Making Peace, Making Revolution

Black Gangs in Chicago Politics, 1992–1993

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Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.
— Mt 5:9

Father, I ask of you that all those naysayers, all those agent provocateurs, all those who will stand in the way of this peace, I ask that you blind them, snap the limbs in their bodies and wipe them from the face of the Earth. Amen.
— Wallace "Gator" Bradley[1]

Introduction: Gangs and the Crisis of Black Politics

"We Will Stop the Killing" proclaimed the front-page headline of the *Chicago Defender* in late October 1992.[2] Representatives from several Chicago gangs (or "nations" as they called themselves) and community-activist groups announced a coalition to forge a peace between warring

1. George Papajohn and John Kass, "Gang Summit Nets One Goal—Press, TV," *Chicago Tribune,* October 22, 1993. Accessed on March 5, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-10-22/news/9310220162.

2. Chinta Strausberg, "We Will Stop the Killing," *Chicago Defender,* October 26, 1992.

gangs in order to end the violence in black neighborhoods, especially in Chicago's public housing. These organizations rallied after the killing of Dantrell Davis, a seven-year-old boy, who was shot by sniper fire while walking to Jenner Elementary School with his mother from the Cabrini-Green Homes, a public-housing complex, two weeks prior. The Chicago truce followed a similar agreement between gangs in Los Angeles earlier in 1992. The day before LA erupted into riots after the Rodney King verdict, the Crips and Bloods gangs signed a high-profile peace agreement brokered by the Nation of Islam, which was based upon the 1949 armistice between Egypt and Israel.[3]

Black nationalists, the nationalist left, and mainstream community organizations saw the truce as an act of political consequence that gangs were taking responsibility for their violence. The media portrayed the truce as a source of hope or scandal, and the attention the truce received motivated the organizers to expand on their success through a series of gang summits organized in 1993. The summits were sponsored by the NAACP. Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan, each at the height of his influence, participated in the Chicago summit, where, during one controversial ceremony, Chicago's gang leaders received trophies for their positive work toward community betterment.

Although important at the time, the truce has since been largely forgotten. I learned about it while researching the history of antiviolence initiatives. The question motivating my research was: Has urban violence ever been viewed as a political problem, as opposed to one needing technocratic social administration, to be dealt with primarily by nonprofit organizations? This question arose from my own political work at the time organizing with black youth in the Woodlawn neighborhood to establish a Level 1 trauma center at the University of Chicago. This campaign began in 2010 when Damien Turner, an eighteen-year-old community leader, wounded in a drive-by shooting, could not receive

3. Rasheed L. Muhammad, *Original Gang Truce of 1992 & the Proper Handling of People* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2009).

trauma care at the University of Chicago, four blocks from the shooting.[4] University administrators deflected responsibility for providing such care by citing the need to address the "root causes" of urban violence, pointing to the university's contributions to antiviolence nonprofits and research as more cost-effective solutions. While there is a logic to that position, the lack of political power and consequent divestment from essential services like trauma care belong to the "root causes" of the violence in Chicago's highly segregated poor and working-class communities.

One of the great values of historical research is to question contemporary conceptual paradigms. Not only the answers, but the way investigators frame questions about social and scientific problems are historically situated. Our political choices are framed by our basic assumptions, which are historically contingent. The university's denial of responsibility to provide trauma care was based in a narrowly technocratic and market-driven set of assumptions characteristic of the current neoliberal period, increasingly entrenched as a hegemonic worldview since the late 1970s. The democratic principle of fairness and equality of services among neighborhoods bowed instead to market logic—who can pay for those services—which then determines "cost-effective" solutions differently for poor and rich communities. Rather than an evenly distributed network of trauma centers throughout the city, civic leaders have "antiviolence" programs for some people, and trauma centers for others, located in areas with the lowest incidence of violent crime. Far from advocating for a palliative measure, the campaign for a trauma center at the University of Chicago challenged the real root causes of violence on the South Side: inequality and lack of social power.

When I learned about the gang truce of 1992 and the peace summits of 1993, I decided to explore them in-depth as a relatively recent yet distinct approach to antiviolence work from the initiatives the university

4. Don Terry, "A Death Sparks a Demand for Care," *New York Times*, October 2, 2010. Accessed on November 4, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/03/us/03cnchospitals.html.

touted. I wanted to explore an alternative to the university's historically particular logic by taking a political approach that saw ending urban violence as rooted necessarily in building community power to alter systems of domination, and not as a problem of technocratic social administration that tolerated and reproduced the logic of a fundamentally unfair system. And I also wanted to know why the truce failed, whether through out-right oppression or its own internal contradictions.[5]

Review of the Literature

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* offers insights into the political dimensions of violence and power. Fanon theorizes that the psychological trauma of racist oppression turns colonial subjects against one another.[6] I wondered whether this model could be applied to understand the gangs of Chicago, whose violence against each other left unchallenged the power structure that produces joblessness, discrimination, mass incarceration, and poverty in their communities. For Fanon, this schizoid behavior can be overcome through the liberating violence of revolution. Fanon influenced the revolutionary Black Panther Party (BPP) of the 1960s and '70s, which had an active chapter in Chicago. The BPP attempted

5. For how antiviolence nonprofits such as Chicago's CeaseFire are evaluated based upon political capital produced rather than independently verified evidence of effectiveness, see Andrew V. Papachristos, "Too Big to Fail: The Science and Politics of Violence Prevention," *Criminology and Public Policy* 10, no. 4 (November 2011): 1,053–63; for the role of nonprofits in depoliticizing social problems and turning service provision into a mode of capitalist value extraction, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, eds., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond The Non-profit Industrial Complex* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007). Service work becomes about the maintenance of the social-service industry; ending the problems that necessitate these services implies the end of the organization, a model that violates capitalist accumulation and the imperative to always grow.

6. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 35–95.

to politicize gangs and address the "root causes" of racist oppression and class warfare through a redistribution of social power. Although the Panthers had dissolved before the gang truce of 1992, the black-power politics they helped popularize was a major component of the political vocabulary of gangs in 1980s and '90s. By the early 1990s the black community was divided between politicians who openly supported the gangs in their attempt to better the community through actions such as the peace summits and voting drives and those who denounced them as self-interested hucksters.[7]

The academic study of gangs has been largely confined to sociology, which defined gangs as criminal organizations. Criminologist and sociologist, George Knox, for example, discounted the 1992 Cabrini-Green truce as "little more than a public relations gimmick by the gangs." For Knox, expecting "a large-scale genuine change in deviant behavior" after the 1993 peace summits was "comparable only to someone leaving the porch light on in the hope that Jimmy Hoffa will return."[8] A more sympathetic sociologist, John Hagedorn, asserts: "the skeptical claim that the political activities of gangs are more 'rhetoric' than action is simply ahistorical and wrong."[9] Hagedorn believes that Chicago's gangs pursue their political self-interest within society as it is constituted, but do not attempt revolutionary change. He views gangs as a product of the urban immiseration of the postindustrial era and as a maladaptive social defense against poverty that reproduces impoverishment. Knox, on the other hand, views gangs as directly causal of urban divestment

7. Lucille Younger, "Gangs: New Political Litmus Test?" *Chicago Defender,* December 11, 1993.

8. George W. Knox, *An Introduction to Gangs*, new rev. ed. (Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, 1994), 585, 587.

9. John M. Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 45.

whose leaders prey on the inhabitants of the inner city and make regular economic development of ghetto areas impossible.[10]

James Sayles, writing under the pseudonym, "Yaki," argues that the truce and political activities of gangs like the Gangster Disciples constituted the political consciousness and potential organizational apparatus for the development of a black revolutionary movement. Sayles, a Marxist-Leninist black nationalist and a founding member of the New Afrikan Independence Movement, argues that gangs were targeted because they sought to "acquire power in order to develop the community in a revolutionary manner."[11] Like Sayles I wish to examine the gang as a dynamic political actor and to historicize both the gang truce and the violence it sought to end. What were the political possibilities of this gang truce? How did it come together? And why did it fall apart?

I use the term "politics" in the sense that political scientist Adolph Reed Jr. has defined oppositional politics as "an explicit challenge to power relations as they are enforced and mediated through the state apparatus."[12] I want to investigate the extent to which gangs had a political self-understanding that transcended the limited aims of a criminal operation and flirted with transformation into revolutionary organizations, as Sayles argues was the case. I hope this investigation will deepen

10. Hagedorn's analysis changed over time. His first work on gangs, *People and Folks*, reflects "culture of poverty" theories of the 1990s that explained black immiseration as a combination of deindustrialization and subsequent cultural traits, like female-headed households. Hagedorn distanced himself from these theories in later works as the racist and classist undertones to these theories became evident, see John M. Hagedorn and Perry Macon, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1988).

11. Yaki [James Sayles], "Let's 'Gang-Up' on Oppression: Youth Organizations and the Struggle for Power in Oppressed Communities," in *New Abolitionists: The (Neo)slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings*, ed. Joy James, 175–94 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

12. Adolph Reed Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 117.

our understanding of the politics of gangs and black politics generally in the 1990s. Understanding the reasons that organizations as diverse as the New Afrikan Independence Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sought to develop and define the political potential of gangs may provide insight into what Reed describes as "the crisis of purpose in Afro-American politics" in the wake of the successes and failures of the civil-rights movement.[13]

Methodology

Through my community-organizing work on the South Side and through some of my professors, I was able to interview several former gang members and community leaders with ties to gangs.[14] These interviews were critical to providing a complete view of the truce, given the antigang bias of journalists, sociologists, and criminologists in the 1990s. Internal gang memos collected by the Illinois Department of Corrections helped me evaluate how gangs saw themselves and wished to be perceived by their membership. Unedited video footage, taken to document Cabrini-Green Homes in their final days before the city replaced them with "mixed-income" housing, provided insight to how the truce played out at Cabrini-Green, where Dantrell Davis was killed and the truce was first announced. The *Chicago Defender* and the *Chicago Tribune*, which followed gangs closely, helped me piece together a narrative of the truce and the city's reaction to it.

My informants saw me, a white college student, as an outsider and some were suspicious of the motives behind my research. They also saw this as an opportunity to tell the "truth" about gangs, organizations rarely portrayed sympathetically or complexly by academics and the press. Because of my political engagement, or because I was sent by someone

13. Adolph L. Reed Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

14. Editor's note: We replaced the informants' names with titles (e.g., school administrator) to protect their privacy.

my informants respected, I was able to establish rapport. My knowledge of important figures in the history of the gangs and generally sympathetic attitude toward gang members impressed my informants and allowed for deeper conversations. For some, the truce remains one of their primary claims to relevance, and they wanted to control and protect its legacy.

Gang violence persists in Chicago, and former gang leaders employed by antiviolence organizations, such as CeaseFire (now Cure Violence), attempt to "interrupt" violence among young gang members before it occurs.[15] One of my informants works as an interrupter. An awareness of how the current social position of my informants might effect their portrayal of the past has guided how I consider their claims against each other and against the written record. I have tried to indicate where evidence is contradictory, such as who was responsible for the truce that came together in 1992.

We will probably never know exactly who made what deals and all the motivations for attempting to stop violence among Chicago's warring gangs in the early 1990s. What makes this episode in gang history interesting is the multivariate factors that brought many diverse political actors in black politics together to attempt to stop the violence by treating gangs as legitimate political institutions that could act to discipline and rechannel urban violence toward higher purposes.

The Political Economy of Gangs in Chicago

The late 1960s and early 1970s, when black communities politicized around the civil-rights and black-power movements, were the precursor to the political activity of gangs in the early 1990s. During this period, Chicago's black gangs also participated in social programs, protest movements, and electoral politics. For examples, the Blackstone Rangers (one

15. Alex Kotlowitz, *The Interruptors*, directed by Steve James (Chicago: Kartemquin Films, 2011).

of Chicago's super gangs[16]) received foundation grants to provide social services, and the "Lords, Stones, and Disciples" coalition agitated for black jobs in the construction industry. The leader of the Blackstone Rangers, Jeff Fort, was even invited to the inauguration of Richard M. Nixon.[17] In his study of Illinois's Stateville penitentiary, sociologist James Jacobs outlines the different ways gangs could become politically involved, either through oppositional radicalism or social-service work.[18] Jacobs concludes that gangs became "confluent with the justificatory vocabulary of protest. Leaders regularly maintain that they are 'political prisoners,' under the slogans of racial oppression, black nationalism, and revolution."[19] Knox asserted that gangs mobilized the rhetoric of popular political movements to obscure their commitment to criminal activities in the 1990s. Another factor in Chicago was machine politics, in which any organized group could vie for power through the deft application of realpolitik. For instance, black, white, and Latino gangs

16. "Super gangs" were composed of multiple "sets" that cohere under one moniker and power structure such as the Vice Lords, the Blackstone Rangers (also known as El Rukns), and the Gangster Disciples. Founded at midcentury, they reached their historical apex of power by the early 1990s. Hagedorn, *World of Gangs,* 37.

17. Natalie Y. Moore and Lance Williams, *The Almighty Black P Stone Nation: The Rise, Fall, and Resurgence of an American Gang* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 111–14.

18. James B. Jacobs, *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 145. "To state that the Chicago street gangs became politicized in the late 1960s thus means one of three things: (1) that the street gangs adopted a radical ideology from the militant civil-rights movement, (2) that the street gangs became committed to social change for their community as a whole, or (3) that the street gangs became politically sophisticated, realizing that the political system could be used to further their own ends—money, power, organizational growth."

19. Ibid., 153.

have periodically formed relationships with local politicians to get out or suppress the vote in return for patronage or the veneer of legitimacy.[20] The gang increased its power through such alliances, but advanced no substantive programmatic goal.

During the 1960s and '70s gangs responded to the broad politicization within black America by aligning gang activities with community goals.[21] In the late 1960s the Vice Lords, a Chicago super gang on the West Side, provided social services under the tutelage of David Dawley, a young white foundation worker: "Many have been skeptical about the ability of the Vice Lords to move beyond street fighting, but the qualities that make men company presidents and political leaders are also qualities that lead to success on the street. If Horatio Alger had lived in the ghetto, he might have been a Vice Lord."[22] Dawley attributed criminality and gang membership to the deprivations of the ghetto; he believed gangs could be transformed into community corporations that provided services and worked within the capitalist system to achieve community betterment. The Vice Lords participated in neighborhood beautification, opened a restaurant for teenagers, "Teen Town," and lead

20. John M. Hagedorn, "Institutionalized Gangs and Violence in Chicago," in *Neither War nor Peace: International Comparisons of Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence*, ed. Luke Dowdney, 312–30 (London: Save the Children, 2005), resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/5014.pdf; Irving A. Spergel, *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 120–22.

21. For how collective black interest during the civil-rights era trumped economic and sociological explanations of transactional voter behavior within Chicago's political machine, see William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931–1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67–68, 115–40.

22. David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), xi.

other community-development programs funded in part with grants from the Rockefeller Foundation.[23]

Gangs have also at times been on the periphery of black politics. The Blackstone Rangers marched with Martin Luther King in 1966 through the Chicago neighborhood of Marquette Park to protest segregation.[24] The Black Panther Party had limited success recruiting gangs into their coalition of revolutionary youth organizations in the late 1960s.[25] Although the aesthetics of black nationalism gained importance in gang culture during this period, the gangs did not embrace the Panthers' revolutionary politics.[26] The Panthers' utopian social vision and political program sought to create the conditions necessary for sweeping social reconfigurations. The first two points of the Panthers' ten-point program were black self-determination and full employment for black people. These goals could mobilize a constituency based in its immediate sense of its own self-interest, but could not be fully achieved within the confines of American capitalism, and therefore required an accompanying revolutionary vision.[27] Gangs produced no such platform, though they might justify their criminal activities as a response to social and state-sponsored racism.

23. Ibid., 121–33.

24. Moore & Williams, *Almighty Black P Stone Nation*, 41. The Blackstone Rangers also served as King's bodyguards.

25. Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 161. Concerned about the possibility of a Black Panther and Blackstone Ranger alliance, the FBI sent separate letters to the leaders of each organization asserting that each leader wanted the other killed. The Panthers did have some success at building a "Rainbow Coalition" with youth organizations of other races.

26. Jacobs, *Stateville*.

27. For a full list, see Huey P. Newton, "War against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America" (PhD diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, 1980), appendix A and B.

In the 1970s, as deindustrialization began to reshape the United States economy, drug dealing and gang membership became more permanent vocations for unemployed black men. Previously, gang membership was a phase in the life cycle of working-class young men, before they joined the industrial workforce.[28] Not only were men staying longer in gangs, but leaders of supposed youth organizations were now entering middle age.[29]

Concurrent with the restructuring of the American economy was a shift in state policy. Social programs aimed at rehabilitating gang members were replaced by suppressive "law and order" policies.[30] In the early 1970s the state began incarcerating young black men en masse, which facilitated the growth of gangs in prison.[31] Mayor Richard J. Daley established Chicago's Gang Intelligence Unit in 1969 after two black gangs were involved in an electoral challenge to the regular Democratic machine.[32] Daley had belonged to an Irish gang that had integrated into the political machine; he viewed attempts by gangs, such as the Vice Lords, to institutionalize on the same model as a threat.[33]

28. Hagedorn & Macon, *People and Folks*.

29. Useni Eugene Perkins, *Explosion of Chicago's Black Street Gangs, 1900–Present* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 18.

30. Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh and Steven D. Levitt, "'Are We a Family or a Business?' History and Disjuncture in the Urban American Street Gang," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (August 2000): 458.

31. Jacobs, *Stateville*.

32. Ibid, 143.

33. "It was not primarily economic factors that transformed the CVL [Conservative Vice Lords] into a drug business. The devastation in Lawndale caused by deindustrialization followed a path to perdition paved by racism. The CVL would follow a third-world trajectory of social exclusion, not climb the ethnic succession ladder like the Irish HAA [Hamburg Athletic Association]," Hagedorn, *World of Gangs,* 65–83. For white ethnic gangs in Chicago's political machine, see Frederic Milton Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 452–86.

In the 1980s, blacks increasingly turned to the underground economy, and gangs became distribution networks for narcotics or "taxed" the dealers in their areas of control. Particularly with the onset of the crack cocaine "epidemic," which arrived in Chicago in 1986, some gangs changed from social-support networks for young men to sophisticated drug distributors with organizational structures similar to a corporate franchise.[34] For high-level members, drug dealing could provide entrée into the middle class, and gang leaders assumed prominent roles in middle-class black neighborhoods.[35] Chicago's black gangs in the latter half of the twentieth century were not merely youth cliques, but what John Hagedorn describes as "shapers," or "institutionalized gangs or other nonstate armed actors with powerful self-interests."[36] For Hagedorn institutionalized gangs desire a laissez-faire relationship with government and involve in politics only to prevent interference with gang interests or realpolitik goals.[37] He described the gangs' attempt to become integrated into the machine as "mundane" Chicago-style politics.[38] Yet Hagedorn's analysis overlooks the complicated community forces at work at the time of the truce, in particular the city's black-nationalist activists, who were partially responsible for overthrowing the Democratic machine and installing Harold Washington as mayor in 1983. After Washington's premature death in 1987, the black nationalists, who shared a political lexicon with gangs, wanted to incorporate them and enhance their power vis-à-vis the reconstituted Daley machine

34. Venkatesh & Levitt, "'Are We a Family or a Business?'" 427–62.

35. Mary E. Pattillo, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege & Peril among the Black Middle Class*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 68–90.

36. Hagedorn, *World of Gangs,* 37.

37. Ibid, 37.

38. Ibid, 42. Although they took their formative political lessons from the masters of the old Chicago machine, a different set of political imperatives drove the Gangster Disciples.

under Richard M. Daley. Whether gang activism would amount to an oppositional politics or merely increase the personal power of certain black leaders within the city's political order was contested.

The Killing of Dantrell Davis

Gangs were one of the most powerful entities in Chicago's public housing when Dantrell Davis was killed by sniper fire at the Cabrini-Green Homes on October 13, 1992. The high-rise projects were fortress-like and defensible, where gangs could sell narcotics, retreat from the police, and find excellent vantage points from which to shoot at rival gangs.[39] In the Robert Taylor Homes, on the South Side, levels of violent crime were twenty times higher than in the rest of Chicago.[40] However, Cabrini-Green was the best known of the high-rise projects, because of its proximity to the wealthy Gold Coast and because then mayor, Jane Byrne, lived there briefly in 1981 after a severe spate of killings. The police mostly avoided Cabrini-Green after two officers were killed there in 1970.[41]

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) had not always held such a hellish reputation. It was founded in 1937 to ameliorated the Depression and postwar housing shortages for the elderly and poor and working-class

39. Hagedorn, "Institutionalized Gangs," 15.

40. "11 percent of the city's murder, 9 percent of its rapes, and 10 percent of its aggravated assaults" occurred in the Robert Taylor Homes, which housed 0.5 percent of Chicago's population. James Garbarino, Nancy Dubrow, Kathleen Kostelny, and Carole Pardo, "Children in War Zones: From Mozambique to Chicago," in *Children in Danger: Coping with the Consequences of Community Violence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 44.

41. Larry Bennett and Adolf Reed Jr., "The New Face of Urban Renewal: The Near North Redevelopment Initiative and the Cabrini-Green Neighborhood," in *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality*, ed. Adolph Reed Jr., 176–77 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).

families.[42] Early residents described the housing as being like paradise.[43] During the 1950s, white working-class residents took advantage of federally backed mortgages denied to blacks to leave public housing. In the late 1960s, black working-class tenants began to leave as well. By the 1970s, the projects were welfare housing of last resort, occupied almost exclusively by blacks. The CHA teetered on insolvency with the loss of rents after the exodus of the working class[44] and after Reagan-era cutbacks of federal subsidies to local housing authorities.[45] By the 1990s, Chicago's public housing was more closely associated with the slums it was meant to replace than with a paradisiacal New Deal promised land.[46]

The destruction of the black male was a topic of considerable importance throughout the black communities of Chicago at the time of Davis's death. The *Chicago Defender* attempted to explain the crisis of "black-on-black" violence in Chicago as a product of community degeneration and exhorted blacks (especially youth) to change their ways. This discourse of blame undermined the credibility of poor communities to

42. Harvey M. Choldin, "Chicago Housing Authority," in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, ed. James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/253.html.

43. D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1–14.

44. Ibid, 183–212.

45. Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6.

46. Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster,* 183–212; Larry Bennett, Janet L. Smith, and Patricia A. Wright, eds., *Where Are Poor People To Live? Transforming Public Housing Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 169. In the late 1950s, when mid-rises and high-rises were added to the Cabrini-Green Homes, the complex was 99 percent black.

self-advocate, a particular problem for the residents of public housing.[47] Davis's killing became a national symbol for violence in Chicago, and city leadership was under immense pressure to respond. However, the extent to which the residents of Cabrini-Green would be consulted in formulating that response was an open question.

Vincent Lane, chairman of the CHA, responded to the killing with dramatic action. The residents wanted consistent patrols as in other "normal" neighborhoods, but Lane asked police to conducted unannounced building sweeps, seizing drugs and weapons and arresting purported gang members.[48] After Davis's shooting the CHA evicted families from low-occupancy buildings that were used by gangs and left the buildings vacant. Because Cabrini-Green was next to the Gold Coast, advocates, such as Dorothy Tillman, Third Ward alderwoman, and Janette Wilson, national executive director of Operation PUSH, described the policy as a landgrab.[49]

Mayor Daley made several public-relations blunders. Rather than express his sympathies and pledge city support to Cabrini-Green residents, Daley plugged Bill Clinton's campaign, and promised more federal attention to inner-city problems if Clinton were elected president. He left for a golf tournament, skipping Davis's funeral.[50] Almost a week after the shooting and after significant negative press, Daley announced a plan to address the violence at Cabrini-Green. Framed as a war against gangs, the plan continued the law-and-order suppression policy (at least toward black gangs). Daley proclaimed that "we cannot surrender to

47. For how Cabrini-Green residents were aware of and attempted to change the public's negative image of them, see Bennett & Reed, "The New Face of Urban Renewal."

48. Venkatesh, *American Project,* 129.

49. "CHA Seals 'Sniper Galleries'," *Chicago Defender,* October 19, 1992.

50. Mary Hill and John Kass, "At Cabrini, Daley Hears Lot of Quiet," *Chicago Tribune,* October 24, 1992. Accessed on January 31, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-10-24/news/9204060241.

gangs," and the mayor, famous for his malapropisms, vowed to "dehumanize" the violence in CHA buildings by more surprise sweeps and by permanently stationing police and armed guards in lobbies.[51] Additionally, four high-rises used as sniper towers would be vacated and permanently sealed.[52] The *Tribune* called Daley's plan an "old-fashioned Chicago political compromise that included damage control for a beleaguered mayor and something of a coup for the CHA chairman."[53] Lane's initiatives had stalled in part because the closing of the high-rises and the institution of "mixed-income" housing was a political risk. Forced to act in the face of the crisis, Daley's plan made a political opening to implement Lane's vision.

At another press conference announcing an interagency taskforce to fight gangs, Daley charged that "for too long you have made the community a target. Now, you're the target." Despite the tough words, Frances Sandoval of the lobbying group Mothers Against Gangs complained that the plan was inadequate because "the sweeps will be gone and it will be open season again. The gangs will not stop or end by sweeping CHA." She pointed out that the gangs were much more widespread than just public housing, and extended into the suburbs.[54] A few days later another *Defender* article described her group as "hailing" Daley's plan, but desired that he create a special law enforcement unit able to keep guns from arriving into the city.[55] City business leaders were

51. Hill & Kass, "At Cabrini"; "CHA Seals 'Sniper Galleries'."

52. Chinta Strausberg, "We Cannot Surrender to Gangs," *Chicago Defender,* October 20, 1992.

53. John Kass, "Compromise Cabrini Plan: Mayor, CHA Boss Detail 'War' Effort," *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1992. Accessed on January 31, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-10-20/news/9204040975.

54. "Task Force Named to Fight Gangs," *Chicago Defender,* October 24, 1992.

55. Ethan Michaeli, "Mothers against Gangs Hail Daley's Plan," *Chicago Defender,* October 24, 1992.

also concerned about the gang problem and wanted to see get-tough policies, such as abolishing probation and the largely symbolic measure of melting down guns seized from criminals.[56]

At the same time, the closure of public housing units placed Daley at odds with Marion Stamps, a stalwart community activist and resident of Cabrini-Green. For Stamps "the situation that led to the killing [of Dantrell Davis] is nothing new." She charged that the mayor was "using our grief and our ignorance to reclaim the land… How can [CHA chairman Lane] justify closing down four buildings with such a long waiting list? It's a set up, and I resent all those officials coming to Davis' funeral and they have never set foot at Cabrini-Green before."[57] Stamps referred to the thousands of families (sixty thousand in 1990) on waiting lists for CHA units despite the deteriorating conditions of the projects.[58]

While Mothers Against Gangs greeted Daley's announcement with ambivalence, criticizing him for not going far enough with his policies, Stamps denounced Daley's plan for its lack of community involvement and denied that the Cabrini-Green community needed to be saved from the gangs. "[The gangs] are ours," she told the *Defender*.[59] A former Black Panther and a force in the Harold Washington campaign, Stamps had experience battling city authorities and a keen eye for the contradictions and hypocrisies of her opponents.[60] Claiming the gangs as a part of

56. Chinta Strausberg, "Daley Talks Tough on Guns, Crime," *Chicago Defender,* December 18, 1993.

57. Strausberg, "We Cannot Surrender."

58. Patrick T. Reardon, "CHA's Rent Limits Pose a Dilemma," *Chicago Tribune*, July 30 1990. Accessed on January 31, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1990-07-30/news/9003030877.

59. "Task Force Named to Fight Gangs."

60. For Stamps's involvement in the Washington campaign, see Gary Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie: Chicago's Harold Washington and the Politics of Race* (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), 76–77, 93–94.

the community was a realistic assessment of the complex and widespread affiliations of gang members, who were members of Cabrini-Green families and not an abstract social pathogen.[61] In her view, mass arrests of gang members would only further tear, not mend, the fabric of the community.

Stamps held black-nationalist beliefs, but her calls for black unity were rooted in strategic analysis: "the only way black people can win anything in America is that they got to stick together."[62] It is not surprising that when gang leaders announced the truce on October 25, 1992, the press conference was held at Stamps's Tranquility Marksman Memorial Organization. Not everyone in the Cabrini-Green community agreed with Stamps's approach. One former resident hoped "that the court system will hand out stiffer penalties in respect to gang violence, so that those cells [in Cook County Jail] will be put to good use."[63]

Stamps utilized the language of nationalism to build a place for gang members within the Cabrini-Green community. She continued to urge the community to approach gangs as potentially positive community members.[64] Reflecting in 1997, after her mother's death, Guana Stamps

61. In Venkatesh's study of the Robert Taylor Homes "the same individuals could often take on various roles, depending on the context. Just as the gang member was also a nephew, a student, and so on, depending on the circumstances, so too were the men who spent time outside the local liquor store invested in other roles, including that of parent, advocate, and part-time laborer." Venkatesh, *American Project*, xv.

62. "Raw: Robbins Barber Shop–Marion Stamps," *Voices of Cabrini*, directed by Ronit Bezalel and Antonio Ferrera (Chicago: Media Burn Archive, July 8, 1996). Accessed on February 1, 2014, mediaburn.org/video/voices-of-cabrini-raw-robbins-barber-shop-marion-stamps.

63. Doreen Ambrose-Van Lee, letter to the editor, *Chicago Defender,* December 18, 1993.

64. "Raw: Town Hall Meeting," *Voices of Cabrini*. Accessed on February 1, 2014, mediaburn.org/video/voices-of-cabrini-raw-town-hall-meeting.

spoke about the "nations" to a filmmaker documenting Cabrini-Green and its struggle with the city:

> Nations and gangs. [long pause while thinking] Gangs are on the South Side where they shooting and killing people. Gangs are on the West Side where they shooting and killing people. Gangs are in the suburbs where they killing and shooting people. Nations—there's only one nation, under Allah, of many tribes. These brothers are not gang members or gang bangers: They are one nation, under Allah, of many tribes.
>
> ***Interviewer: Who are the tribes?***
> The tribes over here, you have the Black P Stone Nation, the Cobra Stone Nation, you have the Conservative Vice Lord Nation, you have the Gangster Disciples Nation, and you have the Travelin' Vice Lord Nation.
>
> ***Interviewer: Are different nations in different buildings?***
> Yes, different nations are in different buildings, but each nation can go to any building they so desire. Whenever they want to. Because we made a concrete decision, five years ago, five years ago, that we're going to stop the killing, and save the babies, and build the nation.
>
> ***Interviewer: Who created it?***
> My mother. My mother said to the brothers: We gotta stop the killing y'all. We gotta save the babies y'all. We got to build the nation you all. And it was her cry as a mother, who has never lost a son cause she didn't have any, but all of them are her sons and her daughters.[65]

Stamps gave "the brothers" a special role within the Cabrini-Green community to keep the peace:

65. "Raw: Guana Stamps," *Voices of Cabrini*. Accessed on February 10, 2012, mediaburn.org/video/voices-of-cabrini-raw-guana-stamps.

> The sisters are the mothers. It is our responsibility to take care of all the children of the village. It is our responsibility to make sure our houses are clean for the brothers, for the children, for ourselves… The brothers have few responsibilities. Their responsibilities aren't as big as us, as sisters, but their main responsibility is to maintain the peace on the Near North Side—that's their first responsibility.[66]

The separate, but complementary, roles that Guana saw for men and women within Cabrini-Green reflects the antifeminism of black nationalist ideology, but peace keeping gave the mostly unemployed young men an essential role to play.[67] Guana's conception of the nation strongly resembles the "community nationalism" that Michael Dawson argues was prevalent in the 1990s:

> The class divisions [of revolutionary nationalism] are gone; indeed, black business entrepreneurs have pride of place, as they do in the ideology of the Nation of Islam. Business is seen as the key to black economic development, and political development without economic development is considered nonsense. Politics, however, has not totally disappeared. Electoral campaigns are waged to gain political as well as economic control of the institutions and

66. Ibid.

67. For black nationalist feminist activists' critiques of "complementary" roles, see "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith, 264–74 (New York: Kitchen Table—Women of Color Press, 1983), and E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, 504–24 (New York: New Press, 1995). White argues that the notion of "complementary roles" originates in Eurocentric bourgeois thought concerned with "respectability." For women's activism around public housing, see Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

> resources of the black community. The concept of self-determination is strongly supported even if, as alluded to earlier, the concept of nation has a very ambiguous status.[68]

The negotiation of the gang truce is not just a story of Stamps's agitation for gang leadership to rise to the occasion and protect their embattled communities from city authorities. Together with representatives from several gangs were community leaders, including the prominent Baptist reverend, Albert Sampson, the national executive director of Operation PUSH, Janette Wilson, the radio host and nationalist activist, Lu Palmer, and the "former" Gangster Disciples (and future aldermanic candidate), Wallace Bradley.[69] This group resembled the activist milieu that brought Harold Washington to power, gathered now to unite the gangs for the greater good.

Stamps presented a multipoint plan (see appendix A) that opposed the "law-and-order" plans of Lane and Daley.[70] Presented as the collective work of Cabrini-Green residents, it focused on providing food and clothes for residents, resources for area schools, and job training and called for a congressional hearing on "what led to the destruction of Cabrini-Green and the entire Near-North Black community."[71] It also called for amenities such as a theatre, a bowling alley, and an arcade.[72] By demanding the

68. Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 120–21.

69. Strausberg, "We Will Stop the Killing."

70. Ibid.; in "Let's 'Gang-Up' on Oppression" Yaki credits the gangs with creating the plan; the *Defender* and the *Tribune* attribute it to Stamps.

71. Strausberg, "We Will Stop the Killing."

72. Entertainment might seem a frivolous demand, but such improvements were identified in a 1981 CHA report as important indirect methods of security enhancement; mirroring nationwide trends of punitive policies towards urban crime since the 1970s, the CHA had refused to provide these amenities. Venkatesh, *American Project,* 124–26.

revitalization rather than the militarization of Cabrini-Green, the plan attributed violence to the conditions of material life, not to the pathological behavior of public-housing residences. Aware of Mayor Daley's need to deliver votes, Stamps threatened to organize the residents of Cabrini-Green to *not* vote in the presidential election if their plan to improve the community was ignored.[73]

For Stamps and the residents of Cabrini-Green, the truce promised to do more than end the violence. Strategically, it would promote the community's unity and ability to take collective action against outside plans to dissolve the community by decreasing the availability of housing units and by evicting and arresting residents. Stamps's plan presented Cabrini-Green to the rest of the city as a community that possessed positive values, which made it a credible interlocutor in the debate about its own future. The city could not unilaterally decide the fate of Cabrini-Green without taking the wishes of residents into account. In this sense the gangs, in coalition with community groups at the announcement of the truce, were participating in a fledgling political movement to stop the city's still incipient plans to displace public-housing residents, and the gangs were subordinating their own organizational interests to the larger community's desire to achieve peace.

73. Jerry Crimmins, "Cabrini Activist Proposes 'Peace Plan'," *Chicago Tribune,* October 23, 1992. Accessed on January 31, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-10-23/news/9204050828.

The 1992 Truce

City leadership discounted the gang truce. LeRoy Martin, director of public safety at the CHA, said that gangs were feeling a "great deal of pressure and they have to do something to try to make themselves a little better than what they are. Their income up there is selling narcotics, and I don't see them giving this up when they call a truce." Mayor Daley brought up the same concerns. Stamps defended the truce from these criticisms: "They should stop trying to set up a situation to make it fail before it gets off the ground… This is a spiritual movement... Maybe they don't understand what happens when the Lord makes up his mind and he intervenes." Stamps suggested that Daley and Martin do "the same thing that the brothers did… apologize to us for the disrespect, the pain and the suffering they have caused." She blamed the US government for allowing drugs into Cabrini-Green and noted that treatment centers would go further toward resolving drug addiction than gang suppression.[74]

Although Stamps became a spokesperson for the truce, particularly as it related to the Cabrini-Green community, other forces were at play that made the truce possible. This section will argue that the truce was in part a product of the self-interest of Chicago's gang leadership. The Gangster Disciples, the best organized black gang, sought to transcend the streets through a philosophy of "growth and development," to become a legitimate organization, and to uplift its members.

74. Chinta Strausberg. "Daley, Martin Doubt Peace Treaty," *Chicago Defender,* October 27, 1992. Stamps's suspicions were warranted; in a 1996 series in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Gary Webb documented the CIA's awareness that the Nicaraguan contras and Reagan allies were trafficking cocaine into the United States during the crack epidemic to fund their guerilla war against the Sandinista government. Gary Webb, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998).

According to a former Gangster Disciples (GD) who held the midlevel post of regent, the truce was the brainchild of GD founder, Larry Hoover. The regent claims that the truce was being negotiated at least a year prior to Davis's murder. Hoover, serving time for murder in Stateville Correctional Center since 1973, wanted out of prison: "he personally felt like the organization on the street was getting into so much stuff and they were making it difficult for him to make parole, as well as other high-ranking members. Also, he was a little angry about all the unnecessary killings that was going on the streets of Chicago."[75]

Hoover ran the GD from prison. Since the 1970s, the Illinois prison population had grown and gangs vied openly for control of the chaotic system.[76] Hoover was believed to be a force behind the 1978 riot at Pontiac prison, and he used his power to negotiate with prison officials. According to one prison guard, Hoover had an "unlocked prison cell, specially prepared food delivered directly to him and an unlimited number of telephone calls."[77] In return for maintaining order among prisoners, Hoover was granted a transfer to Vienna Correctional Center, a minimum-security prison from which he could better direct the gang.[78]

75. Former regent (Gangster Disciples), interview with author, January 13, 2014. The regent left the gang in the late 1990s after federal prosecution of GD leaders.

76. Jacobs, *Stateville,* 138–74.

77. Jeff Zeleny, "Guard Tells of Hoover's Reign in Prison," *Chicago Tribune,* March 27, 1997. Accessed on April 9, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-03-27/news/9703270171.

78. Ron Chepesiuk, *Black Gangsters of Chicago* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2007), 151–69; Toussaint Losier, "Prison House of Nations: Police Violence and Mass Incarceration in the Long Course of Black Insurgency in Illinois, 1953–1987." (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014); James "Yaki" Sayles and Larry Hoover may have met at Pontiac through the legal defense of the thirty-one "Pontiac Brothers" who rioted. Sayles was the leader of a Marxist-Leninist black nationalist group based in the prison.

By 1991 the GD had a membership of between eighteen and twenty-five thousand.[79] GD organization followed a corporate model. Hoover was the chairman, followed by a board of directors, governors, regents, and soldiers.[80] Hoover envisioned the GD becoming a political organization along the lines of Richard J. Daley's Hamburg Athletic Association and required that all incarcerated GD read Mike Royko's *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*.[81] The GD "New Concept" held that gangs were degenerate institutions and gang members had to achieve personal uplift and adhere to certain moral principles in order to become a more powerful, more effective organization.[82]

The New Concept echoed bootstrapping ideas within black political discourse of the 1980s and '90s, which emphasized the complicity of black people in creating their own degraded situation. Moral uplift, education, and political participation were viewed as essential to group advancement. A September 27, 1982, prison memo from Hoover and the board of directors to the rank and file read: "We are NOT a GANG. Our Youth is our future. Through communicating with them, you will help us in many ways on the streets. Many of you incarcerated here, are looked up upon by the Youth on the streets. Begin to feed them our New Concept."[83] Hoover instructed GD outside of prison to vote against

79. Chepesiuk, *Black Gangsters*.

80. Ibid., 204.

81. Former Gangster Disciples regent, interview with author; Neal Pollack, "The Gang that Could Go Straight," *Chicago Reader*, January 26, 1995. Accessed on February 17, 2014, www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-gang-that-could-go-straight/Content?oid=886552.

82. Rod L. Emery, *The Blueprint: From Gangster Disciple to Growth and Development* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 1996).

83. George W. Knox, *The Impact of the Federal Prosecution of the Gangster Disciples* (Chicago: National Gang Crime Research Center, 2008). Accessed on December 10, 2014, www.ngcrc.com/ngcrc/page14.htm.

the Republican gubernatorial candidate, who wanted to lower the age at which youth could be tried as adults.[84] George Knox dismissed the memo: "it uses the cunning and guile and cult-like language of how to cultivate youths on the streets by 'feeding them' the 'New Concept' (i.e., they are not a gang)."[85] Others read the memo as a sincere attempt to transcend criminal aims and advocate for broader community interests.[86]

The New Concept was applied as part of the Englewood Technical Preparatory Academy's "gang deactivation program." Between 1992 and 1995 school administrators did not discipline students who were members of the Gangster Disciples and Black Disciples, and older gang members served as hall monitors and disciplinarians.[87] According to an Englewood school administrator, school reform laws gave the local school council authority to implement the gang deactivation program without approval from the district; at one point in the 1990s Englewood Tech's council president was a top-ranking GD.[88] The program was not

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid. An October 28, 1982, memo asserts that gangs were created by the government to "keep us way [*sic*] from the concept of organization. Because as we consolidated, unified, and being a power to reckon with. Their main goal was to bring disorganization among the ranks of our people."

86. Hagedorn, *World of Gangs,* 42; Greg Donaldson, "Twenty-First Century V.O.T.E.," *Gangeresearch*, c. 1994. Accessed on February 20, 2014, gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/BGD/vote21.html.

87. Grant Pick, "Once a Gangbanger," *Chicago Reader,* June 9, 1994. Accessed on February 17, 2014, www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/once-a-gangbanger/Content?oid=884710.

88. School administrator (Englewood Technical Preparatory Academy), interview with author, November 20, 2014.

questioned until a 1995 *Tribune* article prompted a denunciation from the local NAACP president and the mayor.[89]

Hoover believed that the Gangster Disciples had potential power as an organized voting block, which could help him obtain release from prison by politically pressuring the parole board. Hoover was a C-number prisoner, with an extremely long sentence; it was understood that these prisoners would probably be paroled before the completion of their sentence. If Hoover could demonstrate that he could end gang violence, he could present himself to the parole board as a responsible community figure.[90] Former mayor Eugene Sawyer, the local branch of the NAACP, and Operation PUSH supported Hoover parole in the summer of 1993.[91] That summer the gang also launched a political action committee called 21st Century V.O.T.E., which brought as many as five thousand GD to

89. George Papajohn and Jerry Thomas, "School's Monitors Are Gang Members," *Chicago Tribune,* June 15, 1995. Accessed on February 18, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-06-15/news/9506150157. The article quotes Hal Baskin, a former gang member, credited with starting the program: "Remember that gangs are like fraternal organizations. They want intelligent people to be part of the process. This is part of a transitional process, transcending from the street level to the corporate level aspect of it." See also Jerry Thomas and George Papajohn, "School's Use of Gangs Hit," *Chicago Tribune,* June 16, 1995. Accessed on February18, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-06-16/news/9506200076; George Papajohn and Jerry Thomas, "School Using 2 Gangs Gets Show of Support," *Chicago Tribune* June 17, 1995. Accessed on February 18, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-06-17/news/9506170162.

90. Former Gangster Disciples regent, interview with author.

91. Hoover was denied parole; the *Tribune* report focused on skepticism within the black community over the NAACP and Operation PUSH's support for Hoover. John Kass, "Hoover Case is the Tip of Gangs' Political Iceberg," *Chicago Tribune,* August 15, 1993. Accessed line February 17, 2014 http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-08-15/news/9308150190.

a rally downtown to protest underfunded schools. Critics claimed this was merely to demonstrate political muscle.[92]

The gang truce was an early move in developing Hoover's credibility as a community figure. Nevertheless, the killing of Dantrell Davis created the conditions to make the truce happen. The gang war between the GD, Vice Lords, and War Lords in Cabrini-Green was over two decades old. The GD at Cabrini-Green were "known for being just killers—the worst of the worst."[93] After the death of Dantrell, Hoover made a decision to put a stop to the violence. The involvement of community figures like Marion Stamps was not essential to the Gangster Disciples regent's understanding of the importance of the truce. The former regent and the rank and file saw the truce primarily as an initiative of gang leaders, not as a broader community fight: "[Hoover] was the orchestrator of the treaty. It was his baby, you know he wanted the treaty to work. And it worked for awhile. Most of Chicago went along with it."[94]

Renegades within the gang threatened the truce and the tenuous credibility of gang leadership. Wallace "Gator" Bradley, who was present at the announcement of the truce, was one of Hoover's designated peace enforcers. He did so in the same manner that the GDs enforced their other strictures:

> The full manifestation of the Growth and Development piece did not really gel together until around I will say probably about 1985 or 1991. We he had about four or five chief enforcers. Larry had them working the streets. I will put it this way; I was one of his

92. George Papajohn and John Kass, "City Hall Protest Sends a Message," *Chicago Tribune,* October 13, 1993. Accessed on February 17, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-10-13/news/9310130097.

93. Former Gangster Disciples regent, interview with author.

94. Ibid.

> chief enforcers to help enforce the peace initiative… I was not the enforcer going to tell individuals, "Uh, hey I'm going to break your legs if you don't give me uh street tax," or whatever that shit is. However, I would have that same intensity. If I came and said, "hey man you ain't supposed to have that pistol at this event," an individual would have to comply or get dealt with. There are repercussions for individuals violating what was agreed to for all street organizations.[95]

Bradley's statement is heavy with violent innuendo, similar to how the "gang deactivation program" at Englewood Tech "deactivated" youth from gang involvement by reinforcing their obligation to the codes and hierarchy of the Gangster Disciples. Bradley's own admission appears to support Knox's contention that the truce and summits were a public-relations sham. Manning Marable uses the word "Hobbesian" to describe the state of inner-city black ghettos; the term implies that there was a need for strong figures of authority to control and stabilize poor black communities, suspending liberal rights in order to restore order.[96] The Englewood school administrator presents the gang as just such an authority:

> [The goal of the deactivation program was] to channel the gang in another direction. Because you can't change social being. In the words of Aristotle and Plato, people love to be in a social group. So I was thinking it was changing the negative behavior of the gang structure, it's good [that] people organized, but change it,

95. Wallace "Gator" Bradley and SaFiya D. Hoskins, *Murder to Excellence: Growth & Development for the Millennial Generation* (Washington, DC: Ubiquitous Press, 2014), 49–50.

96. Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945–2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 207.

> change it like Daley done. They became Democrats… You can't change the leopard spots, but you can change the behavior.[97]

The administrator understood gangs as essentially social units whose organizational structure could be channeled toward positive aims and political power, even the mayoralty. By demonstrating that their organizations could produce peace under the command of strong leadership, gang leaders attempted to bring this ideal into reality. The gang used the language of a nation to justify authorities using coercion to ensure order.

Both gang leadership and community activists with nationalist beliefs imagined the institutionalized gangs of the 1990s taking a key role in achieving community self-determination. Among these groups, the Black Hebrew Israelites (BHI) took a central role in organizing the gang truce. The BHI were founded in mid-twentieth century Chicago under the leadership of Ben Ammi and claimed to be God's true chosen people. After a sojourn in Liberia, they arrive in Israel in 1969; Israel denied their claim of citizenship under the Law of Return, which the BHI charged was discriminatory. With support of prominent black figures, the BHI brokered a 1990 agreement with Israel, and they eventually gained Israeli citizenship.[98] In a 1993 lecture in Chicago, Ben Ammi presented the BHI community as free of the social problems that plagued inner-city America and encouraged black people to join the BHI in the Middle East.

97. Englewood school administrator, interview with author.

98. John L. Jackson Jr., *Thin Description: Ethnography and the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Marion Stamps and Louis Farrakhan invited the BHI to help achieve a truce.[99] A BHI leader asked imprisoned gang leaders to "send the message out that women and children are off limits." He also called together the "community men" with whom he was working already, including Bradley. The religious leader was drawn to the movement because he "wanted to be part of an organizing effort to empower, intellectual (get them in schools), economical (get skills), [and] politically (organize and vote so that we can take the protest from shouting to doing)."[100] The religious leader aimed to uplift the gang members, and he validated the gang itself as a legitimate organization with political aims. In the early 1990s he brought gang leaders, including Bradley, to Israel for a spiritual journey.[101]

The BHI's relationship to the Gangster Disciples was possibly a conscious mimicry of the Nation of Islam's connection to El Rukns ("the foundation" in Arabic). Formerly the Almighty Black P Stone Nation, the gang converted to Islam in 1976, adopted a new name, and served as Farrakhan's bodyguards.[102] Like the Nation of Islam, the Black Hebrew Israelites preached both cultural nationalism and bootstrap capitalism. The BHI religious leader compared the evolution of gangs in 1990s to the history of gangsters in the 1930s, particularly in Chicago:

> But at some point they put down the guns and picked up the pens: That's why the godfather movie was so popular. I'm telling [the gang leaders]—they moved into the corporations. I said you gotta do that, now what's the benefit of you killing some kid, what does that prove, what does that achieve? That's not the enemy.[103]

99. Religious leader (Black Hebrew Israelites), interview with the author, November 15, 2014.

100. Ibid.; Bradley, *Murder to Excellence.*

101. Religious leader, interview with the author.

102. Moore & Williams, *Almighty Black P Stone Nation*, 155–62. The People and Folks were two prison gang alliances. Perhaps coincidentally, El Rukns belonged to the People alliance, whose symbol was a five-pointed star, and the GD to the Folks, whose symbol was the six-pointed Star of David.

He shares Hoover's rhetorical stance in *The Blueprint,* and GD memos: gangs could be a vehicle for moral uplift and economic power under the tutelage of enlightened leaders, empowered to direct their youthful members in a positive direction.

On the surface, all the actors that brought the truce together spoke the language of black nationalism, but there were also significant differences. Stamps knew the gangs were destructive but ultimately part of the community; Daley and the CHA chairman held real power and were culpable for the degraded conditions of the people of Cabrini-Green. While Stamps might have agreed with the BHI religious reader that mass incarceration "is modern-day slavery" it is unlikely that she would have admonished gang members, as he claims to have done, that "it wasn't no white man that's got you in [prison], it's your thinking, your behavior; wasn't no white, young white man that you killed or shot or robbed it's your little brother on the neighborhood that you killed, shot, that got you in here."[104] He prioritized uplifting individuals and changing behaviors as a mode of collective racial advancement, rather than direct confrontation with those in power. In contrast, Stamps believed in collective struggle to provide tangible benefits to all residents of Cabrini-Green, including gang members.

The BHI leader limited collective action to getting out the black vote. Black power nationalism since the 1970s had taken ethnic-pluralist politics as its model, exhorting black people to follow the way of the

103. Religious leader, interview with the author.

104. Ibid.

Irish.[105] The importance of the Richard J. Daley's legacy to GD leadership indicates this continued to be the case in the 1990s. Machine politics depended on ward bosses to get out the vote and to dispense government pork barrel, which in turn led to more votes. Rather than promote real community self-determination, the ethnic-pluralist model promoted authoritarian leadership.

According to James "Yaki" Sayles, the gang truce granted a degree of political legitimacy to the gangs: "it is this transfer of LEGITIMACY by the community—from the police and their bosses, to itself and the youth organizations—that so alarmed the U.S. when the peace process was announced [and ultimately led to their prosecution by federal law enforcement]."[106] But Stamps, the organizer with the closest connection to the Cabrini-Green community, was sidelined as the truce's focus shifted from the living conditions inside public housing to a drive for the public legitimacy of the gangs.

After six months of truce, LeRoy Martin, director of CHA security, said "I have to give the devil his due, I think the truce has been somewhat

105. Dean E. Robinson, "Black Power Nationalism as Ethnic Pluralism," in *Renewing Black Intellectual History: The Ideological and Material Foundations of African American Thought*, eds. Adolph Reed Jr. and Kenneth W. Warren, 196 (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2010).

106. Yaki, "Let's 'Gang-Up' On Oppression." This enthusiasm for the potential of gangs as revolutionary organizations contradicts his other assertions, see Yaki [James Sayles], *Meditations on Frantz Fanon's* The Wretched of the Earth (Chicago: Spear and Shields Publications, 2010), 73. "If we were to leave the objective analysis/understanding of the economic basis of 'crime' and proceed no further, we end up legitimizing the dope pushers in our communities, the pimps and other backward, reactionary elements who engage in such activity because of the circumstances caused by the present economic order. We can't continue to say 'the devil made me do it'."

effective [in Cabrini-Green]."[107] The truce brought peace but also an oppressive police presence.[108] Some residents, such as Carol Steele (who would later become Cabrini-Green's Local Advisory Council president), wondered how long the truce would last: "believe me, if the boys wanted to get the guns back in the neighborhood, it would be no problem… I think even the gangs were tired of the shooting."[109] But the truce did last at Cabrini-Green until 1996, long after the sweeps were over and the heavy police presence had subsided.[110] Citywide, the truce's impact varied:

> In seven police districts with large black populations, the November decline in violent crime is pronounced. In Wentworth, which includes the Robert Taylor and the Stateway Gardens CHA projects, shootings fell by 62 percent, compared with November 1991. Other South Side districts with heavy gang activity—including Englewood, Grand Crossing, South Chicago and Gresham—saw shootings plunge by about a third. In the East Chicago district on

107. George Papajohn and Colin McMahon, "Gang Truce Opens Window of Peace," *Chicago Tribune,* April 28, 1993. Accessed February 19, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-04-28/news/9304280053.

108. Don Terry, "Chicago Housing Project Basks in a Tense Peace," *New York Times,* November 2, 1992. Accessed on March 6, 2014, www.nytimes.com/1992/11/02/us/chicago-housing-project-basks-in-a-tense-peace.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm.

109. Louise Kiernan and William Recktenwald, "Gang Truce Brings Hope, Lingering Distrust," *Chicago Tribune,* December 13, 1992. Accessed on February 19, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-12-13/news/9204230601.

110. Flynn McRoberts and William Recktenwald, "Violence Shatters Hopes in Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune,* April 9, 1996. Accessed on February 19, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-08-09/news/9608090062.

the North Side shooting dropped by 50 percent. In the South Side Pullman district the decrease was 44 percent.[111]

While not a complete cease-fire, the decreases in violence remain impressive. Skeptics of the truce—law enforcement, some public housing residents, and some community activists—claimed that the truce was merely a business decision of corporate-minded gang leaders, because the gangs continued to sell narcotics.[112] This truce was not the first: gangs often reached temporary truces in CHA projects to avoid scaring off drug customers.[113] However, the geographic reach of the Cabrini-Green truce, its level of publicity, and the subsequent 1993 "United in Peace" movement all distinguished it. Throughout the city "United in Peace" buttons began to appear (see appendix B) and sworn enemies were able to travel to each other's territories without fear of reprisal.[114]

Building a Black Army: The 1993 Chicago Summit

The leaders of the truce in Chicago looked to extend the truce and amplify its message by joining a movement of peace summits that were held across the country in 1993. The first gang summit (called the

111. Kiernan and Recktenwald, "Gang Truce Brings Hope." According to the Englewood school administrator, Bradley was responsible for enforcing the truce in the Robert Taylor Homes (and maybe Stateway Gardens), which had the greatest drop in violence outside of Cabrini-Green.

112. Papajohn & McMahon, "Gang Truce Opens Window."

113. Susan J. Popkin et al. *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 75–76.

114. Former Gangster Disciples regent, interview with author; Papajohn & McMahon, "Gang Truce Opens Window"; Kiernan & Recktenwald, "Gang Truce Brings Hope."

"National Urban Peace and Justice Summit") was organized by Carl Upchurch, head of the Council for Urban Peace and Justice in Granville, Ohio. Upchurch was inspired by the peace made in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1992 in which the Nation of Islam was an important mediator.[115] The first summit was held in Kansas City in April and was cosponsored by the NAACP, under the leadership of Ben Chavis, and United in Peace, the organization founded by Bradley.[116] Other summits were subsequently held in Cleveland, Saint Paul, and Chicago in October 1993, exactly a year after Dantrell Davis was slain.

The organizers presented the gang summits as relevant not only to gang members, but as important events for black people in general. All strata of black political leadership were involved in the summits: elected officials, civil-rights organizations (the NAACP and Operation PUSH), and black nationalist organizations (the Black Hebrew Israelites and the Nation of Islam). The organizers and featured speakers were all men. Marion Stamps criticized the summit from the left; other leaders questioned the focus on violence but not drug crimes and stressed the risk of legitimizing gangs as role models.

The Chicago summit lasted for about a week and attracted about two hundred gang members.[117] Mayor Daley's hostility to the summit

115. Paul Shepard, "Gang Summit Longtime Project," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* May 2, 1993. Accessed on March 1, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/gang_summit_longtime_project.html; Muhammad, *Original Gang Truce.*

116. Paul Shepard, "Former Rivals Embrace Summit: Gang Members Meeting in Peace," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* May 2, 1993. Accessed on March 1, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/former_rivals_embrace_summit_g.html; Richard B. Muhammad and Charlene Muhammad, "What Happened to Gang Peace," *Chicago Final Call,* May 17, 2012. Accessed on March 1, 2014, www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/national_news_2/article_8843.shtml.

117. Lucille Younger, "We're Building a Black Army," *Chicago Defender,* October 29, 1993.

contrasted to black mayors who welcomed the summits held in their cities as a possible solution to urban violence. Daley denounce the summits for failing to address gang involvement in drug trafficking and other criminal activity. Some summit organizers insinuated that Daley's opposition was racist, but others said he was threaten by the growing political power of gangs to get out the black vote.[118]

Dailey's opposition to the summit presented an opportunity to consolidate his 1989 supporters—upwardly mobile whites, the black middle class, and Hispanic voters—by emphasizing his tough attitude against gangs.[119] One of Daley's winning strategies was to appointed black professionals to posts in his administration and to support certain black issues, shielding himself from a race-based electoral assault.[120] The black middle class supported Daley's plans to demolish the high-rise projects that had concentrated poverty and violence in black neighborhoods. Demolishing the high-rises would also scatter the collective force of poor blacks who opposed Daley.[121] In 1989 Daley had received 7 percent of

118. Paul Shepard, "Gang Summit Snubbed, Organizers Hint at Racism; Chicago Mayor Points to Crime," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* October 23, 1993. Accessed on March 1, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/gang_summit_snubbed_organizers.html.

119. Paul M. Green, "Richard M. Daley and the Politics of Addition," in *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition*, 3rd ed., eds. Paul M. Green and Melvin G. Holli, 264 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005).

120. Jim Kirk, Dan Mihalopoulos, Sarah Karp, Mick Dumke, and Don Terry, "The Daley Legacy, Inescapable," *New York Times*, September 12, 2010. Accessed online on November 5, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2010/09/12/us/12cncweb legacy.html.

121. Green, "Richard M. Daley," 266; Kirk et al, "Daley Legacy."

the black vote, but this percentage grew to a solid majority by the end of the 1990s and to 70 percent in 2007.[122]

Black nationalist activists, on the other hand, became politically isolated during and after the 1989 election.[123] They had comprised the unofficial wing of the Washington campaign and wanted to elect another black mayor. But they did not learn from Washington's strategy, who won by forming a coalition of black, Latino, and liberal-white voters. The absence of Latino gangs at the Chicago summit demonstrated their political isolation; summits in other cities bridged the divide between the two groups and stressed their common struggles.[124]

The summit in Chicago was characterized by some organizers as the "reunification of the African American family," and a local radio station found that 85 percent of listeners were in favor of the summit; it nonetheless generated controversy within black Chicago.[125] Sandoval, founder of Mothers Against Gangs, described NAACP participation as "unconscionable" for not requiring that gangs give up their guns and cease

122. Laura S. Washington, "Putting Harold to Rest," in *The Mayors*, 198–202.

123. Green, "Richard M. Daley," 264.

124. George Papajohn, "Traveling Gang Summit Losing Steam," *Chicago Tribune* May 29, 1994. Accessed on March 27, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-05-29/news/9405290382; Paul Sheppard, "Former Rivals Embrace Gang Summit Meeting in Peace," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 2, 1993. Accessed on March 27, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/former_rivals_embrace_summit_g.html; Jim Wallis, "A Time to Heal, a Time to Build," in *Putting Down Stones: A Faithful Response to Urban Violence, a Study Guide*, ed. Aaron Gallegos and Kelly M. Green, 27 (Washington, DC, Sojourners, 1996), sojo.net/sites/default/files/puttingdownstones.pdf.

125. "Poll Shows 4 Out of 5 Favor Gang Summit," *Chicago Defender,* October 27, 1993; "Cox Praises Gang Summit," *Chicago Defender,* October 26, 1993; Chinta Strausberg, "Summit Seeks Economic Parity," *Chicago Defender,* October 25, 1993.

criminal activity in order to participate.[126] Within a week of the summit, Mothers Against Gangs supported legislation that would make it illegal for citizens with a gang affiliation to run for public office. The Guardian Angels, a quasi-vigilante black crime-fighting group, went so far as to picket the gang summit and nearly sparked a fight.[127] To the left of Sandoval, Stamps criticized summit organizers for taking credit for the peace and deflecting attention from the truce's original goals: "we want some justice, economic justice, criminal justice, educational justice, job justice."[128]

Summit leaders did not mobilize gangs toward Stamps's call for collective direct action, and the plan for Cabrini-Green that Stamps presented at the announcement of the original truce was all but forgotten. They focused instead on the enterprising bootstrapping of the individual. Unlike Booker T. Washington's brand of racial uplift, which demurred from antagonizing white society, black nationalism understood uplift as a prerequisite to confrontation or competition with whites. For gangs, this heralded a return to the kind of community service the Vice Lords had practiced during the genesis of black power nationalism in the late 1960s under white foundation worker David Dawley, but now under black leadership.[129] Black nationalist bootstrapping affirms the

126. Ann LoLordo, "Chavis Puts Himself and NAACP on the Line to Combat Black-on-Black Violence," *Baltimore Sun*, October 31, 1993. Accessed on March 2, 2014, articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-10-31/news/1993304022_1_chavis-gang-naacp.

127. Paul Shepard, "Gang Peace Leaders Need Jackson's Pull," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* October 25, 1993. Accessed on March 3, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/gang_peace_leaders_need_jackso.html.

128. John W. Fountain, "Cabrini's Brand of Peace Withstands the Glare," *Chicago Tribune,* October 23, 1993. Accessed on March 3, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-10-23/news/9310260335.

129. Dawley's race provides fodder for Robert Allen's thesis that liberal-white foundations supported black power as a way to suppress black communities, which rioted in collective outrage in the late 1960s; see Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytical History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

American dream of social advancement through individual merit while recognizing white racism as an obstacle to that advance. Through personal uplift each individual within the racial collectivity is promised a mode to discount and confront that racism.[130]

Take the case of Ice T, gangsta rapper and bootstrap evangelist: "What I try to do as a brother coming up is never apologize for my success. I can't do anything for people in the hood by acting like I'm broke. By me showing them that I can get on the hill, that means they can get on the hill too."[131] Ice T believes a gang truce in Los Angeles let him and other give up hood life and uplift themselves, however, his success does not mean that other blacks simply lack his work ethic. His account ignores the systemic problems of economic dislocation, retrenchment of government services, and the Rodney King verdict as fundamental causes of the Los Angeles riot. The irony is that Ice T's success depended on the social and political disfranchisement of the inner city that he represented in his music.

Such patriarchal leaders, whether rappers or protest politicians, act as the representative voice of the black dispossessed by bringing the grievances of the inner city to the white power structure. Ice T's house

130. Lawrence W. Levine, "Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Revitalization," in *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Hope Franklin and August Meier, 105–38 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Levine describes (p. 118) the appeal of Garveyism: "[Garvey] was able to take Washington's philosophy and transform it from a doctrine geared to help one up the ladder of American mobility into a mechanism designed to increase the worldwide consciousness, unity, power, and autonomy of the race. He took a philosophy suffused with overtones of individualism and bent it to serve the purposes of the group."

131. Ice T [Tracy Lauren Marrow], forward to *Uprising: Crips and Bloods Tell the Story of America's Youth in the Crossfire*, ed. Yusuf Jah and Sister Shah'Keyah, 14 (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

on the hill creates the illusion of vicarious group incorporation through the leader. His success can be understood as an oppositional act, because it refutes stereotypes of black inferiority and serves as a model for the racial collective.[132] The Chicago gang organizers and speakers also preaching uplift, opposition, and individual advancement. As the *Tribune* observed: "surely the summit has helped the careers of Bradley, Upchurch and the other organizers who suddenly became national spokesmen for urban America."[133]

The matriarchal leadership of Stamps was not the kind of leader the summit's male organizers wanted to produce.[134] Stamps had attended the Kansas City summit and helped write a Sisters' Statement (see appendix C) about the role of women in the gang peace movement. At first "all but ignored," the fifty women attendees won the respect of the organizers "and took an active role in the rest of the summit."[135] In contrast, the Chicago summit's "reunification of the African American family" positioned male-protest and gang leaders as the head of a patriarchal family, with the youthful members as prodigal sons.[136] The Black

132. For how representational politics disadvantaged poor blacks during the black gentrification of Chicago's Douglas and Grand Boulevard neighborhoods in the 1990s, see Michelle R. Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 147.

133. Papajohn, "Traveling Gang Summit Losing Steam."

134. For the sexual politics of Garveyism, see Michelle Mitchell, "What a Pure, Healthy, Unified Race Can Accomplish," in *Renewing Black Intellectual History,* 158–83.

135. Wallis, "A Time to Heal, a Time to Build," 27.

136. At the press conference announcing the truce, Al-Jami Mustafa, king of the Cobra Nation, read an apology on behalf of street organizations: "we have all made mistakes being men, but today we are asking you to have the will to forgive as men and to give us this opportunity to correct our mistakes as men for the benefit of future as a nation of people." Strausberg, "We Will Stop the Killing."

Hebrew Israelites, for example, proposed strengthening the black family. Successful black couples should become adoptive parents, and the community should buy abandoned buildings and teach business skills to the youth—goals that would essentially reproduce middle-class white society through patriarchal hierarchy and capitalist pursuits.[137]

Despite some jockeying over who would emerge as the preeminent leader of the summit, the leaders agreed on the overarching aim to preach black capitalism.[138] The CEO of an Atlanta beverage company spoke of the need to generate modes of economic advancement within the black community; he wanted to give "our people an opportunity to enter corporate America and to be a contributor to society because they will increase the tax base, create their own jobs and create self-dignity, all in one fell swoop."[139] Additionally, the Black Hebrew Israelites advocated that blacks take control of small neighborhood businesses away from Indian and Arab immigrants; the BHI planned to work with black bankers to bring economic development to the community.[140] Small business enterprises dovetailed neatly with the business imperatives of the corporate super gangs. Venkatesh and Levitt note that young Chicago gang members risked injury and death to sell drugs for poverty wages were not deviating from but conforming to the consumerist culture of the

137. "'Stop the Killings' Campaign Launched in Harold's Memory Announced on Thursday," *Chicago Defender,* November 6, 1993.

138. Organizers were concerned about Jackson's participation; Earl King said "we feel it is important that a person of Jesse's stature join us… But we must not let it become Jesse's thing solely." Shepard, "Gang Peace Leaders Need Jackson."

139. Strausberg, "Summit Seeks Economic Parity."

140. Ibid.

United States in the era of Reagan. The possibility of attaining the glamorous status held by older gang leaders led them on.[141] In that light, the exhortations toward Growth and Development and uplift through hard work could even be seen as psychological Taylorism.

Sharif Willis, the highest-ranking Vice Lord in Minneapolis, spoke on the problem of mass incarceration: "we're looking at governments building more jails—super-jails—to warehouse blacks as an employment base for whites, we must say there is a better way."[142] However, he did not critique the political economy that led to the unprecedented building boom of prisons in the United States in the 1970s and '80s.[143] Willis continued: "they say we're building a Black army. If trying to touch them through love and teaching them the values of life which we ignored, then I'm guilty. I'm building a Black army."[144] An antistate, revolutionary call to action was missing, yet the image of a morally uplifted "Black army" retained a veneer of militant opposition.

Even leaders known more explicitly for their history as protest leaders, such as Jesse Jackson, continued in this theme. He proclaimed that the movement to end violence was the "new frontier of our civil rights struggle." Jackson's remarks were not based in political mobilization of the civil-rights movement to achieve policy reforms. Instead, he blamed the

141. Venkatesh & Levitt, "'Are We a Family or a Business?'" 449–58.

142. Younger, "We're Building a Black Army"; Rogers Worthington, "Plan to Rehab Vice Lords Remake of 1970s Chicago," *Chicago Tribune,* August 28, 1993. Accessed on March 2, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-08-28/news/9308280100.

143. For the economics of prisons growth, see Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); for an abbreviated and conservative account, see Paul Street, *The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs, and Community in Chicago, Illinois, and the Nation* (Chicago: Chicago Urban League, 2002), www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/theviciouscircle.pdf.

144. Younger, "We're Building a Black Army."

"guns aimed at each other, drugs, greed, undisciplined and unloving sex (that) leads to AIDS," which, combined with self-hatred, create "a neutron bomb to destroy our people." For Jackson, the answer was in "the renewal of our minds."[145] Despite identifying the problem as a civil-rights issue, Jackson's solution was not the expansion or redefinition of political or civil rights. His spiritual, or evangelical, solution entailed the transformation of individual attitudes and behaviors before collective action could be taken.

Louis Farrakhan said that inner-city violence "is no longer the fault of white people, it is our own fault. It is up to us to get our house together," and, gesturing toward gang members, he concluded, "whatever they are… you can say they were made in America."[146]

Chicago newspapers covered the summit extensively. The *Tribune* was quick to observe the summit's contradictions: "the news conference itself was dominated by two themes: black men announcing that they were taking a stand for peace in their communities and the same men blaming outsiders and 'agent provocateurs' for community problems such as guns and drugs."[147] The *Defender*'s coverage was more agnostic, but still ran a headline the week the summit ended, "Body Count Continues," suggesting the summit's failure to achieve immediately tangible results.[148] As a black newspaper, the *Defender* had more to lose by editorializing against a summit that exemplified a new political reality of

145. Chinta Strausberg, "Jesse Assesses Gang Summit," *Chicago Defender,* October 25, 1993.

146. Lucille W. Younger, "Farrakhan to Gang Leaders: The Community Is Watching You," *Chicago Defender,* October 25, 1993.

147. Given its deep suspicion of gangs, the *Tribune*'s coverage was more complex than the *Defender*'s. Papajohn & Kass, "Gang Summit Nets One Goal"; the Englewood school administrator said he hated George Papajohn of the *Tribune,* interview with the author.

148. "Body Count Continues," *Chicago Defender,* October 27, 1993.

assertive street gangs, which may or may not be viewed favorably by the whole black community.

The response by Chicago politicians to the summit varied. According to the *Tribune*, politicians "questioned whether the middle-class voters who decide most elections would take a dim view of aldermanic colleagues who have sought a political alliance with the gangs that threaten that same middle class."[149] Nonetheless, former mayor Eugene Sawyer supported the summit, Alderwoman Anna Langford noted that when she campaigned in 1967 she had the support of four gangs that "had never been on the same route together unless they were killing each other."[150] Alderman Virgil Jones invoked gang involvement with the civil-rights movement to justify his support of the summit.[151] The support of politicians who represented and lived in neighborhoods with gang activity may reflect the Chicago political reality that "clout" brings access. Alderwomen Langford noted that gangs were organized community groups, who could get out the vote or keep people from voting.[152]

Not all politicians were as supportive. Alderwoman Toni Preckwinkle, who represented the affluent, liberal, and racially mixed communities of east Grand Boulevard, Kenwood, and north Hyde Park, claimed that her constituents were "disturbed not only about the rising political influence of the gangs, and the efforts by some politicians and groups to use them, but also by the process that seeks to legitimize them, to create role models. That cuts across all groups in the black community."[153]

149. Papajohn & Kass, "Gang Summit Nets One Goal."

150. Strausberg, "Summit Seeks Economic Parity."

151. Papajohn & Kass, "Gang Summit Nets One Goal."

152. David Bernstein and Noah Isackson, "Gangs and Politicians in Chicago: An Unholy Alliance," *Chicago Magazine,* December 13, 2011. Accessed on July 28, 2016, www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/January-2012/Gangs-and-Politicians-An-Unholy-Alliance.

153. Papajohn & Kass, "Gang Summit Nets One Goal."

US Representative Mel Reynolds hosted his own "anti-gang summit" concurrently with the gang summit.[154] While gang involvement was present among middle-class blacks, gang activity tended to be seen by them as a problem of someone else's children.[155]

When questioned about the fraught relationship between some black politicians and the gangs' movement into politics, Bradley said, "I don't know no one who would turn down a vote because of religious affiliation, sexual preference or gang affiliation,"[156] a nod both to the fundamental equality of votes and a deft mobilization of social-movement political discourse as a form of legitimization. Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965 Adolph Reed Jr. argues that a split occurred between the traditional black protest elite, which could no longer claim to represent black interests after the demise of Jim Crow, and the rise of black elected officials. Absent a more far-reaching social critique and political program, civil-rights protest leaders and the newly elected black officials competed in an arena of ethnic-pluralist politics to ensure the equal racial distribution of government pork barrel.[157] Elected officials had more immediate access to government resources, creating a situation of elite competition over who could most authentically represent black interests.[158]

154. James L. Tyson, "Black Leaders Call on Urban Gangs to Be 'New Frontier of Civil Rights'," *Christian Science Monitor,* October 26, 1993. Accessed on March 6, 2014, www.csmonitor.com/layout/set/r14/1993/1026/26031.html.

155. Mary Pattillo, *Black Picket Fences,* 68–90; Gangster Disciples did recruit students from black middle-class families, as part of their goal to develop a business portfolio beyond drug pushing; a trend that Preckwinkle's constituents would probably have found threatening. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Black Gangster Disciples; Racketeering Enterprise Investgations—Gangs; Memphis Division* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, March 30, 1993).

156. Chinta Strausberg, "Pols Fear 'New Breed' of Gangs," *Chicago Defender,* October 4, 1993.

157. Reed, *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon*.

158. Ibid., 2–10.

Criticized for his involvement in the summit, Jackson denounce his detractors as race betrayers, calling them, through a spokesperson, "Black anti-gang foes who allegedly took that posture to gain stronger support in white areas."[159] While aldermen and other elected officials may have weighed the value of the summit in terms of votes, the political relationships of leaders like Jackson, Chavis, and Farrakhan to gang youth was predicated on their supposed connection to the black masses, who they claimed to represent to whites. Appearing at events with gang leaders provided the appearance of a connection to the masses of alienated young gang members. When confronted by reporters about the summit's critics, a religious leader retorted: "I do not expect a white male who has never grown up in the inner city to understand anything that we are talking about."[160]

The summit held a rally at Englewood Tech, which can be understood as a rite of leadership legitimation. Here Ben Chavis of the NAACP spoke to twenty-five hundred gang members,[161] and summit organizers gave awards to Chicago's gang leaders for their work to achieve peace.[162] None were there to accept the awards in person, most were incarcerated. But Bradley accepted on Hoover's behalf, who received "thunderous"

159. Chinta Strausberg, "PUSH Blasts Foes of Gang Summit," *Chicago Defender*, October 28, 1993.

160. Strausberg, "Summit Seeks Economic Parity."

161. Responding to inquiries from the Illinois state's attorney, Chavis also announce the NAACP's role in financing the summits. Lucille Younger, "Chicago: Eyes of the World Are Upon You," *Chicago Defender,* October 26, 1993.

162. John Kass and George Papajohn, "High School Role on Gang Summit Hit," *Chicago Tribune,* October 27, 1993. Accessed on March 6, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-10-27/news/9310270232.

applause from an audience.[163] The awards ceremony connected the Gangster Disciples' top leader in absentia with the rank and file and broadcast Hoover as a positive figure to the larger community.

Similar to the more mainstream politicians and community leaders, Hoover saw the summit as a means to affirm his position as chairman of the corporate GD. He was not democratically elected by members and few younger members knew who he was. Several of my informants emphasized Hoover's lack of control over the GD on the street to vindicate Hoover from the bad faith of lieutenants on the outside whom he could not control.[164] In Hoover's own estimation, his power came primarily from his control of the prison environment: "Sooner or later the guys on the street know they will probably come inside. Then they know they will have to deal with me."[165] Hoover's influence on the streets relied on the revolving door of incarceration; however, exerting discipline on the streets through such an indirect mechanism was a challenge. Locked away in prison, Hoover's position at the top of GD hierarchy had to be reaffirmed on the outside through the production of a charismatic persona and public recognition that the Englewood honor provided.

Summit leaders, Hoover and Chavis, tightly orchestrated the images of the summit, and the message reaching the wider public was of legitimate black leaders, all men, taking responsibility for and uplifting the youth, a mute, corporate body, politically unformed and reliant on a responsible leadership to guide its actions. The white press often portrayed the summit in a negative light, which made controlling the message at media events

163. George Papajohn, "Gang Peace Summit: A Plague on All Their Houses," *Chicago Tribune,* October 26, 1993. Accessed on March 5, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-10-26/news/9310260179.

164. CeaseFire interruptor interview with author, October 28, 2013; and author interviews with a Gangster Disciples regent and an Englewood school administrator.

165. Donaldson, "Twenty-First Century V.O.T.E." Accessed on February 20, 2014, gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/BGD/vote21.html.

all the more important. However, that defense only begs the question of why the summit *needed* heavy attention from the white media if the goal was truly to organize and unify black people. In contrast, at the Kansas City summit many events were closed to the press, presumably to allow for candid conversations.[166]

The gangs' younger rank-and-file members were infrequently quoted in news articles about the summit, and summit organizers sheltered them from the press intentionally, which was duly noted by the *Tribune*. Stray members of the rank and file who did speak to the press tended to be more pessimistic than the leaders: "A lot of people lost a lot of friends out here behind this gangbanging… Some people want the fighting to stop, but it's going to be hard. It's like a habit."[167] Another attendee said truces were frequent but fleeting: "It lasts for a couple of months and then they'll be back shooting."[168]

Conclusion: The Fall of the Nations

The potential that Sayles saw in the 1992 gang truce to channel gang violence into a revolutionary force for black liberation did not happen during the 1993 Chicago summit. Instead, the summit reflected and reproduced the crisis of black politics in the post-segregation era. Reed argues that the civil-rights movement propped up a black leadership of middle-class technocrats, concerned more with reproducing their role as a racial-administrative apparatus than with formulating an egalitarian

166. Papajohn, "Traveling Gang Summit Losing Steam."

167. Paul Shepard, "Gang Members Seek Unity [and] Time to Stop the Killing, Speaker Tells Chicago Summit," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* October 24, 1993. Accessed on March 6, 2014, www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2009/03/gang_memeber_seek_unity_time_t.html.

168. Papajohn, "Gang Peace Summit."

politics that would substantially benefit poor blacks.[169] The Reagan era accelerated neoliberal economic restructuring of a postindustrial economy that tolerated high unemployment. Material conditions were worse for many poor and working-class blacks than during the civil-rights movement: blacks were often the last hired and the first fired as jobs were automated and plants moved elsewhere.[170] The black middle class narrowly defined the racial agenda to preserve antidiscrimination and affirmative-action laws that primarily benefited the middle class and did not account for the political-economic shifts effecting the working class.[171]

Elite advancement was viewed as beneficial for the entire race. Individual excellence would break social barriers and demonstrate black equality to whites, and black elites would model the social mores necessary to uplift the rest of the race. Echoing Reagan conservatism, black leadership focused on equipping poor black people with the "human capital" to compete in the labor market. They abandoned the Left's critique of political economy and a broad class-based assault on capitalism itself, which Martin Luther King Jr. had also embraced in his later years.[172] A resurgence of black autarky offered an ideological solution for

169. Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug*, 55–78.

170. In 1970, 72 percent of black men born between 1950 and 1955 were in manufacturing and construction jobs. The percentage was 31 percent in 1987, and even lower for younger men. In twelve out of the seventeen predominantly black community areas in Chicago poverty rates exceeded 40 percent in 1990, and only one out of three black adults worked any job in a typical week. For the rest of the city, 57 percent of adults had work. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996) 12–19, 249.

171. Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug*, 55–78.

172. For King's hopes to confront economic injustice with an alliance between the civil-rights movement and labor during the Memphis sanitation-workers strike, see David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven John Ross, *At The River I Stand* (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1993).

black elites that normalized the growing intra-racial class stratification. In the absence of organic political connections to their black constituency, those aspiring for recognized positions of racial leadership relied on showmanship and spectacle (and ultimately to be authenticated as black racial spokespersons by white elites), a strategy pursued to the greatest effect by Jesse Jackson through his failed presidential bids in the 1980s.[173] Jackson's association with gang leaders created the appearance of connection to the black masses.

It helped that gang leaders had a sense of their own potential as political figures or as political brokers. These political ambitions could reach as far as the White House. A year after the gang summit Jackson invited Wallace "Gator" Bradley (still calling himself an "enforcer" for Larry Hoover's peace) to brief President Clinton on inner-city issues. Bradley then ran for alderman, losing in a runoff, the year after that.[174] As late as 2014, the academic Cornel West compared Larry Hoover with Malcolm X, lauding his "visionary leadership" in the introduction to Bradley's autobiography.[175]

In 1995, the government suppressed the Gangster Disciples and ended the "Growth and Development" movement by indicting thirty-nine of the gang's top leaders, including Larry Hoover.[176] While the killing of Dantrell Davis opened certain political opportunities for gang leaders through the peace treaty and gang summit, it also provided a political opening for the City of Chicago to destroy the gangs' most

173. Reed, *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon*.

174. Papajohn and John Kass, "'Gator' Bradley Polishes Image of Gangbanger Gone Straight," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1994. Accessed on March 16, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-02-18/news/9402180034.

175. Cornel West, foreword to *Murder to Excellence*, 2.

176. John O'Brien, "39 Gangster Disciples Indicted," *Chicago Tribune,* August 31, 1995. Accessed on March 16, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-08-31/news/9509010218.

valued territory—public housing high-rises. A federal Hope VI grant and the CHA's Plan for Transformation relocated thousands of residents out of the city or into Chicago's declining neighborhoods, depriving gangs of their strongholds.[177]

Public housing residents not only lost their homes, but gang violence intensified in Chicago's poorer wards, despite dropping significantly in the city overall (940 homicides in 1992; 500 in 2012).[178] Evidence suggests that displaced CHA residents did not cause the decline in their new neighborhoods; rather, they could only find landlords willing to accept their housing vouchers in neighborhoods that were already in decline.[179] Some observers attribute increased violence in poor neighborhoods to the dismantlement of the gang hierarchy that enforced discipline; more research needs to be done to determine if increased

177. For a comprehensive table of the Plan for Transformation's overhaul of public housing, see Bennett et al., *Where Are Poor People To Live?* 105–106. The CHA began leaving units vacant in the 1970s; by 1999 many projects were only 25–50 percent occupied.

178. Reid Wilson, "FBI: Chicago Passes New York as Murder Capital of U.S." *Washington Post,* September 18, 2013. Accessed on January 20, 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/09/18/fbi-chicago-passes-new-york-as-murder-capital-of-u-s/; Matt L. Rodriguez, *Annual Report 1992* (Chicago: Chicago Police Department, 1992).

179. "We find little evidence that an increase in the number of voucher holders in a tract leads to more crime… Voucher holders are more likely to move into neighborhoods where crime rates are increasing." Ingrid Gould Ellen, Michael C. Lens, and Katherine O'Regan, "American Murder Mystery Revisited: Do Housing-Voucher Households Cause Crime?" *Housing Policy Debate* 22, no. 4 (September 2011): 551–57, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2016444; for the attribution of poverty to urban ecology and high-rise architecture rather than the economic losses of deindustrialization, see Bennett & Reed, "The New Face of Urban Renewal."

violence and increases in inequality during the neoliberal era share a causal relationship.[180]

Stamps, too, had to contend with the contradictions of black politics in the post-segregation era. At one point Stamps, who died of a heart attack at fifty-one while still fighting to save Cabrini-Green, called the redevelopment plans for the project an example of "ethnic cleansing," suggesting the need for racial unity around the imperative to preserve public housing.[181] But this was a time when middle-class blacks, who were gentrifying certain black neighborhoods, were ambivalent toward preserving public housing. They favored mixed-income developments that would encourage the poor to emulate the behavior of the middle classes. The idea fit neatly within the nationalist ideology of community development through elite-directed bootstrapping.[182] Unable to make preservation of public housing an elite issue, Stamps could not build a coalition across class divisions in the black community or with other racial groups to halt the destruction of Cabrini-Green.

Stamps attempted to organize through these contradictions. She advocated refusing Jesse Jackson's offer to mediate between the residents of Cabrini-Green and the CHA and believed Jackson would not represent the interests of the residents. She predicted correctly that residents would not return to the new developments despite the city's promises.

180. Daniel Hertz, "The Growing Public Safety Inequality Gap in Chicago," *Newgeography,* October 2, 2013. Accessed on November 23, 2013, www.newgeography.com/content/003965-the-growing-public-safety-inequality-gap-chicago. For the link between underreporting and the decrease in the homicides rate since 2012, see David Bernstein and Noah Isackson, "The Truth About Chicago's Crime Rates," *Chicago Magazine,* May 2014. Accessed on April 10, 2014, www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/May-2014/Chicago-crime-rates.

181. Flynn McRoberts, "Stamps Leaves Imprint on Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune,* September 5, 1996. Accessed on March 16, 2014, articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-09-05/news/9609050073.

182. Green, "Richard M. Daley," 266; Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia,* 138–43.

Stamps understood that black leaders did not necessarily speak for Cabrini-Green residents, but pursued their own political preferences within the Democratic Party, dominated by the white-power structure: "with Daley's help on this side, and Jesse's help on that side… they all can deliver us like lambs to vote for Clinton in November."[183] In Stamps's estimation voting got the residents nothing; "If we decide we don't wanna vote in November that some brothers might get caught up. But in the war they are casualties, and you have to sacrifice the few in order to save the many. It ain't nothing personal, it's just a question of survival."[184] For Stamps it was of little consequence if some black elected officials might lose their office. Stamps believed collective action would save Cabrini-Green. She advocated that the residents take the next four years to decide which party really worked in their best interest or whether they ought to build their own political party.

Stamps's activism may appear like a far cry from the Fanon-inspired revolution of the Black Panther Party. Some might even regard her as a "protest elite" pursing government pork barrel, but this requires a narrow vision of the fight for the human right to housing. Stamps never lost her revolutionary principles: "We don't have the guns to go out here and shoot these people. We don't have the resources to bring in the kind of think tanks that we need. So we need to work with what we've got. What do we have? We've got the people, and we've got our vote. We oughta hold it."[185] Stamps recognized she was fighting a rearguard action and attempted to remain principled by centering the struggle on the most oppressed black people—public housing residents and gang-affiliated youth. She encouraged people to see themselves as political agents, capable of making change through collective action without the need of an elite mediator.

183. "Raw: Town Hall Meeting," *Voices of Cabrini*.

184. "Raw: Robbins Barber Shop–Marion Stamps," *Voices of Cabrini*.

185. Ibid.

In contrast, Larry Hoover attempted to use the gang truce to become an elite mediator with the white elite. However, he was unable to repeat his success outside the prison system. Similar to the first Daley, who used the war on gangs in the late 1960s to eliminate black gangs as political rivals, the federal government dismantled the gang's leadership and ended a nascent gang-based political machine. What James "Yaki" Sayles hoped would be an incipient revolution among the Gangster Disciples became a black-elite competition in the post-segregation era.

The gang truce did not live up to the potential of Stamps's multipoint plan despite her own continued activism. Instead, through the Chicago gang summit, various political figures and gang leaders vied for the role of race leader and produced a political vision of bootstrap capitalism and moral uplift that functioned to contain the potentially explosive inner-city disaffection with the status quo. Stamps was right to denounce these leaders' use of Cabrini-Green as a stage upon which to conjure up, in the words of an earlier revolutionary, "the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language."[186]

Dedicated to Damien Turner (1991–2010)

186. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852. Accessed on March 16, 2014, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm.

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Appendix A
Marion Stamps, "The Cabrini-Green Revitalization Plan"[187]

1. The provision of educational, job training, and recreational activities to all youth and adults.

2. U.S. Representative Cardiss Collins to convene a congressional hearing on "what led to the destruction of Cabrini-Green and the entire Near-North Black community."

3. U.S. Housing and Urban Development regional administrator Gertrude Jordan to "cite Metroplex, the owners of Town and Garden Apartments, for gross violation of their contract with HUD, and to reclaim the property and turn them into scattered site housing" for Cabrini-Green residents.

4. The repair of all vacant Chicago Housing Authority units, and their occupation by homeless families.

5. The turning of the 1117–1119 Cleveland Ave. building into a multi-purpose service center including an alternative high school, drug program, library, and a shelter for youth and adults.

6. The construction of a theatre, bowling alley, and a recreational arcade.

7. The support of existing agencies, churches, and community organizations that already provide services to the area residents.

8. The provision of additional resources and support to all area schools.

9. The establishment of food and clothing cooperatives for the area. The establishment of a 24-hour trouble-shooter hotline.

10. The holding of elections for Local Advisory Councils. The establishment of community-wide Governing Councils that represent all groups in the community. And, the holding of monthly community accountability sessions and status reports.

187. As printed in Yaki, "Let's 'Gang-Up' On Oppression."

Appendix B
The "United in Peace" button

Film still of Wallace "Gator" Bradley presenting the button on Peoria public television**.**

Appendix C
"The Sisters' Statement," National Urban Peace and Justice Summit, Kansas City, MO, April 29–May 2, 1993.[188]

- We are the mothers, the sisters, the girlfriends, and the gang bangers. We have to grow together.
- We must all be equal participants. We must be able to speak up without being condemned or silenced. Our agenda is the same as yours.
- As women we have always known violence. It is gang banging and police brutality, but it is also domestic violence, rape, child abuse, and poverty.
- We insist that women are appropriately represented on any advisory group or board of directors developed out of this summit. We are our best resources. No amount of money in the world can acomplish what the strength, intelligence, and love in this room can. We have to pool our skills.
- The most important issue is that we work together. We love you and support you. Our effort is one.

188. Wallis, "A Time to Heal," *Putting Down Stones*, 27.