was just as ‘Fast Eddie’ Vrdolyak had predicted. The unprecedented occurred, the improbable happened: Washington won the primary. The official vote totals were as follows: Washington 424,324 (36.28 %), Byrne 393,500 (33.64%), Daley 346,835 (29.65%), Frank Ranallo 2,367 (0.20%), William Markowski 1,412 (0.12%), Shelia Jones, 1,285 (0.11%). The shock to the remnants of the Daley machine was catastrophic; it reeled in disbelief. As its members were attempting

²⁴⁹Jakobi Williams, *Bullet to the Ballot*. Chapel Hill: (The University of North Carolina Press,2013) 198.

²⁵⁰ our campaigns.com/ Candidate ID=6568

²⁵¹ Spinney, 247.

²⁵² Palmer Interview.

²⁵³ Spinney, 247.

to recover from the shock, six days later another seismic event occurred on the Chicago terrain. On February 28, 1983, the trial against the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the FBI for the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark came to an end. The suit was settled for 1.85 Million, which represented the largest civil rights judgement at that time. The plaintiff's lawyers included, Flint Taylor, Jefferey Haas, and Dennis Cunningham all of whom had worked diligently in the Panther formed Peoples Law Office.²⁵⁴ The fact that these lawyers were still practicing demonstrates one of the many legacies of the panther movement.

The victory statement by the three lawyers was particularly significant in 1983, when both Bobby Rush and Harold Washington were in the midst of challenging the Chicago machine. The statement read, "It is entirely appropriate that the legal portion of this case has been concluded during black history Month, for the murders of Hampton and Clark by the agents of three governments is a most significant event not only in clack history but also in the history of this city and in history as recorded by all people of conscience."²⁵⁵ This victory helped to further galvanize the black and progressive community in Chicago.

For Bobby Rush, the 1983 Primary was an enormous political boon for his renewed challenge of William Barnett for the 2nd Ward Aldermanic seat. The April 12, 1983 election resulted in a win for Bobby Rush. The second time around was a charm. Bobby Rush received 52.80% of the vote to William Barnett's 47.20%.²⁵⁶ Bobby Rush's win is often portrayed as coming on the coattails of Harold Washington and his mayoral campaign. This view tends to grossly minimize the accomplishments of Rush in his own political advancement. While Rush clearly benefitted from votes the enormous increase

²⁵⁴ Haas, 348.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ ourcampaign.com

in black registration produced, it was essentially because he was an integral part of that process: the very process which produced votes for both himself and Washington.

Moreover, there were other factors that contributed to Rush's win over machine candidate William Barnett. Rush was a former Illinois Black Panther leader which translated to community organizers. Many community activists like Rush himself, had a background in Civil Rights and /or student politics. Additionally, Rush worked on the Oakland campaigns, his own 1975 campaign, Washington's failed 1977 race for mayor, and his 1982 efforts as a precinct captain/organizer on behalf of Washington and himself. This background, as well as name and face recognition throughout the community, was one of the major determining factors in winning the race for alderman. This time around Rush had a firmer financial foundation than redeemed pop bottles with which to promote his campaign. In fact, according to Bob Brown, it was, "W. Clement Stones AION Insurance Company which provided some of the financial backing for Rush's 2nd Ward campaign."²⁵⁷ Perseverance, timing, hard work, and a bit of luck allowed Rush to finally realize his electoral ambition.

Rush won the Second Ward. The battle was not quite over, however, as Washington had yet to secure his seat as Mayor. The defeated Daley machine remnants coalesced behind the candidacy of Bernard Epton. What was remarkable is that in Democratic Chicago Epton, a white Republican, was the candidate whom many hoped could prevent a black man from assuming the office of mayor. Epton, "served as a member of the Illinois General Assembly from 1969 to 1982 and was a member of Lloyds of London and past president of the National Conference of Insurance Legislators."²⁵⁸ They upped the ante and stoked racial fears in the white and ethnic community to a fever pitch. As testimony to the level of racial prejudice in Chicago, the winner of the Democratic Party primary since the 1930's was the mayor elect. This was true, as 78% of registered voters in Chicago were Democrats. As a consequence of

²⁵⁷ Bob Brown, Telephone Interview

²⁵⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/14/obituaries>

Washington's primary victory, however, the CCDP backed the Republican candidate rather than the candidate from their own party.²⁵⁹

The race for mayor in 1983 was one that was not about programs or positions, jobs, or economics. This contest was about race pure and simple. Whites in opposition to Washington mobilized throughout the city's white enclaves. The message was clear. We don't want a black mayor. Historian Jakobi Williams, citing a quote from Abdul Alkalimat and Doug Gills wrote, "Washington's mayoral run was the most polarized election in Chicago's history along the lines of race and nationality to that time, and "more white people voted on the losing side than in any two successive elections in the city's history" due in part to racial coalition building.²⁶⁰ The race ended in a close win for Harold Washington, propelling him to become the first black mayor in Chicago city history. The vote totals were astonishing: 73% of blacks voted, and of those 95% voted for Washington; Hispanics voted 82% for Washington, and lakefront liberal whites cast their votes overwhelmingly for Washington. For Epton 68% of all whites voted and he received 88% of those votes. The total votes cast were 1.3 million. Washington won the election by a total of 46,000 votes.²⁶¹

The Washington victory seemed to amplify racial polarization in Chicago. Bobby Rush and other pro-Washington city council members had a fight on their hands. A coalition of 29 white city councilmen under the leadership of Alderman Ed Burke and Edward Vrdolyak, opposed the legislative initiatives of Washington at every turn. The infighting became so vicious and obvious that this struggle alternately came to be called 'Beirut on the Lake' and Chicago's 'City Council Wars.'²⁶² Little was accomplished during the next four years. Many of the pro-Washington aldermen, however, experienced a marked improvement of basic city services in their wards. They got street lights in alleys, resurfaced streets and sidewalks better police and fire protection. Washington laid off city workers from bloated payroll,

²⁵⁹ Spinney.248.

²⁶⁰ Williams, 199.

²⁶¹ Spinney, 249.

²⁶² Ibid.251.

ceased patronage hiring, and began to balance the city budget. He placed blacks, women, and Hispanics in positions that heretofore they were not able to access.²⁶³

Internally, Washington faced another trial, one that pitted him against one of his staunchest supporters. Lutrelle "Lu" Palmer, a consistently loyal supporter who had lost lucrative backing for his radio show due to his support for Washington and who was a pillar in the black nationalists' community, was unhappy with Washington. As a founder of BIPO and CBU, Palmer was ranked high indeed in the nationalist ranks.²⁶⁴ Washington owed much to liberals, nationalists, rainbow coalition members, and other supporters. Like many others, Palmer wanted to be rewarded for his service and to continue to advance a radical alternative to the status quo. Palmer wanted the job of his choosing, a prime political plum.²⁶⁵

Initially for Washington, the problem was simple; reward Palmer with a political office. When a ward spot become available, Washington had to back Palmer for the position with an endorsement and place resources at his disposal. It was a tried a true solution. Washington offered the Third Ward to Palmer as his reward. Palmer's answer was no. He aspired higher than a mere alderman's seat in the city council. He believed he deserved the nod for Washington's congressional seat in the First Congressional District. However, Washington had already determined that his right-hand man and best friend Charles Hayes should occupy his vacant post.²⁶⁶ Washington then endorsed Hayes for Congressional Representative. Palmer felt that Washington had betrayed him because it was about control. Palmer said, 'Yeah, I was bitter for a while because I realized it wasn't about independence, it was about control.' Palmer and others felt that Charles Hayes was more compliant than Lou Palmer.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Thomas Gale, "Harold Washington," *Encyclopedia of African- American Culture and History*. www.encylopeida.com 2006.

²⁶⁴ Palmer.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ <https://chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm/-1991-06-07-910220632-story.html>.

With the endorsement of Washington and the backing of organized labor, Hayes easily defeated his opponent's, Lu Palmer, Ralph Metcalfe Jr., and Al Raby. He then went on to defeat his Republican opponent in August of 1983 with a whopping 94 percent of the vote. Hayes entered Congress as the Representative of the First Congressional District of Illinois.²⁶⁸ While Hayes was ensconced in Washington's former position, Bobby Rush and the Twenty other Alderman who supported Washington were in for a wild four-and-a-half-year ride. They would fight the so-called council wars.²⁶⁹

The victory of Herold Washington was but the opening salvo in the 'Council Wars' in Chicago. Alderman Ed Vrdolyak and Ed Burke teamed up with other aldermen to oppose Washington at every turn. The opposition numbered 29. The Council required a majority of 34 votes to pass legislation. The vote tallies were universally 21 in favor and 29 opposed on any legislation proposed by Washington and vice versa on legislation presented by the opposition. Washington used his veto power to override opposition legislation that had less than the 34 required votes. While stymied in the city council, Washington managed to instill his "Rainbow Cabinet," which resulted in a representation that better reflected the people of Chicago.²⁷⁰

Washington did not forget his ties to the Illinois Panthers. The most evident tie the name of the 'Rainbow Cabinet,' and by appointing the venerable James Montgomery as corporation council of the City of Chicago, affirmed his loyalties. Montgomery was one of the lawyers on the recently settled 1.85-million-dollar case against the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the FBI in the murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. And to fulfill his agenda for greater representation, "Washington also increased the number of women in positions of political power, bringing the proportion of women commissioners and

²⁶⁸ historyhouse.gov/People/Detail/14760

²⁶⁹ <https://interactive.wttw.com/remembering-chicago/council-wars>

²⁷⁰ Williams, *Bullet to the Ballot*. 199.

deputy commissioners to just under 40 percent and appointing women as the two top financial officers before his death in office in 1987.²⁷¹

Perhaps the best analysis of the tie between Washington and his loyal lieutenant Second Ward alderman Bobby Rush during the period of the Council Wars is described by Jakobi Williams. Williams states, “Rush, like other coalition members, supported Mayor Harold Washington because his politics and policies were in line with the essence of the Panther-inspired Rainbow Coalition, as the mayor supported an antiracist and anti-class coalition to fight political corruption and police brutality.”²⁷² Harold Washington easily won his second term in the mayor’s office defeating ‘Fast Eddie’ Vrdolyak so soundly that many of his former opponents abandoned the divisive Vrdolyak and joined the Washington camp.²⁷³ However, Washington success was short lived as he died November 25, 1987 in his office of a heart attack.²⁷⁴

Political maneuvering in the wake of Washington’s death saw the elevation of Sixth Ward Alderman Eugene Sawyer, former Daley machine loyalist, as mayor. Sawyer paved the way for another Daley in the mayor’s office, as Richard M. Daley easily defeated Eugene Sawyer in the general election. Dr. Margaret Burroughs and Timothy Evans formed the Harold Washington Party, and many of the black nationalist elements attempted to form a winning coalition, but it was not to be. Bobby Rush continued in his position as alderman of the Second Ward and increasingly embraced the Democratic Party. At the same time, Richard M. Daley began to remake the machine with a different focus as its power was now based on concessions to national and global capital.²⁷⁵

Second Ward alderman Bobby Rush like representatives of other inner-city neighborhoods, struggled to meet the needs of his constituents in the face of massive cuts in funding in social services, jobs, and

²⁷¹ Ibid, 200.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders*, 251

²⁷⁴ Ron Grossman, “Remembering Mayor Harold Washington. www.chicagotribune.com. November 13, 2017

²⁷⁵ Helgeson, 273-74.

disinvestment. Rush managed to provide jobs and city services for those in his ward. In 1992, Bobby Rush made the decision to challenge Charles Hayes for his congressional seat. Earlier, Rush had made some significant political moves that cemented him firmly in Illinois democratic power politics. In 1990 Rush was elected to the post of Deputy Chairman of the State Democratic Party. Gary LaPaille was running for Chairman and asked Rush for support and help with several black delegates. Rush said yes, "you get my support if you support me as deputy chairman." The deal was made, and the ticket prevailed.²⁷⁶ Similarly, Rush backed Millionaire Winnetka Lawyer Richard J. Phelan for Cook County Board President. It was of interest that Rush backed Phelan as he was the lawyer who defended the city against the discrimination suit brought by the African American Patrolmen's League. This estranged Rush from black nationalists Rush political moves and failure to embrace the nationalist race-focused agenda infuriated them. Speaking about this Lu Palmer said, "Bobby lost the confidence of those of us who consider ourselves independent nationalists because we were convinced that he's too cozy."²⁷⁷

Lu Palmer and some former Eugene Sawyer supporters such as William Beavers, Seventh Ward alderman were Rush's most vocal opponents. Beavers was accused by Rush of being a Red Squad spy in his former position on the Chicago Police Department. They disliked Bobby Rush and his rapprochement with traditional mainstream democratic politician's. Lu Palmer, said, of Rush, "Here was a Black Panther who was as much anti-establishment as you can get, who years later becomes establishmentarian. People on the street are fed up with Bobby Rush."²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Dirk Johnson, A Politicians Life, From Militant to Mainstream. Special to the *New York Times*, Published June 3, 1990, p.10010022

²⁷⁷ Mary Ann French, "The Radical Departure of Bobby Rush." *The Washington Post*. May 3, 1993.

²⁷⁸R. Bruce Dold, Once a Hero, Now Called Traitor. May 20,1990. Articles www.chicagotribune.com.1990-05-20/news/9002110210

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Rush had an answer for his critics with regards to his working with the mainstream political and financial establishment in Chicago and in Illinois. Rush, said, "I'm trying to create some order out of the confusion, bitterness and isolation that have grown since the death of Harold Washington. I'm trying to remove the bunker mentality that exists within the city of Chicago and within my community. "We have to redefine our relationship with the broader community."²⁷⁹ Many who knew Rush from the days of the Black Panther Party understood why he would reach out and build political alliances with the Democratic party politicians. Bobby Rush and Bob Lee were the primary builders of the original rainbow coalition. Given his coalition building background, it was natural that Rush would establish connections, even in the ranks of the established Democratic party organization.²⁸⁰

Rush's decision to challenge Charles Hayes for the Congressional seat in the First Congressional district was a bold move. Hayes had been ensconced as the representative since 1983 and enjoyed comfortable support from labor and the community. He had a solid background as a labor leader and, like Rush, was tied closely to the late Harold Washington. In fact, Hayes was known as a fearless labor leader and able to work in the most adverse conditions to organize. Born in Cairo, Illinois, a city known for its racism and not normally thought of as a progressive place, Hayes had organized Local 1424 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. This background he carried into his political career.

Hayes was said to have ties to the Communist Party USA, but in a 1959 appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee to testify on his union leadership, he denounced communism. He also refused to name any associates who may have Communist Party connections. Hayes had a solid labor

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

background rising from the United Packinghouse Workers of America Grievance committee to district director for UPWA district one from 1954 to 1968. He was the Vice President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union from 1979 until he retired to assume the First Congressional district seat in 1983.²⁸¹ Putting their records together, Rush simply could not match Hayes' labor credentials. However, Rush sought to portray Hayes as promising much but delivering little in his tenure as Congressional representative. Still, in his time in Congress Hayes assignments were Education and Labor, Post Office and Civil Service, and Small business committees. Moreover, Hayes consistently opposed Ronald Regan's cuts to education and social services. Although, not flashy, Hayes was a solid if quiet presence on Capitol Hill.²⁸²

Rush was trailing Hayes in the polls. The situation appeared ripe for Hayes to retain his Congressional seat, although Rush mounted a strong challenge. Just before the March primary election, however, Hayes was linked to a scandal. The Government Accounting Office issued a study which showed several members of Congress consistently overdrew their accounts in the house "Bank". This Bank was an informal service provided by the House Sergeant at Arms. The investigation showed that Hayes wrote 716 checks exceeding his account balance in a 39-month period. He was identified as one of the roughly two dozen abusers.²⁸³

Rush immediately capitalized on this scandal. He used it to paint Hayes in an extremely negative light. Hayes's reaction to the furor did not help his cause, either. He was seen as overly cavalier in his attitude about the scandal, which turned many voters against his candidacy. Hayes viewed the over drafting of his account as a personal, not a major issue. Certainly, it was not one that he believed should overly concern his constituents. In response to the accusations, Hayes responded, "It did not cost the

²⁸¹ Mitchell Locin and Robert Davies. *"Lifetime of Union work Leads Hayes to Threshold of Congress."* 28 July 1983. Chicago Tribune.A9.

²⁸² Andrew Herrmann, *"Rush, Hayes Put Records on the line n 1st District,"* 21 February 1992, Chicago Sun-times :8.

²⁸³ [History.house.gov/People/Detail/14760](https://www.history.house.gov/People/Detail/14760)

taxpayers a dime and is a side issue when our nation is in a serious crisis.”²⁸⁴ While Hayes was undoubtedly correct that it was indeed a personal issue, that is not the way it was presented by Rush and the media. It cost Hayes the election. He lost 42 to 39 percent. Bobby L. Rush co-founder and former deputy defense Minister Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Alderman of the Second Ward, Second Ward Committeeman, Deputy Chairman Illinois Democratic Party, became the Democratic Party candidate for the First Congressional District.²⁸⁵

Again, not everybody was happy for Rush. His staunch black nationalist adversaries continued to denigrate him. Chief among them was Conrad Worrill, Professor from Northeastern University Center for Inner City Studies, who also managed Lu Palmers unsuccessful race for Congress. In an interview with the Washington Post, Conrad said, “The way Bobby Rush went about becoming congressman-cutting deals with the regular Democratic Party organization that we had been fighting against for 25 years -was a slap in the face...”²⁸⁶ The black nationalist even stooped as low as to repeat a rumor that Rush may have had something to do with the death of Hamilton and Clark, because he was not present that night at the Panther apartment. People who spread this rumor display an ignorance of the Illinois Party. They repeat the media description as Panther headquarters, when in reality it was a ‘Panther Pad’ where Fred and Deborah Johnson and other Panthers slept. Bobby Rush was married and had gone to a different location for the night as did other Party members.²⁸⁷

In a April 1992 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Rush said, “I think their criticism is based either on political expediency of jealousy, ...Some people have deliberately promoted this politics of victimization to such an extreme that it’s not operational to be positive anymore.”²⁸⁸ The haters were already identified and marginalized as far as Rush was concerned. While not winning the primary by a

²⁸⁴ Larry Magasak, “Rep Hayes Listed Among Top Abusers of House Bank,” 15 March 1992, *Chicago Sun-Times* 3.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ French, The Washington Post. May 3, 1993.

²⁸⁷ Blair Anderson, Interview

²⁸⁸ Bob Sexter, “From Boy Scout to Politico” *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1992.

landslide, Rush tallied enough votes to beat Hayes in a close race. Hayes had won his last race by a whopping 93.77 percent over his rival with only 9.23%. In the general election in November of 1992, Bobby Rush beat Republican Jay Walker 209,258 (82.81%) to 43,453 (17.20%). On January 3, 1993, a former Panther took his seat in the Congress of the United States.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁹ [Ourcampaigns.com/Candidate/Id=6568](https://ourcampaigns.com/Candidate/Id=6568)

CHAPTER 4

This chapter examines Bobby L. Rush's political career from his installation and early service as Congressional Representative from the First congressional District of Illinois, his 1999 run for Mayor of Chicago, his 2000 defeat of challengers Barack Obama, and Illinois State Senator Donny Trotter for his congressional seat, and Madeline Haithcock for his Second Ward committeeman position. During this period Rush becomes enmeshed in the political life of the Democratic party and learns the ropes as Congressman.

Bobby L. Rush, a Black Panther in Washington, D.C.! The Black Panther Party Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver in his pre-split days repeatedly referred to the United States as Babylon. Panther rhetoric referred to living as an oppressed community in the United States as being in the "belly of the beast." In 1993, however, the co-founder and Deputy Minister of Defense of the defunct Black Panther Party Illinois Chapter (the national party was also defunct)²⁹⁰, was seated in the Congress of the United States in the legislative branch of that very same beast.

Ironically, it was the Panther strategy in 1972 to gain political power by winning election in one municipality-Oakland-and replicate that formula throughout the United States. However, the Panther electoral strategy formulated during its social democratic stage never envisioned an extension to the halls of power in Washington, D.C. Bobby Rush had two tasks before him. One was to find someone to fill his seat on the Chicago City Council as alderman of the Second Ward, and to make sure his committeeman post was secure, as that was necessary to maintain a strong power foothold in Chicago in addition to his congressional position. By retaining his committeeman position, he had control of the machinery of voting, including the ability to appoint the election judges in the Second Ward. It assured Rush of a certain number of votes in the congressional district.²⁹¹ Rush appointed Madeline Haithcock to

²⁹⁰ Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*. Berkeley (University of California Press, 2013), 389

²⁹¹ Bruce Dixon, Telephone Interview, November 12, 2017

replace him as Second Ward alderman. Haithcock did not have political experience, but she did have an invaluable political connection. She was a friend of Bobby Rush's wife Carolyn Rush when they both were employees of the Chicago Art Institute.²⁹² Also, as a political novice she could be easier to control.²⁹³

In Chicago, Rush had made political enemies of black militants because of his support and alliance with mainstream Democrats and his challenge to and defeat of Charles Hayes. The former Congressman Hayes was well respected in black Chicago and enjoyed solid labor support. He was well known in left labor political circles. His labor organizing in Cairo, Illinois, his boyhood home and hotbed of racial tension, was the stuff of legend. The fact that he had Communist Party ties and had avoided prosecution only added to his stature. However, despite Hayes background and standing, Rush challenged him. Rush had capitalized on the postal scandal and defeated Hayes, who was only a year shy of his pension. Many felt that Rush should not have challenged Hayes at this time because of the pension issue alone.²⁹⁴

Bobby Rush had a different viewpoint regarding his defeat of Hayes. In a 2003 article for the *Chicago Tribune*, when asked about his race against Hayes, Rush responded, "Hayes failed to show the sort of leadership black Chicagoans needed when the community was tearing its political base apart after Washington's death. The occupant of the 1st District seat had a special obligation to exert leadership and influence by bringing feuding community leaders together to try to work out their differences."²⁹⁵ It is an understatement that Rush simplified the enormous task it took to hold the black militants, and old-style machine politicians in the black community together in any cohesive way. It meant combining with lakefront liberals, Latinos, and the rest of the rainbow coalition folks to sustain and enhance Washington's rainbow style vision for Chicago.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Martha Palmer, Telephone Interview, December 3, 2017

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Don Wycliff, "Soul Survivor," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, November 16, 2003. 16-17

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 17

²⁹⁶ Robert Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 253.

Despite the criticism, the fact was that Bobby Rush was the new First Congressional District representative in Congress. As an acknowledgment of his political stature and acumen as a freshman Congressman he was appointed by the Democratic Party leadership to a position as assistant party whip. Additionally, he was elected class president for two terms by his Democratic Party colleagues in the class of 1992.²⁹⁷ During the early part of his first term, Rush was successful especially when H.R.3474 the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994 was signed by then President Bill Clinton. This was a “landmark community banking bill that was based largely on a plan Rush introduced.”²⁹⁸ This bill brought financial resources to communities which lacked the necessary financial institutions which could make equity investments, loans to assist in development projects, commercial real estate, human and capital investments in underserved communities.²⁹⁹

This important piece of legislation established a fund for community development and banking. This act allowed for investment and assistance programming for financial institutions within distressed communities. Additionally, it created an “exception to non-Federal matching funds requirements in the case of an applicant with severe constraints on available source of matching funds.”³⁰⁰ It set incentives for banks to involve themselves in community banking investments in distressed communities.³⁰¹ In his first term, Rush also was instrumental in bills on Conflict Resolution and Meditation, and a Public Pensions bill. By any standard, Rush first term in Congress was a success. He contributed to legislation that enhanced services to his constituents, particularly in the Englewood and Grand Crossing neighborhoods.³⁰²

In Chicago, the Mayor Richard M. Daley, the son of the Late Mayor Richard J. Daley was in control of the city government. Daley was able to exploit the disarray of the black leadership in the city.

²⁹⁷ Our Campaigns .com / Candidate Details/ html candidate ID=1075

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/103/hr3474/text>

³⁰⁰ Congressional Research service, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill/103/hr3474/summary>

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=1075

Consequently, Daley was “elected in 1989 after defeating the black incumbent Eugene Sawyer. Daley was the first white candidate in a major U.S. city to defeat a black incumbent.”³⁰³ The feeling in Chicago about Daley was mixed. In the greater Chicago metropolitan area, Daley was seen by many as a successful mayor. He placated many in the African American community, won the endorsement of Jessie Jackson and other community leaders, reduced patronage, balanced the city budget, privatized public works jobs, janitorial services, and substance abuse counseling. He also privatized the lucrative operation of O’Hare Airport parking garages and the junking of abandoned cars.³⁰⁴

Although Daley opened city hall employment to more women and Latinos, dissatisfaction with his government was still rampant among the lower class in black, Latino, and poor white communities. Public housing problems in Chicago were pervasive, and the condition of the ‘projects’ throughout Chicago was abysmal. The Chicago Police Department was generally disliked and feared in many communities for their heavy-handed policing policies. The Austin district station, and 51st and Wentworth police stations, were to be avoided if possible. However, it was the 83rd and Green station that many in the black community knew was a place where beatings and torture was frequent. In fact, it was general knowledge that if you were arrested and taken to that station, and you were released or taken to Cook County jail without any ‘negative repercussions’ from your stay you should count yourself very fortunate indeed. “Daley ever the advocate for the police was even able to pass thorough the city council legislation which allowed police to gain employment in the city colleges by being designated in City Colleges Teachers Union Local 1600 as support professionals. This allowed the police upon retirement to receive two pensions.”³⁰⁵ These police issues and conditions within the housing projects remained a source of friction between the Daley administration and the black community.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Spinney 253.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Palmer.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

Rush faced a challenge in 1994 for his Congressional seat. His challenger was William J. Kelly, a Republican who hailed from Chicago's trendy Mc Clurg Court housing cooperative on the near Northside. Kelly was the owner of an Emmy Award winning production company, which produced for Fox, Comcast Sport News, and Tribune Networks among others. Kelly, a Republican, never had a chance to defeat the popular Rush. Kelly is chiefly remembered for revealing during the campaign that Rush owed a combination of \$50,000 in back taxes and unpaid child support payments.³⁰⁷ This revelation did not create enough turmoil to unseat Rush, and he handily defeated Kelly. Rush received 1112,474 votes (75.73 %) to Kelly's 36,038 votes (24.27 %) which represents a substantial victory over his opponent.³⁰⁸ Rush won because of his popularity within the First Congressional District. Kelly's right-wing Republican pedigree did not translate to enough votes to carry the heavily democratic the First congressional district.³⁰⁹

However, this triumph was bittersweet as he experienced a defection in the Second Ward. His appointed aldermanic choice Madeline Haithcock had aligned herself like many other black politicians in Chicago, solidly with the Daley administration. Not only did she move to the Daley camp politically, but socially she disassociated herself with Carolyn and Bobby Rush. According to Martha Palmer, some of the speculation in black political circles about what led to the dispute was Bobby's continued control of the committeeman's position in the Second Ward.³¹⁰ There were several dark rumors, about drug use, and misappropriated bank funds, circulating at the time, but none that could be proven, or that saw the light of day. However, Palmer is quick to point out that no one knows for certain what the problem was.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ [www.Our Campaigns.com/candidate detail/ html? Candidate ID=13422](http://www.OurCampaigns.com/candidate-detail/html?CandidateID=13422)

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Palmer.

³¹¹ Ibid.

Despite the rumors, subsequent actions by Bobby Rush and public statements by Madeline Haithcock all seem to point in the general direction of a dispute over the Second Ward committeeman position. Haithcock publicly stated on numerous occasions that Rush wanted to still control the Second Ward even though he was no longer Alderman.³¹² Bobby Rush for his part tried to oust Haithcock by supporting his sister Geraldine Laury for Alderman in 1995 when she forced a run-off, and again in 1999, when Laury was soundly defeated.³¹³ Haithcock needed the committeeman's position to more effectively assist Daley in his control of city government. Daley needed control of the city wards and in turn he could make sure that contracts and benefits were dispersed to those wards. The new political reality in Chicago was that Mayor Daley's son "remade the Chicago machine."³¹⁴ Although, Rush's ability to fully utilize the committeeman's position is almost nonexistent, it still prevented Haithcock from accruing political power she would otherwise have wielded in the city. It was a thorn in her side. This disagreement and Haithcock's alliance with the Daley administration shortly led to a politically embarrassing defeat for Bobby Rush, a defeat that ironically would lead to what would be his greatest political challenge and, arguably, one of his greatest political victories.³¹⁵

During his second term, Rush gained a seat on the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce. This committee and four of its subcommittee were where Bobby L. Rush chose to make his impact on the legislative branch of the United States government. The subcommittees on Telecommunications, Energy, and Air quality, Oversight and Investigations, and the Environment were all key to meeting the needs of his constituents in the First Congressional District of Illinois.³¹⁶ An example of the impact of his committee participation can be seen in 1996. In this year, Rush was a "conferee on the Telecommunications Act of 1996, (P.L 104-104), This piece of legislation was the 1stfirst

³¹² www.russtewart.com/article/2006/06-04-2003.html.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Jeffrey Helgeson, *Crucibles of Black Empowerment*

³¹⁵ Janny Scott, "In 2000, A Streetwise Veteran Schooled a Bold Young Obama." www.nytimes.com September 9, 2007.

³¹⁶ <https://www.dem.gov/member/bobby-rush/>

major overhaul of U.S. telecommunications law in almost 62 years. It paved the way for the growth of cable and internet accessibility and was of immense benefit to both urban and rural areas in America.”³¹⁷ The internet and cable was an important aspect that contributed and fostered growth in the nation.

Since the 1989 election of Richard M. Daley as mayor, Rush had been receptive to complaints about the Daley administration. After assessing the current political climate in Chicago, Rush made the decision to challenge Daley in the 1999 mayoral election in Chicago. The co-founder of the powerful Rainbow Coalition felt that he could replicate what Washington did in 1983 in 1999. However right the timing may have seemed, the truth was that Daley was more formidable than he appeared. Richard M. Daley was not as intractable as his father.³¹⁸ He had built solid alliances with women, Latinos, business, labor, gays, and blacks throughout the Chicago area. Daley embraced affirmative action programs, provided a measure of autonomy in his two-billion-dollar neighborhood restoration project, he promoted art work in the city's eight block Northside gay district that celebrated alternative lifestyles.³¹⁹

An article written in the *Baltimore Sun* just prior to the election gives a well thought out analysis of Rush attempt to wrest the Mayor's seat from Daley. An excerpt of Jean Marbella's editorial in the *Baltimore Sun* provides much needed insight into the challenges faced by Rush vs. Daley. Marbella quoting within her article, editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, Laura Washington, a former press secretary to Harold Washington, had this to say about the Rush challenge. “He's out there by himself. The black leadership that came forth for Harold Washington, you don't see them now. They've been muzzled. [This] is an indication of how Daley has been able to consolidate his power in the city.”³²⁰ Public perception of Daley within the city was generally positive. John Pellissero, political science

³¹⁷ <https://rush.house.gov>

³¹⁸ Spinney, 253.

³¹⁹ Spinney, 254.

³²⁰ Jean Marbella, *In Chicago politics, his foe is still a Daley*. article.baltimoresun.com/1999-02-22/news

professor at Loyola University said,” People think Daley’s been doing a good job. It’s not to say he’s invincible. But you have to have some defining issue and, second, a viable candidate.”³²¹

Was Bobby Rush a viable candidate? The answer to this question would seem to be yes. He was an established Chicago politician, having served as alderman of the Second Ward, and was versed in the nuances of the city council from his time as a loyal lieutenant of Harold Washington. However, did he have a defining issue or issues around which to base his opposition and stake his claim to the mantle of leadership in the city of Chicago, as its third black mayor? This question has no easy answer. Rush attempted to bolster his campaign and provoke the ire of Chicagoans against the Daley regime. He used a method of confrontation that Martin Luther King had employed to effect during the southern phase of the Civil Rights movement.

As a hot button he tried the issue of snow removal. It was the fundamental issue which led to the defeat of Michael Bilandic in the wake of his hapless response to the blizzard of 1979. Rush identified several snow-covered streets on the Southside. As reported, “Rush said those streets were not cleared for 3 or 4 days.”³²² He then alerted the press to a snow laden street so that he might highlight the problem in an onsite press conference.

Daley had a couple methods of his own that he could use. In 1966, when Martin Luther King traveled to Chicago, he formed the Chicago Freedom Movement challenging Daley on segregated dilapidated housing, and the lack of resources in the black community. King attempted to draw Daley into a confrontation to highlight for the world the inequality rife in Chicago. King attempted to make an issue of garbage strewn streets and alleys on the black Westside. The late Richard J. Daley promptly responded by dispatching a fleet of garbage trucks and an army of streets and sanitation workers who cleaned up the entire area and more, thus removing the issue from King.³²³

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Spinney,229

This Daley employed the same tactic on Rush that his father had used on King over three decades earlier. As Rush was setting up to address the assembled press on a snow-covered southside street, a fleet of snowplows, trucks, and city workers from the Department of Streets and Sanitation appeared and removed all the snow from the surrounding city blocks. Someone had informed Daley. This put Rush in the position of rather lamely declaring that the snow removal had taken too long.³²⁴

Rush was hungry for an issue to use to define himself. In the wake of Daley's refusal to debate him and the former Senator Carol Moseley Braun's endorsement of Daley, Rush attacked the Chicago Public Schools' administration. He had little choice. Both major newspapers and the business community backed Daley. Education and school segregation had fired the passions of black Chicagoans during the Civil Rights era and resulted in a sustained campaign of resistance to the old Daley administration. In a speech, President Clinton lauded a reorganized Chicago Public School system. His praise was in response to a positive increase in standardized test scores. To counter Clinton, Rush called out Paul Vallas the CEO of the reorganized school system, as "P.T. Barnum, selling a false picture of improvement."³²⁵ His attack, however, failed to raise the level of opposition that Rush needed to put Daley on the ropes.

Daley had instituted civic improvements in the city during his tenure. Along many large avenues in Chicago, he had flower pots installed on the medians of those streets. Additionally, his administration promoted and oversaw the refurbishing of Navy Pier, changing it into a world-class entertainment venue, complete with a large outsized Ferris wheel. This beautiful lighted wheel harkened back to the time of the 1893 Columbian exposition, when George Ferris introduced his invention, the first 'Ferris Wheel,' to the world. For his part, Rush attacked Daley and the Chicago Police Department on the high crime rate in the city, which had gained Chicago the dubious distinction of 'Murder Capital of the

³²⁴ Marbella, *Baltimore Sun*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

World.” As Rush said, “For the first time, since Al Capone, here we are Chicago the murder capital of the world. Things are not going well in our city notwithstanding the flower pots and Ferris wheels.”³²⁶

It was clear to most observers that Rush was a candidate searching for an issue. Additionally, his campaign effectiveness was woefully short of what was needed to defeat Daley. Rush was the co-founder of the once mighty Rainbow Coalition, that supported Harold Washington and had fielded a demonstration in the Puerto Rican enclave of upwards of 100, 000 people.³²⁷ No such outpouring of support came for Rush.

Although Rush was a Baptist Minister and claimed that he had the support of most of the ministers and parishioners in the black community, this also was not quite true. Not having a majority of those ministers in support of his campaign presented another problem. According to Grimshaw, “The political strength of the middle class was reinforced by the church, the black community’s historic institution of racial advancement and political protest.”³²⁸ This lack of overwhelming church support meant that at best Rush could count on only half or 50% of the middle-class vote. It represented a distinct political liability in a race to unseat an entrenched incumbent like Richard M. Daley.³²⁹

Black militants like Conrad Worrill and Lu Palmer also had fallen out of line with Rush because of his support of the Regular Democratic Party after Harold Washington’s death and the subsequent fracturing of the black voting bloc. Many of the black militants failed to recall that the Illinois Panthers early in 1969 had abandoned any exclusive black nationalist agenda. Their approach centered on All Power to the People which precluded any narrow nationalist ideation. Rush as a cofounder and leading Panther carried this part of the legacy of the party with him during this social democratic stage in his political development.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 198.

³²⁸ William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Back Politics and the Chicago Machine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 68.

³²⁹ Ibid.

As the time to cast a ballot drew closer, Bobby Rush kicked in a flurry of activity visiting bus stops, senior citizens buildings, and nursing homes. The issue Rush spoke about was the condition of the Chicago Transit Authority and its service, which was not responsive to the needs of seniors and people in less affluent areas of the city. Recent service cuts were a concern to many Chicagoans who relied on the CTA to get to their destinations be it for work or other activities. These cuts meant that for many who were unable to afford cars they had to either walk extended distances or seek job opportunities that were more accessible via public transportation.

In 1997 the CTA retained a private consultant Booz-Allen & Hamilton, to “study analyze, and recommend modification to the CTA service network.”³³⁰ The result of this study was a restructuring proposal which was adopted in June 1997. Reactions were immediate, “Public hearings conducted by the CTA on the cuts degenerated into chaotic rallies, with thoughtful public testimonies interspersed by angry shouts at Chairman Jarrett and the CTA panel as more protesters yelled and banged on the doors from outside the standing room-only hearing room. But in the end, the CTA passed all the cuts.”³³¹

Although two years had passed public resentment had been simmering in Chicago’s neighborhoods since the cuts were implemented. Rush had found his issue. It was compelling, one that people seemed to respond to positively. However, it was a case of timing as Rush needed more time to press the issue and he simply did not have the time before the election nor the resources for a massive last-minute media or door to door blitz. Former Mayor Washington’s press secretary, Laura Washington summed up the race when she said, “Daley has been credited with appointing minorities to key positions in the city as well as cultivating black ministers and business people, a major departure from his father.”³³² Laura Washington’s quick to point out that while these moves were positive, the question remained as to how

³³⁰ <https://www.chicago-l.org/history.CTA4.html>

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Marbella, *In Chicago politics, his foe is still a Daley*.

the “largesse trickles down to those on the lowest rungs of the ladder.”³³³ Regarding Rush and his campaign Washington says, “Some of his causes come off as trivial, albeit with a built-in audience among a few beleaguered citizens.”³³⁴ Highlighting her perspective of Rush, Washington quoted from the Chicago Tribune editorial which endorsed Daley. The editorial lambasted Rush for getting “sidetracked’ with penny-ante issues”.³³⁵

In his mayoral bid, Bobby Rush clearly separated himself from Daley and his supporters by claiming that it was the common people that he represented and not special interests or the politically well connected. Speaking as one of the common people, Rush said, “We haven’t been invited to the party. The majority of the citizens of this city haven’t been invited.”³³⁶ In February 2000, Chicago held its first non-partisan election. The result was a resounding win for Richard M. Daley and a rather humiliating defeat for Bobby Rush. The final vote total was Daley with 429,746 (71.91%) to Rush with 167,845 (28.09%). Rush carried 11 black wards, including mixed race Hyde Park and South Shore, the Fifth and Seventh Wards.

However, it was his defeat in the Second Ward which carried the biggest sting. The Second Ward was his old aldermanic ward and the post 1970 power base for the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. His appointee, and defector to the Daley camp, Madeline Haithcock delivered the Second Ward to Daley. The voting in the ward was very close. Daley won with 5856 (51%), and Rush lost with 5595 (48.86 %). Rush supporter and Cook County Board Chairman, the powerful John Stroger, calls Bobby’s challenge to Daley, “a stupid political judgement.”³³⁷ While Rush came close in his old ward, the reality is that coming close only counts in playing horseshoes.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ted Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble?” *Chicago Reader*, March 16, 2000.

Rush had little time to lick his wounds as he was immediately involved in politicking to retain his congressional seat. As a result of his defeat at the hands of Daley, challengers emerged to wrest away his Congressional and ward committeeman positions, Illinois State Senators Barack H. Obama and Donny Trotter were the two highest profile challengers for the post of Congressional Representative for the First district of Illinois. Emboldened by Rush's defeat in the Second ward, Alderman Madeline Haitcock challenged Rush for his Second Ward committeeman job. To many political observers, it appeared that Rush had lost his political muscle. He was now ripe for the picking. Although his recent defeat by Daley appeared to signal a weakened Rush, those who understood the nature of Chicago politics, and especially black First Congressional district politics would have counseled caution.³³⁸

In the upcoming primary race, Rush was much stronger than he appeared. Although in his race against Daley he had won only 45% of the black vote, this race was decidedly different. The challenge was in a primary, not a general election. As such, Rush would have several opponents with whom to contend not just one as he had in the Daley race. This would thin out the overall vote tally. Such a situation typically favored the incumbent. The race against Daley also had been a city-wide contest, whereas the First Congressional District was a much smaller concentrated area, an area where Rush had won most of the wards and votes.

Another question that should have been taken into consideration was who was Bobby Rush? How was he viewed in the First Congressional district overall and the black community in that district in particular? Janny Scott's article about Obama's challenge of Rush addresses both the short and long answer. Scott said, "Mr. Rush had grown up in Chicago, enlisted in the Army, joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and helped found the Illinois Panther Party in 1968. He coordinated a medical clinic that pioneered mass screening for sickle cell anemia, which disproportionately affects blacks. As an alderman in 1992, he had ousted a black political legend — Representative Charles A.

³³⁸ Janny Scott, "In 2000, a Streetwise Veteran Schooled a Bold Young Obama." *New York Times*, September 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/09/us/politics/09obama.html?>

Hayes, a veteran of the civil-rights and labor movements who was caught up in a scandal that year involving the House bank.”³³⁹ He was identified with the fight against the first Daley Administration as well as the fight against the States Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan who with the collusion of the FBI helped orchestrate the assassination of popular Panther leader Fred Hampton Sr. and Panther Captain Mark Clark.³⁴⁰

More immediate to the present was Rush status as a stalwart soldier in the army of Harold Washington. Rush was remembered in the community as a loyal lieutenant in both Washington’s unsuccessful 1977 bid and his successful 1983 bid for mayor. Additionally, Rush was universally recognized as were Cha Cha Jimenez and others, as the foundational pillars of the original Rainbow Coalition. His fights alongside Washington in the ‘Council Wars’ against the Vrdolyak and Burke faction and his support for Timothy Evans in the immediate aftermath of Harold Washington’s death were the stuff of Chicago legend. To take on an incumbent with the background of Rush was no easy task. Far from shaken by this his biggest challenge since attaining the seat in 1993. Rush said of his opponents in one his most memorable quips, “They’re misreading the tea leaves.”³⁴¹

Personally, Rush experienced a tremendous blow when his son Huey Rich was murdered on the Southside, a victim of gun violence. The two killers were apprehended and ultimately convicted. They had the mistaken idea that Huey had a lot of cocaine and cash. They set out to rob him. When he ran, they shot him in the leg. Taken to the hospital after massive blood loss, Huey Rich succumbed to his wound. Afterwards, the heartbroken Rush, the ex-Panther who had advocated for armed self-defense, now advocated for gun control.³⁴² Rush’s embrace of gun control is remarkable because the Panthers advocated the need for blacks to defend themselves against attacks by the power structure and racists

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther*, (Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), 354.

³⁴¹ Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble?”

³⁴² Contemporary Black Biography. “Bobby Rush 1946”. *Encyclopedia .com* (February 25, 2019), <https://www.encylopeida.com.education/news-wires-paper-abd books/rush-bobby-1946>

no matter what guise it may present itself. According to Detroit Black Panther Farooq Azzudan, Panthers basic premise was that without guns the unarmed could be subjected to control and unchecked repression without the means to resist. “We followed the examples of Malcolm X Shabazz and Robert Williams, we believed in armed self-defense.”³⁴³ Rush’s wife Carolyn commented on his gun control stance remarked, “He has really stepped up his efforts in addressing violence and guns,” ... “It’s a way in which he is dealing with his grief.”³⁴⁴ Despite the personal tragedy Rush experienced it failed to slow down his political adversaries.

Relative political newcomer Barack Obama, only recently had been elected to his second term as an Illinois State Senator, thought it was time for a change. He felt that he was the man at the right time to make that change. Of Rush, he comments, “Congressman Rush exemplifies a politics that is reactive, that waits for crises to happen then holds press conferences and hasn’t been particularly effective at building broad-base coalitions.”³⁴⁵ Obama promised to be more “effective in cooperating with whites and Latinos.”³⁴⁶ This statement by Obama revealed a flaw in his strategy against Rush. It was obvious from his last statement that he did not do his homework regarding Rush very well. Had he researched he would have known that Rush was the co-founder of the Rainbow Coalition, a multi-racial, multi-cultural coalition that included confederate flag wearing whites, northside greasers, progressive whites, and Latinos. It stood for the rights of the poor and oppressed people to get basic human rights as articulated in the Panthers Ten Point Program. He worked with this coalition as a Panther, and in both of Washington’s campaigns. In fact, it was his multi-racial approach that set him at odds with Chicago black militant leaders. Obama with his roots from another community failed to see this.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Farooq Azzudan, Telephone Interview, February 24, 2019.

³⁴⁴ Alex Tresniowski, “Change of Heart,” *People*, 22 May 2000.

³⁴⁵ Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble”?

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

In fact, Obama used a rather amateurish poll in determining whether to challenge Rush for his seat. According to Dan Shoman, campaign manager for Obama, they designed a poll of 300 people whose answers to prepared questions determined that Rush was vulnerable.³⁴⁸ Polls notwithstanding, Obama was a formidable opponent who had an impressive background of his own. Obama began his political career working in the Ralph Metcalfe organization in the mid-1970s. He was a Harvard educated lawyer, a constitutional law professor, community activist, organizer, and legislator. He was a polished speaker, young energetic, and coolly confident. Perhaps more importantly, he displayed the type of charismatic energy that appealed to a wide array of people. Of the challengers Obama appeared to have the best chance of defeating Bobby Rush.³⁴⁹

As a legislator in the Illinois Senate Obama had several successes. Kenneth Walsh wrote in US news, that Obama “showed his potential when the Senate overwhelmingly passed a controversial law he sponsored on campaign finance reform in May 1998, prohibiting legislators from raising campaign funds on state property and from accepting gifts from lobbyists and state contractors.”³⁵⁰ Obama had a fairly good record and worked with both parties to pass legislation. John Bouman, a director of the National Center on Poverty Law in Chicago, summed up the prevailing assessment of Obama: “idealistic but practical.”³⁵¹

One of the underdogs in this race was Donne Trotter, a State Senator like Obama. He cut a dapper figure in his Adlai Stevenson like bow ties and his immaculate dress. He was well-liked in his 17th District and known in Springfield as a legislator who could make things happen. He had a background as a health administrator. He was widely considered an able legislator but a long shot to unseat Rush. Trotter

³⁴⁸ Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, p.206

³⁴⁹ Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble”?

³⁵⁰ Kenneth Walsh, “Obama’s Years in Chicago Politics Shaped His Presidential Candidacy,” April 11, 2008. <https://www.usnews.com/news/campaign-2008/articles/>

³⁵¹ Ibid.

challenged Rush by saying, “Bobby, what have you brought back to our community?”³⁵² The other person in the race for Rush’s Congressional seat was retired police officer George Roby who was given absolutely no chance of winning the race.³⁵³

The Primary race was a good one, and the contestants are not shy about debating each other. There was a series of lively debates throughout the Chicagoland area. Rush, the incumbent and ever savvy political street fighter attacked Obama, portraying him in a manner that was sure to gain votes with his constituents. Rush used a style of banter familiar in the black community. When he talked about Obama it was as if he was playing the dozens, as he cut into Obama with sharp stinging barbs. Rush said about Obama, “He went to Harvard and became an educated fool, we’re not impressed with these folks with these eastern elite degrees.”³⁵⁴ Although Rush, styled himself in this race as the underdog. It was clear that in this fight he knew how to throw a couple of below- the-belt punches in the clinches. And given his record in Chicago politics, he was far from the underdog in this race. Styling himself as the ‘underdog’ was part of Rush’s style. An examination of his four previous congressional races revealed that only in the first of those races was Rush an underdog. Rush March 17, 1992 Victory over Charles Hayes for the First Congressional seat was the lowest percentage of votes he tallied as a congressional candidate. He won that race by 3.14 percent of the vote.³⁵⁵

It is on the radio on Clifford Kelly’s WVON 1450 radio show that Rush used that show to lambaste Obama and point out his shortcomings. Rush talks about his leading role in heading up protest marches against Gregory Becker, an off-duty police officer who killed a homeless man in 1995 that made remarks to Becker’s date.³⁵⁶ The married Becker was dating a black woman and got enraged when the homeless man questioned his date. Becker was known by some in the black community for dating black women

³⁵² Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble?”

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ <https://ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=1075>

³⁵⁶ Kleine, “Is Bobby Rush in Trouble?”

and abusing black men. In fact, in 1980 Becker attempted to push a black man out of a 13th floor window in Hyde Park but due to the resistance of his intended victim he was unsuccessful.³⁵⁷

Obama, in his best smooth style quickly rebutted Rush's assertion by saying, "It's not enough for us just to protest police misconduct without thinking systematically about how we're going to change practice."³⁵⁸ This smooth retort is just the response that Rush needed to counter Obama and drive home his point. Rush replied, "We have never been able to progress as a people based on relying solely on the legislative process, and I think that we would be in real critical shape when we start in any way diminishing the role of protest; protest has got us where we are today."³⁵⁹

The Obama for Congress campaign launched radio advertisement that homed in on perceived Rush weaknesses. One ad discussed the need to have "leadership that works for us." This ad pointed to the blackout of lights that frequently occurred and Obamas plan to "fight for reform that will force COMED to refund customers money who lost power."³⁶⁰ This ad went on to expound on Obamas previous work in the Roseland and Altgeld Gardens areas on Chicago's Far Southside as an organizer and his work as a civil rights attorney.³⁶¹ The Obama campaign aired two other radio ads that attacked Rush's record in Congress. These ads focused on his high absentee rate in Congress and the need for new leadership to confront the insurance industry. All the Obama ads referred to his prior work in the Altgeld and Roseland areas.³⁶²

Meanwhile Rush charged that it was an overeducated Eastern elite Obama with an "ivory tower" mentality that was exactly what the district did not need.³⁶³ Obviously miffed by Obamas response regarding protest, Rush said, "Barack is a person who read about the civil rights protests and thinks he

³⁵⁷ Personal recollection.

³⁵⁸ Kleine, "Is Bobby Rush In Trouble?"

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Don Gonyea, "Blackout. "National Public Radio, Inc. <https://www.npr.org>

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Kleine.

knows all about it; I helped make that history, by blood, sweat, and tears.”³⁶⁴ And who could debate the movement background of Bobby Rush? Certainly, neither of his Congressional seat challengers, Donne Trotter, or Barack Obama. Madeline Haithcock’s challenge to Rush for his committeeman’s seat was easily rebuffed, and Rush paid only the most minimal attention to her challenge. (note that the committeeman position was a Democratic party position and thus could be held by Rush in addition to his congressional seat). Her challenge was more of an annoyance than any real political threat to Rush. In his book, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, Jakobi Williams includes a quote from Ron Lester, who worked as a pollster for Barack Obama. He highlighted the difficulty Obama faced in defeating Rush. Lester said. “Congressman Rush’s support ran deep-to the extent that a lot of people who liked Barack [Obama] still wouldn’t support him because they were committed to Bobby. He had built up this reserve of goodwill over 25 years in that community.”³⁶⁵

A WTTW Channel 11 Debate with the candidates was held March 13th, 2000, a mere 7 days before the primary election. The show was called *Chicago Tonight*. It was hosted and moderated by the locally popular Phil Ponce. Viewing the video of the debate, it is evident that Obama had been under a strain. He appeared tired, almost sleepy, but he still responded in a measured manner to the questions asked of him. When asked why he thought he was the best candidate, Obama answered in his rich baritone, Obama talked about the need for the congressional district to have a representative who could bring federal, state, and municipal resources to address the issues of the district. Obama says, “My experience as a civil rights attorney, community organizer, and legislator, [provides] Leadership skills to really make a difference.”³⁶⁶

Obama endorsed by none other than Rush nemesis Richard M. Daley is asked by Phil Ponce why a large part of his campaign money raised had been from sources outside of the district. And Ponce

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ *Bullet to the Ballot* p.206

³⁶⁶ WTTW. *Chicago Tonight* 3-13-2000

continued to add a rather loaded question. His question was, "If those financial sources outside of the district who made contributions to his campaign means that he will be beholden them if elected,"³⁶⁷ answering to interests outside the district.³⁶⁸ Obama replied to this question, turning what could have been a damaging question to his advantage. "Obama said, I raised \$400,000 most from individuals; 99% were individual contributions, not from PACS. Rush raised about \$600,000."³⁶⁹ Obama explained that a majority of those contributions were African American contributors, and small donors who actually lived in the district, and that he has more of those than any of the candidates in this race.³⁷⁰ Obama then proceeded to turn the question even more to his advantage by explaining that his involvement outside of the district was because he has built relationships throughout the entire city, not just in the First congressional district.³⁷¹

However, as he continued in this vein he unintentionally revealed more than he intended. Continuing to expound on his citywide contacts, Obama said, "I think that is actually a benefit- what we need is somebody able to create coalitions and work across a wide spectrum of interests. I think that is something I can provide."³⁷² This statement by Obama betrayed a fundamental flaw in his strategy. First, it reinforced what Rush has been saying about Obama's lack of understanding relative to local civil/rights and black power politics. Secondly, it betrayed a lack of research into both the background and accomplishments of Bobby Rush. Many Chicagoans were familiar with Rush's political background. They knew that, as a co-founder of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, he was also a co-founder and leading member of the Rainbow Coalition, the same coalition that participated in Harold Washington's unsuccessful campaign for Mayor of Chicago in 1977. Together with rainbow members

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ *Chicago Tonight* 03/13/2000

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

Helen Schiller, Slim Coleman, Jose 'Cha Cha' Jimenez, Lu Palmer, Conrad Worrill and others was Rush was a catalyst for Washington's successful 1983 electoral victory.³⁷³

The other challenger for Rush's seat Donne E. Trotter searched for the right formula to implement to unseat Bobby Rush. Donne settled on a strategy that called into question Rush's service to the district as its representative since 1993. Trotter's question to those planning to vote in the primary election was imply what Bobby Rush had done for the community and had he brought back. Trotter was not much of a contender in this race, and his attempts to portray Rush as inadequate to his job as Congressman rang hollow. Donne Trotter as a State Senator from the 17th District in Illinois knew exactly what Rush had done for the constituents of the First Congressional district.

In fact, the list of accomplishments by Rush was extensive and impressive. Rush responded to his critics with action by opening up a campaign office on the southwest side and informing his constituents about his accomplishments on their behalf. A major positive undertaking that yielded noticeable improvements to the district was new improvements in infrastructure. Rush brought back federal money to resurface 95th Street. This wide street was a major thoroughfare that traversed the black community, and mixed-race upscale Beverly and the Evergreen Park southwestern suburban communities. Through the efforts of Rush, Evergreen Park got a new zip code and he was working on securing a post office for the suburban Alsip community.³⁷⁴ In the Englewood community on the southside because of his efforts at interceding with the CTA, he convinced them to scrap a plan to close the Englewood branch of the elevated transit system which would have negatively affected resident's transportation in the entire Englewood area. Rush also secured funding for the Amtrak ticket center which resulted in saving 200 jobs which would have been lost with its closing.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ Bullet to the Ballot, 206.

³⁷⁴ Kleine.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

Bobby Rush was not alone in extolling his virtues as a congressional legislator. He was endorsed by Senator Dick Durbin, President Bill Clinton, Cook County Board President John Stroger, and perhaps more importantly by over 100 black ministers. Senator Dick Durbin extolled the accomplishments as he and Rush announced a “1.5 billion-dollar plan to demolish and rebuild the Chicago Housing Authority’s biggest projects.”³⁷⁶ Durbin also said, “He fought to make sure there will be good housing to replace this housing. He also led the fight to make sure 50 percent of the contracts would go to minorities. I don’t jump at the prospect of getting involved in primaries with good democrats running, but I jump at the prospect of endorsing Bobby Rush.”³⁷⁷

There is little doubt that Trotter was well informed regarding what Bobby Rush had brought to the First Congressional district. In fact, he had but to ask many of the constituents of the ward. Bobby became involved in the negotiations for the sale of the large Lake Grove Village housing complex on Cottage Grove near 35th Street on the Southside. The complex was up for sale to an out of town entity, and Rush made sure it was sold to the local Chicago Community Development Corporation.³⁷⁸ But what could Trotter do to overcome the advantages of Rush the incumbent and Obama the upstart?

Trotter had an impressive record in the Illinois State Senate. Among his accomplishments were “big-ticket construction projects and road and park improvements.”³⁷⁹ Trotter as head of the Illinois General Assembly’s Joint Legislative Black Caucus brought home a “\$4.5 million rehab of the Rainbow Beach field house, and a \$26 million convocation center for Chicago State University.”³⁸⁰ Trotter was also instrumental in “the state’s Kid Care program, an expanded Medicaid plan for children.”³⁸¹ Trotter also

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Evan Osnos, “Rush Could Face His Toughest Test,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 2000, <https://chicagotribune.com/news/ctxpm-2000-02-20-000220119-story.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

focused on universal health insurance.³⁸² Although his accomplishments were impressive, they could not compete with those of Rush and the charisma of Obama. It was patently obvious that neither he or retired policeman George Roby ever had a chance. Short of Rush or Obama's campaigns imploding from a scandal neither Trotter nor Roby had a horse in this race.³⁸³

In February Rush briefly suspended his campaign to travel to Georgia as his father Jimmy passes away at the age of 1972. Rush credited his father with giving him a good foundation in life. The death of his son and his father five months apart weighed heavily upon Rush. However, his indomitable spirit together with his will to press on despite his grief remained as strong as ever. Rush remarked "This campaign was made even tougher because I had to carry that pain forward."³⁸⁴ Rush returned to Chicago and resumed his campaign.³⁸⁵

In this primary contest, there was no smoking gun, no scandal like that which propelled Rush to victory late in his 1992 campaign with Charles Hayes. Both top candidates, Rush and Obama, had solid endorsements. Rush from Jessie Jackson, Cook County Board President John Stroger, President Bill Clinton, Tom Hynes the 19th Ward Committeeman, and the majority of black clergy.³⁸⁶ Obama was endorsed by Richard Daley, and Tom Dart the Illinois representative best known for creating legislation that changed the power dynamic in Illinois prisons. He removed power from the street organizations and returned prison control to the authorities.³⁸⁷ Also, longtime lawyer, law professor, judge, congressman and future Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Abner Mikva endorsed Obama.³⁸⁸

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Susan Kuczka and Flynn McRoberts, "Kirk, Rush Fend Off Strong Ballot Challenges," *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 2000, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-03-22-0003220337-story.html>

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Illinois District 1 D primary, "Abner J. Mikva endorsement," <https://ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID141037>

The primary election was held on March 21, 2000. The results were not surprising to most political pundits as well as causal observers. Bobby L. Rush retained his Congressional seat by a ratio of two to one over Obama. Vote totals and percentages were as follows: Bobby L. Rush 59,599 votes (61.03%); Barack H. Obama 29,649 (30.36%); Donne E. Trotter 6,915 (7.08%); George Roby 1,501 (1.54%). Rush retained his Committeeman position, defeating Madeline Haithcock's challenge.³⁸⁹ In accessing the primary challenge to his congressional seat and the challenge by his one-time protégé, Rush was quite accurate with his earlier Pantheresque statement. Seeing blood in the water and sensing political weakness, the challengers had read the wrong tea leaves.

Winning the Democratic primary all but ensured that Rush would retain his Congressional seat for two more years. In the November election of 2000, Rush faced his Republican challenger Raymond G. Wardingley. Wardingley was an Air Force veteran who became a 'self-made' entertainer. He embarked on public speaking and being a concerned citizen headed up the Neighborhood Watch Program in the Beverly Morgan Park area of Chicago. Rising steadily in the Republican organization, he was nominated as the Republican candidate for mayor.³⁹⁰ Like Rush, he suffered defeat. He won the Republican primary and challenged Rush for his Congressional seat. Although his campaign on line profile extolls his political endeavors against Rush, it is woefully inaccurate. The vote tallies told the accurate picture. The November 7, 2000, election results were as follows: Bobby L. Rush 172,271 (87.81%); Raymond G. Wardingley 23,915 (12.19%), another resounding victory for Congressman Rush.

Thus, ended one of the most challenging periods in Bobby Rush's life both personally and politically. Barack H. Obama went on to become a US Senator from Illinois and the first African American President of the United States. His only electoral defeat was to Bobby Rush.³⁹¹ Donne E. Trotter continued a

³⁸⁹ www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetails/RaceID=448

³⁹⁰ www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetails/candidateID1075

³⁹¹ Don Gonyea, "Blackout." National Public Radio, Inc

successful career as a State Senator, retiring in winter of 2018.³⁹² George Roby the retired police officer returned to political anonymity. Madeline Haithcock never attained the office of Committeeman and would later suffer defeat in the race for Alderman of a redistricted Second ward.³⁹³ Bobby Rush continued to serve the first congressional district as its representative.

³⁹² State Senator Donne Trotter Announces Retirement, <https://abc7chicago.com/politics/state-senator-donne-trotter-announces-tetirement/2969347/> accessed 03/18/2019

³⁹³ Rich Miller, Election Shockers, <https://illinoistimes.com/article-4040-election-schockers.html>. accessed 03/18/2019

CHAPTER 5

This chapter examines Bobby Rush's career after his defeat in the Democratic primaries of challengers Barack Obama, Donne Trotter and Madeline Haithcock. Together these candidates represented the most challenging political adversaries in Rush's post-aldermanic career. The 2000 contest among Rush, Obama, and Trotter revealed as much from what was not discussed as what was discussed. Although the war on drugs had been raging in African American communities since 1982, none of the candidates addressed the costs it had for their communities. Additionally, no candidate remarked on increased corporate influence and the benefits they obtained from corporate sources. In the late 1970's, the United States experienced a significant political shift to the right. Despite this rightward shift of the political spectrum, however Congressman Bobby Rush's political position remained on the left of the Democratic Party.

To maintain this left position was no mean feat, as the Democratic Party included formerly progressive politicians who came to advocate and support policies that were counter to the interests of their constituents- not just the constituents themselves, but the communities where they lived, worked, and played. According to Chip Berlet's article, "The New Political Right in the United States: Reaction, Rollback, and Resentment" in Michael J. Thompson's, *Confronting the New Conservatism*. A group of Cold War liberals were alarmed by the student, anti-war, and feminists' movements of the late 1960's and early 1970's. They wrote about "their misgivings in publications especially *Public Interest and Commentary*." ³⁹⁴ Because of their changed political stance as expressed in these writings this group became known as neoconservatives due to the recent change from liberal to a conservative political advocacy.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Chip Berlet, "The Political Right in the United States," in *Confronting The New Conservatism: The Rise Of The Right In America*. ed. Michael Thompson (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 87.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

This new conservatism was capitalist and advocated the primacy of markets at its core for the “organization of economic life.”³⁹⁶ The national Democratic Party itself underwent a profound change during this period as Lily Geismer wrote, “liberals and the national Democratic Party increasingly came to reflect the material concerns of knowledge workers rather than autoworkers.”³⁹⁷ More importantly according to Michael Thompson this right turn in the United States was because these neoconservatives spoke, “the language that many different sectors of the American public want to hear.”³⁹⁸ Additionally this rightward turn appealed to those who wanted to, “erode the centralization of political power; restore authority to traditional institutions and to civil society; rely on the free market in economic life; and base social life on voluntary associations and community.”³⁹⁹ The Democratic Party as it responded to the changed political reality shifted to the right and failed to use what had been its mainstay for decades; “social movement mobilization and grassroots political activism.”⁴⁰⁰

How did Rush respond to this changed political climate? The former Panther leader embraced a Democratic Party agenda that shifted many of his core positions away from progressive politics. Rush became more aligned with corporate interests. John Jeter wrote, “between 1989, when Rush first ran for congress and 2006, big phone and cable companies donated \$114,082 to his campaign coffers, AT&T has chipped in more than half of that total.”⁴⁰¹ In fact Rush who sits on the on the House Energy and Commerce Committee was called to task by bloggers and consumer groups because an Englewood community center he founded received a million dollar grant from a charitable entity of AT&T in 1999.⁴⁰² An examination of Rush’s voting record reveals much about the appropriation of the radical energy and impetus of the 1960s and 1970s by the Democratic party. This chapter presents a view of the

³⁹⁶ Michael Thompson, *Confronting The New Conservatism*, (New York: New York University Press), 3-4.

³⁹⁷ Lily Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015),1.

³⁹⁸ Thompson, *The New Conservatism*, 2-3.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Berlet, *The New Political Right in the United States*, 92.

⁴⁰¹ John Jeter, *Flat Broke In The Free Market: How Globalization Fleeced Working People*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 107.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

transformation of Bobby Rush through the lens of his voting record, political endorsements, and stance on issues in the legislative branch of the United States.

The 2000 primary defeat of Barack Obama by Bobby Rush was a signature event in the career of Bobby Rush. To this date Rush has not faced a significant challenge for his Congressional seat.⁴⁰³ However, this defeat did not deter Obama from continuing to seek higher office. Obama managed to turn his defeat into a learning experience which propelled him first to the Senate and then to the presidency of the United States in 2008.⁴⁰⁴ Obama's rise to the Presidency, might very well have signaled the increasing irrelevance of politicians such as Bobby Rush. The political strategy and victory of Obama seemed to indicate the decline of the activist turned politician in lieu of the organizer media savvy compromiser. It should be noted that in the Chicago primary campaign Obama was an organizer but not the same type as Rush.⁴⁰⁵ An essential element of the rightward shift of the American political establishment was at its core a get-tough-on-crime stance. This law and order approach were disproportionately directed towards communities of color in America.⁴⁰⁶ In the 1980's the Democratic Party began to call for get tough policies as a means of attracting the so-called "swing voters." These were the voters that the Republican Party gained as it increased its political power in both local and national constituencies. In her book, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander explains it this way, "The shift to a general attitude of 'toughness' towards problems associated with communities of color, began in the 1960s: when the gains of the Civil Rights Movement began to require real sacrifices on the part of white Americans, and conservative politicians found they could mobilize white racial resentment by vowing to crack down on crime."⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ www.ourcampaigns.com Candidate ID=1075.

⁴⁰⁴ Kenneth Walsh, <https://www.usnews.com/News/Campaign-2008/articles/2008/04/11>

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: The New Press, 2012), 98.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 55.

The popular face of crime in America had become a black face; and to crack down on crime meant a disproportionate crack down on the black community and communities of color. The targets were primarily young men and those who used or trafficked in drugs or were suspected gang members. The perception of participation in the drug trade, seen as related to hip hop clothing or hangouts, was often enough to provoke a police response. While America had an indisputable racist past, how could the rise of conservatism have occurred after the spectacular gains of the Civil Rights movement? By and large most of the significant gains were confined to the black middle classes, but it was just those gains which fueled the conservative upsurge throughout the United States. Robert O. Self has described the gains of the 1970s as an unprecedented achievement of civic power in the decades of the 70's and 80's.⁴⁰⁸ The gains made by blacks in the post-civil rights and black power movements saw African Americans in power and control in major metropolitan centers throughout America.⁴⁰⁹

The election to political office of Bobby Rush and other candidates from previously marginalized groups supports this assertion. As cocaine inundated Americans communities in the 1980s and 90s, the faces of drug abuse, addiction, and accompanying crime were merged. That face remained non-white. As seen in the difference between cocaine used in 'crack' and powder forms. The rates of incarceration in the black and brown communities of America paralleled increased drastically from what it had been in previous decades. The toll in the Black community was alarming. As Alexander wrote, "In 1991, the Sentencing Project reported that the number of people behind bars in the United States was unprecedented in world history, and that one-fourth of young African- American men were under the control of the criminal justice system."⁴¹⁰ The result was that millions of people were relegated to the

⁴⁰⁸ Self, *Babylon*. 314.

⁴⁰⁹ Peniel Joseph, "Black Power's Powerful Legacy," *The Chronicle Review* (7/21/06)

⁴¹⁰ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 56.

margins of society, where they were denied basic rights afforded to citizens of the United States. According to Alexander the “New Jim Crow was born.”⁴¹¹

In 1994 the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act was passed and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. This bill is often referred to as the ‘Crime Bill,’ or the ‘Clinton Crime Bill’. Bill Clinton, a right of center Democrat, was determined to appear to be hard on crime, even tougher than the toughest ‘law and order’ Republicans.⁴¹² This bill had devastating consequences on the black community. In 1994 there were 39 members of the Congressional Black Caucus representing the interests of their various constituencies. Of those 39 members only 12 voted no on this bill. Although initially the caucus expressed reservations, most gave in and voted yes.⁴¹³

Bobby L. Rush, the newly elected Congressman and former co-founder of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, voted for this legislation. It is ironic that Rush, given his political background, would sign on to such a draconian bill. Although the Panthers clearly never assumed that any member of that organization would attain a place as high as Rush had in the American political system when they made their transition to a Social Democratic model. It is worth noting that Rush failed to utilize conceptionally some of the organization’s core tenets. Point number 8 of the 10 Point Program of the Black Panther Party critiqued the criminal justice system and its relationship to black men in America. It stated, “We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails. We Believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.”⁴¹⁴ While the Panther organization ceased to function well before Rush’s 1993

⁴¹¹ Ibid,58.

⁴¹² Ibid.,56.

⁴¹³ Lauren Burke, “The 12(of39) Members of the Black Caucus Who Voted NO on the Clinton Crime Bill,” <http://www.crewof42.com/politics/the-11-in-the-black-caucus-who-voted--no-on-the-clinton-crime-bill/> 9 November 2013, 5-6.

⁴¹⁴ It’s About Time BPP. com

election to Congress, and he was not bound by their rules or beliefs, Rush followed the political dictates of the Democratic Party, rather than his earlier political training.⁴¹⁵

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus who voted against the Clinton Crime Bill were as follows: William Clay, Sr. (D-MO), John Conyers (D-MI), Charlie Rangel (D-NY), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Louis Stokes (D-OH), John Lewis (D-GA), Earl Hillard (D-AL), Mel Watt (D-NC), Don Payne (D-NJ), Cleo Fields (D-LA), Maxine Waters (D-CA), and Ron Dellums (D-CA). Had Rush chosen not to vote for the Crime Bill like the 12 no voters of the Congressional Black Caucus, he would have found himself in familiar territory. The no voters were by and large former Civil Rights Activists and progressive politicians, many with years of experience advocating for civil and human rights. Examining the list recalls the contributions that each made to the nation and the advancement of a positive agenda on progressive issues. William Clay, Sr., representative from Missouri, was known for his co-sponsoring of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, a progressive measure that allowed six weeks of family leave with a guarantee of retaining employment. John Conyers and Louis Stokes, both long time congressional in-fighters. Bobby Scott, the only black representative from Virginia, was a member, like many other no voters, of the Progressive Caucus. Mel Watts, Don Payne, Sr., and Cleo Fields were all members of the Progressive caucus. This group also included, the venerable John Lewis, former head of SNCC and legendary Civil Rights activist, veteran of sit-ins, the freedom rides, and the Pettis Bridge where he sustained a cracked skull; the scars which he still bears. Maxine Waters, the outspoken congresswoman and anti-administration critic, from California was also a member of this group.⁴¹⁶

Moreover, Ron Dellums, like Maxine Waters a California Democrat, was an openly socialist politician and supporter of the Black Panther Party throughout its existence. When Dellums retired in 1998, it was a former Black Panther Party community worker and congressional intern who replaced him as representative. Ron Dellums's replacement was Barbara Lee from Oakland. If a bet was taken prior to

⁴¹⁵ https://ballotpedia.org/Bobby_Rush, 1.

⁴¹⁶ Burke, "The 12(of39) Members of the Black Caucus Who Voted No on the Clinton Crime Bill

the vote, it would have been a sure bet that, given his past radical credentials, Bobby L. Rush, the onetime SNCC organizer and co-founder of the Illinois Black Panther Party would have followed suit and voted no on the Crime Bill. But, he failed to join what seemed to be his peers.

According to Alexander, the Democratic party looked upon the Crime bill and its 30-billion-dollar price tag as a win. It was “hailed as a victory for the Democrats who were able to wrest the crime issue from the Republicans and make it their own.”⁴¹⁷ Once the provisions of the Crime Bill were enacted, the results started to become clear. “The Justice Policy Institute has observed, “the Clinton administration’s tough on crime policies resulted in the largest increase in federal and state prison inmates of any President in American history.”⁴¹⁸ Nicholas Turner president of non-profit Vera Institute which researches crime policy in examining the Crime bill said, “ criminal justice policy was very much driven by public sentiment and a political instinct to appeal to the more negative punitive element of public sentiment rather than to be driven by the facts.”⁴¹⁹ The Bill contained an increase of 1,000,000 police officers nationwide, a 3 strikes law that if convicted of a third offense an offender would receive a life sentence. Other provisions of the act “expanded use of the death penalty for serious drug related offenses and imposed new mandatory minimums for drug offenses., including a five-year mandatory minimum for simple possession of cocaine base-with no evidence of intent to sell.”⁴²⁰ Of more paramount importance is the fact that none of those debating and vying for Congress kn the Chicago primary election or the ward committeeman post thought about the Crime Bill as an important or even a necessary issue, let alone one to address in the primaries. With a bold stroke and a nod to a more radical agenda, Barack Obama might have unseated Bobby Rush on the issue of the Crime Bill alone. Certainly, Obama was searching for a smoking gun right up to the election to unseat Rush. Moreover,

⁴¹⁷ Alexander, 56.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Carrie Johnson, “20 Years Later Parts Of Major Crime Bill Viewed AS Terrible Mistake,” *National Public Radio, Inc.*, <https://www.npr.org/2014/09/12/347736999/>

⁴²⁰ Alexander,56.

perhaps with a bit of dash and daring-do, Trotter and Madeline Haithcock could have used opposition to the Crime Bill to advance their candidacy.⁴²¹

As for Bobby Rush, could the 336-page bill been more than Rush was prepared to read? Did he consider the impact of this bill? These are all questions that have to this date gone unanswered. It should be noted that the bill's provisions were clearly spelled out in the text of the legislation. Therefore, why did he vote on the bill when it was clear that it was not in line with his previous convictions or those of his peers of a similar background?

The Crime Bill affected the educational attainment of those who were incarcerated under its provisions. The Bill eliminated the ability for inmates to attain higher education. Under the bill's provisions, College education was no longer to be offered within penal institutions. Education is a key component in attaining gainful employment. Additionally, many trades are not available to those who have a criminal conviction, such as nursing, barbering, and other livelihoods that require a license to practice. Jonathan Zimmerman writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* referenced a 2013 Rand Corporation study that said, prisoners who had access to education were 43 percent less likely to recidivate compared with those who did not.⁴²²

In 1998, a new act added flame to the fire of the Crime Bill. "The Anti-Drug Abuse Act authorized public housing authorities to evict any tenant who allows any form of drug related criminal activity to occur on or near public housing premises and eliminated many federal benefits, including student loans for anyone convicted of a drug offense."⁴²³ Merely advocating for schools and housing was not enough as the damage done by these bills has affected so many areas.

The continued societal cost of this bill has been incalculable. In a Black Agenda Report from December 17, 2008, there was a brief assessment of the continuing impact of the Crime Bill: This bill left

⁴²¹ Martha Palmer Telephone Interview, April 17, 2019.

⁴²² Johnathan Zimmerman, "Why Prison Reform Must Include Pell Grant Access," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 19, 2018), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-prison-reform-must-include/245130>

⁴²³ Alexander 53.

millions of Black people on the margins of society. It consigned these same millions to a life in a permanent underclass. That underclass was outside of the job market and had little opportunity for training, job development, and education. The formerly incarcerated returning citizens come back to the, “same resource-poor, de-industrialized communities in which they lived before prison, where there are no services for them, and no societal will to educate or train them.”⁴²⁴

Clearly Bobby Rush, in voting yes on the crime bill, bears responsibility. It is instructive to note that at Chicago State University, which is known for producing teachers that are primarily funneled into the Chicago Public School system, that the second largest major at Chicago State is Criminal Justice. On the issues of crime, what has Bobby Rush’s voting record reflected? On most issues of crime and sentencing Bobby Rush’s voting patterns are left liberal.⁴²⁵ According to Ballotpedia, Bobby Rush, “can be considered a safe vote for the Democratic Party in Congress.”⁴²⁶

A brief review of Rush voting record in Congress provides a detailed picture of his legislative propensities. Excluding the crime bill which has already been examined, the following information will unveil Rush the Congressman. Rush the reliable Democrat and his voting record and the issues he chose to support.⁴²⁷

Rush is a major proponent of strict sentencing for hate crimes. On March 1, 1993, the Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act (H.R. 1152) became law. The bill, co-sponsored by Rush, was a major accomplishment for the freshman representative from Illinois. Speaking on the House floor in support of the legislation representative Sensenbrenner from Wisconsin said, “The bill does not create a new Federal crime. Nothing that is presently not criminal now would be made criminal as a result of enactment. What enactment of H.R.1152 will do is provide for enhanced criminal penalties for certain

⁴²⁴ Black Agenda Report. December 17-23, 2008.

⁴²⁵ https://ballotpedia.org/Bobby_Rush (11/10/2017),1-18.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

specifically designed hate crimes.”⁴²⁸ Hate crime is defined in this bill when, a defendant intentionally selects someone as a victim based on what they perceive as the victim’s color, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, race, gender or ethnicity.⁴²⁹

In 1994, Rush voted yes on HR 4092, this bill replaced the death penalty on crimes outlined in the Omnibus Crime Bill with life imprisonment.⁴³⁰ This is considered a liberal position. It reflected his overall opposition to the death penalty. Bobby Rush was in favor of legislation, which supported positive re-entry to society of our returning citizens. In fact, “Bobby Rush was rated 89% by CURE, indicating pro-rehabilitation crime votes.”⁴³¹ The CURE group is an organization composed of the families of prisoners, the prisoners themselves, those who were formerly imprisoned, and other people who may be concerned with issues around rehabilitation. The score indicated the groups assessment of advocacy around issues that are favorable to the group.⁴³²

It is no coincidence tht Rush co-sponsored the hate crime bill. A direct correlation can be drawn from Rush’s support for such a bill, which proposed harsher penalties for those who violate an individual’s rights and prerogatives, to the criteria established in H.R. 1152 and the Black Panther Party’s advocacy of the Women’s and Gay liberation movements. In New York City on August 15th, 1970, Panther Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton gave a speech in which he supported both those movements. The speech was entitled, *A Letter to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements*. The speech explained the Panthers view of both groups and its analysis of the intersectionality of racism, sexism, and homosexual oppression.⁴³³ This speech is not a shift away from a

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ http://www.ontheissues.org/IL/Bobby_Rush_Crime.htm#2014_NAPO

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ www.newnownext.com 07/09/2015

prescribed earlier stance. It was an affirmation of support for those groups who were opposed to the status quo and had revolutionary potential.⁴³⁴

Newton made this speech a little over a year after the June 28, 1969, Stonewall Inn uprising in New York's Greenwich Village. The Stonewall Inn uprising was a tremendous outpouring of resistance against the New York police department's systematic abuse of the gay population and gay bars and dance clubs in New York City. In response to police harassment at the Stonewall Inn, gays fought back for several days and put the police on the run. Huey's speech was an acknowledgment of the revolutionary potential of the Gay Liberation movement and a show of support for that movement and the Women's Liberation movement. Huey said, "Whatever your personal opinion and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion."⁴³⁵

As the leading Panther in Illinois in 1970, Rush was responsible for making sure that the party line was disseminated to all cadres of the Party and that the principles were carried out. Rush's subsequent actions as an alderman and congressional representatives reflected his support for both the Gay Liberation and Women's Liberation movements over time. To strengthen the ability of State and local jurisdictions to prosecute hate crimes, Rush co-sponsored legislation to provide federal assistance. The House Resolution was introduced as 01-HR1343 on April 3rd, 2001. The bill's summary stated its purpose as to: "Provide technical, forensic, prosecutorial, or other assistance in the criminal investigation or prosecution of any violent crime that is motivated by prejudice based on the race, color, religion, National origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability of the victim or is a violation of hate crime

⁴³⁴ Billy Che' Brooks Telephone Interview, April 22,2019. Billy Che 'Brooks was the Deputy Minister of Education for the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party from 1968-1972.

⁴³⁵ www.newnownext.com 07/09/2015.

laws.”⁴³⁶ It is evident that Rush was determined to assure that all legislative means would be employed to prosecute hate crimes.

It should also be noted however, that Rush as a Pentecostal Minister in COGIC should have adhered to their doctrines. Much like Rush’s support of the crime bill, the totality of his support for Gay liberation could be called into question. An article on stances of faiths on LGBT issues has described C.O.G.I.C as follows: “The Church of God in Christ, a largely African-American denomination with 5.5 million members, has traditionally established no formal policy about the issues that affect gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer people. But, as in other Pentecostal denominations, it has long been clear that the church condemns homosexuality. And in 2004, church leaders articulated that condemnation in a rare statement against marriage equality for gay, lesbian and bisexual couples.”⁴³⁷ So while he is opposed to hate and violence, he is not necessarily a supporter of all aspects of gay liberation. And that seeming ambivalence is at its core, an example of Rush as the consummate pragmatic politician.

Rush as a Congressional representative has voted on much legislation relative to sentencing, gangs, the death penalty, and issues of habeas corpus in death penalty appeals. He voted No on Bill HR 4092 on February 8, 1995. This bill would have made federal death penalty appeals harder; voted Yes on bill HR 2703 on March 14, 1996 on maintaining the right of habeas corpus in death penalty appeals; voted No for more prosecution and sentencing for juvenile crime, this bill HR 1501 was introduced on June 17th, 1999 by McCollum a Republican Representative from Florida; these bills are by no means reflective of the totality of legislation around the issue of crime, and criminal justice that Rush has voted on Yes and

⁴³⁶ www.ontheissues.org

⁴³⁷ www.hrc.org

No but rather a sampling of his stances on some of the major criminal justice issues during his continued tenure in Congress.⁴³⁸

It is interesting to view Rush's rating from the NAPO. The NAPO is the National Association of Police Organizations. This organizations rates how supportive a person or organization is on issues that revolve around policing and/or crime.⁴³⁹ Rush's rating with this group was 54 %. It would undoubtedly have been much lower had he remained closer to his Panther roots. Like many post-Civil Rights Era black politicians however, he is a strict advocate for gun control and violence prevention, and a Yes vote on the 1994 Crime Bill. The scoring detail is as follows: "0%-50%; soft on crime and police issues; 50%-75%, mixed record on crime and police issues (Bobby Rush's rating area); 75%-100%: tough on crime and police issues."⁴⁴⁰ While it is true that Rush is mixed on police issues, it is not surprising given his background and his fight against the Daley-era police agencies, and even the American governmental establishment that he is perceived as 'mixed' on police issues. One of the leading issues for conservatives in America in addition to issues of crime and policing is pro-life, anti-abortion.

On the issue of abortion, Rush is solidly pro-choice. His voting record on abortion and related issues has earned him a 100% National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League rating as of December 2003 and a 0% rating by the National Right to Life Committee as of December 2006. For example, he voted No on funding for health providers who don't provide abortion information (September 2002); voted No on banning Family Planning funding in US aid abroad (May 2001); voted No on restricting interstate transport of minors to get abortions (April 2005); voted No on forbidding human cloning for reproduction and medical research (February 2003). He also voted Yes on the ever-controversial issue of allowing human embryonic stem cell research in May of 2005.⁴⁴¹ Bobby Rush is obviously firmly on board with a woman's right to choose what she will do with her body. His position mirrors the

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Democratic Party's Platform on abortion. An excerpt from the platform states, "The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to make decisions regarding her pregnancy, including a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay. We oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right."⁴⁴² Bobby Rush is firmly on the side of a woman's right to choose what she will do with her body. However, the Democratic Party is not monolithically aligned with this right. Timothy Byrnes article in conscience magazine observed while the national platform is prochoice, "elected leaders of the Democratic Party cannot be counted on to maintain nonnegotiable institutional support for reproductive rights."⁴⁴³ The politicians support is conditional, determined by if such support will not cost votes or elections.⁴⁴⁴ Unlike his support for reproductive rights Rush's stance on drugs is not as consistent.

Bobby Rush's record on drugs is a pro-reform stance in that he voted no on measures that would have prevented needle exchanges and believes in legalization of marijuana. He has attempted to repair the harm of the Crime Bill and other War on Drugs measures, that have devastated the African American community, especially his 1st Congressional District in Chicago. Bobby Rush has advocated for the end of harsher sentences for crack vs. powder cocaine. On February 28, 2008 Rush and other members of Congress held a press conference to highlight the need for legislation to address the crack-powder disparity in sentencing.⁴⁴⁵ This disparity is viewed by many as a racial matter when it is clearly a difference in sentencing between the two cocaine substances. Crack cocaine is the most popular cocaine form used, abused and trafficked by African Americans, whereas powder cocaine is the form used, abused, and sold by white Americans. Another aspect of the war on drugs and the crime bill which Rush attempted to reverse is the prohibition on education for convicted drug felons. Rush has unsuccessfully

⁴⁴² On The Issues, "Democratic Party on Abortion," www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Democratic_Party_Abortion.htm

⁴⁴³ Timothy Byrnes, "The Democratic Party Is Not the 'Prochoice Party' and It Never will be," conscencemag.org 3 (November 2017): 1-13.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ https://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/2008/feb29/crack_sentencing_gets_hearing_ca.

promoted legislation to allow rehabilitated persons convicted of drug offenses to obtain student loans.

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On the various issues of education, Rush maintains a 92% favorable rating from the National Education Association for his pro-education voting record. He is against vouchers for private and parochial schools and voted no on that issue November 1997 and in 1999 on vouchers in DC schools.⁴⁴⁷ He voted yes on allowing school prayer during the War on Terror, H. Con Res 239, November 15, 2001, but opposed requiring schools to allow school prayer. It would seem from this anomaly that Church of God in Christ Minister Rush is ambivalent when it comes to issues of separation of church and state and school prayer. On the issue of student loans, Rush is a proponent of 10/10, Rush sponsored this legislation which proposed canceling student debt after 10 years.⁴⁴⁸ This was an attempt to address the crushing financial burden many students are faced with when they leave college burdened with massive debt that in many cases take decades to repay or are defaulted on which causes myriad credit problems.⁴⁴⁹ Student loans also can affect the housing market and prevent recent graduates or even those who have begun to repay loans from securing a mortgage. The amount of money needed to pay between student loans and mortgage loans have prevented many lenders from extending financing for home loans.⁴⁵⁰ Another area to examine is Rush's stance on the environment, energy, and trade.

On the Issues an online search engine which provides information on all political leaders on every issue, reports that Rush is rated 100% by the Campaign for America's Future which indicates solid support for energy independence as of December 2006. He is in favor of not drilling in Alaska's National Wildlife Reserve to keep it environmentally sound. Bobby Rush opposed all the Bush Administration's energy initiatives that dealt with oil drilling, construction, and exploitation of the nation's environmental

⁴⁴⁶ http://www.ontheissues.org/IL/Bobby_Rush_Drugs.htm

⁴⁴⁷ http://www.ontheissues.org/IL/Bobby_Rush_Education.htm

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Robert Riches, "The negative effects of student loans," *Loquitur Cabrini University Student Media* (February 7, 2013): www.theloquitur.com/the-negative-effects-of-student-loans/

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

habitats. Interestingly, Rush voted yes on increased funding for nanotechnology research and development and its commercialization. What to some would seem an anomaly given Rush closeness with communication companies is his rating of 100% by the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union. This rating, according to *On the Issues*, indicates Rush has, “an anti-management/pro-labor record.”⁴⁵¹ It is worth noting that Rush began his Congressional career with the defeat of long-time labor union icon Charles Hayes. Rush’s challenge and defeat of Hayes cost the venerable labor leader his Congressional pension. He was one-year shy of getting it. However, Rush is sometimes viewed with misgivings when it comes to ethics regarding labor issues because of his close relationship with telecommunications companies.⁴⁵² On the other hand Rush consistently voted no on legislation that would have negatively affected labor rights. Rush voted no on implementing a free trade agreement with Chile in 2003; US-Singapore Free Trade agreement in 2003; Us-Singapore Free Trade Agreement in 2044, and the Central American Free Trade Agreement in July of 2005. Also, most notably Rush voted no on withdrawal from the World Trade organization.⁴⁵³

In the arena of foreign policy, Rush appears slightly like the 1960s Panther Party radical, minus the socialist ideology. The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party was firmly socialist in its agenda and practice during its existence from 1968 to 1974. Ironically, in 2001, fresh from his defeat of Barack Obama in the Illinois primary Rush voted Yes on keeping the Cuba travel ban in place until that nation released its political prisoners. The irony lies in the fact the Black Panther Party had viewed Cuba as an ally in the fight against Imperialism and Capitalism. On the surface this seems not a bit out of the ordinary. After all, isn’t it humane to release from prison those who oppose a government, if during that opposition, no crime has occurred? Doesn’t holding people prisoner for political reasons differ from the core tenets of democracy? These are all reasonable questions one might ask in a reasonable democratic

⁴⁵¹ [www.on the issues.org](http://www.ontheissues.org).

⁴⁵² Jon Jeter, *Flat Broke in The Free Market* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 101-102.

⁴⁵³ On the issues.org

state. The language of Bill HR 3100 reads in part, "Stop enforcing travel restrictions on US citizens to Cuba, only after the President has certified that Cuba has released all political prisoners, and extradited all individuals sought by the US on charges of air piracy, drug trafficking and murder."⁴⁵⁴ This bill, if complied with by the Cuban government, would mean the return to the US of Assata Shakur, former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member for the killing of State Trooper Werner Foerster in a 1973 shootout on the New Jersey turnpike. This vote would seem to be counter to his roots as a former Black Panther. Moreover, while voting against political prisoners in Cuba, Bobby Rush, has not sponsored legislation to address the political prisoners held in Americas prisons.⁴⁵⁵ As of 2008 the year of Barack Obamas election American prisons contained at least 23 former members of the Black Panther Party/ Black Liberation Army, and AIM activist Leonard Peltier among others.⁴⁵⁶

Why did many black politicians embrace politics and policies that were not in accord with the best interests of their people? Perhaps a closer look at American- style politics can provide an answer. Since the 1970s, black politicians including many former activists such as Rush, have increasingly aligned themselves locally and nationally with the Democratic Party. The progressive edge of these same politicians has been dulled by the platform of the local and national Democratic Party. For Bobby Rush, the former Panther leader, whose family was always involved in politics, albeit not on the democratic side, did not have to make too large of a transition to become a part of machine politics, a point which has been emphasized repeatedly by Illinois Panther co-founder Bob Brown.⁴⁵⁷ Bobby Rush's brother Marlon and his mother were both involved at the precinct level with the Republican Party in Chicago.⁴⁵⁸

Over time, the challenge to the establishment and its functionaries lessened as Rush formed alliances with some of his staunchest adversaries in the interest of Democratic Party solidarity. Bobby Rush's

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ <https://www.thejerichomovement.com>

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Bob Brown Interview.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

1999 defeat in his bid to become Chicago's third Black Mayor represents a marker of sorts. His challenge to the establishment as embodied in his opponent Richard M. Daley, son of the deceased Cook County strongman Richard J. Daley, was the pinnacle of his resistance to Democratic Party power. And he lost.

Prior to the 1999 mayoral race against Daley, Rush's embrace of the Clinton Crime bill and of the Democratic Party's conservative national position identified Rush as a traditional black politician in the best tradition of Boss Dawson and others. Like Dawson he promoted a Democratic Party agenda, party politicians, and local and national positions.⁴⁵⁹ Although Rush is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, his role as a member of that caucus is that of a solid Democrat. Rush's voting as a Congressional Representative is 97% in support of the Democratic Party line. His resistance to the entrenched power of the government is largely expressed within the limited sphere of dissent as defined by the DNP agenda nationally and locally. Thus, most of the resistance against targets is directed against and confined to the Republican Party and its political agenda. That limited resistance, by its very nature, prevents a wider perspective regarding policies that may not be in the best interests of black constituents or of the nation.⁴⁶⁰

Rush was quick to oppose Barack Obama's bid for United States Senator in 2004. He was still smarting from Obama's 2000 challenge for his congressional seat. Rush chose to back billionaire Blair Hull, and it was a boon that Hull employed Rush's half-brother in a \$12,000 a month campaign job.⁴⁶¹ Moreover it was Bobby Rush who was Blair Hull's campaign chairman.⁴⁶² When questioned about his endorsement of Hull, Rush was quick to note that her had supported Obama's run for reelection in the previous year's election for Illinois Senate.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ Robert Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 195.

⁴⁶⁰ Jon Jeter, *Flat Broke in The Free Market* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 108.

⁴⁶¹ Edward McClelland, [https:// www.NBC Chicago.com](https://www.NBC.Chicago.com), 2010.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

Yet Rush endorsed Hull even though Illinois State power broker Emil Jones and Congressional Representatives Danny Davis and Jesse Jackson Jr., both backed Obama. Rush argued that both he and Hull had similarities, because they both had working class backgrounds. Rush, said of Hull, “We believe in looking at issues and circumstances with a fresh eye and a new approach.” Rush continued, “We believe in thinking outside of the box.”⁴⁶⁴ Despite his flirtation outside the realm of the Democratic stable, at the end of the primary with Obama the winner, Rush returned to the box and endorsed Obama. Ultimately Rush knew that, as a black politician it was the only way to go.⁴⁶⁵ Rush was now in line with the regular Democratic Party.

When his opposition to the upstart Obama fizzled, Rush returned to his focal opposition as a Democratic functionary and as an opponent of the Republican Party. Rush quickly reestablished his Democratic Party stature. The embrace of Richard M. Daley in Chicago speaks volumes about Rush’s subservience to the Democratic Party. A *Chicago Sun Times* article encapsulated Bobby Rush’s acquiescence to the Democratic Party. The article’s headline is, “*Former Mayor Challenger Rush praises Daley.*”⁴⁶⁶ Bobby Rush gave his one-time nemesis Daley a ringing endorsement as he said, “Richard M. Daley is a fantastic Mayor who’s done a great job and deserves another term.”⁴⁶⁷ This endorsement of Daley comes notwithstanding the scandals that have plagued the Daley administration. Daley had been beset with the city hiring scandal, the Hired Truck Scandal and the minority contracting scandal. Despite these blemishes on his administration, Congressman Rush chose to ignore them with his praise of Daley.⁴⁶⁸ His endorsement of Daley was no casual political whim, but a calculated move meant to increase Rush’s political leverage within Chicago and, more importantly, his committeeman position. It is important to note not only did Rush endorse Daley, he appeared with the Mayor at the Illinois Institute

⁴⁶⁴ Rick Pearson, Tribune Political Reporter, *Chicago Tribune*, www.chicagotribune.com, July 22, 2003.

⁴⁶⁵ McClelland, *NBC.com*, 2010.

⁴⁶⁶ Chicago Sun Times November 29, 2006, <https://www.ourcampaigns.com/NewsDetail.html?NewsID=37449>

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

of Technology on 35th St in Chicago, where he made the pro Daley speech.⁴⁶⁹ It is hard to separate the political opportunist from the Democratic functionary when it comes to analyzing Rush's support on behalf of Richard M. Daley for another term as Chicago's mayor. Rush support of Daley shows that to maintain power within the Democratic Party, he had to build relationships with Democrats like Daley, whose policies were not necessarily in synch with his own. Therefore, Rush's longtime opposition to the Daley regime and the machinations of Richard J and Richard M are superseded by the need to embrace the Democratic Party. As Jon Jeter wrote in *Flat Broke in The Free Market*, many of Rush's constituents in areas like Chicago's Englewood are resigned to the fact that Rush is no longer "ours."⁴⁷⁰

Rush's alignment with Daley meant that he amassed more political capital i.e. access to funding, contracts, and jobs. To stand outside of the formal Democratic structure was to be denied a significant portion of the benefits. Funding is critical to a politician who like Congressional Representative Rush must run for reelection every two years. This essentially means that as soon as one election is finished the run up to a campaign for the next election begins.⁴⁷¹

In Congress Rush committee assignment on the telecommunications committee as well as his growing seniority brought much needed services to his district. However, these improvements failed to ameliorate the abject poverty visited upon much of his constituency. The decline in businesses in his district is precipitous. Moreover, blight and crime increased in all but the more affluent areas of the first congressional district. Most of the problems was a lack of available employment. "The lack of jobs was cited several times by residents as the reason for so much poverty and crime in Englewood."⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Jeter, *Broke in The Free Market*, 118.

⁴⁷¹ Palmer Interview

⁴⁷² Wendell, Hutson, "Rush and Kirk Tour Englewood, Agree on Need for Jobs, Disagree on Gangs," www.dnainfo.com (August 29, 2013)

However, it should be noted that despite a steady decline in his district, Rush has not had a serious political challenge since that of Obama, Trotter, and Haithcock's attempt in 2000. It seems as if Bobby Rush has all but forgotten that period of the 1960's and 1970's when the slogan All Power to the People resonated throughout areas of the nation and meant power to the least of we the people. This was a slogan embraced and tangibly supported by Rush. It could be seen in his opposition to the policies which kept many people marginalized in declining communities. However, with his repudiation of a more radical challenge to entrenched power and embrace of bourgeoisie middle class values which engendered an abandonment of support for the fundamental needs of the poor. Rush like many of the nation's politicians consistently supported middle class agendas⁴⁷³

One of the hallmarks of the nation's political swing to the right is the focal shift from the issues that face the least of us to that of the middle classes. It is as if the poor no longer exist or even matter in America. Furthermore, America's embrace of corporate elitist and conservative agendas has moved the country closer towards a fascist state. The Democrats while cloaking themselves in the mantle of the progressive party in opposition towards the rightward tendencies of the Republican Party have themselves moved in a manner which aids and abets those very same tendencies. Paul Street writing an article in *Truthdig* sites an example of this Democratic Party phenomenon by quoting the late Princeton political scientist Sheldon Wolin. In this article speaking of the Democratic Party gaining majority power, Wolin says, "they would do nothing to alter significantly the direction of society or substantially reverse the drift rightwards.... The timidity of a Democratic Party mesmerized by centrist precepts, points to the crucial fact that for the poor, (so-called) minorities, the working class and anti-corporationists there is no opposition party working on their behalf."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ Jeter, *Broke in The Free Market*, 120.

⁴⁷⁴ Paul Street, [www.truthdig.com/November 14](http://www.truthdig.com/November_14), 2018 articles/*the signs of creeping fascism is all around us*.

Bobby Rush was elected to Congress, because he challenged his predecessor's commitment to the 1st Congressional district and branded him as out of touch with the needs of his constituents.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, Bobby Rush with no serious challenge to his office since 2000 has failed to meet the needs of the neediest in his district. The once staunch defender of the poor, former Black Panther Rush, is now a champion of the middle classes.⁴⁷⁶ While it is certainly true that Rush remains on the left of the Democratic Party, it is also, true that the shift of the political spectrum to the right has placed Rush in the position of a centrist if the standards of the 60s,70s, and 80s were still in effect in America.

The elevation of Barack Obama to the Presidency revealed the degree to which the country's black agenda had been appropriated by the Democratic Party. While his victory is remarkable, it underscores the victory of the Democratic Party in the subversion of the defiance against the embedded pillars of white supremacy, capitalism, racism, and imperialism. In fact, the rise of Obama, his endorsement by leaders of the black community like Rush symbolizes the victory of the "neo-liberal Negro" element in U.S. politics.

The embrace of neo-liberalism in the Democratic party had dire consequences by the time of Obamas election in 2008. Because of the Democratic Party's Neo liberal agenda, "income inequality began to increase, as economic growth flowed into corporate profits, executive pay, and capital gains instead of to the working class."⁴⁷⁷ Bobby Rush endorsement of Barack Obama and embrace of the Democratic Party was an embrace of neoliberalism. Rush given his record on voting and political endorsements he is a neoliberal or corporate negro.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Thomas Hardy, Political Writer, "Bobby Rush Launches Bid For Congress," *Chicago Tribune* www.chicagotribune.com (November 12, 1991).

⁴⁷⁶ Jeter, 122.

⁴⁷⁷ <https://theweek.com/articles/725419/decline-fall-neoliberalism-democratic-party>

⁴⁷⁸ Jeter, 112.

It is of interest to note that the Progressive Caucus of the Democratic Party does not include Bobby Rush.⁴⁷⁹ Although he is excluded, he occasionally votes with the caucus on issues that generally reflect the wider Democratic Party stance. In 1998, Barbara Lee joined Congress as a congressional representative from California. The arrival of Barbara Lee signaled the end of Bobby Rush's tenure as the lone former Black Panther Party functionary. Barbara Lee was a former Congressional intern for Ron Dellums. Prior to that internship, she was a community worker of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. Despite commonality in a Black Panther Party pedigree her positions and leadership has not categorically aligned with Bobby Rush. Barbara Lee, unlike Rush is a member of the Progressive Caucus.⁴⁸⁰

The election of Barack Obama raised expectations in the black community to a higher level than anything previously seen in that community. Blacks expected he would elevate and alleviate, thus dramatically change conditions that were and are an integral part of the black condition in America.⁴⁸¹ For some observers, the election of Obama was not the reawakening of a progressive impetus in America.⁴⁸² However, Bobby Rush as a loyal Democrat supported Obama.

As of the 2008 election of Barack H. Obama, Bobby L. Rush, the five term Democratic Congressional Representative of the 1st Congressional District of Illinois was one of the most powerful tenured politicians on Capitol Hill. In 2019, Illinois, Rush's stature with his former comrades from the local Chapter of the Black Panther Party is at an all-time low. Few of the former Panthers have anything good to say about Rush. It is safe to say that many of his former comrades are solidly against him. Few publicly oppose him. Rush has been careful not to unduly expose himself to his former comrades, as they may be unpredictable. Rush has a tumultuous relationship, or non-relationship, with the late

⁴⁷⁹ <https://cpc-grijalva.house.gov>

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Chad Stafko, "How Obama Has Failed the Black Community," *American Thinker*, www.americanthinker.com, 21, July, 2012

⁴⁸² Street, *Truthdig.com*

Panther Chairman Fred Hampton's son, Fred Hampton, Jr. The late Chairman's son, who is addressed as Chairman Fred as well, views Bobby Rush as a sell-out politician who has lost the confidence of the poor and working classes.⁴⁸³ The fact remains, however, that despite rumblings of disaffection with Rush, he is firmly ensconced in the 1st Congressional district. He has won every election by at least 70% or more of the votes cast.⁴⁸⁴

Since the late 90s Rush has been increasingly hard to contact. In fact, except for occasional selected public appearances meeting with Rush is often a difficult task. Although Rush is a friend of both Clintons and supported Obama for President, he is still on the left of the Democratic Party. Perhaps there remains a hint of the Panther enmeshed in Bobby L. Rush, former Black Panther leader, loyal Harold Washington lieutenant, and now Congressman of the 1st Congressional District Chicago Illinois. As of 2019, Bobby L. Rush the savvy politician remains in office in the tradition of Chicago's black politicians of yesteryear like Oscar DePriest, Boss Dawson, Ralph Metcalf, Harold Washington, and Charles Hayes.

⁴⁸³ Blair Anderson, Interview.

⁴⁸⁴ "Bobby Rush Biography, "[www.fampeople.com / cet-bobby_rush_2](http://www.fampeople.com/cet-bobby_rush_2)

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ABSTRACT**BOBBY L. RUSH, RISE OF A BLACK PANTHER POLITICIAN:
THE PRICE OF RESISTANCE IN AMERICA**

by

SAMUEL J. HOGSETTE**August 2019****Advisor: Dr Elizabeth Faue****Major: History****Degree: Doctor of Philosophy**

This dissertation charts the political trajectory of Bobby Rush. It uses a narrative approach to examine his politics from 1967-2008. The foundations of his political career are largely defined in opposition to the Daley Machine in Chicago. The scope of this project is from 1967 when he first encounters SNCC organizer Bob Brown to his support for Obama for president in 2008. I decided to begin this project because of my previous association with the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. I recognized that there was no scholarship on Rush or his political history.

The story of a politician from a Black Socialist/Communist political party that advocated the violent overthrow of the U.S. 'government to becoming a member of the legislative body of that same government is a compelling narrative. One of the claims that I was forced to confront was whether Rush's Panther past informed his present actions. Moreover, I sought to the answer the question; Can a militant Black radical maintain her/his radicalism as part of the US government's legislative branch? The answer to these questions is contained in this dissertation. The founding of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Chicago's Black community during the Daley Machine, Rush as second ward Alderman and election to Congressman of the first congressional district are all detailed. Bobby Rush's defeat of Barack Obama to retain his seat in Congress is the stuff of legends. Rush's oftentimes unorthodox political moves are also examined.

After examining key sources and conducting oral histories I concluded that Bobby Rush was a complex subject that is not easily categorized. Neo liberal? Political Hack? Man, of the People? Pragmatic Politician? Bobby L. Rush embodies elements of all these categories. Operating on the far left of the Democratic Party, Bobby L. Rush is a former Black Panther Politician who often acts like a Neo Liberal Negro.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Born and raised on the Southside of Chicago. I had an interest in history since the age of ten. I later joined the Black Student Union at Englewood High School and influenced by two dynamic Black Panthers I eventually joined the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party as a Community Worker. I attended University of Illinois Champaign Urbana and later Chicago State University where I obtained a Bachelor and master's degree. I have had several jobs from Steel Worker, Skip Tracer, Credit Correspondent, Auto Worker, Farm Laborer, Substance Abuse Counselor, Social Services Administrator, and Professor.

My current endeavors are important and satisfying. Currently I am a Part-Time faculty member of the Department of History at Wayne State University, Adjunct Faculty at Lawrence Technological University, Lead Docent/facilitator at the ILMS National Award-winning Detroit History Museum, former Adjunct Faculty at Art Institute of Michigan as well as International Academy of Design and Technology I have researched and edited a biography of Sherman Howard the Oldest Living Black NFL Player and now a dissertation entitled, *Bobby L. Rush Rise of a Black Panther Politician: The Limits of Black Resistance in America*.

Teaching, researching, and engaging with historical projects is both a passion and calling that I fully embrace. This dissertation is the culmination of eight years of focused study of the subject, Chicago politics and the Black Panther Party. The political system in America is part and parcel of this whole project. From the Southside of Chicago to the halls of Academia, the journey continues.