Black Women's Liberation

by Maxine Williams and Pamela Newman
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Why Women's Liberation Is Important to Black Women

by Maxine Williams

In the early part of the sixties, social scientists became more and more interested in the family structure of blacks. Unemployment and so-called crime among blacks was increasing, and some of these "scientists" decided that the problems of the black community were caused by the family pattern among black people.

Since blacks were deviating from the "norm"—more female heads of households, higher unemployment, more school "dropouts"—these pseudoscientists claimed that the way to solve these problems was to build up a more stable black family in accord with the American patriarchal pattern.

In 1965, the U.S. government published a booklet entitled The Negro Family—The Case for National Action. The author (U.S. Dept. of Labor) stated, "In essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole."

According to this theory, the institution of slavery led to a breakdown in the black family and the development of a so-called matriarchy, in which the black woman was "dominant." This "matriarchal" structure was held responsible, in turn, for contributing to the "emasculating" of the black man. In other words, as these people would have it, the oppression of black people was partly caused by the chief victims of this oppression, black women!
This myth of the black matriarchy has had widespread influence and is even widely believed in the black community today. It is something we have to fight against and expose. To show just how wrong this theory is, let's look at the real condition and history of the so-called dominant black woman.

Under slavery, once arriving on American soil, the African social order of black people was broken down. Tribes were separated and shipped to different plantations. Slaves underwent a process of desocialization and had to adopt a new culture and language.

Up until 1840, black men greatly outnumbered black women. Sociologist E. F. Frazier indicates, in his book *The Negro Family in the U.S.*, that this probably led to "numerous cases of sex relations between Negro slaves and indentured white women." The "marriage" rate between black men and white women became so high that interracial "marriages" were banned.

Prior to this time, black men were encouraged to "marry" white women in order to enrich the slavemaster's plantation with more human labor. The black man in some instances was able to select a mate of his choice. However, in contrast, the black woman had little choice in the selection of her mate. Living in a patriarchal society, she became a mere breeding instrument.

Just as black men were chained and branded under slavery, so were black women. Lying nude on the slave ship, some women gave birth to children in the scorching hot sun.

There were economic interests involved in the black woman having as many offspring as she could bear. After her child was born, she was allowed to nurse and fondle the infant only at the slavemaster's discretion. There are cases of black women who greatly resisted being separated from their children and having them placed on the auction block, even though they were subject to flogging. And in some cases, the black woman took the lives of her own children rather than submit them to the oppression of slavery.

There are those who say that because the black woman was in charge of caring for the slavemaster's children, she became an important figure in the household. Nothing
could be further from the truth. The black woman became the most exploited "member" of the master's household. She scrubbed the floors, washed dishes, cared for the children and was often subjected to the lustful advances of Miss Ann's husband. She became an unpaid domestic. However, she worked outside as well.

Still today many black women continue to work in households as underpaid domestics. And as W. E. B. Du Bois stated in his essay *The Servant in the House*, "The personal degradation of their work is so great that any white man of decency would rather cut his daughter's throat than let her grow up to such a destiny."

In this way arose the "mammy" image of black women—an image so embedded in the system that its impact is still felt today. Until recently, the mass media has aided in reinforcing this image, portraying a black woman as weighing 200 pounds, holding a child to her breast, and/or scrubbing floors with a rag around her head. For such a one, who was constantly portrayed with her head to the floor and her behind facing the ceiling, it is ludicrous to conceive of any dominant role.

Contrary to popular opinion, all black women do not willingly submit to the sexual advances of white men. Probably every black woman has been told the old myth that the only ones who have had sexual freedom in this country are the white man and the black woman. But in many instances, even physical force has been used to compel black women to submit. Frazier gives a case in his book where a black woman who refused the sexual advances of a white man was subdued and held to the ground by black men while the "master" stood there whipping her.

In some instances, black women stood in awe of the white skin of their masters and felt that copulation with a white man would enhance her slave status. There was also the possibility that her mulatto offspring would achieve emancipation. Her admiration of white skin was not very different from the slave mentality of some blacks which caused them to identify with their masters.

In some cases, the black woman who submitted herself sexually played a vital role in saving the life of the black man. If she gave the master a "good lovin'," she could
sometimes prevent her husband from being horsewhipped or punished.

The myth that is being perpetuated in the black community states that somehow the black woman has managed to escape much of the oppression of slavery and that all avenues of opportunity were opened to her. Well, this is highly interesting, since in 1870 when the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed citizens the right to vote, this right did not apply to the black woman.

During Reconstruction those blacks who served as justices of the peace and superintendents of education, and in municipal and state governments, were men. Although the Reconstruction period was far from being an era of "black rule," it is estimated that thousands of black men used their votes to help keep the Republicans in power. The black women remained on the outside.

To be sure, the black man had a difficult time exercising his right to vote. Mobs of whites waited for him at the voting booth. Many were threatened with the loss of jobs and subjected to the terror of Klan elements. The political activity for the black man was relatively ephemeral, but while it lasted, many offices for the first time were occupied by them.

The loose ties established between black men and women during slavery were in many cases dissolved after emancipation. In order to test their freedom, some black men who remained with their wives began flogging them. Previously, this was a practice reserved only for the white master.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, female heads of households began to crop up. Black men who held jobs as skilled craftsmen, carpenters, etc., were being driven out of these occupations. Since the Republicans no longer needed the black vote after 1876, the "welfare" of blacks was placed in southern hands. Black men found it very difficult to obtain jobs and, in some instances, found employment only as strikebreakers. Black men, who were made to feel "less of a man" in a racist oppressive system, turned toward black women and began to blame them for the position they occupied.

The black woman, in some cases left to herself with children to feed, also went looking for employment. Many
went to work in the white man's kitchen. Du Bois in the same essay mentioned earlier, *The Servant in the House*, gives a vivid portrayal of the exploitation of domestic workers. He speaks of the personal degradation of their work, the fact that they are still in some instances made to enter and exit by the side door, that they are referred to by their first name, paid extremely low wages and subjected to the sexual exploitation of the "master."

All of this proves that because the black woman worked, it did not make her more "independent" than the white woman. Rather she became more subject to the brutal exploitation of capitalism—as black, as worker, as woman.

I mentioned earlier that after emancipation, black men had a difficult time obtaining employment, that after emancipation he was barred from many of the crafts he had been trained in under slavery. The labor market for black women also proved to be a disaster. Black women entered the needle trades in New York in the 1900s, as a cheap source of labor for the employers; and in Chicago in 1917, black women, who were willing to work for lower wages, were used to break a strike.

There was great distrust between black and white workers, and in some cities, white workers refused to work beside black women and walked off their jobs.

The black woman has never held high status in this society. Under slavery she was mated like cattle and used as a mere breeding instrument. Today, the majority of black women are still confined to the most menial and lowest-paid occupations—domestic and laundry workers, file clerks, counter workers and other service occupations. These jobs in most cases are not yet unionized.

Today at least 20 percent of black women are employed as private household workers, and their median income is $1,200. These women have the double exploitation of first doing drudgery in someone else's home and then having to take care of their own households as well. Some are forced to leave their own children without adequate supervision in order to earn money by taking care of someone else's children.

Sixty-one percent of black married women were in the labor force in 1966. Almost one-fourth of black families are headed by females, double the percentage for whites.
Due to the shortage of black men, most black women are forced to accept a relationship on male terms. In black communities there sometimes exists a type of serial polygamy—a situation where many women share the same man, one at a time.

As if black women did not have enough to contend with—being exploited economically as a worker, being used as a source of cheap labor because she is a female and being treated even worse because she is black—she also finds herself fighting the beauty "standards" of a white Western society.

Years ago it was a common sight to see black women wearing blond wigs and rouge, the object being to get as close to the white beauty standard as one possibly could. But, in spite of the fact that bleaching creams and hair straighteners were used, the trick just didn't work. Her skin was still black instead of fair and her hair kinky instead of straight. She was constantly being compared to the white woman, and she was the antithesis of what was considered beautiful. Usually when she saw a black man with a white woman, the image she had of herself became even more painful.

But now "black is beautiful," and the black woman is playing a more prominent role in the movement. But there is a catch! She is still being told to step back and let the black man come forward and lead. It is ironic that at a time when all talents and abilities should be utilized to aid in the struggle of national liberation, Stokely Carmichael comes along and declares that the position of women in the movement should be "prone."

And some years later, Eldridge Cleaver in referring to the status of women said they had "pussy power." Since then, the Black Panther Party has somewhat altered its view, saying "women are our other half."

When writing their political statement, the Republic of New Africa stated they wanted the right of all black men to have as many wives as they can afford. This was based on their conception that this is the way things were in Africa. (In their publication, *The New Africa*, written in December 1969, one of the points in their Declaration of Independence seeks "to assure equality of rights for the sexes." Whether this means that the black woman
would be allowed to have as many husbands as she can afford, I have no way of knowing.)

So today the black woman still finds herself up the creek. She feels that she must take the nod from "her man," because if she "acts up," then she just might lose him to a white woman. She must still subordinate herself, her own feelings and desires, especially when it comes to the right of having control of her own body.

When the birth-control pill first came into use, it was experimentally tested on Puerto Rican women. It is therefore not surprising that Third World people look at this example and declare that both birth control and abortion are forms of genocide—devices to eliminate Third World people.

However, what is at issue is the right of women to control their own bodies. Enforced motherhood is a form of male supremacy; it is reactionary and brutal. During slavery, the plantation masters forced motherhood on black women in order to enrich their plantations with more human labor.

It is women who must decide whether they wish to have children or not. Women must have the right to control their own bodies. And this means that we must also speak out against forced sterilization and against compelling welfare mothers to accept contraceptive methods against their will.

There is now a women's liberation movement growing in the United States. By and large, black women have not played a prominent role in this movement. This is due to the fact that many black women have not yet developed a feminist consciousness. Black women see their problem mainly as one of national oppression.

The middle-class mentality of some white women in the movement has also helped to make the issue of women's liberation seem to be irrelevant to black women's needs. For instance, at the November 1969 Congress to Unite Women in New York, some of the participants did not want to take a stand against the school tracking system, that is, the system school authorities use to channel students into certain types of occupations on the basis of their so-called intelligence. These women feared that "good" students thrown in with "bad" ones would cause the "bril-
liant" students to leave school, thus lowering the standards. One white woman had the gall to mention to me that she felt women living in Scarsdale were more oppressed than Third World women trapped in the ghetto. There was also little attempt to deal with the problems of poor women, for example, the fact that women in Scarsdale exploit black women as domestics.

The movement must take a clearer stand against the horrendous conditions in which poor women are forced to work. Some women in the movement are in favor of eliminating the state protective laws for women, that is, the laws which regulate women's working conditions. But poor women who are forced to work in sweatshops, factories and laundries need those laws on the books. Not only must the state protective laws for women remain on the books, but we must see that they are enforced and made even stronger. I do not mean that those laws which are so "protective" that women are protected right out of a job should be kept. But any laws that better the working conditions for women should be strengthened, and extended to men!

Women in the women's liberation movement assert that they are tired of being slaves to their husbands, confined to the household performing menial tasks. While the black woman can sympathize with this view, she does not feel that breaking her ass every day from nine to five is any form of liberation.

She has always had to work. Before the Emancipation Proclamation, she worked in the fields of the plantation, as Malcolm X put it, "from can't see in the morning until can't see at night."

And what is liberation under this system? Never owning what you produce, you are forced to become a mere commodity on the labor market. Workers are never secure, and their length of employment is subject to the ups and downs in the economy.

Women's liberation must relate to these problems. What is hampering it now is not the fact that it is still composed of mainly white, "middle-class" women. Rather it is the failure to engage in enough of the type of actions that would draw in and link up with the masses of women not yet in the movement, including working and Third World
women. Issues such as day care, support for the striking telephone workers, support for the laws which improve working conditions for women and the campaign to free Joan Bird are steps in the right direction. (Joan Bird is one of the New York Black Panther members, who was unjustly held in jail for months awaiting trial, because of the excessively high bond demanded by the courts.)

I don't feel, however, that white women sitting around a room, browbeating one another for their "racism," saying, "I'm a racist, I'm a racist," as some women have done, is doing a damn thing for the black woman. What is needed is action.

Women's liberation must not isolate itself from the masses of women or the Third World community. At the same time, white women cannot speak for black women. Black women must speak for themselves.

The Third World Women's Alliance has been formed in New York to begin to do this. We felt there was a need for a revolutionary black women's movement to speak to the oppression of black women as blacks, as workers, as women. We are involved in reading, discussion, consciousness-raising and taking action.

We feel that black women will have a difficult time relating to the more bitter antimale sentiment in the women's liberation movement, fearing that it will be a device to keep black men and women fighting among themselves and diverting their energies from the real enemy. Many black women realize it will take both men and women to wage an effective struggle. However, this does not negate the necessity of women building our own movement, because we must build our struggle now and continue it after the revolution if we are to achieve real emancipation.

When the Third World woman begins to recognize the depth of her oppression, she will move to form alliances with all revolutionary forces available and settle for nothing less than complete destruction of this racist, capitalist, male-dominated system.
Take a Good Look at Our Problems

by Pamela Newman

When women's liberation is mentioned, there are often two reactions. One is that this is just a bunch of frustrated women who are going to separate themselves from men. The other is that this is something that is a white thing, which doesn't concern black women.

The truth is that the exploitation of black women goes deeper than that of white women. Unity of all black women is needed to push for such demands as self-determination, equal pay, free abortion and child-care centers. We should realize the need for the women of the black nation to have a liberation movement of women as part of our movement for total liberation of our people.

The black man has been led to believe that office and skilled jobs are given to the black woman by the white capitalists to make the black man feel inferior. In reality, there aren't enough jobs for everyone, and the black woman suffers the most from low pay and unemployment.

When our men get jobs where they make enough to keep a family, they often insist that the woman's place is in the home with the children. But raising children can be done just as well by the man as the woman. Because a woman is able to have babies doesn't mean she knows more about caring for them and raising them.

The very idea that women are here on earth just for having children isn't true either. We have minds and have the right to determine what we do and say. Child rearing should be a profession, not an automatic duty.
Usually black children are taken care of by older women who can't find other work. As a result, the children are separated from other children because these women aren't able to take care of more than one or two children. The mother often has to run home from work to take the child off the older woman's hands. There are no facilities for child care in the black community and few qualified people to take care of teaching the children in a progressive manner.

Ask yourself, have you ever been told, this is a man's conversation, so be quiet or keep out because woman's work is only dishwashing, sewing or laundry. This, my sisters, is male chauvinism, not by the system but by the brothers because of the illusions that capitalism has produced.

How many of you sisters come home from work and have to cook dinner and clean the house, and if the brother comes in before you finish, he immediately gets angry because you are not in the best mood. Somehow we must make him understand that we are human as much as he is. We aren't tools of pleasure to be called to his side and put down if we dare not come.

Just look at the newspaper ads, how they use sex to sell products, and also use race. Before the rise of black power, you never saw a product for black people. But they did have lighteners and brighteners on the market to make women look "beautiful." Not until it was profitable could you buy a bush comb, bush wig or Afro-Sheen. Most of these black products are for women because of their general lack of a strong sense of worth and dignity, which makes women more exploitable than men and better consumers.

And don't you think it is wrong that women who can't afford to keep their children have no say in where their child is sent? Isn't it wrong that after a certain number of "illegal" children, you are sterilized without your permission? Don't you think that we should have community control of abortion hospitals in our communities?

No doubt you or almost anyone can somehow get an abortion, but it is either expensive or risky. It would be nice to see the day when we have free abortion by recognized doctors in the community. But with hospital costs
what they are now, and with most of us making only about $75 a week, we can't afford this.

Why not lower the cost of medical care or make it free? Reason: the system of medical care would cut the profits of all the companies, including the drug companies. The system wouldn't want Bayer Aspirin or Excedrin or any other company that makes drugs and sells them at ridiculously high rates to be unhappy. But still people are dying in the black community without the care they desperately need, and children are being brought up in conditions that some rats would turn down.

It is time that we started struggles against every aspect of our oppression.

Take a look at our problems: medical care, housing, jobs, police repression, child care, abortion . . . To solve these problems we need to gain control of our communities. We have to stop letting our communities be controlled by white, rich politicians and capitalists. We can't go on voting for the two parties controlled by these dictators. Both parties protect not the interest of the people but the white ruling class which controls the economic system. For the total liberation of our people, we need an independent black political party which we can control.

With the demand for self-determination, we are demanding total control of everything that affects our lives. Is it wrong to ask for the right to make the decisions affecting the lives of your children and yourself? If you think so, then you are against women's liberation, black liberation and democracy.

It is very important that black women's groups be formed now, because the capitalists are not going to give money out of their pockets to finance twenty-four-hour child-care centers and meet our other needs. A black women's liberation group would also bring out other demands directly related to women, such as welfare. They could fight for new clothes and for free food which is not surplus but fresh meat and other products which are good for the body.

This money-greedy ruling class can't and won't give us free medical care and other necessities. The only way to get these things is to fight for them. In the process of this fight, many women will begin to realize that our struggle is
against capitalism and imperialism. We should be dedicated to building a socialist society inside the United States where profits would be outlawed and the total means of production and distribution placed in the hands of the working class. That struggle must be led by black people, who are concerned about the humanity of this world.

The revolutionary vanguard of America will be the black nation. The total working class must be liberated, including the women, and of course the black woman shall have to be liberated first because of the multi-oppression which she suffers.

All over the world, black and Third World people have stopped turning their cheeks. We need to organize to struggle against every aspect of our oppression. Black women's liberation could not and will not be a diversion from the liberation of our people. The organization of black women to fight for our needs as well as the needs of all black people will help intensify the struggle.
Further Reading

Readings in women's liberation from Pathfinder Press:

BOOKS
The Mod Donna and Scyklon Z: Plays of Women's Liberation
Myrna Lamb cl$5.95/pb$2.25
Problems of Women's Liberation
Evelyn Reed cl$3.95/pb$1.45

PAMPHLETS
Black Women's Liberation
Maxine Williams, Pamela Newman .25
In Defense of the Women's Movement
Ruthann Miller, Evelyn Reed, Mary-Alice Waters .25
Pioneers of Women's Liberation
Joyce Cowley .25
The Politics of Women's Liberation Today
Mary-Alice Waters .25
Revolutionary Dynamics of Women's Liberation
George Novack .25
Sisterhood Is Powerful
Betsey Stone .25
Women and the Cuban Revolution
Linda Jenness, Fidel Castro .35
Women and the Equal Rights Amendment
Caroline Lund and Betsey Stone .25
Women and the Family
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"I Think of the Great Things of God, Not the Little Things"

Two women who had been born slaves devoted all their energies to freeing others. Both were deeply religious. One, Sojourner Truth, was termed a mystic. The other, Harriet Tubman, was a woman of action, but in times of stress her favorite prayer was, "Lord, you have been with me through six troubles. Be with me in the seventh." Both women were so famous while they lived that books were written about them although neither could read or write. Both women had been married, but most of their lives each walked alone, and each covered wide areas in her travels. Each faced danger and possible death, one at mob-threatened meetings where abolitionists were stoned and the other at state boundary lines dividing freedom and slavery.

Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree about 1797, the property of a Dutch master in New York, and she spoke English with a Dutch accent all her life. Her childhood home was a hotel cellar where her parents and a number of other slaves were quartered. While still a child, Isabella's parents died, and she was sold and resold, finally becoming the property of one John Dumont in whose service she remained until New York State freed all its slaves in 1827. But Isabella's master did not want to let her go, so she ran away, leaving her children behind. When her five-year-old son Peter was sold to an Alabama owner Isabella went to court and succeeded in getting Peter back. Another time, accused of the murder of an employer by a white man who had no proof, Isabella again went to court, sued for libel and won a judgment of $125, an unusual vindication for a Negro then.

One day in 1843 Isabella decided to leave her job as a domestic servant to travel. "The Spirit calls me," she said, "I must go." With only a few coins in her purse, Isabella departed, feeling the call, although free herself, to preach and teach against slavery, under a symbolic new name. She declared, "The Lord gave me Sojourner because I was to travel up and down the land showin' the people their sins and bein' a sign unto them. Afterwards I told the Lord I wanted another name, cause everybody else had two names; and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare truth unto people."

Sojourner Truth became a famous figure at anti-slavery meetings. Once she said about her work, "I think of the great things of God, not the little things." A very tall, very dark woman, with a deep voice like a man's, she electrified many audiences and irritated those who did not agree with her. When a man told her that he cared no more about her speeches than he would about a fleabite, "Maybe not," Sojourner replied, "but the Lord willing. I'll keep you scratchin'."
Harriet Tubman, who was born a slave on the Eastern Shore of Maryland about 1823, ran away and brought many others to freedom. During the Civil War she was a nurse, a spy and a scout. She lived until 1913.

Harriet Tubman was an even greater irritant to the slave-owners than Sojourner Truth, for not only did she make speeches in the North but time after time she went into the South and brought slaves out to freedom. At one time $40,000 was offered for her capture. When she was about twenty-five she ran away herself from a Maryland plantation, leaving her husband, parents, brothers and sisters behind. Two brothers started out with her, but became frightened and went back. Perhaps to prevent this from ever happening again Harriet Tubman carried a pistol on her freedom forays and if any slave heading North in her parties faltered, she drew her gun and said, “You’ll be free or die!” Strength to go on was always forthcoming.

Up creek beds, through swamps, over hills in the dark of night, on nineteen secret trips into the dangerous South, Harriet Tubman guided more than 300 slaves to freedom, including her aged parents. Once in 1851 she took a party of eleven all the way to Canada, since the Fugitive Slave Law had, by then, made it dangerous to stop short of the border. One slave in the party, on whose head was a $1,500 reward, was so frightened he would not say a word nor, on the train crossing from Buffalo, even look out the window at the scenery. But when he found himself on free soil, he sang and shouted so much no one could shut him up. Harriet Tubman said, “You old fool, you! You might at least have looked at Niagara Falls on the way to freedom!”

Friendless and without work in Canada, Harriet herself prayed, cooked and begged for these refugees all winter. Then, in the spring she went back South to free more. She went alone, but once she got her slaves started, Harriet had help. There were secret stations of the Underground Railroad from Wilmington, Delaware, to the Great Lakes—hiding places in barns, cellars, churches, woodsheds, caves—and white friends to help with food and warm clothing and wagons with false bottoms for long trips in harsh weather. Harriet Tubman one of the most famous “conductors” on the Underground Railroad, once said, “I neber run my train off de track, and I neber lost a passenger.”
THE STORY OF THE MURDER OF FRED HAMPTON (which the N.Y. SUNDAY TIMES refused to print).

reprinted from Scanlan's
by John Kifner

It was a helluva story that splashed across the front pages of the Chicago papers on the afternoon of December 4th: "Panther Bosses Slain in Cop Shoot-out." It was, indeed, the kind of story that White Americans have come to expect to read about the Black Panthers. The details, somehow, seemed familiar even as they unfolded.

The story was a rewrite man's dream: a raiding party of police attached to the State's Attorney's office knocked on the door of a shabby West Side apartment at 4:40 in the morning and announced they had a search warrant . . . receiving an ambivalent response, they burst through the door . . . a girl on a bed opened fire on them with a shotgun . . . the flash of the shotgun illuminated a man behind a door with a gun; a policeman wheeled, fired and felled him . . . the tiny apartment was barricaded with mattresses and furniture, as if a raid had been expected . . . there was a hail of bullets . . . three times the police called for a cease-fire, but a voice cried "shoot it out" . . . two policemen were wounded, or anyway, injured . . . the ten-minute battle "seemed like an hour," said a young policeman after his first gun battle . . . "we were lucky to get out alive," said another . . .

When the shooting stopped, Fred Hampton, the twenty-one-year-old chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party was dead of a bullet through the brain and Mark Clark, a twenty-two-year-old Panther organizer from Peoria was dead with a bullet through his lungs and heart.

One policeman cut his hand while breaking a window with his revolver; another was grazed on the leg.

Four of the seven surviving Panthers were more seriously wounded. All seven were arrested, and on January 30, they would be indicted by the county grand jury for attempted murder, armed violence and sundry other crimes.

The details of the shoot-out came from the obligatory post-raid press conference held later that morning by Cook County State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan. Laid out on a table for the photographers were 19 rifles, shotguns and pistols the police said they had seized from the apartment, along with more than 1000 rounds of ammunition, standing in neat rows on the flat ends.

"There must have been six or seven of them firing," Sergeant Daniel Groth, who led the raid, told reporters. "The firing must have gone on 10 or 12 minutes. If 200 shots were exchanged, that was nothing."

Prosecutor Hanrahan issued a stern statement saying: "The immediate, violent and criminal reaction of the occupants in shooting at announced police officers emphasizes the extreme viciousness of the Black Panther Party. So does their refusal to cease firing at police officers when urged to do so several times. "We wholeheartedly commend the police officers for their bravery, their remarkable restraint and their discipline in the face of this vicious Black Panther attack and we expect every decent citizen of our community to do likewise."

The first cold light was breaking over the West Side ghetto as the police came out of the two-story brick house at 2337 West Monroe Street. Neighbors and the first reporter on the scene said the police had come with an Illinois Bell Telephone Company van. The authorities denied they used such a vehicle but later said they had brought what they described as an "undercover truck." There were reports the raiding party had been equipped with a submachine gun. These were first denied, but later confirmed. Reinforcements had been called in, the street was blocked off and uniformed police with rifles and shotguns warily stood guard. The four wounded Panthers were
Jeffery Haas, one of a group of young white attorneys who frequently represent the Panthers, was refused permission to see them. Old-time Chicago police reporters, who know virtually every sergeant on the force and normally have the run of the station house, were kept back, too. The bodies of Hampton and Clark were laid out at the county morgue, awaiting identification and autopsies.

That afternoon, large numbers of respectable citizens, both black and white, started questioning the official version of the raid, referring to the slayings as "assassination" and "murder." Investigations were soon launched by groups ranging from the police department's Internal Inspection Division—which exonerated police within a matter of days—to an independent citizens' committee headed by former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark. The doubts were based on the physical evidence of the raided apartment, the history of police practices in Chicago's ghettos, and a nationwide pattern of raids, arrests and deaths that appeared to some to represent a concerted effort by law enforcement officials to wipe out the Black Panthers. The tangled circumstances surrounding the death of Fred Hampton were to raise a number of painful questions.

The first floor apartment at 2337 West Monroe Street is a block's walk across a muddy vacant lot from the Black Panther headquarters—bullet-scarred from earlier raids—on Madison Street. A set of battered wooden steps leads to the front door of the building, which opens on a small hallway with two doors.

The door on the right opens on a flight of stairs to the second floor apartment, the door on the left to a small vestibule. Inside the vestibule, a door in the left wall leads to the living room. The apartment consists of the living room, a narrow hallway, two small bedrooms, a dining area and a kitchen, which leads to a back porch. The living room measures approximately 13 feet by 24 feet; the other rooms are much smaller.

In the wake of the police raid, the cramped apartment was ripped up and disordered. Taped to one wall of the living room were newspaper accounts of a gun battle on November 13 in which two policemen and a Panther died. In the living room was an empty J. C. Higgins shotgun cleaning kit and a civil defense survival manual; by the bloodstained mattress in Hampton's bedroom was a volume on Lenin and a Panther leaflet, which said, "If the police take anything of yours—from your house or your garage or your car or from you—you may ask for a written receipt if they do not offer you one."

But the most interesting thing about the apartment was the pattern of the bullet holes.

On the inside door jamb of the door between the front hall and the living room there is what appears to be the mark of a shotgun blast at close range, which then dug into the corner of the wall next to the door. The police account of the raid does not make any mention of shots fired at this door.

There are two holes in the door between the vestibule and the living room. One is a small hole, at about chest height, with jagged splinters projecting from the face of the living room side of the door. At a blue ribbon coroner's inquest, called at the urging of the Chicago Bar Association, several policemen testified that no officer fired through the door and that they did not see this hole. Attorneys for the Panthers, however, said they had recovered a bullet from the living room wall opposite the door.

The second hole is lower on the door, about an inch in diameter with smooth, round edges. This hole, the police say, was made by a solid slug from a deer hunting shotgun, fired at them.

In the first police accounts, the officers said they were fired on as they came through the door by a girl on the bed with a shotgun. Later, they said the shotgun blast ripped through the door while they were still in the vestibule. There are no marks on the wall of the vestibule opposite the door. Several weeks later, the police discovered a bullet hole near the ceiling in the southwestern corner of the vestibule. The bullet hole could have been made by someone firing a shotgun at a sharp upward angle from behind the door, but if it had been fired by the woman on the bed, the slug would have to have taken a looping path. In testimony at the inquest, the police changed their account, saying they now believed the first shot was fired by Mark Clark, and that as many as three shots might have been fired by the Panthers in the first encounter. There are no marks to indicate where these other two shots, presumably the ones originally attributed to the girl on the bed, might have landed.

By the hinges just behind the door was a congealed blood stain where Clark's body was found.

Along the back wall of the living room were some 42 closely spaced bullet holes, in a pattern of roughly two straight lines and a small cluster about two feet up the wall, which was stained with blood. The police testified that they had shot into the wall with submachine gun and rifle fire in order to subdue persons whom they said were firing out of the first bedroom. Most of these bullets ripped through the thin plaster walls of the first bedroom and into the back bedroom, where Hampton died. There are several other bullet and shotgun holes in the first bedroom; some of the bullets also pierced the wall into the back bedroom.

A double bed mattress nearly fills the back bedroom: The end of the mattress toward the doorway, where Hampton's head had been, was soaked with a patch of crusted blood about two feet square. The room was riddled with bullet holes: two through the mattress, seven in the wall at the foot of the bed opposite the door, two shotgun blasts higher up on the wall, a score of bullets coming through the wall from the other bedroom, just above Hampton's bed.

There were no bullet holes visible in or around the back door, through which a force of policemen also entered, no bullet holes opposite the bedroom doors from which the police say the Panthers were firing, no bullet holes in the kitchen, dining room, hallway, the rest of the living room or anywhere else in the apartment. Persons who walked through the apartment found the pattern of the bullet holes difficult to reconcile with the police account of a torrid gun battle.
J. Toman said that Hampton suffered three bullet wounds. One struck his left temple, one hit the lower portion of his neck, and the other grazed his arm. At the inquest, six weeks later, Dr. Constantinou testified that one bullet had entered the left side of Hampton's head, a little in front of the ear, and had come out of the right side of the forehead, above the middle of the eyebrow. A second bullet had entered the right side of the head, again just in front of the ear, and had come out under the chin, near the base of the neck on the left side. There was a third wound, he added, in the left shoulder. A bullet was taken out of the chest wall below this wound, he said, and immediately cleaned. A police firearms expert identified the slug as a .30 caliber carbine bullet.

That Friday evening, after the body had been returned to the family, lawyers for the Panthers asked Dr. Victor Levine, who had been chief county coroner's pathologist in the 1950's, to conduct another autopsy, with two other doctors as observers.

Dr. Levine's examination found that both bullets in the head had entered from the right side. And, he said, his autopsy found a heavy dosage of the barbiturate Seconal in Hampton's bloodstream, about three times the amount necessary, he estimated, to put a man of Hampton's height and weight to sleep. A coroner's chemist testified at the inquest that he had twice tested for the presence of Seconal and found none.

"It's a very hard test, it takes a really fine laboratory technique to make it come out. But I'm confident that it's there," said Dr. Levine, a small white-haired man who enjoys reminiscing about the problems of his trade. Discussing the examination in his Michigan Avenue office, Dr. Levine said that he agreed with the official finding on the bullet that entered in front of the right ear and exited by the throat. This, he felt, was the first slug that entered the skull showed this distinctive "beveling." The bullet was turned slightly by the bone, he said, passed through the brain, struck bone again and lodged near the bottom of the socket of the left eye. He said that he traced the path with X-rays and a probe, but that the slug itself had been removed. (Asked if a bullet had been removed from Hampton's head, Coroner Toman replied: "That's a dirty lie.")

For 13 days, until it was belatedly sealed up by the police and the coroner's office, the raided apartment became a combination shrine and political education center as the Black Panthers conducted tours for thousands of people.

It began almost spontaneously, as members of black community organizations heard the news and rushed over to find out what really happened. Word spread quickly through the ghetto grapevine and each day there was a steady line of people going through the apartment or waiting on the shabby steps to get in. The crowds were a cross section of the black community: workmen in paint-stained clothes, angry young men and women, elderly people, middle-aged women in flowered hats, people in coats and ties and others in old Army jackets, a smattering of whites. In the late afternoon there would be lines of small children in their bright school clothes.

"Right here is where the first brother, Mark Clark, was murdered," a young man in the Panthers' black leather jacket would say just inside the front door, gesturing with a thin pointer. "The pigs say that a girl fired a shotgun at them and they started shooting. Now you can see, ain't no bullet holes anywhere around the door," he would go on, "no shooting coming out, all the shooting was coming in.

The reaction was particularly strong when people gathered around the blood-stained mattress in the back bedroom where Hampton died.

"They killed him when he was asleep," murmured a middle-aged woman. "He never had a chance." "What can we do?" a woman with freshly-done hair asked a youth in the kitchen.

"Arm yourself and join the Black Panther Party," he replied.

It would go on like that, with people giving the clenched fist salute, all day until the Panthers locked up at eight o'clock.

The scene was similar at Rayner's funeral home, where a steady line of people filed past Hampton's body as it lay in a "state of blackness." An honor guard in a black leather jacket stood at each end of the coffin, which was flanked with wreaths, several with black-dyed flowers. The ribbon on one said: "You can kill a freedom fighter, but you can't kill the fight." Hampton's body was clad in a dark suit and a pale blue turtleneck shirt; his chest was almost covered with political buttons, rosary beads and dozens of rings—high school class rings, thick bands set with imitation gems, pinky rings, even an engagement ring—that people had thrown into the coffin.

Over a loudspeaker blared tapes of Hampton's speeches, and a 45 r.p.m. recording of Stevie Wonder singing, "A Place in the Sun."
Fred Hampton’s apartment door
There was a striking unanimity in the attitude of the black community toward the slayings and the police account of the raid. Moderate organizations like the Urban League and the NAACP, which had little use for the Panthers' revolutionary rhetoric and weaponry displays, called the shootings "modern-day lynchings." They attacked the police and called for independent investigations. The Afro-American Patrolman's League, an association of black policemen, announced that it did not believe the official version and began its own investigation, turning the results over to the Panthers' attorneys. Five thousand people heard the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference eulogize Hampton at a rally in a small church in the suburb of Maywood, where he grew up. There were walkouts and scattered disorders in the city's schools. The black Junior Chamber of Commerce on the South Side named Hampton one of their ten "Men of the Year." There were meetings, statements—including a brief and heatedly denounced call for a "white curfew"—and rallies.

Shock would not be the right word to describe the community's reaction. It was, rather, a grim, widespread acceptance of the belief expressed by a well-dressed young black mother as she walked with her husband and teenage daughter to a crowded rally on the Sunday after the raid.

"They murdered Fred Hampton," she said in a very quiet, even tone. "And if they can do it to him, they can do it to any of us."

To understand the depth of feeling in the black community, the place to start is with the story of two other young black men.

Late in the afternoon of last October 10, the police chased a young man named Michael Soto into the Henry Horner housing project in the West Side ghetto and shot him to death. The police said, in successive versions, that he was either robbing a nearby grocery store or beating up a white man in an alley, and that he pulled a gun on the pursuing officers.

Three black residents of the project said in separate interviews at the scene that the incident started when a police car attempted to block three young men walking down the sidewalk. The three fled in different directions, they said, and one was chased to a second floor landing where he was shot.

Michael Soto, twenty, was an Army enlisted man home on leave after a tour in Vietnam. Earlier that day, he had attended the funeral of his sixteen-year-old brother, John, who had been killed by the police in the same neighborhood five days before. The police said John's death occurred after two Task Force patrolmen stopped three youths whom they said were acting suspiciously and passing a brown paper bag back and forth. Young Soto was killed, the police said, when he fought with one of the patrolmen, whose gun accidentally discharged and fired a single shot into the back of the boy's head. Several black witnesses, however, insisted that the white policeman shot the youth without provocation. "The policeman deliberately shot the boy in the back of the head," Charles Blair, thirty-four, told the Chicago Sun-Times after the incident.

There is a busy intersection near the housing project where a number of children have been injured or killed, and people in the neighborhood had started a campaign for a traffic light, which included blocking traffic on Washington Street. The Soto brothers took part in the demonstrations and one was arrested; many people in the area are convinced they were marked by the police for their participation. On January 8, the Justice Department ordered an FBI investigation into whether the brothers' civil rights had been violated. Members of the Community to End the Murder of Black People, an organization formed after the shootings, say that witnesses are being harassed and intimidated by the police.

When the police chased Michael Soto into the Henry Horner project that Friday afternoon, people in the project opened their windows and began shooting at the police with shotguns and rifles. Ten policemen were wounded. This would seem to be a rather startling occurrence, but it is becoming increasingly frequent in Chicago. Indeed, the Sunday night before, the police were greeted with a barrage of gunfire when they attempted to go into Cabrini Greens, a particularly depressing housing project on the Northwest Side.

People do not simply suddenly take it into their minds to blaze away at the forces of law and order, nor do organizations like the Black Panthers suddenly drop out of the sky. The position of the police in Chicago—among other urban areas—has become virtually that of an occupying army on hostile territory. "This is the first time I ever lived where I have walked in fear of my life," Dr. Charles Hurst, the president of the city's Malcolm X Community College told a black congressman's investigative hearing during a day of denunciations of the police and of Mayor Richard J. Daley's Democratic machine for creating what nearly every speaker described as a police state. "There is a curtain of intimidation," Dr. Hurst continued. "It's nigger, nigger, nigger. We're treated like niggers, niggers, niggers."

When reporter Brian Boyer walked into the city room of the Chicago Sun-Times on the afternoon of Thursday, December 4, he discovered that no reporter had been sent down to the raided apartment and that all the information was coming from the police and the State's Attorney's office. He told his editors he wanted to get in on the story and asked to go down to the apartment, but he was told it was too dangerous and that there were no black reporters available. He later drifted down on his own, arriving a little before five o'clock, and was astounded at what he saw.

"I guess my first reaction was to check the walls again to see if they'd plastered anything over," he recalled later. "Then I called in and said they weren't going to believe it, but it looked like murder to me. I asked for editors and other reporters to come down and go through the apartment, but they weren't interested."
Shaken, Boyer returned to the paper and described what he had seen, but was again told that it wasn’t a story. He insisted it was. One participant in an editorial conference about Boyer’s report recalled that the group worried, “If we run that story and the West Side burns down, we’ll be responsible.” Finally, Jim Hoge, the paper’s editor, ruled that the story should run. Boyer safely couched his account in a description of the Panthers’ guided tour. There was another clash with a copy editor, and the reporter waited for the next edition to come up to see how the story would be played. It was buried on page 32.

“At which point,” Boyer recalls, “I quit.”

If anything, Chicago’s three other dailies handled any early doubts about the raid even more gingerly. But the press did carry Panther Deputy Defense Minister Bobby Rush’s charge that Hampton had been “murdered in his bed” in a plot ordered by “Dog Nixon and Daley”; to most white readers this just seemed to be a standard part of the scenario, and Rush’s contention that the “pigs vamped on Chairman Fred’s crib” was, at best, inscrutable. An exception to the general coverage was presented by Daily News columnist Mike Royko, who visited the apartment on Monday and began his column the next day: “State’s Atty. Edward Hanrahan says he had not sent men to the apartment to check the photographs, but stressed that all the statements in the article were attributed to the police and the State’s Attorney.

Hanrahan, however, asserted at a press conference that it was not he who had told the Tribune that the nailheads were bullet holes. “I have made no evaluation of the pictures other than to say that they portrayed the scene accurately. We have made no characterization of the pictures other than to release them and say they portrayed the apartment,” he said. Pressed on the point, Hanrahan disclaimed any responsibility for the captions or descriptions, snapping: “We are not editors.”

The State’s Attorney had called the press conference partially to denounce what he termed “trial by the press,” and, having done so, stalked out. He then did cause to be built in his office a representation of the raided apartment, made out of two-by-fours, as a set to be televised. He had arranged for another exclusive, a televised re-enactment of the raid on WBBM-TV, a local affiliate of CBS. The authorized version ran for 28 minutes on local TV (less time on the network), with the police describing their actions and pointing their fingers like guns.

For Hanrahan, the issue was clear. “I would have thought our office is entitled to expect to be believed in by the public,” he said. “Our officers wouldn’t lie about the act. I’m talking about the credibility of our officers here and myself.”

At forty-eight, Edward V. Hanrahan is a man rapidly on the rise in the Irish hierarchy that rules Chicago. After Our Lady of Sorrows Grammar School, St. Phillip High School, Notre Dame and Harvard Law School on the GI Bill, he has moved quickly up the accepted political route in the past 14 years: assistant city corporation counsel, assistant state attorney general, first assistant state attorney general, United States Attorney for northern Illinois and, since last January, the chief law enforcement official of Cook County. Along the way he has built a reputation as a man of driving ambition which is said to extend to the governorship, a tough and aggressive prosecutor, a Democrat with strong faith in and loyalty to the regular organization, and the
possession of what one Democratic official calls "the worst temper I have ever seen."

Hanrahan's short fuse and towering temper are legendary. Not unlike the mayor himself, he has frequently turned on his heel and stomped out of a press conference when he didn't like the drift of the questions. He has frequently quarreled with the press, and at a 1965 Bar Association meeting on "Free Press, Fair Trial" was the only speaker urging greater press restrictions, saying that unless "we can police the matter, I don't see how it is possible to hold a trial in a metropolitan community where the press can run rampant regarding the facts of a case."

Appointed U.S. Attorney in 1964, Hanrahan built a reputation as a crimebuster with a well-publicized campaign against organized gangsters. Aided by several able assistants, he succeeded in jailing a number of hoodlums, including rackets boss Rocco Pranno, and in breaking up extortion and gambling rings. He also started local Justice Department probes of mail pornography, Students for a Democratic Society and draft evaders. Much of Hanrahan's reputation rests on his celebrated jailing of Sam (Mom) Giancana, the kingpin of the Chicago Syndicate, in 1965.

In 1968, Hanrahan was slated to run for State's Attorney against a strong-campaigning law and order Republican named Robert O'Rourke. That year, the Cook County Democrats were to concentrate most of their efforts—to the unhappiness of Hubert Humphrey—on the two posts that were most important to them: clerk of the Circuit Court, with its high patronage value, and State's Attorney, with the power of defining investigations. Between 1956 and 1960, Benjamin Adamowski, a rival of Mayor Daley who had turned Republican, held the post of State's Attorney and spent all his time investigating Democrats. They did not want to go through that again.

Hanrahan ran on the slogan, "Criminals fear this man." The campaign frequently grew heated, and once, when the two candidates were speaking against each other at the Civic Club, O'Rourke charged that Hanrahan was closely tied to the Daley machine and wouldn't do anything about city scandals.

"He blew up," O'Rourke recalls. "He threw his prepared speech away and blasted me. He shouted what a wonderful guy Daley was, how wonderful the building department was and how wonderful the health department was. Everything was wonderful."

Normally, in a presidential election year, Cook County turns its votes in after most of the rest of the state, a practice that generally results in a Democratic victory. In 1968, as people who stayed up late will recall, the downstate Republicans outwaited Chicago and Richard M. Nixon won the state. But in Cook County, the posts of clerk of the Circuit Court and State's Attorney were saved by the Democrats.

As State's Attorney, Hanrahan has devoted himself almost entirely to the "war on gangs" announced last spring by Mayor Daley and directed at the city's rebellious black youth. His predecessor, John Stamos, now an appellate court judge, had resisted City Hall pressure for such a campaign.

Tough young street gangs have long been a part of the Chicago scene, as any reader of James T. Farrel knows. Indeed, when the mayor himself was seventeen, one of the toughest gangs in the city, the Hamburg Athletics, operated out of his own neighborhood of Bridgeport and played an enthusiastic role in that year's race riot. But the old Irish and Italian street gangs have grown up and evolved into politics, organized crime or both; the new generation of gangs is largely black—and that is a different situation.

The gangs have changed since the days of five or six years ago when the Blackstone Rangers and the Devil's Disciples were shooting each other down in the best Chicago style. The new mood of black consciousness and militancy developing within many of the gangs—particularly the Black P. Stone Nation, a coalition of some 50 gangs centering around the Rangers—represents, in some ways, a greater potential threat to the order of the city's feudal politics. The slogan "Stone runs it" painted on buildings all over the Kenwood and Woodlawn sections of the South Side is something more than mere rhetoric: the gang is widely credited with keeping the South Side calm during the tense days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King while large portions of the West Side—where there was no strong community organization—were burned to the ground.

The hostility of the authorities to the gangs increased markedly in 1967, when the Blackstone Rangers were the major beneficiaries of an experimental $957,000 federal antipoverty grant channeled through the Woodlawn Organization, bypassing city agencies. In 1968, the Stone ran a "Don't Vote" campaign aimed at cutting down the black South Side pluralities, controlled for some 30 years by the quiescent black congressman, William L. Dawson, who has long been a key element in the operation of the Democratic machine. Some of the gangs have become involved in such pursuits as attempts to drive heroin salesmen and prostitutes from their neighborhoods, and to establish day care centers, health clinics and "people's parks." On the North Side, the radical politicalization is even stronger among Puerto Rican groups like the Young Lords and among some white Appalachian youths in the Uptown section. Last spring and summer, when civil rights organizations closed down some eight million dollars' worth of construction projects over demands for black jobs in the building trades, the shock troops of the demonstrations were Stones in their red berets, Disciples in blue berets and Conservative Vice Lords in yellow.

Early last year, Mayor Daley increased the strength of the police department's Gang Intelligence Unit from 50 to 200 men and announced an all-out war on the city's street gangs. The GIU, a section of the police Intelligence Division, is almost as controversial as the gangs themselves. Its commander, Captain Edward L. Buckney, a black, is appalled that the street gangs have been receiving support from foundations, antipoverty programs, church groups and white liberals, and contends that they are racketeers, murderers, extortionists and thugs who prey on other blacks, and that the gang structures must be eradicated. The GIU's tactics include surveillance and infiltration of
the gangs and constant arrests of leaders. They are bitterly accused by many blacks and a number of knowledgeable whites of harassment, destructive raids, charges built on dubiously acquired witnesses, brutality and such techniques as picking a youth up and depositing him in a rival gang's territory. When the Better Government Association set up a meeting between white businessmen and street youths last summer, GIU detectives barged in and demanded to know what was going on.

Hanrahan enthusiastically joined the crusade, denouncing the gangs as "animals unfit for society," and declaring that the major objective of his office would be to cut down on juvenile street crime and stamp out the gangs. For weeks, the papers were filled with lurid tales of gang depravity and the outrage of public officials. "I'm trying to take the romance out of the gangs and let the brutality show through," Hanrahan said at one point. Unquestionably, many of the gang members were still delinquents, and many youths affiliated with gangs committed a number of crimes. But there were indications that, contrary to the official pronouncements, violent gang activity was decreasing and to many the campaign seemed questionable; in fact, one Justice Department official privately called it a "racial purge."

When Hanrahan took office last January, he established a Special Prosecution Unit, whose task, it developed, was to go after the youth gangs. He placed a politically ambitious young prosecutor named Richard Jalovec, whom he had brought with him from the U.S. Attorney's office, in charge and recruited a special detachment of nine aggressive policemen from the Gang Intelligence Unit and the anti-subversive section (the "Red Squad") of the police Intelligence Division.

Assignment to the State's Attorney's office has always been regarded as a plum by the Chicago police; in the past it has taken a political sponsor to get the job, and during the police reform administration of O. W. Wilson, detached duty with the State's Attorney was a refuge for some of the most politically well-connected policemen. State's Attorney's police wore civilian clothes, were freed of the normal paramilitary discipline, and rarely heard a shot fired in anger. The job frequently served as a stepping stone for promotion or entrance into politics, and around election time there was usually the glory of well-publicized raids on a few clip joints or the nabbing of a Republican with his hand in the till.

One of the new men was a black officer who was to become the focal point of much of the resentment in the black community after the fatal raid on the Panthers. He was Patrolman James ("Gloves") Davis, who had a reputation in the black community stretching back at least ten years as a tough-guy cop who regularly beat up black youths. His nickname comes from his practice of slipping on black leather gloves and cracking his knuckles before administering a beating and from his habit of wearing a black glove on his right hand as what he calls a "recognition symbol." "Davis is an old-style officer," said another black patrolman. You mean, he was asked, that he feels that slapping a youth around will straighten him out? "No, it's not that simple," the patrolman explained patiently. "If you're caught by any policeman you're going to get beaten. But if you're caught by this one particular policeman, you know you're really going to get it. He's an enforcer."

By late spring and early summer, the attention of law enforcement officials in Chicago, as all over the country, was turning increasingly toward the Black Panther Party, which J. Edgar Hoover had declared to be "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" among the black militant groups.

The Panthers began organizing in Chicago in November of 1968, operating from a steel-doored two floor office on the West Side. They viewed themselves as an "armed propaganda unit" whose role was to educate the black masses to the need for armed revolution. Sometime late in the spring of 1969, police jurisdiction over the party seemed to shift from the Red Squad to the more openly aggressive Gang Intelligence Unit. Unlike the gangs, which are made up almost entirely of school dropouts, the Panthers recruited much of their membership from the city's junior college system, a tiny elite in view of the staggering black dropout rate. They viewed themselves not as a mass organization, but as a "vanguard" leadership.

And, while the gangs had little political articulation, the Panthers were Marxist revolutionaries. Activities such as a free breakfast program, which reportedly fed about 1,000 children, and a free health clinic were designed to serve as examples of socialism, pointing up the shortcomings of the city's bureaucracy. Despite the rhetoric of guns and revolution, the Panther's public appearances were usually orderly: they enforced discipline, pushing white radicals back at demonstrations at the beginning of the conspiracy trial, and Hampton condemned the Weathermen rampages as "Custeristic," counseling that the time was not yet right. The Panthers built a working alliance, called the Rainbow Coalition, between themselves, the Disciples, the Puerto Rican Young Lords and the white Appalachian Young Patriots. The coalition's adherents wore striped buttons (hand-painted on Nixon-Agnew leftovers) in the racial hues of black, red, brown, yellow and white.

The Panthers' vanguard position was immediately accepted by white radicals, but many of the black street gangs (whom the Panthers viewed as essentially "reactionary" until they were educated and politicized) initially viewed the group with suspicion. This was particularly true of the Black P. Stone Nation, which had long resented attempts by outside groups to exert influence over its membership, estimated to run upwards of 3,000. But on May 28, 1969, at the height of the "war on gangs" furor, the Stone and their old rivals, now known as the Black Disciples, held a press conference to announce that they, along with the Black Panther Party, had formed a peace pact. "Now we are all part of one army," the three groups announced, and it appeared to be a potentially formidable alliance. But the Panthers' first six months of existence as a vanguard organization in Chicago.
had cost them miscellaneous harassment, some 60 arrests—on which most of the charges were later dropped—and more than $300,000 in bail bonds. Then things got tough.

On Tuesday, June 3, Deputy Defense Minister Bobby Rush told a news conference that police harassment and surveillance had been stepped up, that the day before a marked police helicopter had hovered over the office taking pictures, that more pictures had been taken by detectives on the street and that police cars were cruising by the building “seemingly every five minutes.” Rush also said that he had information from “inside the police department” that the Panthers were in for “a series of arrests and indictments by a grand jury.” Asked for comment on the charges, Captain Buckney of the GIU burst into gales of laughter. “That’s my comment,” he said when he had recovered his breath.

At 5:15 the next morning, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and local police sealed off the area around the Panther headquarters. The agents, wearing bulletproof vests and white armbands reading “U.S. Department of Justice,” and armed with submachine guns and shotguns, surrounded the building, put men on the roof and smashed in the door with sledgehammers and axes. They had a search warrant for George Sams, who was implicated in an alleged Panther torture-murder case in Connecticut. In the course of looking about for Sams, the officers managed to wreck most of the office and confiscated several weapons, including a five-foot-long bronzed-colored decorative sword, pamphlets, a mimeograph machine and money for the free breakfast program, all of which they loaded into a grimy green panel truck bearing the name of a nonexistent television repair shop. Eight Panthers who were in the building quietly submitted to arrest and were charged with illegal weapons possession and harboring a federal fugitive. Similar raids quickly followed in Detroit, Denver and Salt Lake City. Sams, the alleged fugitive, eventually turned up in Canada and is now a prosecution witness. Panthers charge that he was an agent all along. Sixteen days later, both of the charges against the eight Panthers had been dropped.

The June 4 raid, preceded and followed by a wave of raids and arrests across the country, caused widespread speculation as to whether, as the Panthers charged, there was a national effort by police forces, masterminded by the Justice Department, to wipe them out. On June 10, a Cook County grand jury indicted 16 Panthers, including Hampton, on 18 counts for allegedly kidnapping and torturing a man and woman who had reputedly stolen a Panther shotgun. Three of the indicted were already in jail, three others were picked up in predawn raids. The night before, the police had stopped a crowded station wagon in front of the Panther office and arrested the 11 occupants for possession of drugs and explosive chemicals; charges have since been dropped on at least ten. And so it went.

At about two a.m. on the morning of July 17, Larry Roberson, who was one of the eight seized in the June 4 raid, and another Panther got into an argument with several policemen. Shots rang out and Roberson was wounded in the abdomen and leg. In Bridewell prison hospital he contracted an infection during a blood transfusion, fell into a coma and died on September 4. The Panthers charge he was maltreated; a routine inquest ruled the death “justifiable.”

Shortly after 1:30 on the morning of July 31, a 20-minute gun battle broke out at Panther headquarters; five policemen were wounded, none seriously, and three Panthers were arrested and hospitalized with injuries other than gunshot wounds. The police said the incident started when two officers attempted to stop two men with shotguns and were fired upon from the office. The Panthers and black witnesses on the street said the incident began when the policemen pulled up in front of the office and started shooting. A tour of the office later that morning showed that most of the third floor had been burned out by a fire that appeared to have been started in a big pile of Panther newspapers and boxes of cereal for the breakfast program. The second floor main office was ripped apart, with papers, food and medical supplies destroyed and strewn all over; typewriters, mimeograph machines and tape recorders were smashed. Charges against the three were later dropped.

A third raid on the office and a reputed gun battle took place early on the morning of October 4. The police say they arrived in response to reports of a sniper firing from a roof and that crowds formed and looting broke out. The police shot open the front door and arrested six Panthers for attempted murder. Again, the Panthers charged that the police had taken money for the free breakfast program, the office was torn up, food and medical supplies destroyed and another fire—set off, the police asserted by a stray bullet—broke out. And again, on November 10, charges against the six were dropped.

On November 13, two policemen and a Panther were killed in a predawn shoot-out on the South Side. The police said they were responding to a telephone call from a woman who said that there were four men with guns in the area, and that the Panthers opened fire when the police began to close in on them. Seven other policemen and a second Panther were wounded in the clash. Dead were Spurgeon (“Jake”) Winters, a nineteen-year-old Panther, and officers Frank G. Rappaport, thirty-six and John Gilhooley, twenty-two. The Panthers put out a leaflet praising the “spirit of Jake Winters.” Feeling over the deaths in the police department was particularly strong because Gilhooley came from a police family: his father has been on the force for 29 years, his uncle is on the detail that guards Mayor Daley’s home and his brother-in-law is also a policeman.

Sergeant Daniel Groth, the December 4 raid leader, testified at the inquest that he received word from an informant that an illegal sawed-off shotgun had been seen in the apartment at 2337 West Monroe Street. He went to his superior, Assistant State’s Attorney Jalovec who, he said, had just received similar information. Sergeant Groth testified that he had considered making a raid around eight o’clock on Wednesday, December 3, when he knew the Panthers would be out of the apartment at their regular political orientation class, but decided on a predawn
hour for the safety of greater surprise. The search warrant was signed by Circuit Court Judge Robert J. Collins, Hanrahan's former first assistant in the U.S. Attorney's office and a longtime neighbor and friend. At 5:30 on the morning after the fatal Monroe Street raid, the police raided an apartment in the Raymond Hilliard Homes in search of Defense Minister Rush and weapons they said an informer had told them Rush had bought in a suburban gun store the week before and had not registered. The police said they found a 22-caliber, two-shot Derringer, ammunition, dried leaves that might be marijuana and literature they described as "inflammatory."

On the afternoon of Friday, January 25, the police struck again. This time the target was a small, experimental cooperative school set up last year by a group of middle-class liberals in Hyde Park who were dissatisfied with the public schools. Eight children, ages twelve and thirteen, were handcuffed and arrested, as were four teachers and a mother who remonstrated. The police said the school was operating illegally. This turned out to be untrue, but a later police version held that a thirteen-year-old girl had solicited two vice squad officers as they were cruising down the street by waving to them and then allowing them to follow her inside the storefront school. Again, the Chicago Tribune was closest to the official mentality, and its account is perhaps the most instructive. Its story began: "A 'school' where white children are being taught the writings of Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver by hippies in their middle twenties was discovered operating on the South Side. . . . " The story said the "strange institution" was decorated with posters "denouncing" the police. Perhaps the officers were oversensitive. A parent said later the posters were for a documentary film on Vietnam. The film's title was "The Year of the Pig."

The United States Department of Justice announced on December 19 that a federal grand jury would be empaneled in Chicago to investigate whether the civil rights of the two slain Panthers, Hampton and Clark, had been violated. The announcement followed the failure of a preliminary investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to develop much information. State's Attorney Hanrahan, in what by now was becoming his usual public mood of barely suppressed wrath, held a press conference to denounce the Panthers for not cooperating with the FBI, which had wrecked their offices the previous June. It developed, however, that Hanrahan himself had refused to let his police be interviewed unless he had a representative present and was given a transcript, conditions the FBI found unacceptable.

The Justice Department said that a special unit to handle the investigation would be established under the jurisdiction of Jerris Leonard, chief of the civil rights division. Among those who found this development ironic was Jay Miller, the director of the Illinois division of the American Civil Liberties Union, who recalled a conversation the two had had last spring while flying back from a speaking engagement. It was shortly after federal indictments had been handed down in the Chicago conspiracy case, and Miller had suggested that the inclusion of Panther Chairman Bobby Seale, who had made two speeches, among the alleged conspirators was a mistake. According to Miller, Leonard replied that, "The Black Panthers are a bunch of hoodlums and we've got to get them."

Indeed, the Justice Department itself seemed to be helping to set a climate which police forces across the country, who needed little encouragement, took to indicate that open season had been declared on the Panthers. Shortly after taking office, Attorney General John Mitchell ruled that the Panthers were a threat to domestic security, making them eligible for unsupervised wiretapping under the as yet untested "Mitchell Doctrine." The FBI stepped up its efforts at infiltrating the organization and passed the information along to local police, although it sometimes developed that both agencies were buying the same spies. In July, shortly after the first wave of raids, the Justice Department created a special task force spanning its three major divisions—civil rights, criminal and internal security—to investigate the Panthers. Last May, the department began a still-ongoing grand jury investigation of the Panthers in San Francisco which, among other things, has been issuing blanket subpoenas for newsmen's notes on the organization. "Whatever they say they're doing, they're out to get the Panthers," said Cecil Poole, then U.S. Attorney in San Francisco. Mr. Poole, a black man who was replaced on January 31, added: "To a large degree I don't agree with this whole probe. It bothers me because I think it's silly, quite wasteful. A lot of the things they're doing are harassment."

On January 21, after hearing 12 days of testimony from the police and morgue officials, a special coroner's jury ruled the deaths of Hampton and Clark "justifiable." Attorneys for the Panthers, fearing to reveal their defense strategy, refused to present any witnesses. The finding, the verdict noted, was based "solely and exclusively" on the evidence presented. But the testimony of the officials appeared to raise a number of questions. A police firearms expert, for instance, testified that the shell casings of five .32-caliber bullets were recovered from the apartment but that they did not match any known police or Panther weapon, and that there was no evidence that 17 of the 19 weapons the police said they had recovered had been fired during the raid. Sergeant Groth testified that there was no tear gas "available" to the raiders, although they had drawn three shotguns and a submachine gun from a special weapons arsenal, and that no fingerprints had been taken from any of the weapons the police said they seized.

Despite their assignment to Hanrahan's Special Prosecutions Unit, the police officers testified that they had virtually no knowledge of the Black Panthers and certainly harbored no ill feelings toward the organization. And there was the quickly-cleaned .30-caliber carbine slug the pathologist said was taken from a shallow wound on Hampton's left shoulder. According to the testimony, the only officer with a weapon capable of firing such a bullet was James
Davis, who carried his personal carbine and testified he did all his shooting in the living room, including a burst into the back wall.

Dr. James T. Hicks, the foreman of the coroner's jury, said later that the panel had unanimously "determined that the shots that killed Hampton went through the wall, but we couldn't determine who fired them." Asked if the verdict might have been different had the Panthers presented evidence, Dr. Hicks said, "I couldn't say. It will remain a controversial point."

"Rotten people, the whole bunch is rotten people," said the slain Panther's mother, Mrs. Iberia Hampton, who sat impassively, her arms folded across her chest, on the first row of benches through each day of the inquest.

"I have no regrets, I can hold my head up," said Martin S. Gerber, the Loop attorney appointed to serve as a special deputy coroner in the inquest. "No one should be ashamed of public responsibility."

The next day, the police raided the Panthers' free medical clinic, charging it was not properly licensed.

Fred Hampton was buried, at the age of twenty-one, in the Bethel Cemetery near Haynesville, Louisiana, a small southern town from which his parents, like so many others, had migrated to the promised cities of the North. His fiancée, Debra Johnson, was eighteen that summer and worked in the open housing campaign in Chicago and prepared to go to Triton College as a pre-law student.

But that summer the new leadership of the local NAACP asked him to begin a youth organization. "What we needed," remembers Donald Williams, who was the chapter's president at the time, "was a young person who had rapport with the youth—one intelligent, committed, responsible and who accepted the NAACP's ideals. I asked around and continually got back one name—Fred Hampton."

Hampton became the president of the West Suburban youth council of the NAACP and that fall began leading protests supporting student grievances at Proviso East. Recreation and demands for a swimming pool were the issues the next summer. Maywood's white youth, it seemed, could swim in the municipal pool in nearby Melrose Park, but blacks were turned away as non-residents. Many remember Hampton's role as responsible and often conciliatory, but the mayor (who was later indicted for embezzlement and replaced by a reform administration which was to call for an investigation into Hampton's slaying) and the police force saw him as a firebrand and a troublemaker. "Some people would contend that our actions are of an extreme nature," Hampton wrote in the magazine Nation's Schools in October, 1968, "but I know of no other intelligent way to act in an extreme situation other than extreme."

"He tried to get across peacefully, but it didn't work," his twenty-four-year-old brother Bill says. "He's human like everybody else. He saw himself getting beaten by white police; you saw people like Martin Luther King getting shot down. The militancy was forced on him by the news media, by the racist policemen in Maywood, by the school administration, by the entire white power structure that fingered him as the chief enemy. This made him angry, and the angrier he got, the more militant he got—he was so very young."

Fred Hampton was arrested some 25 times and convicted once. The conviction was a two to five year sentence for robbery in connection with an incident in the spring of 1968 when a group of youths surrounded an ice cream truck in a Maywood Park and took $71 worth of ice cream. He was convicted last May and denied an appeal bond by Circuit Court Judge Sidney A. Jones who contended that he was a "dangerous man."

The denial came after a series of questions put to Hampton by an assistant State's Attorney:

Question: "Are your principles consistent and compatible with those of Mao Tse-tung of Red China?"

Answer: "We take things from Mao Tse-tung and Martin Luther King or anybody else applicable to what we are after."

Question: "Do you feel that a legitimate means of obtaining what you are after is armed violence or armed revolution?"

Answer: "I believe if we tried anything else we would end up like Dr. Martin Luther King."

He was later granted appeal bond, but the case was upheld and he was facing jail and planning a new appeal when he was killed. Hampton maintained that he was not in the park at the time of the robbery and that the arrest really resulted from his civil rights activity. "I may be a big dude, but I can't eat no 710 ice cream bars," he said.

"I just went to a wake where a young man had been shot in the head by the pigs," the Black Panther leader told the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee last June. "And you know this is bad. But it heightens the contradictions in the community. These things a lot of times organize the people better than we can organize ourselves."

For Fred Hampton, the contradictions between the black existence and the exercise of white power were such that he became a revolutionary. There is a saying that, in the early stages of revolution, there are only three places for a revolutionary: exile, jail or death, and Hampton, friends said, accepted the belief that he would be killed. And so, at this point in our history, in Chicago, which likes to call itself the most American of cities, perhaps the coroner's inquest could have reached another verdict, that voiced by a friend a few days after the shooting.

"Chairman Fred," he said, "died a natural death."

John Kifner is a New York Times reporter based in Chicago.
If we worry about what's going to happen to us, we couldn't accomplish anything. Justice is gonna come when the mass of people rise up and see justice done. The more they try to come down on us, the more we'll expose them for what they are...... Pigs
Lance Bell, a 20 year old member of the Black Panther Party, has been a political prisoner since November 1969. At that time, Lance witnessed one of the many armed attacks by the police on the Illinois chapter of the Party. The Chicago police attacked the community and one of the Panthers, Spurgeon “Jake” Winters defended himself and killed several policemen before he was shot to death. Lance Bell, who was witnessing the attack from the street, was arrested for the murder of two policemen. Less than a month later, the jig saw puzzle into which Lance Bell fit became crystal clear. On December 4, the Illinois state police murdered Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in cold blood. Fred never had a chance to get out of bed. That murder epitomized a campaign of terror and extermination by Federal, state, and local governments which has not yet ended. It stretches from Los Angeles to New York to New Haven, where they are trying to murder the Chairman of the Party, Bobby Seale. Lance Bell faces the electric chair. If we are to stop this government from exterminating black people in general and the Black Panther Party in particular we must attack every example of their terror. For more information contact:

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