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“AS LONG AS YOU’RE SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER—YOU’RE
SOUTH!”: THE RISE OF BLACK POWER IN NORTH OMAHA, NEBRASKA
THESIS

Presented in Full Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate School
of Texas Southern University

By

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“AS LONG AS YOU’RE SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER—YOU’RE
SOUTH!”: THE RISE OF BLACK POWER IN NORTH OMAHA, NEBRASKA

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CONTENT WARNING

This work includes themes of racism, torture, and violence that may be considered offensive, profane, and vulgar. Reader discretion is advised.

The author disagrees strongly with the themes above yet has no alternative but to include such topics in pursuit of an accurate socio-historic context that supports this thesis.

“AS LONG AS YOU’RE SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER—YOU’RE
SOUTH!”: THE RISE OF BLACK POWER IN NORTH OMAHA, NEBRASKA

By

William Odell Burney, MA

Texas Southern University, 2024

Distinguished Professor Cary D. Wintz, Advisor

The objective of this master’s thesis is to configure a socio-historic narrative in such a way that it clearly illustrates how and why much of North Omaha’s Black American collective transitioned from a mundane migratory movement to that of the Black Panther Party. To wholly comprehend the essence and relevance of Black Power one must understand its lesser-known evolution in locales such as Omaha, Nebraska, in the Midwest. Hopefully, this research will enhance a pre-existing trove that other historians may pull from to consider similarities and juxtapositions of causal dynamics that underpinned Black Power in different regions of the United States.

Regarding the arguments put forward, there are two. The foremost contention is that the physical manifestation of Black Power in North Omaha (the Black Panther Party and related persons or matters) did not occur in a vacuum; instead, it was a response to decades of violent dehumanization and a revolutionary function of necessity spawned for the physical defense and socio-political uplift of its people. Secondly, many agree with

what one of North Omaha's native sons, Malcolm X postulated during his politically charged 1964 *The Ballot or the Bullet* speech when he forcefully verbalized his thought that for Black folks, there was no difference between the North and the South concerning how they were treated. The intention here is to provide evidence that, although many Black people took flight toward various areas of the United States, including the Midwest, for a primary reason of escaping the criminally savage Jim Crow Deep South, they inevitably experienced what Malcolm meant by what he said.

The methodology is straight-forward in that *courte durées* (flashpoint events) within conjunctures, including their most impactful and impacted actors (people, places, and institutions), are utilized to develop a literary bridge connecting the Red Summer of 1919 to the Black Panther Party of the mid to late 1960s. This bridge will incorporate narrative planks based on the following: the Great Black Migration, the Great Depression, and the World War II and Civil Rights-Vietnam War Eras.

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Finally, I sincerely appreciate the quality guidance and instruction I've received from Texas Southern University and its faculty and staff. Dr. Cary D. Wintz, Dr. Jesus J. Esparza, Dr. Gregory H. Maddox, and Dr. Carla D. Brailey have been especially gracious in that they were more than willing to help navigate me through the thesis process. As I move forward on my academic path, through a PhD and even beyond, I know that I will never forget Tiger Nation.

INTRODUCTION

DEFINING BLACK POWER

“Black Power can be clearly defined for those who do not attach the fears of White America to their questions about it.”¹

Stokely Carmichael

Like the Phoenix, again and again, re-emerging from ashes of death and destruction, Black Power has consistently made itself known when called upon to defend and uplift its people.² No matter the odds, and even knowing at times that it will meet its temporary demise, it rises with a majestic aura. Crowned with glory and honor, and armed with a flaming sword of justice, Black Power leaves no doubt that it is indeed the vanguard of its subaltern group’s *will to reach the Sun*.³ If its true nature is to be meaningfully comprehended, then it is imperative that one first separates fact from fiction, just as Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture) suggested in 1966.

In America, Black Power is not “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country”; to the contrary, it is the antidote for deep-rooted corruption of agencies such as J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI during the 1960s and 1970s, and it is a militant stance against decades and even centuries of police brutality perpetrated upon physical reflections of itself.⁴ Black Power is neither anti-White nor pro-Black, both of which are highly fragile

¹ Stokely Carmichael, “What We Want,” 5.

² See ‘Appendix A’.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Hoover and the F.B.I.,” PBS.org.

and superficial caricatures of loyalty; instead, it encourages faithful adherence to a Black-first philosophy, which is no more insidious than the White-first doctrine firmly put forward by the United States of America's so-called Founding Fathers. Black Power does not wish to integrate and pollute the blood of White America; it only demands that its citizens are not segregated like *rabid dogs in a kennel*. Black Power has no desire to dismantle the illusion of the American *Dream*; rather, it is understandably hell-bent on bringing an end to its lived American *Nightmare*. Black Power is in no way a savage representation of Black America; it is the antithesis of White Power incarnations such as that which nefariously inspired the 1921 Black Tulsa Race Massacre. In no uncertain terms, highly influential persons and institutions of this nation have desperately tried to convince others that Black Power is a repulsive, communist stain on America's *flawless, White as snow* republic; upon further review and much to their dismay, it turns out that Black Power is *as American as apple pie*.



Tommie Smith (center) and John Carlos (right) with fists held high for Black Power at the 1968 Mexico Olympics, during the medal ceremony and playing of the United States national anthem

Image 1 (See 'List of Images')

Its Enduring Soul and Its American Relevance

The ethos of Black Power has neither beginning nor end; it faithfully advances on a continuum of time-bound evolutions and imperative manifestations.⁵ Evidenced by the eternally Supreme West African God Olorun and the earthly Nubian Kingdom of Kush, it has always been here.⁶ Whether personified through fierce warriors such as Queen Amina of Zazzau in Nigeria or by way of altruistic strength in men like South African President Nelson Mandela and Jamaica's own Marcus Garvey, it is ever-present.⁷ Toussaint L'Ouverture harnessed Black Power to lead enslaved Haitians as they forcefully liberated themselves from French rule, and over one-hundred years later, the Maji Maji of Tanzania summoned it in the form of Islamic animist magic to solidify their determined thrust of rebellion against German colonization.⁸ Modern American expressions of Black Power should not be overlooked, including but certainly not limited to Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panther Party.

Citizens of the United States have undeservedly benefited, in a significant way, from satisfying fruits of Black Power's labor. One could argue, for example, that if there had been no Harlem Renaissance, Black Arts Movement, or The Sugarhill Gang's *Rapper's Delight*, there would have been no meaningful culture in America. Without BB King, there would be no Elvis Presley; without legendary athletes such as Satchel Paige, Bill Russell, and Jim Brown, the world of sports would have much less influence. And it should never be forgotten that Black Power rescued America from the possibility of

⁵ See 'Appendix A'.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

suffering through a lifetime of tasteless dishes by introducing soul food and barbecue, not to mention banana pudding, coffee, and even watermelon, which has often been associated with disgusting caricatures of Black culture but is quite literally one of the healthiest fruits on Earth.

More profoundly impactful than the above, without the agrarian and industrious toil of Foundational Black Americans (both freed and enslaved), there would be no need for debate on the benefits and detriments of capitalism because the current trillion-dollar plantation, which American elites and their White suburban fanatics constantly laud would not exist. Worse than this, it may not even be a nation if not for all-Black military units that were historically loyal to a country that was reprehensibly disloyal to them; even going back to the Revolutionary War and the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, they served. Had it not been for the utterly unselfish bravery of Black men such as those in the 54th Massachusetts Union Regiment during the Civil War, the global community today would plausibly refer to their country as the *Divided* States of America; thus, brilliant authors such as Ta-Nehisi Coates may not have emerged from *The Mecca* (Howard University), being that the transcendental sway of Black Power moved a White Civil War Union general to establish this Washington DC school for freed Black Men and Women.⁹ And one would be remiss if he or she failed to mention the Buffalo Soldiers, Harlem Hellfighters, and Tuskegee Airmen.

Devoid of the literary courage of WEB Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and James Baldwin, the voiceless may still have no voice, and the invisible may still be hidden. If

⁹ “The Semi-Centennial of Howard University,” *Howard University Record*, 5.

not for the lyrical symphonies that flowed from the pen of Maya Angelou, the World would never genuinely know *Why the Caged Bird Sings*. And well before Billy Graham toured the nation in continuance of the centuries-old tactic of spreading the Gospel variety of White nationalism through a weaponized religion based on a *blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesus*, Black Power had already begun disseminating spiritual truth about the Christ who had *hair like wool and feet the color of brass*.

Before the Black Lives Matter Movement benefitted non-Black groups such as LGBT and Asian Americans, Black Power had been hard at work for itself and others in the United States for decades. It utilized Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad to liberate its people from chattel slavery. A. Phillip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and Hattie Canty sparked labor movements to the benefit of all. Over twenty years before the savage beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, California, Black Panthers and Brown Berets were uniting in other parts of the country as a physical and political shield of protection, standing between their people and police brutality.¹⁰ Both The Civil and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960s were spearheaded by Black leaders and organizations, including martyrs Medgar Evers and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the NAACP. Yet, even though these and so many more positive Black Power influences were woven into the fabric of the American experience, many in the nation continue to insist that its roots are exceedingly toxic. This sentiment is both false and utterly shameful, and it must always be argued that never-ending stories of Black American heroism and triumph are deserving of being told in an unbelievable way that

¹⁰ Burney, "Research Paper," 6; See 'Appendix A'.

rivals or even supersedes those told of the Greek gods of ancient times.¹¹

Its Presence in Omaha, Nebraska

Understandably, one may be puzzled as to why this author deems it necessary to go to such great lengths to portray Black Power reverently in such a way that it is seemingly guilty of no wrongdoing. Why is its presence in the birthplace of an old, rich White man named Warren Buffett significant?

Foremost, it is a historian's duty to, as much as possible, tear down distorted socio-historic narratives in such a way that they may be properly balanced or even reconstructed, and no other figurative or literal entity in American history has been falsely accused and denigrated more so than Black Power. Much like what happened to Emmett Till in 1955, Black Power has been historically abducted, tortured, and lynched for its crime of offending an ultra-sensitive and frail White America. And just as Emmett's mother Mamie insisted that his funeral be open casket so that all could see the tragic results of man's inhumanity to man, the dehumanizing lies and hypocrisy which have been unjustly projected onto Black Power should likewise be exposed.¹²

The name and story of Emmett Till should never be erased from our history and, try though they may, Black Power should not be erased either nor can it be, for it is indeed eternal. More than this, Black Power and its people are inextricably tied together; whether in Eternal Paradise, the Motherland, the Black Atlantic, the Americas, or anywhere else—where they reside, so too does Black Power. And this leads to the

¹¹ Burney, "Census Data Assignment," 19.

¹² See 'Appendix A'.

import of its presence in North Omaha, Nebraska.

Horrendous events like what happened to Till in the Mississippi Delta and the social conditions that bred them were not supposed to occur or exist beyond the dark confines of the Jim Crow Deep South. For many Southern Black folks of the mid to late 19th century, this was the utopian vision they had of other regions of the United States during and after the Civil War, especially regarding America's Heartland (the Midwest), which includes the state of Nebraska. Consequently, as soon as it was legal and feasible, hundreds of thousands of southern Black folks packed up all they owned and, with Black Power in tow, headed northward toward a new frontier, many of whom settled in Omaha, Nebraska. The impetus for this mass migration was multi-faceted in that the pursuit of educational and economic opportunities was considered along with their hopeful desire to escape the race-based and violent oppression of Jim Crow.¹³ Still, Father Time is undefeated when it comes to revealing truth, and Black folks who took part in this exodus quickly discovered that this midwestern mirage of the American *Dream* was no more than a southern extension of their seemingly endless American *Nightmare*. The objective in the heart of a nation supposedly now united remained the same, except that the modes by which this mission was accomplished would slightly change. Primarily, the only relevant differences between Omaha, Nebraska, and Charleston, South Carolina, were that it was 20° colder, and corn was king, not cotton.

As time moved forward, so too did the vice of Jim Crow-like racial intimidation and segregation, which was further exacerbated by the destruction of Black minds,

¹³ "African American Heritage," National Archives.

bodies, and communities. Although it may have seemed at times that Black Power had left its people for dead, it did not; instead, it extended patience and grace to Omaha's White citizenry and institutions in hopes that they would reverse course and reflect what America said it was on paper. Through the Red Summer of 1919, the lynching of Will Brown, the Omaha Race Riots of the 1960s, and the Civil Rights Movement, it was always hovering over its North Omaha Black collective, which it so adored—never allowing them to suffer more than they could bear. However, knowing that it would likely have to take an aggressive stance and fight in defense of its people who would be hemmed in on Omaha's north side, Black Power was all the while strategically maneuvering itself in a significant way behind the scenes.

Like the Holy Trinity, it was using persons, events, and institutions to prepare the way for itself to come off its celestial throne and enter a body of flesh born on 3448 Pinkney Street in North Omaha on May 19, 1925; *Black Jesus* would soon leave for the next destination on his divine trek but briefly returned home in 1964. The following year, envy, corruption, and irrational fear conspired to assassinate Black Power's *Only Begotten Son* behind an Audubon Ballroom podium in New York City. Yet, in North Omaha, Nebraska, the *Black Spirit* he left behind would shortly after that be utilized as Black Power's active force of liberation and, in some ways, vengeance. With a fist held high and an emphatic mantra declaring *All Power to the People!* it removed their *veil*, began to deliver them from a debilitating *double consciousness*, and forced Omaha's White collective to witness the justified wrath of *The Souls of Black Folk*—past, present, and future. In the summer of 1966, Black Power made it forcefully clear that it would protect, serve, and inspire its North Omaha kindred *by any means necessary!*

Its Historiographic Significance in North Omaha

The objective of this thesis is to configure a socio-historic narrative in such a way that it clearly illustrates how and why much of North Omaha's Black American collective transitioned from a mundane migratory movement to that of the Black Panther Party. To wholly comprehend the essence and relevance of Black Power one must understand its lesser-known evolution in locales such as Omaha, Nebraska, in the Midwest. There is not meaningful, in-depth work that accomplishes this concerning North Omaha specifically. Hopefully, this research will enhance a pre-existing trove of piecemeal considerations that other historians may pull from to consider similarities and possible juxtapositions of causal dynamics that underpinned Black Power in different regions of the United States.

Regarding the arguments put forward, there are two. The foremost contention is that the physical manifestation of Black Power in North Omaha (the Black Panther Party and related persons or matters) did not occur in a vacuum; instead, it was a response to decades of violent de-humanization, and a revolutionary function of necessity spawned for the physical defense and socio-political uplift of its people.

Secondarily, many agree with what one of North Omaha's native sons, Malcolm X postulated during his politically charged 1964 *The Ballot or the Bullet* speech when he forcefully verbalized his thought that for Black folks, there was no difference between the North and the South concerning how they were treated. The intention here is to provide evidence that, although many Black people took flight toward various areas of the United States, including the Midwest, for a primary reason of escaping the criminally savage Jim Crow Deep South, they inevitably experienced what Malcolm meant by what he said.

The methodology is straight-forward in that *courte durées* (flashpoint events) within conjunctures, including their most impactful and impacted actors (people, places, and institutions), are utilized to develop a literary bridge connecting the Red Summer of 1919 to the Black Panther Party of the mid to late 1960s. This bridge will incorporate narrative planks based on the following: the Great Black Migration, the Great Depression, the World War II Era, and the Civil Rights-Vietnam War Era.

CHAPTER 1

THE UNFORESEEN PERIL OF MIGRATING THROUGH DEPRESSION

“Stop talkin’ about the South! As long as you’re south of the Canadian border—you’re south!”¹⁴

Malcolm X

During the First Great Migration beginning in the early 20th century, the state of Nebraska was one of several destinations for many southern Black folks. They embarked on what they no doubt dreamed would be an invigorating journey to a new world of true freedom, economic prosperity, and, most importantly, one in which their Black minds and bodies would be sheltered from barbaric acts of White mobs and their supporting institutions. Through decades prior, they had only experienced reconstructed modes by which their soul and dark skin were still criminalized and denigrated, and this despite being supposedly freed by Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. The Black Codes and Jim Crow statutes that were established by legislation and vigorously enforced through practice during and after the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877) made it clear to Black folks of the Deep South that the only distinction between a slave *n****** and a free *n****** is that the former was where their absolute worth to southern Whites ended. As such, these migrating Black people held tight to a persistent hope that their American experience and that of their children’s children would be different in the

¹⁴ “Malcolm X’s Legendary Speech,” 20th Century Time Machine. (See ‘Appendix C’)

Midwest *oasis*.

Specific to Omaha, shortly before the turn of the 20th century, there were nearly a thousand Black citizens dispersed within its borders, many of whom were brought in as strikebreakers by Union Pacific Railroad.¹⁵ By 1900, this number more than tripled, yet their collective was still only a minute portion of the over one-hundred thousand total population.¹⁶ During this time, they were not a significant threat that needed to be *dealt with*, but that soon changed.

Over the next two decades, railroad companies, including national powerhouses Burlington Northern and the previously mentioned Union Pacific, continued to aggressively recruit southern Black workers, and Omaha's burgeoning stockyard and meat-packing industry was also a strong draw.¹⁷ This was an immense factor in Omaha's Black American population increasing to more than ten thousand by 1920, over five percent of its entire populace.¹⁸ To put this into perspective, the only American city at the time that had a larger Black population was Los Angeles, California in the West, and this rapid acceleration of growth coupled with other variables increasingly agitated many non-Black groups, most notably the mass of Omaha's native White working class.¹⁹

Nearly simultaneous to the Great Black Migration, this city was also dealing with an influx of Asian and European immigrants that led to two significant inter-communal conflicts. In 1905, eight hundred White students, nearly all children of meat-packing

¹⁵ Taylor, *In Search of a New Frontier*, 193.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ Lawson, "Omaha, A City in Ferment," 403.

¹⁸ United States Census Bureau, "Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Population," 47 and 590.

¹⁹ Taylor, *In Search of a New Frontier*, 205; "For Action on Race Riot Peril," *The New York Times*, 2.

employees, locked teachers and Japanese students out of *their* South Omaha schools in protest of Asian families being brought in as strikebreakers.²⁰ Four years after that, again in the south of the city, The Greek Town Riot left a significant segment of Greeks displaced, and many were physically wounded as a result of a few thousand White men essentially burning their neighborhood to the ground.²¹ The first noted case of mob violence against Blacks in Omaha occurred on the 4th of July in 1910 after the *Galveston Giant* Jack Johnson, a Black boxing legend, defeated the *Great White Hope* Jim Jeffries in what was dubbed the *Fight of the Century*; White men roamed the streets, murdering one Black Man and injuring many others.²²

Add these events to the 1915 silent film release of *The Birth of a Nation* and its renewed influence on the Ku Klux Klan, America's entry into World War I in 1917 coinciding with anxiety-packed labor unrest, and an officially established NAACP Omaha chapter in 1918, and you have a fully loaded, racial powder keg sprinting downhill toward the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. But before slamming into this bout of misery, it made a stop on North Omaha's historical timeline shortly after the national Red Summer of 1919, where it was ignited by one of the most sadistic acts of White-on-Black savagery in United States history.²³

²⁰ "Revolt over Japanese," *The New York Times*.

²¹ "South Omaha Mob Wars on Greeks," *The New York Times*.

²² See 'Appendix A'. (See 'Appendix C'); "Omaha Negro Killed," *The New York Times*.

²³ *Ibid*; "Omaha Mob Hangs and Burns Negro who Assaulted Girl."



The charred body of Will Brown, a Black American Man whom Whites lynched during the Omaha Race Riot of 1919 after being accused of raping a White woman. A crowd of White men, women, and children are gathered around the body, posing, and even smiling for this photograph
Image 2 (See 'List of Images')

Omaha's Bloody Fall of 1919

No other singular image in American history magnifies the lowest point of negative potentiality for White America's degenerate and bestial nature than the one above. It is a searing reminder that although public executions, in general, have proven to be historically impartial to color, the most ferocious exhibits of intimidation are reserved for *Blacks Only*; it is evidence that not all lynchings are created equal. This flashpoint event in Omaha, Nebraska, no doubt infuriated Black Power to such an extent that it had no alternative but to engage in much more organized and forceful ways to protect its

Black kinfolk.

Forest Lawn Cemetery in North Omaha is home to Will Brown's grave, which went unmarked until 2009, without even the basic human dignity of a headstone. He was accused of raping a teenage White girl by the name of Agnes Loeback on the date of September 25, 1919. Initially, she told local authorities that Brown was the perpetrator. However, this was later recanted as she expressed uncertainty as to whether he was indeed the man who raped her. Nevertheless, Will Brown was taken into custody and held in Omaha's Douglas County Courthouse, from which he was eventually dragged out by crazed White vigilantes who were never going to be satisfied with even prejudicial justice.

His desperate declarations of innocence were muted by the pummeling of his Black body by White fists, boots, and baseball bats. Yet, justice was not served. This White mob, by action, declared themselves to be Brown's tribunal of judge, jury, and executioner as they tore off his clothes and proceeded to hang him by the neck from a telephone pole on 18th Street, only a short distance from the courthouse. Still, for them, justice was in no way content. As Will's naked humanity dangled lifelessly from the noose, they riddled his flesh with hundreds of bullets before cutting the rope and allowing gravity to finish their intended work of shattering every bone in his body. Yet and still, they concurred that justice had not been duly compensated for his unlawful act committed 40 years before his supposed rape of a White woman—the *crime* of being born Black in America; for this, no degree of physical death by torturous lynching was savage enough. September 28, 1919, was capped off by what could be abstractly described as White Omaha's sacrifice to their *blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesus* and an act

of fealty to their *flawless, White as snow* republic. Men, women, and children gathered in the entertainment district of Omaha to witness the spectacle of Will Brown's corpse being doused with flammable liquids and set on fire. Following this, they paraded his charred remains throughout downtown as a reminder that Black people were about as welcome in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1919 as they were in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1819.

Today, general controversy and disagreement among scholars linger around the circumstances of Will Brown's lynching and the ensuing Omaha Race Riot of 1919. Was Brown even physically capable of committing such a crime given that he had, at minimum, mildly acute immobility in his joints, hands, and feet due to a diagnosed condition of suffering from rheumatoid arthritis? Were Brown's murder and the riot weaponized for political purposes? Most intriguing, was everything associated with these events no more than a coincidental intersection of combustible social factors? Or were they flashpoints of an inevitable firestorm brewing for centuries nationwide and for decades in Omaha, Nebraska? The first three inquiries are undoubtedly worthy of further consideration, and it must not be ignored that all four are in many ways bound together; however, the principal purpose of this thesis leads this author to a firm contention that the fourth curiosity is most vital to the rise of Black Power in North Omaha.

Days before Will Brown's physical body was put to death by White Power, *The Omaha Daily Bee* proclaimed that a *Black beast* had assaulted a White girl, and this incendiary, race-based headline was an extension of those that had been spread far north and west of the Mason-Dixon line for decades leading up to the nationwide Red Summer

of 1919.²⁴ White citizens of Omaha were consistently bombarded with similar reports from their local news outlets, including *The Omaha World-Herald*, that Black men were rampantly victimizing their women and girls, and that local authorities were unable or unwilling to protect them and their White community at large. This prompted an extra-legal battle cry among many of Omaha's White men to shield both from a supposed onslaught of Black barbarity, no matter the cost. It also exacerbated an already palpable atmosphere of racial tension spurred by various sources of discontent, such as those that arose during and after World War I.

As more Black people came to Omaha as strikebreakers and later to fill employment vacancies caused by the war's draft, angst between White and Black laborers intensified exponentially. White WWI veterans came home to a heated competition with Black men who replaced them in the labor market and generally produced the same quality of work or better while being compensated with less money and benefits. This stirred up a war for jobs in Omaha, and Black Americans quickly became public enemy number one. For Black men who served in the war, their return yielded only another disheartening bout of American *déjà vu*. No different than their predecessors from Rhode Island during the American Revolution, the 54th Civil War Regiment of Massachusetts, or the Buffalo Soldiers, they were again loyal to a nation that was still unapologetically disloyal to them. What should have been a hero's welcome waiting for them in Omaha, Nebraska, was realized as something no different than what Black men likely came home to in Charleston, South Carolina. The same injustice,

²⁴ "Negro Assaults Young Girl while Male Escort stands by," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

dehumanization, and unequal opportunity that was present when they left continued to thrive in the fertile ground of racism in America's Heartland. White Power quickly reinforced an illusionary superiority infrastructure, like that which was rooted in the Deep South. Akin to *rabid dogs in a Jim Crow kennel*, Black folks would soon be segregated to the north of southern Whites. In short order, Omaha became a midwestern cesspool for what was supposed to be uniquely southern White-on-Black prejudice, intimidation, and violence. Black people were to *stay in their place* or suffer the consequences, the foremost being the threat of lynching.

After the release of *The Birth of a Nation*, over fifty Black Americans per year were executed by lynching across the country, and that number increased to nearly eighty in 1919.²⁵ This statistic does not include the one hundred plus who were killed because of rioting that occurred in over twenty United States cities during the Red Summer of 1919. Provocative newspaper reporting on lynching and other racial violence played a significant role in condoning this sort of vigilante justice, particularly when paired with stories of White women being raped by Black men. Adding to this dynamic in Omaha, there was an intense political struggle between a more recent progressive movement and an already profoundly entrenched conservative political machine led by Tom Ole' Man Dennison. *The Omaha Daily Bee* was Dennison's vessel of propaganda, and he utilized it as he delved into the age-old playbook of criminally caricaturizing Omaha's Black community and sensationalizing racial transgressions. To counter this narrative, Reverend John Albert Williams, founder of Omaha's first local NAACP branch in 1918, made use

²⁵ Brown, *The Story of the American Negro*, 115.

of socio-political rhetoric and a Black newspaper known as *The Monitor* to aggressively implore the editors of *The Omaha Daily Bee* and *The Omaha World-Herald* to cease their nefarious slander of Black folks that was leading to unnecessary casualties.²⁶ Even so, the virulent influence of Dennison, his organization, and *The Daily Bee* proved exceptionally difficult to uproot.

Jim Cowboy Dahlman served as mayor of Omaha for over a decade, from 1906 to 1918.²⁷ He was cherry-picked by Dennison and his band of wealthy elite thugs to do their bidding, and this ensured that the Ole' Man, at least for a time, maintained a vise-grip on the city's journalistic and monetary resources, its police department, and its entire justice system. When Democrat Edward P. Smith usurped Dahlman in 1918, many of his fellow Christian reform advocates quickly moved to eradicate gambling, prostitution, and drinking, which were now rampant in Omaha's poverty-stricken Third Ward due primarily to willful negligence and corruption that were both normalized by Dennison and his political *accomplices*.²⁸ Newly appointed police commissioner Dean Lily White Ringer's vow to clean up the city was thwarted by his department's still evident loyalty to the Ole' Man and his Ole' ways.²⁹ *The Daily Bee* did Ringer no favors in this regard either, as it ensured that the already propagated irrational fear of Black men set in motion by Dennison's machine in the early 1900s was ratcheted up to maximum efficacy.

The Bee vehemently suggested it was the newly installed government that was

²⁶ "Held to District Court on Very Meagre Evidence," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 1.

²⁷ Morearty, *Omaha Memories*, 107.

²⁸ Leighton, *Five Cities*, 192, 209, and 609.

²⁹ Rickard, "The Politics of Reform in Omaha, 1918-1921," 427.

unequivocally responsible for a spike in criminal activity from 1918 to 1919, not the old guard. Consequently, many White citizens of Omaha aggressively called for the removal of Smith and the reestablishment of Dennison's regime, which they believed effectively subdued the *savage* nature of *their* city's Black population, thereby protecting White citizens. A ferocious storm infused with political warfare, racial intolerance, labor unrest, and shocking tales of *Black beasts* roaming the streets to prey on White women under the light of a full moon had touched down in Omaha, Nebraska, and both Edward P. Smith and Will Brown were soon enough caught up in it.

Despite multiple reports that Brown, a meat-packinghouse employee, was unable to commit the supposed crime due to severe rheumatism, Milton Hoffman, Loebach's boyfriend who was with her at the time she was assaulted, refused to consider Brown's innocence. In the early afternoon of September 28th, he persuaded a couple hundred young White men to assist him in seizing Will Brown from the courthouse.³⁰ As they marched, their number of followers grew until they arrived at the south side of the building a short time later. There were now close to five hundred in the mob, all foaming at the mouth in anticipation of their clash with the new regime's police officers, who formed the only barricade between them and the *Black beast* they so abhorred. With a handful of irrational agitators in the lead, their mission to "get the nigger and lynch him!" would soon be reinforced by horses, rope, bats, bricks, Molotov cocktails, and thousands of fellow White *accomplices* who began taking control of the courthouse on all sides.³¹ Close to the 6:00 pm hour, Omaha's police force of less than one hundred men gave way

³⁰ See 'Appendix A'; "Girl Identifies Assailant," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

³¹ "Omaha Mob Hangs and Burns Negro who Assaulted Girl." *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

to this vicious pack of White vigilantes. Billy clubs, fire hoses, and hollow threats of discharged weapons down hallways and elevator shafts were no match for the seemingly impenetrable savagery of the invading execution squad. Whether intentional or unintentional, Omaha's *thin blue line* failed Will Brown and even justice itself.

In a frail attempt to restore order and regain control of the courthouse that was battered and breached on every side, Mayor Smith and Police Chief Marshall Eberstein finally arrived and attempted to quell this unlawful act of White terrorism using passive rhetoric. As one might imagine, their more than reasonable request was met with delirious demand, and it quickly became apparent that even the pale skin of Edward Smith could not save him from the fury of the Ole' Man's White adherents.

Shouts of "lynch the damn Jew!" began resonating from the violent mob who had by now all but completely subdued whatever police presence remained, stripping them of their badges and revolvers; Black folks in the immediate area were severely beaten, and Whites who attempted to help them suffered the same fate.³² After sundown, a massive fire broke out in the courthouse, fueled by gas stolen from a nearby filling station. Shots began to ring out from rifles and other firearms, especially after the Clark & Townsend Gun Company facility and local pawnshops were looted. Coming out of the building's east doors on 17th Street, the Mayor again attempted to address the rioters, imploring them to let due process run its course; his plea fell on deaf ears of the *partial* jury of Agnes Loebach's White peers who had already determined the punishment for a *guilty* Will Brown. And for his *crime* of even suggesting that a Black man in Omaha was

³² "Frenzied Thousands Join in Orgy of Blood and Fire," 2.

worthy of receiving a fair trial, Edward P. Smith was bludgeoned over the head with the butt of a rifle over a dozen times before being dragged down Harney Street with a noose around his neck. On a traffic signal tower at 16th Street, they attempted to execute him by hanging, but he was rescued at the last minute by a man named Russell Norgaard.³³ Conveniently, Nebraska State Trooper Ben Danbaum, a high-ranking Omaha officer under Dennison, arrived at the scene with an emergency vehicle and armed police reinforcements to whisk Smith away to Ford Hospital.³⁴ Meanwhile, the White mob remained steadfast in completing its mission.

The rioters returned to the courthouse and threw more and more gasoline into the building, causing an already significant inferno to spread and intensify even further; the police and their prisoners retreated to the 2nd floor. The effort of local firefighters to put out the engulfing flames was severely handicapped by the physical force of the mob and equipment being destroyed. The rioters stole and used their ladders to infiltrate the 2nd floor through already broken windows. Overpowered and with every exit blocked by armed men, the police and sheriff's deputies continued their withdraw, with Brown and over one hundred inmates in convoy. They eventually took their White prisoners to the rooftop to be saved and gave the *n****** up to the deranged mob's representatives on the 4th floor to meet his fate.³⁵ With Brown appropriately secured by a rope around his neck, like the *wild animal* he was, they hauled him down three flights of stairs before handing him over to the horde of executioners anxiously awaiting his arrival on the south side of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid; "U.S. Troops Policing Omaha Bring Disorders to an End," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

³⁵ Ibid.

the courthouse.³⁶ They went on to *proudly* fulfill their duty of ensuring that justice was served correctly in the case of Omaha's White *beauty* versus just another Black *beast*.

At least five thousand White folks lined the celebratory parade route of Will Brown's murder and scorched remains. Toward its end, they were joined by Fort Omaha's United States Army personnel, who had just arrived even though Chief Eberstein sent out multiple requests for assistance much earlier in the day. In addition to asking for federal help, calls went out to the nearby police force of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and even the Lancaster County Home Guard, where Nebraska's capital, Lincoln, is located. However, only excuses for why they could not assist were given in response.³⁷ It was not until well after 10:00 pm that federal troops arrived, and their top two priorities were protecting the Douglas County Courthouse and preventing *chaos* in Omaha's *Black districts*. Meanwhile, they allowed the public trial, murder, and subsequent humiliation of Will Brown and his Black Omaha brethren to commence. Finally, at 2:00 a.m., a detachment of over three hundred soldiers armed with rifles and automatic weapons cleared the streets.³⁸

Roughly two thousand military personnel were brought in from South Dakota, Iowa, and Kansas, and two days after the Brown lynching, Army Major General Leonard Wood set foot in Omaha to take command. He assigned one unit to cover the city auditorium, three to fortify the courthouse, four to supposedly protect Black

³⁶ Menard, "Lest We Forget," 161; "Omaha Mob Hangs and Burns Negro who Assaulted Girl".

³⁷ Hartman, *Nebraska's Militia*, 97.

³⁸ "U.S. Troops Policing Omaha Bring Disorders to an End," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

neighborhoods in both North and South Omaha, and zero to monitor White neighborhoods. These eight companies of federal troops were strategically whittled down to two that remained on riot duty until they were relieved well into November. One guarded the courthouse, and the other stood watch to the north at 24th and Lake Streets on the *dark side* of town.³⁹

Despite the inhumane and unjust execution of Will Brown, multiple other fatalities, nearly one hundred reports of severe bodily injury, destroyed land and tax records, and a county courthouse damaged to the tune of over one million dollars, no *meaningful* punishment was enforced upon those who committed these crimes. Although a half-hearted promise made by the County Attorney to prosecute the rioters to the full extent of the law did result in 189 indictments. Still, these only led to a misdemeanor and relatively few low-level felony convictions.⁴⁰ Sixteen White jurors, including Dennison loyalist and former Omaha Chief of Police Henry W. Dunn, considered all counts ranging from inciting a riot to arson and even to the murder of Brown but returned with a verdict of not guilty for the most blatantly egregious crimes committed.

The grand jury's final report placed blame on everyone and everything except White Power and its race-based, irrational fear of Black men. There was a brief mention of their disappointment with the presence of *obstacles* to their investigation, including police obstruction and uncooperative eyewitnesses. However, much of what was stated mirrored that which was headlined in newspapers regarding the national Red Summer Riots of 1919. Physical assaults on White women and socio-economic class warfare were

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

presented as the two foremost conditional agitators in Omaha, and there was no direct mention of local politics or racism as being factors.⁴¹

An interesting twist in the backstory of the Omaha Race Riot of 1919 is that Milton Hoffman worked for the Ole' Man's political campaign in 1916, and he immediately moved to Denver, Colorado, after the riot, where he and Agnes Loeback were married. One of Tom Dennison's closest allies, Vaso Chucovich, just so happened to be a long-time resident of Denver and was a wealthy political donor who ran illegal gambling and liquor establishments.⁴² This tie to Hoffman, along with his weaponization of *The Omaha Daily Bee*, his local influence, and his psychotic obsession with discrediting Smith as Mayor, begs the question—was the Ole' Man, at minimum, indirectly responsible for the murder of Will Brown? Did he intentionally water what he knew to be an already seeded and fertile ground of racial hatred in Nebraska and the Midwest? After all, his goon squad, also known as the Omaha Police Department, murdered Eugene Scott, a Black bellhop, just weeks before the White mob executed Brown on September 28th.⁴³ This crime was committed under the pretense that the young man was resisting arrest. Make no mistake, the Department was still under the corrupt thumb of the Ole' Man in 1919 despite Smith winning the election the year before. Whatever the absolute truth may be, the socio-political atmosphere in Omaha following the lynching of Brown was quite telling.

Charred remains of a human being were on full display in the middle of *their*

⁴¹ "Final Report in the Case of Willy Brown," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 3.

⁴² Kreck, "Denver's Brotherhoods," *The Denver Post*.

⁴³ Menard, "Tom Dennison, The Omaha Bee..." and the 1919 Omaha Race Riot," 157.

entertainment district. Yet, not one White soul, working-class or elite, mustered up the courage to *adamantly* denounce the savage murder that occurred, neither through rhetoric nor legal conviction. *Their* county courthouse and businesses within its immediate vicinity were all but burned to the ground at the hands of thousands of *their* men, yet supposedly only a tiny number witnessed these criminal acts and those that did claim they had no clear recollection or knowledge of who, what, where, when, and why? The lynching of *Black beasts* seemed to be overwhelmingly approved and justified by White folks in this 20th-century midwestern *oasis*, just as it had been in the 19th-century Deep South. Instead of expressing collective remorse through sincere apology and effective alleviation of racial hatred following the shameful slaughter of Brown, they chose to support and perpetuate the residential herding of *Black beasts* into the north side of *their* city.

Most ominous of all, Tom Ole' Man Dennison's political machine was placed back in power after the 1920 election, and in 1921, Nebraska Klavern Number One was planted in Omaha by the Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁴ Over a short, two-year period, KKK membership in this city grew to over 10,000, with nearly 50,000 across the entire state.⁴⁵ Like two massive locomotives approaching one another on the same track, White Power and Black Power were headed toward an inevitable collision, and their respective peoples were now firmly segregated—Whites to the south and Blacks to the north.

⁴⁴ "Exclusive Pictures of First Ku Klux Klan Initiation in Nebraska," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 6.

⁴⁵ Treick, proj. ed., "Nebraska Klan," from the group project *Kampus Klan*.

Though They Walked through the Valley of Death

It goes without saying that by now, *The Souls of Omaha's Black Folk* were crushed under the weight of an unearned shame and unrelenting terror, identical to that which many of them had previously experienced in the Deep South. But they were not alone in their suffering, for the *Good Shepherd* was never far away; it would neither leave nor forsake them. As it had done so many times before, Black Power ensured that its precious North Omaha flock would, even amidst its enemies, rise again. To fight back against various forms of abuse and injustice perpetrated upon its people in Nebraska, Black Power deployed both diplomatic and militant activism as its *rod* of protection and *staff* of guidance — “Even though [they] walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, [they] fear no evil, for [Black Power is] with [them]; [its] rod and [its] staff, they comfort and console [them].”⁴⁶ This assurance, paired with its flock’s spirituality and excellence, fostered a measure of solitude and hardened their already resilient nature.

Decades before the Omaha Riot of 1919, seeds of Black leadership were already being planted, and North Omaha’s Reverend Russel Taylor was one of its most notable pioneers in this regard. He was a brilliant alum of Omaha Presbyterian Theological Seminary at the turn of the 20th century and a fierce advocate for Black pride. As pastor and professor, Rev. Taylor first made an influential impact in Oklahoma at its only Historically Black College, Langston University. From there, he spread the Gospel throughout different states before returning to Omaha, but not before a pivotal stay in Empire, Wyoming, a locale founded by Black homesteaders and Omaha natives Charles

⁴⁶ Psa. 23:4 (Amplified Bible).

and Rosetta Spees in 1908.

With support from the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen and through his determined authority, Rev. Taylor was instrumental in transforming this rural, East Wyoming-West Nebraska border town into a haven of Black excellence, even if only briefly.⁴⁷ The Reverend wholeheartedly believed that Black American children should be taught exclusively by physical reflections of themselves; thus, he embraced a Black nationalist perspective on voluntary or natural segregation, which was evident in his establishment of the all-Black Empire school in 1911.⁴⁸ It stands to reason that his outlook lessened the sting of forced and dehumanizing segregation, which was the law at that time in the state of Wyoming, although he still often called out harsh mistreatment of Black folks via local newspapers when necessary.⁴⁹ Additionally, he secured the town's first United States Post Office in 1912 and planted Empire's Grace Presbyterian Church along with Sheep Creek Presbyterian Church just across the Nebraska state line in 1916; ironically, both congregations were integrated and predominantly White.⁵⁰

To his people in Empire, Rev. Russel Taylor was a beacon of hope in a sunless ravine, but to White Power he was just another Black man that needed to be *dealt with*. The community that he so proudly galvanized was economically suffocated as Whites refused to patronize Black-owned stores or purchase their farm goods. His son and brother were both gunned down by local sheriffs without cause, and in 1920, just one

⁴⁷ Guenther, "The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand," *Nebraska History*, 186.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *General Laws, Memorials, and Resolutions of...the Territory of Wyoming, 1869*, 227-230.

*This set of state segregation laws would remain in effect in Wyoming until the US Supreme Court's 1954 federal ruling in 'Brown v. Board of Education' (See 'Appendix A')

⁵⁰ Guenther, "The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand," *Nebraska History*, 185.

year after the lynching of Will Brown, he and his family returned to North Omaha, where they established St. Paul's Presbyterian Church.⁵¹

Resting on the corner of North 26th and Seward Streets, this segregated, all-Black place of worship became one of the most important gathering spots for Black activism in Omaha, Nebraska.⁵² Reverend Taylor wasted no time organizing fellow Black men to advocate for the betterment of their people, including civil rights. As he did in Empire, he encouraged Omaha's Black citizenry to embrace segregation of their neighborhoods and schools as a positive benefit to their uplift. Based on this premise, one of the earliest Black economic organizations in the United States, was formed by Rev. Taylor and Nebraska's first Black American lawyer, Harrison J. Pinkett; they named it the Omaha Colored Commercial Club.⁵³ Through this institution, they kept vital monetary and other resources within their communities while assisting with local Black American employment. They cataloged Black-owned businesses and partnered with the Omaha Public Library to significantly improve access to books and literature. The OCCC's community-based works continued through 1928, when the organization merged with the Omaha Chapter of the Urban League.⁵⁴

OCCC co-founder H. J. Pinkett was much more than just an attorney. He was a Howard University alum and was the secretary alongside WEB Du Bois at the first meeting of the Niagara Society in 1905.⁵⁵ He was also a prominent journalist known nationwide as P.S. Twister and was a 1st Lieutenant while serving as a Buffalo Soldier

⁵¹ "St. Paul Presbyterian Church," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 3.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Guenther, "The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand"; "Spirituals to be Sung"; "Harrison J. Pinkett...".

⁵⁴ Schneider, *We Return Fighting*, 34.

⁵⁵ "Harrison J. Pinkett, 78, Dies, Long-Time Leader for NAACP," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 44.

during World War I.⁵⁶ Throughout the war and the Omaha Race Riot of 1919, he wrote editorials for *The Omaha World-Herald* and squandered no opportunity to push back on Tom Ole' Man Dennison's political machine, including *The Omaha Daily Bee*.⁵⁷ As a representative of the Omaha Chapter of the NAACP, Harrison J. Pinkett was Will Brown's attorney and the one who discovered and reported Brown's severe rheumatism, which made it all but impossible for him to have raped Agnes Loeback.⁵⁸ After the smoke cleared in Omaha following Brown's execution and the 1919 riot, he was one of the very few writers, Black or White, who had the fortitude to blatantly point out the race-baiting, weaponized narratives that oozed from the bowels of the Ole' Man and his *Bee*.⁵⁹ In no uncertain terms, Pinkett suggested this as being the prominent spark that ignited the psychotic flame of White Power on September 28, 1919, in Omaha, Nebraska.

He went on to prosecute twenty-six civil rights Supreme Court cases, losing only once. This contribution to the Black American struggle, along with many others, and those made alongside Rev. Taylor with OCCC, did not go unnoticed by more well-known civil rights organizations and their leading activists. WEB Du Bois personally traveled to meet with Pinkett on at least one occasion and even lauded the Omaha Colored Commercial Club in the 1920 release of his magazine, *The Crisis*.⁶⁰ Reverend John Albert Williams, a close associate of both Pinkett and Rev. Taylor, used his newspaper, *The Monitor*, to put forward Pinkett's editorials chastising Tom Ole' Man Dennison's virulent prostitution and bootlegging rackets during the 1910s and, like Du Bois, he

⁵⁶ "Colored Men Return with their Shoulder Stripes"; "Negro Leader will not Vote for Mr. Taft".

⁵⁷ Menard, "Lest We Forget," 164.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 165.

⁶⁰ "Negro Leader will not Vote for Mr. Taft," *The Omaha World-Herald*, Monday, 1.

celebrated the many accomplishments of OCCC, garnering support for the organization from both Black and White journalists.⁶¹

Canadian by birth, the Reverend John Albert Williams is tied to many Black firsts in Omaha, Nebraska.⁶² After securing his graduate degree from Minnesota's Seabury Divinity School in the summer of 1891, he took on the Holy duty of ministering at St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church on 21st Street in North Omaha.⁶³ Ten years following this, he married Lucinda Winifred Gamble, who, in 1895, became Omaha's first Black American public-school teacher.⁶⁴ Their daughter Dorothy Elizabeth Williams was the first Black American graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1924.⁶⁵ In the same year that Dorothy earned her Bachelor's degree, Rev. Williams himself was the first Black American nominated for a position on the Omaha School Board.⁶⁶

His stellar reputation as a Holy man garnered much local and national attention from media outlets. He was named one of the country's most well-known priests in 1914, and Baltimore's *Church Advocate* magazine set aside an entire page in 1916 to applaud his positive, influential gift.⁶⁷ To this day, he remains the only Episcopalian minister in the history of Omaha to be entered into an honor society known as the Order of the Sangreal.⁶⁸

Beyond his religious accolades, the Reverend was a forceful advocate for Black

⁶¹ McKanna Jr., "Seeds of Destruction", 70; Schneider, *We Return Fighting*, 33-34.

⁶² "Omaha Pastor Finishes 34 Years of Service," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "Clergyman Takes Wedding Vows," *The Omaha World-Herald*, Thursday, June 27, 1901, 1.

⁶⁵ "Dorothy E. Williams," The University of Nebraska at Omaha.

⁶⁶ "Reverend John Albert Williams, Candidate for School Board," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 1.

⁶⁷ "A Revival in the Episcopal Church," *The Advocate of Kansas City, Kansas*, Friday, May 6, 1921, 3.

⁶⁸ "Omaha Rector is Given Highest Honor of Church," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 3.

Omaha. He despised even the slightest hint of Southern Jim Crow-like statutes and general mistreatment of Blacks in the Midwest, and, despite their lifelong bond of friendship, he philosophically diverged from the Reverend Russel Taylor on the issue of segregation. Rev. Williams was a staunch proponent of integration, and he articulated his grievance toward dehumanizing, forced segregation in the July 24, 1898, edition of *The Omaha World-Herald*:

He may cook or cater for them; he may preside, in “his own place,” with grace, in exquisite evening dress, at their social feasts without alarming their social instincts one smallest particle; he may go anywhere, be anything in service or friendship, and they feel no repugnance; he may storm the blood-stained heights of the battle-crested Morros of Santiago as bravely as the bravest, and they feel no sense of presumption on his part in the nearness of his approach to White men. But if he presumes to wear, or to ask for shoulder straps of a lieutenant, or if he dares to sit at a lunch counter with White men, or if he dares ask for a soda at the same fountain with them, then their proud blood is up, and the Negro must be taught to stay in “his own place.”⁶⁹

He understood the intense essence of his people’s predicament in Omaha and various parts of the country and was divinely inspired by Black Power to do more than write and talk.

Rev. J. A. Williams was president of Omaha’s Anti-lynching League, which he co-founded in the mid-1890s.⁷⁰ He held the position of secretary for the Negro Press Association in 1898 and was a pro-active member of Omaha’s Afro-American League. He rubbed activist elbows with Ida B. Wells and Booker T. Washington and, in 1906, headed a Black political organization called the Progressive League of Douglas County.⁷¹ In 1911, he led a protest of wrongfully demoted Black fire department captains. After the

⁶⁹ “Open Letter on White Supremacy,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2.

⁷⁰ “Miss Wells’s Crusade,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

most destructive Nebraska tornado of all-time touched down on Easter Sunday in 1913, leaving nearly one hundred dead on Omaha's north side, he was accepted as the only Black American volunteer on the citywide disaster relief committee.⁷² During World War I, Rev. Williams organized Black-only, parade-like send-offs for segregated units of Black troops being deployed to foreign lands where they sacrificed themselves for a nation that refused to even so much as acknowledge their humanity.⁷³ And no Black American served on the governing board for the Omaha Community Chest before he did so in 1924; he was elected to do the same for Omaha's first Urban League civil rights branch.⁷⁴ Yet by far, his two crowning achievements were his newspaper, *The Monitor*, and his foundational work in Omaha for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

After a Black-centric newspaper known as *The Enterprise*, to which a younger Rev. Williams submitted his early sermons, folded in 1915, he launched his own weekly publication, *The Monitor*. It was Omaha's only Black-owned paper that circulated through the late 1920s, and its mission was clearly expressed by the Reverend himself in the premier July 3, 1915, edition:

This is the first issue of *The Monitor*, a weekly newspaper published primarily in the interests of the 8,000 colored Americans in Omaha and vicinity, to chronicle their social and religious activities and to discuss matters of peculiar importance to them as touching their civic and economic rights, duties, opportunities, and privileges. Further than this, it has as its general aim and purpose the contributing of something to the upbuilding and good of the community, to the dissemination bearing on race progress throughout the country, and to the formation of a sound and righteous public opinion.⁷⁵

⁷² "Rev. J. A. Williams Dead," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ "Think on these Things," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 1.

Rev. Williams took both offensive and defensive journalistic postures with this paper in support of his people, and this was arguably the first formally organized call for Black unity in Omaha, Nebraska. *The Monitor*'s content included social uplift, focus on the middle-class Black population of Omaha, and even persuasions that occasionally caused common White folks to question the idea of White supremacy itself. The politics published by Rev. Williams's newspaper leaned Republican, although core tenets of socialism were often put forward in favor of those of capitalism. Notably, it turns out that White railroad and meat-packing business leaders were not the only ones recruiting Black folks from the South, as the Reverend was an avid proponent of Black emigration and had a significant hand in Omaha's exponential Black population growth between 1910 and 1930.⁷⁶ He made use of *The Monitor* and word of mouth to aggressively promote the benefits of Omaha to Black southerners.⁷⁷ To complement this push, he set up an official Omaha Welcome Committee, paid for travel and moving expenses in some cases, and leveraged his relationship with Omaha's Colored Commercial Club to ensure that many who relocated were quickly employed.

In 1917, Rev. Williams tasked George Wells Parker to spearhead this effort through advertising and editorials, and he, too, made a positive impact on Black Omaha's history.⁷⁸ Before being appointed Business Manager of *The Monitor*, Parker worked as a clerk for the United States Post Office in-between academic stints at Howard and Creighton Universities; his life's work revealed that he was not created to oversee mail.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ "Square Deal is Aim for the Negro," *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 1.

⁷⁷ Sasse, "A Biography of Rev. John Albert Williams".

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Shavit, *History in Black*, 41.

He was one of the first Black leaders nationally to theorize that Africa was the cradle of Earthly human existence. Like Marcus Garvey, but without the *funny-looking hat*, he boldly proclaimed through composition that Africans were the most excellent of all races on the planet. G. W. Parker was regularly published in esteemed Black academic journals such as *The Voice of the Negro*, which originated in Atlanta, Georgia, and he also wrote editorials for many well-known newspapers, including *The Omaha World-Herald*.⁸⁰ Yet, his most enduring contributions were to Black pride influenced by Afro-centrism.

Parker founded the Hamitic League the same year *The Monitor* employed him and published his most well-known work, *The Children of the Sun*, in 1918.⁸¹ Both works placed heavy emphasis on racial pride and lineage awareness, but the latter went twenty steps further with his direct assault on what he deemed false, Euro-centric narratives and facts. He suggested that the entirety of human history should be correctly re-written to reflect Africa's cultural and academic dominance, going back well before the first glimpse of European significance; his thoughts were based on the re-discovery of what he deemed to be intentionally hidden archaeological and scientific evidence. George Wells Parker was a highly active member of Omaha's first NAACP chapter led by *The Monitor's* Rev. Williams, and he was one of a small number of Black leaders in the city to outwardly oppose the christening of Klavern One by the KKK in 1921.

In 1915, Reverend John Albert Williams coalesced the influential power of his God-given leadership ability with that of both *The Monitor* and the NAACP, a minority civil rights organization founded in New York City in 1909, by WEB Du Bois, Ida B.

⁸⁰ See 'Appendix A'.

⁸¹ Ibid; Martin, *Literary Garveyism*, 80.

Wells, and others.⁸² Just as he did for Black emigration, he drummed up interest and even membership for the Omaha NAACP through publication within his newspaper. Although informal initially, Rev. Williams used his ministerial pulpit and resources from the NAACP to encourage civil activism throughout Black Omaha. He consistently fought against forced segregation of communities, hospitals, public transportation, schools, and recreational facilities, and he garnered significant support for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill.⁸³ He exposed Tom Ole' Man Dennison's corrupt and criminal underground, asserting that Dennison was guilty of racial rabble-rousing and, therefore, culpable for the inhumane lynching of Will Brown.⁸⁴ It was destiny that he would be the one to lay the groundwork for Omaha's first officially recognized NAACP chapter in 1918.⁸⁵ Rev. J. A. Williams served as its president until 1928, before the onset of the Great Depression, and he remained active until his death in February of 1933.⁸⁶

Long before Black Power would have no alternative but to deploy a more militant vanguard of its people into North Omaha, it sought to accomplish its objective of realizing equality and justice for all through diplomatic channels. The NAACP was the most longstanding and potent of all such modes of operation; its commission was to secure economic, social, and governmental power for Black Americans of Omaha through education, organized and focused protest, and politics or *war without bloodshed*.

In 1915, the first attempt to establish a local Omaha branch was thwarted despite multiple public speaking appearances from NAACP National Chairman of the Board, Dr.

⁸² "Omaha At a Glance," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 12; Britannica, "National Association for the...".

⁸³ "Omaha Negro Pastor Warns His Race Against Reprisals"; "Negro Opposes Mayor's Plan...".

⁸⁴ "Pledges are Made Here to Anti-Lynch Fund," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 3.

⁸⁵ "Omaha At a Glance," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 12.

⁸⁶ "Rev. J. A. Williams Dead," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 1.

Joel Elias Spingarn, a wealthy White Republican Jew whose political views closely aligned with Rev. Williams's.⁸⁷ But this was not persuasive enough, even when coupled with the Reverend's use of *The Monitor* to convince Omaha's White elite to support the local NAACP establishment, nor were they able to dispel doubts from Omaha's Black citizenry that their intentions were pure. The death blow to this initial endeavor was likely the coinciding release of the movie *Birth of a Nation*. Although Rev. Williams aggressively opposed showing it in Omaha, Nebraska, popular demand resulted in multiple viewing events over eight months. This fanned the flames of the same irrational superiority complex that justified a celebratory parade following the execution of Will Brown just four years later. Nevertheless, the day after Christmas in 1918, after months under the direction and watchful eye of NAACP co-founder Mary White-Ovington, sufficient monetary support and membership numbers were secured to formalize the Omaha Branch's grafting into the organization.⁸⁸

They quickly began meeting regularly at the now iconic and still-standing Zion Baptist Church on 2215 Grant Street in North Omaha. After only one year, membership grew from just under sixty to roughly one thousand, and NAACP activity in May of 1919 bountifully contributed to this increase.⁸⁹ Reverend J. A. Williams, Harrison J. Pinkett, and Mrs. Jessie Hale-Moss embraced and relentlessly promoted the NAACP's national push to enroll 100,000 members; they encouraged every citizen of Omaha, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status, to join or endorse their local chapter.⁹⁰ A

⁸⁷ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP".

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

committee was formed to legally and even physically confront business owners who refused to do business with Black folks, yet their strategy was only somewhat effective in reversing discriminatory commercial practices. In the same month, WEB Du Bois was the main speaker, among several others, including Mayor Edward P. Smith, at a powerful rally held at Zion Baptist Church. His message was straight forward—pursue Justice and annihilate racism in Omaha, Nebraska.⁹¹

Unfortunately, this emerging optimism was toned down by elements of a recurring nightmare. The nationwide Red Summer of 1919 dawning brought another set of turbulent challenges for the NAACP and Black Americans in this midwestern *oasis*. Massive labor strikes throughout Omaha caused White men coming home from World War I to bitterly despise the presence of Black men whom they believed were being brought in for the sole purpose of replacing them as lesser compensated strikebreakers. Instead of working-class Whites banding together with Black people to dismantle institutions that were weaponizing extreme capitalism (the true enemy) they allowed themselves to become irrationally consumed by the false narrative that Black men were no more than a nefarious infestation needing to be exterminated.

On multiple occasions, the Omaha NAACP made it clear that they were anti-strikebreaking and, at the same time, attempted to shield their Black brethren from unwarranted verbal and physical abuse. Whether in the realm of labor or otherwise, legal counsel was made available for those fighting race-based discrimination and Rev. Williams himself spoke out whenever he could on behalf of his people. One such

⁹¹ “Rev. J. A. Williams Dead,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 1; Schneider, *We Return Fighting*, 33-34.

occasion where this occurred was a rare contribution made by him in the June 17, 1919, edition of *The Omaha Daily Bee*:

Speaking for the Omaha branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which has a membership of 800, I desire to say that it appears there is the usual disposition to make the Negro the goat, and we are unalterably opposed equally to the outrageous propaganda designed to foment prejudice against the colored race.⁹²

Only a few weeks after this was published, the Omaha NAACP took on its first notable case in defense of a local Black citizen.

Ira Johnson, a Black man accused of physically attacking an 18-year-old White girl on July 8, 1919, was represented by attorney H. J. Pinkett. Along with his counsel, several other Omaha NAACP activists consistently showed support for Johnson during the trial through their physical presence in the courtroom and protest in print.⁹³ Despite this, after less than only a few hours of deliberation, an all-White jury of Ira's *peers* came back with a verdict of guilty based on testimony from only one witness for the prosecution and none coming forward in Johnson's defense. He was subsequently punished with twenty years of hard labor in a Nebraska state prison.⁹⁴ This unfavorable judgment and America's already simmering temperament prompted the Omaha chapter of the NAACP to double down on its efforts to safeguard Black Omaha from the seething hatred of White Power, and that is undoubtedly what it attempted to do.

Political rhetoric and calls for social justice emanating from the organization became much more focused and boisterous than they were before. Omaha's NAACP leadership implored Police Chief Eberstein to protect Black communities should they be

⁹² "Five Strikers Arrested, and Other Warrants Out," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 2.

⁹³ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP".

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

caught up in riots such as those that were spreading like wildfire throughout the nation. They sounded the alarm through newspapers that the Ole' Man was planting or enabling White men disguised in blackface who were terrorizing White women throughout the city, but to no avail. Even the changing of seasons from summer to fall failed to show them kindness.

In protest of the September 1st murder of Black bellhop Eugene Scott, hundreds of NAACP activists gathered at North Omaha's Saint John's African Methodist Episcopal Church to demand that justice be served for this reckless crime committed by officers of the Omaha Police Department.⁹⁵ To pacify this ultimatum, Chief Eberstein signed an agreement that the two men responsible would be suspended while awaiting the investigation results; he recanted this gesture soon after. The acting Omaha NAACP president, Reverend John Albert Williams, once again utilized *The Monitor* and other local papers to pressure Chief Eberstein into honoring his promise to discipline the officers involved. Less than a week later, a sham trial began; it lasted only a few days and yielded a not-guilty verdict for both officers on all charges brought forward.⁹⁶

The matter of Will Brown and related circumstances ended with comparable results for the NAACP and more devastating blows to the psyche of Black Omaha. Immediately following the unjust public execution of Brown, attorney Pinkett sent this notice to the national headquarters of the NAACP:

The Omaha Bee is directly responsible for the lynching. It was deliberately brought about by *The Bee's* agitation to discredit our police administration. I am satisfied that the Negro who was lynched was innocent of the crime charged. The woman now admits it was a mistake to quote her as saying she was raped.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Sasse, "A History of Police Brutality in Omaha".

⁹⁶ Ibid.

After that, NAACP activists vigorously inserted themselves into every detail of Will Brown's murder and the ensuing riot. Multiple demands for accountability were made but went unanswered, and their physical presence and representation during the trial were not sufficient to overcome the despicable nature of White Power that was blinding the eyes of justice. As was mentioned earlier in this work, the most blatantly savage and criminal acts, which occurred on September 28, 1919, went unpunished, with multiple perpetrators being found not guilty by a jury of their White peers.

Following the race riot of 1919, the Omaha Chapter of the NAACP remained active within its community, but not to the extent it would in the 1940s and through the Civil Rights Movement. They still met weekly at either Zion Baptist Church or their local headquarters on 24th and Lake Streets in the heart of what was then designated as the *Black Belt* of North Omaha. They continued fighting back, as best they could, against Jim Crow-like harassment, intimidation, and oppression. But waning financial support from local businesspeople, the lack of faith in their legal representation based upon few, if any, meaningful courtroom victories, and a significant decrease in membership all contributed to a watered-down potency of its thrusts. The cause of hopelessness associated with these factors was likely three-fold: terror, being segregated, and the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan.

One can only imagine the castigating fear that must have permeated the collective *Soul of Omaha's Black Folk* as they witnessed or caught wind of the barbaric decimation of Will Brown's body. Seeing his still smoking and butchered remains being flaunted

⁹⁷ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP".

around town was a scorching admonishment that no matter how far they traveled in any direction, they were still in the South. To make matters worse, the vast majority of Omaha's Black collective and their NAACP chapter's home base were now quarantined like people with leprosy within the *Black Belt*; race-based, strategic redlining reinforced this de facto segregation until the practice was declared illegal by the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968.⁹⁸

Going back to the beginning of the First Great Migration and its effect on the dynamics of population in Omaha, Nebraska, Black folks from the South initially established a relatively solid business and societal foothold despite glaring economic and cultural divisions. Before the Omaha Race Riot of 1919, an assemblage of non-White American and immigrant groups took up residence in a neighborhood known as the Near North Side: these included Black Americans, Jews, Germans, Japanese, Czechs, and Scandinavians.⁹⁹ Within this concentrated populous, each group was, to varying degrees, self-sufficient, and they were largely self-segregated, both among themselves and from native White Americans. This race or ethnic-based separation seemed to occur in a mutually understood and natural way, but in 1919, much more restrictive isolation was all but forced upon Black folks, who were the most reviled of all Omaha citizens.

Following the horrific lynching of Will Brown and over a decade before redlining formally became one of White Power's most nefarious instruments used to perpetuate segregation of Black Americans within the Deep South and nationwide, Colonel J. E. Morris and the federal government cordoned off what they officially designated as the

⁹⁸ "History of Fair Housing," *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*; See 'Appendix A'.

⁹⁹ Sullenger, "Problems of Ethnic Assimilation in Omaha," 405.

Black Belt in North Omaha.¹⁰⁰ Under his military command and to supposedly protect Omaha's Black citizenry, one of the two remaining Army brigades in the city settled in the middle of this riot zone. Nearly one hundred doughboys or WWI infantrymen fortified their base with tank busters and high-powered Vickers machine guns, not far from the NAACP's location on North 24th and Lake Streets; they did not depart until late November 1919.¹⁰¹ Moving forward, Black Power's people explicitly understood that *their place* in Omaha was on the north side, from Cuming to Locus Streets and North 22nd to North 26th Streets.

Nonetheless, Black folks of North Omaha found a way to do what their lineage had done in America for centuries, even in the South; they did more than survive—they *moderately* thrived. North 24th and Lake Streets were soon lined with Black-operated businesses, and several all-Black churches and schools were quickly established. A Black-only assisted living facility founded in the early 1900s based on the vision of iconic Black Omaha businesswomen and social workers Ella Mahammitt and Jessie Hale-Moss, was renamed from the Old Colored Folks Home to the Negro Old Folks Home in 1921 and moved to North 25th Street; it became the premier destination for midwestern Black elders needing special care. These two women were also instrumental in laying the groundwork for health care facilities overseen by Black Red Cross nurses via the Negro Young Women's Christian Association (later well-known as the Northside YWCA) located on 22nd and Grant Streets.

Despite these and other institutional developments, Black people in North Omaha

¹⁰⁰ "U.S. Troops Policing Omaha Bring Disorders to an End," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

could not progress economically as much as other ethnic and racial groups. The foremost obstruction to this advancement was that many of their storefronts and homes were rented from Jews and other non-Black groups.¹⁰² Therefore, they had little ultimate control over meaningful assets within their Black community.

From the mid-1800s through the early 1920s, Jewish people were a residential pillar of North Omaha, and even after they began moving into other areas of town, particularly the west side, their economic and communal sway gained momentum there through the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s.¹⁰³ They established Omaha as a major American hub of escape for persecuted Jews fleeing what had become a heavily anti-Semitic Europe at the turn of the 20th century.¹⁰⁴ Throughout the city, including downtown and the south side, they along with other non-Black groups acquired and controlled valuable resources such as real estate, businesses, and even a measure of socio-political influence. For example, *The Omaha Daily Bee* newspaper that referred to Will Brown as a *Black beast* in 1919, was founded in 1871 by Jewish immigrant Edward Rosewater.¹⁰⁵ It remained under his family's control through the early 1920s when Jews were Omaha's preeminent immigrant collective.¹⁰⁶ Between 1905 and the beginning of White flight in 1920, their population more than doubled in the Near North Side of Omaha, where they took ownership of North 24th Street and transformed it into a bustling manifestation of Jewish pride.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Sasse, "A History of Relations between Jews and African Americans in Omaha".

¹⁰³ Ibid; Sasse, "A History of North Omaha's Jewish Community".

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cottrell and Larsen, 69; UNL "The...Bee"; "Negro Assaults Young Girl..." *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Sasse, "A History of North Omaha's Jewish Community".

It is a matter of fact that, early on, Jews and other non-Black immigrant groups experienced similar degradations as Black Americans of the First Great Migration, but by the time White Power desecrated Will Brown's body on September 28, 1919, they were well on their way to being integrated into its *White as snow* republic. It appeared that the more Omaha's Jewish and non-Black immigrant community embraced and mastered White Power's weaponization of extreme capitalism, the more they were seemingly utilized in its oppressive arsenal moving forward. Little did they know that their small measure of relief was only granted for the purpose of being used by White Power to further exploit the *Black beasts* economically. The Ku Klux Klan was en route to Omaha, Nebraska, and soon made it clear that the only value Jews and other White immigrant groups held in the eyes of White Power was to what extent their wealthy elite contributed toward bludgeoning *The Souls of Omaha's Black Folk* into economic submission. As for the *others* within these groups who were socio-economically impoverished, they were of no use to the Aryan Brotherhood and were, therefore, subject to *some* of the same emotional and physical brutalities that Black folks endured.

On the eve before its annual celebration of the birth of its *blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesus* and in the early stage of the American Reconstruction Era, White Power spawned its most foul embodiment on December 24, 1865, in the southern state of Tennessee.¹⁰⁸ Led by a handful of Confederate Army Officers, this original Ku Klux Klan was on a mission to thwart reconstruction and fortify its institutional ideology of White supremacy *by any means necessary!*¹⁰⁹ Through years of unrelenting and violent acts of

¹⁰⁸ "Extremism in America"; "Ku Klux Klan Established"; Ashbrook, et al, *The Present-Day Ku Klux...*," 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

terror, up to and including outright murder, it targeted *all* individuals or groups that in any way opposed its objective, no matter the hue of skin color. During this time in the South, White sympathizers or *allies* of Black freedmen and women were just as vilified by the KKK as Black activists were. Central to its strategic undertaking was a vigorous attempt to overthrow southern Republican state governments, and while it did significantly weaken Black leadership and organization through socio-political intimidation, it failed to accomplish these goals absolutely.

In 1871, the United States of America's most notorious, home-grown terrorist organization was temporarily restrained by federal legislation signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant who happened to be the Commanding General of the victorious Union Army of the Civil War, which concluded just before the beginning of the Reconstruction Era. The Enforcement Act of 1871, otherwise known as the Ku Klux Klan Act, allowed Grant to deploy federal resources such as the military and judicial system to override state militias and law and permitted him to bypass the writ of *habeas corpus* when dealing with terrorist organizations; thus, he could imprison Klan members without the necessity of a trial.¹¹⁰ With these legal shackles removed, the President, to an extent, dismantled the KKK and did all he could to uphold the constitutional rights of *all* citizens. Still, the *Prince of Darkness* refused to remain dormant for long and would surely rise again. On Thanksgiving night in 1915, a pompous, White nationalist preacher named William Joseph Simmons donned a *funny-looking hat* as he stood atop Stone Mountain in Georgia of the Deep South and, before fifteen hooded and robed Klansmen

¹¹⁰ "The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871," *United States House of Representatives*; See 'Appendix A'.

and a burning cross, declared that he was the Imperial Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.¹¹¹

This reconstructed manifestation of the original KKK was heavily inspired by the February 8, 1915, national release of the silent film *Birth of a Nation*, which romanticized and resurrected the darkest elements of White Power's hollow soul.¹¹² Its base of devoted worshippers grew exponentially more than that of its earliest incarnation. By the mid-1920s, this well-structured national and regional organization melded with focused patriotic and political messaging to yield nearly five million *boots on the ground* across the United States.¹¹³ Omaha's Klan cohort peaked at roughly 15,000 members during this same time. In 1921, after being initiated by the Imperial Wizard himself, Klavern Number One became the city's first official KKK branch.¹¹⁴ After that, its historical presence in the city was *relatively* uneventful. However, numerous displays of White superiority through parades, mob intimidation, blazing crosses, and hateful race rhetoric spewing from the gutters of Omaha's Christian and political pulpits was more than enough to exacerbate the terror already hovering over the town's Black community. The Omaha NAACP's *Monitor* and the still Jewish-run *Omaha Daily Bee* pushed back on these efforts through narrative exposure and organizational activism, with each no doubt doing so to shield its respective group from emotional and physical violence.¹¹⁵

Notwithstanding these modes of oppression, one cannot ignore the peculiar lack of what was typically much more intense and ravenous behavior directed toward Black

¹¹¹ Ashbrook, et al, *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement*, 5.

¹¹² "Klansville U.S.A.," PBS.org.

¹¹³ Ashbrook, et al, *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement*, 7.

¹¹⁴ "Exclusive Pictures of First Ku Klux Klan Initiation in Nebraska," *The Omaha Daily Bee*, 6.

¹¹⁵ "Local Negro Society Discusses Ku Klux Klan"; "'14 Points' of Klan Exposed".

folks by the KKK in other areas of the country, and this stimulates curiosity if nothing else. Could it be that the *Klantastic* spectacles that took place in Omaha were no more than recruiting side hustles that juxtaposed White Power's true aim? Is it possible that the foremost intention of White Power sending its henchmen with the *funny-looking hats* to Omaha, Nebraska, was for them to lie in wait for the *Black Messiah* who would be born with *hair like wool* and *feet the color of brass*? No fact within the annals of history can *definitively* prove this postulation. Still, time is an abstract entity that never fails to reveal the truth. The timeline of events that almost immediately followed the establishment of the first Omaha Klavern raises the plausibility that St. Augustine of Hippo was correct in his premise that historical incidents are occasionally brought to the surface by supernatural undercurrent rather than by noticeable cause.¹¹⁶

In the same year that KKK Imperial Wizard W. J. Simmons drove a stake of White nationalism into the soil of this midwestern *oasis* in Nebraska, Earl and Louise Little did the same on its north side, only in Black. Earl was a Baptist preacher, Louise was a lifelong Black activist, and both were devout followers of Marcus Garvey. It was through their service to Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association in Montreal, Canada, that they met and would marry in the spring of 1919.¹¹⁷ From Canada, they traveled south, first to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, then to Omaha, Nebraska, in 1921.¹¹⁸ There, Reverend Little established himself as President of Omaha's premier UNIA chapter, and his wife served as its Branch Reporter; they relayed local activity to either Garvey

¹¹⁶ See 'Appendix A'.

¹¹⁷ McDuffie, "The Diasporic Journeys of Louise Little," 152.

¹¹⁸ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 2.

directly or to the organization's dedicated newspaper called the *Negro World*.¹¹⁹

On street corners of the same block occupied by the Omaha NAACP headquarters, Rev. Earl Little preached a Black-centric Gospel for years, and his message was not based on the typical *liberation and joy in the afterlife* fantasy. Instead, he articulated fiery hope for his dark-skinned kinfolk in the *here and now* based on a core tenet of Garveyism, which called on Black folks to separate as much as was possible from literal and figurative White institutions that were only constructed for their demise.¹²⁰ He inspired them to re-discover their extraordinarily beautiful Black American selves and shift toward intimately reconnecting with their African roots, and possibly even re-locating to the Motherland itself.¹²¹ Earl and his wife Louise coordinated one of the UNIA's most successful recruiting and fundraising branches.¹²² Its most devout Omaha members were thoroughly united under the battle cry "Up, you mighty race! You can accomplish what you will!" and this certainly caused the KKK to take notice.¹²³

While the Klan was, for obvious reasons, perturbed by Earl Little's Black pride *rabble-rousing*, it could not have known that Louise Little was nurturing and sheltering the seed of Black Power in her womb. This author believes that White Power was not using the Ku Klux Klan to chase down another Black man that needed to be *dealt with*. No, it was instead in hot pursuit of a nemesis that was infinitely more threatening to its fragile complex. As if divinely ordained and scheduled, *Black Jesus* soon made his presence known. On May 19, 1925, Malcolm X was born in a modest home on 3448

¹¹⁹ Vincent, "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X," 10 and 11; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 20-22.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 21-24; Perry, *Malcolm*, 2-3.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Vincent, "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X," 11.

¹²³ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 7.

Pinkney Street in North Omaha, Nebraska.¹²⁴

Like a bloodthirsty wolfpack in search of prey, White Power relentlessly stalked the Littles, more so than it did any other Black activists during this period in Omaha's history, and arguably even that of the entire United States. Now and then, Knights personally dropped by the Little residence to *politely* forward White Power's message that Omaha's "good Christian White people" were not going to put up with them "spreading trouble among the good Negroes of Omaha," but they were not so *kind* during the most noted visit.¹²⁵ On that occasion, the stakes were much higher because Louise was now carrying the quintessence of Black Power in her womb. Under the sinister glow of a full moon, they arrived at the Little home on horseback. They proceeded to smash its windows in with the butts of their rifles before riding off into the dark abyss from whence they came, leaving only a blazing cross behind as a terrifying reminder of White Power's fury.¹²⁶ Louise was home alone with their four children (Malcolm included) on this night, and although Earl had, to this point, valiantly resisted the Klan's demands that he and his family get out of town, this was the critical juncture.

Several months after the birth of Malcolm X, the Littles relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they were yet again run out of town by the KKK before Lansing, Michigan, became their home in 1928.¹²⁷ Here, they continued their fight for the liberation of Black minds and bodies amidst even more intense harassment and violent intimidation that came from a splinter faction of the Klan called the Black Legion.¹²⁸ This

¹²⁴ Watson, "Ideology and Identity," 94.

¹²⁵ DeCaro Jr., *On the Side of My People*, 43-44.

¹²⁶ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1; Vincent, "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X," 12.

¹²⁷ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 2-4; Natambu, *The Life and Work of Malcolm X*, 3.

terrorist group broke away from the KKK in the late 1920s because, in short, it became impatient with what it perceived to be inadequate *physical persuasion* used by the primary White Knights throughout the Midwest, and Earl Little was in its crosshairs from the moment he and his family traversed the Michigan border. His reputation of being a *stubborn and uppity n****** shadowed him everywhere he went, and it did not help that the Reverend refused to settle in the *dark side* of Lansing, instead opting for a suburban home in the near exclusively White neighborhood known as Westmont. The *audacity* of this *uppity n****** willfully *contaminating* a White *Eden* was enough to drive White Power mad; it was the breaking point of its brittle ego where Earl was concerned, and after a few unsuccessful attempts through the legal system to force his family to vacate their home in 1929, the Black Legion *dealt with its problem* by burning the house to the ground, thereby displacing the Littles until they moved to South Lansing following this act of terrorism.¹²⁹

In the fall of 1931, Reverend Earl Little was officially said to have committed suicide at the intersection of Detroit Street and Michigan Avenue in Lansing, but circumstantial evidence pointed to murder.¹³⁰ To accept that he took his own life, one would have to believe, based on the gruesome details of his death, that in the dark of night, he crushed his skull with multiple blows from a hammer and then laid face down on streetcar rail tracks in such a way that after being run over, his shoulders and legs were violently separated from his torso.¹³¹ Malcolm's mother insisted, as he did later in life,

¹²⁸ "The Murder that Brought down the Black Legion," *The Detroit News*, Wayback Machine.

¹²⁹ Haley and X, *The Autobiography...*, 3 and 10; Pilgrim, "Malcolm X"; Natambu, *The Life and...*, 4.

¹³⁰ Vincent, "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X," 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

that Earl was executed by the Black Legion, bringing to fruition White Power's unceasing death threats made against their family, which began a decade prior in Omaha, Nebraska.¹³²

Despite this reasonable conclusion and because the local coroner documented her husband's death as being *self-inflicted*, Louise Little could not collect insurance money and was thus immediately burdened with economic hardship, given that she now had seven children to care for on her own.¹³³ With nowhere to turn, she accepted public assistance, her young children stopped going to school to either work or run the streets, and Malcolm began to establish a reputation for being mischievous.

The state welfare board picked up where the Black Legion left off in harassing the Littles. For years, it threatened to break up the family largely due to petty trouble caused around town by her children, especially Malcolm, and the board eventually began the legal process of determining whether Mrs. Little was fit to be a parent. Although defiant, her spirit was at last crushed under the immense weight of despair, shame, and dejection brought about by White Power's merciless bombardment of her character and its menacing dark cloud over her family. Louise had a severe mental breakdown before being declared legally insane and was committed to Kalamazoo State Psychiatric Hospital in 1938. Her children were separated into various foster homes, and she remained at Kalamazoo until they fought for her release in 1963.¹³⁴

The *Lamb of Black Power* was now set apart from his flock. Malcolm was no longer resting in the safety of his mother's womb and could no longer hide behind the

¹³² Marable, *Malcolm X*, 29; Pilgrim, "Malcolm X," *Jim Crow Museum*.

¹³³ Natambu, *The Life and Work of Malcolm X*, 29.

¹³⁴ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 35-36 and 265; Perry, *Malcolm*, 33-34 and 331.

shield of his father's body. He was *seemingly* vulnerable and unattended, yet it was impossible for him to be alone because he and Black Power are one. The *Good Shepherd* always stood nearby to guide and protect him until his Earthly destiny was complete. Although his divine trek required that he physically leave Omaha, Nebraska, his *Black Spirit* remained.

White Power conceivably weaponized these and other tragic incidents experienced by a young Malcolm X to launch him into a frantic downward spiral of doom and gloom. Still, he did not suffer alone because Omaha and the whole country had no choice but to fight through its own depression during the 1930s.

Omaha's Melancholy

Black Thursday, October 24, 1929, marked what many historians believe to be the beginning of the global economic nosedive known as the Great Depression.¹³⁵ A Wall Street stock market crash in New York City was the back-breaking culprit that caused this *humble pie* earthquake that even the *superpower* United States of America was unprepared for and unable to defend against.¹³⁶ Casualties were innumerable due to rampant business collapse and skyrocketed unemployment rates, and such aftershocks would not cease until World War II began in 1939. In the blink of an eye, the cultural and material prosperity of the Roaring Twenties that was realized in urban metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles, California, Chicago, Illinois, Harlem, New York, and New York

¹³⁵ Garraty, *The Great Depression*, 3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

City itself seemingly vanished into thin air.¹³⁷ For the first time, the so-called American *Dream* was exposed as a fraudulent illusion. To this point, it was propagandized as an impenetrable floating fortress, but a crash with mere numbers on paper violently penetrated its hull and sank it faster than the Titanic.¹³⁸

Omaha, Nebraska, was neither spared nor shown mercy, as its general business model was tightly bound to possibly the most devastated of all commerce sectors during this era. Whether via rail transportation or stockyard, industrious ranching and agriculture were king in this town, and they were swiftly put to death by a double-edged sword of economic free fall and a crippling, years-long climatic drought wrought with dust storms that began in 1931 and affected all regions of the United States.¹³⁹ In retrospect, it could be successfully argued that in the entire United States of America, only the Deep South suffered through the Great Depression more so than the Midwest.¹⁴⁰

In North Omaha, Black folks were, at best, a distant priority on the list of groups that received *meaningful* relief measures from local, state, or federal organizations. They were least among the *deserving poor* to whom Omaha's wealthy elite *graciously* extended a helping hand occasionally. Throughout the Great Depression, this midwestern *oasis* intensified overt discrimination against its Black citizens to the extent that even basic humanitarian aid was segregated. During this decade of extraordinary need for the masses, most of the crumbs that fell from *masta's table* were shamelessly set aside for *White peasants only*. Fortunately for Black Omaha, Black Power does not rest or

¹³⁷ See 'Appendix A'.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "North American Droughts," National Climatic Data Center Archives.

¹⁴⁰ Rosenbloom and Sundstrom, "The Sources of Regional Variation in...the Great Depression," 714.

slumber. Comfort and uplift never stopped flowing from its celestial throne as it continued fighting for them through another round of trying times.

The honorable Reverend John Albert Williams passed into eternity on February 4, 1933, but his wife Lucinda ensured that their familial legacy on Earth continued.¹⁴¹ After his death, she served in significant roles on the board of the Omaha NAACP and the Negro Old Folks Home and was a highly active member of the Omaha Colored Women's Club.¹⁴² Mrs. Williams also transitioned from teaching children in the Omaha public school system to educating Black adults in venues such as the segregated YWCA on the city's north side and the Urban League Community Center in the iconic Exchange Building.¹⁴³ Tireless communal leadership such as this, along with various resources provided by these sorts of organizations, shined bright in the often dark and desolate sky of North Omaha. *The Soul of these midwestern Black Folk* did not surrender to depression—it refused to die.

What began near the turn of the 20th century as the Negro Young Women's Christian Association of Omaha was now known as the Northside YWCA, and it was a social force to be reckoned with. Initially, the aim of its activism was three-pronged: community building, healthcare, and women's voting rights.¹⁴⁴ As time went on, it became necessary that they cast a wider net of socio-political thrusts. By the mid-1910s, the Northside YWCA was one of, if not the most effective fundraisers and membership

¹⁴¹ "Rev. J. A. Williams Dead," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 1.

¹⁴² "Teacher Recognized," *The Omaha World-Herald*, Wednesday, 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Sasse, "A History of the Negro Women's Christian Association of Omaha".

drivers for various causes and organizations, including their own.¹⁴⁵ They, of course, remained staunch advocates for the empowerment of Black women but also energetically did what they could to fight southern Jim Crow-like segregation and expose the inhumane brutality of lynching. Throughout the Great Depression, the institution cooperated with the National Urban League of Omaha to implement many vital functions for its downtrodden kinfolk: these included basic healthcare, job-finding assistance, free breakfast and dinner for families, summer camps for children, entertainment, and gift-giving on holidays, and reading, writing, and arithmetic classes for adults.¹⁴⁶

The Omaha branch of the National Urban League was founded in 1927; it was the first to exist west of the Mississippi River and the East Coast, where it was initially established in New York City nearly two decades earlier.¹⁴⁷ Although led primarily by Black Americans, its board and membership were integrated from the start, and its primary objective was — “the social and economic betterment of Negro residents and improved relationship between races” — in that order.¹⁴⁸ For decades, the organization’s success rivaled that of every other similar activist institution in Omaha, Nebraska, including the NAACP during the Civil Rights era, and its positive local impact was evident from the start of the Great Depression. The YWCA and NUL shared two areas of focus during this time: labor opportunity and positive communal activity. They facilitated the distribution of resources and planning of events for these two thrusts through the Omaha Free Employment Bureau and the Mid-City Community Center; both were

¹⁴⁵ Ibid; “Events and Persons,” *The Monitor of Omaha, Nebraska*, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Sasse, “A History of the Negro Women’s Christian Association of Omaha”.

¹⁴⁷ “Urban League Formed,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2; Brooks and Guichard, *Black in the City*, 5.

¹⁴⁸ “Urban League Formed,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2; Urban League of Nebraska, “History”.

managed from the Webster Telephone Exchange Building.¹⁴⁹ Another enduring struggle taken up by the National Urban League was the battle against race-based segregation, an issue that was now vulcanized onto the Omaha socio-political landscape by the extreme heat of severe economic depression. While their attempts to uproot this dehumanizing and economically debilitating practice in the city during the 1930s were admirable, the results were all too familiar at worst and only minimally effective at best.

The Logan Housing Project was one of many unfortunate examples that even the treatment of common folks during callous times was unequal and segregated. On the surface, the efforts made by the government to shelter impoverished, working-class, or unemployed Blacks and the relatively few Whites remaining in North Omaha appeared to be a heroic venture. Still, upon further review, it only magnified the abysmal depth of shameful discrimination. This housing facility was constructed on the northside in 1938 and was set up to put a roof over the heads of nearly five hundred families totaling over two thousand people; it was modeled after an all-White public housing project built on the south side two years prior.¹⁵⁰ Yet again, Black folks were dead last on Omaha's priority list, and even the Logan housing units themselves were separated as *White only* and *Black only*.¹⁵¹ White Power crystalized a message through this manifestation that even among the *least of all* humanity, Black folks were to remain second-class citizens. However, there was one noticeable change in North Omaha during the Great Depression, and that was the intensity of Black political activism with a moderate shift in party loyalty.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid; See 'Appendix A'.

¹⁵⁰ Daly-Bednarek, *The Changing Image...*, 86; Coulibaly, Green, and James, *Segregation in...*, 68.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

On February 3, 1870, the United States Congress ratified the Fifteenth and final Reconstruction Amendment that made it unconstitutional to deny men the right to vote based upon “race, color, or previous condition of servitude”; women of all groups were still unable to vote until the Nineteenth Amendment was passed fifty years later.¹⁵² But whether intentional or not, it allowed for states to decide the qualifications for suffrage, and as such, those in the South took the nationwide, iniquitous lead toward reconstructing barriers to deny the Black vote; the Midwest and Omaha, Nebraska, followed their example. Conveniently narrow interpretations of this new amendment were primarily weaponized by the city’s Democratic Party, which played a significant role in legalizing and enacting state and local Jim Crow-like voter registration laws. Through the early 1900s, unreasonable literacy tests, exuberant poll taxes, and belligerent intimidation of the Ku Klux Klan all but eliminated the Black vote, given that many were uneducated, poor, and vulnerable. During this time, only a select few Black citizens of Omaha were able or willing to participate in the political arena. Republican Matthew O. Ricketts was one such rare example as he was a native of the city and the first Black American to serve as a Nebraska state legislator in 1892; there would not be another Black person elected to this position until the mid-1920s.¹⁵³

Black folks who were active in the realm of both federal and local government in the early 1900s were by and large loyal to what they no doubt still deemed to be Abraham Lincoln’s Republican Party, never mind that not a single Democrat in either the House or

¹⁵² See ‘Appendix A’; “All Amendments to the United States Constitution,” The University of Minnesota.

¹⁵³ Taylor, *In Search of a New Frontier*, 205.

Senate voted in favor of the Fifteenth Amendment.¹⁵⁴ In the summer of 1906, Omaha itself became home to a segregated Black Republican political group known as the Progressive League of Douglas County, which was led by the Reverend John Albert Williams.¹⁵⁵ Although it had no significant success, the organization boldly promoted its candidates for local and state offices, with Millard F. Singleton being the most well-known and heavily supported in Omaha's Black community at the time.¹⁵⁶ While Millard was denied victory more than once, his son, Dr. John A. Singleton, was one of two Black Americans elected to the Nebraska State Legislature in 1926, the first since Dr. Ricketts more than three decades earlier.

During the first half of the Great Depression, the federal government began more broadly interpreting and ruling on the Fifteenth Amendment, and this ever so slightly opened the door of hope for *meaningful* Black suffrage across the country. In the Spring of 1933, Dr. J. A. Singleton joined with John Adams, Jr., Andrew Stuart, and others to form the Consolidated Negro Political Organization in Omaha to assemble Black political activity.¹⁵⁷ Attorney Adams, Jr., was Nebraska's first legislator to introduce public welfare and housing laws to the state governing body, and he prosecuted several civil rights cases.¹⁵⁸ Stuart was a political unicorn going back to the early 1920s. He was a staunch Democrat and was highly regarded as a public speaker and organizer by Black citizens of Omaha.¹⁵⁹ He became the town's foremost voice that implored Black voters to

¹⁵⁴ "All Amendments to the United States Constitution," The University of Minnesota.

¹⁵⁵ "Colored League Formed," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ "Negro Club Endorses Hupkins's Candidacy," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 4.

¹⁵⁸ McMorris, "Charter Member Once Opposed Unicameral," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 17-18.

¹⁵⁹ Sasse, "A Biography of Political Activist Andrew Stuart".

side with Democrats during the Great Depression.

In 1923, Andrew Stuart was elected to an important position with the short-lived Omaha Independent Voters League, a small group of Black Democratic political activists through 1925.¹⁶⁰ He was a regular contributor to *The Monitor* and *The Omaha World-Herald*, wielding his pen to chastise Black voters for not being more politically active despite obstacles, and he also frequently criticized White politicians for selling out Black folks who voted in their favor.¹⁶¹ By the time the Great Depression hit, the Republican Party was losing its luster with Black people. Its overtly racist rhetoric, support of the prison industrial complex, and devastation of the South's cotton-based economy, which southern Black folks were still so heavily reliant upon, all played a role in this emerging national shift of Black political loyalty from Republican to Democrat. Adding to this oppression, in the early 1930s, Omaha's Black unemployment rate was approaching forty percent, which was more than twice that of their White counterparts.¹⁶² Thus, change in the political landscape of Black people in this midwestern city was born of desperate necessity. The presidential race of 1932 was the undeniable turning point in Omaha, Nebraska, just as it was throughout much of the United States, and Andrew Stuart was by far the most boisterous Black Omaha voice in support of his people divesting from the Republican Party.

Democrat Governor of New York Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Vice-Presidential nominee John Nance Garner were pitted against Republican incumbent

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Herbert Hoover for the office of United States President in 1932.¹⁶³ He ran on a near-singular platform of reversing the economic failures of then-President Hoover, whose administration was, fairly or not, blamed for the Great Depression. Stuart and other like-minded Black activists enthusiastically endorsed this ticket. They formed the North Omaha Roosevelt and Garner Club, along with joining the segregated Negro Young People's Democratic Club of Omaha.¹⁶⁴ Roosevelt pledged to eradicate the Depression with a "'New Deal' for the American people," which largely consisted of agriculture and farm relief, tax reduction, and government-funded public assistance for *all* who needed it.¹⁶⁵ This approach was wildly popular with mass groups of ordinary folks who were economically crushed during the 1930s, especially so with Black Americans. The 1932 Presidential election turned out to be one of the most lopsided in United States history and Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in as the 32nd President of the United States on March 4, 1933.¹⁶⁶ He was the first Democrat to hold the office since the 28th President Woodrow Wilson did so in 1912 and went on to be the only President to date elected to four terms.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, he died shortly into his fourth term in the Spring of 1945, but not before entering the country into World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor four years prior.¹⁶⁸

Politics in Omaha before, during, and after the Great Depression was dominated by the Democratic Party, and during the 1930s, only one Republican Mayor, Roy Nathan

¹⁶³ Leuchtenburg, "Franklin D. Roosevelt," The University of Virginia Miller Center — U.S. Presidents.

¹⁶⁴ Sasse, "A Biography of Political Activist Andrew Stuart".

¹⁶⁵ See 'Appendix A'; Burns, *Roosevelt*, 139; Smith, *FDR*, 276-277.

¹⁶⁶ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940*, 188.

¹⁶⁷ Glass, "Franklin D. Roosevelt dies at 63, April 12, 1945," *Politico*.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Towl (1933-36), was elected.¹⁶⁹ Tom Ole' Man Dennison's political machine resurrected the Democratic stronghold in 1906, ending the only stretch of consistent Republican power in the city's history, going back to 1892.¹⁷⁰ But there was a *slight* shift in local governing style and policy after the Ole' Man's regime came to an end due to Dennison himself being near death, the passing of James Cowboy Dahlman during his second term as Mayor in 1930, and the last of two Dennison loyalists serving as interim Mayor being unseated by Towl, the Republican.¹⁷¹ Of note, there has never been a Black American *officially* elected as Mayor of Omaha, Nebraska, although a *token* Black Mayor was elected by an all-Black voting block through the Northside Bacchanite Social Club between 1936 and the mid to late 1940s.¹⁷²

Although most southern Black migrants who came to Omaha were conditioned to support Republicans, their vote and political influence were rendered ineffective for decades on both the federal and local levels. But there did and does exist a strong voting bloc in Omaha that has always been an undeniably major factor in the legacy of Democratic rule in the city. It is a well-known historical fact that for more than a century, Jewish Americans have overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party, and that indeed held true in Nebraska during the Great Depression. By now, Jews and other non-Blacks had at least been granted an influential seat at White Power's governing table. They were plausibly rewarded for their work as *accomplices* with an increase in political and cultural influence, and material wealth. White Power *did them a solid* and blurred its

¹⁶⁹ "Omaha mayors, from the beginning to now," Omaha World-Herald.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Sasse, "A History of Omaha's 'Black Mayor'".

racial line, *graciously gifting* them a *measure* of equality as a token of its gratitude for their assistance with, intentionally or unintentionally, oppressing North Omaha's Black citizenry. But unbeknownst to them, the deadliest global conflict of the modern era was on the horizon, and across the Atlantic Ocean, millions of Jews and other non-Aryan Europeans would be slaughtered in Nazi gas chambers for their *sin* of being *contaminated* human beings. They were not aware that White Power was, is, and always will be the *Father of Lies*.

CHAPTER 2

FIGHTING A WAR ON II FRONTS

“Freedom is not something that anybody can be given; freedom is something people take, and people are as free as they want to be.”¹⁷³

James Baldwin

On December 7, 1941, over three hundred Japanese Kamikaze pilots unexpectedly breached the airspace over the American Naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii.¹⁷⁴ Their mission was to proactively neutralize the heart and soul of the United States Pacific Fleet, and they wreaked havoc on this military installation. More than two thousand American servicemembers, along with civilians, were killed. From aircraft to the largest battleships, nearly everything was destroyed or severely handicapped by extensive damage.¹⁷⁵ It was the first brazen attack by a foreign country on the United States. The following day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan, entering the country into World War II, which began two years earlier, in 1939.¹⁷⁶ Japan allied with Italy, Germany, and other European nations to form the Axis alliance, and its German ringleader, Adolf Hitler, may as well have been *Lucifer* himself.¹⁷⁷

By the war’s end, well over forty million total deaths were recorded. Of the

¹⁷³ Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*, 17.

¹⁷⁴ Wholestetter, *Pearl Harbor*, 341.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 342-343.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ “Axis Powers in World War II,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

civilian portion, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for roughly fourteen million casualties.¹⁷⁸ Upwards of five million Jews of the Holocaust were among those who fell victim to his White Power inspired racial *cleansing*.¹⁷⁹ Had he not accepted defeat and taken his own life in a Berlin, Germany, bunker on April 30, 1945, who knows how many more would have been exterminated.¹⁸⁰ Adolf Hitler led with an outward display of fierce confidence but was inwardly rotting away due to toxic cowardice. He is, without question, a fine example of an *apple that did not fall far from the White Power tree*.

Although it was a violently tragic blight on their historical experience, the many atrocities that occurred during the Holocaust were in no way exclusive to Jewish people. Hitler's Third Reich sought to rid its country, and eventually the world, of all *impure* races, homosexuals, and groups or individuals who held political or religious beliefs that inhibited them from pledging allegiance to its brand of extreme nationalism.¹⁸¹ People slotted into these Nazi classifications were viewed as *subhuman* or *undesirable* and even, occasionally, included native Germans of *pure* Aryan lineage.¹⁸² Aside from Jews, the Holocaust death toll, in part, consisted of human beings who were mentally ill or physically handicapped, Catholic or a Jehovah's Witness, Polish or Russian, Gypsy or Ukrainian, and Afro-European; Black Germans of African descent were derogatorily referred to by Hitler's Nazi regime as *Rhineland Bastards*.¹⁸³

Germany is close to five thousand miles northeast of America's Deep South and is

¹⁷⁸ Nicosia and Niewyk, *The Columbia Guide to Holocaust*, 47-49.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Linge, *With Hitler to the End*, 199.

¹⁸¹ Berenbaum, *The World Must Know*, 125.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*; "Non-Jewish Victims of Persecution in Germany"; Samples, "African Germans in the...", 55.

separated from the United States by Earth's second largest body of water, the Atlantic Ocean, and still, no relief from suffering and resentment could be found even there for Black folks. At the beginning of Hitler's Third Reich, there were fewer than ten thousand Afro-Germans in the population and they were overwhelmingly of Sub-Saharan African descent.¹⁸⁴ Their predominant lineage during this time was in some ways tied to a widely unspoken historical fact that the Holocaust of WWII was not the first 20th-century instance of Germany committing mass genocide of the *impure*.¹⁸⁵ A blueprint, if you will, for what occurred in the early to mid-1940s was established more than three decades before by Kaiser Wilhelm II and Germany's Second Reich during the Scramble for Africa.¹⁸⁶

Near the turn of the 20th century, Germany forcefully colonized several territories throughout the Motherland, with the most significant being modern-day Namibia, a coastal region in Southwest Africa.¹⁸⁷ There, the Germans greatly benefitted from the exploited labor of the indigenous Herero and Nama peoples, which enabled them to set up lucrative plantations and either bring in or secure other power resources.¹⁸⁸ As time went on, exploitation digressed into near-absolute labor enslavement, tribeswomen were often raped and physically assaulted, and ancestral lands and possessions were violently stolen. In 1904, Herero and Nama warriors joined together to revolt against these White colonizers and their small security force. They massacred hundreds of German *settlers*, causing embarrassment, panic, and seething anger among military and political leaders of

¹⁸⁴ "The Nazi Persecution of Black People in Germany," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

¹⁸⁵ Black, "In Germany's extermination program for Black Africans, a template for The Holocaust".

¹⁸⁶ Ibid; See 'Appendix A'.

¹⁸⁷ Black, "In Germany's extermination program for Black Africans, a template for The Holocaust".

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

the Second Reich.¹⁸⁹ Emperor Wilhelm II wasted no time deploying military reinforcements to defend *his* land and people.

On June 11, 1904, Lieutenant-General Lothar van Trotha arrived in German Southwest Africa alongside nearly fifteen thousand troops, bringing rifles, cannons, and Gatling guns.¹⁹⁰ Their explicit mission was to *exterminate* the *inferior* Herero and Nama tribes for their *crime* of crushing Germany's *superior* White ego, and this was to occur *by any means necessary!*¹⁹¹ Trotha made it crystal clear through his *vernichtungsbefehl* (German for *extermination order*) that whether one was a direct participant in the revolt or a civilian, there were no exceptions, and the same held whether man, woman, or child:

I, the great General of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Hereros. The Hereros are German subjects no longer—the Herero nation must now leave the country. If it refuses, I shall compel it to do so with the long tube [cannon]. Any Herero found inside the German frontier, with or without gun or cattle, will be executed. I shall spare neither women nor children.¹⁹²

A near identical message was delivered regarding the Nama, and following this, thousands upon thousands of each tribe were murdered on sight. Women, children, and elderly men were given a *temporary* reprieve that turned out to be a much more inhumane fate than that of their younger male brethren. Slowly but surely, they were herded into the most extremely inhospitable section of the Kalahari Desert, where they were corralled like *Black beasts* and left to suffer agonizing deaths by starvation and thirst.¹⁹³ For those who did not die quickly enough, their emaciated bodies, still faintly breathing and clinging to life were stacked, one on top of the other, and burned alive; this

¹⁸⁹ Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros*, 74.

¹⁹⁰ Clarke, *Iron Kingdom*, 604.

¹⁹¹ Gewalt, *Herero Heroes*, 173.

¹⁹² Puaux, *The German Colonies*, 27.

¹⁹³ Clarke, *Iron Kingdom*, 605.

was Germany's first *Final Solution*.¹⁹⁴

These unchecked, genocidal crimes perpetrated upon the Herero and Nama resulted in nearly eighty percent of their population being wiped off the face of the Earth.¹⁹⁵ White Power made sure that the surviving *Black beasts* understood what it meant to *stay in their place*, and the Germans soon refocused their efforts on exploiting their industrial labor and stripping their land of all the majestic resources it had to offer. Still, this time, they hoped to ensure that a revolt would never again occur under their watch. After the heist was complete, their end goal was to finish the job of eliminating these once mighty African tribes, and this was attempted through extermination by labor in *concentration camps*.

Shark Island (also called Death Island) was the most well-known of a handful of such German facilities that opened in Southwest Africa during early 1905.¹⁹⁶ The mortality rate at this camp was so inevitably near one hundred percent due to exhaustion, disease, and malnutrition that after being parceled out and classified as either fit or unfit, these *slave* laborers were issued pre-printed death certificates that read "death by exhaustion following privation."¹⁹⁷ Sexual assault of Herero and Nama women remained a constant, and those who worked slowly or disobeyed were flogged with rhinoceros skin whips. Even worse, if they offended a *flawless, White as snow* German *settler*, or attempted to escape, then they were *lynched* for their crime.¹⁹⁸ As if these unwarranted sufferings were not enough, their dead bodies were desecrated and subjected to

¹⁹⁴ Black, "In Germany's extermination program for Black Africans, a template for The Holocaust".

¹⁹⁵ Adhikari, *Destroying to Replace*, 29; Evans and Mbabaike, "Other Victims of the Holocaust," 15.

¹⁹⁶ Erichsen, "The angel of death has descended violently among them", 75.

¹⁹⁷ Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, 50.

¹⁹⁸ Erichsen, "The angel of death has descended violently among them", 78 and 87.

animalistic medical experiments like those that later occurred under Hitler's Third Reich during WWII. The most bizarre act was the examination of heads and brain matter by German academics and physicians as they began postulating irrational race theories, explicitly attempting to link the direct evolution of Black Africans to apes and monkeys.¹⁹⁹ To prep the skulls for this experimentation, Herero and Nama women were forced to boil the heads of their dead loved ones, pluck the eyes out, and scrape the hair and skin off with sharp rocks or shards of glass.²⁰⁰ There may be nothing more disgustingly brutal to one's living soul than that.

After the closure of the German Southwest African death camps in 1908, the relatively few surviving tribe members were sold off to the highest German bidder as *slave laborers*. They were marked by a *labor registration number on a metal disc* that they were always forced to wear, which was likely a precursor to the yellow Star of David that demarcated Jewish people from all other groups during the Holocaust.²⁰¹ Most remained in Africa, but some were transported to Germany when their new *mastas* returned home. However, an interesting war-related twist yielded a significant mode by which thousands of Black people became residents, if not citizens, of Germany by the time Nazis came to power in the early 1930s—the French Army African regiments of World War I.²⁰²

One of the provisions enacted by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 was that following the First World War in which Germany was defeated, the Entente or Allied

¹⁹⁹ Pitzer, *One Long Night*, 83-84.

²⁰⁰ Erichsen and Olusoga, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 224.

²⁰¹ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 12.

²⁰² Black, "In Germany's extermination program for Black Africans, a template for The Holocaust".

Powers would occupy territory within its borders for fifteen years; the land on which this took place was essentially right down the middle of West Germany in what is known as the *Rhineland*.²⁰³ Most of the assigned Entente forces were French, and of those, at least ten thousand or more were Black African men.²⁰⁴ The authoritative presence of these *Black beasts* was not received well by native White Germans. Their disdain and cowardly, irrational fear only intensified once Black men began marrying and having children with *their* White women.

Not surprisingly, the same hate-motivated, illogical rhetoric that crowded the front pages of newspapers across the United States shortly before and during the Red Summer of 1919 had somehow sailed across the vast Atlantic Ocean and landed in 1920 Germany. The *Black Horror on the Rhine* was put forward in their literature and imagery as a savage and brutal infestation of monkey-like caricatures roaming the streets, causing havoc, and rampantly assaulting White women.²⁰⁵ Close to one thousand multi-racial children were born to married or intimate Black men and White women during the Weimar Republic Era, between the end of WWI and the beginning of the Third Reich, and these innocent souls were stamped as *Rhineland Bastards*.²⁰⁶ According to German elites and scholars they were “physically and morally degenerate,” and they, along with their mothers, ceased being German citizens the moment they were contaminated by the seed of Black, *impure subhumans*. To them, these *Bastards* were no more than a

²⁰³ Martel, *Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered*, 18.

²⁰⁴ Black, “In Germany’s extermination program for Black Africans, a template for The Holocaust”.

²⁰⁵ Nelson, “The ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 614.

²⁰⁶ Wigger, *The Black Horror on the Rhine*, 85.

disgusting stain on Germany's *White as snow* republic.²⁰⁷

In 1925, Adolf Hitler, who was out of prison and an ascending star in German politics, finished Volume I of *Mein Kampf* or *My Struggle*. He used a portion of it to verbalize his thoughts on Afro-Germans and made it abundantly clear that, in part, his hatred toward Jewish people was tied to his disdain for the Black race:

Children resulting from any kind of relationship to African occupation soldiers is a contamination of the Aryan race by Negro blood on the Rhine in the Heart of Europe—the Jews are responsible for bringing Negroes into the Rhineland, with the ultimate idea of bastardizing the White race which they hate and thus lowering its cultural and political level so that the Jew might dominate.²⁰⁸

Two years later, in Geneva, Switzerland, one of the men who heavily inspired Hitler's Nazi ideology and efforts to eradicate Black people and other *impure* groups from Europe was a keynote speaker at Margaret Sanger's World Population Conference.²⁰⁹ He was none other than Dr. Eugen Fischer—a devout contributor to the false scientific doctrine of *eugenics*, which was heavily propagated in the 20th century by the United States of America itself.²¹⁰ Dr. Fischer was one of the select few who experimented on Herero and Nama bodies and skulls in colonial German Southwest Africa, and he also began researching sterilization methods and their effects on their women.²¹¹ Although he did not become an official member of the Nazi Party until 1940, he pledged loyalty to Hitler's regime by way of agreeing to head the Nazi-controlled Frederick William University in

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

*German to English translation of an excerpt from a quote made by Guido Kreutzer in his book *The Black Shame: A Novel of Disgraced Germany* (book title also translated from German to English)

²⁰⁸ Hitler and Murphy, *Mein Kampf*, 11-13.

²⁰⁹ See 'Appendix A'; "From Geneva to Cairo"; Anderson, *Ethics and Suffering since the Holocaust*, 37.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims*, 44.

Germany's capital city of Berlin in 1933.²¹² His scientific theories and publications were instrumental in justifying the racially charged Nuremberg Laws, and like Hitler, he did not mince words when speaking on Jews and Blacks:

When a people want to, somehow or other, preserve its own nature, it must reject alien racial elements, and when these have already insinuated themselves, it must suppress them and eliminate them. The Jew is such an alien and, therefore, when he wants to insinuate himself, he must be warded off. This is self-defense. In saying this, I do not characterize every Jew as inferior, as I do Negroes, and I do not underestimate the greatest enemy with whom we must fight.²¹³

It is evident that the Nazis despised the Black race more so than any other group, including Jews. The *only* reason that the Black body count of the Holocaust did not number in the tens of millions is that they were a minuscule portion of the population when compared to Jews; thus, they held little to no meaningful sway in the German community, and because of that, they were not a threat. Nevertheless, during WWII and Hitler's Third Reich, White Power used all too familiar means to remind Germany's Black residents that no matter the decade or geographic location, *they are always in the South!*

Close to twenty thousand Afro-Germans were accounted for upon the arrival of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Regime in 1933, and, like Jewish people, all were eventually subjected to the *Jim Crow-like* Nuremberg Laws that were enacted in 1935.²¹⁴ Two years before these laws were established, the Civil Service Restoration Act dictated that only Germans of *pure* Aryan blood could hold government or professional offices or jobs, thereby severely reducing employment opportunities for Black folks who were already

²¹² Weiss, *The Nazi Symbiosis*, 85.

²¹³ See 'Appendix A'; Müller-Hill and Fraser, *Murderous Science*, 10-12.

²¹⁴ Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 544; "The Holocaust Explained"; See 'Appendix A'.

struggling through the global Great Depression.²¹⁵ In school, their children were exposed to a humiliating, false racial ideology that they were inherently inferior to their White counterparts, and by 1941, they were forced to attend *segregated* institutions on every level.²¹⁶ Over four hundred *Rhineland Bastards* were victims of mass sterilization in 1937—the thought being that as they grew older, they would be incapable of further *poisoning* the Aryan bloodline.²¹⁷ The two Nuremberg Laws were devastating because they took away the few socio-political privileges that Black Germans had to begin with and all but officially declared that they were indeed a leprous breed of *undesirables*, thus making them even more susceptible to race-based hatred and inhumane violence.²¹⁸ First was the Law of the Reich Citizen, which stripped all those who did not have *pure* Aryan German ancestry of their governmental and social privileges, such as voting and frequenting public restaurants and businesses.²¹⁹ The second law, referred to as the Law for Protection of German Blood and German Honor, criminalized sexual intercourse and intermarriage between *impure* and *pure* groups.²²⁰

Although records are indeed sparse, it is estimated that almost one thousand Black men, women, and children, including prisoners of war from various other countries, wound up in the Holocaust concentration camps just as Jews did, and even here, they were segregated like *rabid dogs in a kennel*.²²¹ It stands to reason that many Black folks walked the same Death Marches as those who were forced to wear the Star of David, and

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 527.

²¹⁸ Wolfe, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies*, 94.

²¹⁹ Kershaw, *Hitler*, 344-345.

²²⁰ Ibid, 345.

²²¹ Evans and Mbabaike, “Other Victims of the...,” 15; “How Many People Did the Nazis Murder?”.

they likely suffered through the same agonizing fate in gas chambers used by Hitler to carry out the second *Final Solution*.²²²

The many atrocities they experienced during the Nazi Third Reich were modes by which White Power punished German Black folks for their *crime* of being born with *hair like wool* and *feet the color of brass*. Although *they walked through yet another Valley of Death*, a measure of hopeful pride emerged amidst it all. His name was Jesse Owens, and his unspoken message was that Black Power is indeed *as American as apple pie*. The Deep South, Alabama native crushed the brittle ego of Adolf Hitler and his Aryan ideology by winning four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin, Germany, Summer Olympics—a feat that had never been accomplished before and would not be realized again until Carl Lewis matched the total in 1984.²²³ As a matter of Nazi propaganda and despite the Nuremberg Laws, Owens was allowed to stay in the same hotel as Whites and was treated like royalty throughout the city of Berlin.²²⁴ However, when he returned to America, he was brutally reminded of the old adage — “the more things change, the more things stay the same.” This decorated global hero, who traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to represent the United States boldly and proudly, was shamefully forced to walk through the back door of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City before taking the freight elevator to his celebratory reception.²²⁵ Most disheartening, the President of the United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, refused to customarily invite

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics*, 36 and 87; See ‘Appendix C’.

²²⁴ Ibid, 49.

²²⁵ Schwartz, “Owens pierced a myth,” ESPN.

Owens to the White House in honor of his accomplishments.²²⁶ Five years later, the same President forced young Black men to return to Europe and battle Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime in defense of his *White as snow* republic during World War II.

Otherwise known as Conscription, a military draft of young men between the ages of 21 and 35 was ordered by President Roosevelt through the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, and because it went into effect a year prior to the Attack on Pearl Harbor, it was the first peacetime draft in American history.²²⁷ The following year, after the NAACP applied substantial pressure, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which addressed the longstanding civil rights issue of racial discrimination in the national defense industry, including all federal agencies and unions.²²⁸ Still, there was no remedy provided for the centuries-old practice of race-based segregation of officers and rank-and-file military personnel. Thus, Black volunteers and draftees were segregated from White units.²²⁹ White officers could be, and were, often assigned to lead Black soldiers, but the comparatively few Black officers were rarely, if ever, placed in charge of all-White units.²³⁰ Roosevelt also put in place a racial quota that limited Black enlistment to a maximum of nine percent, thereby making it that much more difficult for patriotic Black Americans to serve their country as they had valiantly done in *every* United States conflict going back to the Revolutionary War in 1775.²³¹

Most Black soldiers who ultimately served in World War II never saw combat due

²²⁶ Folsom, *New Deal or Raw Deal?*, 210.

²²⁷ Holbrook, "The Crisis Years," *The Pacific Ship and Shore Historical Review*, 2.

²²⁸ "Executive Order 8802," National Archives, Transcript.

²²⁹ Kersten, "African Americans and World War 2," *OAH Magazine of History*, 16.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

to blatant global and domestic racial stereotypes.²³² Per the *unfortunate* usual, they were generally perceived as insubordinate, unintelligent, and untrustworthy, hence their assignments were typically restricted to jobs such as digging ditches, building infrastructure, or cooking in mess halls.²³³ Those who entered battle did so without regard for self, and they fought with a precision and intensity that only Black Power could inspire.

In 1944, the Buffalo Soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division were the first Black Americans to participate in live, ground combat.²³⁴ They were a key component to the Liberation of Italy campaign and highly effective in strategically herding Germans into the northern region, where they would eventually surrender.²³⁵ The Battle of the Bulge, considered by many scholars to be the most significant WWII turning point in favor of the Western front, was the only instance where the military was desegregated during the war.²³⁶ Nearly three thousand Black men were called upon to fight this battle alongside their White counterparts, and together, they successfully caused the permanent retreat of the Germans.²³⁷ Renowned 5-Star General George S. Patton commanded the 761st Tank Battalion (better known as the *Black Panthers*) of the Third United States Army, the first all-Black tanker unit to see action in Europe. It was responsible for liberating dozens of towns and fought for a record 183 consecutive days as it bullied its way into Germany from France; Jackie Robinson of Brooklyn Dodgers fame is the most well-known of its

²³² Ibid, 16.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Pleasant, "Honoring Black History World War II Service to the Nation," United States Army.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ambrose, *Americans at War*, 52.

²³⁷ Ibid.

commissioned officers.²³⁸ Tuskegee Airmen were the first Black military pilots in United States history, and World War II marked the first time they were deployed into combat scenarios.²³⁹ Their 332nd Fighter Group, better known as the Red Tails, is historically recognized as one of the most decorated escort groups of the entire conflict.²⁴⁰ Alfonza W. Davis was a captain of this segregated unit and one of its top pilots.²⁴¹ Tragically, in October of 1944, his plane went down over the Adriatic Sea during a reconnaissance mission over Italy.²⁴² The US Army Air Force recovered neither his body nor his aircraft, and he was therefore officially listed as Killed In Action.²⁴³

Captain Davis graduated from Creighton University and was raised in North Omaha, Nebraska.²⁴⁴ For his skill and sacrifice overseas, he was awarded, among other decorations, an Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and a Purple Heart, and, in 2006, he and fellow Tuskegee Airmen were bestowed with the Congressional Gold Medal.²⁴⁵ Like so many other Black Americans during World War II, Alfonza W. Davis gave *first-class service* in defense of his country in foreign lands, even to the point of death. For those who were fortunate enough to return to America alive, they discovered that their sacrifice did not matter. They were still treated like *second-class citizens* at home, and Nebraska was no exception. During the World War II Era, with White Power spread thin around the globe, Black Power made a strategic move in North Omaha with a rejuvenated thrust of activism for its people.

²³⁸ “761st Tank Battalion”; “African Americans in World War II”.

²³⁹ “The Tuskegee Airmen,” The National WWII Museum; See ‘Appendix A’.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ “Meet Alfonza W. Davis,” Omaha Public Schools.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid; “Alfonza W. Davis”; “Public Law 109-213 — April 11, 2006, Congressional Gold Medal to...”.

The Second Wave of Black Power in Omaha

As the world's second major conflict played out on the global stage, extensions of Black Power remained hard at work in the United States. From *sea to shining sea*, battles for Black manhood and womanhood were intensifying, and the same could be said for Omaha, Nebraska.

The Omaha NAACP Chapter, although not as formidable as it would later become, was still the foundation of Black activism in the city, and young warriors re-energized its advance. In 1935, NAACP National Executive Secretary Walter White initiated the NAACP Youth Council in Atlanta, Georgia, to harness the untapped potential of a new generation's brilliant minds and passionate fire; the first Omaha chapter was established one year later.²⁴⁶ Its Black members, ages 12 to 25, were encouraged to embrace both their African and American heritages. Prophetically, Black Power trained them to effectively engage in socio-economic and political protest by utilizing such modes as marches and sit-ins, including how to respond to attacks by vicious police dogs and angry White mobs.²⁴⁷ Their presence would be incredibly impactful decades later. During the WWII Era, its parent chapter continued its thrust of communal organization as it waged war against racial and economic injustice.

Attorney Harrison J. Pinkett was still in the fight against police brutality and misconduct in addition to being one of the NAACP leaders who championed focused efforts to dismantle race-restrictive covenants that bolstered the practice of redlining and

²⁴⁶ Bynum, *Our Fight is for Right*, 23; St. James, *NAACP*, 132.

²⁴⁷ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP Youth Council".

de facto segregation in Omaha.²⁴⁸ Prominent NAACP activist Roy Wilkins visited in 1950 and gave a powerful speech on fighting propagandized racial discrimination at an event organized by the NAACP and the DePorres Club.²⁴⁹ By the early 1950s, three chapters were present in the town and merged to form the NAACP Metropolitan Area Council.²⁵⁰ Yet, the Omaha NAACP was still generally viewed as ineffective, creating a leadership void that other groups filled.

One year after the United States entered WWII, the Northside YWCA and the Omaha Urban League worked together to form an organization called the Omaha Negro Youth Council.²⁵¹ Unlike the NAACP's Youth Council, its objectives leaned toward creating positive social activities for all youth and developing better relationships among the city's various ethnic and racial groups.²⁵² The Urban League of Omaha was a well-respected, vibrant voice of Black activism within the city. It defended socio-economic democracy and was a relentless advocate for the desegregation of war-related and peace-time labor industries. In 1950, during the same event that Roy Wilkins spoke at in Zion Baptist Church, civil rights hero Whitney Young was officially announced as president of the NUL's Omaha Chapter.²⁵³ He quickly immersed himself in the community, making him wildly popular with local Black folks. During his time there, he served as a professor at both the University of Nebraska at Omaha and Creighton University, and he proactively reached out to work alongside the NAACP in the fight for

²⁴⁸ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP".

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Sasse, "A History of Omaha's Urban League".

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

civil rights.²⁵⁴ Young and the NUL were instrumental in turning up the heat on segregation issues within the city while another activist organization doubled down on these efforts.²⁵⁵

At Creighton University, the DePorres Club was founded by a group of Black and White high school and college students on November 3, 1947.²⁵⁶ Initially, twenty-four members were guided by Father John Markoe, a White Catholic priest.²⁵⁷ Most in this inaugural group were influenced by or actively involved with the Youth Councils; thus, they had already been made aware of the power of well-orchestrated, socio-political protest. The club mobilized expeditiously and put their passion and purpose to practical use in the fight for civil rights in Omaha.

In February 1948, they convinced the Creighton University School of Dentistry to end its discriminatory practice of treating poor White citizens but denying care to poor Black people.²⁵⁸ The same year, nearly forty members staged the city's first sit-in to successfully desegregate Dixon's Top Hat Restaurant near the Douglas County Courthouse, and they began aggressive campaigns to halt labor-related racism within some of Omaha's most influential companies.²⁵⁹ Twelve months after taking on their own University's School of Dentistry, they came away victorious in a lawsuit versus Dunk Donut Shop on Farnam Street, where a few of their Black members were refused service in the White-only establishment.²⁶⁰ In 1950, Manuel Talley of the Congress on Racial

²⁵⁴ Franklin and Meier, *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century*, 333.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Smith, "The Omaha DePorres Club," *Negro History Bulletin*, 1.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Holland, *Ahead of Their Time*, 37.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 38-39; Graves, "Black history strong at Creighton".

²⁶⁰ Holland, *Ahead of Their Time*, 39.

Equality (CORE) and Whitney Young were invited to speak at major rallies hosted by the DePorres Club.²⁶¹ One year later, the organization moved toward attacking two formidable targets: Coca-Cola and public transportation. After a month of being boycotted, the Omaha Coca-Cola plant submitted to economic pressure and hired its first Black American.²⁶² Four years before Rosa Parks sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the Deep South, the DePorres Club, the Omaha NAACP, and the Omaha Urban League joined forces to officially boycott the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Railway Company for its racist hiring and transportation practices.²⁶³ The process for this was initiated by the DePorres Club in the summer of 1949 when they acquired over two thousand signatures on a communal petition to fight discrimination related to public transportation in North Omaha.²⁶⁴ In 1954, the Street Railway Company gave up the fight, began hiring Black drivers, improved its service in Black Omaha, and agreed to desegregate its buses on *some* of the routes in the city.²⁶⁵ These are just a few examples of impactful activism generated by the DePorres Club, which eventually became an affiliate of CORE in 1960.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Graves, "Black history strong at Creighton".

²⁶² Ibid; Smith, "The DePorres Club," *Negro History Bulletin*, 4.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Graves, "Black history strong at Creighton".

²⁶⁵ Smith, "The DePorres Club," *Negro History Bulletin*, 4-5.

²⁶⁶ Holland, *Ahead of Their Time*, 41.



Charter members of Creighton University's Omaha DePorres Club in 1947: front row, 2nd from left is Rev. John Markoe, and Bertha Calloway is on the second row, far right
Image 3 (See 'List of Images')

Bertha Calloway was the most influential of all her DePorres peers. She was consistently active with the NAACP and served as Vice-Chair of the Douglas County Democratic National Party in 1968.²⁶⁷ In the following decade, she founded the Nebraska Negro History Society and the Great Plains Black History Museum in Omaha.²⁶⁸ In 1971, she partnered with Rowena Moore to ensure that the home and birthplace of Malcolm X was registered as a national historic site and was elected as a board member for the

²⁶⁷ Barkley-Brown and Clark-Hine, *Black Women in America*, 122.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 122-123.

Malcolm X Memorial Foundation.²⁶⁹ Calloway was also a reporter for Mildred Brown and *The Omaha Star*.²⁷⁰

There is no question that Black Power inspired Mildred Brown to take on the mantle of Reverend Williams's *The Monitor*, which published its final paper ten years before she released the first copy of *The Omaha Star* on July 9, 1938.²⁷¹ Throughout the World War II Era and indefinitely beyond, this Black-owned and operated newspaper proved to be a radiant beacon of hope for its targeted North Omaha audience. Brown was a leading civil rights activist in the town and used her journalistic sway to expose and fight various forms of racism. She refused to advertise for any institution, economic or otherwise, that supported segregation and housing discrimination, and the most enduring aspect of Brown's legacy was her intentional uplift of Omaha's Black community.²⁷²

Through *The Omaha Star*, she created scholarships for education, promoted countless opportunities for Black business and employment, and announced constructive social events and activities.²⁷³ Her newspaper consistently gave positive press to local civil rights organizations through optimistic journalism. One such example was its praise of the NAACP in 1942:

Leaders of the NAACP are so courageously and completely fighting our every battle for economic and civil rights. The mass meetings being held by the NAACP are beyond a doubt, the most effective and well-managed in the history of Omaha.²⁷⁴

However, Mrs. Brown's greatest affinity was reserved for the DePorres Club.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 123.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 122; See 'Appendix C'.

²⁷¹ "Mildred Brown," NebraskaStudies.org.

²⁷² Forss, *Black Print with a White Carnation*, 38-40.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ "Open Letter," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

After the group was kicked out of Creighton University for being too *controversial*, she offered encouraging guidance and let them use *The Omaha Star* facility on North 24th Street as their temporary headquarters.²⁷⁵ During the bus boycott, Mildred implored readers of *The Omaha Star* not to ride Omaha’s buses or streetcars until their demands to end discriminatory practices were met.²⁷⁶ She added that if they had absolutely no choice but to ride, they could still “protest by using 18 pennies” to pay the fare.²⁷⁷ On June 17, 1952, Brown did much more than print words on paper—she stood before White Power and gave a speech to the Omaha City Council and Mayor, demanding change:

If our boys can drive jeeps and tanks and fly jet planes in Korea in the fight to save democracy, then make democracy work at home—make it work in Omaha. I say to you, your Honor, the Mayor if the tram company will not hire Negroes as drivers, then we prevail on you to remove the franchise of the bus company.²⁷⁸

Mildred Brown has been honored with many accolades for her lifetime of courageous civil rights activism and communal service. Of these, two stand out the most: Brown was the first Black American inducted into the Omaha Business Hall of Fame, and, in 1960, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed her as a United States goodwill ambassador to East Germany during the Vietnam War.²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, despite aggressive and courageous efforts by *The Omaha Star* and organizations such as the DePorres Club, the Urban League, and the NAACP, much progress remained to be made for Black folks in this midwestern *oasis*.

²⁷⁵ “Mildred Brown,” NebraskaStudies.org.

²⁷⁶ Rojewski, “The Omaha Bus Boycott of 1952-54,” *The Omaha World-Herald*.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ “Mildred Brown,” NebraskaStudies.org.

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Just as it is in the South, police brutality is deeply rooted in the history of Omaha, Nebraska. The cases of Will Brown and Eugene Scott are notorious, but there were other well-known Black victims of legal and *extra*-legal law enforcement violence in Omaha going back to the late 1800s: Georgiana Clark (1887), James A. Smith (1889), Victor B. Walker (1905), John Aytch (1919), and Robert H. Johson (1922).²⁸⁰ Three notable incidents of police brutality occurred in the city during the World War II Era, involving Herman Lewis (1941), Ruby Eldridge (1942), and William Rose (1948).²⁸¹ And through the Civil Rights-Vietnam War Era and beyond, there would, unfortunately, be many more Black bodies that unjustifiably fell prey to savage attacks initiated by police officers who swear to protect and serve *all* citizens.

Ruby Eldridge suffered through the most egregious incident of those that occurred during the 1940s. In the spring of 1942, Omaha Police Sergeant John Graham arrived at her home on 2530 Maple Street in response to a call from a tenant who rented a room from her.²⁸² The occupant claimed that Ruby was threatening him and acting belligerent, which led to an altercation between her and Sgt. Graham as he attempted to take her into custody. After being dragged outside and violently thrown to the ground, she bit the officer, who then responded by repeatedly punching Mrs. Eldridge in the head until she was unconscious.²⁸³ When they arrived at the police station, the unwarranted beating continued as Sgt. Graham reached through the cell bars and punched Ruby in the face

²⁸⁰ Sasse, "A History of Police Brutality in Omaha".

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid; Davis, "Fighting Jim Crow in post-World War II Omaha," 37.

²⁸³ Ibid.

multiple times until her limp body fell to the cold, concrete floor.²⁸⁴ Yet, even that was insufficient to *properly* teach this *Black beast* a lesson. Sgt. Graham opened the cell door and began ruthlessly kicking her near-lifeless body before intentionally raising her dress and exposing her private parts for all to see.²⁸⁵ She remained in this degraded state of being severely battered, bruised, and humiliated for nearly five hours before regaining consciousness.²⁸⁶ For the *crime* of being a Black woman having the *audacity* to defend herself against excessive force dished out by a White male authority figure, she was charged with six offenses: assault and battery, causing mayhem, disturbing the peace, drunkenness, interfering with a police officer performing his duty, and resisting arrest.²⁸⁷ Through Mildred Brown's newspaper, Black Power rallied its troops to her defense.

No more than a few days after Mrs. Eldridge became a victim of police brutality at the hands of one of Omaha's *finest*, the front page of *The Omaha Star* headlined her story.²⁸⁸ The article resurrected an incident for which Sgt. Graham received minor discipline in 1940 as *punishment* for beating two Black Creighton University students.²⁸⁹ A week later, at Zion Baptist Church, nearly two thousand Black people gathered in solidarity at an NAACP rally to witness the official adoption of resolutions in support of Ruby and in opposition to Sgt. Graham and police brutality.²⁹⁰ To quiet the boisterous voices of protest, Graham was suspended until the trial was finished. After being declared *guilty*, Ruby Eldridge was given a five-day sentence for causing mayhem, disturbing the

²⁸⁴ Ibid; Ibid, 37-38.

²⁸⁵ Ibid; Ibid, 38.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid; Ibid, 38-39.

²⁸⁸ Ibid; Ibid, 39; "Graham accused of beating a Negro woman," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

peace, and resisting arrest.²⁹¹ For the crime of abusing authority and brutalizing a human being to the point of near death due to his psychotic White superiority complex, John Graham was *punished* with a second *slap on the wrist*. He was also *rewarded* with back pay and a reinstatement to full duty as a *leader of men* within the Omaha police department.²⁹²

Although not as morally reprehensible as police brutality, constraints on generational wealth-building potential for Black Omaha continued to impact their north side community during and after WWII. Despite jobs created by the war and measures put in place by federal and local government agencies to lift the masses out of economic depression, it seemed that Black folks still had no clear path forward toward securing meaningful socio-economic power within the city. One of the foremost examples of this was a correlation between World War II's GI Bill and home ownership, or lack thereof, regarding which group(s) were established as Omaha's new *middle class* via this mode of upward mobility.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, or GI Bill, was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt a year before the end of World War II on June 22, 1944.²⁹³ What was supposed to restore the *American Dream* and immediately benefit *all* the war's veterans and their families only extended the *American Nightmare* of Black people nationwide. The overarching language of the act was blatantly optimistic in that it promised financial rewards such as one year of unemployment compensation, low-interest agriculture and business loans, and full coverage of cost and tuition at

²⁹¹ "Graham case comes to an end," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Altschuler and Blumin, *The G.I. Bill*, 16.

institutions of higher learning.²⁹⁴ But White Power inserted nefarious loopholes and fine print that accommodated Jim Crow laws of the South, ensuring that Whites would stay at the front of the line and Blacks would remain *in their place* at the back.

For example, as an additional qualification for the college tuition benefit, one had to pass and excel on a written exam, never mind that schools and universities were still free to pick and choose *who* they accepted into their programs.²⁹⁵ It is well-known that up to and during this era, through no fault of their own, Black people generally lagged behind White people in the academic realms of literacy, comprehension, and writing; therefore, it should unfortunately come as no surprise that the same tactic used for decades to deny them of their legal right to vote was now used to deny them of a more than well-earned and vital benefit of the GI Bill. Worse than this, dishonorably discharged military personnel were not allowed to take advantage of *any* benefits, and Black soldiers were dishonorably discharged at a much higher rate than that of White soldiers.²⁹⁶ Where home ownership is concerned, the GI Bill guaranteed a zero down payment and low interest rate for all military veterans who were offered a mortgage loan on a new or existing home.²⁹⁷ However, there was no definitive language prohibiting lenders from being *selective* in determining who would and would not be granted funds to purchase a home. Like Black military veterans in other locales across the country, those in North Omaha were highly susceptible to this Jim Crow-inspired legal loophole, and that vulnerability only served to widen the geographic and socio-economic chasm

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 56-57.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 118; Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*, 63.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 57; Blakemore, "How the GI Bill's Promise was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans".

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

between Omaha's *White as snow* republic and the *Black beasts* on its north side.

Long before Adolf Hitler's Third Reich took hold in Nazi Germany, the state of Nebraska established its own set of Nuremberg-like laws in *the land of the free and the home of the brave*, and these were double downed on during the WWII Era.

Miscegenation, or marriage between Blacks and Whites, was made illegal by the Nebraska Legislature in 1865.²⁹⁸ In 1943, Statute 42-103 expanded this law to include Asians; of interest, Jewish people have never been listed among Nebraska's *undesirables* where miscegenation is concerned.²⁹⁹ The unwritten practice of dehumanizing segregation that was present as far back as the early 1900s intensified during and after the war. Signs reading *Whites only* or *Coloreds not welcome* became more and more prevalent throughout the city of Omaha as the United States moved toward another major conflict in the 1950s.

After World War II ended in 1945, the unfulfilled promises of the GI Bill and other governmental wartime programs were a stark wakeup-call for Omaha's Black citizens. They understandably convinced themselves that the illusion of the so-called *American Dream* was constructed for them as well—they were sadly mistaken. The war did generate an influx of both public and private sector jobs for Omaha, Nebraska, but there were no legal bumpers put in place that would lead to equitable distribution of these opportunities. White men and women were often favored over their Black counterparts for the more desirable positions that offered higher pay and better benefits. A similar experience was manifested regarding home ownership and its real or imagined

²⁹⁸ "Jim Crow Laws," Americans All; See 'Appendix A'.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

association with securing a better quality of life. As it has already been alluded to, the application of the GI Bill should have been a powerful work-around for many Black families as they began the process of reversing nearly a century of real estate and housing discrimination in their midwestern *oasis*. Instead, White Power weaponized the act, making socio-economic influence even more challenging to obtain for Black folks of North Omaha than it already was.

What began as a slow drip of White flight in the 1920s, became a scorched earth exodus of White people to the new, west side *middle-class suburbs* in the late 1940s and early 1950s.³⁰⁰ False narratives constructed to devalue property in North Omaha by portraying it as the crime-infested, *dark side* of town were ratcheted up to such an extent that land and homes were worth much less than those in the new White *middle-class suburbs* to the west.³⁰¹ This created an *investment opportunity* for wealthy non-Black groups and individuals that took advantage of a perfect storm, which was brought about by the convergence of a significant wage increase for Whites, a *Swiss cheese* GI Bill, and their already established vise-grip on Omaha's business and real estate markets. An uptick in the construction of highways and bridges made it logistically easier for White citizens to vacate their homes and escape the constant *threat* of *Black beasts* lurking in the shadows of North Omaha.³⁰² The GI Bill left open the possibility that mortgage and real estate companies could arbitrarily decide who they would do business with, and most of these institutions in Omaha were controlled by White elites who made certain that their own people were taken care of first.

³⁰⁰ Bankston and Caldas, *The End of Desegregation?*, 12.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

As a result, a mass of delusional, home-owning White people (many of them Jews) heavily populated West Omaha. They willingly enslaved themselves to the psychotic pursuit of extreme materialism, otherwise known as the American *Dream*. Meanwhile, every form of real estate on the north side was *ripe for White picking*, and most of what they did not already own was purchased in short order before being leased out to new and existing Black businesses and residents of North Omaha.³⁰³ Black Americans purchased some of the sparse assets remaining, but when taking quality and quantity into consideration, the collective value of these properties paled in comparison to that of the bounty acquired and controlled by Jews and other non-Black groups. For Black Omaha, their *Nightmare* continued playing out before them on a seemingly eternal loop of despair. Nevertheless, Black Power honored its unwavering commitment to give them hopeful measures of progress and relief, especially during their darkest hours.

In 1944, Attorney Charles Davis co-founded Carter Savings and Loan Bank of Omaha on 2416 Lake Street; it was one of the premier Black-owned financial institutions in the country and the first in Nebraska's history.³⁰⁴ His daughter, Attorney Betty Davis-Pittman was an Omaha pioneer and Nebraska icon. In 1948, she became the first Black woman to graduate from Creighton University Law School.³⁰⁵ Two years later, Davis-Pittman was the first Black woman elected to serve on the Omaha School Board and would become the first to be appointed Douglas County Attorney in 1964.³⁰⁶ She went on to become both the first woman and Black American to hold a seat as a judge in

³⁰³ Ibid, 14.

³⁰⁴ Smith, Jr., "Elizabeth D. Pittman," *Creighton Law Review*, 514.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 517; "Woman named county attorney," *Lincoln Star*, 3.

the state of Nebraska when she served on the Omaha Municipal Court from 1971 through 1986.³⁰⁷ More than this, she was a fierce, lifetime advocate for civil rights who worked closely with the NAACP, the DePorres Club, Bertha Calloway, and *The Omaha Star* and Mildred Brown.³⁰⁸

Four years after Betty's father helped establish the Carter Savings and Loan Bank, the People's Hospital was constructed on North 20th and Grace Streets.³⁰⁹ The project was manifested by Dr. Aaron Manasses McMillan, who recently returned to Omaha from a medical missionary movement in Angola.³¹⁰ There, he built a fully functional volunteer hospital that served nearly one hundred thousand Black Africans for seventeen years.³¹¹ Known as an active NAACP member and highly motivational organizer, Dr. McMillan convinced the community to support his endeavor to provide for them what the segregated city of Omaha refused to for decades—quality healthcare at little or no cost to Black folks who needed it most.³¹² *The Omaha Star* stayed faithful to its calling and was a pivotal voice during the hospital's fundraising and opening phases:

Dr. McMillan's hospital will have the latest equipment and be staffed by some of the best physicians in Omaha and will have an efficient nursing team. The facility will provide services for obstetrical work, surgery, and general medicine.³¹³

The People's Hospital certainly lived up to this standard. On its two floors, it had a delivery room, a surgery room with modern equipment, a full-size kitchen, two medical wards that could house up to thirty patients and an all-Black staff of nurses and

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 518-519; "Elizabeth Pittman sworn in as municipal judge," *Lincoln Star*, 2.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 521.

³⁰⁹ "Dr. Aaron McMillan Dies..." 6; "Negro hospital open house," 1.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Sasse, "A History of the People's Hospital in North Omaha".

³¹³ Ibid; "Negro hospital open house," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

physicians.³¹⁴ Through philanthropic donations and volunteer work, the medical facility was self-sufficient and served Black Omaha with immense pride and excellence until it closed in 1953.³¹⁵

On the lighter side of Black pride in Omaha, Nebraska, the Omaha Rockets was one of the most entertaining independent baseball teams in Negro League history. Will Calhoun was the owner and manager of the team, which started in 1947.³¹⁶ He was a somewhat well-to-do, flamboyant Black businessman from Tyler, Texas, who arrived in Omaha in 1941.³¹⁷ After being *honorably* discharged from the Army four years later, he was one of the relatively few Black soldiers who benefitted from the GI Bill's low-interest rate business loans. The funds were used to open the Calhoun Hotel on North Lake Street in the heart of Omaha's Black business district.³¹⁸ It served Black patrons only, and for almost two decades, it was one of the most popular resting spots for celebrities who entertained in or traveled through Omaha: BB King, Jesse Owens, and Ray Charles were among those who frequented Will's establishment.³¹⁹ His Rockets played games at Creighton University or Levi Carter Park in East Omaha until the team folded in 1950.³²⁰ While they were active, there was no shortage of star power on the roster. Eventual Pro Football Hall of Famer Dick Night Train Lane was a member of the team during its opening season along with Negro League standout and Hall of Fame pitcher Satchel Paige, who played in his first Major League game with the Cleveland

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Badders, "The Nine"; Sasse, "A History of the Omaha Rockets Independent Black Baseball Team".

³¹⁷ Sasse, "A History of the Calhoun Hotel".

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Badders, "The Nine"; Sasse, "A History of the Omaha Rockets Independent Black Baseball Team".

Indians in 1948 at 41 years old.³²¹

Beloved Omaha legend Bob Gibson was only a teenager when the Rockets existed. He was an excellent student and star athlete at North Omaha's Tech High School, where Captain Alfonza W. Davis, civil rights activist Ernie Chambers, and Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers also graduated. Gibson went on to become a two-sport All-American at Creighton University in 1957.³²² After graduating from college, he toured the country for two years as a basketball player with the Harlem Globetrotters before developing into arguably the most feared post-season pitcher in the history of Major League Baseball.³²³ When he retired from the St. Louis Cardinals in 1975, he was a nine-time All-Star, a two-time World Series MVP, a member of the All-Century Team, a first-ballot Hall of Famer, and one of only thirteen *Black Aces* (Black pitchers that won 20 or more games in a season during their career).³²⁴ Most important, he selflessly gave back to his Omaha community. For twelve years, he raised millions of dollars for local charities through his annual Bob Gibson All-Star Classic celebrity golf tournament.³²⁵

Like water in a desert, these manifestations of hopeful Black excellence were no doubt refreshing to *The* downtrodden *Souls of Omaha's Black Folk*. Yet, they offered only a fleeting reprieve from the horrors of an ongoing and centuries-old war in the United States of America. Throughout the World War II Era, Black Power was readying and positioning its North Omaha regiments for a critical fight ahead—their *Battle of the Bulge* for civil rights, as it were. Simultaneously, the anointed *Warrior King* was being

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Gibson and Wheeler, *Stranger to the Game*, 21.

³²³ Ibid, 27.

³²⁴ Ibid, 32; "Bob Gibson," Baseball Reference.

³²⁵ Ibid, 35.

held in Norfolk State Prison in Massachusetts, and while incarcerated, Black Power *baptized* him through *The Messenger of Allah* and the Nation of Islam.³²⁶ A *re-born* Malcolm X was granted parole in the Summer of 1952, and he immediately engaged in the work he was created for—liberating his people from their predicament *by any means necessary!*³²⁷

³²⁶ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 181.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 186; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 98.

CHAPTER 3

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY ANSWERS THE CALL OF DUTY

“Politics is war without bloodshed, and war is politics with bloodshed.”³²⁸

Fred Hampton, Sr.

Spanning twenty-five years through five Presidential administrations, the Civil Rights-Vietnam War Era is the most revolutionary epoch in the history of the United States of America. Although most scholars mark the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement with the 1954 *Brown versus the Board of Education* ruling, this author sides with others who believe the push began during President Harry S. Truman’s post-World War II term. A. Philip Randolph and the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training convinced Pres. Truman to expand on and reinforce Pres. Roosevelt’s WWII Executive Order 8802.³²⁹ In the Summer of 1948, the President authorized the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, followed by Executive Orders 9980 and 9981, which immediately and fully prohibited discrimination or segregation of any kind in federal workplaces and the military.³³⁰ *Brown v. Board of Education* occurred under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and it determined that state-sanctioned segregation of public schools was unconstitutional. In 1957, Pres. Eisenhower enacted the first Civil Rights Act since the Reconstruction Era and signed another one into law three

³²⁸ Hampton, Sr., “Power Anywhere Where There’s People,” Marxist Internet Archives; See ‘Appendix C’.

³²⁹ Glisson, *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*, 91; “Harry S. Truman and the Quest...”.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

years later. These legislative decrees established the United States Department of Civil Rights Division and the United States Commission on Civil Rights, along with *partially* addressing many of the Jim Crow laws and practices used to disenfranchise Black and Brown people across the country.³³¹

The President most synonymous with the Civil Rights Movement is far and away John F. Kennedy. In 1961, he appointed Thurgood Marshall to the United States Court of Appeals, and Marshall went on to become America's first Black American Supreme Court Justice six years later. During the same year, Pres. Kennedy initiated the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (a precursor to Affirmative Action) through the application of Executive Order 10925, and he also assigned federal marshals to protect the Freedom Riders as they traveled through the Deep South in protest of dehumanizing segregation.³³² In response to the Ole Miss Riot of 1962, he implemented Executive Order 11063, which made it illegal to racially discriminate in federally subsidized housing, including on public college campuses.³³³ On June 11, 1963, James Hood and Vivian Malone were the first Black students to attend the newly desegregated University of Alabama. They were escorted by the federalized Alabama National Guard, which was commanded by Pres. Kennedy to shield them from the possibility of being physically brutalized by Governor George Wallace's deranged White mob that was attempting to stop them from entering. That evening, he addressed America on the matter of civil rights and the path forward, the first major radio and television broadcast of its kind in the United States. As punishment for his *crime* of leading with

³³¹ Mayer, "The Eisenhower Administration and the Civil Rights Act of 1957," 140-143.

³³² Brauer, "John F. Kennedy," in *The Presidents*, 490.

³³³ *Ibid* 493.

compassionate strength and strategically advancing Black American civil rights legislation, White Power called on Lee Harvey Oswald to *have the honor* of blowing the back of President John F. Kennedy's skull off in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.³³⁴

No more than three hours after his assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States of America aboard Air Force One at Dallas Love Field Airport. Five days later, before a special joint session of Congress, President Johnson emphasized the importance of fulfilling the former President's vision through his *Let Us Continue* speech — “No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the Civil Rights Bill for which he fought so long.”³³⁵ On July 2, 1964, Pres. Johnson garnered enough support to pass the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In 1965, he signed into law the Voting Rights Act, and three years after that, as part of his War on Poverty, the President passed the Fair Housing Act, or Title VIII, of the Civil Rights Act of 1968.³³⁶ The latter piece of legislation came to fruition one week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For years, President Johnson had been coordinating with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI to spy on and wiretap both Dr. King, Jr., and Malcolm X before they were murdered. He also oversaw the extreme implementation of COINTELPRO, which took down the Black Panther Party.

President Johnson's successor, President Richard Nixon, implemented the 1970 Philadelphia Plan, which was the first extensive Affirmative Action program in the

³³⁴ Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 517-518.

³³⁵ “1963 Year in Review — Transition to Johnson,” United Press International Archives.

³³⁶ Davidson and Grofman, eds. *Quiet Revolution in the South*, 3-5.

United States.³³⁷ After it was approved by both Congressional chambers in 1972, he endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment that prohibited discrimination based on sex, and he also ensured that the legal process of school desegregation was carried out.³³⁸ Where Black Americans were concerned, he was an avid proponent of *Black capitalism* as a means by which their group could secure lasting socio-economic equality.³³⁹ Yet, like Pres. Johnson, Pres. Nixon had a *dark side* and engaged in arguably the most dishonorable episode of political corruption in United States history. On August 8, 1974, he was forced to resign due to his involvement in the Watergate Scandal.³⁴⁰

American military involvement in the Vietnam War began during President Lyndon B. Johnson's Administration when the first Marine Brigade landed on the country's southern shore in 1965; its mission was to defend the United States air base at Da Nang *by any means necessary!*³⁴¹ Although the conflict was aimless and seemingly infinite, Black Americans, once again, stood tall amidst the carnage and chaos. Initially, the bodies of Black men were used as human shields as they were vastly over-represented in the infantry divisions and were often the first to be sent out into the most dangerous warzones.³⁴² The NAACP and other civil rights activists quickly protested this egregious disparity, leading to reforms that reversed this practice mid-way through the war.³⁴³ In March of 1973, two months after signing the Paris Peace Accords, President Richard

³³⁷ Delaney, "Nixon Plan for Negro Construction Jobs is Lagging," *The New York Times*, 1.

³³⁸ Frum, *How We Got Here*, 246.

³³⁹ Frazier, *Harambee City*, 184-186.

³⁴⁰ "Richard Nixon's Resignation Letter and Gerald Ford's Pardon," National Archives Foundation.

³⁴¹ Johnson and Shulimson, *US Marines in Vietnam*, 6-7; "Shoot Back if Fired Upon, Troops Told," 1.

³⁴² Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 11-12.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, 13.

Nixon withdrew the last American combat troops from Vietnam.³⁴⁴ In the end, twenty Black Americans were decorated with the Congressional Medal of Honor for sacrificing their lives in defense of a nation that still viewed and treated their collective as no more than *Black beasts* that needed to be *dealt with*.³⁴⁵

At home in America, before and during the Vietnam War, it was *open season* on Black minds and bodies. In Omaha, Nebraska, the war to protect and uplift Black manhood and womanhood was beyond compromise, and *playtime* was over. After centuries of grieving and withholding its wrath, Black Power unleashed its ferocity and deployed an elite fighting unit known as the Black Panther Party, whose mission was to defend physical reflections of itself *by any means necessary!* no matter the odds. The result was all-hands-on-deck guerilla warfare, *with and without bloodshed*, in this midwestern *concrete jungle* on the *dark side* of town. It was a colossal clash of titans between the *Führer* of Omaha's *White as snow* republic and the vanguard of *The majestic Souls of Omaha's Black Folk*.

The Pressure was Mounting

By the time *Brown v. Board of Education* was settled in 1954, it was likely too late for a *kumbaya* coming together of Black folks and White folks across the country. Legislation that manifested after that US Supreme Court decision was nothing more than disingenuous political babble etched on fancy paper because those that endorsed them likely knew that most states were neither obliged to nor willing to abide by federal

³⁴⁴ Johnson and Shulimson, *US Marines in Vietnam*, 54.

³⁴⁵ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 203; See 'Appendix C'.

statutes. Nebraska was no exception, and Omaha was a racially charged boiler room that would inevitably explode, like Bull Connor's Birmingham, Alabama, of the 1960s.

Police brutality remained a focal point of White-on-Black racism in Omaha, and James C. Lee became yet another *Black beast* that was *dealt with* in the Fall of 1954. For his *crime* of being publicly intoxicated, he was beaten to the point of hospitalization:

They beat me for about three minutes, then dragged me out of the cell and beat me outside. They beat me all the way down the elevator and into the ambulance—he beat me about the face, head, and stomach with a blackjack all the way out to the hospital.³⁴⁶

Lee suffered bruising all over his body, severe head and eye injuries, broken ribs, and a punctured kidney.³⁴⁷ It was a reminder to him and the entirety of Black Omaha that their bodies were still disposable. The Omaha NAACP, the DePorres Club, and *The Omaha Star* rallied together in protest of the beating, and the three officers involved were each *punished* with no more than a 10-day suspension.³⁴⁸ Fed up with the fact that these savage crimes committed by the Omaha Police Department continued to yield no *meaningful* discipline and change, civil rights activists demanded more. The mayor of the city promised to establish a citizen's police committee to heal the divide between his police department and Omaha's Black community through oversight and relationship. Not surprisingly, the promise was broken and never came to fruition. It was now hopelessly evident in this midwestern *oasis* that White Power had zero interest in genuine repentance and would never admit guilt; like most of the America, it only desired that Black people *stayed in their place* and kept their mouths shut. The Reverend Dr. Martin

³⁴⁶ "Negro man beaten by officer," *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2; Sasse, "A History of Police Brutality...".

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Luther King, Jr., was a national figure who refused to remain silent and encouraged his Black brethren to *up the ante* through non-violent civil disobedience.

Thrust into the struggle by Black Power, Dr. King, Jr., spearheaded the 1955 Rosa Parks-inspired Montgomery bus boycott that led to the Supreme Court effectually declaring that segregation on public transportation in Alabama and nationwide was illegal. That same year, fourteen-year-old Emmitt Till was on the wrong end of a *Will Brown treatment* in the Mississippi Delta of the Deep South. In 1957, three years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the *Little Rock Nine* endured verbal abuse, the degradation of being spat on, and death threats as they integrated Little Rock Central High School. The irrational outrage from White students and their families was so delirious and untamed that President Eisenhower was forced to federalize the Arkansas National Guard *and* order US Army soldiers to escort the students to and from class while also “keeping the peace” throughout the city.³⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Black Omaha was engaged in civil rights battles of its own.

The Omaha Fire Department was segregated going back to 1895 when the first Black firefighters were hired thirty-five years after the department was established.³⁵⁰ That changed in 1957 after the Omaha Urban League and *The Omaha Star* worked together to integrate the department’s stations citywide; three years later, Herbert Davis was selected to be Omaha’s first Black American Fire Battalion Chief.³⁵¹ In 1958, Lawrence McVoy took the helm as president of the Omaha NAACP and swiftly moved toward aggressive measures to affect positive change within and for the city’s Black

³⁴⁹ Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*, 723.

³⁵⁰ Sasse, “A History of African American Firefighters in Omaha”.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

community.³⁵² He developed a *four-point plan* to increase the number of Black teachers in Omaha's secondary and post-secondary schools, purchase and develop housing for Black people beyond the confines of North Omaha, firmly advocate for Black employment in Omaha's public services and utility sector, and exponentially increase the Omaha NAACP's resource pool and Black membership.³⁵³ McVoy served as president of the chapter for nearly two decades, and while in that role, he convinced local politicians to honor what they reneged on when James C. Lee was victimized by Omaha police officers in 1954. Between 1966 and 1967, the city council coordinated with the police department and leaders of North Omaha to create a position called Police-Community Relations Coordinator.³⁵⁴ The PCRC was stationed at a satellite law enforcement facility located in the heart of Black Omaha on North 24th Street.³⁵⁵ The same year that McVoy became president of the Omaha NAACP chapter, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. penned his book *Stride Toward Freedom* and spoke on civil disobedience before an audience of over ten-thousand people at a national Baptist conference in North Omaha.³⁵⁶ In October of 1960, Dr. King, Jr. was again a keynote speaker in Omaha at the Civic Auditorium and the title of his speech was "The Church in National Affairs," with content centered on the varied dynamics of hopeful integration.³⁵⁷

As if prophesied by the Reverend, 1963 proved to be a year of great *Strides Toward Freedom* for Black civil rights activism in Omaha, Nebraska. The NAACP Youth

³⁵² Sasse, "A History of the Omaha NAACP".

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Sasse, "A Tour of the Omaha Civil Rights Movement".

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

Council was still engaged in the struggle, and they put *boots on the ground* in protest of various national and local issues. After Medgar Evers was slaughtered by White Power on June 12, in Jackson, Mississippi, the Youth Council led a march honoring him in solidarity with other Black folks across the country.³⁵⁸ Later that summer, the group organized and led the Peony Park Policy Protest.³⁵⁹ The water park was one of the most popular public entertainment venues in Omaha and was *White-only* from its inception in 1919.³⁶⁰ In 1955, a Nebraska judge ordered the park to desegregate, as it was a public facility, but to no avail.³⁶¹ City officials took a page from the Deep South Jim Crow playbook, closed the park, and reopened it under the guise of being a *private club*, enabling Omaha's White citizens to bypass the *horrors* of being forced to mingle with *Black beasts* from the *dark side* of town.³⁶² Beginning on the 14th of July and lasting nearly two weeks, carloads of Black families and youth pulled up next to each other, one by one.³⁶³ Knowing they would be denied entry, a barricade was intentionally formed, making it near impossible for White patrons to get through and spend money in the establishment. As a result, Peony Park took a significant financial hit. By summer's end, it was desegregated for good, enabling Black boys and girls to experience the joyful memories that amusement parks create.

The Omaha Citizens Coordinating Committee for Civil Liberties, or 4CL, was an activist group that emerged during the same year as the Peony Protest, and they were a

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. "Flashback Friday," History Nebraska.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

force to be reckoned with.³⁶⁴ Many of 4CL's founding members were formerly associated with the DePorres Club and brought with them a wealth of experience in non-violent protest methods that they put into practice years before Dr. King, Jr., did so in Alabama.³⁶⁵ This committee played a pivotal role in setting the agenda for and coordinating the early stages of Omaha's civil rights movement and placed emphasis on doing so through politics, or *war without bloodshed*. Their overarching strategy was to press the Nebraska State Legislature on three primary objectives for Black citizens of Omaha: equal housing opportunity, equal job opportunity, and integrating schools and related transportation.³⁶⁶ The mindset behind these thrusts was presented clearly by one of the committee's four leaders, Reverend Dr. Kelsey Jones, in Mildred Brown's *Omaha Star*:

Omaha is the Mississippi of the North—local government has historically perpetuated familiar patterns of economic and social discrimination, segregation, and calculated degradation. As for what we want—first, we do not want any measure of compromise. We do not want any revenge. We want justice. We want full citizenship, and we want it now!³⁶⁷

In the fall of 1963, Black Power called on 4CL to move forward on its commitment to assist in rescuing and uplifting the weary, worn, and wounded *Souls of Omaha's Black Folk*. Their first move was banding together with the Omaha NAACP and Urban League to coordinate the City Hall *Pray-In* to demand a local equal opportunity employment and housing ordinance.³⁶⁸ Thousands showed up to pray for hours at Omaha City Hall, resulting in over forty men, women, and teenagers being arrested for *disorderly*

³⁶⁴ Sasse, "The History of the Citizens Coordinating Committee for Civil Liberties, or 4CL, in Omaha".

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ "4CL Vows to Continue Drive 'Until Hell Freezes Over'," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

³⁶⁸ Sasse, "A Tour of the Omaha Civil Rights Movement".

conduct and disturbing the peace, including seventeen pastors.³⁶⁹ Weeks later, in continuance of the pray-in, forty members of the committee staged the City Council *Sing-In*.³⁷⁰ They sang during an Omaha City Council meeting and were promptly taken into police custody for their *crime of disturbing the peace*. After being found guilty, they appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court. Although they lost, it was one of the first highly publicized legal challenges for the right to assemble and protest in the state of Nebraska peacefully.³⁷¹

In the month before 4CL was mobilized, Black America was mourning what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., described as — “one of the most vicious and tragic crimes ever perpetrated against humanity” — and Black Omaha grieved along with them through their Sorrow March that was organized by the NAACP.³⁷² Close to one hundred people actively participated in the protest, and hundreds more lined the streets of downtown Omaha to memorialize four beautiful girls whose bodies were blown apart as punishment for their *crime* of being born Black in the Deep South. The 16th Baptist Church bombing on September 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, was undoubtedly the tipping point that led to much less passive action being taken by civil rights groups in the United States of America. Four KKK members from the same Klavern that orchestrated a vicious attack on the 1961 Freedom Riders and burned their bus to the ground in Birmingham, ignited nineteen sticks of dynamite near steps leading to the basement of this iconic Black

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Krajicek, “Justice Story,” *New York Daily News*.

American place of worship.³⁷³ Carol Denise McNair (11 yrs. Old), Addie Mae Collins (14 yrs. old), Carole Roberston (14 yrs. old) and Cynthia Wesley (14 yrs. old) were killed by the blast—they were there anticipating what was supposed to be a joy-filled *Youth Day* at the Church.³⁷⁴ The initial *investigation* was closed in 1968 by J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI and yielded zero indictments.³⁷⁵ It would not be until 2002 that three of the four perpetrators were all convicted of their crimes; the fourth murderer died in 1994 before his trial.³⁷⁶ Black Power conveyed a harsh rebuke to White Power and Alabama’s Governor George Wallace; it was sent by telegram from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — “The blood of four little children is on your hands. Your irresponsible and misguided actions have created in Birmingham and Alabama the atmosphere that has induced continued violence and now murder.”³⁷⁷

There was no accountability taken by *Grand Wizard* Wallace, his *goon squad general* Bull Connor, or Alabama’s *White as snow* republic. Instead, they placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of Dr. King, Jr., and other leaders of this new phase of the Civil Rights Movement. From their point of view, events such as the April 12, 1963, March on Birmingham and the August 28, 1963, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom were *stirrin’ up the good Negroes* and causing chaos across the country. The March on Birmingham was led by Dr. King, Jr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and Fred Shuttlesworth, and its blatant intent was to defy an injunction ordered by an Alabama judge that banned anti-segregation protests in the state. All three leaders were jailed along

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid; Maranzani, “Remembering the Birmingham Church Bombing,” History.

with other participants, and this is where Dr. King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail* was written. Within its text, he boldly and correctly pronounced — “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”³⁷⁸

One day after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X bluntly stated his thoughts on the matter — “President Kennedy never foresaw that the chickens would come home to roost so soon. Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never made me sad; they always made me glad.”³⁷⁹ After being swiftly disciplined for his comments by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (*The Messenger of Allah*) and the Nation of Islam, he publicly expressed what he meant to convey and did so later for Alex Haley, who assisted in writing his autobiography:

It was, as I saw it, a case of “the chickens coming home to roost.” I said that the hate in White men had not stopped the killing of defenseless Black people, but that hate, allowed to spread unchecked, had finally struck down this country’s Chief Magistrate.³⁸⁰

Despite his clarification, the NOI came down hard on Malcolm due to bad publicity.

However, the rift between him and the leaders within the organization had been worsening for months before the President was murdered. Jealousy, hypocrisy, and prophetic destiny all played a role in the deteriorating relationship. Two major points of contention were that many of the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad did not agree with the true nature of the religion of Islam and Malcolm’s concern that the NOI was not as actively involved as it should have been in the civil rights thrust. What began as a seemingly inseparable bond between *The Messenger* and *Black Jesus* was now

³⁷⁸ King, Jr., *The Measure of a Man*, 6.

³⁷⁹ “Malcolm X Score US and Kennedy,” 21; X, “God’s Judgement of White America...”.

³⁸⁰ Haley and X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 273.

damaged beyond repair, and on March 8, 1964, Black Power separated Malcolm X from the organization.³⁸¹

Before leaving the United States in mid-April to experience Africa and participate in the Hajj, or annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X made stops in Cleveland, Ohio, and Detroit, Michigan, to orate his fiery declaration that 1964 would be the year of *The Ballot or The Bullet*.³⁸² On June 28th, having been inspired by Black African activist organizations in the Motherland, he formally announced the establishment of the Pan-African Organization of Afro-American Unity in New York City's Audubon Ballroom.³⁸³ Its purpose was to first fight for the human rights of Black Americans and then to cooperate with African American Immigrants and Africans across the diaspora to form a globally unified front.³⁸⁴ The OAAU bound itself to a *five-point program* of restoration, reorientation, education, economic security, and self-defense.³⁸⁵ When queried by a newspaper reporter as to whether or not White people could join his organization, Malcolm responded in the half-joking and half-serious manner he was known for — “Definitely not, but if John Brown were still alive, we *might* accept him.”³⁸⁶

In December of the same year, the oratory brilliance of Malcolm X was front and center on the United Kingdom, Oxford University debate stage.³⁸⁷ Standing before a packed house of White European academic elites, he spoke on the fallacy and hypocrisy

³⁸¹ Handler, “Malcolm X Splits with Muhammad,” *The New York Times*.

³⁸² “Malcolm X’s Legendary Speech,” 20th Century Time Machine — YouTube video; See ‘Appendix C’.

³⁸³ Perry, *Malcolm*, 294-295.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Massaquoi, “Mystery of Malcolm X,” *Ebony*, 41.

³⁸⁷ “Malcolm X Oxford Union Debate, December 3, 1964,” Avereos — YouTube video; See ‘Appendix C’.

of hollow, disingenuous American civil rights legislation and even American democracy itself. The most compelling argument within the speech was regarding the empty promises of civil rights laws and the associated necessity for Black American self-defense:

Anytime you have a democratic country—supposedly the land of the free and the home of the brave—and it can't enforce laws even in the northernmost cosmopolitan and progressive parts of it that benefit a Black man—how much heart do you think we will get when they pass civil rights legislation which only involves more laws? If they can't enforce that law, they'll never enforce those laws. So, my contention is that we are faced with a racialistic society—a society in which they are deceitful and deceptive—and the *only* way we can bring about a change is to speak the kind of language they understand. The racist never understands non-violent language. The racist has spoken his language to us for four hundred years. We have been the victim of his brutality! We are the ones who face his dogs that tear the flesh from our limbs, only because we want to enforce the Supreme Court's decisions! We are the ones who have our skulls crushed, not by the Ku Klux Klan, but by policemen only because we want to enforce what they call Supreme Court decisions! We are the ones upon whom water hoses are turned with pressure so hard that it rips the clothes from our backs—not men, but the clothes from the backs of women and children, which you've seen for yourself, only because we want to enforce what they call the law! Anytime you live in a society supposedly based upon law, and it doesn't enforce its own law because of the color of a man's skin, then I say those people are justified to resort to *any means necessary!* to defend themselves and bring about justice where the government can't give them justice.³⁸⁸

Fittingly, his points emphasized at Oxford University were echoes from a speech he gave months before, on June 30, 1964, in Omaha, Nebraska.³⁸⁹

Malcolm X returned to the *cradle of American Black Power* and delivered a message that fired up an all-Black audience at the North Omaha Elks Club on Lake Street, where A. Philip Randolph had just given a speech the week before. Although he left the Nation of Islam behind, he did not abandon his militant stance, nor did he abort

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ "Malcolm Speaks," *The Omaha Star*, 1; Bristow, "Malcolm X"; Sasse, "A Biography of Malcolm X".

the divine mission passed down to him through the seed of his biological father, Reverend Earl Little—to uplift his *mighty race!* The event was hosted by 4CL and *The Omaha Star*, and they, along with *The Omaha World-Herald*, paid considerable attention to what Black Omaha’s native son had to say, given that the entire nation and their city were essentially devolving into a civil rights war zone during these turbulent times:

In Omaha, as in other places, the Ku Klux Klan has just traded in their bed sheets and bloodhounds for police uniforms and attack dogs.³⁹⁰

I go for revolutionaries more than I go for anybody else. I’ve never known anybody who ever got anything by singing “We shall overcome.”³⁹¹

We, twenty-two million Afro-Americans, must form a united front. There’s no need for us to be divided. We do not want integration—we want complete recognition and respect as human beings.³⁹²

The United States Government has failed to give us our freedom and our pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. But we will not be denied much longer.³⁹³

One can only imagine how impactful his message and presence were on this day.

Malcolm surely injected courage and hope into the metaphorical veins of *The depleted Souls of Omaha’s Black Folk*. He was a living and breathing manifestation of Black Power; he was indeed their *Black Messiah*.

Malcolm X took his last breath on February 21, 1965, behind the same Audubon podium in New York City where he announced the formation of the OAAU.³⁹⁴ With his wife, Betty Shabazz, and their six children looking on in the front row, he was murdered in cold blood. Multiple gunmen riddled his body with nearly thirty bullets and the

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Marable, *Malcolm X*, 436-437; Perry, *Malcolm*, 366.

deathblow was caused by gaping buckshot wounds to his chest from a sawed-off shotgun.³⁹⁵ Acting as judge, jury, and executioner, they brutally punished Malcolm X for his *crime* of attempting to liberate dehumanized Black minds and bodies from the grasp of sick and twisted *White devils*. It seemed that a *Black Judas* from the Nation of Islam had successfully conspired with the *White American Empire's* FBI to take down one of the greatest human beings, leaders, and truth-tellers the world has ever known. Little did they know that the influential legacy of Malcolm X is eternal and that his incorruptible soul and fighting spirit would soon rise from the dead.

Not long after Malcolm's assassination and one day before the US Marines infiltrated Da Nang, South Vietnam, a ferocious display of police brutality occurred in Selma, Alabama, on Edmund Pettus Bridge. *Bloody Sunday* took place on March 7, 1965, and ended with sixty-seven protestors being hospitalized or seriously injured.³⁹⁶ They were participating in what would be the first of three Selma to Montgomery marches that were organized by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to protest decades of Jim Crow laws that targeted and disenfranchised Black Americans. The murder of a young Black man named Jimmie Lee Jackson in nearby Marion on February 28th intensified their controlled rage and determination to complete the march.³⁹⁷ Mr. Jackson was gunned down by an Alabama state trooper for the *crime* of shielding his mother from being barbarically clubbed to death for her *crime* of protesting with others for the right to participate in

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Klein, "How 'Bloody Sunday' became a Turning Point..."; Reed, "'Bloody Sunday' was a Year...," 76.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

America's so-called democracy through voting.³⁹⁸

As the nearly six-hundred marchers reached the crest of the bridge, they saw at its base a wall of Alabama state troopers wearing *funny-looking* helmets with gas masks and wielding billy clubs. Behind them were Dallas County sheriff's deputies on horseback and a throng of White southerners proudly waving Confederate flags in eager anticipation of this showdown between the *Black beasts* of Selma and the *Führer* of Alabama's *White as snow* republic.³⁹⁹ Led by John Lewis of SNCC and the Reverend Hosea Williams of SCLC, the protestors had only two options—retreat or press on, and Black Power emboldened them to choose the latter. They slowly advanced toward their oppressor, carrying no weapons other than their will to fight for the dignity of *The majestic Souls of Selma's Black Folk*. A chaotic scene unfolded as news cameras rolled, exposing the primitive and savage nature of White Power to citizens of the United States and the world. After the seemingly endless bludgeoning of Black bodies came to a halt and the smoke from tear gas cleared, it was evident that these valiant Selma warriors paid a heavy price for their *crime* of not cowering in fear as they stood before their *masta*. Fourteen-year-old Lynda Lowery was beaten so badly that wounds to the back of her head and right eye required forty-five stitches.⁴⁰⁰ Ameilia Boynton, a well-known local organizer for the Selma Voting Rights Campaign, was beaten unconscious, and John Lewis was fortunate to survive multiple skull fractures, which he endured as punishment for his *crime* of conspiring with others to protest for justice and human rights peacefully.

Two weeks later and on their third attempt, the SCLC, and the Rev. Dr. Martin

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

Luther King, Jr., successfully led thousands of marchers across Edmund Pettis Bridge, from Selma to Montgomery. They were escorted by the federalized Alabama National Guard, and by the time they arrived at the Alabama State Capitol Building on March 25th, the number of supporters had grown to well over twenty-thousand strong. It was on the steps of this government building that Dr. King, Jr. delivered one of his most iconic speeches—*How Long?! Not Long!*:

The end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience—I know you are asking today, how long will it take?! I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long!⁴⁰¹

Just days after this, the Omaha NAACP Youth Council coordinated the Youth Freedom Rally event at the North Omaha YMCA to show solidarity with the March on Selma. One of the guest speakers was Father James Stewart of Omaha’s Holy Family Catholic Church, who traveled to Alabama and marched with both John Lewis and the Rev. Dr. King, Jr.⁴⁰² Inspired by this fight for Black voting rights, the Youth Council began a one-month voter registration drive shortly after the event, resulting in close to one hundred newly registered Black voters in the city.⁴⁰³ That fall, they played a key role in desegregating Omaha’s public after-school activities and social clubs. This was accomplished by utilizing the powerful community voice of *The Omaha Star* to draw attention to the issue and aggressively petitioning the school board for immediate change.⁴⁰⁴ Modest gains such as these offered glimmers of hope in this midwestern *oasis*, yet Black Power was no longer satisfied with piecemeal liberation that was only

⁴⁰¹ “Selma to Montgomery March,” King Encyclopedia.

⁴⁰² Sasse, “A Tour of the Omaha Civil Rights Movement”.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

constructed by White Power to disingenuously pacify its downtrodden people across the United States of America. As James Baldwin might contend, if he were still with us today — “To realize the complete and uncompromising liberation of Black people from their American and global predicament, it became *necessary!* that *The Fire Next Time* was much more intense because Malcolm X was right.”

Whether you are a Christian, or a Muslim, or a nationalist, we all have the same problem. They don't hang you because you're a Baptist—they hang you 'cause you're Black! They don't attack me because I'm a Muslim—they attack me 'cause I'm Black! They attack all of us for the same reason! All of us catch hell from the same enemy—we're all in the same boat! We suffer political oppression, economic exploitation, and social degradation—all of it from the same enemy! The government has failed us—you can't deny that. Anytime you live in the twentieth century in 1964 and you're still walkin' around singing “We shall overcome”—the government has failed you! This is part of what's wrong with you—you do too much singin'! Today, it's time to stop singin' and start swingin'! You can't sing up on freedom, but you can swing up on some freedom! Cassius Clay can sing, but singin' didn't help him become the heavyweight champion of the world—swingin' helped him become heavyweight champion of the world! So, the government has failed us, and the White liberals who have been posing as our friend have failed us! And once we see that all these other sources to which we've turned have failed, we stop turning to them and turn to ourselves. We need a self-help program, a do-it-yourself philosophy, a do-it-right now philosophy, and it's already-too-late philosophy—this is what you and I need to get with!⁴⁰⁵

Once you change your philosophy, it changes your thought pattern. Once you change your thought pattern, it changes your attitude. Once you change your attitude, it changes your behavior pattern, and then you go into some action. If you have a sit-down philosophy, you'll have a sit-down thought pattern, and if you have that ole' sit-down thought, you'll be in some kind of sit-down action! They'll have you sittin'-in everywhere! It's not so good to refer to what you're going to do as a sit-in. That immediately castrates you and brings you down! Think about what goes with that! Think of the image of someone sittin'! An old woman can sit! An old man can sit! A chump can sit! A coward can sit! Anything can sit! Well, you and I have been sittin' long enough, and it's time for us to start doin' some standin' and some fightin' to back that up!⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ “Malcolm X's Legendary Speech,” 20th Century Time Machine — YouTube video; See ‘Appendix C’.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

All Power to the People!

James Meredith was the first Black American to attend the University of Mississippi, an event that ignited the Ole Miss Riot of 1962.⁴⁰⁷ The *sinister* presence of just this one Black man *lurking* on an all-White campus was enough to trigger the bestial nature of the “other” Oxford’s *White as snow* republic. For two days, the *Battle of Oxford* raged on with White mobs deliriously foaming at the mouth in protest, spewing violent death threats toward Meredith and his relatively few supporters. Nineteen Louisiana Klansmen with *funny-looking hats* made an appearance alongside their Imperial Wizard, Robert Shelton.⁴⁰⁸ They were there in support of retired US Major General Edwin Walker’s call to action for “10,000 volunteers to rally for the cause of freedom at Ole Miss.”⁴⁰⁹ Baseball bats, Molotov cocktails, and sniper rifles were the weapons of choice for many of the thousands of White criminals who participated in the riot, including local police officers.⁴¹⁰ To effectively quell the violence on campus and in the city, President John F. Kennedy had to initiate the largest invocation of the Insurrection Act of 1807 in America’s history—ordering over thirty-thousand Mississippi National Guard and US Army troops to take control of the situation.⁴¹¹ It was later reported by the FBI that the KKK had every intention of lynching Meredith after the military presence eased up.⁴¹²

Although he was not lynched following the riot, James Meredith did not escape inevitable punishment for his *crime* of being born Black in America. On June 7, 1966, a

⁴⁰⁷ Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 149.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 167-170; Scheips, *The Riot at Oxford*, 102.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid, 282; Ibid, 123.

White gunman named James Norvell shot Meredith several times during an attempt to murder him just one day into his solo 220-mile March Against Fear from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi.⁴¹³ The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee joined with other civil and human rights organizations to complete the March in honor of him. By the time they reached Jackson, Mississippi, on June 26th, it had become the largest civil rights protest in the state's history, with over fifteen-thousand marchers.⁴¹⁴ At one of the rally points along the way, Stokely Carmichael of SNCC uttered the words "Black Power!" for the first time in a fiery speech on Black pride and self-determination.⁴¹⁵ Two weeks before the March Against Fear reached its Mississippi destination, the Omaha NAACP organized the March for Slain Civil Rights Heroes on North 24th Street.⁴¹⁶ It was a demonstration to show solidarity in support of James Meredith, to honor southern civil rights martyrs and to commemorate Medgar Evers on the anniversary of his death.⁴¹⁷ In part, it was also meant to be a peaceful protest of the unlawful arrest of nearly thirty Black teenagers on North 24th and Binney Streets in the month before.⁴¹⁸ The boys were accused of *disorderly conduct* and *assaulting* police officers—an ominous foreshadowing of things to come in North Omaha.⁴¹⁹

Independence day weekend in 1966 marked the beginning of the crucial battle for more than just *political babble etched on paper*. This was no longer a conflict for civil rights; it was now an all-out war for Black manhood and womanhood. As the Sun set on

⁴¹³ "Black Civil Rights Activist Shot," *BBC News*.

⁴¹⁴ "Eyes on the Prize," *PBS*.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Sasse, "A Timeline of the Omaha Civil Rights Movement".

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

July 2nd, a group of over one hundred Black youth met up to enjoy festivities in a Safeway grocery store parking lot on North 24th and Lake Streets, in the heart of Black Omaha.⁴²⁰ Shortly after midnight, a neighborhood citizen called the police because the teenagers were setting off fireworks and creating a disturbance. When the first patrol car arrived, the officers were greeted with two bricks that busted their back window wide open. They left the scene and returned a brief time later with reinforcements who had but one intention—to teach these *Black beasts* a lesson. However, this time would be different than it had been for centuries because this new generation of Black folks was no longer going down without a fight. Armed with loaded weapons, gas masks, and billy clubs, the Omaha police force converged on this *pack of wild animals* and began threatening them with violence and arrest. The group of Black teenagers responded with a barrage of bottles, rocks, and cherry bombs before they eventually dispersed. But instead of going home, they channeled their justified anger and pent-up rage and took to the streets of North Omaha’s business district.

For three days, they wreaked havoc on what had become to them a prison of psychological and physical brutality that was only constructed for their demise. They demolished storefronts and set fire to everything in sight, not forgetting to do the same to every vacant patrol car they passed by. What began as only hundreds of young, fed-up Black people refusing to *turn the other cheek* grew to thousands of all ages by the time the Nebraska National Guard arrived to assist state troopers and local police on the third and final day of the riot.⁴²¹ After both groups had drawn clear *battle lines in the sand*, the

⁴²⁰ Howard, “Then the Burning Began,” 79-81; Sasse, “A History of the North Omaha Riots”.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

spontaneous, yet predictable, conflict was temporarily quelled by White Power in the early-morning hours of July 5th.⁴²² Rudimentary historical thought would have you believe that this first uprising was simply a childish temper tantrum to demand more entertainment and recreation options beyond just being able to hang out in a parking lot after dark. This author begs to differ with such elementary socio-historical propositions because they are an affront to the majestic essence of *The Souls of Omaha's Black Folk*.

Just three weeks after the Safeway Riot came to an end, a Black nineteen-year-old by the name of Eugene Nesbitt was shot to death by Floyd Matula, a White *off-duty* police officer.⁴²³ Matula took it upon himself to sentence Nesbitt to execution by a one-man firing squad as punishment for his *alleged* crimes of burglary and fleeing from the officer's *unmarked* personal vehicle at high speeds.⁴²⁴ The young Black victim of unjustified police brutality was laid to rest on July 31, 1966; the morning after, a second uprising began in North Omaha, Nebraska.⁴²⁵ Again, over the course of three days, thirty-nine buildings and businesses along North 24th Street were, at minimum, severely damaged, and close to half were either looted or firebombed and burned to the ground.⁴²⁶ Hundreds of riot police eventually contained the situation and restored *law and order* on the *dark side* of town. During and after the uprising, media coverage and socio-political rhetoric were divisive and telling. Mayor Al Sorenson and *The Omaha World-Herald* blamed Black Americans for their own miserable neighborhood conditions, not to mention they were undeniably more concerned with the destruction of property and the

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid; Sasse, "A History of Police Brutality in Omaha".

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

reputation of their police force than they were with the destruction of Eugene Nesbitt's Black body.⁴²⁷ This incident occurred fifty-four years before the murder of George Floyd at the knee of police officer Derek Chauvin, yet in 1966 White Power was continuing to fine-tune its practice of criminalizing Black victims of police brutality in Omaha through its *World-Herald* newspaper:

Eugene Nesbitt was a 19-year-old Negro youth facing a felony charge for a January armed robbery. He died early this morning in an unfortunate occurrence related to a seemingly routine police matter. A preliminary inquiry shows Patrolman Matula was acting properly.⁴²⁸

In stark contrast, Black Power utilized *The Omaha Star* to tirelessly advocate for justice on behalf of Eugene Nesbitt and his family.⁴²⁹ As the 1960s came to an end, four more lethal cases of White-on-Black police brutality occurred in Omaha, setting off riots in 1968 and 1969. These uprisings convinced Black Power to deploy militant reinforcements to the north side of town to comfort, defend, and uplift its people.

On September 22, 1966, Stokely Carmichael published what many argue is the most definitive essay on the socio-political thoughts and desires of young Black revolutionaries at the apex of the age of American Black Power, and nowhere in America did his words reflect reality more so than they did in Omaha, Nebraska:

One of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that up to now, there has been no national organization which could speak to the growing militancy of young Black people in the urban ghetto. There has been only a civil rights movement whose tone of voice was adapted to an audience of liberal Whites. It served as a sort of buffer zone between them and angry young Blacks. None of its so-called leaders could go into a rioting community and be listened to. In a sense, I blame ourselves, together with the mass media, for what has happened in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, and Omaha. Each time the people in those cities saw

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid. Omari and Paatela, "Street in Turmoil," *The Omaha World-Herald*.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

Martin Luther King get slapped, they became angry; when they saw four little Black girls bombed to death, they were angrier; and when nothing happened, they were steaming. We had nothing to offer that they could see, except to go out and be beaten again.⁴³⁰

Black people do not want to “take over” this country. They don’t want to “get whitey”; they just want to get him off their backs, as the saying goes. It was, for example, the exploitation by Jewish landlords and merchants which first created Black sentiment toward Jews—not Judaism. This White man is irrelevant to Blacks except as an oppressive force. Blacks want to be in his place, yes, but not to terrorize and lynch and starve him. They want to be in his place because that is where a decent life can be had.⁴³¹

The next month, in Oakland, California, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.⁴³² With fists held high and an emphatic mantra declaring *All Power to the People!*, they were the vanguard of *The Souls of America’s Black Folk*. They were *The Fire Next Time*, and they were the resurrected spirit of Malcolm X.

Black Power inspired Newton and Seale to form the organization through an unfortunate event that was like those that appeared far too often on the historical timeline of Omaha. In the same month that Carmichael penned his *What We Want* essay, the Hunters Point Riot exploded in San Fransisco, California. This uprising was an aggressive backlash directed at local police within an oppressed Black neighborhood. It was sparked by their killing of a seventeen-year-old unarmed Black boy named Matthew Johnson, Jr., who was shot three times in the back for his *alleged* crime of evading arrest on foot.⁴³³ Across the San Francisco Bay, these two fed-up Black Merritt College students began establishing the Black Panther Party.

⁴³⁰ Carmichael, “What We Want,” *The New York Review of Books*, 6-7.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴³² Burney, “Research Paper,” 3; Johnson, *Waiting Til’ the Midnight Hour*, 216.

⁴³³ *Ibid*; Carlsson, “Hunter’s Point Uprising,” FoundSF.org.

Fueled by a passion for protecting and serving subaltern segments of their own group, they unapologetically exercised their constitutional right to bear arms by openly carrying weapons as they engaged in *cop-watching*. This show of defensive militancy and close observation of law enforcement sent a clear message that they were now fighting back against what had been an extensive history of over-policing and unnecessary violence perpetrated upon their Black brothers and sisters by the Oakland Police Department. Beyond this, they expanded geographically and initiated their own social programs apart from those being weaponized against their community in nefarious ways. Only a few years after the group was founded, there were several chapters in many urban cities across the country. They established a network of much-needed resources such as health clinics, Free Breakfast for School Children (also known as the People's Free Food Program), a *Ten-Point Program* based upon Black communal needs, and various types of educational initiatives with a heavy focus on economics and politics.⁴³⁴ Shamefully, the same conspirators who led the charge to assassinate Malcolm, Martin, and possibly even JFK were the same ones who would ultimately dismantle the Black Panther Party.

On July 28, 1968, Eddie Bolden and Veronza Bowers, Jr., established the Omaha chapter of the Black Panther Party after Bolden returned from Oakland, California, where he was trained in the ways of the organization.⁴³⁵ With the help of Eldridge Cleaver, the BPP's National Minister of Information, the chapter gained nearly one-hundred members

⁴³⁴ Ibid; Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire*, 315.

⁴³⁵ Howard, "Then the Burning Began," 118; Sasse, "A History of the Omaha Black Panthers".

in less than two months.⁴³⁶ From their headquarters on North 24th and Spencer Streets, they wasted no time organizing armed citizen patrols to monitor the Omaha Police Department and stand firm against police brutality.⁴³⁷ They replicated the organization's national models for free breakfast programs, self-defense courses, basic healthcare facilities, political education for adults, and summer Freedom Schools for youth that offered both education and recreation.⁴³⁸ Not long after the Black Panther Party touched down in this midwestern *oasis*, one of its teenage members, Robert Griffo, was appointed as the Minister of Student Affairs at Tech High School.⁴³⁹ He was instrumental in forming the Black Association for Nationalism through Unity, which was a Black Power-inspired youth activist group—essentially, a militant variation of the NAACP Youth Council.⁴⁴⁰ With compassionate love, the Panthers and the BANTU applied soothing balms of healing to the festering mental and emotional wounds of their people in North Omaha. They also functioned as fierce human shields that would protect physical reflections of themselves *by any means necessary!*

There were several events that occurred before July 1968 that no doubt triggered Eddie Bolden and many other Black youths of Omaha to seek more militant forms of civil activism. By now, it seemed that White Power's *Final Solution* in America was an attempt to *off* every Black citizen and leader who dared to defy its *supreme* authority. Omaha, Nebraska, was one of its many primary targets across the country, and racial tension between Blacks and Whites was well beyond *the boiling point*.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, 119-120; Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid; Sasse, "A History of the Black Association for Nationalism Through Unity (BANTU) in Omaha".

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

In the dark of night on February 8, 1968, ten South Carolina highway patrolmen opened fire on hundreds of unarmed Black students who were congregated on their own historically black South Carolina State University campus.⁴⁴¹ Twenty-eight young men and women were wounded, and three more were murdered.⁴⁴² The students were *dealt with* for their *crime* of protesting segregation at the local All-Star Triangle Bowling Lane.⁴⁴³ The Orangeburg Massacre in South Carolina was one of the most violent episodes of the entire Civil Rights Movement, and as they had done countless times before, the Omaha NAACP Youth Council exhibited solidarity. A week after the horrific event took place, they led a march through North Omaha to honor these southern reflections of their midwestern selves and in protest of police brutality.⁴⁴⁴ Early in the following month, the Youth Council mobilized again in protest of a sinister presence in their own city.

Alabama governor George Wallace made a presidential election campaign stop in Omaha, Nebraska, on Sunday, March 3, 1968.⁴⁴⁵ In front of an audience of thousands of White supporters, he delivered an enraged speech in which he suggested that militant Black activists and *communists* were one and the same.⁴⁴⁶ Members of the NAACP Youth Council along with another group of Black protestors led by David Rice were being held out of the Omaha Civic Auditorium by close to one hundred law enforcement officers.⁴⁴⁷ They eventually forced their way into the facility and headed straight toward Wallace's

⁴⁴¹ Bass and Nelson, *The Orangeburg Massacre*, 71.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁴⁴ Sasse, "A History of the NAACP Youth Council".

⁴⁴⁵ Howard, "Then the...", 106; Gish and Jahn, "George Wallace"; Sasse, "A History of Omaha Riots".

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

podium on the main floor. As one might guess, the disruptive actions and chants of the protestors (most of whom were Black students) were not well received by this audience of *White devils*. Omaha police officers cordoned off exits before chaos ensued, and the situation quickly escalated into an all-out brawl. Folding metal chairs became violent weapons, billy clubs landed blow after blow, pepper spray filled the air, and there were reports that gunshots were fired.⁴⁴⁸ The battle inevitably spilled out onto the streets, and as the Sun went down, the third Black Omaha uprising commenced.

When the fog of war subsided on Wednesday, March 6, 1968, eight businesses were looted, close to one hundred buildings and cars suffered severe damage due to firebombing, fifty-three people were arrested, seventeen people were hospitalized, and two Black teenagers were murdered by police.⁴⁴⁹ Black seventeen-year-old Richard Henry was one of those arrested, and he *allegedly* hung himself by his own belt twelve hours after being placed into a cell at Douglas County Jail.⁴⁵⁰ He was not given emergency medical treatment, there was no autopsy performed, and the county never officially certified his death as being a suicide or not.⁴⁵¹ At a news conference, Ernie Chambers publicly advocated for Henry on behalf of his family — “There was nothing for him to stand on in his cell therefore it was impossible for him to hang himself. We are tired of our people dying at the hands of police.”⁴⁵² Howard L. Stevenson was the second Black victim of lethal police brutality during the Wallace Riot.⁴⁵³ He was shot to death

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Sasse, “A History of Police Brutality in Omaha”.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

after being caught looting the Crosstown Loan Pawnshop on North 24th Street.⁴⁵⁴ When questioned by a supervisor on scene, the officers involved *alleged* that Stevenson was *resisting arrest*.⁴⁵⁵ Other than routine paperwork, nothing more was said or done in connection with the teenager's death.⁴⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the nationwide hunt for Black bodies only intensified as time moved forward in 1968.

On April 4, 1968, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was *offed* by White Power. Due to a bomb threat to his airplane the day before, he arrived late to speak at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee; the threat prompted him to write and deliver his last-minute speech *I Have Been to the Mountaintop!*⁴⁵⁷ He was in town with Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Rev. Jesse Jackson to support the city's Black sanitation workers and their labor strike for equal pay and better treatment. In the early evening of the 4th, Dr. King, Jr., and his entourage were leaving for a scheduled event when he was gunned down on the 2nd floor walkway of Lorraine Motel, directly in front of the door to their room. The bullet crushed the right side of his jaw before severing his spinal cord and embedding itself in his shoulder. It is *alleged* that a White man named James Earl Ray was the one who *dealt with this uppity n****** for his *crime* of having the audacity to "dream that [his] four little children [would] one day live in a nation where they [would] not be judge by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."⁴⁵⁸

Room 306 at the motel was used often by the Reverend when he was visiting

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Montefiore, *Speeches that Changed the World*, 155; Thomas, "The Worst Week," Newsweek.

⁴⁵⁸ Kakutani, "The Lasting Power of Dr. King's I Have a Dream Speech," *The New York Times*.

Memphis—so much so that it was commonly referred to as the *King-Abernathy suite*.⁴⁵⁹ This fact was well-known by J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI, which had been spying on Dr. King, Jr., for years after being authorized to do so by US Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., in 1963.⁴⁶⁰ The two foremost allegations drummed up from the spying and wiretaps were that he was a communist and an adulterer who stepped out on his wife, Coretta Scott King, on multiple occasions. When these attempts to smear his name and the integrity of his leadership failed to gain traction, the federal government resorted to *any means necessary!* to take him out. During the week of Dr. King, Jr.’s, tragic death, FBI agents set up shop in a fire station across the street from the Lorraine Motel, where they surveilled him up to the moment he was murdered.⁴⁶¹ In their haste to eliminate this *problem*, they failed to account for the fact that Dr. King, Jr., and those who supported him were the last retardant buffer between White Power and *The Fire Next Time*.

Following his death, close to one hundred civil unrest powder kegs exploded simultaneously.⁴⁶² During this national Holy Week Uprising, major riots took place in Chicago, Baltimore, Kanas City, Oakland, and Washington DC, resulting in forty deaths, thousands injured, and the necessary force of over sixty-thousand US Army and state National Guard troops to restore *law and order*.⁴⁶³ Although not approaching the same intensity, Black Omaha held a march on North 24th Street in memoriam of Dr. King, Jr., to show solidarity with their fed-up Black brothers and sisters in other states.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ “King versus Jowers Conspiracy Allegations,” United States Department of Justice.

⁴⁶⁰ Herst, *Bobby and J. Edgar*, 372-373.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Risen, *A Nation on Fire*, 217-220.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Sasse, “A Tour of the Omaha Civil Rights Movement”.

Only hours after the assassination of the Reverend, now US Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., delivered a eulogy in Indianapolis, Indiana, while on his presidential campaign trail:

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are Black—considering the evidence evidently is that there were White people who were responsible—you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization—Black people amongst Blacks, and White amongst Whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion, and love.⁴⁶⁵

The *fork-tongued* Kennedy, Sr., later spoke to a crowd of predominantly *White liberal allies posing as friends of the Black race* at Creighton University in Omaha on May 13, 1968, during his presidential campaign:

I think we should improve life in the United States. Will you work with me to end the Vietnam War, and to bring Whites and Blacks together, to bring decent jobs, to bring decent housing for all? Work with me so the next generation of Black people has a better opportunity than you have had.⁴⁶⁶

As for the minuscule number of White people in the audience who had sincere empathy for the enduring struggle of Black America and for Black folks of Omaha, who adored the Kennedy family—they had no way yet of knowing that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., was a *White Judas* with the blood of Malcolm, Martin, and plausibly even his own brother on his hands.

Essentially two months to the day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was laid

⁴⁶⁵ Murphy, "A Time of Shame and Sorrow," 406-407.

⁴⁶⁶ Crawford, "Robert Kennedy's Remarkable Speech at Creighton University," Medium.

to rest in the bosom of Black Power, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., was sent home to his maker as well. Shortly after the clock struck midnight on June 5, 1968, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan put three bullets into his skull, and he succumbed to those wounds a day later at, of all places, Good Samaritan Hospital.⁴⁶⁷ Before being shot, the Senator had just finished another presidential campaign speech at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California before exiting the event ballroom through a kitchen that he was informed was a *shortcut* to an adjacent press room.⁴⁶⁸ During an interview from prison decades after the murder, Sirhan told British journalist Sir David Paradine Frost that — "My only connection with Robert Kennedy was his sole support of Israel, and his deliberate attempt to send those fifty fighter jets to Israel to obviously do harm to the Palestinians [during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War]."⁴⁶⁹ This statement doesn't square with conspiracy theories pointing to the heavy involvement of the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

An abstract yet reasonable postulation is that Black Power inspired the hit on the Senator as an act of vigilante justice for his role in the murders of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, and for his loyal support of Israel, which is the *motherland* of Jewish people, as it were. The date of Sen. Kennedy Sr.'s murder is significant because it was carried out on the first anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli or Six-Day War.⁴⁷⁰ Sirhan was an Arab Palestinian by blood, and even after

⁴⁶⁷ Dooley, *Robert Kennedy*, 140.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 138.

⁴⁶⁹ "Sirhan Felt Betrayed by Kennedy," *The New York Times*, 13.

⁴⁷⁰ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 172.

his family immigrated to the United States when he was twelve years old, he retained his Jordanian citizenship and never desired to become a legal US citizen.⁴⁷¹

Going back to his days with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X made it clear that Black Americans “[were] completely [sympathetic to] the Arab cause,” and he visited Palestinian refugee camps in the Gaza Strip just months before he was murdered.⁴⁷² In the year of the Six-Day War, the SNCC published a highly controversial piece that linked the enduring Black American struggle with that of the Palestinians by way of Israeli, or White colonialism.⁴⁷³ This was a sentiment shared by the Black Panther Party and a key component of their ideology. They regarded Black Americans as an *internally colonized* subaltern group that was oppressed by both imperialism and colonialism, motivating them to establish a relationship with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which was headquartered overseas on the West Bank.⁴⁷⁴ Leadership and members of the Black Panther Party discovered in 1968 that *rabble-rousing* thoughts such as this would not be tolerated by the *Führer* of America’s *White as snow* republic.

On April 16, 1968, seventeen-year-old Bobby Hutton became the first Black Panther martyr.⁴⁷⁵ He, along with Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver and twelve other Panthers were protesting police brutality in Oakland during the Holy Week Uprising, which led to small-scale guerilla warfare between them and the Oakland Police

⁴⁷¹ Martinez, “Sirhan Sirhan, convicted RFK assassin, to face parole board,” CNN.

⁴⁷² Cineas, “The long, complicated history of Black solidarity with Palestinians and Jews,” Vox.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas, “The Black Panther Party on Palestine,” Hampton Think.

⁴⁷⁵ Grigsby-Bates, “Bobby Hutton,” NPR-KERA.

Department. After a nearly two-hour shootout in West Oakland, police used tear-gas to convince the Panthers to surrender. After dropping their weapons and coming out of the house they were firing from, Hutton was shot nearly fifteen times for his *crime* of not moving quickly enough to remove *all* his clothes as he was ordered to do by the police; the officers later added that he attempted to run away and did not obey commands to stop and get on the ground.⁴⁷⁶ Eldridge Cleaver and other Panthers stated that Bobby Hutton was murdered with his hands up in the act of surrendering.⁴⁷⁷

Months later, the face of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton, was imprisoned for the *voluntary manslaughter* of Oakland police officer John Frey. The only witnesses to the incident were Newton, officer Frey, and officer Herbert Heanes, who claimed that while *resisting arrest*, Huey fired first using Frey's weapon and then several times more before he was shot once in the abdomen by Heanes.⁴⁷⁸ Newton claimed that Frey shot him first and that as he wrestled with the officer in *self-defense*, both Frey and Heanes chaotically fired several gunshots, which missed him and wounded both officers, Frey fatally.⁴⁷⁹ No weapons were recovered from the crime scene, thereby eliminating substantial fingerprint and forensic evidence.⁴⁸⁰ Soon after this incident, the Omaha Black Panther battalion answered *their* call of duty in response two more incidents of unnecessary tragedy that pierced the already bleeding heart of Black Omaha.

On the same day that Black Power *dealt with* Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., *The Omaha World-Herald* reported that the case of the police murder of seventeen-year-old

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 73-74 and 81; "State Opens Case of..." *The New York Times*, 3.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

Percy Hare had been closed without any charges being filed on the officer who pulled the trigger:

Police Chief Richard R. Anderson said Wednesday that no action will be taken against patrol officer Raymond Price in connection with the shooting death of Percy Phelix Hare. The chief said at a brief news conference — “It is a very unfortunate set of circumstances when a death results in any police action. Firearms are only used as a last resort in police law enforcement and all officers are extremely reluctant to use firearms. *However*, it is a part of law enforcement and must be considered in the over-all law enforcement *problem*.”⁴⁸¹

Officer Price was in hot pursuit of a stolen vehicle being driven by Hare before it crashed into a retaining wall. The *unarmed* Black teenager got out of the car and ran. For his *crime* of running from a White man with a badge, he was fatally taken down by two shotgun blasts to his back—one blew a hole through his chest, and the other entered through his abdomen before shattering his pelvis.⁴⁸² The next year, on June 24, 1969, yet another vibrant Black teenager was murdered at the hands of a White Omaha police officer, and this time, all hell broke loose in North Omaha, Nebraska.⁴⁸³

Before taking in her final breath of fresh air on Earth, Vivian Strong was innocently doing what many fun-loving teenagers do—enjoying an after-dark party with her friends in an apartment at the Logan Fontenelle Housing Project.⁴⁸⁴ Shortly after 10:00 pm, Omaha police kicked in the door after receiving complaints of loud noise and a *suspected robbery* on the premises.⁴⁸⁵ The confused and startled teenagers took off running toward the back door, and when they did, officer James Loder took aim and shot

⁴⁸¹ “Police Response to...,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2; Sasse, “A History of Police Brutality...”.

⁴⁸² *Ibid*.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*; “Fourth Black Killed by Police,” *The Omaha Star*, 1; Sasse, “A History of the June 1969 Riot...”.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*; “Six Danced in Vacant Rooms,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 6; Wisch, “Remembering Vivian...”.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

Strong in the back of the skull, killing her instantly.⁴⁸⁶ There were no commands to stop and no warning shots—only irrational hate. Fifty years after White Power executed Will Brown for his *crime* of being born Black in America, Vivian Strong suffered the same dehumanizing fate.

The city of Omaha burned for three days after the incident, in what could only be described as a war zone. Armed for militant defense, close to half of the now two-hundred members of the Omaha Black Panther Party guarded *The Omaha Star* facility, Zion Baptist Church, the Greater Omaha Black Community Action Center, Black Mothers for Adequate Welfare office, and other vital Black owned assets on North 24th Street.⁴⁸⁷ Those that were known to be owned and controlled by Jews or other non-Black groups were intentionally left vulnerable to Black rage.⁴⁸⁸ In the dark of night, close to one thousand Black Omaha protestors rallied to North 24th and Lake Streets, where they burned down what had become, in many ways, a Jim Crow prison of unceasing brutality. Fires that began inside two prominent Jewish-owned businesses quickly engulfed ten blocks on the north side of this midwestern *oasis*.⁴⁸⁹

To prevent these *Black beasts* from ravaging the city's *pristine* White suburbs, the first strategic move made by the Omaha police chief was to cut-off potential exit routes beyond the limits of the *dark side* of town.⁴⁹⁰ Then he ordered one hundred eighty-three of his Omaha officers to gear up and forcefully restore *law and order*.⁴⁹¹ But their military-grade helmets, assault rifles, and tear gas were no match for the controlled

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Howard, "Then the burning began," 80-83; Sasse, "A History of the June 1969 Riot in Omaha".

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

ferocity of Black Power. Soldiers of the Black Panther Party and the BANTU were strategically situated within the neighborhood that they knew so well. They were perched atop guarded buildings with sniper rifles; they were intercepting police communication over the airwaves; they themselves communicated through channels that bypassed those of the police department; and early on, they equipped three locations to provide rations, shelter, and even basic medical care to the weary and wounded.⁴⁹² Daily reports of gunfire, racially charged brawls, and physical confrontations with police officers and firefighters were being reported by citizens at an alarming rate.⁴⁹³ It was clear that White Omaha was not equipped to combat *The Fire Next Time*.

Within hours of putting in a call to Nebraska Governor Nobby Tiemann, sixty-seven state National Guard troops rolled into North Omaha with military jeeps and machine guns at the ready to put an end to the most *extreme* elements of the uprising.⁴⁹⁴ The Strong Riot made national headlines and resulted in three fatalities, twenty-seven incidents of police brutality, eighty-three hospitalizations, twelve arrests, and nearly one million dollars in property damage.⁴⁹⁵ Although they were defeated only due to eventually being outgunned and outnumbered, the Omaha Black Panthers made their point loud and clear—so long as the fighting spirit of Black Power dwelt among them, *The majestic Souls of Omaha's Black Folk* would no longer be the only ones who were *dealt with*.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid, 85-86; Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid, 86-87; Ibid; Sasse, "A History of the Omaha Black Panthers".

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 94; Ibid.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Black Panthers leaving the downtown Omaha Police Department headquarters after being questioned about their roles in the ongoing riots after Vivian strong was murdered by a policeman; pictured from left to right: Robert Cecil, Robert Griffé, Frank Peak, Gary House, and William Peak

Image 4 (See 'List of Images')

The Aftermath

An all-White jury acquitted Omaha officer James Loder of all charges stemming from his murder of Vivian Strong, but the vanguard of Black America was not afforded

such grace.⁴⁹⁶ In 1968, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover intensified his weaponization of the Covert Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to sabotage the Black Panther Party from within. Typical of their playbook and to justify what followed, he declared to citizens of the United States that the BPP was “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.”⁴⁹⁷ Through unrelenting police intimidation, surveillance, infiltration, and even blatantly illegal tactics, they did to the BPP what they had been doing to Black folks for centuries; they destabilized their infrastructure and criminalized not only the organization itself but also its mission to elevate Black America. Like President Richard Nixon’s soon-to-come 1971 declaration of *War on Drugs and Crime*, Hoover’s FBI had now, through action, declared *War on Self-Defense and Social Uplift*.⁴⁹⁸ In short order, Newton was sent to prison, and Bobby Seale, along with seven other Panthers were jailed for their *crime* of organizing an anti-Vietnam War protest in Illinois during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.⁴⁹⁹ Hoover’s coup d’état was his 1969 takedown of the BPP’s most up-and-coming leader.

Twenty-one-year-old Fred Hampton, Sr., was arguably the most brilliant and charismatic leader that the Black Panther Party had ever known. He was the first to reach out to similar organizations of other racial groups that were also fighting to defend and uplift abused and oppressed subaltern reflections of themselves. As Chairman of the party’s Chicago, Illinois, chapter, he founded the Rainbow Coalition, which was a triune pact between activist groups: the Black Panther Party, the Hispanic Young Lords,

⁴⁹⁶ Pederson, “The Strong Shooting,” *The Daily Nebraskan*, 1.

⁴⁹⁷ “Hoover and the FBI,” PBS; Burney, “Research Paper,” 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid; Dufton, “The War on Drugs,” *The Atlantic*.

⁴⁹⁹ Seale, “On Violent Revolution,” *The Black Panther Leaders Speak*, 23.

and the White Young Patriots.⁵⁰⁰ Power moves such as this quickly made Hampton, Sr., *republic enemy number one*.

On November 13, 1969, a shootout between the Chicago Police Department and members of the Black Panther Party took place. Two officers lost their lives, including one who killed nineteen-year-old Panther Spurgeon Winter, Jr.⁵⁰¹ The next day, a *Chicago Tribune* editorial did not hold back — “No [Mercy] for [Black] Beasts! Chicago police officers approaching suspected Panthers should be ordered to be ready to shoot!”⁵⁰² In the following weeks, Hoover’s FBI coordinated with Chicago law enforcement, Cook County detectives, and a *Black Judas* named William O’Neal to *off* the chapter’s leader.⁵⁰³ At approximately 4:00 am, fourteen heavily armed agents raided Hampton, Sr.’s apartment, killed his security guard, Mark Clark, by blowing a hole through his chest, and then put two bullets into the back of Hampton, Sr.’s skull as he was *sleeping* facedown next to his pregnant girlfriend, Deborah Johnson.⁵⁰⁴ To support a no doubt rehearsed narrative that they were *in fear for their lives*, they positioned the body in such a way that it appeared he assaulted them first; they pulled his limp body off the bed and dragged it into the bedroom doorway, leaving the *Black beast* to drown in its own pool of blood.⁵⁰⁵ The officers then fired every bullet they had toward the four other Panthers who were sleeping in a bedroom down the hall, causing several gunshot wounds before they violently beat them and dragged them out into the street.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁰ Valdemar, “Chicano Power and the Brown Berets”; Burney, “Research Paper,” 7.

⁵⁰¹ “No Quarter for Wild Beasts,” *Chicago Tribune*, 10.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ Vander Wall and Ward, *Agents of Repression*, 66.

⁵⁰⁴ Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*, 74.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Johnson and the four Panthers were charged with *attempted murder* of the officers involved. Federal and local officials presented the extensive damage to the apartment and chaotic locations of nearly one hundred bullet holes as evidence that their agents were lawfully defending themselves from an all-out assault by the Panthers. Eye-witness testimony and forensics later contradicted this lie. As it turns out, Hampton, Sr., was not *sleeping* when he was killed—the *Black Judas* drugged him. Regarding the plethora of bullet holes, only one of them was fired by a member of the BPP, and it was discharged from the weapon of Mark Clark.⁵⁰⁷ The evening before he was murdered, Fred Hampton, Sr., was *mischievously* doing what *criminals* do—he was teaching political education to Black youth at the Church of the Epiphany on 201 South Ashland Avenue.⁵⁰⁸

While not as violent as what happened to Hampton, Sr., and other members nationwide, the Omaha Black Panther Party did not escape the ire of White Power, and it, too, eventually fell. During and following the Strong Riot in the Summer of 1969, Hoover and his COINTELPRO *goon squad* fulfilled their White American duty to smear the character of and arrest members and leaders of the BPP's Omaha chapter and all organizations associated with it.⁵⁰⁹ Through political rhetoric, the local news station, and *The Omaha World-Herald*, the criminal perpetrators successfully *criminalized the victim*. They convinced nearly everyone who listened that the Black Panther Party was solely responsible for the death, violence, and destruction that occurred during the so-called riot. Under intense pressure and knowing that this extremely negative press coverage would make it near impossible for them to affect change in their community, the Omaha BPP

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 81; "Interview with William O'Neal," Washington University in St. Louis.

⁵⁰⁸ Vander Wall and Ward, *The COINTELPRO Paper*, 357-358.

⁵⁰⁹ Sasse, "A History of the Omaha Black Panthers".

folded in August 1969, but not without having a forward-looking strategy in place.⁵¹⁰

Only a few days after going under, BPP loyalists Ed Poindexter and David Rice formed a new organization based upon Panther principles, including the free breakfast and Ten-Point programs; it was called the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF).⁵¹¹

Within a matter of weeks, another *Black Judas* relayed information on the new group to J. Edgar Hoover's FBI that ensured the permanent dismantling of the NCCF and, thus, the Omaha Black Panther Party.⁵¹²

Although he was not one of the highly publicized *Chicago Eight*, Vietnam War veteran, Ed Poindexter directly assisted the group led by Bobby Seale as they protested the unjust Vietnam War before Seale's arrest.⁵¹³ Rice led the Omaha Civic Auditorium protest when Alabama Governor George Wallace made an appearance, and not long after that, he joined the Omaha Black Panther Party.⁵¹⁴ Both were well-respected within the community and were firmly committed to doing what Black Power called them to do—uplift Black Omaha *by any means necessary!* As recompense for these *crimes against humanity*, J. Edgar Hoover wanted more than just an end to their BPP's Omaha chapter—he wanted Poindexter and Rice behind bars for life. In 1970, they were both framed for the August 17th bombing murder of Omaha police officer Larry Minard.⁵¹⁵

With no fingerprints to consider, a 911 call withheld from them, and significant exculpatory evidence left undisclosed, a jury consisting of eleven White people and one

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Sasse, "A History of the Case of Rice and Poindexter in North Omaha".

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

token Black peer of Poindexter and Rice found both men guilty of the alleged crime.⁵¹⁶ They leaned heavily on the hotly contested testimony of a *Black Judas* named Duane Peak (brother of Omaha Panthers Frank and William Peak), who initially confessed to planting the bomb himself, with no assistance or orders from anyone else.⁵¹⁷ It was not until he was interrogated by Omaha detectives a third time that he implicated Poindexter and Rice.⁵¹⁸ County Prosecutor Art O’Leary later admitted in a 1978 *Washington Post* interview that he tricked the fifteen-year-old Peak into believing that he would be tried as an adult if he refused to tie Poindexter and Rice to the officer’s murder.⁵¹⁹ The pair were each punished by White Power with life in prison, where they both died years later.⁵²⁰ Before passing on to eternity, many civil and human rights organizations ceaselessly fought to free these two innocent Black men, and one of their most vocal advocates was then Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers:

My view is that they should never have been arrested, never tried, and certainly not convicted. They were scapegoats, framed—not for killing a cop—but to crush the Black Panther Party, and with the arrest of Ed and David, they succeeded in doing that.⁵²¹

After the demise of the Black Panther Party as a formidable organization, the Vietnam War mercifully began grinding to a halt, but the same could not be said for the physical abuse of Black bodies at the hands of Klan members wearing badges in Omaha, Nebraska. Toward the end of 1970, four White police officers arrived at the Roller Bowl on Leavenworth Street on the outskirts of North Omaha; they were responding to a *public*

⁵¹⁶ Ibid; Jones, *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, 426-427.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid; Ibid, 424-426; See ‘Image 4’, 135.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid; Ibid, 424-426.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid; “More Facts on the David Rice Case,” *The Omaha World-Herald*, 2.

disturbance call.⁵²² Apparently, they determined that the *crime* of Black teenagers enjoying a roller skate party in a White suburb was so egregious that it warranted a savage beating before they arrested the *Black beasts* and dragged them outside through the mud before hauling them off to jail in a paddy wagon.⁵²³ This incident prompted Mildred Brown's *Omaha Star* to print these words the following day — "How long, oh, how long is the Black community going to continually and mildly be *open game* and *prey* of mistreatment, malpractice, and abuse from the police department without the benefit of some relief or overt correction?"⁵²⁴ Unfortunately, in this midwestern *oasis*, just as it played out in the South, the insidious destruction of Black minds and bodies continued through reconstructed modes of harassment, oppression, and terror for decades.

⁵²² Sasse, "A History of Police Brutality in Omaha".

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*; "How Long Must We Suffer?," *The Omaha Star*, 1.

CONCLUSION

SURRENDERING TO WHITE POWER WAS NEVER AN OPTION

“Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss in life is what dies inside while still alive. Never surrender!”⁵²⁵

Tupac Shakur

To this day, *The Omaha Star* publishes a Black-centric newspaper from its original building on 2216 North 24th Street, and the Great Plains Black History Museum is directly across from it in a new location on the first floor of the historic Jewell Building; the Webster Telephone Exchange Building was donated to the Bertha Calloway Foundation in 2022.⁵²⁶ One only needs to walk a few blocks from this location in North Omaha and then drive through the suburbs on the other side of the Creighton University campus to realize that the entire city is still mostly segregated—Black from White and poor from rich. It is well-known that the *dark side* of town has disproportionately higher rates of crime and poverty than those of Omaha’s *White as snow* republic. But these socio-economic conditions are not due to the bizarre theory that Black folks are inherently lazy, savage, and hopeless; instead, they are a function of White Power’s insecurity, its weaponization of extreme capitalism, and its irrational fear of Black Power.

The current and unfortunate reality in North Omaha is that many of its areas

⁵²⁵ Shakur, “Never Surrender!,” Good Reads — Quotes.

⁵²⁶ See ‘Appendix B’.

should be avoided for matters of safety when the Sun goes down, but when the Sun rises, so too does the unspoken sense of community, love, pride, and hope. If you have never lived in an area such as this, you have no way of understanding the dichotomy, but if you have, then you know. Most in America view those who reside in these communities as no more than an inconvenient burden on society with damaged roots. But they are wrong about Black Omaha, for its roots are strong, and it is much like *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* — “We wouldn't blame a rose that grew from concrete for having damaged petals. Instead, we would celebrate its tenacity. And we would all love its *will to reach the Sun*.”⁵²⁷

The majestic Souls of Omaha's Black Folk still grace us with their presence today because they survived and thrived through centuries of degradation and destruction in America. Whether they or their lineage lived in Charleston, South Carolina, through chattel slavery, or in the Republic of Namibia during the Scramble for Africa, or in Berlin, Germany, under Hitler's Nazi regime, or in Omaha, Nebraska, near North 24th Street, they were always in the Deep South. Like ancient Roman gladiators in a Jim Crow coliseum, they had no way of escape and therefore had no alternative but to fight for their liberation passionately and to defend the honor of Black Power. Their many battles won and lost along the way were solely their own because they were often abandoned or even betrayed by *White allies posing as friends of the Black race* when it mattered most.

⁵²⁷ Shakur, “The Rose that Grew from Concrete,” Good Reads — Quotes.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

When the North Omaha uprisings occurred in the mid to late 1960s, it was plain to see that it was Black Power *versus everybody*. It was a time of necessary revolution for *The Souls of Omaha's Black Folk*, and as Malcolm X made clear in his *Message to the Grass Roots*, effective revolutions are not meant for the faint of heart:

You don't have a peaceful revolution! You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution! There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution! The only kind of revolution that's nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution based on loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way! And you're sittin' around here like a knot on the wall, sayin', "I'm going to love these folks no matter how much they hate me." No, you need a revolution! Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms, singin' "We Shall Overcome?!" You don't do that in a revolution!⁵²⁸

For acts of liberation such as this, *highly fragile and superficial caricatures of pro-Black loyalty* are woefully insufficient. During the Black American Revolution of the 1960s, some Jews and other non-Black groups, including White liberals, were exposed as opportunistic and temporal allies of Black people. The historical timeline of Omaha, Nebraska, in 1966 marked the turning point when *pro-Black allies* were no longer *down for the cause* because it was a time for courageous martyrs—a time when only *Black-first accomplices* would suffice.

Whether justified or not, by the time White Omaha's 1966 Independence Day began, they along with the Omaha Police Department, Jews, and every other non-Black group were indistinguishable in the eyes of Black Omaha—and they all wore *funny-looking hats*. In 1969, James Baldwin diplomatically advised White America that *The*

⁵²⁸ "Malcolm X Message to the Grass Roots..." Reel Black One — YouTube video.

Fire Next Time was only a *warning shot* from Black Power for what would come again if the destruction of Black minds and bodies did not cease:

The reason that Black people are in the streets has to do with the lives they are forced to lead in this country. They are forced to lead these lives due to indifference, apathy, and very willful ignorance on the part of their co-citizens. Everyone knows that they do not want to be a Black man in this country. They know that and they shut their minds off to the rest of it—all the implications of being a Black father or a Black mother or a Black son, and all the implications involved in a human being's endeavor to take care of his wife, to take care of his children, and to raise his children to be men and women in the teeth of a structure which is built to deny that I can be a human being, or that my child can be. The great question in this country has been—in all the years that I lived here, and I was born here forty-three years ago—what does the Negro want? This question masks a terrible knowledge—I want exactly what you want, and you know what you want. I want to be left alone. I don't want any of the things that people accuse Negroes of wanting. And I don't hate you. I simply want to be able to raise my children in peace and arrive at my own maturity—in my own way and in peace. I do not want to be defined by you. I think that you and I might learn a great deal from each other if you can overcome the [veil] of my color. The [veil] of my color is what you use to avoid facing the facts of our common history and the facts of American life. It is easy to call me a Negro or nigger or a *promising* Black man, but in fact, I am a man like you. I want to live like you. This country is mine too; I paid as much for it as you. White means that you are European still and Black means that I am African. And we have both been here long enough to know that you cannot go back to Ireland or Poland or England, and I cannot go back to Africa. So, we will live here together, or we will die here together. And it is not I that am telling you this—time is telling you. You will listen, or you will perish.⁵²⁹

The Militant Black Revolution that Hate Produced

Expanding on Baldwin's answer to the enduring question "What does the Negro want?" the following is the list of *criminal* demands that were put forward by the Black Panther Party in their *Ten-Point Program*:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black community.
2. We want full employment for our people.

⁵²⁹ "The Magnificent James Baldwin Speaks Power to Truth," David Hoffman — YouTube video.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black community.
4. We want decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men wrongfully held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people, when brought to trial, to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States of America.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace.⁵³⁰

If one were not careful, most, if not the entirety, of this Black American *communist manifesto* could be easily mistaken for the well-known White American *capitalist manifesto* based on the God-given human right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—the caveat being that *Black beasts* are not human. Therein lies the quandary that inevitably left Black Omaha and its Black Panther Party with *no alternative but to engage in more [militant] forms of civil disobedience*.⁵³¹

Just as the current conditions in North Omaha did not manifest in a socio-economic vacuum, neither did the rise of Black Power. Militant Black activism that culminated in this midwestern *oasis* during the 1960s was a consequence of centuries of dehumanizing and debilitating treatment that was experienced within a very real

⁵³⁰ Anderson, “A Tension...,” 252-253; “The Black Panther...,” *Helix*; “The Black Panther...,” BlackPast.

⁵³¹ “Selma Speeches,” Doug Coops — YouTube video.

American *Nightmare*. Economic exploitation, systematic racism, White backlash, White flight, degrading segregation, and police brutality all led to the explosive 1960s uprisings on the *dark side* of town in Omaha, Nebraska. They were left to die on a lonely island of despair; they were invisible, and their voices for change were all but muted for a prolonged period. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was correct when he stated that “[An uprising] is the language of the unheard,” and that is what inevitably occurred.⁵³² With *fists held high* and *shouts of Black Power!* emanating from the depths of their majestic *Souls*, they put *boots on the ground*, and after they burned their figurative, and in many ways literal, prison of economic, mental, and physical brutality to the ground, they were unheard no more.

Today, historical conversations and thoughts on Black Power and associated events such as those that occurred on Omaha, Nebraska’s timeline almost always concludes with the demonization of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. Yet, as was stated in the “Introduction” to this work — *Father Time is undefeated when it comes to revealing truth*, and the truth is that brutality, hypocrisy, self-defense, and violent revolution for the cause of liberation are all *as American as apple pie*:

The police put their club upside your head, and then turn around and accuse you of attacking them! Every case of police brutality against a Negro follows the same pattern! They bust you all upside your mouth! Then they take you to court and charge you with assault! What kind of democracy is that?! What kind of freedom is that?! What kind of social or political system is that when a Black man has no voice in court and has nothing on his side other than what the White man *chooses* to give him?! My brothers and sisters, we must put a stop to this, and it will never stop until we stop it ourselves! They attack the victim! Then the criminal who attacked the victim accuses the victim of attacking him! This is American justice! This is American democracy! And those of you who are

⁵³² “MLK: The Other America,” The Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

familiar with it know that, in America, democracy is hypocrisy!⁵³³

We are oppressed! We are exploited! We are downtrodden! We are denied not only civil rights but even human rights! The only way we're going to get some of this oppression and exploitation away from us is to come together against a common enemy! I, for one, as a Muslim, believe that the White man is intelligent enough to understand if he were made to realize how Black people really feel and how fed up we are without that ole' compromising sweet talk! Stop sweet talkin' to him! Tell him what kind of hell you've been catchin' and let him know that if he's not ready to clean his house up—he shouldn't have a house—it should catch on fire and burn down!⁵³⁴

If a White man defends himself, then it's alright, but a Black man is supposed to have no feelings. When a Black man strikes back, he's an extremist. He's supposed to sit passively, be nonviolent, and love his enemy—no matter what kind of attack, be it verbal or otherwise, he's supposed to take it. But if he, in any way, stands up and tries to defend himself, then he's an extremist...I don't believe in any form of *unjustified* extremism, but I do believe that when a man is exercising extremism in the defense of liberty for human beings—it's no vice. However, when one is moderate in the pursuit of justice for human beings—I say he's a *sinner*. America is one of the best examples when you read its history about extremism—ole' Patrick Henry said “Liberty! or death!”—that's extreme—very extreme. I read once, passingly, about a man named Shakespeare, and I remember one thing he wrote that moved me—he put it in the mouth of Hamlet, I think — “To be, or not to be? Whether it is nobler in the mind of man to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” — moderation — “or to take up arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them.” I go for that—if you take up arms, you'll end it, but if you sit around waiting for the one in power to decide when he should end it, you'll be waiting a long time.⁵³⁵

⁵³³ “Malcolm X Speech: ‘Democracy is Hypocrisy’,” Educational Video Group — YouTube video.

⁵³⁴ “Malcolm X’s Fiery Speech Addressing Police Brutality,” Smithsonian Channel — YouTube video.

⁵³⁵ “Malcolm X Oxford Union Debate, December 3, 1964,” Avereos — YouTube video; See ‘Appendix C’.



Malcolm X holding a loaded, military grade assault rifle while peering out of a window of his Elmhurst, Queens, NY home that was fire-bombed approximately one year after the photo was taken
Image 5 (See 'List of Images')

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

Bob Gibson — a first-ballot Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and one of the greatest, if not the greatest, post-season pitchers in history; this native son of Omaha was one of relatively few Black students to attend and graduate from Omaha's Creighton University, a private school, in 1957 where he was both an All-American baseball and basketball player; he had a brief stint with the Harlem Globetrotters in addition to his brilliant career with the St. Louis Cardinals
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Gibson

Brown Berets — a socio-political group within the Chicano/a community during the 1960s and '70s; they engaged in both diplomatic and militant activism and were modeled closely after the Black Panthers
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Berets

Brown v. Board of Education — US Supreme Court ruling in 1954 that shot down the 'separate but equal' practice weaponized by many states, ending legal segregation, especially in public schools
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_v._Board_of_Education

Emmett Till — Black American boy who was lynched and murdered in Mississippi in 1955; the brutality of his lynching and the murder along with the acquittal of his killers drew national attention; posthumously recognized as an icon of Civil Rights Movement
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett_Till

ethos — the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethos>

eugenics — set of beliefs and practices that aims to improve or 'purify' the genetic quality of a human population or group; typically, the foundational 'science' behind this is race-based and irrational; spurred Hitler's Third Reich Holocaust during WWII
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics>

Fair Housing Act of 1968 — Title VIII and IX of the federal 'Civil Rights Act of 1968' which made practices such as 'redlining' and those associated with it illegal
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1968

Hamitic League of the World — founded by George Wells Parker; early African American nationalist organization related to the modern-day Black Israelite religion; proffers that the Black race is the greatest in human history
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamitic_League_of_the_World

Herero and Nama Genocide — ethnic genocide waged against the Herero and Nama in Southwest Africa during the ‘Scramble for Africa’ between 1904 and 1908
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero_and_Nama_genocide

Howard University — Historically Black College or University known as ‘the Ivy League School of HBCUs’ or ‘The Mecca’; founded by White Civil War Union general Oliver Otis Howard
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_University

Jack Johnson — considered by many to be the greatest heavy weight boxer of all-time; also, the ‘Jackie Robinson’ if you will, of the sport of boxing
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Johnson_\(boxer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Johnson_(boxer))

John Brown — a prominent and radical White leader of the pre-Civil War American abolitionist movement, who was executed in Virginia for inciting the 1859 slave rebellion at Harper’s Ferry
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brown_\(abolitionist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brown_(abolitionist))

Kingdom of Kush — powerful ancient empire of Nubia along the Nile Valley (north Sudan and south Egypt)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Kush

Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 — formally known as the federal ‘Enforcement Act of 1871’, it empowered the President to bypass the writ of *habeas corpus* and other state and federal laws to fight terror organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan_Act

Maji Maji — animist and Muslim Africans who were instrumental in forging a militant rebellion against German East Africa (now Tanzania)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maji_Maji_Rebellion

Margaret Sanger — well-known White feminist and birth-control activist in the United States who established programs that are now, at minimum, loosely related to the issue of abortion and Planned Parenthood; sometimes referred to as the ‘mother of the feminist movement’; it is common knowledge that she was a racist
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Sanger

miscegenation — a pejorative referring to interracial marriage or ‘breeding’
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miscegenation>

New Deal — a series of public programs, projects, and regulations enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression (1933-38)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal

Nuremberg Laws — German anti-Semitic and blatantly racist laws made official in 1935, during Adolf Hitler's Third Reich Nazi regime
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Laws

Olorun — Supreme King over gods of the West African Yoruba religion
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/olorun>

Phoenix — originates from Ancient Greek mythology; immortal, bird-like spirit creature which represents the cycle of death, rebirth, and renewed life
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_(mythology))

Queen Amina — legendary warrior who ruled what is now Zaria in the northwest of Nigeria during the 16th century ad
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amina_\(Queen_of_Zazzau\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amina_(Queen_of_Zazzau))

Reconstruction Amendments — 13th through the 15th amendments to the US Constitution passed between 1865 and 1870 during the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_Amendments

redlining — often leads to de facto segregation by denying financial and other vital resources to those in neighborhoods that are typically minority and socio-economically poor
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redlining>

rheumatism — chronic, intermittent pain in joints; often severe and extremely prohibitive of movement
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rheumatism>

Roaring Twenties — a decade of exponential economic and cultural growth in the United States of America and even the world; urban metropolitan cities such as Chicago, New York City, London, and Mexico City were those which benefited most during this era
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring_Twenties

Scramble for Africa — invasion, division, and colonization of Africa by Western European Powers during the New Imperialism Era
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scramble_for_Africa

St. Augustine of Hippo — a notable ancient Roman theologian and historian (proffered that the two were, in many ways, inseparable), and he believed that the Christian Church was, in a sense, the ‘City of God’
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo

subaltern — a socio-historic term; populations that are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power of an imperial colony; within the most well-known theory of Karl Marx, ‘proletariats’ would be ‘altern’ and ‘lumpen-proletariats’ would be ‘subaltern’
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_\(postcolonialism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))

The Birth of a Nation — one of the most blatantly racist films in United States history; under President Woodrow Wilson, it was the first movie ever formally shown at the White House; originally titled *The Klansman*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_a_Nation

The Voice of the Negro — the first African America periodical based in the South (Atlanta, Georgia, 1904-07)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Voice_of_the_Negro

Titanic — built in 1912 by the White Star Line; it was the largest ocean liner in the world at the time and was touted as being the most luxurious of all, in addition to being indestructible
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titanic>

Toussaint L'Ouverture — a former slave who became the most prominent general of the ‘Haitian Revolution’; also known as the ‘Father of Haiti’
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toussaint_Louverture

Tuskegee Airmen — the first Black military pilots in United States history who were trained for and participated in live combat
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuskegee_Airmen

Webster Telephone Exchange Building — now a registered historic landmark in Omaha, it was originally the Nebraska Telephone Company headquarters in 1907 and was later donated to the Omaha Urban League in 1933 before being used for the Great Plains Black History Museum in 1976
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webster_Telephone_Exchange_Building

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT

Oral Interview with Eric L. Ewing,
Executive Director of the Great Plains Black History Museum

Interviewer: William Odell Burney (WOB)

Interviewee: Eric L. Ewing (ELE)

Interview Date: February 17, 2023

Interview Day and Time: Friday at 12:00 pm

Interview Location: Omaha, Nebraska, at the Great Plains Black History Museum

Interview Method and Setting: digitally recorded and semi-formal

Interview Duration: 50 minutes and 19 seconds

[Interview begins, 00:01]

WOB: Alright...my name is William Odell Burney; I'm a graduate student at Texas Southern University, and I'm here today on Friday February, 17, 2023, at noon, 12:00 pm conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Eric L. Ewing. He's the Director of the Great Plains Black History Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. Good afternoon Mr. Ewing; thank you for setting aside time for our interview session. If it's alright with you, let's get started.

ELE: That sounds good.

WOB: I guess the first question is, just tell me some basic information about you?

ELE: Well, native of Omaha, Nebraska, left here with the intention of never to return. Served in the military for 20 years. After that, I retired then I had one of those 'Dorothy' moments where I felt there was 'no place like home,' so I returned here, and one of the reasons was because uh, living on the West Coast, the cost of living is a little bit more than here in Omaha, and with my parents and family members being here, decided to come back here. I worked at Bellevue University for five years then went back to school for my doctorate program. Then I started working in the community, and I worked for a few non-profits and had an opportunity to be a dean at a small institution for a little bit, but I found working here at the Great Plains Black History Museum probably being the most rewarding job I've had since retirement if not the best job I've had period. And I enjoy being here and doing what I'm doing in educating folks on the rich history of American History told through the lens of African Americans.

WOB: Ok...and what about, if you don't mind, going into your experience as a Black American Man, just in general in the United States but, if you could, more specifically here in Omaha, Nebraska?

ELE: Well, uh, one of the reasons why I left here was because I thought, you know, I'd have better opportunity for growth and upward mobility someplace other than here, and, you know, what it did, it allowed me to see the world and get different perspectives and everything. And it allowed me to expand the 'fishbowl' which I was living in. You know, unfortunately, a lot of the time people are born in a city or town, and they also spend their whole life in that city and town, and so they don't get a chance to experience life beyond that point. And so having the opportunity to see different things and do different things that I thought as a young person growing up here in Omaha, I would not have ever had the opportunity to do. So, you know, it's been, it still is, and continues to be a great and fun ride.

WOB: Alright, so it's a continuing experience?

ELE: Yes.

WOB: Alright, uh, what about Mrs. Bertha Calloway? I could be wrong, but I read online she kind of founded the museum initially. What can you tell me about her personally or just historically?

ELE: Well, as you mentioned, yes, she is the founder of the Great Plains Black History Museum. Started the museum back in 1975, opened the doors in 1976 in the old historical Webster building. She was also a graduate of Creighton University. While a student at Creighton University in the 1940s, she was part of an organization called the DePorres Club, which was a group of mixed students at Creighton that uh, held various boycotts and protests the uh, unfair hiring practices here in the city of Omaha. And they were responsible for getting a lot of changes and things happening in the area.

WOB: Alright, and is she still...I guess this is neither here nor there...is she still living by chance or...?

ELE: Unfortunately, she passed away in November of 2017. What was interesting was, uh, we moved into this location where we're at now October 1st, 2017, and she had the opportunity, her family members brought her to the reopening, so she did have an opportunity to see, you know, what had become of what she started. And at that time, she was cognitive and aware of everything that was happening but then unfortunately, in the following months, she uh, she passed away and I think that could have been because it's like ok, now I can let it go and move on.

WOB: That's a possibility and I'm sure that she enjoyed that more than anyone knows. Um, so obviously, I'm assuming she's well-revered in this community. Um, are there any significant, um, things that she did with the Cr(eighton)-? I know you mentioned Creighton's activism and then founding the museum. Anything else as far as significant acti(vism)- or any other work that she's done in this community?

ELE: Well, yes, she started uh, ah gosh, I can't remember what it's called, but uh, [silence] something for the state as it pertains to African Americans and as far as history and preserving history. So yeah, she was just active throughout with some of the other organizations and some of the other leaders in the uh, community.

WOB: Ok...did that have something to do with possibly creating some sort of historical archive?

ELE: Yes, yes, yes, a historical set up for, you know, maintaining the, preserving the history of African Americans as it pertains to Nebraska. So, she was part of that, respons(ible)- for that. And then with the Museum, when she first started it, as well was focusing on telling the story of events in Africa America throughout the Great Plains, which is probably underrepresented and under- uh, [silence] just under- [several unintelligible words] [laughs]...

WOB: ...underappreciated? undervalued?...

ELE: ...well, not only underappreciated but underdocumented. You know, in a lot of cases, you know, when you think about African Americans, you think about the East Coast, and then you think about the West Coast, but not realizing the impact throughout, you know, the Midwest and Great Plains that, you know, we've had and things which we've done.

[The selected portion of the interview for this partial transcript ends here at 07:05]

APPENDIX C

VIDEO LINKS

“A look back: The Omaha riots of the 1960s” — modern news report on the history of the four 1960s North Omaha riots
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLGoxQQ7g2I>

“Black-American Vietnam Soldiers Interview, on Racism” — interview with Black American soldiers on racism at home and in Vietnam during the Vietnam war
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E76obDTioYc>

“Bloody Summer of 1919 (Will Brown Riot)” — brief video commentary and interview on one of the worst periods of race rioting in American history, especially in Omaha relating to the lynching of Will Brown
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsSB4HWyCps>

“Fred Hampton on Revolution and Racism” — possibly the most powerful speech given by Black Panther Fred Hampton, Sr. who was murdered by police at the young age of 21
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVzbSvWaMkc>

“I’m Black and Beautiful!” — speech delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 3, 1968, one day before his assassination
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGLF0X3WHiE>

“Jack Johnson vs Jim Jeffries, July 4th, 1910, in Full Color” — ‘fight of the century’ between the ‘Galveston Giant’ (Johnson) and ‘Great White Hope’ (Jeffries)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17kfUUwX438>

“Malcolm X Oxford Union Debate, December 3, 1964” — the brilliance and brutal honesty of Malcolm X were on full display during this Oxford University (United Kingdom) debate on racism
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auWA7hMh5hc>

“More Than Gold: Jesse Owens and the 1936 Berlin Olympics Trailer” — brief excerpt from a documentary on how Jesse Owens, nearly single-handedly crushed Adolf Hitler’s propagandized myth that Whites were superior to Blacks in all things, including sports
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf6ryOWfYN4>

“Omaha Star newspaper celebrates 85 years” — a brief history of Omaha’s most longstanding and vibrant, Black-owned and published newspaper (1938 to present)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Rsw2mbNnSU>

“Race Riot of 1919 in Omaha: The Lynching of Will Brown” — a major, racially charged flashpoint event in North Omaha’s history
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OytIIur3Ck>

“Resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan” — brief commentary on the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan during the early 1900s
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHssOMOaUvI>

“The Ballot or the Bullet” — speech delivered by Malcolm X on April 12, 1964, at the King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLQLUpNGsc>

“The History of Negro League Baseball” — a brief history of the Negro Leagues, which the Omaha Rockets were apart of; dialogue given by Henry Louis Gates Jr.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF3VZW72LO8>

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