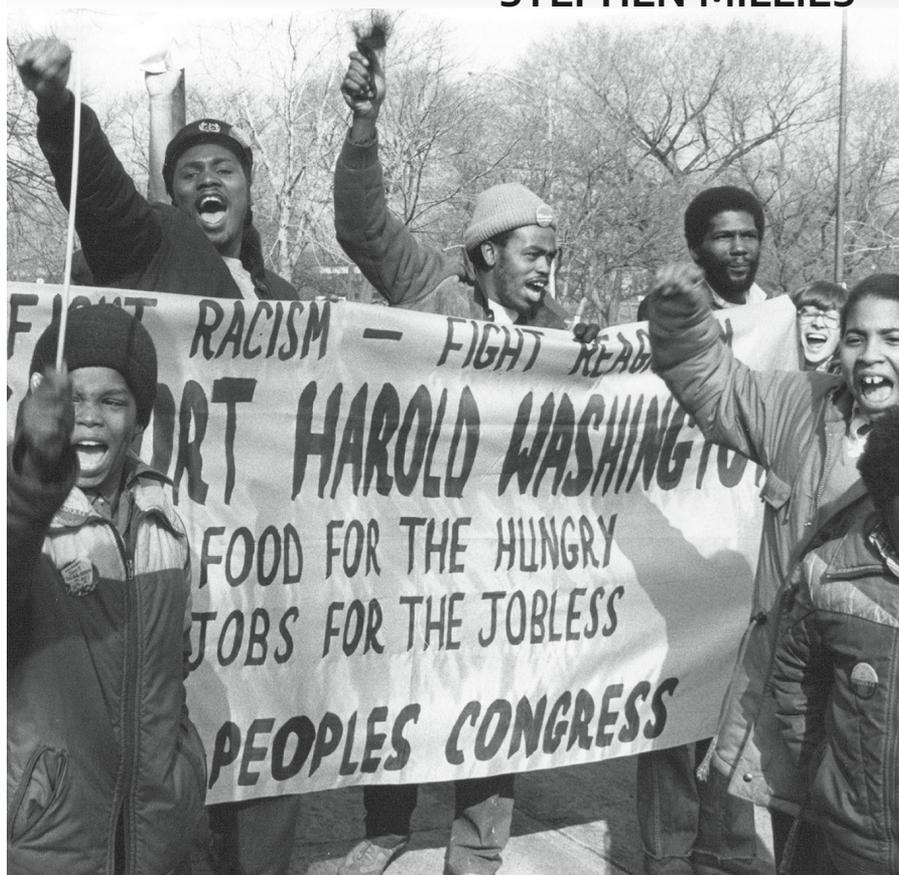


# The long shadow of the 1919 Chicago race riot

STEPHEN MILLIES



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**Stephen Millies**

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Cover Photo by Bill Hackwell of the campaign for  
Harold Washington who became mayor of Chicago in 1983.

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# The long shadow of the 1919 Chicago race riot

**A** century ago, Chicago was convulsed by anti-Black riots. For days, African Americans were beaten and killed in a city whose first non-Indigenous resident was the Black man Jean Baptiste Point du Sable. Black workers couldn't go to their jobs in the Union Stockyards, steel mills or downtown.

The violence started July 27, 1919, when five young Black men went to a beach on a hot Sunday afternoon. They climbed aboard a raft that they had helped build, went out into Lake Michigan and started diving from the vessel.

Chicago is a segregated city. It was worse a century ago.

Black people were confined to part of the city's South Side. While the 25th Street beach was for African Americans, the 29th Street beach was exclusively white.

When the raft drifted into waters off 29th Street, a racist named John Stauber started throwing rocks at the Black youth. One of the rocks struck 17-year-old Eugene Williams, who drowned.

Williams' companions went with an African American policeman from the 25th Street beach who asked Daniel Callahan, a white cop, to arrest Stauber. Callahan refused and stopped the Black officer from apprehending the killer.

Reportedly, a thousand Black Chicagoans then assembled at the 29th Street beach and demanded the police arrest Stauber for murder. The police refused. A Black man named James Crawford was shot and killed by the police, but the crowd did not disperse. By nightfall, rumors of “race war” in white neighborhoods were running rampant, and the anti-Black rioting began.

This atrocity resulted in 34 deaths. Seven Black people were killed by racist police who often attacked and arrested the Black victims of mob violence.

A cop yelled, “I ought to shoot you!” at African American Joseph Scott after 25 whites had nearly killed him. None of the whites who attacked Scott on a streetcar were arrested. Instead, Scott was struck repeatedly by cops and thrown into a police wagon.

Horace Jennings was left wounded in the street by racists only to be asked by a policeman, “Where’s your gun, you Black son of a bitch?” The cop then swung his billy club at Jennings’ head, leaving the Black man unconscious.

Only after several blood-soaked days did the capitalist class decide to call in the National Guard to stop the anti-Black riot.

The capitalists acted partly because the shooting wasn’t all one-way. African Americans were arming themselves in self-defense. While 23 Black people were murdered, 15 whites were sent to the morgue as well.

### **The bloody red summer of 1919**

The Chicago race riot didn’t occur in a vacuum. Seventy-six African Americans were lynched in 1919. At least 13 were veterans. More than 50 cities had anti-Black riots.

The week before Chicago erupted, as many as 39 people were killed in the Washington, D.C., riot. Carter G. Wood-



son, the father of Black History Month, barely escaped harm as he saw a white mob shoot a Black man to death.

In May, six people were killed in Charleston, S.C. At the end of August, as many as 30 people were killed in Knoxville, Tenn.

In September, the 14-year-old future actor Henry Fonda witnessed the African American Willie Brown being hanged and shot in Omaha, Neb. A white mob tore down the courthouse and tried to hang the city's mayor, Edward Smith.

The worst massacre was in Phillips County, Ark., near the city of Elaine. Hundreds of Black sharecroppers and their families were slaughtered.

Arkansas Gov. Charles Brough accompanied Col. Issac Jenks and 550 U.S. army soldiers who arrived in Elaine on Oct. 2. This all-white contingent proceeded to hunt down Black people hiding in the countryside.

None of these atrocities was spontaneous or accidental. Capitalist newspapers played a major role in whipping up racist violence.

The Washington Post called for racist soldiers to assemble and conduct a “clean-up” against Black people. The Omaha Bee helped incite the murder of Willie Brown by printing sensational articles about rapes and attempted rapes that never occurred.

Racist filth poured from the top of capitalist society. Four years before 1919, President Woodrow Wilson had the first Hollywood blockbuster — ”Birth of a Nation” — shown in the White House. The movie quotes Wilson on a title card praising “the great Ku Klux Klan.” The Ku Klux Klan used this viciously racist movie for decades as a recruiting film.

### **A free pass for racist terror**

In 1919, the wealthy and powerful needed to pour even more poison into the white poor. The shock waves sent out by the Bolshevik Revolution were felt all over the earth.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed on March 21, 1919. The Communist International was founded the same month.

Revolutionary ferment wasn’t confined to Europe. In February, W.E.B. Du Bois organized the first Pan-African Congress. The May 4th Movement of Beijing students in 1919 was the beginning of the Chinese Revolution.

The speculators at Chicago’s Board of Trade as well as the bankers on La Salle Street were more concerned about events closer to home. In 1919, over four million workers went on strike in the United States. One out of seven industrial workers walked a picket line.

Among them were 365,000 steelworkers who began their walkout on Sept. 22. The strike’s organizer was future communist leader William Z. Foster.

The strike was defeated with 18 strikers killed by police and private gunmen. But for weeks it shut down what was then the largest corporation on the planet, United States Steel, the crown jewel of the J.P. Morgan banking empire. (Now part of the JPMorgan Chase & Co. banking octopus with \$2.7 trillion in assets.)

Twelve to fifteen thousand Black workers were employed in Chicago's Union Stockyards, which at the time was the largest concentration of workers in the U.S. Much of the violence occurred around the stockyards, and Black pack-inhouse workers were prevented from going to their jobs for a week.

Swift, Armour and the other packers could have intervened to stop the racist mob violence. The Union Stockyards had its own private police force. Also, there were probably a thousand railroad cops in Chicago.

These forces could have escorted Black workers to and from their job. Just telling local shopkeepers and the white gangs that the slaughterhouse bosses didn't want trouble could have dampened things.

The packers and the railroad companies did nothing. Eighteen years later, Chicago cops killed ten striking steelworkers — six of whom were shot in the back — in the 1937 Memorial Day massacre.

In 1919, the cops didn't even try to break up the white mobs attacking Black people. They often aided them instead.

Sources: "*Race Riot, Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*" by William M. Tuttle Jr.; "*Red Summer, The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America*" by Cameron McWhirter; "*Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973*" by Philip S. Foner.

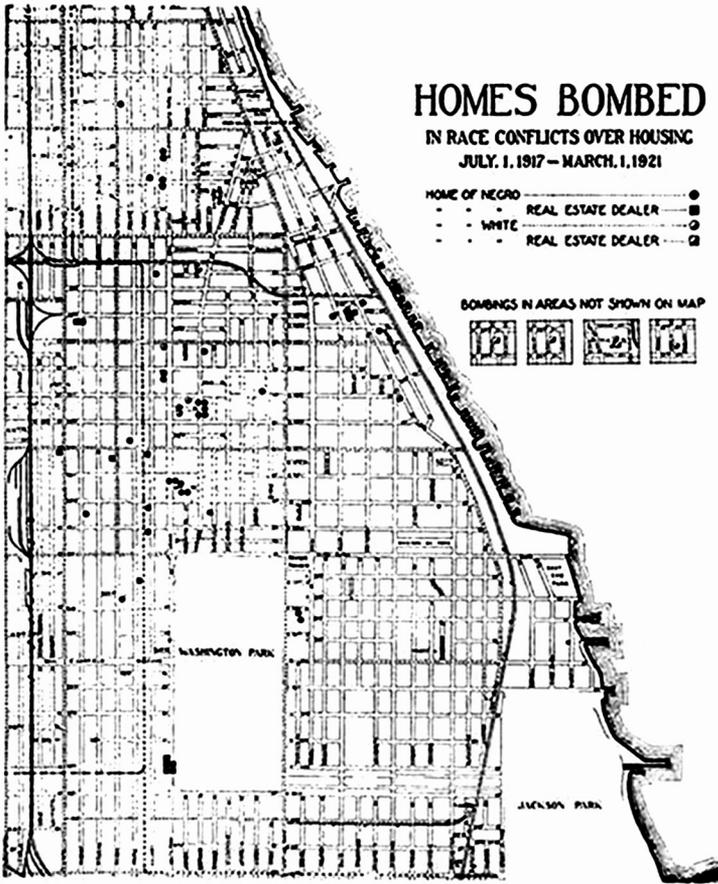
# HOMES BOMBED

IN RACE CONFLICTS OVER HOUSING

JULY 1, 1917 - MARCH 1, 1921

HOME OF NEGRO —●—  
- - - REAL ESTATE DEALER —■—  
- - - WHITE —○—  
- - - REAL ESTATE DEALER —□—

BOMBINGS IN AREAS NOT SHOWN ON MAP



# 2

## Bombings greet the Great Migration

**A** fundamental change in the composition of the U.S. workforce was the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities.

With the outbreak of World War I, factory owners lost Eastern and Southern Europe as a source of exploited workers. For the first time, Black people were able to get jobs in many Northern plants.

Hundreds of thousands of African Americans, largely from sharecropper families, went North. Chicago's Black population increased two-and-a-half times between 1910 and 1920, rising from 44,103 to 109,408. In the same decade, Detroit's Black community grew sixfold.

This sudden growth combined with segregation allowed landlords to jack up rents on their overcrowded properties. Real estate moguls tried to stop African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods.

Between July 1917 and March 1921, 58 Black homes were bombed. The long-time anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells demanded the city take action.

Among the few terrorists arrested for the bombings was James Turner, a clerk at the real estate firm of Dean & Meagher. A six-year-old Black child was killed when a bomb

was thrown into a building on Chicago's Indiana Avenue.

Decades later, real estate sharks prefer setting fires to throwing bombs. Between 1978 and 1981, 41 people, including 30 children in Hoboken, N.J., were killed by arsonists. The Latinx population of this small city dropped by half.

The Chicago bombings often followed racist meetings like the one organized by a "property owners' association" on May 5, 1919. A real estate agent urged whites to "stand together block by block" against the "invasion" of African Americans seeking homes.

Two weeks later, the home of the renowned actor Richard B. Harrison and his family was destroyed on May 16. Harrison was most famous for his role in the Broadway play "The Green Pastures."

Against a backdrop of racist newspapers and politicians, the campaign of real estate crooks sought to provoke a hysteria among whites. A result was that the Black teenager Eugene Williams could be killed for swimming off the "wrong beach" of Lake Michigan.

Why didn't the Great Migration happen earlier?

Why did it take 50 years after the Civil War for Northern industry to exploit Black workers? Andrew Carnegie recruited workers from the Austro-Hungarian Empire for his Pittsburgh steel mills. Why didn't Carnegie seek Black or white employees from the U.S. South?

Northern capitalists needed Black and white labor to stay in the South. Cotton production grew from 4 million bales in 1870 to over 16 million bales in 1911. Even though U.S. manufacturing exports grew at a more rapid rate, cotton still accounted for 29 percent of U.S. exports in 1911.

Employment in Southern logging, sawmills and tobacco factories also boomed. Yankee corporations grabbed much of the profit. Both the Southern Railroad, (now part of the

Norfolk Southern), and the steel mills around Birmingham, Ala., were effectively controlled from J.P. Morgan's banking house at 23 Wall Street.

As World War I began, Black labor was summoned North. But Chicago's ruling class continued to use racism to pit workers against each other.

The packer Phillip Armour bragged that he sought to "keep the races and nationalities apart after working hours, and to foment suspicion, rivalry, and even enmity among such groups."

Armour was filthy rich. His packing plants were just plain filthy. In 1898, when the U.S. invaded Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, more U.S. soldiers died by food poisoning from Armour's tainted pork and beans than were killed by gunfire.

### **The Democratic machine and the race riot**

Just as Wall Street ran New York City for generations through the corrupt Tammany Hall political machine, so did Chicago's wealthy and powerful rely on the Democrats.

The living shadow of the 1919 "race riots" was the Chicago Democratic Party machine. Even decades later, a whole layer of this apparatus — alderman, judges, ward bosses and the like — could trace their careers to membership in the neighborhood "athletic clubs" that sparked the violence.

These clubs were sponsored by elected officials like the racist Cook County commissioner, Frank Ragen. His "Ragen's Colts" killed and wounded Black people. They were like the fascist gangs that were being formed in Italy and Germany.

The coroner's report emphasized the role of these clubs:

"Responsibility for many attacks was definitely placed by many witnesses upon the 'athletic clubs' including Ra-

gen's Colts, the Hamburgers, Aylwards, Our Flag, Standard ... and several others. The mobs were made up for the most part of boys between 15 and 22.

"Gangs, particularly of white youths, formed definite nuclei for crowd and mob formations. Athletic clubs supplied the leaders of many gangs."

Among the members of the "Hamburg Social and Athletic Club" at the time was 17-year-old Richard J. Daley, who would be elected six times as Chicago's mayor.

Crucial to Daley's political ascent was winning the presidency of the Hamburgers in 1924.

This racist swine was still mayor when he finally died in 1976. One of his sons, William Daley, became President Bill Clinton's secretary of commerce and helped drive the North American Free Trade Agreement through Congress.

Another of his sons, Richard M. Daley, was elected to his fourth term as Chicago's mayor in 1999, the 80th anniversary of the "race riots."

Sources: "*Race Riot, Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*" by William M. Tuttle Jr.; "*The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*"; "*A Few Red Drops, the Chicago Race Riot of 1919*" by Claire Hartfield; "*The Chicago Race Riots, July, 1919*" by Carl Sandburg; "*Down on the Killing Floor, Black and White workers in Cicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54*" by Rick Halpern; "*Boss, Richard J. Daley of Chicago*" by Mike Royko.

## What did the unions do?

**U**p to the 1920s, Chicago was the center of the labor movement in the United States. It was the heart and soul of the eight-hour-day struggle in 1886. Workers marched from factory to factory and shut them down.

Chicago's working class and its leaders, the Haymarket martyrs, gave May Day to the world. The capitalists violently crushed this movement and hanged its leaders—George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Albert Parsons and August Spies—on Nov. 11, 1887. Another activist, Louis Lingg, either committed suicide or was killed in his jail cell.

Because of its central location, sitting at the foot of Lake Michigan, Chicago became the industrial capital of the U.S. It was the railroad and meatpacking center of the country. In those days, railroads employed 2 million workers, 10 times as many as today.

Chicago was the headquarters of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, nicknamed “Wobblies”). In the fall of 1919, the Communist Party would be founded there in two conventions. (The two communist parties that were formed, the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party of America, would merge in 1921.)

However, the workers' movement was virtually all-white. It ignored the super oppression of African Americans. What finally changed this around was the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and the struggles of oppressed peoples.

The best of these socialists would have used guns to stop a lynching. Left-wingers attacked the color line that existed in most of the unions belonging to the American Federation of Labor. (The United Mine Workers was a notable exception in having a large Black membership.)

Eugene Debs won over 900,000 votes as the Socialist Party presidential candidate in 1920 while he was imprisoned for opposing World War I. Debs wrote that "the history of the Negro in the United States is a history of crime without parallel," in a 1903 issue of the *International Socialist Review*. The article was a fiery attack on racism and ridiculed white supremacy.

Yet for Debs nothing more was required from socialists concerning the struggle against racism except to say "the class struggle is colorless."

Debs was beloved for leading the American Railway Union's 1894 Pullman strike that shut down many railroads. President Grover Cleveland crushed the walkout by sending U.S. troops to Chicago.

Soldiers under the command of Gen. Nelson Miles shot down strikers. Miles had earlier captured Geronimo and would later invade Puerto Rico, making the beautiful island a U.S. colony.

But the ARU wasn't "colorless." Its convention delegates had voted 112-100 to bar Black workers from joining their union. Debs argued passionately against this racist ban. It would have been better if Debs had quit the Jim Crow ARU and organized an alternative open to all workers.



Photo: RootsWeb

Members of IWW Timber Workers jailed in Grabow, La., in 1912. The union organized Black and white workers together and led the Merryville strike soon after.

### The legendary IWW

The IWW sought to organize all workers. The Wobblies despised racism and at a time of almost universal anti-Asian racism, published literature in Japanese. African American IWW leader Ben Fletcher successfully organized Black and white dockworkers in Philadelphia.

It was their deeds that made the Wobblies an unforgettable part of working-class history. The Brotherhood of Timber Workers was particularly heroic.

It affiliated with the IWW at its May 1912 convention in Alexandria, La. Upon the urging of IWW leader Big Bill Haywood, the union members met together in defiance of the state's segregation laws.

The biggest IWW-led strike in the region was against the American Lumber Company in Merryville, La. Thirteen hundred workers went on strike there beginning Nov. 11, 1913.

These Black, Indigenous and white strikers stood together against company terror. Mexican workers brought in as strikebreakers joined the picket line. But the triple combination of the timber barons, the Santa Fe railroad and the state of Louisiana finally broke this strike.

Five union organizers were kidnapped. Four were terribly beaten. The African American F.W. Oliver was shot. By Feb. 19, 1914, all remaining union members in Merryville had been driven out of the town. Strikers were told that they would be killed if they returned.

Although the strike was crushed, the unity of these workers was never broken. This remarkable struggle took place only 30 miles away from Jasper, Texas, where James Byrd Jr. would be dragged to his death in 1998.

However, the IWW at the time would have agreed with Debs that socialism had nothing “special” to offer African Americans. This attitude ideologically disarmed the left.

### **Organizing the stockyards**

Two years before the Chicago race riots there was a terrible massacre in East St. Louis, Ill. In his autobiography, W.E.B. Du Bois estimated that 125 African Americans were killed there in 1917.

“The area became a ‘bloody half mile’ for three or four hours; streetcars were stopped, and Negroes, without regard to age or sex, were pulled off and stoned, clubbed and kicked, and mob leaders calmly shot and killed Negroes who were lying in blood in the street,” according to the Kerner Commission report.



Photo: Chicago History Museum

### **Black workers fold hides at Chicago Union's Stockyards.**

This bloodbath inspired the NAACP's famous "silent march" on July 28, 1917, down Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

The memory of East St. Louis hung over the efforts to organize the 50,000 to 60,000 workers in Chicago's Union Stockyards.

Meatpacking and poultry workers still have some of the highest injury rates of any occupation. A century ago it was worse.

People were horrified by Upton Sinclair's description in his novel "The Jungle" of a worker falling into a boiling vat. People wondered what was really in their sausage. ("*The Jungle*" is irredeemably spoiled by a racist description of Black workers.)

William Z. Foster set out to organize these workers. Foster was a former IWW member who realized that most

workers looked towards the American Federation of Labor. He believed that union activists should struggle within the AFL to make it fight.

The problem with this formulation was that, in 1919, Black workers knew they were unwanted by almost all of the craft unions and railroad brotherhoods, which at that time constituted the majority of organized labor.

Foster organized the Stockyards Labor Council with the backing of Chicago Federation of Labor President John Fitzpatrick. The idea was to get the different craft unions to back an organizing drive. Any jurisdictional problems could be worked out later.

This was meant to be a half-step towards industrial unionism. Even if the workers would later be separated into different craft unions, they would be united at the bargaining table. Any “unskilled” workers not wanted by these craft outfits would be members of a “federal labor union” directly affiliated to the AFL.

Workers responded enthusiastically to this organizing drive. Among those who signed union cards were thousands of African Americans.

Future Black communist leader Harry Haywood’s sister Eppa was a union activist at Swift. It seemed that the color line within the labor movement was about to be broken.

But the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen never joined the Stockyards Labor Council. The *New Majority*, published by the Chicago Federation of Labor, continued to print racist “jokes.”

Even the craft unions that were members of the council refused to drop their whites-only membership policy. African Americans weren’t allowed to join them. Instead they were stuck in the federal labor unions, some of which became all-Black Jim Crow locals.

This was poison to the organizing campaign. Close to one out of four meatpacking workers in Chicago was Black. They were sick of paying union dues for second-class union membership.

Doomed by the race riot, this union drive eventually fizzled out. It would be another 20 years before the workers in the stockyards would be organized, largely by Communist Party members, in a genuine industrial union: the Packing House Workers of the CIO.

### **Labor's failure to confront racist violence**

Swift, Armour and the rest of the packers were the greatest beneficiaries of the Chicago race riot. They got the cops to prevent a union march in early July 1919 that was to go through African American and white neighborhoods. Two separate parades were held instead, with the Black and white marches coming together at a playground.

What did the the left do to stop the attacks on African Americans?

Alongside the red summer of lynchings, there was also a red scare. Hundreds of socialists were still locked up for opposing World War I. The IWW headquarters had been raided and its leaders were jailed.

Some union leaders were outspoken against racism. Among them was John Kilkulski, who published the Polish newspaper *Glose Rabortnica*. He would be assassinated on May 17, 1921. His killers were never found.

What was absolutely necessary was for the Stockyards Labor Council to organize defense squads of Black and white union members. But how could these unions have done so when most of them refused to let African Americans join their organizations in the first place?

Some must have wanted to intervene. The base of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was thousands of workers making suits at the Hart, Schaffner & Marx factories.

Most of these workers were Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire. Some had participated in the Russian revolutionary movement. They were as familiar with anti-Jewish pogroms as African Americans were with lynch mobs.

It was only years later that the labor movement and the left realized the necessity of stopping racist violence. An outstanding example was the campaign led by the Communist Party to save the lives of the Scottsboro defendants.

Another was the Dec. 14, 1974, march against racism in Boston, which was conceived by the communist leader Sam Marcy.

The mob violence in 1919 injected a higher level of race hatred into many white workers in Chicago. A long-reaching effect of this poison was to conservatize large sections. The inevitable result was to eliminate Chicago's leadership in the working-class movement.

Sources: "*The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*"; "*Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973*" by Philip S. Foner; "*History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 6, Postwar Struggles 1918-1920*" by Philip S. Foner; "*Black Bolshevik, Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*" by Harry Haywood; "*Down on the Killing Floor, Black and White workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54*" by Rick Halpern; "*A Few Red Drops, the Chicago Race Riot of 1919*" by Claire Hartfield.

# 4

## Communists fight racism and evictions

**D**espite the race riot and segregated housing, Chicago's Black population more than doubled in the 1920s and reached 233,903 by 1930. Even in 1940, during the Great Depression, the figure climbed to 277,731.

A small Mexican community also grew, despite the massive deportations of the early 1930s. About 5 percent of workers at the Armour and Swift packinghouses were Mexican.



Photo: Encyclopedia of Chicago

**'Don't starve, fight': Thousands of jobless workers demonstrate in Chicago, 1932.**



**Unemployed rally in Chicago's Grant Park during the Great Depression.**

The Chicago Defender became one of the best known African American newspapers and was distributed countrywide. In 1928, the African American Oscar DePriest was elected from Chicago to the House of Representatives. He became the first Black member of Congress since George Henry White of North Carolina was driven out in 1901.

It was in Chicago and the Midwest that Black workers made their greatest impact in the labor movement. African American, Latinx and white communists in Chicago fought for food, jobs and unions in the 1930s.

Black workers are still the last hired and the first fired. By 1931, during the Great Depression, Chicago's white neighborhoods suffered a horrendous 28 percent unemployment rate. But 85 percent of African Americans in a Chicago neighborhood who had jobs the year before were now unemployed.

### **'Don't starve, fight!'**

When the capitalist economic crisis broke out, the Communist Party issued the call, "Don't starve, fight!" Fifty

thousand people marched in Chicago on March 6, 1930, for unemployment relief and free milk for children.

Hundreds of thousands more demonstrated across the country in New York, Detroit, Milwaukee and other cities. It was mass actions like these that won unemployment compensation and ultimately food stamps (now known as SNAP benefits).

Communists were the spark plugs in launching Unemployed Councils across the country. In Chicago's homeless shelters, 1,500 people joined the councils.

Communists in Chicago led 408 demonstrations in 1931 and 566 in 1932. People would march on Chicago's relief stations demanding food and rent money. When an official at the Emerson relief station slapped an African American, Unemployed Council members forced their way past cops to get justice.

In a Chicago winter, evictions can mean death. Between Aug. 11 and Oct. 31, 1931, 38 percent of the cases before the renters' court involved African Americans, even though they were just 6.9 percent of Chicago's population.

The Unemployed Councils fought evictions. The Black communist leader Claude Lightfoot described in his autobiography how thousands of people would gather in Washington Park and go to where the sheriff was kicking a family out of their home. In the lead would often be the fearless communist David Poindexter, who had been a follower of the Honorable Marcus Garvey.

Police retaliated by killing African Americans Abe Gray, John O'Neil and Frank Armstrong on Aug. 3, 1931, during an anti-eviction action. Armstrong's mutilated body was later found in Washington Park. Like Freddie Gray, who was killed by Baltimore police in 2015, Armstrong had been given a "rough ride" by the cops.

Thirty thousand people, half of them white, marched down State Street to protest this atrocity. At least twice that number watched from the sidewalks. “The crowd just took over State Street — there wasn’t a cop in sight,” Harry Haywood later wrote in his autobiography, “Black Bolshevik.”

One African American activist later said that this was the first time they had seen white people cry for any Black person. That’s how barbarous social relations are in the capitalist United States.

Chicago Mayor Cermak was forced to issue a moratorium to halt all evictions. Everyone knew that it was “the reds” that forced him to do it.

### **Organize!**

An early union success was achieved in 1933. Jewish communists helped organize 1,500 Black women employed in the Sopkins sweatshops.

Communists knew that organizing unions goes hand-in-hand with fighting racism. Squads moving furniture back into the homes of people whom the landlord or bank were trying to evict had Black and white members.

Even a white worker saturated with racism could be affected by Black and Latinx people helping to save his or her home. The ruling class knows this too.

The late Les Payne wrote a series of articles in *Newsday* in early 2001 about how African Americans and Latinx people were kept from becoming firefighters in New York City. The wealthy and powerful considered it socially dangerous if Black, Latinx or Asian firefighters saved the life of a white baby in a racist neighborhood like Howard Beach.

In 1919, 58 percent of the attacks on Black people happened near Union Stockyards. Every attempt was made to whip up racism in the “Back of the Yards” neighborhood.

On Aug 2, 1919, arsonists set fire to homes occupied by Lithuanian and Polish families. Almost a thousand people were made homeless. Even though a grand jury decided that it was white racist gangs that committed this crime, the Chicago Tribune blamed Black people.

Now, during the Depression, poor white families in the Back of the Yards were being evicted. Black and Latinx workers were helping them get back into their homes. The basis for organizing packinghouse workers was being built.

During the thirties, the Polish immigrant Bolesław “Bill” Gebert led Chicago’s communists. A fierce anti-racist, he would be deported during the anti-communist witchhunt. The Communist Party published a daily newspaper in Polish, *Głos Ludowy*, that fought racism and anti-Semitism.

The Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee set out to organize the stockyards. Two key organizers were the communists Herb March and Henry “Hank” Johnson.

The bosses used Polish women to segregate some of the departments. With the help of his Polish comrades, Hank Johnson, who was Black, learned a little Polish.

After Johnson gave a short speech in Polish to the women workers, they lined up to sign union cards. That’s what an upsurge of the working class looks like.

Sources: “*Red Chicago, American Communism at its Grassroots 1928-1935*” by Randi Storch; “*Chicago Slums to World Politics, Autobiography of Claude M. Lightfoot*” by Claude M. Lightfoot; “*Down on the Killing Floor, Black and White workers in Chicago’s Packinghouses, 1904-54*” by Rick Halpern; “*Black Bolshevik, Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*” by Harry Haywood; “*Race Riot, Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*” by William M. Tuttle, Jr.; “*A Few Red Drops, the Chicago Race Riot of 1919*” by Claire Hartfield.



**Mayor Richard Daley stands at the microphone during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.**

# 5

## Chicago Mayor Daley's racist machine

In the spring of 1937 the Congress of Industrial Organizations—the mighty CIO—seemed unstoppable. General Motors had caved in after the 44-day occupation of their plants in Flint, Mich., and signed a union contract with the United Auto Workers.

Soon afterwards United States Steel signed a union contract, too. CIO president John L. Lewis, who led the United Mine Workers, talked of organizing 25 million workers. Hundreds of thousands of Black workers joined the CIO. So did Mexican workers in steel mills and copper mines as well as Puerto Rican workers in New York City sweatshops.

The wealthy and powerful counterattacked. During the Little Steel strike, 18 workers were killed by police. Cleveland cops under the city's safety director Elliot Ness killed two strikers.

On May 30, 1937, Chicago's Democratic Mayor Ed Kelly had cops kill ten steelworkers and supporters, most of whom were shot in the back. Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt defended this "Memorial Day massacre." He quoted Shakespeare, saying "a plague on both your houses," meaning that labor was just as responsible for this bloodshed as big business.

Ten weeks before the Chicago atrocity, Roosevelt's colonial governor in Puerto Rico, General Blanton Winship, had his cops kill 19 people in Ponce on March 21. These supporters of the Nationalist Party were marching peacefully. Winship was never prosecuted but Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos was jailed for sedition.

Working and poor people in the United States will never be free while workers in U.S. colonies are in chains.

### **They called it “clout”**

By the 1960's, Chicago had the last big urban political machine. At least 20,000 people holding city and county jobs were expected to “turn out the vote.” The first day of the 1968 Democratic Convention, delegates were greeted by 20,000 patronage employees holding signs reading “We love Mayor Daley.”

The whole world watched Daley's cops beat anti-war protesters during the convention. Chicago had a police “red squad” that was as large as New York City's. It sought to infiltrate and destroy Black organizations and the left.

Machine pickings were so lush that Roman Pucinski quit congress to become a member of the City Council. As an Alderman, Pucinski knew that he would get more graft and control far more jobs than as a mere member of Congress! (This was called “clout.”)

The vast corruption was expensive. All of this loot was really stolen from the working class. The bourgeoisie simply viewed it as a tax on their profits.

After every election, the Chicago Tribune ran a full-page containing pictures of graveyards and abandoned buildings where “ghost voters” had been registered by the Machine. But no Republicans were demanding Voter ID laws.

Yet the ruling class put up with these costly shenanigans and contributed heartily to the machine's election

war chest. This was partly because so much of this plunder came back to them in the form of huge bond issues, inflated construction contracts, tax abatements and the like.

Capitalists also viewed this corruption as a necessary tax. It supported a political machine that suppressed the class struggle in the industrial capital of the United States.

Growing Black and Latinx communities had to be “kept in their place” while white workers had to be continually injected with racist poison.

Housing segregation accomplished both objectives and was immensely profitable to the slumlords and banks to boot. Public housing was built where it could reinforce residential apartheid.

The most notorious example was the Robert Taylor Homes. Stretching more than a mile along State Street — just east of the Dan Ryan Expressway — the Taylor Homes was the largest housing project in the United States. These 28 identical sixteen-story buildings housing 27,000 people became Chicago's Soweto.

The route of the expressway had been shifted west so it would serve as a ghetto wall. Even housing for the elderly was kept out of white areas since some African American seniors might become tenants.

This segregationist policy served to fuel a racist tension in many white neighborhoods. A riot erupted in the all-white Bridgeport section when two Black students moved into an apartment in October 1963. The racial violence broke out just a block-and-a-half from Mayor Daley's bungalow.

### **Working with the mob and fighting Dr. King**

Like every other Black community, Chicago's police served as an occupying army. The cops collaborated with organized crime to pour drugs into African American and Latin neighborhoods.

Mafia boss Sam Giancana was virtually an open partner in the Daley Machine. Giancana was the CIA's accomplice in many of the assassination attempts against the liberator Fidel Castro.

The combination of the Machine, cops and white gangsters practically stifled the second largest Black Community in the country. Daley's dependence upon an avalanche of Black votes to remain in power only intensified this political strangulation.

Ever since the Depression, large majorities of African Americans in the North have voted for the Democratic Party. But in Chicago, one's job was often tied to making sure family members — and even neighbors — voted “the straight Democratic ticket.”

Most of the so-called “patronage jobs” were low-paying. For many Black workers at Cook County Hospital and elsewhere, staying employed meant producing votes. This intimidation even extended to those living in public housing projects.

It was reminiscent of how some plantation owners in Alabama after Reconstruction — but before the right-to-vote was taken away from African Americans — would troop their Black field hands to the polls. In Daley's 1963 reelection campaign, 115,000 of his 139,000-vote winning margin came from wards within the African American Congressman William L. Dawson's district.

Despite being locked into these humiliating conditions, resistance began to sprout in Chicago's Black community. School boycotts were held in 1963 to protest the racist policies of School Superintendent Benjamin Willis. Open housing marches led by Dick Gregory went to Daley's Bridgeport neighborhood.

Dr. Martin Luther King came to the city and formed the Chicago Freedom Movement. Fifty thousand people assembled in Soldier's Field on July 15, 1966. On the hottest day of the year, they cheered King's denunciations of "rat-infested slums" and "inferior, segregated and overcrowded schools."

For a year the Chicago Freedom Movement conducted marches, including one to the racist suburb of Cicero. Racists violently attacked the protesters. Dr. King was struck by a brick. As in 1919, the Chicago police looked on with approval.

Like his 1961-1962 attempt to desegregate Albany, Georgia, which also ran into a stone wall, Martin Luther King was forced to retreat from Chicago. Some think one cause was the loss of tens of thousands of jobs at the stockyards. Meat packing had moved west to Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska where the feed lots were.

By the 1950s, a good majority of the stockyard workers were African American. If there had still been 20,000 or even 10,000 members of the Packing House Workers in the Union Stockyards in 1966 — while a big drop from the 50,000 workers that were once employed there — the Chicago Freedom Movement might have been more successful.

But even with the decline of the stockyards, Daley couldn't keep the lid on the Black liberation struggle.

Sources: "Boss, Richard J. Daley of Chicago" by Mike Royko; "*Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973*" by Philip S. Foner.



Fred Hampton speaks at a Chicago Black Panther Rally in 1969.

# 6

## Never forget Fred Hampton

**B**y 1960, Chicago's Black community reached 813,000 people, nearly a quarter of the city's total population. The Great Migration of African Americans continued until the mid-1970s' capitalist economic crisis.

Northern industry needed Black labor. Tens of thousands of African Americans were employed in factories like U.S. Steel's massive South Works and International Harvester.

The McCormick family fortune started with Cyrus McCormick's harvester works. Old man McCormick supported slavery and during the Civil War gave \$50,000 — worth over \$1 million today — to pro-Confederate “copperhead” terrorists.

On May 3, 1886, Chicago police killed two striking workers at the McCormick works. Some reports say six were killed. The protest rally called the next day led to the frame-up and hanging of the Haymarket Martyrs.

The McCormick family bought the Chicago Tribune, which became the Midwest's biggest newspaper. The Tribune allegedly wrote some of the speeches given by Joseph McCarthy for his anti-communist witch hunt. It was notorious for its racism and attacks on any progressive struggle. One example occurred in 1968.

By that time, 60 percent of the city's bus operators were African American. These drivers paid dues to Local 241 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, yet they weren't allowed to vote in union elections. Only 3,500 retired workers, all of whom were white, were permitted to do so.

This intolerable situation led to the formation of a Black caucus, called the Concerned Transit Workers. Two wildcat strikes were called by the CTW in the summer of 1968 that shut down most bus routes. (The second one began the day before the Democratic Convention opened.)

Local newspapers, like the Tribune, called this struggle for justice "a Black Power plot." An injunction was issued not only against the CTW but also against sympathy strikes by workers on the elevated lines.

By September, the capitalist state — and the firing of 42 drivers — forced the CTW to call off its strike. But this struggle was crucial to eventually ending what a CTW leader called "the old plantation system" in Local 241.

### **Shoot to kill**

Months before these bus strikes, African Americans on Chicago's West Side rebelled after Dr. King's assassination. Mayor Daley's response was to issue his infamous "shoot to kill" order to the police at a news conference.

Daley was so vicious that he repudiated his hand-picked police superintendent, James Conlisk, for not being blood-thirsty enough. Nine Black people were killed by the police.

For many African Americans, the "shoot to kill" order was the breaking point between themselves and the Daley machine. Even Daley felt the necessity to backtrack from his murderous statements. His press secretary then attacked the media for reporting what Daley had said, not what he later said he meant.

Black people knew very well what the pig in City Hall meant. Many responded by boycotting the November 1968 elections. Even though the number of African Americans had increased since 1964, the Black vote declined.

The Black P. Stone Nation helped this movement along and it was a reason that Abdul Malik Ka'bah — then known as Jeff Fort — was years later sentenced to 168 years in jail.

### **The Black Panthers**

Like an awakening giant, Chicago's Black community was resuming its position at the forefront of the African American struggle. The Black Panther Party filled the political vacuum that was created by the CIA-FBI-New York police assassination of Malcolm X.

One of the many reasons that the capitalist state was eager to silence Malcolm X was the escalating U.S. war against Vietnam. In 1965, African American GIs accounted for almost a quarter of U.S. combat deaths in Vietnam.

The Black Panther Party denounced this genocidal war. Hundreds of Vietnam veterans, like Geronimo Ji Jaga, joined the Panthers.

Under the leadership of Fred Hampton, the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party became the largest in the country. This writer remembers attending a Chicago Free Bobby Seale rally in 1969, where six buses of supporters came from Rockford, Ill.

Fred Hampton grew up in Maywood, a Black suburb just west of Chicago. His father worked at International Harvester.

A natural leader, Hampton was quarterback of his high school football team. He became a revolutionary and infused everyone around him with his revolutionary op-

timism. Like Hugo Chávez, Fred Hampton had an electric-like ability to connect with the masses.

The Chicago police busted him for handing out hundreds of ice cream bars to kids. While in jail, Hampton won over the leader of a Puerto Rican gang to revolutionary politics. The group was called the Young Lords.

Millions of children have free school breakfasts today because of the Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children programs. In Chicago, the Black Panther Party also started a People's Medical Care Center. Up to 200 people a week benefited from these programs.

"You can kill the revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution," was Hampton's best known saying. On Dec. 4, 1969—fifty years after the "race riots"—Fred Hampton was murdered in his sleep by the cops. He was only 21 years old. A fellow Panther, Mark Clark, was also killed in the early morning raid at 2337 West Monroe St. conducted by the office of State Attorney Edward Hanrahan.

The police and the capitalist media lied about these assassinations and described them as a furious gun battle between the cops and the Panthers. The Chicago Tribune printed a large picture of a door that they claimed was riddled by bullet holes created by the Panthers' gunfire.

The bullet holes were actually nails. The truth came out because the Panthers were able to conduct tours of the blood-soaked rooms on Monroe Street.

Thousands of people, including this writer, attended Fred Hampton's funeral at the First Baptist Church in Melrose Park, Ill. Among the speakers was Claude Lightfoot of the Communist Party.

William O'Neal was an FBI informant within the Panthers who provided information to the pigs about the Pan-

ther house. Tormented by guilt, he committed suicide in 1990 by running onto the Eisenhower Expressway.

Besides Hampton and Clark, five other Panthers were killed by Chicago police. A quarter of all the Black Panther Party members who were gunned down across the country were members of its Illinois chapter.

The Daley machine and the FBI weren't able to kill the revolution, but assassinating Fred Hampton helped delayed it.

Sources: "*The Hidden Civil War, the Story of the Copperheads*" by Wood Gray, "*Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973*" by Philip S. Foner and "*Boss, Richard J. Daley of Chicago*" by Mike Royko



Harold Washington campaigning with Muhammad Ali.

## The people put Harold Washington in City Hall

**B**y 1970, people of color were already close to half of Chicago's population. The Daley machine — which still had white ward bosses on the overwhelmingly Black West Side — was untenable. So was the apartheid government in South Africa.

In both cases, it took a long struggle to get rid of the regime. The Black masses responded to the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by voting for Bernard Carey — the Republican candidate for states attorney — at the next election. Helping elect Hanrahan's opponent seemed to be the only way to protest this atrocity.

Richard J. Daley was re-elected by wide margins in both 1971 and 1975. Despite these landslides, the ties that bound the Black masses to the Machine continued to disintegrate. Particularly significant was the defection of the African American congressman, Ralph M. Metcalfe.

Metcalfe had won a gold medal under the gaze of Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. He was a member of the winning 400-meter relay team that included Jesse Owens. Incorporated into the Machine, the great athlete was elected alderman in 1955.

When Dr. King came to Chicago in 1966, it wasn't with Metcalfe's backing. Following the death of Congressman William L. Dawson in 1970, Ralph Metcalfe was elected to fill the same First District seat.

By inheriting Dawson's congressional seat, Metcalfe automatically became the most prominent African American leader in the Daley Machine. But this didn't translate to any real power or even influence.

The turning point for Ralph Metcalfe came when a close friend, a well-known African American physician, was dragged out of a car and beaten up by Chicago cops. To the police it was just another case of "driving while Black."

Behind Metcalfe's public break with Daley was the pent-up wrath of the Black community. With the Black Panther Party decimated, this anger found its public expression within the Democratic Party itself. One African American politician after another came out in opposition to the Machine.

The racist circus that broke out after Richard J. Daley died on Dec. 20, 1976, helped along this process. By this time, the City Council's "President Pro Tempore" was usually a Black alderman. (Ralph Metcalfe had been chosen for the largely ceremonial post in 1969.)

This was pure tokenism. Yet it also meant that the African American Wilson Frost, who held this position, was supposed to succeed Daley.

Frost was chased out of City Hall during Christmas week. The racist aldermen couldn't tolerate a Black mayor even for a few months until a special election could be held.

The City Council rushed to select Michael Bilandic—another product of all-white Bridgeport—to be mayor. He was inaugurated on Dec. 28, 1976.

These thieves soon turned on each other. While Bilandic was able to win the special 1977 mayoral primary, he was

defeated in 1979 by Jane Byrne. A string of fiascos are the only things this pair of mayors are remembered for.

### **Fast Eddie, we are ready!**

What finally smashed the Machine was the mass outpouring that elected Harold Washington as Chicago's first Black mayor in 1983. Washington was Ralph Metcalfe's successor as First District congressman.

With Jane Byrne and Richard M. Daley dividing the machine vote in the Democratic primary, Washington won it with 36 percent of the vote. In the general election, Harold Washington beat the Republican Bernard Epton by a 52 percent to 48 percent margin.

These were more than elections. They were mobilizations of both the Black and Latinx masses. Tens of thousands of whites voted for Washington as well.

Communist leader Sam Marcy recognized that this election was a referendum on racism, despite the Democratic Party labels. Workers World newspaper ran three consecutive front pages devoted to this struggle against racism.

Nearly as many people voted in Chicago as would cast ballots 14 years later in New York City. Around 1,290,000 people voted in Chicago's 1983 election compared to the 1,409,347 votes cast in New York's 1997 mayoral contest. This was despite Chicago having only 40 percent of New York City's population.

The capitalist media did everything they could to prevent Washington from being elected. Five days before the election, the Chicago Tribune reported that Washington was being accused of child molestation.

Washington's victory amounted to a limited but definite political revolution. The oppressed had thrown off the Daley machine that had throttled them for decades.

Because of the gerrymandering of aldermanic districts, 29 racists controlled the City Council. Under the leadership of Edward Vrdolyak — a vulgar legal mouthpiece who was later convicted twice on corruption charges — these 29 bigots declared war on Harold Washington. This struggle wasn't restricted to the race baiting antics of "Fast Eddie" Vrdolyak and his followers.

Rudy Lozano was the most dynamic supporter of Washington in mobilization of the Latinx community. An organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Lozano nearly won a seat on the City Council.

Rudy Lozano was assassinated by unknown gunmen in his home on June 8, 1983. Like the murder of Polish-American labor leader John Kikulski sixty-three years before, this crime remains "unsolved" by the cops.

Behind Vrdolyak was Chicago's capitalist class. Big capital let Fast Eddie paralyze the City Council just like they allowed racist mobs to murder African Americans in 1919.

"Fast Eddie, we are ready!" became the rallying cry of the masses. A federal judge was forced to order special City Council elections in 1986. Vrdolyak was licked.

Harold Washington was re-elected mayor in 1987. On Nov. 25th of the same year, he died of a heart attack. His picture hangs in thousands of Chicago homes as a cherished memory.

Source: Roosevelt University, External Studies Program, History 307, Module III, Chapter V, "The Decline of the Democratic Machine, 1976-1983," by Amy Reichler.

## A city of struggle

**T**he sudden death of Harold Washington in 1987 was a godsend to Chicago's power structure. Most of Washington's supporters wanted Alderman Timothy Evans to be made mayor.

Alderman Ed Burke and other racists saw an opportunity to split the Black members of the City Council. Eleven years before, these bigots revolted when the Black President Pro Tempore Wilson Frost proclaimed himself mayor.

Now, in 1987, they threw their support to the African American President Pro Tempore Eugene Sawyer. The masses were outraged at this treachery. At least 5,000 people protested outside City Hall.

Sawyer was elected mayor at 4:01 a.m. on Dec. 2, 1987, by a vote of 29-19. Only five Black aldermen voted for him.

Sawyer was soon gotten rid of. Richard M. Daley beat him in the 1989 primary. The Daley family had become so hated by African Americans that Richard-the-second got just 5 percent of the Black vote.

With millions in campaign funds provided by big business, Daley defeated Timothy Evans in the general election. (Evans ran on the Harold Washington Parry ticket.)

The son of the pig who had Fred Hampton and Mark Clark murdered was re-elected mayor five times. What happened to the hopes of all those who put Harold Washington in City Hall?

### **A long depression for Black workers**

The movement that elected Harold Washington was a concluding act to the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. It served as a springboard to the Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984.

The Daley Machine had to be broken. It was broken, at least temporarily.

In the meantime, Chicago, like most other big cities in the Midwest and Northeast, has shrunk. Chicago's population has fallen from nearly 3.6 million in 1960 to 2.7 million today.

It's still a powerhouse. Chicago's metropolitan region has grown to nearly 10 million people.

In the early 1980s, the Black community suffered the biggest drop in income since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Between 1978 and 1982, the median income of African American families in the Midwest fell by nearly 36 percent.

Deliberate deindustrialization was the culprit. U.S. Steel's South Works in Chicago shut down. So did nearby Wisconsin Steel that was owned by International Harvester. Employment at Stewart Warner fell from 5,000 in the 1970s in Chicago to 20 in the late 1990s.

It wasn't just automation or even capitalist decay that got rid of these jobs. Big capital was determined to get rid of its dependence on Black workers in basic industry.

Back in 1970, a quarter of the workers in U.S. steel mills and auto plants were Black. Many of the new auto plants built since then were in areas with small numbers of African Americans.

Even in 2018, African Americans in the Midwest were poorer than they were 40 years before. Adjusted for inflation, Black family median income there in 2018 was just \$44,790, as compared to \$48,510 in 1978.

White workers suffered too. Hundreds of thousands of white workers were thrown out of factories along with their Black and Latinx sisters and brothers. White family income dropped 7 percent from 1978 to 1982, one-fifth of the decrease for African American families.

While African American median family income in the Midwest was the highest of any region in 1978, by 1982 it was the lowest, even below the South.

A small reverse migration to the South began because that's where the jobs were. Instead of being employed in the big plants, many Black youth were being railroaded to the big prisons.

It was this economic reaction — which scattered, demoralized and incarcerated large numbers of workers — that allowed the Daley family to make a comeback.

### **Welcome fellow workers and fighters**

While the Great Migration of African Americans came to an end, another Great Migration began of Latinx people. Chicago's Latinx community is now 800,000 strong. Two million live in the metropolitan region.

Immigrant bashing is old rotten news. The Honorable Marcus Garvey was an immigrant from Jamaica who was framed and deported.

For decades there's been a Mexican community in Chicago. But in the early 1930s, a massive deportation drive across the U.S. rounded up hundreds of thousands of Mexican people.

Thirty miles from Chicago, the U.S. Steel works in Gary, Ind., fired every Mexican worker who wasn't a U.S. citizen. Mexicans were among those shot in 1937's Memorial Day massacre.

Over the last 40 years, millions of Mexican people have been forced to leave their country by increased poverty. Between 1981 and 1986 alone, vampire-like U.S. and other foreign banks sucked \$63.6 billion in interest payments out of Mexico. That's worth over \$200 billion in today's dollars. In those same years, real wages for Mexican workers were cut almost in half.

Hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers lost their jobs because of the North America Free Trade Agreement. But millions of Mexicans were shoved off their land by heavily subsidized U.S. corn exports that jumped from two million tons in 1992 to over ten million tons in 2008.

Puerto Ricans were driven out of their beautiful homeland by Wall Street's colonial occupation and its Operation Bootstrap. The Lincoln Park neighborhood was a center of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Led by José "Cha Cha" Jiménez, the Young Lords became a revolutionary force for change.

Power broker Robert Moses drove out thousands of Puerto Rican families from Manhattan's Upper West Side to build Lincoln Center. Mayor Richard J. Daley's urban removal program drove Puerto Ricans and other poor people out of Lincoln Park.

More than three million people have left Central American countries to come to the U.S. because of intense poverty and death squads. U.S. corporations, like United Fruit, are responsible for both.

The name “Chicago” is derived from the Indigenous word “checagou.” But Indigenous people were driven out with the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.

Today around 80,000 Indigenous people live in the Chicago area. A key factor was the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, which offered one-way tickets to Indigenous families to move from reservations to what were often urban slums.

Hundreds of thousands of Asian people have also come to the Chicago region.

All of these workers from other lands — and Indigenous people whose land was stolen—are playing an increasing role in the working-class struggle.

An outstanding example is how immigrant workers revived May Day in the city where it was born. In 2006, 300,000 people came out in Chicago to celebrate International Workers’ Day.

### **Fire sales and police torture**

The second edition of Daley family rule was not quite as crude, but it was just as corrupt. Chicago became a leader in privatizing its infrastructure.

The Chicago Skyway, a toll road that links the Indiana toll road to the Dan Ryan expressway, was leased to private investors in 2005 for \$1.83 billion. This was chump change for giving it away. The buyers made a billion-dollar profit when they flipped the Skyway ten years later.

Daley also handed over Chicago’s parking meters. Wheeler-dealers led by Wall Street’s Morgan Stanley investment bank gobbled them up in 2008. Morgan Stanley had earlier grabbed a 99-year-long lease on the city’s parking garages.

The \$1.16 billion that the city got for the meters was a billion dollars too low. Chicago had to give \$20 million back to

the new owners in 2018 because construction had taken a large number of parking meters out of service.

What really rocked the city were revelations about police torture. Between 1972 and 1991, police commander Jon Burge and his “midnight crew” used electric shocks, strangulation and burning to coerce confessions from over 110 Black prisoners. Ten were sent to death row.

In 1982, Richard M. Daley, then Cook County state’s attorney, was told about Burge’s crew torturing Andrew Wilson. Daley refused to investigate.

These outrages helped lead Illinois Gov. George Ryan to commute the sentences of 167 prisoners on death row. Ryan pardoned four condemned prisoners who had been tortured.

The deep state, which is the real state apparatus of police and prisons, paid Ryan back. The former governor was jailed for five years on corruption charges.

Ryan may have been guilty. But why haven’t any members of the Daley family been prosecuted?

### **Fight back**

Daley eventually wore out his welcome with big business by a series of contracting scandals, some of which involved his son Patrick. Former congressperson and investment banker Rahm Emanuel was put into City Hall in 2011.

Emanuel continued the attacks on poor people. He closed 50 schools in 2013.

The Chicago Teachers Union led a fightback against these cuts. In their recent 2019 strike, the CTU demanded smaller class sizes as well as nurses and counselors in every school. Teachers are fighting for the “common good.”

The 25,000 members of the CTU are militant and strong. They’ve gone on strike almost a dozen times in the last 50



Photo: naarpr.org

### Protesters in Chicago demand justice for Laquan McDonald.

years. In 1987, the teachers walked out for 19 days, while a 2012 strike lasted more than a week.

These strikes echo the Chicago teacher's revolt in 1933. Teachers stormed the City National Bank and Trust Co., demanding their back pay. They confronted bank president and former U.S. Vice President Charles Dawes.

The vicious Chicago Police Department continues to kill, brutalize and frame people. Just between 2008 and 2015, they killed 108 people. More than 1,600 people have been shot by cops since 1986.

The 2014 police murder of Laquan McDonald horrified the city. Police Officer Jason Van Dyke shot the 17-year-old Black youth 16 times.

The police brass tried to cover up the murder. Mayor Emanuel suppressed a video of this shooting until after he was re-elected. Community outrage finally compelled

the state to prosecute Van Dyke, who was convicted of second-degree murder.

Leading the struggle against police atrocities is the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. One of its co-chairs is the former prisoner and longtime activist Frank Chapman, author of "*The Damned Don't Cry*." Together with community members, they are demanding a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC).

In the spirit of the Haymarket martyrs and Fred Hampton, the people of Chicago are fighting back.

Sources: "*Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality*" by Bruce Nelson; "*Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973*" by Philip S. Foner