

STUDIES OF ORGANIZED CRIME

Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia'

A Social and Political
History

Sean Patrick Griffin

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PHILADELPHIA'S 'BLACK MAFIA'
A Social and Political History

STUDIES OF ORGANISED CRIME

Volume 2

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PHILADELPHIA'S 'BLACK MAFIA'

A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY

BY

SEAN PATRICK GRIFFIN

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My wife, Deborah, has sacrificed a great deal while I've been consumed by the demands placed on aspiring, junior scholars. Among numerous other things, she has put her career aside, orchestrated three significant moves (each one farther away from her friends and family than the last), and has managed each and every aspect of our lives for the past several years. Most of all, she has forfeited *any* sense of normalcy for the benefit of my productivity and, more importantly, to ensure our children are cared for and raised properly.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the sociologist, history can place social behavior within the frame of time. The longitudinal view offered by the observation and documentation of phenomena through time can provide for a more complete analysis and understanding of the emergence, scope, and persistence or change of given social organization and behavior, and as such, history becomes the very framework of detached inquiry.¹

James A. Inciardi et al. (1977)

Following an intensive investigation by the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and other agencies, Frank Matthews was arrested in Las Vegas on January 5, 1973.² In subsequent weeks, he was indicted for several offenses including federal income-tax evasion and conspiracies to distribute heroin and cocaine. If convicted, Matthews likely faced more than 50 years in prison. Despite the pleas of several high-ranking authorities, federal court Judge Anthony J. Travia reduced Matthews' bail to \$325,000, which had previously been reduced from \$5 million to \$2.5 million, on April 9th. That same day, 29-year-old Matthews posted bail, \$100,000 in cash, and was released from jail. He did not appear in Brooklyn federal court as ordered on July 2, 1973, and thus on January 25, 1974, the DEA announced a reward of \$20,000 for information relating to his whereabouts, then one of the two highest rewards ever offered.³ Matthews has not been seen since, and various reports state that he had stashed between \$15 million and \$20 million overseas, possibly in Algeria.

Matthews, a well-known African-American drug dealer, was one of the nation's largest narcotics dealers in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was not uncommon for him to handle multi-million dollar shipments of heroin, as evidenced by two noteworthy deals in 1971 and 1972, respectively. In 1971, Matthews successfully imported

1 James A. Inciardi, Alan A. Block and Lyle A. Hallowell, *Historical Approaches to Crime: Research Strategies and Issues* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977), p. 9.

2 Donald Goddard, *Easy Money* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978). The most concise, substantive discussion regarding the Matthews organization is found in *United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Barbara Hinton, William Beckwith, Charles William Cameron, James W. Carter, John Darby, Thelma Darby, David Bates and Scarvey McCargo, Defendants- Appellants*, Nos. 1018, 1019, 1023, 1062-1065, 1390 – September Term, 1975. Nos. 75-1402, 75-1418, 75-1441 – 75-1445, 76-1024, United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 543 F.2d 1002; 1976 U.S. App. LEXIS 6904, September 27, 1976. Barbara Hinton was Matthews' common-law wife.

3 Ibid. According to Goddard, p. 362, only John Dillinger in 1931 "had such a high price on his head."

approximately 400 kilos, earning him \$4 million. The following year, Matthews had a 175 kilo-shipment intercepted by the BNDD. At the time, it was the largest shipment ever seized by federal authorities.⁴ Authorities considered him a major dealer in twenty-one states, who had quality overseas contacts for heroin and cocaine. Matthews had contacts with Cuban wholesalers who controlled vast portions of the South American cocaine trade to the United States. His primary contact, starting in 1967, was Rolando Gonzalez who operated out of Caracas, Venezuela, and who was “then the largest Cuban dealer in New York.”⁵ “Spanish Raymond” Marquez, with whom Matthews shared an interest in policy⁶ (gambling), had introduced Matthews to Gonzalez. The Matthews heroin networks also originated with Cubans. He was perhaps best known for hosting a meeting of some of the most prominent African-American and Hispanic narcotics dealers and importers. The meeting took place in Atlanta during the second week of October in 1971. The primary purpose of the meeting was to devise ways to circumvent whatever impediments existed to the direct importation of cocaine and heroin, namely the Italian-American groups along the Eastern seaboard. Interested parties came from such locations as New York, Philadelphia, Chester (PA), Rhode Island, Baltimore, Chicago and Baton Rouge.

Frank Matthews lived the life of a millionaire, renting several lavish apartments and owning a fleet of luxury cars and a mansion (which he had custom-built) in Staten Island’s exclusive Todt Hill section that cost him \$200,000. His neighbors included the borough president, Robert Connor, assemblyman Lucio Russo, and prominent gangster Paul Castellano of New York City’s Gambino “family”. Needless to say, Frank Matthews became a legend in organized crime circles, on the “street” among other gangsters and within the law enforcement community. Federal officials called his organization the largest in the country selling predominantly to African-Americans.⁷ The street status earned by Matthews was evidenced not only by his domination of certain markets, but also by his growing confidence in holding his own with competitors. During one particular confrontation with predominant Italian-American gangsters, Matthews was quoted as warning them, “touch one of my men and we’ll drive down to Mulberry Street ... and shoot every wop we see.”⁸

4 Ibid., pp. 124-125.

5 Ibid., pp. 107-108.

6 According to Robert M. Lombardo, “The Black Mafia: African-American organized crime in Chicago, 1890-1960,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 38, no. 1 (2002), p 46:

Policy is the name given a lottery gambling system that was once common in black communities. Players, who wager a small sum of money, select combinations of three numbers. A drum or ‘wheel’ is used in which seventy-eight capsules containing numbers from one to seventy-eight are whirled about rapidly. A blindfolded person selects twelve numbers at each of the drawings, which are held as many as three times a day.

7 Max H. Siegel, “8 Convicted as Members of a Drug Ring for Blacks,” *The New York Times*, October 9, 1975.

8 Hank Messick, *Of Grass and Snow: The Secret Criminal Elite* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979, p. 27) quoted in Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime* second edition (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985).

At least one group of competitors was apparently not impressed with Matthews' bravado, however.

Frank Matthews' primary distributor in Philadelphia was "Fat" Tyrone Palmer, like Matthews a young millionaire. On April 2, 1972, leaders of a relatively unknown organized crime syndicate in Philadelphia, the "Black Mafia", assassinated Palmer. Matthews believed the Tyrone Palmer killing was a Black Mafia message to him. One of Matthews' lieutenants, Charles W. "Swayzie" Cameron, said Philadelphia's Black Mafia felt they were: "invincible ... they killed and killed and killed until people paid off. They kept killing and scared the other people ... After a while, 'Hey, let's pay off. Give them 10 percent'."⁹ The Black Mafia eventually murdered three of Matthews' Philadelphia intermediaries as the group asserted itself in the lucrative heroin and cocaine trades. As Cameron noted, at that time in the early to mid-1970s the Black Mafia "controlled all the drug traffic in Philadelphia."¹⁰ The group was also engaged in a variety of other illicit activities, and would soon gain notoriety for their numerous criminal conspiracies and also infamy for their violent actions spanning more than two decades.

Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia': A Social and Political History provides the first historical and sociological analyses of the group. The Black Mafia has organized crime (with varying degrees of success) in predominantly African-American sections of the city dating back to the late 1960s. Using primary source documents, including confidential law enforcement files, court transcripts and interviews, the group's activities are explored in detail, with explicit depictions of some of the most notorious crimes in Philadelphia's history provided. Furthermore, some of the group's alliances, conspiracies and conflicts with Philadelphia's predominant Italian-American crime "family" spanning 30 years are explored. The organization of the Black Mafia is also examined, complete with descriptions and commentary on the group's structure, rules, meetings and membership oath. The activities of the Black Mafia, of course, were part of a larger social structure that included politicians, lawyers, financiers, media personalities and actors in the criminal justice system. The book comprehensively analyzes the multi-dimensional sets of relationships that are fundamental to the understanding of both Philadelphia's Black Mafia in particular, and to the understanding of organized crime in general. *Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia'* is thus a first step in developing both data and sophisticated theoretical propositions germane to the ongoing study of organized crime.

Few books in this area have utilized primary source documents such as those employed in this book. There are also relatively few historical studies of organized

9 Goddard, p. 168.

10 Ibid. Cameron became a target himself, though not at the hands of Philadelphia's Black Mafia. In early February 1975, he was "kidnapped by Black Muslims, apparently for reasons having to do with his narcotics activities. The story of his three days in captivity is a sordid tale of brutality and deprivation ... Suffice to say that he was released ... after the payment of ransom and arrived in somewhat battered condition at a relative's home in Brooklyn shortly thereafter." *U.S. v. Hinton et al.*, p. 16.

crime, and still fewer that go beyond the stereotypical “analyses” of Italian-American organized crime. *Black Mafia* examines a grossly under-researched topic, and directly challenges many of the current historical and theoretical assumptions regarding “organized crime”. A brief comment on the writing style; I have tried to “straddle the fence” with respect to audience. That is, while the book is first and foremost a scholarly pursuit, where possible I have tried to make the study readable and lively for non-academicians. Certainly, another writing approach to this topic based on these data would make for a sensational read. Alas, that is not the road taken here, though I hope the technical prose of academic writing has not bled *all* of the fascinating parts from the historical record.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The methodology employed in this research project, including the types of data and how they were obtained, is explained in Chapter 2. The chapter also explicitly defines several terms used in this study. The book is split into two time periods, Parts I and II, 1968-1974 and 1975-2002, respectively. The seven years beginning with 1968 saw the group form, grow and commandeer vast segments of illicit markets. This time frame represented the group’s apex, and also marked one of the most complex socio-political periods in the city’s history. The combination of group significance and multi-dimensional political atmosphere dictates this era receives the majority of analysis. Subsequent years have witnessed a waning of organized crime in Philadelphia, and this includes Black Mafia activities. The social and political tumult of the 1960s and 1970s faded as well. Therefore, the analysis of this time frame (1975-2002) is not as substantive as presented in Part I, just as the group’s activities were not as significant during this era.

The social history of Philadelphia’s “Black Mafia” is divided into four time periods, based on significant events. Chapter 3 includes events from 1968-1972, while Chapter 4 concentrates on activities that occurred during 1973 and 1974. Chapter 4 also discusses the organization of the “Black Mafia” from 1968-1974, complete with descriptions and commentary on the group’s structure, rules, meetings and membership oath. The “Black Mafia” was part of a larger social structure, particularly in the period marking 1968-1974, which included civil rights leaders, politicians, lawyers, financiers, media personalities and actors in the criminal justice system. Chapter 5 thus analyzes the complex sets of relationships that are fundamental to the understanding of both Philadelphia’s “Black Mafia”, and to the understanding of organized crime in the United States. Chapter 6 examines the Black Mafia’s exploitation of the social phenomena discussed in the previous chapter, particularly regarding matters of race. Activities that occurred from 1975-1984 and 1985-2002 are presented in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively. The historical perspectives presented throughout Chapters 3 to 8 offer insights into group activities as well as those involving noteworthy Black Mafia affiliates. In order to keep the manuscript manageable, limits had to be drawn, of course. Operationally, this meant excluding all Black Mafia affiliates beyond those ten to twenty leaders who designed the criminal conspiracies over the years.

Part III, “Criminology and the History of African-American Organized Crime”, synthesizes the history of the Black Mafia with larger theoretical matters, starting with Chapter 9. Chapter 9 examines academic perspectives of African-American organized crime, including current interpretations of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia. The conclusion of the book is presented in Chapter 10. This includes a synopsis of the major points in this study and suggestions for future research. Lastly, the Epilogue speaks to broader concerns in the sociological study of phenomena such as African-American and other ethnic organized crime, and concludes with a brief discussion of how research in this area can better address the phenomenon of organized crime.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DATA

In a subject plagued by unreliable works based on unsubstantiated sources, one must go as often as possible to the actual record ... primary source documents.¹

Alan Block (1983)

Law Enforcement Intelligence Documents

The majority of the research data utilized in this study is derived from confidential law enforcement files. The agencies that created the law enforcement documents are the Philadelphia (PPD), Camden, New Jersey (CPD), New York (NYPD) and Metropolitan (Washington, D.C. – MPD) Police Departments, and the regional offices of federal law enforcement agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and its predecessor, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD). The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section (Criminal Division) also compiled several helpful documents, including minutes of its Strike Force meetings, as did the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE).² Additional sources of information include the press releases of these agencies, although it was rarely the case that a press release contained information distinct from the intelligence files themselves. On occasion, the agencies, either independently or in conjunction with other law enforcement agency assistance, would compile internal histories and synopses of the group being investigated, and these are analyzed as well. Some of the most insightful research involved the memoranda within and between agencies. The informal nature of the memoranda provided the most concrete picture of what an agency understood its

1 Alan A. Block, *East Side-West Side: Organizing Crime in New York, 1930-1950* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1983), p. 12.

2 The Philadelphia Office of the Justice Department's Special Strike Force consisted of representatives from the following agencies: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Drug Enforcement Administration, New Jersey State Police – Intelligence Division, Camden, New Jersey Police Department – Intelligence Division, Philadelphia Police Department – Intelligence and Organized Crime Units. The Strike Force apparently relied heavily upon reports from ODALE. Thus, on a few occasions I have cited the Strike Force, even though the analysis may have been conducted by ODALE.

investigative role to be, and more importantly how a case should be developed. The memoranda serve as a guide to the resolution of investigative questions. As historian and criminologist Alan Block (1991) has found in similar studies, this rich collection of files includes, among other information, data on the significant matters of “ethnicity, residential mobility, the organization of criminal activities, and most especially the relationship between organized crime and other sectors of U.S. society.”³ For a select few cases, court transcripts have been located and utilized. The “Black Mafia” was most heavily pursued by the Philadelphia Police Department’s Organized Crime Unit (OCU). Thus, while each of the aforementioned agency’s documents are employed, the project is grounded on OCU files.

The OCU began a file on the “Black Mafia” in April of 1972. The lag was partly attributable to the structure, and thus the information-transmission process, of the Department at that time. The Department’s Intelligence Unit received all city-wide intelligence and then would dispense parts to the appropriate units. Thus, if several seemingly individual acts of extortion in different sections of the city were reported independently, there was a chance that different detective divisions would have been notified even if they were indeed related. Similarly, if there was a group which dealt primarily in narcotics, the information would be earmarked for the Narcotics Unit. There was a possibility that other independent “non-narcotic” criminal information would not be associated with the narcotics data, thus leaving gaps in the perceived complexity of the organization. Only if the Narcotics Unit independently found evidence of other criminal activities would the information be re-routed to OCU. This was often the case in the preliminary stages of the “Black Mafia” investigations. Any in-depth look into law enforcement documents is likely to reveal a series of gaps in the transfer and proliferation of files. This is so when discussing both intra-agency and inter-agency communications and investigations. In the case of the “Black Mafia”, this dilemma is perhaps even more pervasive since the group’s activities were not only varied (i.e. homicide, extortion, gambling, prostitution, narcotics trafficking, and thus “pieces” of intelligence and cases were frequently doled out to the appropriate unit within the relevant agency), but were spread out over several sections of Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. Thus, until the Department’s Organized Crime Unit had the opportunity to compile a comprehensive intelligence file on the group’s *overall* activities, the individual criminal investigations were divided among the various homicide, intelligence, detective, vice and narcotics units. Additionally, the “street” cops were not fully aware of the significance of many of the people they arrested or investigated. It is also clear that even after OCU began maintaining a comprehensive file, there were still relevant items that were maintained by independent units within the Department which did not find their way to OCU. Once files became the property of OCU, however, there was a series of information maintenance safeguards including the use of standardized forms. To further complicate the centralization of intelligence,

3 Alan A. Block, *The Business of Crime* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), pp. 20-21.

several federal agencies were also extensively involved in the ongoing investigations, as were other municipal police departments and state police organizations. As the OCU file was created, numerous files which were already developed, or in the process of being developed, in different investigative units in the Department were incorporated into the OCU “Black Mafia” file.

The Philadelphia Police Department has no formal definition of organized crime, nor does it maintain a protocol for which cases fall under the domain of OCI (the Organized Crime and Intelligence Units merged in 1982 to create OCI – Organized Crime-Intelligence). However, in the case of Philadelphia’s “Black Mafia,” the criteria being used at the time, no matter how arbitrary, easily placed the calculated acts of extortion and violence in the category of organized criminality. As the group became increasingly involved in both the extortion of narcotics dealers, and the trade itself, and its power and influence grew, whatever concerns the Department had over which unit should handle the investigation were put to rest. This is not to suggest that the Department’s Narcotics Unit did not play a pivotal role in providing intelligence to OCU, but that it was clearly not the lead investigative body.

Because the investigations were based within the Philadelphia Police Department circa 1970, a few comments are necessary relating to the use of intelligence files. Relations between minorities and the police were complex and often discordant. Part of the acrimony originated with the department’s Civil Defense (CD) Squad, created in 1964. The unit was designed to “muzzle a growing number of public demonstrations without confrontation” but quickly expanded its mission.⁴ The CD Squad gained a reputation for developing informants, and their mandate was primarily to infiltrate so-called radical groups.

According to Sal Paolantonio (1993), the CD Squad was the model for the FBI’s notorious counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO).⁵ I should thus note I am aware of the numerous FBI-led, COINTELPRO efforts to discredit and subvert “Black Nationalist” and other civil rights groups during the crucial “Black Mafia” investigation time period beginning in the late 1960s.⁶ Two key points need to be made. First and foremost, Philadelphia’s “Black Mafia” organized crime in an overt fashion. It was not, in any fair sense of the terminology, a group whose concerns rested with the broader enhancement of the African-American community. Victims, targets, witnesses, social commentators, politicians, religious officials and others were well aware of the group and its activities. Importantly, almost all of all of these persons were African-American. Thus, while not unreasonable, the concerns of government conspiracy in the case of the Black Mafia have proven unfounded. Secondly, this study is grounded on Philadelphia Police Department Intelligence files.

4 S.A. Paolantonio, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993), p. 95.

5 Ibid.

6 See, for example, Kenneth O’Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI’s Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).

The significance of these events as they related to the “Black Mafia” is detailed in Chapters 5 and 6. Regarding the validity of the PPD intelligence data used in this study, it is not at all clear the data were compromised – once investigations were initiated – as some might suspect. Importantly, it was possible to compare and contrast the PPD’s data with those of other agencies and their sources. Furthermore, numerous other sources have been utilized in this book, including interviews (by the author and others) of several African-American-community residents, activists and police officers. I have also interviewed a journalist who was actively investigating police corruption in the Philadelphia/South New Jersey area in the late 1960s and early 1970s (more on interviewing is discussed below).

Newspaper Sources

Serving to augment the voluminous intelligence files are the newspaper accounts of the “Black Mafia” and related events, political actors, etc. Over the course of approximately fifteen years, marking the time frame encompassing the majority of the “Black Mafia’s” activities, several beat reporters were assigned to cover the group. No reporter played a more vital and significant role than James Nicholson, then with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. His contributions are discussed below. To date, over 600 news articles have been written which explicitly deal with Philadelphia’s “Black Mafia” in the city’s two primary newspapers, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Philadelphia Daily News*.⁷ Each has been analyzed for content and tested for accuracy by checking arrest records, interrogations, debriefing reports, intelligence summaries, court transcripts, surveillance notes, etc. As Bruce DiChristina (1997) noted in a recent critique of methodological approaches to criminal justice-related phenomena:

To understand crime and criminal justice processes, it is important to delve into the values, beliefs and norms of the people who make the laws, who enforce the laws, and who are labeled criminals, and to investigate the historical contexts of phenomena related to criminal justice. Such inquiries often require qualitative field research and historical-hermeneutic inquiries into the meanings of documented communications.⁸

I have also reviewed other sources, such as Pennsylvania Crime Commission reports (critiqued below) and the New Jersey State Commission of Investigation’s

7 The total number of articles published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (1980–present) and *Philadelphia Daily News* (1978–present) which mention the “Black Mafia” exceeds 1,100. The index used for this study only provided for searches of *Philadelphia Daily News* dating back to 1978, and of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* dating back to 1980. Thus, the numerous articles written during the course of the group’s extensive criminal activity of the early 1970s are not included in the cited figures. Additionally, a third newspaper, *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, closed since 1984, has not been utilized. The total number, then, of articles on this topic is no doubt higher. The number of reviewed articles for this book, including those which detail related political networks, important “players” in both upperworlds and underworlds, domestic and international narcotics networks and the like, is over 1,500.

8 Bruce DiChristina, “The Quantitative Emphasis in Criminal Justice Education,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* vol. 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997), p. 189.

1991 Report, “Afro-Lineal Organized Crime,” although they are not very illuminating.⁹

Interview Data

In addition to the written accounts that form the basis of this work, I have conducted in excess of 110 interviews.¹⁰ The topics of the interviews varied, of course, depending upon what information the source offered, the validity of the information, and other important matters such as the location of documents and other sources of data. Subjects included eighteen law enforcement officials at the local, state and federal levels, including several who were involved in the initial investigations into the “Black Mafia” in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The officials interviewed ranged from uniformed ‘street’ officers, undercover narcotics unit officers, police detectives and supervisors to investigators from district attorney’s offices and federal agencies. I have also interviewed several investigative journalists who chronicled the activities of the group in “real time”. Lastly, and significantly, interviews have been conducted, by the author and by others cited in this study, of African-American-community residents and activists. (Note: the referenced sources have been given aliases, largely because of security concerns for the interview subjects.)

Importantly, I have only incorporated a few interviews formally into the book. The information gleaned from them has been utilized in other fashions. In many instances, interviewees directed me to documents, files and other primary source data, and I have cited the document(s) in favor of the interview. This permits researchers to conduct future analyses and to critique the current study, regardless of their access to interview subjects in the community or within certain relevant agencies.¹¹ Annelise Graebner Anderson (1979) addressed this issue in her study of an organized crime group in the 1970s:

Federal agencies have been collecting data more or less systematically over a long period of time, and similar kinds of information are collected by state and sometimes local agencies by

9 State of New Jersey Commission of Investigation (NJCI), *Afro-Lineal Organized Crime* (Trenton, NJ: NJCI, 1991). Pennsylvania Crime Commission (PCC) reports reviewed for this study include the following; *A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1980 Report; Annual Report (1988); Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1990 Report; Annual Report (1991)*. Conshohocken, PA: PCC.

10 Though interviews are not extensively utilized in the study, I should note attention was paid to “traditional” methodological field interviewing concerns. See William Foote Whyte, “Interviewing in Field Research,” in Richard N. Adams and Jack J. Preiss (eds.), *Human Organization Research* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1960), pp. 352-374.

This was particularly true regarding the motivations of interview subjects. The multi-method approach, cross-referencing interview data with information gleaned in other manners, including document research, helped reduce these potential problems.

11 When prudent, I have also cited news media coverage to further assist readers searching for information who may not have access to such data sources as LEXIS-NEXIS.

what are often called organized crime intelligence units. A study based on data of investigative agencies can thus be replicated at another time or another locale.¹²

METHODOLOGY

An investigator can obtain a great deal of information by analyzing written documents, mass media reports, or data kept by institutions for administrative or governmental purposes. Document analysis ... is often the only way to collect data about past events.¹³ Jack D. Fitzgerald and Steven M. Cox (1994)

The current study's methodology has been modeled upon Humbert S. Nelli's classic work *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States*.¹⁴ The primary source documents are qualitative in nature. All interviews were transcribed and placed into an extensive chronology of events. This chronology was then meshed with existing intelligence data into a timeline for "Black Mafia" activities, including the actions of individual members and associates as well as the group itself. Activities, both criminal and otherwise, were cross-referenced between and among the various sources for the purposes of checking validity and reliability. The newspaper accounts have also been analyzed for both validity and reliability. Sociologists John Galliher and James Cain (1974) have stated there are two troublesome aspects to the reliance on journalist sources, "one empirical, the other political. In arriving at conclusions and statements of fact, the journalist or political investigator is not bound by the canons of scientific investigation as is the social scientist."¹⁵

Law enforcement agencies recorded the identity of reporters who had access to particular files. The agencies also maintained extensive notes on the intelligence being collected by these reporters. As Nelli has noted, "Effective crime reporters ... are among the most knowledgeable syndicate crime experts, for they have contacts on both sides of the law and as clear an understanding of events and procedures in the underworld as any contemporaries."¹⁶ Thus, it is reasonable to place a higher value on the works of reporters such as James Nicholson of *The Philadelphia*

12 Annelise Graebner Anderson, *The Business of Organized Crime: A Cosa Nostra Family* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), p. 6.

13 Jack D. Fitzgerald and Steven M. Cox, *Research Methods in Criminal Justice: An Introduction* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1994), p. 103.

14 Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). Nelli's study exemplified "how a judicious search for reliable material can produce a first-rate history of even the most sensational American syndicate criminals." James A. Inciardi, Alan A. Block and Lyle A. Hollowell, *Historical Approaches to Crime: Research Strategies and Issues* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977), p. 178. Two other noteworthy studies of organized crime are also grounded on intelligence and other documents, though these also incorporate interviews of relevant parties. I have thus also consulted Anderson's *The Business of Crime* and Alan A. Block's *Master of Paradise: Organized Crime and the Internal Revenue Service in the Bahamas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991).

15 John F. Galliher and James A. Cain, "Citation Support for the Mafia Myth in Criminology Textbooks," *American Sociologist*, vol. 9 (May 1974), pp. 68-74.

16 Nelli, p. 305

Inquirer, and Tyree Johnson and Kitty Caparella, both of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, based on what is known about the sources and credibility of their information from agency files.¹⁷

A thorough review and analysis of the Philadelphia Police Department Organized Crime Intelligence Unit's "Black Mafia" files does more than tell a tale of African-American gangsters, their activities and the difficulties law enforcement had in building cases against them. It also illustrates the extent to which "beat" reporters can play significant parts in difficult investigations. In the immediate case, reporter Jim Nicholson of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* managed an extremely important, complex and indeed dangerous role. According to OCU files, Nicholson was formally informed of the dangerous ground on which he was treading by the OCU on July 18, 1973, after the Unit reviewed a preliminary excerpt of an explosive article on the "Black Mafia" that would eventually appear on August 12, 1973. While the various agencies had complete intelligence in some instances (because of surveillances, interrogations of offenders and inter-/intra-agency correspondence), Nicholson often gathered information unavailable to authorities. In his exchange of information with the police, Nicholson provided leads to investigators about both previously committed crimes and those still in the planning stages.

Nicholson, a native Philadelphian, had been a speechwriter, a private investigator, and a reporter for all of the city's main newspapers (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News* and *The Philadelphia Bulletin*), and for the *Wilmington News-Journal*, *Camden Courier-Post* and WCAU radio in Philadelphia. He had also served in the Marine Corps Reserve and military intelligence in the Army Reserve.¹⁸ Nicholson's access to the Department's intelligence files and to verifiable street sources enabled his work to be both path breaking and reliable. His work was so well respected that the contents of his most comprehensive article, "Philadelphia's

17 Because these reporters used their contacts within and without law enforcement agencies, they often developed a fuller picture of the events than if they had merely relied upon intelligence documents. Nevertheless, the possibility of "blowback" can't be ruled out entirely. R. Thomas Naylor, "Mafias, Myths, and Markets: On the Theory and Practice of Enterprise Crime," *Transnational Organized Crime* vol. 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 1-2, detailed the risks inherent in the study of organized crime based on these data:

Faulty information, which an informant may genuinely believe, might be accepted in good faith by the police. It is then taken up by the media which simplifies and exaggerates to feed the public's insatiable appetite for crime stories. That misleading intelligence, sometimes 'confirmed' by criminologists, cannot only re-enter and shape the criminal culture itself, but also influences police efforts in ways that reinforce the original misinformation. This danger is all the greater the more limited are resources, and therefore the more selective enforcement must be. If the justice system believes a particular type of crime or criminal is an especially major threat, there will be more investigations, and likely more cases dealing with that particular type of crime or criminal. The numbers then serve to verify the original hypothesis.

18 "'Richly Detailed' Obits Win Prize," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 2, 1987, Local, p.6. Nicholson retired from the Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel in Feb. 2002 after a lengthy career in military intelligence. He retired from the Daily News May 30, 2001. Nicholson is currently a contractor and working as a senior analyst on a Department of Defense counterterrorism task force in Washington, D.C. Personal communications with Jim Nicholson, October 17, 2002 and November 17, 2002.

Black Mafia,” published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer’s* TODAY pullout section on August 12, 1973, were quickly established as standard discussion points in the files of several law enforcement agencies. Beyond Nicholson’s professional reputation, this can also be attributed to his sources which included interviews and records in four states. Among those he interviewed were police, former policemen and city, state and federal officials, social workers, former junkies, ministers, attorneys, prison inmates and assorted “street” people. Importantly, many of his interview subjects were African-Americans. Nicholson first became aware of the “Black Mafia” while conducting research for an expose on heroin use and trafficking in Philadelphia in late 1969/early 1970. Law enforcement agencies were later able to verify his findings, and the origins of the organization, through various street sources and government informants.

In addition to the timeline and chronology of events, a profile has been created for each of the “Black Mafia’s” primary figures. Each profile contains the member’s date of birth, social security number and Philadelphia Police Department Photo Number (PPN), thus ensuring the accuracy of the person’s identity. Additional data included in most of the profiles are the arrest record, family information, associates (criminal and otherwise), current and previous residence addresses, current and previous work addresses (including jobs held) and co-defendants in criminal cases. Thus, for each individual member, there is the potential for nine distinct pieces of information to be present in their profile – three for the purpose of identification, and six for the purpose of developing a comprehensive account of the locations and activities of the member.

As for selecting the “primary ‘Black Mafia’ figures” out of the hundreds of members (in addition to the many associates) identified by authorities, it was possible to deduce from the group’s own notes (which were confiscated by law enforcement authorities) the position and power of each member. And, with the ability to reflect back on noteworthy events, complete with street source accounts, court testimony, etc., I could confirm or refute the stated positions of power found in the group’s notes. The position of “chairman” of the group, for example, did not in and of itself dictate the creation of a profile. Similarly, a member’s participation in a notorious or heinous crime was, on its own, not enough to generate a profile. It was the confluence of stated positions of power in combination with known large-scale criminal activities and connections that formed the basis for a “member profile”. As Fitzgerald and Cox have noted, one of the many benefits of such “nonreactive” data collection methods is that they “remove biases introduced by the research process itself by eliminating the subjects’ knowledge that they are being studied.”¹⁹ Because I had relatively unfettered access to the intelligence files, this project is not a vehicle for any particular agency or administration, so-called “state-sanctioned criminology.”²⁰

19 Fitzgerald and Cox, p. 103.

20 See James D. Calder, “Al Capone and the Internal Revenue Service: State-sanctioned Criminology of Organized Crime,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1-23, in which Calder

Kenneth Bailey (1987) notes one of the disadvantages of historical, document-based research is that such materials survive selectively. That is, “they are written on paper that corrodes and they take up space in files that may need to be cleaned out.” Bailey also identifies the potential problems regarding information that was never recorded and sampling bias, “which occurs when not all of the potential respondents in a sample are included in the study.”²¹ I was able to ameliorate these possible shortcomings, and avoided one of the concerns Fitzgerald and Cox noted about document-based research – the misinterpretation of material unfamiliar to the researcher.²² Because the study is still contemporary in nature, it was possible to verify or discount the numerous leads and speculations found in the documents, and also to account for possible voids in the data, either through further document research and/or through the interviewing of appropriate sources.

TERMINOLOGY

The use of the term or name “Black Mafia” refers explicitly to those individuals who made up a finite, self-named group of criminals who conducted various illicit businesses in Philadelphia’s African-American communities from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s. Moreover, the term in no way suggests there was a monolithic African-American organized crime group in Philadelphia, or in the United States. An important decision involved the use of the terms “member” and “associate” with respect to group affiliation. All of the intelligence files used in this study characterized group affiliation by one of these two terms. Rather than defining these terms operationally, and thus creating a standard which might run counter to the intelligence information used in the study, I have chosen to use precisely the same terms as found in the files. There was a high degree of consistency when the files were cross-referenced between agencies. This may have been the result of each agency’s involvement in the Strike Force assigned to the Black Mafia. Since the current study deals almost exclusively with the overall structure and significance of the group, and discusses only the activities of its most notorious members, this methodological decision is only important in one instance – the total figures of group affiliates. Individuals who were considered associates by one agency and members by another (at the same period in time) were placed into the associate category for the purposes of the study to provide the most conservative number of Black Mafia members. However, this was the case on only a few occasions.

argues that what we know about gangsters, like Capone, is what the government permits us to know. He further demonstrates how the media and academicians have been used to promote political agendas through the selective dissemination of documents.

21 Jeffrey Scott McIllwain, “From Tong War to Organized Crime: Revising the Historical Perception of Violence in Chinatown,” *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 1997), p. 32. McIllwain is paraphrasing Kenneth D. Bailey, *Methods of Social Research* (New York: Free Press, 1987), pp. 269-271.

22 Fitzgerald and Cox, p. 106.

PART I: SOCIAL HISTORY 1968-1974

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CHAPTER 3

1968–1972: THE ORIGINS OF THE BLACK MAFIA

GROUP ORIGIN

The Black Mafia was “founded” by Samuel “Sam” Christian in September 1968.¹ Christian, a former Black Panther with an extensive arrest record who stood 5’10” tall, was described by one reporter as a “thick-necked, 215-pound bully”.² Christian, Ronald Harvey, Richard “Pork Chops” James, Donald “Donnie” Day and several others spent the previous several years holding up crap games and extorting drug dealers, numbers men, as well as illegitimate businessmen. According to Lt. Charles Bush, then in the Philadelphia Police Department’s Intelligence Unit, “They would intimidate persons who would not report them to police.”³ This was clearly the most significant rationale for the group’s choice of targets, though there were others. For instance, as Bruce Jacobs (2000) has noted with particular regard to drug dealers, such targets are “perfect victims” in that they are visible, accessible, and plentiful, and “they deal strictly in cash and tend to have lots of it.” Lastly, such victims can’t “rely on bystanders to come to their aid; operative norms dictate that witnesses mind their business or suffer the consequences.”⁴ While the efforts of Sam Christian et al. were successful and each person had his own reputation, the group lacked the necessary notoriety to engage in large-scale extortion. Thus, sometime in September of 1968, the group adopted the name “Black Mafia”. Figure 3.1 lists the original Black Mafia “command”, along with the ages of each individual at the time of the group’s incorporation.

It is possible the group had other members, and almost assuredly had associates, beyond those listed. However, because of the lack of intelligence on the beginning of the group, these individuals have never been identified according to the numerous sources used in this study.

1 See the U.S. Attorney Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.; PPD OCU’s “History of Black B. Inc., “ March 7, 1974; and PPD OCI’s September 1990 summary report on the Black Mafia (no title). Note: Because *the group* was not investigated until 1972, it was necessary to research the backgrounds of the individual members, and to use sources beyond law enforcement in order to provide a detailed history of the Black Mafia’s origins.

2 James Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1 – The Muslim Mob Gets It On,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 1973, p. 126.

3 James Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, TODAY, August 12, 1973, p. T-8.

4 Bruce A. Jacobs, *Robbing Drug Dealers: Violence Beyond the Law* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), p. 1.

FIGURE 3.1. *Original Black Mafia Members, 1968*⁴⁵

Samuel "Sam" Christian, 29	Robert "Bop Daddy" Fairbanks, 33
Eugene "Bo" Baynes, 30	Clyde "Apples" Ross, 30
Ronald Harvey, 28	Richard "Pork Chops" James, 34
Robert "Nudie" Mims, 28	Jerome Barnes, 23
Grady Dyches, 29	Charles "Black Charles" Toney, 31
Roosevelt "Spooks" Fitzgerald, 39	Walter Hudgins, 33
Donald "Donnie" Day, 28	Nathaniel Williams, 23

*In order of importance based on law enforcement intelligence sources. Several sources were cross-referenced to compile this listing. Age listed is as of 1968.

The command structure in 1968 consisted of fourteen individuals with a mean age of 29.⁶ Each of the founders had extensive arrest records, with most cases involving violence. Law enforcement officials had difficulties prosecuting members of the group, however, because witnesses would rarely cooperate, fearing retaliation, and cases were dropped more often than not. This not only permitted the offenders to continue their criminal activities, but also allowed their reputations of being "untouchable" to flourish, thus enhancing their influence on the street. The earliest documented act committed by the Black Mafia was the April 19, 1969 murder of one of the group's founders, Nathaniel "Rock and Roll" Williams. Williams arranged a crap game above a barbershop at 14th and South Sts. As usual, several Black Mafia leaders participated in the game. Curiously, Williams was absent from his own crap game. Thus, when two gunmen "burst into the room and robbed the pot and the players," suspicions were aroused. The Black Mafia leadership almost immediately heard on the street what they already suspected, that Williams had engineered the stick-up, using neighborhood gang members, and that Williams had driven the getaway car himself. "An hour and a half after the robbery, witnesses saw two men marching Williams out of a bar at 15th and South Sts. at gunpoint. Williams' corpse was found in an isolated area near the Naval Base in South Philadelphia. Four bullets had been pumped into his back."⁷ Police would later characterize the homicide as a "Black Mafia execution." Jerome Barnes was arrested for the Williams murder on August 12, 1969. In a trend that would be repeated

5 Nicholson, "Philadelphia's Black Mafia," p. T-8. Also see Nicholson's, "The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1 – The Muslim Mob Gets It On," *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 1973; Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" n.d.; and OCU's "History of Black B. Inc.," March 7, 1974.

6 The Black Mafia's average age was much less than the prominent Italian-American group in the city at that time. See Annelise Graebner Anderson's study of Philadelphia's Bruno "family," *The Business of Crime: A Cosa Nostra Family* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), pp. 41-43. This is likely because the Black Mafia was an emerging organization, unlike the Bruno group which had been in place for some time.

7 Nicholson, "Philadelphia's Black Mafia," p. T 11.

numerous times throughout the Black Mafia's tenure, charges against Barnes were dropped when "police were unable to line up witnesses who could identify him."⁸

One of the first incidents attributed explicitly to the Black Mafia by law enforcement officials was the beating of Pennsylvania Deputy Insurance Commissioner David Trulli in May of 1969. Trulli, then investigating an insurance fraud case, was beaten with a lead pipe by Richard "Pork Chops" James, apparently at the request of a third party. Trulli lost three teeth, and required 26 stitches to close his wounds. Before James could be brought back from jail in New York City, where he had been arrested for murder on November 23, 1969, he died of a drug overdose. At the time of his death, James had a history of 32 arrests. Camden Police Department Intelligence files state that James was sent to New York on the orders of "Bo" Baynes to fulfill a contract of murder. He "killed a woman and a child and wounded the man he was to murder."⁹ The files further state that James' subsequent overdose in jail was, in fact, a "hot shot" given to him by members of the Black Mafia. The Strike Force concluded the overdose was arranged "to ensure his silence in a Black Mafia-related assault case."¹⁰

Just as the Black Mafia hierarchy was taking shape and its "membership" was increasing in 1969/1970, they began their first community group (of three), the Council for Youth and Urban Development (CYUD) on March 30, 1970. The CYUD was supposedly created to serve as a "charitable, scientific and educational" group to assist youths in African-American communities, but, as described in Chapter 6, this was not the true reason for the group's existence.¹¹ It is clear, both from intelligence reports and from arrest records, that the original Black Mafia was engaged almost exclusively in robbery and extortion, with minimal activity in the "contract" or "assault/murder-for-hire" business, at least until the summer of 1970 when they first began trafficking narcotics themselves. The group's activities were confined to the city's predominantly African-American neighborhoods in North, West, South and Southwest Philadelphia, and their extortion and robbery targets were predominantly illicit businessmen. On several occasions throughout 1969 and 1970, Ronald Harvey, with the assistance of cohorts like Sam Christian, Richard James and Donnie Day, shot up establishments and their occupants. For example, on September 21, 1970, Harvey, Day and Grady Dyches entered the Lambert Bar at 2012 W. Susquehanna Ave., shot the bartender, and robbed him of \$250. Predictably, the charges were *nolle prossed* when witnesses would not cooperate. The group's violent reputation, a prerequisite for serious extortion outfits, was built

8 George Murray and Mike Leary, "Black Mafia Figure is Shot, Critically Hurt," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 6, 1975.

9 Camden Police Department, Detective Division, memo, "Information received during interviews with informant," August 15, 1973, p. 5.

10 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 5.

11 The investigation into the CYUD is discussed throughout both the OCU and Strike Force files. See, "History of Black B. Inc.," March 7, 1974.

on these activities and others, such as Robert “Bop Daddy” Fairbanks’ shootout with Nathaniel (“Nate”) Swint.

In the morning hours of April 5, 1970, Nate Swint and his brother, Robert, returned to a party they had left earlier in the evening. Black Mafia co-founder Walter Hudgins opened the door, and, with the Swint brothers and Hudgins in the vestibule, Fairbanks shot at the Swints, wounding Nate and killing Robert. Hudgins was also hit and wounded in the melee. Fairbanks was convicted of murder in the second degree on October 21, 1970. His conviction was later overturned because of prosecutorial error, namely comments made by the prosecutor during the proceedings regarding Fairbanks’ alleged position in the Black Mafia. The prejudicial comments were several, including the following: “The reason [Fairbanks] was there ... is that he is an enforcer for a group that’s loosely called the term or termed the Black Mafia.” Furthermore, the prosecutor argued that Nate Swint was ambushed upon entering the apartment, and

all of a sudden he sees his brother fall, no more than eight feet away he sees Mr. Fairbanks. Bop-Daddy, the enforcer, the executioner, standing behind the kitchen wall firing a .38 caliber at his brother and then firing at him. They walked right into a death trap, two unprotected, unarmed young men, never expecting anything.¹²

Some citizens did not believe the city was doing enough to confront the problems created by the Black Mafia. Such concerns seemed to remain in the African-American community, however, as a caustic article in *NiteLife*, one of the city’s black newspapers (primarily distributed in South Philadelphia), criticized District Attorney Arlen Specter for not having the “guts” to address the problem.¹³ Specter’s personal handling of the situation is not known, although it seems plausible that he, along with law enforcement officials, also faced the dilemma of confronting a potentially explosive racial issue. The sensitive issue of race was compounded by the Black Mafia’s relationship with the burgeoning Black Muslim movement.

At some point in 1969-1970, criminals within Philadelphia’s Black Muslim community began competing with the Black Mafia for lucrative narcotics and extortion networks. Any notions Sam Christian and others had that they would simply take over the Black Muslim territories, as the Black Mafia had done to many neighborhood gangs, were dismissed following several high-profile Black Muslim shootings. Thus, faced with an impending turf war, one they would undoubtedly lose, the Black Mafia opted sometime in late 1970 or early 1971 to become, in essence, the extortion arm of the Black Muslims.¹⁴

12 *Commonwealth v. Fairbanks*, No. 469, Jan. T., 1971, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 453 Pa. 90; 306 A.2d 866, July 2, 1973, p. 3. The Court ruled the prosecution injected terms like “Black Mafia”, “enforcer” and “executioner” based exclusively on hearsay evidence.

13 “Is Black Protection And Extortion Racket For Real?” *Nite Life*, September 25, 1973.

14 Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

NATION OF ISLAM MOSQUE NO. 12

There were Black Muslims in Philadelphia as early as the 1930s. According to Clifton Marsh (2000), Temple No. 12 was opened by Malcolm X in 1954.¹⁵ However, various sources place the beginning of the substantial local movement between 1963 and 1970. According to C. Eric Lincoln (1994), “the movement that has become known as the Black Muslims” was born in the summer of 1930, when Wallace D. Fard began teaching African-Americans in Detroit about their “true religion – not Christianity, but the religion of the Black men of Asia and Africa.”¹⁶ One of Fard’s earliest understudies was Elijah Poole, who was later given his Islamic, or “original,” surname, Muhammad (under Fard, each proselyte was required to discard his “slave” name for his “original” name). Elijah Muhammad, from his Chicago headquarters, ran over 50 mosques nationwide in the mid-1970s¹⁷ and led the Black Muslim movement from 1934 until his death of congestive heart failure on February 25, 1975. Under Muhammad’s leadership, the Muslim movement had business operations estimated as worth between \$20 and \$75 million, including farms, real estate, newspapers and bakeries in 1973.¹⁸ Lincoln considered the Black Muslims an African-American “protest group,” one which “like the NAACP, (is) frequently before the courts – but only on behalf of their own membership.” “They want justice and fair play, but unlike the NAACP, they do not really expect the courts to give it to them through the normal processes of American jurisprudence, because they assume that whites are by nature incapable of justice towards Blacks. By nature they are devils.”¹⁹ Lincoln notes that the Black Muslim movement has thrived in the worst of times for African-Americans.²⁰ The movement began during the Depression, and saw its most significant membership increases during the 1960s and 1970s. Lincoln believes the persistence of the Black Muslim movement is best explained by the “realities” of Black life in America.²¹ Joshua Freilich et al. (1999) examined disenfranchised groups and their proclivity for deviance. They found that social movement organizations “promote deviance both through their ideology, which legitimizes deviance, and through their organizational

15 Clifton E. Marsh, *The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), p. 53.

16 Ibid., p. 12. On the origins of the Black Muslim movement, also see Erdmann Doane Beynon, “The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit,” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43 (July 1937 - May 1938), pp. 894-907. This article is contained in the FBI’s Black Muslim files.

17 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1.”

18 Ibid.

19 C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), pp. 248-249.

20 Also see Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separatism to Islam, 1930-1980* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1984).

21 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*. Also see Sterling X. Hobbs, “The Young Muslims,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, TODAY (pullout section), April 27, 1975, pp. T-18-19, T-23-25.

structures, which are unable to control either the actions of those who are a part of the movement or the flow of movement generated information.”²²

Philadelphia-area law enforcement intelligence files contain numerous informant references to the “Black Muslims.”²³ Just as the “Black Mafia” did not represent the totality of African-American organized crime in Philadelphia, the “Black Muslims” referenced in this study did not represent all Philadelphia Black Muslims or all Muslims who were African-American.²⁴ In Philadelphia, the Black Muslims far outnumbered the Black Mafia in numbers of affiliates and weapons as early as 1969. Philadelphia’s overall Black Muslim membership was estimated at 10,000 in the early 1970s, while the number of criminals within the Mosque has never been estimated.²⁵

Jeremiah Shabazz, formerly Jeremiah Pugh, headed Philadelphia’s Mosque No.12.²⁶ Over time, Shabazz gained fame and infamy; fame for his association with boxing legend Muhammad Ali, and infamy for actions engineered from within his Mosque. Jeremiah Shabazz recruited Ali, formerly Cassius Clay, into the Nation of Islam in 1961, and the two were extremely close.²⁷ Boxing aficionado and Ali

- 22 Joshua D. Freilich, Nelson A. Pichardo Almanzar and Craig J. Rivera, “How Social Movement Organizations Explicitly and Implicitly Promote Deviant Behavior: The Case of the Militia Movement,” *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3 (September 1999), p. 655.
- 23 Authorities in New York City similarly found factions of the Black Muslim population engaging in a variety of criminal acts, often in conjunction with other groups. An African-American group headed by drug dealer Frank Moten worked with the Black Muslims in the mid-1970s. As an Intelligence Division “Synopsis” dated June 18, 1975 states (p. 2), the Black Muslims “are reported to have street experience in various criminal activities and have come to be affiliated with Moten because of their discipline, experience and ability to carry out orders efficiently.”
- 24 Street sources predictably had differing views as to whether the Philadelphia’s Black Muslims were primarily a religious or political organization. See, for example, Camden Police Department, Detective Division, memo, “Information received during interviews with informant,” August 15, 1973, p. 1, in which the informant, a Black Muslim, vividly details the machinations of the Philadelphia Mosque.
- 25 Tyree Johnson, “Muslim Changes Revealed,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 20, 1978, Local, p. 12.
- 26 According to Shabazz, he was born in Philadelphia and raised as a Christian. At age fourteen, he was introduced to “the teachings of Islam [by] a barber who’d been imprisoned with some Muslim brothers down in Virginia”. Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Touchstone [Simon & Schuster], 1991), p. 91. He graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School, served in the Army and worked for the Postal Service, among other jobs, following his discharge. He left his job in 1954 to assist Malcolm X drum up interest in Philadelphia’s Temple No. 12. In addition to overseeing Mosque No. 12, Shabazz was also asked to spend time in the South on occasion. He spent time as the Nation of Islam’s minister over the Deep South for a time beginning in 1961. Born in 1927, Shabazz died of congestive heart failure at the age of 70 in January 1998. Andy Wallace, “Jeremiah Shabazz, 70, Former Nation of Islam Minister, Ali Aide,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 1998, p. B07.
- 27 David Remnick, *King of the World* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 128-129. The Shabazz-Ali relationship is explored in fascinating detail throughout Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*. Also see Ron Borges, “Still King of the Hill,” *The Boston Globe*, June 7, 1991. In 1961, Jeremiah Shabazz was asked to travel from Atlanta to Miami to speak with Ali, after Ali had initially met there with Minister Ishmael Sabakhan. Many years later, Shabazz was a middleman in a controversial exchange between Muhammad Ali and boxing promoter Don King. King allegedly short-changed Ali by over a million dollars for his 1980 bout with Larry Holmes. Though the signed

confidant Ferdie Pacheco summed up Ali's rationale for joining the Black Muslims thusly:

Ali ... understood strength. Just like Sonny Liston understood the Mafia, Ali understood that you did not fuck with the [Black] Muslims. He liked their strength. He turned his head away from the fact that, especially in the early days, the Nation [of Islam] was filled with a lot of ex-cons, violent people who would go after you if you crossed them.²⁸

Pacheco went on to say that "Malcolm X (particularly before his trip to Mecca) and Ali were like very close brothers".²⁹ Pacheco also believed Ali was paid "top dollar" for his fights partly because high-profile promoters like Don King feared "someone like Jeremiah Shabazz might have been behind [Ali's business manager Herbert Muhammad] as an enforcer"³⁰ if the promoters attempted "getting over" on Ali. Muhammad Ali's presence in Philadelphia, particularly as it related to Black Mafia's activities, was significant for it lent credibility to the Black Muslims and the Black Mafia. Of course, his mere presence and his alliance with persons embedded in the Black Mafia social system also created public relations difficulties for authorities, thus feeding an existing and reasonable concern of victims and witnesses that law enforcement would not take their complaints seriously.

Depending on the Black Mafia affiliate's standing in the "Muslim faith," ability to generate money, and prior history of violence, some were incorporated into the Mosque's elite paramilitary unit, the Fruit of Islam (F.O.I.).³¹ For instance, Sam Christian changed his name to Suleiman Bey, an ancient and honorable Moorish title bestowed on military officials, and was immediately made a captain in the local F.O.I. He was responsible for sanctioning murders and other criminal acts, and reported directly to Jeremiah Shabazz. Roosevelt "Spooks" Fitzgerald, aka Roosevelt 5X, became Brother Investigator to Shabazz, and reviewed prospective

contract called for Ali to receive \$8 million, King claimed he had an oral contract with Ali for \$7 million. Ali's lawyer, Michael Phenner, thus immediately sued King for the difference. Within a month after the fight, however, a debilitated Ali informed Phenner that he had accepted \$50,000 in cash from King, and had signed a release to drop the pending lawsuit. According to Jeremiah Shabazz, King summoned him to King's office and handed him a suitcase containing \$50,000 in cash, and said, "I want you to give this money to Ali, but only after you get him to sign this document." Thus, Shabazz and a notary public made the trip and Ali relented, absolving King, legally at least, of the breach of contract. The circumstances surrounding the transaction are recounted in Jack Newfield, *Only in America: The Life and Crimes of Don King* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1995).

28 Ibid., p. 134. While focused on the life and times of Muhammad Ali, Remnick also presents a thorough history of the Black Muslim movement during the 1960s and 1970s. In line with Eric Lincoln's points regarding the persistence of the Black Muslim movement, Remnick (p. 274) states that James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dell, 1963) was correct in identifying "the Nation (of Islam) not as a particularly effective political group, but as a symptom of continued oppression."

29 Ibid., p. 165.

30 Hauser, p. 381.

31 "The FOI's duties fall into two broad headings: security and discipline." Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, p. 202. For an historical and sociological analysis of the Fruit of Islam, see pp. 199-204.

members, complaints on active members, and possible security leaks.³² The informal absorption of the Black Mafia into the Mosque was never complete, however. Many Black Mafia affiliates chose to forsake formally entering the “Muslim faith,” which was now a requisite for certain positions, and were thus excluded from positions of power. These affiliates continued to operate, however, with the permission of the Black Mafia’s Executive Board, although they now paid a higher percentage of their profits in tribute to the group’s hierarchy. The new structure provided several benefits.

For each party, the Black Muslims (in Philadelphia and Chicago) and the Black Mafia (at all levels of activity and power), the “take” would be greater since there would be a virtual monopoly on the narcotics trade in several significant sections of the city, and the trade would have the backing of some of the city’s most notorious criminals. Consequently, the newly-formed group’s presence on the street also had an intimidating effect on witnesses to their activities. Victims and witnesses generally would not testify against either group prior to the merger. Now, the prospect of facing a member of the newly-formed, 200 “hardened street soldier”-strong, criminal “supergroup” in court was even more frightening.³³ Thus, the Black Mafia felt comfortable, for the first time, in expanding their extortion rackets to include numerous legitimate businesses. The Black Muslims and the Black Mafia had also avoided a fight in the streets which would have been costly both in manpower, and in business if the battle had brought “heat” on the respective organizations. The Black Muslims had much to gain, as they would now receive portions of the Black Mafia’s narcotics and extortion rackets, while maintaining the profits from their own illicit activities. Perhaps the biggest benefactors of the merger were the low- and mid-level Black Mafia affiliates who opted not to formally enter the Mosque. While they kept a smaller percentage of their profits, because both the Black Mafia and Black Muslim commands were now getting a cut, each of these affiliates now had more recognition, backing and power on the street. Thus, they faced less competition, their territories expanded and they had more business, and job security, than before the merger. The Black Mafia’s highest command seemingly had less to gain, since they would now be sharing some of their profits with the Mosque. Law enforcement sources placed the group’s monthly “contribution” to the Black Muslims at over \$4,000 per month in late 1973.³⁴ For them, however, security was worth the “tribute” they now paid.

The merger afforded the Black Mafia the opportunity to create a more powerful political problem for authorities, for it was no longer simply race but religion as well that could be exploited as needed. In addition to the public relations challenges the alliance presented to authorities, the group now routinely attempted to exploit the

32 Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime-Intelligence Unit, “Investigation of Roosevelt Fitzgerald,” September 3, 1974, p. 6.

33 Ibid.

34 Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d. The Black Mafia paid this amount directly to Philadelphia’s main mosque at 13th and Susquehanna Streets.

legal system. For example, two defendants in one high-profile case appealed their convictions on the grounds of “racial and religious prejudice”.³⁵ In another noteworthy case, Black Mafia attorneys criticized the *voir dire* process with particular respect to the:

purported antisocial propensities of the Black Muslims ... Defense counsel urged that the court ask six specific questions of the individual jurors designed to elicit the jurors’ attitudes to the Black Muslims. The court refused, and instead directed general questions to the panel at large with respect to prejudice on the basis of race, religion, or membership in the Black Muslims.³⁶

Thus, an otherwise nondescript robbery/extortion case became, as the United States District Court of Appeals for the Eastern District of Appeals stated, one “with serious racial and religious undertones.”³⁷ Another high-profile case involved similar circumstances. A prospective juror, “upon questioning by defense counsel ... admitted she might be confusing the so-called ‘Black Mafia’ with the Black Muslims.”³⁸ On appeal, defense counsel argued “the Court [failed] to fully explore the prejudices of potential jurors against members of the Black Muslim faith.”³⁹ One of the other benefits of the merger, which would be essential to several of the Black Mafia’s elite, was the ability of the Black Muslims to hide “wanted” criminals throughout their national chain of mosques. For authorities, it was inherently more difficult to obtain search warrants for the mosques because they were, at some level, places of worship.⁴⁰ The mosques also employed Black Mafia fugitives as needed, and some doubled as warehouses for the group’s arsenal of weapons. Police received detailed information regarding the existence of stored weapons in the two largest Philadelphia mosques, along with the detailed protocol for how they were to be maintained and accessed.⁴¹ Intelligence sources also detailed a mosque in

35 The defendants were Edward Sistrunk and Robert Mims.

36 *United States of America v. Larry Starks, Clarence Starks, Alonzo Robinson, Donald Everett, Abney Merrill, Albert Ferguson Alonzo Robinson*, Appellant in No. 74-1947 Larry Starks, Appellant in No. 74-1966 Donald Everett Abney, Appellant in No. 74-1967, Nos. 74-1947, 74-1966, 74-1967, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 515 F.2d 112; 1975 U.S. App. LEXIS 15030, April 21, 1975, p. 15.

37 *Ibid.*

38 United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, *United States of America v. John W. Clark, William Christian and John Griffin*, Criminal No. 73-471, 398 F. Supp. 341, July 14, 1975, p. 14.

39 *Ibid.* In this case, the Court rejected the claims of prejudice.

40 The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States prompted a review and revising of these policies. Under the old guidelines (i.e. those in place during the Black Mafia’s tenure in the 1970s), the FBI could not send undercover agents to investigate groups that gathered at places like mosques or churches unless investigators first found probable cause, or evidence which led them to believe that someone in the group had broken the law. Full investigations of that sort were not permitted without the Attorney General’s consent. See, for example, David Johnston and Don Van Natta, Jr., “Ashcroft Seeking to Free F.B.I. to Spy on Groups,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2001.

41 See, for example, OCU’s “Investigation of Muhammed’s Mosque #12-C, 4110 Haverford Avenue,” dated April 16, 1974.

Pittsburgh which had a firing range in its basement. Jim Nicholson (1973) summed up the Black Muslim/Mafia situation thusly:

The advantages of a merger with the Men in the Dark Suits were obvious: There was the 'religion' shield to ward off attack by authorities; there were the superior numbers and disciplined organization of the Men in the Dark Suits and, of course, a merger was far more desirable than a bloodbath, with the bloodbath likely to be taken by the Black Mafia.⁴²

The discipline Nicholson refers to may best be illustrated by reviewing the Black Muslim orders for one of their Mosques. Two distinct sets of orders for Philadelphia's Mosque No. 12, Park Avenue and Susquehanna Street, are presented in Appendices A and B. Figure 3.2 is a law enforcement surveillance photo of this mosque, which doubled as the Black Mafia's headquarters, circa January 1974.

The security of the Mosque is the focus of both sets of orders. Discipline and security were also the foundations for the Black Muslim presence in the prison system.

Numerous sources, including inmates, prison guards and prison officials, concurred that at some point in the 1960s, prisons became the province of the Black Muslims.⁴³ As one informer stated in August of 1973, "The Black Muslims are in control of the major prisons, (and) are considered the best form of protection."⁴⁴ Young prisoners with lesser sentences would join the Muslims for the purposes of protection, and were then schooled in the criminal ways of the group. Generally speaking, Black Muslim prison leaders were "lifers", and thus had nothing to lose by engaging in acts of violence and other non-conformist activities. If a top Black Muslim was transferred to another institution, their rank and position was retained, and the recruitment continued. Their protection was to be paid back through various means once the convict returned to the "outside". Often times this simply meant that financial deals were brokered, while others involved providing various resources for family members and girlfriends. For the highest level of Muslims, benefactors of their protection who got out of prison were to retain drug territories once held by the hierarchy and remit a percentage of the proceeds. The Black Muslim activities were so pervasive in Philadelphia prisons that several guards voiced concerns for their safety. One such guard at the city's Holmesburg Prison, whose Black Muslim

⁴² Nicholson, "Philadelphia's Black Mafia," p. T-12.

⁴³ Donald Goddard, *Joey* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), noted that in 1970, New York's Auburn Prison experienced similar circumstances. According to his sources, half of Auburn's 1,675 inmates were African-American or Puerto Rican. "Of these, at least 400 were militants – men who regarded themselves, not as convicted criminals, but as political prisoners, as black revolutionary victims of a racist society." Race relations were enough of a concern that a "five-man state legislative committee" recommended "corrections officers work harder to relieve racial tensions, [and] that Black Muslim and black nationalist ministers be allowed to visit with inmates 'of these faiths'" (p. 297).

⁴⁴ Camden Police Department, Detective Division, debriefing report, "Black Mafia-Muslim relations," August 15, 1973.

FIGURE 3.2. Nation of Islam Mosque No.12 (Black Mafia headquarters), Park Avenue and Susquehanna Street, January 1974



population at the time was headed by convicted murderer and Fruit of Islam Captain Clarence Fowler,⁴⁵ stated the following:

I used to love my job. Now I mark the calendar each day and say, “Well, that’s another day toward retirement.” The Muslims have close-order drill and practice karate. All I and the other guards can do is see that they go in and come out of their cells at the right time.⁴⁶

The strong Black Muslim networks in the Philadelphia prison system, then, also afforded the Black Mafia resources it did not have prior to the partnership. As Ianni (1974) discovered in his study of African-American organized crime, “throughout the various networks that we observed, we found that prisons and the prison experience are the most important locus for establishing the social relationships that form the basis for partnership in organized crime.”⁴⁷ See Figure 3.3 for an illustration of the “merger” benefits for both parties.

FIGURE 3.3. “Merger” Benefits

<i>Black Mafia</i>	<i>Black Muslims</i>
Increase in revenue (esp. low-level affiliates)	Increase in revenue
Less witness testimony	Less witness testimony
Less warfare – and thus less “heat” –	Less warfare
“Security” – politics/mosques (esp. high-level affiliates)	
Prison system/recruitment	

In addition to the previously mentioned benefits of the merger, the Black Mafia manipulated a few Black Muslim businesses. The Black Muslims operated at least three known food shops in the city. There were two Shabazz Bakeries; one located at Broad Street and Susquehanna Avenue and one at 437 S. 60th Street. The Shabazz Steak Shop was located at 6406 Stenton Avenue. Roosevelt “Spooks” Fitzgerald operated the “Shabazz Steak and Take” at 1601 S. 24th Street, although it is unclear whether this “business” was formally sanctioned by the Mosque. Each of these locations was under extensive surveillance because law enforcement officials believed they were simply fronts for the Black Mafia’s illicit activities. The vast majority of Black Mafia affiliates arrested listed one of these locations as their place

45 Fowler was serving time for shooting Dr. Clarence Smith to death in his home in 1970, in what authorities deemed an “execution”. Authorities ruled out robbery as a possible motive, but never developed a theory for the killing of Smith, a minister of North Philadelphia’s Wayland Baptist Church.

46 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War, Part 1,” p. 222. Warden Richard Burke explained that an entire cellblock was Black Muslim, because inmates requested to be with other Black Muslims. The unstated inference was that because of religious concerns, inmates must be granted requests to be housed with other members of their denomination. He went on to add that Holmesburg had two other Muslim sects in its population, but they were not concentrated in any particular area because they had made no such requests.

47 Francis A. J. Ianni, *Black Mafia: Ethnic Succession in Organized Crime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 158.

of employment, while others listed themselves as employees of the Black Muslim newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. One aspect of the loosely-knit Black Mafia-Black Muslim fabric was clear: a percentage of all money garnered by Black Mafia activities was to be remitted in some fashion to the Philadelphia Mosque, headed by Jeremiah Shabazz.⁴⁸ According to Black Mafia intelligence files, which are largely based on informant's statements, Philadelphia had five active mosques as of August 15, 1973. Law enforcement authorities considered the mosques located at Park and Susquehanna Avenues (primary Black Mafia headquarters), 4110 Haverford Avenue, 47th Street and Wyalusing Avenue, and 3700 Germantown Avenue to be the most important with respect to criminal activity. Law enforcement photos of the latter two mosques are presented in Appendices C and D. There was also a University of Islam located at 1319 W. Susquehanna, immediately adjacent to the main mosque. The university was funded exclusively by private donations, and boasted an enrollment of approximately 1,000 students from first grade through high school. The rationale for the lack of public funds was simple, according to Minister Jeremiah Shabazz: "We don't get funded by the white man. He doesn't come to us with little grants and subsidies. He knows we wouldn't take it because his donations come with strings attached."⁴⁹

Each mosque, while under the ultimate control of Jeremiah Shabazz, was run by a Lieutenant who was responsible for picking up the "protection money" and the proceeds from other various illegal operations in his designated territory each week. As criminal activity by members of Mosque No. 12 increased, criticism was leveled at Shabazz. One black Baptist minister, Muhammad Kenyatta, stated publicly that "many of the city's Black Mafia leaders hold prominent positions in the mosque here and Jeremiah Shabazz has said nothing about it."⁵⁰ According to a police informant, Shabazz was "confident and not at all worried about law enforcement agencies probing the Black Mafia," since he had "kept himself far removed from actual involvement."⁵¹ His "right-hand man" was identified only as Lieutenant Gerald X, and was described by street sources as "ruthless" and a murderer. Gerald would travel throughout the city's African-American neighborhoods with a select few Black Mafia members in order to commandeer lucrative drug corners. Law enforcement authorities and numerous street sources firmly believe that after Shabazz took his percentage of the proceeds, the Philadelphia Mosque (No. 12) then sent a portion back to "The Messenger," Elijah Muhammad in Chicago, Illinois.⁵² Soon after the Black Mafia-Black Muslim "merger", the "new" group committed

48 OCU, "debriefing report," February 18, 1974, containing information received by OCU from informants.

49 Hobbs, "The Young Muslims", pp. 18-19.

50 Wallace, "Jeremiah Shabazz, 70," p. B07.

51 OCU, "debriefing report," February 18, 1974, containing information received by OCU from informants.

52 See, for example, Camden Police Department, Detective Division, debriefing report, "Black Mafia-Muslim relations," August 15, 1973.

one of Philadelphia's most infamous crimes – the Dubrow Furniture store robbery/arson/murder.

THE DUBROW FURNITURE STORE ROBBERY

The Dubrow Furniture store murder/robbery/arson was an outburst of incomprehensible cruelty by a band of criminals whose motivation can't be explained by the lure of a day's receipts.⁵³ Elmer Smith (1992)

On January 4, 1971, eight Black Mafia affiliates, led by "Nudie" Mims, robbed DuBrow's Furniture store in the 400 block of Philadelphia's famed South Street.⁵⁴ At approximately 2:00pm, Mims, a "hulking, six-foot, four-inch, 225-pound killer", and an accomplice entered the store posing as customers. Over the next several minutes, the remaining six affiliates entered the store alone or in pairs, each posing as customers. Once each was inside, they drew guns and forced twenty employees into a rear room where they stripped them, forced them to lie face-down on the floor, and bound them with tape and electrical cord.⁵⁵ Thirteen of the employees were beaten and pistol-whipped, and two others were shot.⁵⁶

Alton G. Barker, a janitor who happened upon the robbery in progress as he was about to exit a freight elevator, was shot three times and died, while the other shooting victim, Morton Grossman, survived.

Grossman ... returned from his lunch break as the robbery was in progress. He was immediately grabbed and forced to the back of the store, where he was hit on the head and tied up. One of the intruders took his wallet, containing \$400, his wristwatch, and a ring. Unable to remove a second ring from Grossman's finger, the assailant became enraged, struck Grossman in the head, then shot him in the arm and back.⁵⁷

One of the beating victims, Robert Porreca, was doused with gasoline and set afire. After the victims had been subdued and robbed, the Black Mafia affiliates looted the store's offices. Additionally, the robbers also spread gasoline throughout the property, setting five other fires in an apparent attempt to destroy evidence.⁵⁸ "When the fire alarm sounded, the eight intruders fled. As they made their escape,

53 Elmer Smith, "How Race May Taint the Sense of Justice," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 18, 1992, Local, p. 10.

54 Dubrow's Furniture was located at 419 South Street.

55 Hugh J. Burns, Jr., Assistant District Attorney, Philadelphia, "Letter Brief: Commonwealth v. Robert Mims, No. 3094 Philadelphia 1997," August 24, 1998, to David A. Szweczak, Esquire, Prothonotary, Superior Court of Pennsylvania.

56 OCU debriefing report, "Investigation of Roosevelt Fitzgerald," September 3, 1974.

57 United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, *Edward Sistrunk, a/k/a Omar Askia Ali, Appellant, v. John McCullough, Superintendent, SCI Houtzdale; Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; The District Attorney of Philadelphia County*, No. 97-1538, June 11, 1998.

58 For more information concerning the "DuBrow" incident, see Joe O'Dowd and Frank Dougherty, "Alleged Dubrow Slayer Held in Drug Bust," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 14, 1981, Local, p. 8; and Joyce Gemperlein, "Murder Case Against 2 Men Accused of 1971 Rampage Goes to the Jury," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Local, p. B03.

some of the men purposely trampled on the wounded body of Morton Grossman, who lay on the floor in the hallway.”⁵⁹ Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo stated it was “the most vicious crime I have ever come across.” Rizzo went on to say that if the defendants faced the death penalty, “given the chance, I’d pull the switch myself.”⁶⁰ The crime was so horrific that W.E.B. Griffin wrote a novel, *The Witness*, based on it.⁶¹ Each of the defendants was found guilty, and a witness was later murdered because of his incriminating testimony (discussed in Chapter 7).⁶²

One of the ‘Dubrow robbers’ was Black Mafia heavy “Nudie” Mims, who fled Philadelphia to Chicago, where he served as bodyguard to Elijah Muhammad, spiritual leader of the Lost Society of Islam, until his eventual surrender on September 20, 1974.⁶³ While awaiting trial on the charges (and out on bail), Mims listed his employment as circulation manager of Mohammed’s Mosque No. 12, 12th and Susquehanna Streets,⁶⁴ the Black Mafia’s primary headquarters. Mims was Robert 28X in Philadelphia, and Robert 59X in Chicago, and also used the alias Robert Green while in Chicago.⁶⁵ In 1975, Mims was “convicted by a jury of murder of the first degree, arson, two counts of aggravated robbery, three counts of aggravated assault and battery, and conspiracy.” He was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder conviction, with a concurrent five to ten year sentence for the arson conviction.⁶⁶

The “Dubrow” robbery was remarkably similar to later robberies committed by the group. For instance, on February 5, 1971, Ronald Harvey and Russell Meade robbed the Uptown Dock Company. During the robbery, they ordered all employees to strip at point of gun, and beat them. The take was \$5000. Also in February, John W. Clark and at least five others robbed the Southeastern National Bank in Exton, Pennsylvania.⁶⁷ Clark wore a police uniform during the robbery, and was convicted

59 *Sistrunk v. McCullough et al.*

60 Howard Goodman, “Convict Says Prosecutor Barred Blacks from Jury,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1992, Local, p. B01.

61 W.E.B. Griffin, *The Witness* (New York: Jove Books, 1992).

62 Edward Sistrunk was later granted two retrials because the Assistant District Attorney who prosecuted the case, Barbara Christie, was found to have held African-Americans off the jury. In 1996, a U.S. Appeals Court ruled against a third retrial for Sistrunk. See Shannon P. Duffy and Hank Grezlak, “Federal Judge: Prosecutor Picked All-White Jury,” *Pennsylvania Law Weekly*, September 18, 1995, p. 30; and Joseph Slobodzian, “Court Denies Retrial for Man Convicted in ‘71 Slaying,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 20, 1996, p. 1.

63 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Robert Mims*, Appellant (two cases), Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 481 Pa. 275; 392 A.2d 1290; 1978 Pa. LEXIS 994, October 5, 1978.

64 O’Dowd and Dougherty, p. B03. The mosque distributed the Muslim newspaper “Muhammad Speaks” (later to be renamed “Bilalian News” in November 1975 by Wallace Muhammad).

65 When Mims was arrested, his wallet contained eighteen different identification cards in the name of Robert L. Green.

66 *Commonwealth v. Mims*. Also see Joyce Gemperlein, “Murder Case Against 2 Men Accused of 1971 Rampage Goes to the Jury,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 18, 1981, p. B03.

67 *United States of America v. John W. Clark*, Crim. A. No. 71-163, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 346 F. Supp. 428; 1972 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 13011, June 28, 1972.

and sentenced to fifteen years in prison.⁶⁸ On September 6, 1971, Meade, Sam Christian, Roosevelt Fitzgerald and four other Black Mafia affiliates robbed the Adelphia Bar in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Once again, “they taped and tied 25 patrons and pistol-whipped the manager.”⁶⁹ The take on this occasion was \$14,360.

The Black Mafia continued gaining notoriety by committing public acts of violence. Throughout 1971, the Black Mafia extorted and robbed numerous individuals, particularly numbers writers and drug dealers. According to a June, 1971 ODALE report, for instance, African-American heroin dealers Eligah Jackson and Vernon Gregg “were robbed on several occasions by members of the Black Mafia and ... both fled the Philadelphia (PA) area when they feared a ‘Black Mafia Contract’ had been placed on them.”⁷⁰ Another instance involved CYUD incorporator – and Black Mafia enforcer – Russell Barnes, who shot and killed Wardell Green (for unknown reasons) in a South Street bar on October 27, 1971. The acts increased in profile and in quantity over the next two years, beginning with the murder of Tyrone Palmer.

THE KILLING OF “FAT” TYRONE PALMER

One of the watershed moments in the Black Mafia’s history was the Easter Sunday (April 2) 1972 murder of “Fat” Tyrone Palmer. The 24-year-old Palmer, known on the street as “Mr. Millionaire”, was killed in Atlantic City, New Jersey by fellow Black Mafia affiliates. Palmer was the key Philadelphia-area contact for New York City’s infamous Frank Matthews, and had apparently reneged on a narcotics deal. Sam Christian, Larry Starks, Eugene Hearn, and James Enoch entered the ritzy Club Harlem and murdered the large-scale heroin and cocaine dealer, in plain view of the nightclub crowd, estimated at 600–800 people.⁷¹ The club was described as a “brassy nightspot in a dismal, two-story brick building three blocks from the boardwalk” where “the black elite of Philadelphia and South Jersey” gathered.⁷² Palmer had just returned from vacation in Bermuda, and sat at a ringside table with his entourage of women and bodyguards, as rock singer Billy Paul was topping the club’s “Easter Panorama” bill on stage. As Paul ended his opening number, “Magic Carpet,” Palmer was shot in the face by Christian, and then twice more as he fell back. Before Palmer’s bodyguards could reach their guns, other Black Mafia affiliates also opened fire. Atlantic City Police Commissioner Mario Florani stated following the shots, “bedlam broke loose – tables were flying, chairs were flying,

68 *United States of America ex rel. John W. Clark v. Charles S. Guy, United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Louis S. Aytch, Superintendent of Prisons for Philadelphia County*, Civil Action No. 73-2083, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 386 F. Supp. 1175; 1974 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 11852, November 27, 1974.

69 OCU debriefing report, “Investigation of Roosevelt Fitzgerald,” September 3, 1974.

70 Cited in Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d., p. 3.

71 Eric Pace, “4 Killed, 11 Injured As Narcotics Rings War in Atlantic City,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 1972, p. 1.

72 Donald Goddard, *Easy Money* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), p. 166.

bottles were flying – it was a shambles.”⁷³ Twenty people were wounded – 11 from bullets and fragmented glass, the rest apparently from the melee that ensued. Palmer, three women and Gilbert (“Malik”) Satterwhite, his 25 year-old bodyguard, were killed. Satterwhite’s death was deemed significant by authorities because he “doubled” as a bodyguard and investigator for prominent civil rights activist and attorney Cecil B. Moore.⁷⁴ The gunmen waived their pistols in the air as they fled the scene, and fired at least one shot at a responding police officer.⁷⁵

There are several plausible explanations for Palmer’s assassination, all of which involve the earlier slayings of Palmer “employees” Richard “Red Paul” Harris and Richard “P.I.” Smith, and a dispute over drug money that dated to late 1971, when \$243,000 worth of cocaine was stolen from Palmer.⁷⁶ The leading theory involves blowback beginning with the consignment of drugs Palmer gave Smith to deal in Philadelphia. Smith was to pay Palmer for the shipment once the street sales had garnered sufficient returns. Though he was able to distribute the drugs throughout the city, especially in South Philadelphia, Smith was unable to pay Palmer the large debt. It is believed Smith was “stuffed” by Harris, a lower echelon dealer. Thus, in February 1972, Harris was “blown off his barstool in a tavern at 17th and Dauphin Sts. by gunmen police said represented ‘P.I.’s’ interests.”⁷⁷ Of course, this did nothing to satisfy Palmer’s concerns, and on March 2, 1972, Richard “P.I.” Smith was “found sprawled in a parking lot on the 3700 block of Brown St.” with two bullet holes in his head.⁷⁸

The Black Mafia eventually murdered three of the Frank Matthews organization’s four Philadelphia intermediaries, “Fat” Tyrone Palmer, Major Coxson and Thomas “Cadillac Tommy” Farrington. Matthews, however, wanted to maintain his Philadelphia market without risking further manpower losses, and brought his remaining Philadelphia broker, John Darby, to New York. Darby was indeed safer, and he continued his Philadelphia operations, except for a brief stint in prison for a gun charge in September 1972, from a distance until he was arrested again in 1975.

After the Palmer slaying, Sam Christian eventually fled to Chicago and Detroit, all the while being hidden in various Muslim mosques.⁷⁹ Detroit was considered the “strongest Muslim town in the country” by law enforcement at the time. Intelligence sources had Christian starting another African-American crime group called the

73 Ibid., p. 47.

74 Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia.”

75 Pace, p. 47.

76 The initial New York Times account (Pace, “4 Killed ...”) stated the deal involved heroin, not cocaine. Further investigations suggest this was inaccurate. For a complete analysis of the Palmer slaying, see Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia”; and Goddard, *Easy Money*.

77 Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia,” p. 14.

78 Ibid.

79 OCU, “debriefing report,” February 18, 1974, containing information received by OCU from informants.

“Sons of Africa”, with major heroin traffickers Edgar Thomas and Anthony Williams, in Detroit while avoiding the homicide charge in New Jersey.⁸⁰

The Harlem Club shooting was the starting point for the Philadelphia Police Department’s Black Mafia file,⁸¹ and the subsequent discoveries consumed numerous investigators for the next ten or more years. As the group’s power increased, and territory expanded, the Black Mafia created their second community group, Community Urban Development, Inc. (CUD), on April 28, 1972. The Dubrow robbery, the Palmer slaying and other events received fairly extensive media coverage, and the group began losing more of its anonymity. Whatever remained of their obscurity was taken away throughout the following year.

80 Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary: Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

81 OCU memo, “Information re: Black Mafia,” November 7, 1973.

CHAPTER 4

1973–1974: MURDER AND INFAMY

Black Mafia activities were receiving increased attention from law enforcement and the media by January 1973, though this interest was largely restricted to the Philadelphia-Southern New Jersey region. This would change with the Hanafi murders.

THE HANAFI MURDERS¹

“I was in Milwaukee on January 18, 1973 when I heard about the massacre,”²
former Los Angeles Lakers basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

On that day, Abdul-Jabbar’s townhouse in Washington, D.C. was the site of the Black Mafia’s most heinous acts. Several Black Mafia affiliates traveled to D.C. on January 12, 1973 to scout the home. Ronald Harvey, John Clark, James “Bubbles” Price, John Griffin, Theodore Moody, William Christian, and Jerome Sinclair traveled in two cars from Philadelphia to D.C. on January 17th. Thomas Clinton took a train and joined them the following day. On the 18th, the Black Mafia “hit squad” murdered seven people, all Hanafi (Orthodox) Muslims. Two adults and a child were shot to death, while four other children were drowned. The ages of the children ranged from 9 days to 10 years. The slayings revolved around an ideological dispute between the Black Muslims and the Hanafi aka Sunni sect of Muslims. The intended target was Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, leader of the 1,000-member Washington sect of Hanafis. On January 5th, Khaalis sent a letter to Black Muslim ministers denouncing the Black Muslims and Elijah Muhammad as “false prophets”.³ In the opening paragraph, he called Elijah Muhammad a “lying

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- 1 The Hanafi murders are described in excruciating detail in the following. District of Columbia Court of Appeals, *William Christian, Appellant, v. United States, Appellee; Theodore Moody, Appellant, v. United States, Appellee; John W. Clark, Appellant, v. United States, Appellee*, Nos. 8809, 8810, 8811, 11042, 394 A. 2d 1, September 28, 1978; John Sansing, “Hanafi Massacre, Hanafi Siege: How Greed, Revenge, Religious Fanaticism, and a Search for Justice Combined into a Washington Tragedy,” *The Washingtonian*, February 1980, pp. 87-96; and Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), pp 383-393.
 - 2 Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Peter Knobler, *Giant Steps* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983). Excerpts of Abdul-Jabbar’s autobiography appeared in “Abdul-Jabbar’s Long String of Off-the-Court Tragedies,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 22, 1983, Local, p. D01. Authorities initially thought Abdul-Jabbar may have been a target, and thus he was afforded a police escort for months following the events.
 - 3 *Christian et al. v. U.S.*; and James Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1 – The Muslim Mob Gets It On,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 1973, p. 220.

deceiver.”⁴ Khaalis also wrote a similar letter in December 1972, and sent both letters to 58 mosques nationwide.⁵

Khaalis was born Ernest Timothy McGhee, and formerly served as Elijah Muhammad’s national secretary in the Chicago national headquarters, 1954-1957. At that time he was named Ernest 2X McGhee. He was demoted in 1957, and moved to New York City. He next ran the Hanafi Midh-Hab center in Harlem as Hamaas Abdul Khaalis. Among others, he converted Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, formerly Lew Alcindor, in 1970. In 1971, Khaalis moved his headquarters to Washington, D.C., where Abdul-Jabbar had donated a \$78,000 home. The “imposing brick and fieldstone mansion” was located at 7700 16th St. NW, in an upper-class, largely African-American, neighborhood called the Gold Coast.⁶

An appeals court case summarized the key facts of the Hanafi murder case:

Two of the offenders initially gained entry to the house on the pretext of purchasing a religious pamphlet written by Hamaas Khaalis, who lived at this residence. The entrants forced three occupants at gunpoint to lie down on the floor. After placing shirts over their captives’ heads, the two let into the house five or six more intruders. Once they were inside they rounded up all the remaining occupants of the house and demanded money before taking them down in the basement. Most of the Hanafi residents were bound and had their heads covered to prevent them from seeing the intruders. Then, one at a time, three of the Hanafis were taken upstairs to various rooms and shot in the head at pointblank range; two of them died. Four of the young children were drowned – three in a bathtub together upstairs and a fourth in a washtub in the basement. Two other Hanafis were shot in other parts of the house, and one of them died.⁷

The intruders methodically made their way their way through the home, looking for Khaalis, and rummaging for anything valuable. John Clark asked Hamaas’ daughter, Amina, 23 years of age, “Why did he write those letters? Shouldn’t he have known better than to write those letters to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad? Why didn’t you try to stop him?” She was summarily taken to the third floor, ordered to kneel in a closet, and shot three times in the head. Remarkably, she survived and witnessed some of the ensuing horror. One of the affiliates later realized she was still breathing and shot her twice more in the head, and yet she still lived. Each of the older children and adults were executed kneeling, shot at point-blank range in the head, with the exception of Hamaas’ wife, Bibi. Bibi, whose three children were alive at this point, was bound, gagged and shot eight times in the basement of the home.

Two of the killers next began discussing drowning the children, at which point James Price questioned why they would have to kill the babies, since they could not possibly identify them and thus posed no risk. Furthermore, he said, he had joined in

4 Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 189. The full text of the second letter, sent on January 5, 1973, is presented in Appendix B of Evanzz, *The Messenger*, pp. 446-449.

5 Jim Nicholson, “Hanafi Siege Adds Chapter to Holy War,” *The Sunday Bulletin*, March 13, 1977, p. 1B.

6 Evanzz, p. 381.

7 *Christian et al v. U.S.*, pp. 3-4.

for a robbery heist and perhaps an assault on Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, not the killing of little children. Ronald Harvey responded by saying the children were to die because “the seed of the hypocrite is in them.”⁸ Harvey had told the “crew” he assembled the ostensible purpose for the trip was to rob the Hanafi sect of Muslims, but then ordered everyone to be killed once inside the home.⁹ The crew, in addition to exacting revenge on Khaalis, also thought the mansion must have contained a considerable amount of money because of the group’s relationship with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Early on during the event, John Clark didn’t believe Amina when she insisted there was no money in the home. He responded, “Come on, in this big-ass house you have to have some kind of money in here.” Clark also asked, “When is this Mr. Hamaas going to be home? I want to meet this Mr. Hamaas.” Quickly discovering both goals would go unmet – there was not a treasure trove in the home, and neither was Hamaas, the intruders ordered everyone into the basement, and the killings ensued. The incident represented the largest mass murder in Washington’s history.

Immediately after the murders, police on the scene found several items, including a .38 caliber pistol, a copy of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, and some credit cards belonging to a man named Willie Horton, and a credit card receipt to a “Brother Lt. John 38X”. Police were able to trace the pistol to a rape and robbery that took place on January 6, 1973. The gun was stolen from a man named Eugene White during that North Philadelphia incident. John Taliaferro was arrested in that case, and thus Washington D.C. Metropolitan police traveled to Philadelphia and interviewed him in late January about the Hanafi slayings. Taliaferro’s lawyer, Barry Denker, stated that while his client was a member of the Nation of Islam Mosque No. 12, Taliaferro had no knowledge of the Hanafi sect or of the ideological dispute between the groups.¹⁰ This was a significant development, though, and would fit in with other developments in the case. For instance, when police investigated Willie Horton, they discovered he was robbed in December, and the credit cards were stolen from him at that time. Furthermore, police traced the credit cards to a tuxedo rental in Philadelphia. A man by the name of John Clark, aka Brother Lt. John 38X of Mosque No. 12, had rented the tuxedo. The Horton credit card was also used to pay for the hotel room in Washington, D.C. the evening before the killings. Police later developed a strong case based on phone records, hotel bills, victim testimony, and evidence found at the scene. The most damning evidence, however, came from one of the Black Mafia’s own, James Price, who testified for the government.¹¹ Price confessed in late June, and gave a formal statement on July 3, 1973. He was also placed into protective custody on June 22 and moved to Washington, D.C.

8 Sansing, “Hanafi Massacre, Hanafi Siege”, p. 91.

9 PPD, “Background Investigation: Ronald Harvey,” p. 30.

10 Ivan C. Brandon, “Two Philadelphia Suspects Quizzed in Hanafi Slayings,” *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1973.

11 Price was being charged with another murder in Pennsylvania, and faced several robbery charges in Philadelphia, in addition to the Hanafi charges.

All seven Black Mafia defendants were indicted on August 15, 1973, even though Thomas Clinton died of leukemia on July 11, 1973. When the trial was about to begin in February 1974, Ronald Harvey was a fugitive. Rationally concerned about security in light of the Black Mafia's history and the warring factions of Muslims and others, officials had a special courtroom constructed, complete with bullet-proof glass and metal detectors. The trial of the five Black Mafia defendants was lengthy and complex. The government's case alone consumed almost fifty days, and included one hundred witnesses and more than 500 exhibits were introduced. The trial ultimately lasted thirteen weeks, and included a couple of significant exchanges between the Khaalis family and the defendants. For instance, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis opened his testimony by stating his position was "Masheer – the guide, spiritual adviser. The man who defends the faith. The man who knows tricksters and murderers and gangsters that deviate on Islam." As defense attorneys quickly asked the judge to declare a mistrial, Hamaas continued his verbal assault on the defense team, "It's over. It's over. You killed my babies. You killed my babies and shot my women."¹² Khaalis was escorted, and eventually banned, from the courtroom, and fined \$750 for contempt-of-court. Earlier in the proceedings, Amina Khaalis referred to the Black Mafia defendants as "part of Elijah Poole's cutthroat gang". Also, Khadiya Khaalis, Hamaas' first wife, was ordered to cease calling the defendants "murderers", at which point she left the courtroom in disgust. She stated, "If I can't be heard – or my family in regards to this – there is no sense in us being here at all."¹³

12 Eugene Meyer and Paul Edwards, "Barry 'A Very Lucky Man;' Bullet stopped near Heart," *The Washington Post*, March 10, 1977, p. A1.

13 Sansing, p. 94. There is a significant follow-up to the Hanafi murders, though not particularly germane to the understanding of the Black Mafia, per se. On March 9, 1977, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis and 11 other Hanafi Muslims under his direction stormed three government buildings. He and his followers were armed with an assortment of weapons, including a shotgun, rifles, handguns, machetes and a cross-bow. At approximately 11:00am, several Hanafis entered the B'nai B'rith national headquarters building, six blocks northwest of the White House, armed with guns and machetes. They attacked people in the lobby, shooting and pistol-whipping people as they rounded up occupants floor by floor. At approximately 11:30am, Hanafis wielding guns entered the Islamic Center on Embassy Row. At 2:40pm, Hanafis armed with shotguns stormed the D.C. City Council chambers in the District Building, less than two blocks from the White House. The men "took an elevator to the fifth floor, where the Council offices [were] located, stepped out into a corridor and blasted away." One of the terrorists fired a shotgun with double-O buckshot, killing Maurice Williams, a reporter for a local radio station, and wounding City Councilman Marion Barry in the chest. Another Hanafi fired a shotgun at Robert Pierce, a City Council aide, as he lay on the floor with his hands tied behind his back. At B'nai B'rith, gunmen had the largest group of hostages, including press officer Hank Siegel. Siegel later recalled some of the events. One particularly tense moment occurred when Khaalis called Siegel over and ordered a guard to point a rifle at Siegel's head. Khaalis next said, "The elevator is coming up. If there's a cop on it, he's dead and you're dead." The elevator was empty, and Siegel survived without further incident, though he did witness an assault. Khaalis and his followers were surprised to discover African-Americans working for the Jewish group. Siegel watched as an African-American man was stabbed "because he was working for Jews".

In all, Hamaas and his followers held 149 hostages, killed one person and wounded over 40 others. The hostage situation lasted for 37 hours. The events were attributable to the 1973 killings at

Despite the carnival atmosphere in the courtroom, John Clark, Theodore Moody, William Christian and John Griffin were each convicted on May 17, 1974.¹⁴ Judge Braman termed the crime “a holocaust”, and sentenced the Black Mafia affiliates to 140-year prison terms on July 10, 1974. Jerome Sinclair was acquitted two weeks prior when the “government conceded it had no evidence against him because of the refusal of a key witness to testify.”¹⁵

Four Black Mafia defendants in the “Hanafi” trial, William Christian, John Clark, John Griffin, and Thomas Clinton were also involved in a separate

the hands of the Black Mafia. Hamaas was disconcerted over what he deemed unsatisfactory punishments for the Hanafi killers. Amina Khaalis, Hamaas’ daughter, said the family was satisfied with the police investigation, but not with the judge who tried the case. The family believed Judge Leonard Braman’s Jewish background played a role in the trial. That is, the Hanafis believed Braman’s heritage contributed to Khaalis’ contempt-of-court charge, and to the resolution of the case. Thus, for the first of his three demands for releasing the hostages, Khaalis demanded authorities turn over the 1973 killers from Philadelphia’s Mosque No. 12 to him, personally. He also demanded the Court pay him back \$750 for the contempt-of-court fine he received during the Hanafi trials in 1974. Hamaas’ third demand was that the recently-released film, “Mohammad, Message of God,” stop being shown. The group considered the film to be sacrilegious.

During the hostage situation, Khaalis stated, “First thing, I want the killers of my babies ... I want to see them right here. I want to see how tough they are. I want the one who killed Malcolm [X] too.” He also complained about “Jewish judges” letting criminals go free. One of his cohorts stated “Zionest Jews” were behind the Black Muslims. He later repeated this line of reasoning at trial, testifying that he believed a “Zionest-Jewish conspiracy” was in place to take over the United States and the world. The attack on the Islamic Center was apparently related to a comment made by an Islamic Center official immediately following the 1973 murders. He described the Hanafi’s knowledge of Islam as “superficial”.

Ambassadors Ashraf Ghorbal (Egypt), Ardeshir Zahedi (Iran), and Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan (Pakistan) were called upon to meet with Khaalis to resolve the situation. After meeting with the three ambassadors, who sat down and discussed the Qur’an with him, Hamaas surrendered. Khaalis and the eleven other Hanafis were indicted on May 3, 1977, and on July 24, 1977 were each convicted for assorted offenses stemming from the siege. Hamaas Abdul Khaalis was sentenced to a prison term of 41 to 123 years for kidnapping and murder.

The following sources were utilized in the above summary of the “Hanafi siege”, as it was called: *The Washington Post* – William Greider and Richard Harwood, “Hanafi Muslim Bands Seize Hostages at 3 Sites; 1 Slain; Others Wounded,” March 10, 1977, p. A1; Joseph D. Whitaker, “Khaalis’ Daughter: ‘He’s Going to Get Murderers ... You Would Call It... Retribution’,” March 11, 1977, p. A1; J.Y. Smith, “12 Hanafis Guilty in Kidnappings, 3 in Slaying,” July 24, 1977, p. A1; J.Y. Smith and Laura A. Kiernan, “12 Hanafis Given Stiff Sentences,” September 7, 1977, p. A1; Laura A. Kiernan, “‘Hanafi Slayers’ Conviction Upheld,” September 29, 1978; Joseph D. Whitaker, “Appeals Court Upholds Hanafi Verdicts,” October 23, 1979, p. B1; Marc Fisher and Karlyn Barker, “10 Years After Takeover, Hostages Recall Terror,” March 10, 1987, p. B1.

Understandably, the “siege” received extensive media coverage with fuller details about the event, the subsequent trial, and reflections on the events. See, for example, Charles R. Babcock and Kevin Klose, “The Beginning ... ; From Beginning to End, 38-Hour Drama Unfolded Slowly,” March 12, 1977, p. A1; “Why Two Sects are at Odds,” *U.S. News & World Report*, March 21, 1977, p. 22 (n.a.); and Phil McCombs, “The Hanafi Takeover; One Year Later,” March 5, 1978, p. A1.

14 Judge Braman later granted John Griffin a retrial because the key witness against him, Amina Khaalis, identified another person as the one who took her child’s life in Ron Harvey’s trial in November 1974. This decision was also a factor in the 1977 Hanafi siege described above. Griffin was cleared in the Hanafi case entirely in November 1977, when a jury acquitted him.

15 Eugene L. Meyer, “Hanafi Defendant Acquitted as Government Rests Case,” *The Washington Post*, May 3, 1974.

kidnapping/robbery case which occurred in February 1973, approximately two weeks after their involvement in the D.C. killings.¹⁶

THE KELLY ROBBERY/KIDNAPPING

On February 8, 1973, Christian, Clark, Griffin, and Clinton, along with Black Mafia affiliate Richard Dabney, broke into the home of Thelma and Ernest Kelly, a bar owner, and demanded \$100,000.¹⁷ They pistol-whipped Kelly, who owned two bars, including Ernie's Gay Paree, a frequent Black Mafia hangout. Kelly was also involved in "illegal numbers writing."¹⁸ Explaining that he did not have that amount of money in his home, Ernest Kelly was forced at gunpoint to take Dabney and Clark to Kelly's bank (Continental Bank, Broad and Nedro Streets in Philadelphia) to provide them with the contents of Kelly's safety deposit box. Christian, Griffin and Clinton remained behind with Kelly's wife and grandchildren, who lived with them, "to guard them, and to lend credence to Clark's threat that if anything went wrong at the bank ... then Clark would telephone the house and have Christian, Griffin and Clinton kill everyone in the family."¹⁹ At one point during the hostage situation, Kelly's wife had a gun pressed against her head, and as she awaited her husband's return from the bank, Griffin told her, "If things don't work out right, we will kill the little bastards."²⁰ In light of the recent drowning of Hanafi babies, this was not idle chatter. Ernest Kelly happened to see a police officer he knew while at the bank, jumped through a plate glass window, and the robbery attempt was thwarted. The kidnapping back at his home was also resolved without harm to his family. Christian and Griffin were arrested in the Kelly home that afternoon, while Clark was not arrested until March 16, 1973. A murder related to the Kelly incident is discussed below. On March 20, 1973, Clark began serving his fifteen-year sentence for the 1971 Southeastern National Bank robbery. Indictments were returned in the Kelly case on August 24, 1973, though Christian and Griffin were fugitives until they were arrested in Jacksonville, Florida on October 2, 1973. Each of the defendants was later found guilty, adding time to the sentences each was serving for the Hanafi murders.²¹

16 United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, *United States of America v. John W. Clark, William Christian and John Griffin*, Criminal No. 73-471, 398 F. Supp. 341, July 14, 1975.

17 Jim Nicholson, "Witness Against Muslims Finds Son's Body in Car," *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 12, 1980, p. 3. The Kelly residence was located at 5769 Kemble Ave.

18 *U.S. v. Clark et al.* At trial, Kelly (p. 26):

admitted to past participation in numbers writing, denied 'conducting' the numbers game at present. Denied participation in organized crime and sale and receipt of stolen goods, and refused to answer questions pertaining to the operation of the numbers game, income tax matters, and the use of proceeds from numbers in illegal narcotics transactions.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

20 Francis M. Lordan, "Muslim Killers Tried in Theft," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 15, 1974.

21 *U.S. v. Clark et al.*

Meanwhile, the Black Mafia's decision to engage more in the drug trade was starting to have the predictable effects. On March 20, 1973, James Enoch was found guilty of committing perjury regarding testimony he provided "under oath before grand jury investigating narcotics traffic in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania."²² The Black Mafia was receiving increased attention from law enforcement, the public and the media following the string of high-profile crimes they committed. The acts continued, however, including the murder of high-profile personality Major Coxson.

THE MURDER OF MAJOR COXSON

Major Benjamin Coxson was a small man with a big, toothy grin who rose from poverty to riches under mysterious circumstances and adopted a flamboyant lifestyle that delighted his friends and confounded his enemies.²³ Adolph Katz (1973)

On June 8, 1973, Ronald Harvey, Sam Christian and two other Black Mafia affiliates gained entry to Major Benjamin Coxson's home and shot all four occupants.²⁴ Coxson answered the door to his residence in a secluded area of Cherry Hill (NJ) at approximately 4:00am, and "admitted a person known to (him) and his family" when "three other Negro males pushed their way into the house and proceeded to tie up Coxson and other members of his family, namely, his wife, daughter, and two sons."²⁵ "Coxson's hands were tied behind his back. His legs were bound and he was gagged. Neckties were used for the bonds and gag."²⁶ He was found kneeling by a waterbed, and "had been shot once in the back of the head."²⁷ The children were tied up and shot in their bedrooms. Coxson and his stepdaughter Lita Luby, 15, were killed, while his common-law wife Lois Luby and her son Toro, 14, were seriously wounded. His other "son," Lex, was "placed in a rear bedroom; whereupon hearing gunshots being fired, he jumped out the window, while still bound, and found his way to a neighbor's home and asked them to notify police of the shooting."²⁸ Camden County (NJ) Medical Investigator Thomas R. Daley considered Coxson's killing "an execution."²⁹

Coxson had reneged on upwards of \$200,000 from a narcotics deal in which he was a middleman between the Black Mafia and Italian groups in New York City.³⁰

22 *United States of America v. James Enoch*, Crim. No. 72-617, United States District Court for the eastern District of Pennsylvania, 360 F. Supp. 572; 1973 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 13919, April 24, 1973.

23 Adolph Katz, "Coxson: A Man of Mystery with a Love for Luxury Cars," *The Evening Bulletin*, June 8, 1973, p. 3.

24 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d.

25 OCU, "Major B. Coxson," June 8, 1973.

26 George L. Kerns and Francis J. Lenny, "Major Coxson Slain in Cherry Hill Home," *The Evening Bulletin*, June 8, 1973, p. 1.

27 *Ibid.*

28 OCU, "Major B. Coxson," June 8, 1973.

29 Kerns and Lenny, p. 1.

30 Nicholson, "The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1," p. 216. This article contains the most comprehensive analysis of the motivations for the Coxson killing available (including law enforcement files).

At the time of his death, Coxson was an active target of several criminal investigations at both the local and federal levels.³¹ Authorities were primarily occupied with income tax evasion issues, considering that Coxson could not entirely account for his ostentatious lifestyle which included a custom-built home, then valued at \$200,000, and six cars, among them – “a Rolls Royce, a Lincoln limousine, an X-J6, a Mark IV that could be started by remote control, and a Mercedes 350.”³² According to former U.S. Attorney E.J. Curran, “we had Coxson under very active investigation ... You might say we were just inches away from indicting him.”³³ This would not have been Coxson’s first interaction with law enforcement authorities, however. He had an extensive arrest record in Philadelphia dating back to 1949 when he was first arrested in the city for fraud. Through 1970, he had been arrested seventeen times in Philadelphia for a variety of theft- and fraud-related offenses.³⁴ Additionally, on March 7, 1972, the IRS had “perfected a federal tax lien” on one of Coxson’s cars, eventually seizing it in May of 1972 “to apply it to Coxson’s tax deficiency.”³⁵ Unlike his Black Mafia colleagues, Coxson’s record does not list a single arrest involving violence or the use and/or possession of a weapon. Perhaps this is why syndicated columnist Claude Lewis considered Coxson a “lovable rogue.”³⁶ His intelligence file is replete with vehicle theft cases and conspiracies to defraud various persons in Philadelphia and in the Bronx, New York.³⁷ He once served 22 months in federal prison on a fraud conviction. “When he came out, the Philadelphia Tribune hailed his return as the local ‘playboy-sportsman-auto-king’.”³⁸ According to intelligence reports, Coxson had another car confiscated by the IRS on May 12, 1972. Interestingly, in 1972 Coxson was bidding for the same home as Mayor Frank Rizzo.³⁹

Major Coxson was never closer than an associate, if that, with the Black Mafia, but provided valuable contacts with white society.⁴⁰ As the Black Mafia was further absorbed into the Black Muslim movement, this became less of an asset, and

31 See the Internal Revenue Service, Philadelphia Regional Office’s “List of Targets for Investigations,” April 15, 1972. The list was updated on May 26, 1972 and contained a total of twenty-one targets, including Black Mafia affiliates Coxson, Carl Banks, Vernon Earl Walden, John “Stan the Man” Watson, Robert Bolar and Leroy Griffin.

32 Katz, p. 3.

33 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1,” p. 218.

34 For a synopsis of Coxson’s criminal record, also see Henry W. Messaros and Donald B. Proctor, “Coxson was ‘Inch Awa’ from Federal Charges,” *The Evening Bulletin*, June 8, 1973, p. 1.

35 *First National Bank of Marlton, a Corporation of the United States, Plaintiff v. Major Coxson, United States of America and Internal Revenue Service, Defendants*, Civil Action No. 347-73, United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, 1976 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15155; 76-1 U.S. Tax Cas. (CCH) P9450; 37 A.F.T.R.2d (RIA) 1382, May 11, 1976, p. 2.

36 Claude Lewis, “The Doors Were Open: Business Makes It Easy for Crime Figures,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 11, 1987, p. A15.

37 See, for example, OCU report, “Supplemental Information: Major Coxson,” April 11, 1972.

38 Gaeton Fonzi, “The Man from M.O.X.I.E.,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, July 1970, p. 128.

39 Ron Avery, “Here’s a Two-House Story,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 3, 1995, p. 12.

40 James Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, TODAY, August 12, 1973, p. T-13.

certainly was not enough to spare his life for the large debt for which he was ultimately slain. Several Black Muslims courted Coxson to join their ranks to no avail, including his longtime “associate” Muhammad Ali.⁴¹ Ali had one year earlier dedicated his June 27th victory over Jerry Quarry in Las Vegas to “the next mayor of Camden New Jersey, Major Coxson.” He lost the mayoral race to Angelo Errichetti in a landslide, despite heavy financing from black Philly gangsters.⁴² Ali and “the incomparable Major Coxan (sic)” worked together promoting the opening of a hardware store in the city’s Germantown section of Philadelphia in February of 1973.⁴³ Ali, who had purchased his Cherry Hill home from Coxson,⁴⁴ said of him, “Coxson was a good associate of mine, not a true friend. The Koran preaches that only a Muslim can be true friends with another Muslim, and Coxson was not a Muslim.”⁴⁵ Surveillance conducted by members of Philadelphia’s Organized Crime Unit placed “Coxson in the company of Muhammed (sic) Ali at 16th & Chestnut Sts. as early as 2:00pm on Thursday, 6/7/73,”⁴⁶ approximately fourteen hours before his murder. They were sitting in Coxson’s Rolls Royce. Almost three decades later, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* placed the Coxson murder on its list of “violent crimes of the 20th century”.⁴⁷

Following the Coxson murders, Sam Christian and Ron Harvey were placed on the FBI’s “Ten Most Wanted” list on December 7, 1973. When Christian made the list, he had been arrested 33 times and charged in seven murders. Figure 4.1 is the “Wanted Poster” disseminated by law enforcement for fugitive Ron Harvey.

Harvey had, in fact, been apprehended on June 28th but was able to post the requisite 10% of his \$165,000 bail in cash, and fled on August 21st.⁴⁸ Harvey was the 320th person to make the Most Wanted list, and Christian was the 321st.⁴⁹

41 Gerald Early, “Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times (book review),” *The New Republic*, v. 205, no. 18 (October 28, 1991), p. 32, stated, “Surely, no life of Ali is complete without a thorough investigation of the Philadelphia and Cherry Hill years, without a thorough investigation of the New York and Philadelphia mosques.” Early was particularly interested in Ali’s relationship with Major Coxson. While Ali certainly traveled with an interesting crowd in Philadelphia and South Jersey, there is no suggestion, let alone evidence, of any wrongdoings on Ali’s part. My examination of surveillance records and other intelligence documents, many of which include analyses of Ali, does not reveal a single item relating to dubious activities by Ali.

42 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1,” p. 219.

43 See the full-page advertisement which appeared in *The Sunday Bulletin*, February 18, 1973, section 3, p. 9.

44 “He Could Share His Soup,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 17, 1978, Local, (Sports, n.p.) n.a.

45 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1,” p. 220.

46 OCU, “Major B. Coxson,” June 8, 1973.

47 “Region has seen crimes as violent as the century,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 22, 1999 (n.a.).

48 Philadelphia Police Department, “Background Investigation: Ronald Harvey,” n.d., p. 37. Harvey’s lawyer was Nino V. Tinari, who suspected foul play because Harvey was supposedly “harassed” while free on bail in Philadelphia.

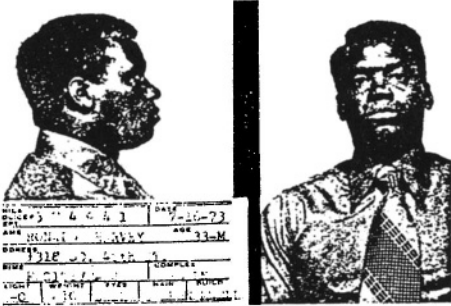
49 Mark Sabljak and Martin H. Greenberg, *Most Wanted: A History of the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted List* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1990). Christian and Harvey appear on pp. 197-198. Consider that as of August 1999, there have been a total of 458 fugitives on the F.B.I.’s “Ten Most Wanted List,” including two Black Mafia affiliates (Christian and Harvey). Murray Dubin, “After 50 Years, this top 10 list is still No. 1,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 17, 2000.

Commenting on their addition to the list, the FBI said Harvey and Christian were members of the Black Mafia, an organization “which preys upon black communities and deals in murder, narcotics, extortion, the numbers racket and prostitution.” Furthermore, the FBI stated:

Christian, who is reputed to be a cold-blooded killer and a murderer for pay, is wanted for unlawful flight to avoid prosecution for armed robbery. He has been charged with the wounding of a New York City Police Department detective, and the murder of five individuals resulting from a shoot-out in an Atlantic City, New Jersey, nightclub during a robbery. He allegedly travels with two bodyguards.⁵⁰

FIGURE 4.1. “Wanted” Poster for Ronald Harvey, December 1973

WANTED FOR DOUBLE HOMICIDE



DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT

RONALD HARVEY
(Last known address)
1318 S. 48th Street
Philadelphia, Pa.

SEX: Male
AGE: 33
D.O.B.: July 1, 1940
WEIGHT: 195 Pounds
HEIGHT: 5 Feet - 11 Inches
BUILD: Stocky
COMPLEXION: Dark Brown
HAIR: Short cut
MUSTACHE: Slight

FPC 7 9 aA IO 15

V.C.I.C.F.P.C. - AA - AA - 07 - PO - 15 - AA - AA - 69 - PI - 17

Ronald Harvey was identified and apprehended in Philadelphia, Pa. as one of the suspects involved in the Homicide (Shooting) of Major Coxson and the daughter of his common law wife, and the Atrocious Assault and Battery (Shooting) of his common law wife and her son. The crime occurred in the private home of the victim (Coxson) located in Cherry Hill, New Jersey on Friday, June 8, 1973 at approximately 4:30 a.m. Harvey failed to appear as scheduled on August 21, 1973 and his bail forfeited. Harvey was released on \$175,000.00 bail pending his hearing in Philadelphia court regarding extradition to New Jersey. Harvey is wanted in New Jersey for 2 counts of Homicide, 2 counts of Atrocious Assault and Battery (Shooting) and 2 counts of Assault with a Deadly Weapon. Harvey is presently under Federal indictment for Homicide in Washington, D.C. in connection with the death of seven (7) Black Muslims.

Harvey is a member of the Black Muslims whose main office is located in Chicago, Illinois. **HE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EXTREMELY DANGEROUS AND CAUTION USED.**

WARRANTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED - WILL EXTRADITE

Previous arrests include C.C.D.W., assault on a police officer, resisting arrest, plus other arrests. Criminal records available upon request.

SPECIAL ATTENTION: CHICAGO, ILL. and PHILADELPHIA, PA. POLICE DEPARTMENTS

As stated above, Christian was arrested in Detroit on December 11, 1973, while Harvey was arrested in Chicago on March 27, 1974.⁵¹ Ronald Harvey was tried for

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵¹ Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d.; Philadelphia Police Department, "Background Investigation: Ronald Harvey," n.d., p. 37.

the Hanafi murders, and was convicted on November 21, 1974. On January 8, 1975, he was sentenced to 140 years, just as his co-conspirators months before. In June 1977, Harvey was sentenced to two life terms for the Coxson and Luby murders. Christian was never convicted for the Coxson or Palmer murders, largely because witnesses refused to testify against him. One of the few cases which was not dismissed because of a lack of witnesses was a 1971 robbery of a Harlem liquor store in which he shot a police officer. After Christian's 1973 arrest, he was convicted and served time for attempted murder in the 1971 Harlem case. Christian was paroled by New York authorities in November of 1988.⁵²

RONALD HARVEY: PROFILE OF A BLACK MAFIA EXECUTIONER

Ronald Harvey was more than a founding member of the Black Mafia. Reporters and officials who investigated the group in the early 1970s speak in awe of Harvey's street status. A flamboyant, big spender who had a voracious appetite for women (often enjoying several simultaneously), Harvey was known for one thing over all others: Violence. Even among fearsome colleagues, he was feared. What follows is an examination of Harvey's criminogenic background leading to his eventual imprisonment and concluding with his son's conviction and sentence for murder.⁵³

Ronald Francis Harvey was born on July 2, 1940 in Philadelphia to Harry Harvey, Sr. and Henrietta Harvey (nee Lomax). His father was 19 years old, while his mother was 16 years of age. Harry Harvey had no Philadelphia police record at the time, though Henrietta had a "history of 3 criminal arrests" (unknown offenses).

Ron Harvey never graduated from high school, attending Philadelphia public schools until dropping out of the tenth grade at Bartram High, 66th and Elmwood. Harvey's police file includes some interesting, and perhaps telling, comments from his teachers throughout his schooling. The file does not identify when these comments were made. Among them are the following: "Ronald does not work to his potential"; "Ronald is lazy"; "Ronald stays out on days tests are given"; "Ronald is undependable"; "Ronald misses entirely to (sic) much time, something MUST be done"; and "Ronald is sneaky". Harvey was suspended from school on two different occasions, and the School Board of Philadelphia requested on two occasions (9/22/46, age 5; and 10/21/48, age 8) that he submit to psychological examinations. Law enforcement officials did not possess the requisite court order, and thus did not receive further information from the School Board regarding these requests.

Harvey's listed places of employment from 1958-1967 ranged from working at a junkyard to bartending to working as a butcher at a meat company. In 1970, he listed his place of employment as cook at Mohamed's Mosque, 3754 Germantown Ave. In

52 See Jack McGuire, "Cops Let Black Mafia Founder Slip Through Their Finger(print)s," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 16, 1990, Local, p. 7.

53 Unless otherwise noted, the following narrative is derived from a comprehensive 37-page document, Philadelphia Police Department, "Background Investigation: Ronald Harvey," n.d.

1972 and 1973, he listed “baker” and “manager”, respectively, for the Shabazz Bakery at Broad and Susquehanna, adjacent to the Black Mafia’s headquarters.

The criminal history of Ronald Harvey has been presented above in splintered fashion, because the analysis is presented in chronological order almost exclusively. It may therefore be constructive to summarize Harvey’s noteworthy activities, and I thus present law enforcement’s analysis of Harvey in 1974, just after his stint on the FBI’s Most Wanted List:

The criminal record of Ronald Harvey, consists of 3 pages ... dating back to 1959, when he was 19 years of age, enumerating 17 arrests nearly all consisting of some form of violence ... This does NOT include the contacts he encountered with the police as a juvenile. Harvey has documented 18 separate home addresses, hidden in the shadow of six aliases, and culminated his career with a reputation, soon to be substantiated (sic) in a Court of Law, of a hired assassin. A full 9 ... arrests involved, among other charges, the carrying of concealed deadly weapons. He has assaulted arresting police officers, and engaged in running gun battles with police authorities to avoid arrest.

In deadly contrast to the above narration of crime, is the pitiful record of conviction. Of the 17 arrests the subject has sustained a mere 3 convictions, one of which was for the insignificant charge of Disorderly Conduct. Ronald Harvey has spent a little over a year in jail, and this was actually awaiting trial, and NOT the result of a formal sentence. However, the lack of convictions lie (sic) NOT with the Court System, but rather with the subject’s ability to threaten and intimidate victims or witnesses, to such an extent they refuse to testify against him.

The murder of Major Coxson was Harvey’s last slaying. In August 1977, he died of congestive heart failure in a hospital for federal prisoners in Springfield, Missouri, while a direct appeal from his conviction for the Hanafi slayings was pending before the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.⁵⁴

Harvey had one brother, Harry Harvey, Jr., born in 1938, four “half brothers” and one “half sister”. Police files state Harry, Jr. was “believed to be retarded” and being raised by his grandmother [as of 1974]. Three of Ron Harvey’s four half brothers had criminal histories involving violence. For instance, by age 26 Alvin Harvey had six arrests, mostly for robberies, and was well known for being armed. Crayman Harvey was an active gang member, and by age 23 had been arrested three times. By age 18, Earl Harvey had been arrested seven times in Philadelphia, and “three of the offenses were felony charges, including one for robbery.” Harvey’s other two siblings had no known criminal histories as of 1974. Two of Harvey’s three uncles were also involved in crime, as evidenced by their collective eight arrests.

Ron Harvey married 20 year-old Hattie Mae Lamb on October 25, 1958 just four months after they had their first child, Eriline Lena Lamb. Ronald Harvey, Jr., was born on November 22, 1959.

Sometime in 1960, while ... Ronald Harvey was in jail awaiting trial, Hattie Mae became pregnant, with her 3rd child, by one Wyatt Leftwich ... This pregnancy culminated in the

54 *Ronald Harvey, Appellant, v. United States*, Appellee, No. 9309, District of Columbia Court of Appeals, 385 A.2d 36; 1978 D.C. App LEXIS 592, April 5, 1978.

birth of Elaine Leftwich, aka Elaine Harvey, on 6-27-61, and resulted in the separation (sic) of the subject from his wife Hattie Mae, upon his release from jail sometime in 1961.

Ron and Hattie Mae Harvey were not formally divorced as of 1974, by which time Hattie Mae had a history of three arrests, including one for homicide by stabbing for which she received a five-year probation period. Eriline apparently avoided the criminal lifestyles surrounding the greater Harvey clan, but the same cannot be said for Ron Harvey, Jr.

By 1974, 15 year-old Ron Harvey, Jr. had a history of three juvenile arrests. On October 24, 1977, Ronald Harvey, Jr. shot and murdered Arnold Goldsmith. Days later, he surrendered to *Philadelphia Daily News* columnist Chuck Stone, and was convicted in March of 1978 “by a jury in the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia of the offenses of murder of the third degree and possession of instruments of crime.” He was sentenced on February 20, 1979 to “terms of ten to twenty years for the murder conviction, and one to five years for the weapons offense.”⁵⁵ As he was led from the courtroom, Harvey threatened the victim’s family, stating, “That’s okay. I’ll be on the street and you’ll be next.”⁵⁶ According to a judge who reviewed the murder case against Harvey’s son, Ronald, Jr., the younger Harvey was “a hero worshipper of his father” because of “his father’s achievements over the years.” The judge stated, “That’s the impression I get from people that (sic) have interviewed him.”⁵⁷

Black Mafia activities up to and including the Coxson slayings garnered increasing scrutiny from law enforcement and the media. Perhaps the single most substantive and significant article appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* Today pullout section on August 12, 1973. The multi-page analysis included the following “snapshot” of the group as they were hitting their stride:

The Black Mafia is real. It is not a cop fantasy, newspaperman’s pipe dream or movie myth. It is a black crime syndicate that has been growing unchecked in Philadelphia for the past five years. It has expanded and evolved into a powerful crime cartel with chains of command, enforcers, soldiers, financiers, regular business meetings and assigned territories. It specializes in narcotics, extortion and murder, with minor interests in loan sharking, numbers and prostitution. It has a war chest that bankrolls drugs and gambling and buys the best lawyers.⁵⁸

55 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellee, v. Ronald Harvey, Jr., Appellant*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 494 Pa. 154; 430 A.2d 1163; 1981 Pa. LEXIS 912, July 2, 1981.

56 “Killer Threatens Victim’s Mom,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 21, 1979. The lone witness to testify against Ronald Harvey, Jr., Ronald Willis, was shot and killed after the trial in apparent retaliation for his testimony.

57 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Ronald Harvey, Appellant*, No. 00145 PHL 87, Superior Court of Pennsylvania, 365 Pa. Super. 296; 529 A.2d 516; 1987 Pa. Super. LEXIS 8770, August 10, 1987.

58 Nicholson, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia,” p. T-8.

As the Black Mafia grew in size and stature, it was almost inevitable the group would have skirmishes with the dominant Italian-American group, the Bruno “family”.⁵⁹

One was a tense situation involving independent numbers bankers Pasquale “Black Pat” Monzelli and James Singleton who “had been approached by members of the Black Mafia concerning payment of money for protection” in early September 1973.⁶⁰ Monzelli, whose nickname came from his closeness with African-American clients, disclosed to the OCU that he was told to pay \$700 per week to the group, but refused to confirm the payments and to cooperate with authorities by identifying who had approached him. Singleton was beaten by unidentified Black Mafia affiliates in mid-September of 1973 for not accepting their conditions. He had refused to pay the Black Mafia. Following his beating, he moved to New Jersey.⁶¹

Monzelli was questioned by police regarding the Singleton assault. He stated he was aware of two other similar beatings by the Black Mafia. One victim was a 61-year-old numbers writer named Joseph “Pepe” Fanelli, the other was a worker for Fanelli named Lombardi. They were severely beaten and robbed after they had picked up their daily take from their African-American street writers.⁶² At the time, Fanelli and his partner, Ralph Patrone, were not paying tribute to the Black Mafia. Fanelli and Patrone refused to cooperate with authorities, and it is unknown how the event affected their business. Police also questioned Frank “Chickie” Narducci, one of the “fast rising and most powerful men in the (Bruno) organization,” and a veteran loanshark and gambler with 21 arrests at the time.⁶³ Asked about the Black Mafia beatings and the territorial dispute, Narducci told authorities, “if you shoot two niggers, the rest will learn,” and assured authorities he would handle anything which concerned him.⁶⁴ According to reporter Jim Nicholson’s sources, Monzelli eventually went back to his Italian mob contacts and detailed the threats and demands. While the white mob did not exert control over Monzelli, one of the group’s members still exploded after hearing the extortion plan. He said “you pay them one goddam (sic) dime and there’ll be six dead niggers on your doorstep the next morning.”⁶⁵ These statements turned out to be just wind. Payoffs were made. Months later Black Pat was “doing better now than ever in his life,” despite paying

59 For an economic perspective on violence and competition in organized crime, see Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Invisible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), chapters 5-7. Reuter’s examination of “competitive violence” on p. 139 is particularly enlightening when considering the strained relationship between the Bruno family and the Black Mafia during the early 1970s.

60 OCU memo, “Contacts Made by Organized Crime Unit,” November 7, 1973.

61 OCU, “debriefing report,” October 1, 1973.

62 OCU, interview with informant, November 15, 1973.

63 James Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 2 – But The Mafia Isn’t Sweating,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 1973, p. 225.

64 OCU, “debriefing report,” October 1, 1973.

65 Nicholson, “The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 2,” p. 224.

\$1,000 per week to the Black Mafia. Monzelli was making \$5,000 a day with Black Mafia backing.⁶⁶

Also in September of 1973, Black Mafia enforcer Russell Barnes was about to go on trial for the 1971 murder of Wardell Green. The only witness to the shooting was Velma Green, Wardell's sister. She was shot to death at her home, "just seven days before she was to testify against Barnes."⁶⁷ He was thus acquitted in that case.⁶⁸ Following his arrest for narcotics, and related, offenses in 1974, Barnes confessed to authorities that he was a contract killer for the Black Mafia.

The warfare continued when independent heroin dealer Thomas "Cadillac Tommy" Farrington was shot to death by Charles Russell in front of the Gay Paree bar at 18th and Cumberland in North Philadelphia on October 3, 1973.⁶⁹ The Black Mafia's George "Bo" Abney had contracted Russell. The killing was considered to be a territorial dispute, and was significant for North Philadelphia's heroin supply because Farrington received his heroin directly from the Frank Matthews organization. Therefore, his supply was more constant than rival dealers, and could easily be upgraded in quantity because of the Matthews organization's substantial networks. Abney took over the territory, and DBA intelligence reports indicated a marked increase in his trips to New York City and in the quantities of narcotics he was dealing.⁷⁰

In the midst of increased and mounting public pressure against them, the Black Mafia founded their third (and final) community organization, Black B. Inc, on November 9, 1973 (Black B. Inc is discussed below). The primary goal of the organization was purportedly to stop gang warfare in the African-American community. This was laughable to law enforcement officials and others familiar with the group who knew their history of involvement with gangs. From 1968 to 1973, the Black Mafia had worked on and off, with several of the city's larger and more influential gangs. As their power increased, however, their reliance on these gangs lessened, but their presence in some areas was costing the Black Mafia business. Thus, in May of 1973, Russell Barnes and Larry Starks organized a "recruitment" of gangs.⁷¹ Of vital importance was their nemesis, the heavy-handed 20th and Carpenter Street gang. The 20th and Carpenter crew had a lucrative territory, one which they had run for years. They were, therefore, very skeptical of any proposed compromise, but feared they would not win a battle with the Black Mafia, especially now that the group was aligned with the Black Muslims. The 20th and Carpenter Street gang was the first such group to accept the Black Mafia's

66 OCU, "debriefing report," November 15, 1973.

67 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 6. Also see OCU debriefing report, "Black Mafia Notes," September 24, 1973, containing information received by OCU from informant.

68 Robert J. Terry and Paul Nussbaum, "Reputed Black Mafia Leader Slain," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 24, 1986, p. B03.

69 DEA debriefing report, "Black Organized Crime Traffickers," October 12, 1973.

70 See DEA debriefing report, "ABNEY, George @ BO ABNEY," n.d., p. 1.

71 OCU, "History of Black B. Inc.," March 7, 1974, p. 3.

terms, particularly the loss of territory and the “street tax” they now paid. Once this gang was in the fold, the Black Mafia was able to enlist the services of other gangs from around the city, primarily in South and West Philadelphia. Six of the gangs, in addition to the “Carpenter Street” gang, totaled approximately 150 members. The 20th and Carpenter crew, with the backing of Barnes and Starks, victimized those gangs not in compliance.

It did not take long, however, for the 20th and Carpenter group to become displeased with the deal they had brokered, and began operating independently again in late 1973, apparently willing to risk battle with their recent partners. As both intelligence reports and news accounts agree, the split set the stage for some of the most violent street warfare in the city’s history, including “armed teenage boys on bicycles ... taking pot-shots at grown men – and killing several,” and firebombs exploding at night.⁷² The 20th and Carpenter crew was far outnumbered, though, and it was not long before the group had forfeited whatever territory it still claimed.

In late 1973, leaders such as Sam Christian, Ronald Harvey, Nudie Mims, and Bo Baynes were either in prison or fleeing prosecution. Furthermore, many of their immediate underlings were in similar predicaments or deceased from business-related warfare. Thus, second-line leaders such as James Fox, Lonnie Dawson, Eugene Hearn, Larry Starks, Russell Barnes and others assumed important positions within the organization.

James Fox and Lonnie Dawson would go on to become major players in Philadelphia’s underworld, and thus a brief summary of their backgrounds before their ascendance to the Black Mafia’s top echelon is warranted. This is particularly relevant because their personal experiences are similar to those of Ronald Harvey, another Black Mafia leader.

JAMES FOX AND LONNIE DAWSON

James G. Fox

James Fox was a particularly interesting figure, known as a “handsome, well-dressed man who liked to cruise the streets in his flaming red Cadillac.”⁷³ Though not as dominating a figure as Sam Christian, Fox was still a stocky, imposing figure at 5’9”, 217 lbs. Unlike Christian, Fox was known more for his deft social skills than his brawn. He was cited by two interview sources as the key figure courted by City Councilman Thomas Foglietta regarding grant funds for Black Inc.⁷⁴

Fox was born in Philadelphia on October 3, 1948 to Obile and Lilly Mae Fox. Fox’s mother had a criminal history in Philadelphia, including arrests for illegal

72 John F. Morrison, “‘Black Mafia’ Was Short-Lived,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 24, 1986, Local, p. 4.

73 Jim Nicholson, “Drug Chief,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 25, 1979, Local, p. 12.

74 Unless otherwise noted, the following narrative is derived from a 5-page background report. Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime Unit, “Black Mafia: Investigation of James Fox,” December 14, 1973.

lottery and sales and possession of narcotics. His father, Obile, had been arrested ten times in Philadelphia as of December 14, 1973. These included arrests for various offenses, including larceny of auto tags; larceny and receiving stolen goods; burglary; illegal possession of liquor; sales of liquor without a license; fugitive of justice; violation of the Uniform Firearms Act (VUFA), carrying a concealed deadly weapon, reckless use of a firearm; and possession of stolen interstate shipment. Several of Fox's siblings also had criminal histories within the city. Consider the following. Ann Crawford, his sister, had three arrests (assault and battery and two arrests for shoplifting). Fox had four brothers, each with criminal backgrounds. Jefferson Fox had three arrests (aggravated robbery, larceny, assault and battery on a police officer; assault with intent to kill, aggravated assault and battery; and distribution of a controlled substance). James Fox was arrested with Jefferson in the officer assault case, which occurred on January 11, 1969, but was never charged. Ellis Fox had arrests for interfering with an officer, disorderly conduct; and for illegal sales of liquor. Thomas Fox was second to James with respect to criminal histories. As of December 1973, he had four documented arrests: assault with intent to kill, aggravated assault and battery, VUFA; aggravated robbery, robbery, larceny; robbery, larceny, receiving stolen goods; and possession with intent to deliver controlled substances.

Unlike some of his Black Mafia cohorts, James Fox had a high school education. He graduated from Edward Bok Vocational School in 1966. Fox was employed by Joseph H. Cohen and Sons, a men's clothing store, as a presser. He left Cohen and Sons sometime in 1970 after joining the Council for Youth and Urban Development, a Black Mafia front. His criminal associations and activities began in earnest around that time.

Lonnie Dawson

Dawson, also known as Lonnie Tillison, was physically unimpressive at 5'8" and 157 pounds. Dawson was known for driving around his territories in a white Cadillac, as opposed to the red "Caddy" preferred by Fox. One thing the two shared in common was their personal backgrounds.⁷⁵ Dawson emerged from an equally criminal social milieu. Lonnie Dawson was born in Philadelphia on October 29, 1947 to Hazel Elizabeth Dawson (nee Tillison) and Dudley Dawson. Dawson's mother did not have a criminal history. Dudley had a history of six arrests for the following: burglary (twice); disorderly conduct; resisting arrest; malicious mischief; and liquor violations. Lonnie Dawson's brother was also named Dudley Dawson. He had seven arrests for the following offenses: aggravated robbery; assault and battery; illegal lottery; malicious mischief; liquor violations; and contempt of court (twice). Lonnie Dawson's uncle, Ralph Tillison, had a criminal history in Philadelphia of

75 Unless otherwise noted, the following narrative is derived from a 5-page background report. Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime Unit, "Black Mafia: Investigation of Lonnie Dawson," December 3, 1973.

eight arrests: burglary (three times); VUFA; disorderly house; damage to city property; assault and robbery; and violation of parole.

Lonnie Dawson's wife, Brenda Dawson, had been arrested once in Philadelphia as of December 1973, for possession of narcotics. Lonnie Dawson left Octavium Catto School, a remedial disciplinary institution, in 1964, before completing the tenth grade. He was employed briefly in 1964, working for J&A Catering, and next as a welder trainee in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1966. Lonnie Dawson was arrested on December 15, 1967, and charged with several counts each of aggravated robbery and the playful pointing and discharging of a deadly weapon, and was also charged with conspiracy and carrying a concealed deadly weapon. All charges were dismissed in this case, but he wound up serving time in Graterford Prison on other charges. He was paroled and released on January 4, 1971. This is when his activities with Philadelphia's Black Mafia began.

James Fox, Lonnie Dawson and the rest of the evolving Black Mafia hierarchy started making traditional, stereotypical mistakes characteristic of organized criminals; namely, they became overconfident and greedy. Perhaps the most glaring example of these damning missteps occurred during November and December of 1973. By the end of 1973, Philadelphia police had developed quality intelligence on certain Black Mafia affiliates and matters. In one stunning disclosure, police were informed that in late November, the Black Mafia had a discussion in their South Street headquarters centered on killing a Philadelphia Police Highway Patrol officer who had been successful in developing cases against the group.⁷⁶ In another incredible finding, authorities received information the Black Mafia was going to host a ball on New Year's Eve. The "Black Mafia Ball", as it was known, was scheduled to be held at the Sheldron Ballroom, Broad Street and Cheltenham Avenue.⁷⁷ The police soon verified the information, and discovered specifics including how many (30) tuxedos were rented by the group, when they were rented (November 12th) and from whom (an "After Six" franchise). According to the rental agency, the group placed one large order, and this was an otherwise nondescript transaction. No threats or requests for donations to Black Mafia organizations were made to the businessmen involved. However, an important threat would be made at the Black Mafia Ball, and an informant would later relay the specifics to authorities. During the evening's festivities, the Black Mafia had agreed to kill the aforementioned Highway Patrol officer on "May Day", May 1, 1974.⁷⁸ Law enforcement, predictably, took aggressive actions to ensure this would not occur,

76 For obvious reasons, I have not named the officer targeted. The officer made several significant arrests of Black Mafia affiliates over the years, and also played a large role in the confiscation of many important documents.

77 Another source identified the location as York Road and Cheltenham Avenue in Cheltenham, PA.

78 I am withholding the specifics of this case and the documents utilized for the narrative out of concerns for the informant's safety.

and these are described below. Figure 4.2 is a group photo of the Black Mafia taken at the Black Mafia Ball.⁷⁹

Another break for law enforcement, and thus for the victimized African-American sections of the city, came when an extortion target, Ulysses Rice, agreed to cooperate with authorities.

FIGURE 4.2. The Black Mafia Ball, December 31, 1973



79 The persons listed in the picture, as identified by law enforcement authorities, are: 1. Roy Hoskins; 2. Ricardo McKendrick; 3. Timothy “Tino” Graves; 4. Clarence “Geech” Starks; 5. Robert Hasty Smith; 6. James Fox; 7. Gary “Opie” Williams; 8. Russell Barnes; 9. Frederick Armour; 10. Lonnie Dawson; 11. George “Pie” Sampson; 12. Barthaniel “Black Bart” Thornton; 13. Eugene Hearn; 14. Dave Anderson; 15. Joseph “Jo Jo” Rhone; 16. Bill “Cadillac Billy” Smith; 17. Larris “Tank” Frazier; 18. Larry “Large” Starks; 19. William “Skinny Terry” Jefferson; 20. Gregory “Shank” Hill. Each of the persons in the “Black Mafia Ball” photo had an arrest record in Philadelphia as of that date, with the exception of Bill Smith and Gary Williams.

THE EXTORTION OF ULYSSES RICE (OWNER OF “NOOKIE’S TAVERN”)

Nookie’s Tavern was located at 6301 Wister Street in West Philadelphia, and was owned by Ulysses Rice.⁸⁰ In December of 1973, a Black Muslim Rice knew as “Alonzo” (Robinson) had “visited the tavern on several occasions to sell him the Muslim newspaper, pies, orange juice and fish.”⁸¹ An appeals court later summarized the subsequent circumstances:

On Saturday, December 8, 1973 [Alonzo] Robinson and [Albert] Ferguson, the latter one of the defendants whom the jury acquitted, came to “Nookie’s Tavern” and told Rice to have \$200.00 for them later that day for “Founder’s Day,” a [Black] Muslim holiday. Robinson and Ferguson came to “Nookie’s Tavern” on December 11th in the company of defendant [Donald] Abney. Rice gave them \$150.00. Robinson and Abney then returned on December 18th. Abney told Rice that he was to make payments of \$200.00 a week, because if he could pay “taxes to the white man and the government,” he could pay taxes to them. On December 19th, Rice was approached by defendant [Larry] Starks in a movie theater. He told Rice the defendants had a meeting about him, that Rice was supposed to give \$1,500.00, but that he, Starks, had got it down to \$500.00. Between December 19, 1973 and February 19, 1974 Rice was in hiding in his apartment and did not talk to any of the defendants. On Tuesday, February 19th he was at “Nookie’s Tavern” when Starks came to the tavern and asked him for \$500.00 “to get the Black Mafia brothers out of jail.” Starks told him to have the money by Thursday night, February 21 st. After the February 19th conversation Rice approached the F.B.I. He was equipped with a tape recorder which was placed on his body, and given \$500 in marked money in anticipation of the February 21st meeting.⁸² *United States of America v. Larry Starks et al.* (1974)

Thus, on February 21, 1974, Rice concealed an FBI-furnished tape recorder on his person, and when “Larry and Clarence Starks came into Nookie’s Place he turned it on and kept it on during the whole conversation.” He also delivered \$500.00 in marked bills. Alonzo Robinson, Larry Starks and Donald Abney were arrested for extorting Rice in the Rice/Nookie’s Tavern extortion following the February 21st sting operation. During the sting, a patron and apparent ally to the Black Mafia, Deramos Knowles, interfered with a federal officer and was shot by an F.B.I. agent.⁸³ He survived the shooting, and the Black Mafia responded to the situation in typical fashion. Rice’s family received threats immediately following the set-up and arrests on February 21. “The information received was that Rice had been recognized by members of Black Inc. at an unknown motel in the King of Prussia area where the FBI had made accommodations for the subject’s protection.” Furthermore, the FBI received credible information that if Black, Inc. couldn’t “get

80 OCU debriefing report, “Black Inc.,” February 26, 1974.

81 *United States of America v. Larry Starks, Clarence Starks, Alonzo Robinson, Donald Everett, Abney Merrill, Albert Ferguson Alonzo Robinson*, Appellant in No. 74-1947 Larry Starks, Appellant in No. 74-1966 Donald Everett Abney, Appellant in No. 74-1967, Nos. 74-1947, 74-1966, 74-1967, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 515 F.2d 112; 1975 U.S. App. LEXIS 15030, April 21, 1975.

82 Ibid.

83 OCU debriefing report, “Extortion of Ulysses Rice & Arrest of Larry Starks and Clarence Starks,” February 28, 1974, p. 2.

to Rice, they would seek retaliation against Rice's son as a result of (Rice's) complaining to law enforcement authorities concerning 'the shakedown reported to the FBI'.⁸⁴ Local and federal authorities took the threats seriously and detailed manpower to several locations throughout the region and took several security precautions. On February 25, 1974, the Philadelphia office of the FBI "received an anonymous telephone call, on their switchboard, asking for (the agent who shot Deramos Knowles during the sting operation)."⁸⁵ When the caller was told that he was not in the office, the caller said "Give (him) the following message – he's going to get his fucking head blown off."⁸⁶ No known incidents ever validated the threats to the Rice family or the agent. Robinson, Starks and Abney were each found guilty of the extortion charges (technically of violating the Hobbs Act)⁸⁷ after a ten-day jury trial on July 1, 1974.

Some months after George "Bo" Abney commandeered Cadillac Tommy Farrington's territory in October 1973, DEA and FBI reports began noting that the Black Mafia had placed a contract on Abney's life.⁸⁸ Abney was apparently not paying a large enough percentage of his profits back to the organization. He was thus at risk, and eventually decapitated in early 1974. His head was found in a pillowcase by a boy waiting for a school bus along Ridge Avenue in North Philadelphia.⁸⁹

Another internal dispute went public in the morning hours of January 25, 1974, when Clarence Starks shot and killed fellow Black Mafia affiliate Jeremiah Middleton.⁹⁰ Starks was arrested at approximately 9:25am following a traffic stop, after which a loaded .32 caliber Smith & Wesson was found concealed on his person. After his arrest, Starks admitted to police that he was "a member of a gang known as 'Black Brothers, Inc.' (BBI), and that BBI was presently 'warring' against the 19th [and] Carpenter Street Gang. The purpose of the war was secession of certain BBI members."⁹¹ In February of 1974, OCU and the Intelligence Unit

84 OCU debriefing report, untitled, February 25, 1974 (included in the Black Mafia files, along with other intelligence re: Nookie's Bar/Tavern and Ulysses Rice).

85 OCU debriefing report, "Confidential Information: Threats to F.B.I. Agent," February 26, 1974.

86 Ibid.

87 "The Hobbs Act proscribes a number of separate offenses: (1) robbery; (2) extortion; (3) attempted robbery or extortion; and (4) conspiracy to commit robbery or extortion. Each such offense also requires the federal jurisdictional element of obstruction, delay, or effect on interstate commerce." In the "Nookie's Tavern" case, "the indictment charged two such offenses; conspiracy to extort and attempt to extort." *U.S. v. Starks et al.*

88 The first mention of the contract appeared in an FBI debriefing report, "Narcotics Activities in The Black Mafia," dated November 20, 1973, and was based on a discussion with an informant.

89 Interview with "John Gallagher".

90 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Clarence Starks, Appellant*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 484 Pa. 399; 399 A.2d 353; 1979 LEXIS 461, March 14, 1979. A jury found Starks guilty of "homicide of the first degree, criminal conspiracy, carrying a firearm on a public street or public property and unlawfully carrying a firearm without a license." The court sentenced him to "life imprisonment on the murder conviction, five to ten years imprisonment on the conspiracy conviction and two separate two and one-half to five year prison sentences on the weapons violations. All of the sentences were to be concurrent." (p. 1)

91 Ibid., p. 3.

received credible information that at least twelve teenage gang members had not attended school for over three months after finding out that Black Mafia enforcers Larry Starks and Russell Barnes had been ordered to find the remaining 20th and Carpenter members and kill them.⁹² Similar orders likely accounted for the numerous references throughout the intelligence files to dealers and other competitors to the Black Mafia moving their operations out of the city.

Philadelphia police and other law enforcement authorities continued mounting evidence against the Black Mafia throughout 1974, and with each successful case prosecuted, developing witnesses became less significant. This was because authorities were increasing their knowledge base with the assistance of informants, wiretap and other surveillance efforts, and perhaps most importantly documents confiscated by authorities during several arrests. For instance, on August 22, 1974, Philadelphia police executed a search warrant at Black Mafia affiliate George Sampson's home, 701 S. 56th Street. During the course of the search, authorities discovered two shotguns, a pistol, 25 bags of heroin, and \$1,500 in cash. Sampson was later indicted on March 2, 1975, and arrested the following day by ATF agents, on a firearm violation.⁹³ He pleaded guilty on March 14, 1975 and was immediately sentenced two years imprisonment that would run concurrent with a five-year sentence he received for a narcotics conviction. There was a greater significance to the arrest, and successful prosecution, of George Sampson. In addition to the guns and drugs found in the search of Sampson's home, law enforcement authorities confiscated several ledgers enumerating extortion targets and the prices they were paying to the Black Mafia. Many of the targets were prominent numbers bankers.⁹⁴ Though the Black Mafia's ranks were being thinned by internecine killings and prison sentences, the group pressed on, including intimidating witnesses.

In October 1974, Ernest Kelly stated he was receiving threats "with respect to his appearance as a prosecution witness" in the robbery/ kidnapping case, which had come to trial.⁹⁵ Kelly refused to testify until his family received government protection because of numerous threatening anonymous phone calls to himself and his family. Even after the Kelly family was being guarded by federal agents twenty-four hours a day, and at the time of the trial in October, the threats continued. "You're testifying against the (Black Mafia)," one of the callers told Ernest Kelly, who replied, "I have to." "Well, you're dead, your family's dead, and the FBI won't be able to save you. We'll get you one by one, day by day," the voice responded before hanging up.⁹⁶ The threats would be realized in 1980, when his son Barry, who was also a prospective witness in the case, was murdered (discussed in Chapter 7). Another witness who made the fatal decision to testify against the Black Mafia was James Price.

92 Debriefing memo, "Black Incorporated," February 1, 1974.

93 Strike Force press release (re: Arrest of George Sampson), no title, March 3, 1975.

94 Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime Unit, "Black Mafia", August 23, 1974.

95 *U.S. v. Clark et al.*, p. 5.

96 Nicholson, "Witness Against Muslims Finds Son's Body in Car."

THE MURDER OF JAMES PRICE⁹⁷

One of the key witnesses against the Black Mafia in the Hanafi trial was one of their own who had turned State's evidence, Charles "Bubbles" Price aka James Price.⁹⁸ In November of 1973, a savvy reporter saw a potential crisis for Price looming in Philadelphia's criminal justice system. He noted that while Price was in fact removed from the Philadelphia prison system because he agreed to supply information regarding the Hanafi D.C. killings, he was still scheduled to be tried for several other local cases, including a murder, a robbery-rape and an armed robbery. Price's cooperation with the government was covered extensively in the Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. media. James Nicholson prophetically wrote "This means that even if Price beats the federal charges, there is still a good chance he could do time on the local charges. And if he is sent to jail, the Muslim mob will easily be able to lay hands on him. Its influence in the prisons is well documented."⁹⁹ The Hanafi trial began on February 18, 1974 and concluded on May 17, 1974.¹⁰⁰ "Price was found hanging by knotted shoelaces in a vacant cell at Holmesburg Prison in Philadelphia on December 29, 1974,"¹⁰¹ in retaliation for his incriminating testimony.

The circumstances leading up to Price's testimony and presence in Holmesburg's D Block are complex, but a summary is necessary. Price was unsure of his decision to cooperate with the government, as court records clearly show. During this period, Price was intermittently housed by himself and with his Black Mafia co-defendants – at his request. His angst over his role as a witness was made public in March 1974.¹⁰² There is disagreement over whether this was a legal tactic to benefit himself and/or his co-conspirators, or if he was sincerely attempting to remove himself from the case. Each line of reasoning has merit. For instance, court records illustrate Price and his wife, in particular, were not satisfied with the lifestyle afforded them as protected witnesses. Furthermore, Price was supposedly convinced that if he removed himself from the witness protection program, refused to testify further, and ingratiated himself with his "Black Muslim brothers", he would be able to overcome the threats of violence he was receiving. Meanwhile, Minister Louis Farrakhan, on behalf of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, uttered a not-so-veiled threat. During a

97 Because Price was found hanging in his cell, some have mistakenly written that he committed suicide. See, for example, Steven Tsoukas, *The Nation of Islam: Understanding the 'Black Muslims'* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), p. 97; and Vibert L. White, Jr., *Inside the Nation of Islam: A Historical and Personal Testimony by a Black Muslim* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 29.

98 "Man Gets New Murder Trial; Key Witness is Dead," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 22, 1981, Local, p. 18.

99 Nicholson, "The Underworld on the Brink of War," p. 221.

100 *U.S. v. Clark et al.*

101 Dave Racher and Gloria Campisi, "'Changed Man' Gets 20 Years' Probation for Role in 1969 Murder," *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 29, 1981, Local, p. 12.

102 See Eugene L. Meyer, "Witness Balks at Testifying," *The Washington Post*, March 30, 1974.

national radio broadcast entitled, “The Opponents of Muhammad”, in the first week of April 1974, Farrakhan stated:

Let this be a warning to the opponents of Muhammad. Let this be a warning to those of you who would be used as an instrument of a wicked government against ... our rise ... Be careful, because when the government is tired of using you ... they're going to dump you back in the laps of your people. And though Elijah Muhammad is a merciful man and will say, 'Come in,' and forgive you, yet in the ranks of black people today there are younger men and women rising up who have no forgiveness in them for traitors and stool pigeons ... And they will execute you, as soon as your identity is known. Be careful because nothing shall prevent the rise of the messiah, the Nation of Islam and the black man the world over.¹⁰³

Thus, “despite court-ordered immunity and a bargain allowing him to plead guilty to a single count of manslaughter, Price refused to testify” approximately one week after the broadcast, on April 17th. He was thus held in contempt of court by the Washington, D.C. Superior Court Judge Leonard Braman.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, his confession and sworn statements before a grand jury in July 1973 were revealing and proved costly to his co-conspirators.

Price was last seen alive at 8:00am, and was found strangulated at 3:15pm. A guard named Philip Harris, who was conducting a routine check, found the body in a vacant cell (#457). Price's body was “hanging by a sheet from the grating of a ventilator.” The circumstances surrounding the murder are as follows, presented to illustrate several key points regarding the import of the Black Mafia alliance with the criminal element within the Black Muslims.

At the time of Price's death, he was an inmate of “D” block, a maximum security area of Holmesburg Prison that also happened to be predominantly Black Muslim. “The inmates of D Block were not permitted to leave it, nor were other inmates permitted to enter it without an institutional escort.”¹⁰⁵ Two of the Black Mafia Hanafi murderers Price had testified against were also housed in D block at that time, Theodore Moody and John Griffin. In fact, Moody and Price were cellmates, even though there were 37 vacant cells in D block.¹⁰⁶ An inmate of D block, Calvin Hunter, testified that at approximately 9:00am, the area became unusually quiet. “He then heard noises from the front of the block and as the noise came closer he was able to observe” Moody, Griffin and another inmate, Theodore X. Brown, with Price between them.

The group proceeded in the direction of cell 457 at which point Hunter heard the victim screaming for help and yelling “They're killing me.” When the noise stopped ... Theodore Brown and John Griffin retraced their steps past Hunter's cell going in the opposite

103 Eugene L. Meyer, “Black Muslim ‘Traitors’ Warned of Vengeance,” *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1974.

104 Meyer, “Hanafi Defendant Acquitted.”

105 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Theodore X. Brown, Appellant* (two cases), Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 482 Pa. 130; 393 A.2d 414; 1978 Pa. LEXIS 957, October 5, 1978.

106 Three prison guards were ultimately suspended because they failed to lock unoccupied cells in D block.

direction. Hunter called out to Griffin and inquired as to the reason for the noise. In response, Griffin stated, “Nothing that concerns you.”¹⁰⁷

The pathologist’s examination revealed that the cause of death was strangulation. Specifically, “the instrument causing death was a ligature or garrote fashioned from three shoe laces, which was secured around the victim’s neck.”¹⁰⁸ Additionally, it was ascertained that the victim had been tortured and mutilated before death. “The most noticeable [injuries] were in the area of the testicles and rectum. These injuries were determined to have been caused by multiple insertions of a sharp instrument that would have caused excruciating pain.” All three defendants were convicted of first-degree murder.¹⁰⁹ The motivations of Moody and Griffin are obvious, and the inclusion of Theodore X. Brown into the conspiracy merits attention. As the court noted in Brown’s appeal, Brown had been convicted in another Holmesburg murder approximately sixteen months prior. Brown, along with three other inmates, murdered Samuel Molten in Holmesburg on August 15, 1973.

The evidence at [Brown’s] trial for Molten’s murder indicated that [Brown] and his co-defendants at that trial were members of the Nation of Islam, a religious sect commonly known as the Black Muslims. Appellant had the title of Lieutenant within the sect. This position gave him responsibility for the enforcement of its tenets. Molten was murdered because he made derogatory remarks about Elijah Muhammed (sic), the founder of the Nation of Islam. The evidence in the [Price] case also establishes [Brown’s] position as a Lieutenant in the Black Muslims. The evidence further shows that Price was co-operating with federal authorities in the District of Columbia who were prosecuting a case involving the killing of seven members of Hanafi Muslims, a rival group to the Black Muslims. Price implicated seven Black Muslims in that case, including Moody and Griffin. There is evidence that [Price] was killed because of his co-operation in the Hanafi case.¹¹⁰

Moody, of course, was convicted back on May 17, 1974 and sentenced to seven consecutive life sentences and would normally have been in a federal prison.¹¹¹

107 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellant, v. Theodore Moody*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 476 Pa. 223; 382 A. 2d 442; 1977 Pa. LEXIS 955, November 30, 1977.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

109 John Griffin was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Price. There is an ironic component to this murder case. Price was murdered in part, if not wholly, because he provided information about the role of Griffin and others in the Hanafi murders. Griffin was later cleared of the Hanafi killings in 1977 when a key witness identified a person other than Griffin, who she had implicated in his 1974 trial. Thus, Griffin was sentenced to life in prison for murdering an informant in a case for which Griffin was exonerated. See Laura A. Kiernan, “Hanafi Case Defendant Acquitted,” *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1977, p. B1.

110 *Commonwealth v. Brown*, p. 2. In the Price case, Brown was convicted of murder of the first degree and criminal conspiracy. He received life imprisonment for the murder conviction and five to ten years for the conspiracy conviction. The sentences were to run consecutively to each other and to sentences he was already serving for other crimes.

111 Moody was first sentenced to death for the murder of James Price. However, his case became the first test of Pennsylvania’s death penalty law since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated its application in 1976. In November 1977, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned his death sentence on the grounds the state law’s restriction of mitigating factors was unconstitutionally severe. In Moody’s case, the issue of his “age, lack of maturity, and youth” should have been considered more fully. The

However, he was being detained in Holmesburg in connection with the processing of charges stemming from his January 1975 conviction for eleven counts of aggravated robbery, burglary and rape.¹¹²

The most significant blow to the Black Mafia's "first generation" came in September of 1974. Twenty-one of the group's affiliates were arrested "in a predawn raid by federal drug agents and members of the Justice Department's organized crime strike force."¹¹³ The sweep was hailed by the chief of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, John R. Bartels, Jr., as "the breakup of Philadelphia's infamous Black Mafia, an all-black crime syndicate dealing in narcotics, gun trafficking and murder"¹¹⁴ Regional director of the DEA, Arthur Lewis, stated the group also passed counterfeit money in addition to the other offenses. On September 11, 1974, a Federal Grand Jury indicted Black Mafia leaders Eugene "Bo" Baynes, James Fox, Eugene Hearn, Russell Barnes, and four other affiliates, for their involvement in a "massive drug distribution ring."¹¹⁵ The indictment included offenses regarding the group's heroin and cocaine distribution networks. DEA intelligence estimated that from 1972 through 1974, the Black Mafia accounted "for over 60% of the heroin distribution in Philadelphia."¹¹⁶ Additionally, the DEA concluded the Black Mafia's "heroin distribution ring controlled virtually all of the heroin traffic in South and West Philadelphia," made considerable inroads into the North Philadelphia market, and that independent heroin traffickers (outside of the Black Mafia's "ring") "either paid tribute to (the Black Mafia) for the right to sell heroin or they met a violent end."¹¹⁷ The key evidence used in the case consisted of information provided by a key informant starting in March of 1974, and information gleaned from twenty days of wiretap intercepts, beginning on May 15, 1974.¹¹⁸

The informant was Charles "Mickey" Robinson, the "common law brother-in-law" to James Fox (Fox lived with Robinson's sister, Tamara, for a number of

U.S. Supreme Court later upheld the state Supreme Court's ruling, and Moody was thus spared a death sentence.

112 Also of note, the government's main witness, inmate Calvin Hunter, died before the defendants came to trial (the government thus relied upon his preliminary hearing testimony).

113 Nicholson, "Drug Chief," p. 12.

114 Jim Nicholson, "20 in Black Mafia Arrested in Raids; Syndicate 'Broken'," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 1974; and Jack McKinney, "Slain Man Suspected," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 25, 1978, Local, p. 5.

115 Strike Force's press release, February 3, 1975; contained in OCU Black Mafia files. The other defendants were William Jefferson, Gregory Trice, Barthaniel Thornton and Ferris Foster.

116 United States District Court, District of Kansas, *James Fox v. U.S. Parole Commission, et al.*, No. 80-3044, 517 F. Supp. 855, March 20, 1981.

117 United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, *Eugene Baynes v. United States Parole Commission and Warden of Otisville Federal Correctional Institution*, No. 86 Civ. 7075, September 9, 1988.

118 See *United States of America v. Eugene Baynes, a/k/a "Bo", James Fox, Eugene Hearn, Russell Barnes, Barthaniel Thornton, William Jefferson, a/k/a "Skinny", "Terry", Ferris Foster, Gregory Trice*, Misc. No. 74-603, Criminal no. 74-523, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 400 F. Supp. 285; 1975 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 11587, July 3, 1975.

years). Robinson visited the DEA office in Philadelphia unsolicited and agreed to cooperate with the agency. He testified there were two motivations for his actions, namely: he was concerned for his family's safety after Fox had intimidated members of Robinson's family (particularly his mother); and he wanted to help control the drug traffic, which he considered to be a threat to young African-Americans. "More particularly, Robinson felt that Fox was perverting several youth organizations, in which both men had been involved, by using them as a base for the narcotics trade."¹¹⁹

The program of cooperation involved a series of telephone calls made by Robinson in the presence of DEA agents which were monitored and recorded by them. During these telephone calls Robinson spoke with Fox, Barnes, Thornton, Foster and one Herschel Williams about narcotics traffic. Pursuant to the conversations, actual narcotics buys were made by Robinson from Williams, [Barthaniel] Thornton and [Ferris] Foster, who were Fox's associates.¹²⁰

Two of the defendants pleaded guilty, and a jury found the others each guilty on February 1, 1975 for engaging in a conspiracy to distribute heroin.¹²¹ Baynes had also been sentenced to four months' imprisonment on October 17, 1974 for providing false statements to the Internal Revenue Service.¹²² On March 25, 1975, Baynes and Fox were sentenced to twenty-seven and thirty years, respectively.¹²³ This successful prosecution augmented the guilty verdicts against the Black Mafia Hanafi killers on May 17, 1974 in Washington, D.C.

The collective prosecutions and lengthy sentences forever altered the Black Mafia's structure. Thus, it is prudent to examine precisely how the organization functioned until this point.

GROUP ORGANIZATION, 1968–1974

"Good organized crime is badly organized crime."¹²⁴

Frank Bovenkerk (1998)

Meetings, Rules, and Oath

The Black Mafia held meetings on a somewhat regular basis at several locations from 1969 through 1975. The group made distinctions between "general" meetings, and those convened exclusively for the group's hierarchy. General meetings were

119 *Ibid.*, p. 7. This is interesting in light of the fact that Robinson was a former leader of the 20th and Carpenter Street gang.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

121 *Ibid.*

122 *Baynes v. U.S. Parole Commission*, p. 3.

123 Fox was sent to the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. *United States of America v. James Fox*, Criminal Action No. 74-00523, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1986 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 22594, July 21, 1986.

124 Author's interview with Dutch criminologist and organized crime scholar Frank Bovenkerk, July 1998, Leiden, The Netherlands.

held at several locations, including various spots along the 52nd Street strip (specifically at Chestnut, Spruce and Locust Streets) in West Philadelphia, and 1443 South Street (Black B. Inc. headquarters) and 23rd and Dickinson Streets (Storybook Inn) in South Philadelphia. Authorities only had knowledge of “executive” meetings being held at 25th Street and Ridge Avenue (Johnson Homes public housing project) in North Philadelphia. Minutes taken at several of the general meetings suggest the average number of attendees ranged from forty to sixty affiliates. General meetings were governed by several written procedures, all of which were included in the group’s explicit overall written rules. For the complete list of rules, see Appendix E. Two of the rules that applied specifically to meetings are the following:

9. For Family meetings regular or called, there will be a fine of \$5.00 for tardiness and a fine of \$15.00 for absences. However, absence from three (3) without legitimate excuse, could result in disciplinary action as set forth by the Executive Board.

13. Each member must be searched upon entering the designated meeting place by the authorized and only those designated by the executive shall bear any offensive weapons. Members are cautioned to exercise extreme caution when attending Family meetings.¹²⁵

Some Black Mafia members were blindfolded when they were transported to executive meetings. This was done to keep the location secret. Additionally, when sensitive topics were raised at these meetings, they were ordered out of the room. The secrecy concern was also addressed in the group’s oath, which was taken by selected members. The criteria for selecting which members were administered the oath are unknown. Sources believe this oath was patterned after a similar statement used by the Black Panthers. For the complete text of the oath, see Appendix F. It reads in part:

I (*repeat your name*), in the presence of the brethren of the honorable assembly and council, do hereby promise & swear by all that I consider to be good, decent, respectable, pure, and/or sacred, yea, even by the blood that sustains my children, that I will never divulge any pertinent information, or secrets that pertain to the family, and I shall ever be on guard against those would and report any such violations to members of higher authority to see that the violation are properly acted upon ... I swear by my own life that I will not communicate any information to any law-enforcement official or anyone else in any way, that which could endanger the safety or freedom of another family member.¹²⁶

Structure

The structure of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia remained constant from 1968 through 1974, when the large-scale prosecution of most of its hierarchy took place. As with any organized crime group, however, identifying the “true” structure as compared to that which is presented both by the group (in writing, testimony and through

¹²⁵ Confiscated document; contained in the OCU’s “History of Black B. Inc.” report dated March, 1974.

¹²⁶ Confiscated document; contained in the OCU’s “History of Black B. Inc.” report dated March, 1974.

interrogation) and by law enforcement is a complicated matter. The sources used in this study are replete with hierarchical organizational charts, each with titles and roles for the affiliates listed. In many cases, these are derived from confiscated documents in which the group itself charted the members' places in the organization. The law enforcement and Black Mafia versions of organizational charts changed dramatically over time with respect to who filled certain positions, although the positions and titles remained constant for the most part. Using various law enforcement sources and confiscated Black Mafia documents, Figure 4.3 illustrates the group's command structure at several points.

Much like the dilemma of distinguishing between "members" and "associates", there is unfortunately no codebook or key for exactly what the titles of "chairman," "secretary," "treasurer," "sergeant-at-arms," and "enforcer," etc. actually represented. It is possible, however, to separate members who were able to dictate certain activities from members or affiliates who were simply participants in the activities. Based on several government informant accounts, the Black Mafia command *was* operationally defined. The splitting of hairs over whether someone was, say, an "enforcer" or a "treasurer" did not apparently take place among those who were involved with the group's activities, except, from time to time, in the case of formal Black Mafia meetings. Only then would authority likely be delegated in such a fashion as to validate the stated positions of treasurer, etc.

Beyond the command structure, there were numerous other members and associates of the group. The individual affiliates changed with the same frequency as the group's hierarchy, though the overall number of affiliates grew with time. For example, the OCU was able to identify 62 members and/or associates in the months immediately following the ACPD request for assistance in the Palmer case in 1972. The largest total of members and/or associates listed in OCU files was 96 in February of 1974. The federal strike force listed 228 members and 118 associates as of May 3, 1976. As stated previously, there were no criteria for determining who was an "associate" or a "member." Therefore, it is possible the strike force had looser standards for those it considered a "Black Mafia" affiliate. At no time, however, did any agency include in the total figures the "troops", or gang members who dealt narcotics and extorted from other dealers for the Black Mafia. Operationally, the gangs were on the fringe of Black Mafia operations, and remitted a portion of their narcotics take. On occasion, they would extort from other dealers for the Black Mafia.

*FIGURE 4.3. Black Mafia Command Structure for Selected Dates**

May 30, 1972¹²⁷

Co-Chairman – Samuel Christian
 Co-Chairman – Ronald Harvey
 Treasurer – Robert Smith
 Treasurer – Eddie Brinson
 Secretary – Roosevelt “Spooks” Fitzgerald
 Secretary – Larry “Large” Starks
 Sergeant-at-Arms – Eugene Hearn
 Sergeant-at-Arms – Richard “P.I.” Smith

July 15, 1973¹²⁸

Chairman – Eugene “Bo” Baynes
 Vice Chairman – James Enoch
 Chief Enforcer – Sam Christian
 Enforcer – Ronald Harvey
 Enforcer – Roosevelt Fitzgerald
 Enforcer – Robert Fairbanks
 Enforcer – Clyde Ross
 Enforcer – Donald Day
 Enforcer – Leroy Griffin
 Enforcer – Charles Toney
 Enforcer – Ronald Woodruff
 Field Lieutenant – John Darby (North Philadelphia)
 Field Lieutenant – George Glover (North Philadelphia)
 Field Lieutenant – Earl Walden (West Philadelphia)
 Field Lieutenant – Donald Day (Unknown area of operations)

Field lieutenants “controlled” narcotics territories by sections of the city. Bo Baynes, in addition to serving as chairman, also controlled a section of West Philadelphia

March 7, 1974¹²⁹

Chairman – Eugene Hearn
 Assistant Chairman – Frederick Armour
 Secretary/Staff – James Fox
 Secretary/Staff – Larry Starks
 Secretary/Staff – Timothy Graves
 Enforcer – Lonnie Dawson
 Enforcer – Joseph “Jo Jo” Rhone
 Supreme Head Captain – Lonnie Dawson
 Captain – Timothy Graves
 Captain – David Mitchell
 Head Controller – William “Skinny” Jefferson
 Investigator – Roosevelt Fitzgerald
 Investigator – Russell Barnes

Troops – No names provided on confiscated documents. Police were later able to determine that six gangs totalling approximately 150 members constituted the “troops”, which had been “contracted” to work for the Black Mafia.

*The sources for these illustrations varied from police to informant depictions to the group’s own notes, thus the inconsistency in terminology and format.

127 Confiscated minutes from Black Mafia meeting May 30, 1972; contained in the Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

128 OCU, untitled organizational chart, dated July 15, 1973.

129 Confiscated notes from Black Mafia; contained in OCU’s “History of Black B. Inc.,” March 7, 1974. This information was also provided by an informant on November 14, 1973.

On the street, informants and other sources used different terminology to depict the structure of the organization. These sources referred to The Black Mafia's members and associates as "Part I" and to the troops (gang members and drug runners) as "Part II" of the group. Yet others called the drug runners and other low-ranking affiliates "The Little Brothers"; mid-level members such as enforcers were referred to as "The Brothers"; and leaders of the Black Mafia were "The Big Brothers." Figure 4.4 presents a comparison of the structures of the Black Mafia, The Family and Black B. Inc., which of course were one and the same organization, made up of the same individuals.

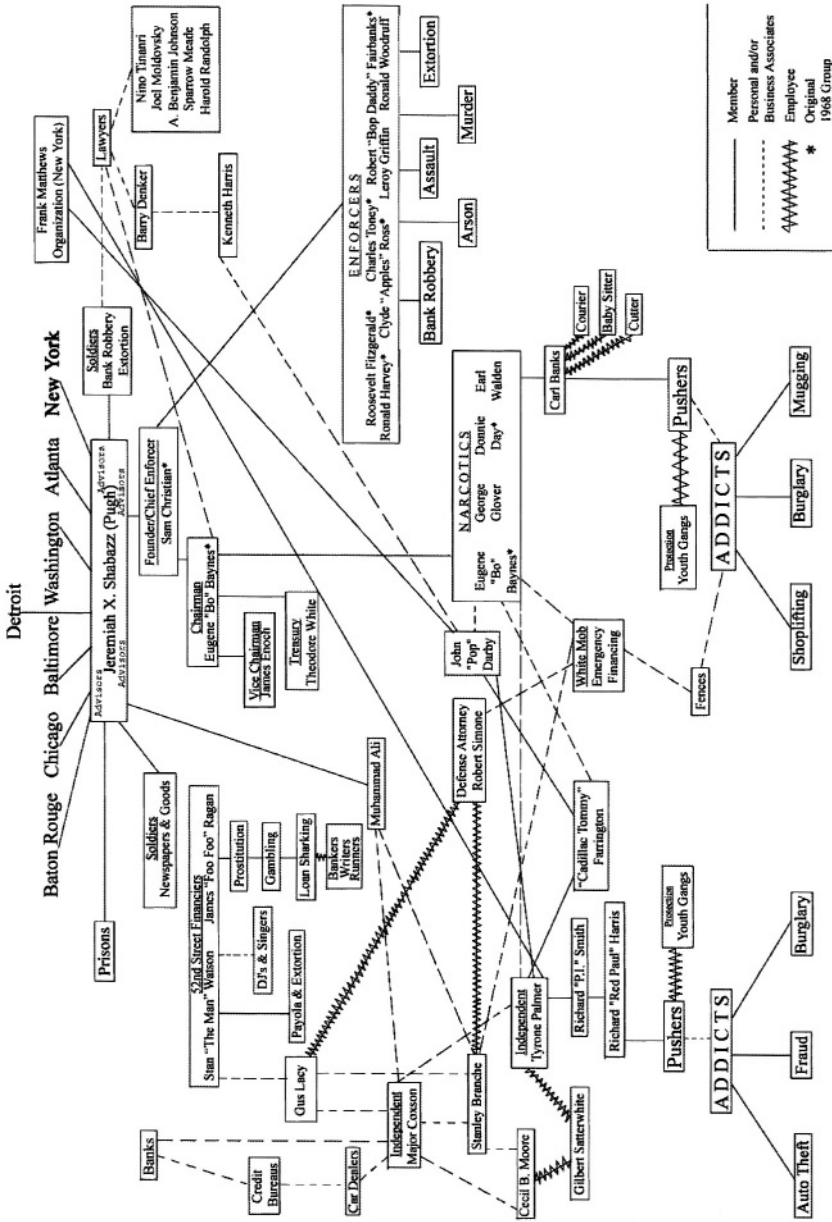
FIGURE 4.4. Structural Comparison of Black Mafia Organization(s)

	<i>Black Mafia</i>	<i>The Family</i>	<i>Black B. Inc.</i>
	Board	The Big Brothers	Board
<i>Part I</i>	Officers	The Brothers	Officers
<i>Part II</i>	Gangs	The Little Brothers	Youths

According to the sources, there were certain criteria for "graduating" from one rank to another, and that to become anything but a "Little Brother", members had to become Muslims. All sources agreed that the lowest rank, regardless of what it was termed, served as a "training ground" for prospective officers and leaders.¹³⁰ The Black Mafia also used the Muslim-controlled prison system as a recruiting and training tool. Figure 4.5 illustrates how these individuals fit into the comprehensive picture of the Black Mafia at the group's zenith of power.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

FIGURE 4.5. Organizational Chart of the Black Mafia Circa 1973



CHAPTER 5

1968–1974: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND THE BLACK MAFIA

The Black Mafia, of course, operated within larger social structures. Therefore, the group's multifarious relationships with various segments of society are examined next to place the Black Mafia's activities into perspective. It is instructive to consider, however briefly, the broader societal circumstances predating and surrounding Philadelphia's Black Mafia in the late 1960s and early 1970s for a few reasons: the group was formed in 1968; the Black Mafia expanded exponentially during this period and some of their success was attributable to cultural considerations; and, perhaps most importantly, the Black Mafia exploited the social movements in several ways. Following this more general analysis, I examine Black Mafia-specific social networks immersed in the broader cultural movements of the time.

There are two inter-related issues that impact the discussion of Philadelphia's Black Mafia circa 1968. These are the general state of the African-American underclass in the city (i.e. population, unemployment rates, crime rates and so on), and the various social movements in play at that time in Philadelphia's history. Entire books have been written on mere components of these multi-dimensional topics, and I thus do not claim to encompass anywhere near the majority of the complex analyses. However, the following discourse illustrates the more general atmosphere in which the Black Mafia developed and operated.

URBAN AMERICA, 1960–1980

By 1960, proportionally more blacks than whites were living in cities,¹ and more blacks than whites were working in factories. This was also the case in Philadelphia. Regarding African-Americans who migrated to the North, historian Roger Lane has remarked (1992), “during the 1940s and 1950s blacks in effect were piped aboard a sinking ship, welcomed into the urban industrial age just as that age was dying, with industrial cities losing population and jobs.” Black unemployment, from a low in the early 1950s, “began to climb again into double digits, [and] the indices of crime and family instability began to climb as well.”² The decline in demand for the designated

1 The percentages of the African-American population residing in urban areas were the following: 1940 – less than 50%; 1950 – 62%; 1960 – 73%; and 1965 – 80%. John P. Crank, “Crime and Justice in the Context of resource Scarcity,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, forthcoming 2003. According to Crank, the estimates for the number of African-Americans out-migrating from the South by time period were 1930-1940: 348,000; 1940-1960: 3,054,000; 1960-1970: 613,000.

2 Roger Lane, “Black Philadelphia, then and now,” *The Public Interest*, Summer 1992, p. 50.

types of unskilled labor was most severe in the older cities in the North. Between 1967 and 1976, New York, Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia lost more than a million jobs in manufacturing, wholesale, and retail enterprises, “at the same time their populations were rapidly becoming minority dominant.”³ If Newark, New Jersey is added to the four cities above, these five metropolitan areas accounted “for two-thirds of the total increase in ghetto poverty in the 1970s.”⁴

The unemployment rate for African-Americans ranged from 10 to 13 percent in the early and mid 1960s, three times white unemployment.⁵ In the 1960s, ghetto neighborhoods saw increasing rates of poverty, joblessness, welfare dependency and serious crime, and these trends would eventually reach “catastrophic proportions” in the mid-1970s.⁶ By 1980, nearly half of the total poor population of the fifty largest cities in the U.S. lived in the five largest cities – New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Detroit.⁷ Furthermore, “although the total population in these five largest cities decreased by 9 percent between 1970 and 1980, the poverty population increased 22 percent.”⁸ The population of persons living in poverty areas grew substantially as well, with the largest percentage increase occurring among those in “extreme poverty areas” (i.e. areas with a poverty rate of 40% or more).

PHILADELPHIA, 1960–1975: AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND A DYING AMERICAN CITY

The national, urban trends regarding population and unemployment were mirrored, if not accentuated, by Philadelphia. Philadelphia’s population declined in each of the relevant decades, 3.3 percent from 1950-1960; and 2.7 percent from 1960-1970. The city would experience a (more) drastic hemorrhaging in the 1970s when it lost 260,399 people, approximately 13.4% of its population.⁹ Concurrently,

3 William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 101.

4 William Julius Wilson, “Studying Inner-City Social Dislocations: The Challenge of Public Agenda Research,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, pp. 1-14, cited in James F. Short, Jr., *Poverty, Ethnicity and Violent Crime* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 54.

5 See Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 216–217.

6 Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, p. 3. Wilson documented the particular case of black male unemployment in relation to the rate for white men over the same period. He notes, p. 82, “the labor-force participation rate of white men declined from 82 percent in 1940 to 76 percent in 1980 ... Labor-force participation of white men ages twenty-four and under actually increased” from 1970-1980. The labor-force participation of black men also declined, though more substantially, from 84 percent in 1940 to 67 percent in 1980. For black males, participation in the labor force fell below that of white men for all age groups by 1970, “with particularly steep declines for those ages twenty-four and younger.”

7 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Philadelphia’s population figures for the relevant decades were: 1960 – 2,002,512; 1970 – 1,948,609; and 1980-1, 681, 175.

Philadelphia's black population had increased substantially from 1940-1970.¹⁰ In 1940, African-Americans in Philadelphia numbered 251,000 (13% of the city's population), and by 1960, the black population accounted for 26.4% of the city's population, rising in numbers to 529,000, a 111% increase since 1940.¹¹ African-Americans accounted for 34% and 38%, respectively, of the city's population in 1970 and 1980.¹²

In 1950, the respective rates of unemployment for blacks and whites in Philadelphia were 11.7 and 5.4 percent. In 1960, the African-American unemployment rate was 10.7 compared to 5 percent for whites. In 1964, the rates were 14 and 8.4 percent, respectively.¹³ Between 1970 and 1975, the number of jobs declined 12 percent in Philadelphia, and several major firms moved their headquarters out of the city.¹⁴ Older cities like Philadelphia were faced with a shrinking tax base, as "tax-rich businesses abandoned the urban core and migrated suburbs." By 1977, approximately 60 percent of the employment in the Philadelphia metropolitan area was outside Philadelphia.¹⁵ One author has remarked, "big-city mayors who had formerly confronted belligerent black militants now had showdowns with fiery policemen angry over personnel cuts."¹⁶

The socioeconomic factors enumerated above likely accounted for at least some of Pennsylvania's glaring criminal justice-related statistics illustrating disproportionate representation of African-Americans. For instance, in 1973, 61% of inmates in Pennsylvania prisons were African-American, though blacks accounted for just 9% of the state's population according to the 1970 census. Of these African-American inmates, "69 percent were serving time for crimes of violence, 18 percent for crimes against property, and 12 percent for crimes against public order."¹⁷ For whites, the respective figures were 41 percent, 36 percent, and 20 percent. "For each of the specific crimes of violence except kidnapping [i.e. murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, rape, statutory rape, lewd act with child, sexual assault: force undetermined, robbery, and assault], black prisoners outnumbered their white and 'other' counterparts."¹⁸

10 John Hadley Strange, "Blacks and Philadelphia Politics: 1963-1966," in Miriam Ershkowitz and Joseph Zikmund II (eds.), *Black Politics in Philadelphia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973), p. 110.

11 Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), p. 87.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

13 Strange, p. 126.

14 Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City: Problem, Promise, and Reality* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 142.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

17 U.S. Department of Justice, *Census of Prisoners in State Correctional Facilities, 1973* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 167.

18 *Ibid.* In 1972, Philadelphia registered 413 homicides. 342 of these were African-Americans, and of these victims, 81.4% of their murderers were black. 54.5% of the city's 5,294 robbery victims in 1972 were African-American.

I next examine related societal developments. Just as above, I first examine more general, national developments, followed by a Philadelphia-specific analysis.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the social and political climates across the country were in flux, with numerous movements and agendas “in play” simultaneously. These events were collectively characterized by one author as the “sixties phantasmagoria.”¹⁹ Stephen Steinberg (1989) addressed one of these movements:

the late 1960s witnessed an outbreak of what might be called ‘ethnic fever’. One after another, the nation’s racial and ethnic minorities sought to rediscover their waning ethnicity and to reaffirm their ties to the cultural past. Ethnic fever had its origins in the black community, where black nationalism, after a long period of quiescence, emerged with renewed force.²⁰

One theme, however, was paramount – civil rights/racial equality. The United States had “been torn by almost continuous racial strife” while vast segments of society faced a “*crise de conscience* over the disparity between the promise and the reality of American life.”²¹ The peaceful protest movement of the early sixties was interrupted by rioting across the country, and was giving way to a more militant mindset perhaps best embodied in the Black Power movement begun in 1966.²² In the years leading up to the riots, there was growing activity in the Black nationalist movements in the North. “Northern blacks ... contributed to the development of militant strategies in the struggle to penetrate urban decision-making systems.”²³ As Joe Feagin and Harlan Hahn (1973) documented, “in the year or two prior to the major ghetto riots, nonviolent tactics seemed to take an increasing militant direction.”²⁴ In late August 1964, Philadelphia experienced one of the nation’s earliest, and one of the least destructive, uprisings in the “‘Jungle’ [neighborhood] in North Philadelphia.”²⁵ According to Alexis Moore (1999), “339 people were injured, two died, and property worth an estimated \$3 million was destroyed.”²⁶ The riots

19 David Remnick, *King of the World* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 158.

20 Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 3.

21 Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss (eds.), *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), p. iii.

22 Tamar Jacoby, *Someone Else’s House: America’s Unfinished Struggle for Integration* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), p. 109. For a more detailed examination of the attitudes and behavior of African-American teens in Philadelphia, particularly regarding crime and black militancy, see Michael Lalli and Leonard Savitz, *Delinquency and City Life* (Washington, DC: Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, January 1972).

23 Joe R. Feagin and Harlan Hahn, *Ghetto Revolts: The Politics of Violence in American Cities* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1973), p. 93.

24 Ibid.

25 Strange, p. 143.

26 Alexis Moore, “Forces of Change: Millenium Philadelphia: The Last 100 Years,” *Inquirer Magazine*, July 18, 1999.

generally took place between 1964 and 1967 (not including those following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968).²⁷ Joseph Boskin (1976) summed up the toll exacted during those four years:

Approximately 130 civilians, mainly blacks, and 12 civil personnel, mainly whites, were killed. Approximately 4,700 blacks and civil personnel were injured. Over 20,000 persons were arrested during the melees; property damages mounted into the hundreds of millions of dollars; many cities resembled the hollowed remnants of wartorn cities.²⁸

Not surprisingly, a 1966 national survey indicated the most important domestic problem was race relations, with the related problem of crime ranking second.²⁹ As historian Jon Teaford (1986) has commented:

During the 1960s race riots had drawn the attention of television cameras to the social bankruptcy of the city ... the 1970s repeated fiscal crises exposed the city's financial insolvency. Together, the social conflicts of the 1960s and the funding problems of the 1970s leveled a telling blow at the nation's central cities.³⁰

Like other metropolitan areas in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, Philadelphia was going through one of its most tumultuous times (thus, at precisely the same moment the Black Mafia was terrorizing sections of the city). Police-minority relations in the city were strained, as documented by a series of commissions and investigations. For instance, the Pennsylvania Crime Commission (1974) found that the Philadelphia Police Department had a "history of excessive

27 The Watts riots are perhaps the most significant of the dozens that took place. Nash and Weiss, p. v., assess the totality of the upheavals:

Watts, a part of the black ghetto of Los Angeles, exploded in the summer of 1965. Before the rioting ended, thirty-five people, most of them blacks, had been killed and hundreds more injured. For two days after the National Guard arrived, Watts took on the aspect of theater of war. More than 4000 people were arrested and property damage was estimated at over 35 million dollars.

28 Joseph Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence in the Twentieth Century* second edition (Beverly Hills, California: Glencoe Press, 1976), p. 159. Boskin (p. 152) believed the riots and related efforts signified "the most important underclass revolt in recent American history." Furthermore, he (p. 169) argued the:

spontaneous outbursts, the collective actions, and the consensual attitudes of blacks and browns highlighted the failure of American society to recognize the problems in racial minority groups in the cities. The events stemmed not only from the traditions imposed by a racist mentality but also from the ambiguous attitudes of the majority toward the city itself. The enormity of the failure led to one of the most intense social crises in American society in the twentieth century.

For an analysis of the numerous government responses to the riots, see Feagin and Hahn, pp. 199-262.

29 The survey was conducted for the National Crime Commission. Jennie McIntyre, "Public Attitudes Toward Crime and Law Enforcement," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CCCLXXIV (November, 1967), pp. 34-46, cited in John A. Gardiner, *The Politics of Corruption: Organized Crime in an American City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970), p. 35.

30 Teaford, 146.

use of arrests and failure to provide adequate protection for minorities.”³¹ According to the Committee of Seventy³², the disreputable history of the Department was aggravated during the tenure of Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo.³³ Rizzo was appointed to the post in 1967 by Mayor James H.J. Tate and served until 1972. He “was probably the best known and most controversial Police Commissioner in modern urban history.”³⁴ He was “a fierce advocate of the department and urged an effective ‘zero tolerance’ crackdown on crime and disobedience.”³⁵ While his “strong-arm tactics were credited for” preventing the grand-scale riots, protests and other “types of disturbances most other cities” experienced in the late 1960s, “allegations of police brutality and racism grew” during his tenure as Commissioner.³⁶

In addition to these matters, the Philadelphia Police Department had initiated their Civil Defense (CD) Squad in 1964. One of the CD Squad’s more high-profile operations targeted the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM).

In July 1967 Rizzo ordered a raid of a RAM house in North Philadelphia. The police were looking for weapons but did not find them. Instead, they confiscated pamphlets and brochures of a group calling itself the Black Guard – RAM’s paramilitary wing. For a year, the CD squad infiltrated RAM then moved on them when they began stockpiling weapons in a North Philadelphia row house. In November 1968, a CD raid found two rifles, two shotguns, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, Maoist literature by the boxful, and a mimeograph machine. The prosecution of one of the RAM members was dropped, but the group died. Rizzo got credit for snuffing out a potentially violent group – civil liberties be damned.³⁷

These police activities may have been conducted at least partly at the urging of the FBI. According to Kenneth O’Reilly (1989), in 1968, the “FBI arranged for Philadelphia police officers to arrest RAM members ‘on every possible occasion until they could no longer make bail.’”³⁸

31 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *Report on Police Corruption and the Quality of Law Enforcement in Philadelphia* (St. David’s, PA: PCC, 1974), quoted in the Committee of Seventy, *Philadelphia Police Department Governance Study* (Philadelphia, PA: Committee of Seventy, 1998). A concise synopsis of the PCC’s findings can be found in Gary W. Potter and Philip Jenkins, *The City and the Syndicate: Organizing Crime in Philadelphia* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Ginn Custom Publishers, 1985), p. 105.

32 The Committee of Seventy is “a not-for-profit, non-partisan political watchdog organization dedicated to advancing good government for the City of Philadelphia and its surrounding communities since 1904.”

33 Committee of Seventy, *Philadelphia Police Department Governance Study*, p. 4.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. Also see Jerome H. Skolnick and James J. Fyfe, *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

37 S.A. Paolantonio, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America* (Philadelphia, Camino Books, 1993), p. 96.

38 Kenneth O’Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI’s Secret File on Black America, 1960–1972* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), pp. 280-281.

On December 4, 1969, a raid on the Black Panther Party (BPP) headquarters in Chicago resulted in a shoot-out with several police officers injured and two Black Panthers dead.³⁹ Following the event, “the Panthers declared war on police officers nationwide.” BPP head Huey P. Newton later announced there would be a “revolutionary people’s convention” held in Philadelphia on September 5, 1970. Just as the City of Philadelphia was making preparations for the “convention”, Fairmount Park Police Sergeant Frank Von Colln was shot and killed “as he sat at his desk in a Cobbs Creek Park police guardhouse on August 29, 1970.”⁴⁰ Another police officer was shot in the mouth and survived. At least five members of a radical revolutionary group called the Black Unity Council participated in the Von Colln murder. The Black Unity Council’s “philosophy in the 1970s was to kill the pigs, and declare war on police officers for what they thought was brutality in their community.”⁴¹ (The Black Unity Council had no known connections to the Black Mafia.⁴²) Police responding to the scene found trip wires attached to grenades in the Cobbs Creek Park area, an apparent effort to kill or maim more police. The next evening, two police officers were shot during a car stop. Though this shooting was not related to the previous night’s murder, anxiety throughout the department was predictably heightened. Neither of these events was related to the Black Panther Party, but later in the day, Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo effectively “declared war on the Black Panthers.”⁴³

Rizzo approved raids of BPP hideouts in Germantown and North Philadelphia. “At the Panthers’ Wallace Street headquarters, the police exchanged gunfire with more than a dozen Panthers and members of the Black Unity Movement ... They confiscated shotguns, rifles, and pistols.”⁴⁴ As a fitting footnote to the complex, unpredictable police-community relationship, particularly with respect to race relations, the revolutionary people’s convention “went off without incident as scheduled at Temple University” in North Philadelphia.⁴⁵ The Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM) found the police professionalism so profound, they sent Rizzo a telegram that read in part, “Representatives of GPM have personally observed abuse

39 According to Black Panther Party founder Bobby Seale, the tally for his group’s violent past was “28 members dead; 68 wounded; 14 police officers dead.” Dean E. Murphy, *Graying Black Panthers Fight Would-Be Heirs*, *The New York Times*, October 8, 2002. At the time the article was written, eight BPP members were still in prison.

40 Linda Loyd, “Mannequin Tells the Story at Trial in Officer’s 1970 Slaying,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 29, 1997, Local, p. B05.

41 Dave Racher, “Innocent Plea in ‘70 Cop-Killing: ‘Evidence Illegal,’ Lawyer Says,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 20, 1996, Local, p. 8.

42 Two of the defendants had attorneys with Black Mafia connections. Frederick Burton was represented by Cecil Moore, discussed in Chapter 5. Jim Smith, “5 Years in Solitary Nets Killer \$6,700,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 30, 1982, Local, p. 3. Another defendant in the case, Richard Thomas, was represented at various times by Black Mafia attorneys Joel Moldovsky and Nino Tinari. Linda Loyd, “Phila. Jury Acquits Fugitive in Slaying of Sgt. Von Colln,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 4, 1997, Local, p. A01.

43 Paolantonio, p. 102.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

and provocation to which your men are often, on such occasions, subjected. We congratulate you and them for maintaining the peace.”⁴⁶

Rizzo was elected Mayor of Philadelphia in 1972 (and re-elected in 1976).⁴⁷ Figure 5.1 briefly lists several political activities from 1967 to 1972 which influenced, directly and indirectly, the actions of, and the investigations into, the Black Mafia.

FIGURE 5.1. Philadelphia Police Department-Related Political Events (1967–1972)

May 1967	– Frank Rizzo appointed Police Commissioner (he served until elected Mayor in 1972).
1971	– State Attorney General J. Shane Creamer announced that the Pennsylvania Crime Commission would investigate the PPD re: corruption and racial issues (report was eventually published in 1974).
1971	– The Pennsylvania State Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights conducted hearings on the police department’s conduct under Rizzo, specifically how, “Rizzo ... exerted a direct influence on the deterioration of police-community relations for minorities.” ⁴⁸
1972	– Newly-elected Mayor Rizzo appointed his “hand-picked successor”, Joseph O’Neill.
1972	– One week after Rizzo’s election, the <i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> ran a series of stories about widespread police corruption in the PPD.
1972	– The Civil Rights Commission proposed to the U.S. Attorney General that the Dept. of Justice file suit against the PPD. (Nixon administration dismissed the suit.)

John Hadley Strange (1973) stated that at that point in the city’s history, there was no African-American political organization. “Blacks work for whites in Philadelphia politics.” He explained how this excessive competition within the African-American community weakened their influence by examining the four major – but not distinct – groups of African-American activists circa 1965: politicians, clergymen, civic leaders, and civil rights leaders. “There was great antagonism and competition between and within these four groups. They disagreed over goals, tactics, personalities, and patronage rights. They also waged bitter and vituperative attacks upon each other.”⁴⁹ These phenomena factored into the successes and failures experienced by the Black Mafia, as I describe next.

46 As cited in Paolantonio, p. 102.

47 Rizzo was again the Republican nominee for Mayor (against Democrat Ed Rendell) before dying of a heart attack on July 16, 1991. His 1991 campaign was similar to those he had run before, focusing largely on crime-related issues. In particular, he focused on the crack cocaine dilemma in minority sections of the city. Ironically, much of his support in the ‘91 campaign came from his former detractors. For instance, the Reverend Eugene Graves helped organize “North Philadelphia Against Rizzo” in 1971 and 1975, and yet hosted Rizzo’s last political meeting in 1991 because the “black community was in disarray” and Frank Rizzo was someone “we could trust.” Paolantonio, p. 369.

48 Ibid., pp. 134-136.

49 Strange, p. 111.

THE BLACK MAFIA'S FLEXING WEB OF POLITICIANS, LAWYERS AND FINANCIERS

Serious organized crime in American society is always political even though its most lurid manifestations are the private use of violence. Organized criminals, just like actors from the upperworld, seek profit and power through influence and intimidation and ceaselessly work at developing networks of reciprocity with individuals who dispense political capital ... These high stakes networks are subject to so much contingency, including often deadly competition for access to those with resources to dispense, that all participants live in a world of great uncertainty ... There is a very complex interplay between the underworld and upperworld with power shifting back and forth among individuals.⁵⁰

Alan A. Block and Sean Patrick Griffin (1997)

It is no less difficult to precisely illustrate the complex and ever-changing allegiances and alliances within the vast and influential political circles being described than it is to analyze criminal connections and conspiracies. Each set of relationships is subject to much contingency, and relationships are often fleeting. As shown previously in Figure 4.5, several individuals (e.g., Cecil B. Moore, Major Benjamin Coxson, Stanley Branche, Robert Simone, Gus Lacy, John “Stan the Man” Watson, James “Foo-Foo” Ragan, A. Benjamin “Ben” Johnson, Barry Denker, Kenneth Harris and Nino Tinari) appear in various roles connected with, but not necessarily “in”, the organization. While each connection served a particular purpose, some political, others financial, and yet others legal, interrelationships were commonplace, as were double-roles. For instance, while lawyers defended their clients in the courtroom, their presence also served a crucial political purpose. Several attorneys who defended Black Mafia affiliates were also part, if not the leaders, of Philadelphia’s civil rights movement. These individuals were significant because of their political connections, and the protection – real, assumed or inferred – they derived and distributed through these networks. Unlike other high-profile organized crime syndicate examples, there is no evidence of *extant* corruption in the lengthy history of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia, including this significant period of time. Thus, determining the extent to which Black Mafia actors derived protection and other benefits from the following complex relationships is difficult. I examine other reasons for the group’s downfall beginning in 1975 below in Chapter 6, and the absence of corruption must also be considered. That is, I found no evidence of law enforcement, prosecuting or judiciary authority complicity, and this decreased the probability of enduring Black Mafia underworld success.

50 Alan A. Block and Sean Patrick Griffin, “The Teamsters, The White House, The Labor Department: A Commentary on the Politics of Organized Crime,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1997), p. 1.

*Significant Social and Political Associates**Cecil B. Moore*

Cecil B. Moore, a lawyer whose closest friends included prominent African-American politicians Adam Clayton Powell (Harlem, New York) and Robert N.C. Nix Sr. (North and West Philadelphia)⁵¹, was one of Philadelphia's most controversial personalities.⁵² Moore was considered by some to be "one of the most significant leaders of [Philadelphia] in the 20th century."⁵³ He was elected president of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in October of 1962 and built the local branch into the nation's largest. The success did not last long, however. Membership in 1963 was estimated at over 20,000 and by October 15, 1965 it was down to 3,855. Paul Lermack (1973) critiqued the tenure of Moore as NAACP head thusly:

The Philadelphia chapter ... was a disunited, poorly-organized group. Cecil Moore had succeeded in first building up and then destroying a large part of the organization's membership. His flamboyant leadership of the NAACP was a significant part of the 1960s

51 Robert N.C. (Nelson Cornelius) Nix Sr. began his career as a lawyer in 1925, and gained a reputation as an excellent criminal attorney. He first became active in Democratic politics in 1932. Nix was first elected to represent Philadelphia's 4th Congressional District (then-North Philadelphia) in May of 1958, becoming Pennsylvania's first African-American Congressman. Nix defeated Cecil Moore handily to secure the seat. At the time, there were three other African-Americans in Congress – William L. Dawson, Illinois; Charles C. Diggs Jr., Michigan; and Adam Clayton Powell Jr., New York. Diggs, Powell and Nix later successfully thwarted a Congressional probe into the Nation of Islam in 1962. Among other actions Nix wrote a letter in support of the Nation. The letter stated Elijah Muhammad's teachings on liberty and freedom "were consistent with statements by Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and other founders of this republic." Quoted in Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), pp. 251-253. Nix served in Congress from 1958 to 1978, when he lost his congressional seat to William H. Gray 3d, despite campaigning extensively with Muhammad Ali. Moore and Nix started out as adversaries in the early 1960s, but later joined forces in the late 1960s/early 1970s. In 1985, the federal courthouse at Ninth and Chestnut Streets was named in Nix's honor. He remained active in local politics until his death in June of 1987. See Michael E. Ruane and Edward Colimore, "Ex-Rep. Robert N.C. Nix Dies at 88," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 23, 1987, p. A01; Tyree Johnson, "Ex-Rep. Nix, 'Pathfinder,' Dead at 88: He Paved the Way for Black Politicians," *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 23, 1987, p. 4; and Claude Lewis, "Got Things Done: Nix Was Always Open to His Constituents," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 24, 1987, p. A15.

52 Interestingly, Cecil Moore did "not come from ghetto stock." Rather, he "was born in West Virginia to a family of college graduates. His father was a doctor and a 'community leader'." Paul Lermack, "Cecil Moore and the Philadelphia Branch of the National Association of Colored People: The Politics of Negro Pressure Group Organization," in Miriam Ershkowitz and Joseph Zikmund II (eds.), *Black Politics in Philadelphia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973), p. 146. Moore's life and achievements have been chronicled by both print and television media since his death on February 13, 1979. See, for example, the PBS documentary "Cecil B. Moore," which first aired on Philadelphia's WHYY on February 25, 1987. Two of his more heralded achievements include the banning of blackface in the city's Mummers (New Year's Day) Parade in 1964, and the desegregation of Philadelphia's Girard College in 1968. In 1987, Philadelphia City Council changed the name of Columbia Avenue from Broad to 33rd Streets to Cecil B. Moore Avenue.

53 Acel Moore, "Statue Brings to Mind Stature of Cecil B. Moore," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 2, 1999.

era in Philadelphia black politics, but it is difficult to see many long-term benefits from his tenure as the chapter's president.⁵⁴

Among other colorful labels, Moore has been described as loud, effective, outspoken, vigorous, flamboyant, profane, fanatical, caustic, fiery and militant.⁵⁵ One columnist stated, "Confrontational and in-your-face, he angered and alienated not only those in the white power structure but also many in the black power structure as well."⁵⁶ In 1964, he attracted attention by supporting several African-American candidates who were running against other African-Americans Moore described as "so-called Negroes" and also as "tools of the white power structure."⁵⁷ This was a common tactic he employed, and he also was known for denouncing "opposition leaders as 'Uncle Toms'," and for welcoming such figures "back to the Negro race" on occasion.⁵⁸ Moore explained, "You gotta use a little demagoguery now and then."⁵⁹ Moore gained attention in 1966 when he told the press, "What we need is a few more riots ... I'm in full accord with Black Power. You name me a Negro who isn't anti-white."⁶⁰ Moore's relationships with Philadelphia's Black Clergy predictably vacillated. African-American ministers would "watch him carefully, supporting him when they [found] him constructive, quietly opposing him when he [became] too violent or too obviously racist."⁶¹

In an effort to lessen his influence, the national NAACP divided the branch into five chapters in 1967, and Moore resigned soon afterward.⁶² Moore had been criticized by some of his NAACP colleagues for his relationship with the Black Muslims. One of those who left the organization when Moore took over stated, "Cecil Moore is as close to Malcolm X and the Black Muslims, without being an avowed follower, as anyone I know."⁶³ Moore ran for mayor in 1967, coming in a distant third to re-elected James Tate (D) and Republican Arlen Specter. Moore received 9,018 out of the more than 700,000 votes cast.⁶⁴ Mayor Wilson Goode (1984-1992) later said Moore would have been a very popular, but controversial, candidate for mayor in 1971. Goode stated, "There were a significant number of blacks who did not support (Moore's) tactics."⁶⁵ Moore was a 1953 Temple

54 Lermack, p. 158.

55 See, for example, Herbert Lowe, "Cecil B. Moore to join Great Blacks in Wax," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 29, 1999; and John Hadley Strange, "Blacks and Philadelphia Politics: 1963-1966," in Ershkowitz and Zikmund, p. 112.

56 Acel Moore, "Under Mondesire, NAACP has risen from the shadows," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 12, 2000.

57 Strange, p. 112-112.

58 Lermack, pp. 147-148.

59 Ibid., p. 148. Lermack is quoting *The New York Times*, August 15, 1963, p. 1.

60 Jacoby, p. 110. Jacoby is quoting a *Time* magazine article dated July 15, 1966.

61 Hanna Lees, "Philadelphia, Pa.: A Process of Fragmentation," *Reporter XXIX* (July 4, 1963), p. 20, cited in Lermack, p. 152.

62 "The Tribute That Melted an Iron Warrior to Tears," *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 6, 1978, Local, n.p.

63 *The Pennsylvania Guardian*, June 7, 1963, p. 3.

64 Paolantonio, p. 90.

65 Ibid., p. 113.

University Law School grad, and simultaneously operated a significant law practice during these politically active periods. According to Lermack, the bulk of Moore's practice involved the poor. Moore went on to represent the City's 5th Councilmanic District from 1974 until his death on February 13, 1979.⁶⁶ One of Moore's closest civil rights associates, and also one of his good friends, was Stanley Branche.

Stanley E. Branche

Branche worked with Cecil B. Moore on several political endeavors in Southeastern Pennsylvania in the 1960s, most notably in the effort to desegregate Girard College. At the time, Branche was the leader of the Chester, Pennsylvania NAACP. Former *Philadelphia Daily News* columnist and senior editor, Chuck Stone, once described Branche as a "sepia-toned Jack Armstrong, the black all-American boy grown to shrewd manhood."⁶⁷ Branche, who once stated that "in the ghetto, in order to survive, we all have to be damn good hustlers,"⁶⁸ was a very close friend of Major Coxson.⁶⁹ Branche said that he and his close friend Gus Lacy (discussed below) spent the evening of June 7, 1973 together with Coxson "talking and kidding around ... like we always do," just hours before Coxson's slaying.⁷⁰ Branche and Coxson were partners in an upscale Center City bar named the Rolls Royce Lounge, which opened in 1970 with a bash that headlined City Councilman Thomas Foglietta and boxing star Muhammad Ali.⁷¹ In the early 1970s, Branche often traveled throughout the city with "Ali in tow."⁷² In 1978, he made a losing run for the 1st Congressional District seat, losing to Tom Foglietta.⁷³ The following year, he was recruited by one of the nation's premier mechanical contractors, W.M. Anderson Co., to become the sole stockholder and chairman of the board. This was to obtain Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) government contracts in an effort to save the company ("Anderson" eventually went bankrupt despite Branche's involvement).⁷⁴ In 1985, he teamed with the late activist lawyer William Kunstler to file a lawsuit on behalf

66 "Councilman Cecil B. Moore, 63, Dead," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 13, 1979, Local, p. 3. Moore was 63.

67 Frank Dougherty and John F. Morrison, "Civil Rights Activist Stanley Branche Dies," *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 24, 1992.

68 Ron Goldwyn, "A Foot in the Door and a Hand in Everything," *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 15, 1988, Local, p. 5.

69 See, for example, Gaeton Fonzi, "The Man from M.O.X.I.E.," *Philadelphia Magazine*, July 1970, pp 63-65, 126-133, 136-139.

70 Laura Murray, "Coxson, 2 Pals Rapped Here Last Night," *The Evening Bulletin*, June 8, 1973, p. 3. Fonzi, p. 139.

72 Claude Lewis, "A Requiem for Stanley Branche, Card, Character and Bon Vivant," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 28, 1992, Local, p. A13.

73 Steven A. Marquez, "Foglietta-Tayoun Rerun Could Be a Weak Copy," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 12, 1986, p. E8.

74 Chuck Stone, "Stanley Branche's American Dream," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 14, 1980, Local, p. 2. Major Coxson had an ironic take on programs such as the MBE's utilized by Branche: "The Negro has it made today. He can get all the money he wants as long as he's Black ... But there was no federal money to fool around with when I started out." Fonzi, "The Man from M.O.X.I.E.," p. 130.

of MOVE member Louise James in an attempt to force then-District Attorney Edward G. Rendell to investigate the Goode administration's bombing of the controversial group's headquarters.⁷⁵ Branche owned two other nightspots (in addition to The Rolls Royce), The Graduate and Bugsy Siegel's. Siegel's, named of course after the infamous Prohibition-era gangster, lasted less than two months.⁷⁶ His affinity for the gangster life eventually led to his March 20, 1989 conviction for extorting drug dealers on behalf of the "Scarfo mob," while he was running for Congress.⁷⁷ He was sentenced to five years in federal prison. The key incident in the case occurred in August 1985, when Branche and Norman Lit demanded a street tax of \$1,000 per week in tribute to the "downtown mob" from Northeast Philadelphia drug dealer Frank "Chick" Trachtenberg.⁷⁸ The incident took place in a Dunkin' Donuts parking lot on Street Road in the Northeast, and the jury rejected the testimony of Branche's key defense witness, Gus Lacy, who claimed he and Branche remained inside the store throughout the extortion incident.⁷⁹

High-profile defense attorney Robert Simone, perhaps known best for his defense of "mob boss" Nicodemo Scarfo, represented Branche. According to Robert Simone, Branche was a "dear friend and drinking buddy".⁸⁰ Branche and Gus Lacy worked as "private investigators" for Simone as early as 1972,⁸¹ and Branche was later a defense witness in Simone's 1986 federal perjury trial.⁸² Simone's clientele throughout the years has included James "Foo-Foo" Ragan, Salvatore Testa (son of slain mobster Philip "Chicken Man" Testa), Raymond Martorano, George Martorano and Simone's "dear friend" Saul Kane, a convicted extortionist and Scarfo pal. Simone was convicted in December 1992 of "racketeering, extortion and

75 Maida Odom, "Kunstler Sues Over May Siege: Seeks Two Probes of MOVE Siege," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 8, 1985, p. B01.

76 Ron Goldwyn, "He's Branched Out A Lot Since Civil Rights Era," *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 18, 1986, p. 8.

77 Jim Smith, "Mob Role Brings Stanley Branche 5 Years," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 21, 1989, Local, p. 4. Also indicted in the case was John Ciancaglini, son of "mob captain" Joseph Ciancaglini.

78 Linda Loyd, "Branche Not at Meeting, Friend Says," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 13, 1989, p. B01.

79 Tyree Johnson, "Prosecutor: Duo 'Were No Robin Hoods'," *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 13, 1989, p. 28.

80 Robert F. Simone, *The Last Mouthpiece: The Man Who Dared to Defend the Mob* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 2001), p. 65.

81 One of the cases Branche and Lacy worked was the June 5, 1972 Altemose – Philadelphia Area Building and Construction Trades and Council "dispute". Leon Altemose, a non-union builder, was constructing a large project involving a Sheraton Hotel just outside of Philadelphia. Over 1,000 union men, led by Roofers Union Local 30 president John McCullough and Council president Thomas McGrann, picketed the site. The protest turned quickly to vandalism, and before long the pieces of the partially developed hotel were damaged and many pieces of construction equipment were set on fire. McCullough contacted Simone to defend 23 union members charged in the incident, and Simone enlisted two other high-profile defense attorneys as co-counsel, Cecil B. Moore and Charles Peruto, Sr. Branche and Lacy served as investigators for the defense team. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

82 Ron Avery, "Stanley Branche is Simone's Defense," *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 17, 1986, p. 10; and Jane M. Von Bergen, "Simone Jury is Told of Advice That Branche Gave to Mob Associate," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. B12. Branche also testified on Simone's behalf when he was acquitted of federal income tax evasion charges.

using the violent reputation of the mob to collect loan-shark debts.”⁸³ He was sentenced to a four-year prison term on May 3, 1993.⁸⁴ Simone also settled an old case with the IRS for tax evasion, though the result was no more time in prison since he was sentenced to a fifteen-month sentence to run concurrent with the one for racketeering.

One of the pieces of evidence in the case against Stanley Branche was an FBI tape recording of a November 15, 1986 conversation between him and George Botsaris, a leader of Philadelphia’s “Greek mob”. The tape illustrated the breadth and depth of Branche’s knowledge of the underworld.⁸⁵ Rev. Jesse Jackson was among those who wrote letters of support for Branche’s parole.⁸⁶ Before his death at age 59 in 1992, Branche had twice run unsuccessfully for mayor of Chester and for Congress (1978 and 1986).⁸⁷ Branche’s coterie of friends included some of the city’s most famous (and infamous) personalities, and his closest associate was West Philadelphia legend Gus Lacy. The two met in 1963 when Branche was a tri-state director of the NAACP.

Gus E. Lacy

Gus E. Lacy was also involved with several civil rights causes. For instance, he served as “president of Concern Communications, a group that brought black newscasters into the city,” and “he formed motorcades for Cecil B. Moore during the struggle to integrate Girard College.”⁸⁸ Lacy, however, was mostly known as the owner of a popular West Philadelphia bar named Mr. Silk’s Third Base, referred to on the street as “Silky’s”. Lacy was a former Postal Service employee, and got his trademark name from selling lingerie on the side out of his trunk, which featured “Stockings to Step-Ins from Mr. Silk” stenciled on it. Silky’s played a key role in Philadelphia’s nightlife scene throughout the 1960s and 1970s. As *Philadelphia Inquirer* staff writer Bill Thompson (1982) wrote:

By 1965, the city’s black nightlife was reincarnated primarily on the 52nd Street strip of West Philadelphia, where blacks began buying the drinking establishments formerly owned by whites. Gus Lacy’s Third Base at 52nd Street near Spruce Street was popular with blacks

83 Jim Smith, “Simone Guilty: Feds Finally Nail Simone,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 16, 1992, Local, p. 4.

84 Jim Smith, “Simone Sentenced to 4 Years,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 4, 1993, p. 5.

85 Linda Loyd, “Drug Dealer: Branche Was at Meeting,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 12, 1989, p. B01. Recently, defense attorney Robert F. Simone has written that he, Branche and Botsaris spent an evening gambling at the Golden Nugget Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. It is unclear when this took place, however, though it appears 1982 is likely. Simone, p. 142.

86 Lewis, “A Requiem for Stanley Branche,” p. A13.

87 Emile Lounsberry, “Stanley Branche is Charged: Ex-Activist Cited in Extortion Case,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 15, 1988, p. B01.

88 Barbara J. Richtberg, “Gus ‘Mr. Silk’ Lacy, Popular Club Owner,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1995, p. D11.

and whites from all over the city, including celebrities like Muhammad Ali and Billy Eckstine. Late model Cadillacs and Rolls-Royces dominated the street's parking area.⁸⁹

Joe Frazier, Teddy Pendergrass, Stevie Wonder and other noteworthy figures also frequented Mr. Silks, as did many members of the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies teams.

As one commentator later said, "It was the place where straight-lifers in conservative clothes mixed easily with pimps and hustlers in diamond rings and wide-brimmed hats."⁹⁰ Lacy's motto for the club was "You have to touch 3rd Base before you go home."

Lacy was also one of the primary Major Coxson backers from the 52nd Street strip, and was a partner with Stanley Branche in *The Graduate*.⁹¹ *The Graduate*, located at Juniper and Spruce Streets in Center City, entertained a crowd that included theatrical people, and "James Earl Jones was known to visit whenever he was in town."⁹² Among other mutual business endeavors, Lacy was a board member of W.M. Anderson Co. under Branche.⁹³ According to Lacy, the two were also partners in a private detective business in the 1970s. In 1979, Lacy and Branche were charged with bribery in a case involving a medical student's attempt to get in Hahnemann Medical College. All charges were dropped on January 2, 1980 when the key prosecution witness died. On April 9, 1982, law enforcement authorities executed a search warrant in Silky's, eventually discovering methamphetamine on the upper floors of the bar. An informant had disclosed that four days prior, Black Mafia leader Lonnie Dawson had obtained 'meth from Charles Broadnax "out of a cash register on the second floor of Mr. Silk's".⁹⁴ No charges were brought against Lacy. Later that year, Lacy ran unsuccessfully for Pennsylvania's 190th House District (West Philadelphia).⁹⁵ Lacy made headlines in May of 1983 when he hosted a pro-Rizzo rally at Mr. Silk's Third Base, hoping to rally support among African-Americans for Rizzo's mayoral campaign against eventual victor Wilson Goode. A modest demonstration against Rizzo by African-Americans was held outside the bar, after which Lacy announced, "I want you to know, buddy [Rizzo], you are welcome,

89 Bill Thompson, "Black Café Society: Lamenting a Dearth of Nightlife Alternatives," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 4, 1982, p. E01.

90 Elmer Smith, "'Mr. Silk' Was Family's Loving Boss, Right To The End," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 19, 1995, p. 8.

91 Toni Loci, "'Close to Nick': Mob Trial Witness Says Ex-Rights Activist a Scarfo Associate," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 19, 1988, Local, p. 12.

92 Richtberg, p. D11.

93 Stone, "Stanley Branche's American Dream."

94 *United States of America v. Lonnie Dawson, a/k/a "Abdul Salim", William Roy Hoskins, a/k/a "Muhammad Waliyud-Din", Robert Hardwick, a/k/a "Fareed Abdul Shakoore"*, Criminal No. 82-00128-01, 82-00128-02, 82-00128-03, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 556 F. Supp. 418; 1982 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 16787; 12 Fed R. Evid. Serv. (Callaghan) 353, December 21, 1982, p. 5.

95 Mike Leary, "Mullen, 2 Other Incumbents in City Trail for PA. House," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1982, p. A07.

buddy, out here on 52nd Street. You were always fair.”⁹⁶ In 1986, Lacy served as treasurer for Stanley Branche’s failed campaign for the 1st Congressional District.⁹⁷ Despite being immersed in complex social networks, many involving career criminals and other hustlers, Lacy’s only run-ins with the criminal justice system related to his tax payments for Mr. Silk’s. On August 17, 1983, the Pennsylvania attorney general’s office filed charges against Lacy for not paying taxes from July 1981 through December 1982. An investigation by the state Department of Revenue’s Financial Investigation disclosed that Lacy had paid no sales taxes since 1973, but the statute of limitations prevented charges being filed for offenses prior to 1981.⁹⁸ Mr. Silks closed in 1984. Lacy later appeared on the city’s “Top 20 Tax Delinquent” list in February of 1990. At the time, Lacy owed the City of Philadelphia “\$26,061 in taxes dating to 1979 for a property at 282 S. 52nd St., identified as Mr. Silk’s Third Base.”⁹⁹ Lacy died at age 72 on May 17, 1995.¹⁰⁰ Prolific columnist Claude Lewis (1995) wrote:

Lacy’s death signals the end of an era that produced a large number of widely loved rascals that included lawyer, activist and City Councilman Cecil B. Moore. Another on the roster of lovable rogues was Stanley Branche, who earned notoriety battling to make Chester better for blacks.¹⁰¹

One of the other prominent 52nd Street financiers, and Lacy associate, was John Watson.

John “Stan the Man” Watson

John “Stan The Man” Watson owned Philly Groove Records. Watson formerly employed “Bo” Baynes in 1971, when one of Watson’s popular acts, The Delphonics, was celebrating their million-selling record, “La-La Means I Love

96 Russell Cooke and Carol Horner, “Rizzo and Goode Thank the Troops and Downplay Race,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 13, 1983, p. B04; and Earni Young, “Crowd Threatens Rizzo,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 13, 1983, p. 3.

97 Maria Gallagher, “Long-Shot Candidate is Fired Up,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 21, 1986.

98 Michael E. Ruane, “W. Phila. Bar Paid No Sales Tax for 10 Years, Prosecutor Says,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 18, 1983, p. B12. Lacy’s wife, Virginia Edith Lacy, was a formal partner in the establishment.

99 Bob Warner, “City Ads Up Its Top 20 Tax Delinquents,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 22, 1990, p. 8.

100 At some point before his death, Gus Lacy granted Philadelphia’s Public Broadcasting System (PBS) affiliate WHYY an on-camera interview about his knowledge concerning various underworld activities, including the death of Major Coxson and the relationship between African-American and Italian-American gangsters. The documentary was called *Mobfathers*, and it was parsed into three parts. African-American organized crime in the Philadelphia region, including the Black Mafia, is discussed in the second half of the second part. There is an interesting footnote to this program. When I contacted WHYY offices for a copy of the tape, a representative explained that all copies of the program were confiscated by the FBI. A check of a few Philadelphia libraries was also fruitless for the same reason. I am thus indebted to Professor Lynee Snowden at the University of North Carolina – Wilmington (UNCW) for providing me with a copy of the documentary.

101 Claude Lewis, “Saying Goodbye to ‘Mr. Silk’ – They All Remember Him Fondly,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 22, 1995, p. A11.

You”. Following their success, The Delphonics attempted to sign with a larger more established label, only to be “persuaded” by Baynes to stay with Watson’s label. A major heroin dealer in Cincinnati named Alexander Randolph, aka Dickie Diamond, promoted The Delphonics. Diamond owned a New Jersey-based concert promotion company called Capital City Attractions. He promoted such acts as the Jackson Five, Sly and the Family Stone, and the Moments, up and down the East Coast. While on tour, he dealt narcotics and laundered the money through his box-office receipts. The last of the 52nd Street financiers considered by authorities to be involved in the Black Mafia’s endeavors was James “Foo-foo” Ragan.

James “Foo-foo” Ragan

Ragan, who owned Foo-foo’s Steak House at 52nd and Locust Streets, was one of the primary 52nd Street financiers of the Black Mafia (and of Coxson’s failed Camden mayoral bid). Ragan was once wounded in a 1970 shootout. He was such a well-known numbers writer that his attorney, Robert Simone, used this fact as a defense against drug trafficking charges in 1979. Simone stated, not too artfully, “Foo-foo Ragan is a numbers man, not a dope man.”¹⁰² Prosecutors, with the assistance of tape recordings, demonstrated Ragan was a middleman between 1972 and 1978 for a wealthy California businessman who supplied heroin to the Philadelphia area. In the spring of 1979, Ragan was convicted of conspiring to distribute heroin, and was sentenced to three years in prison on December 11, 1979.¹⁰³

Black Mafia Attorneys

While the intimidation, and, in some cases, the killing, of witnesses influenced the outcomes of many cases against Black Mafia affiliates, the political power provided by Cecil Moore and others allowed the group to expand despite increasing media attention. This power was in addition to the high-priced and influential legal team which was contracted to defend all Black Mafia affiliates, from a “Member of the Board down to the lowliest soldier.”¹⁰⁴ A September 1972 ODALE Intelligence Report indicates that “there appears to be a loosely formed Black crime syndicate in Philadelphia made up primarily of narcotics traffickers who are defended by the same defense attorneys ... operating for the benefit of the syndicate and not their individual clients.”¹⁰⁵ Another report states several Black Mafia factions are represented by “three or four prominent attorneys.”¹⁰⁶ The reports identified prominent Philadelphia defense attorneys “Ben” Johnson, Barry Denker, Kenneth

102 Jim Smith, “Numbers Writer Awaits,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 8, 1979, p. 18.

103 “Foo-foo Ragan Given 3 Years,” December 11, 1979, Local, p. 14, n.a.

104 Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d., p. 14.

105 ODALE Intelligence Report, September, 1972.

106 ODALE Intelligence Report, October, 1972.

Harris and Nino Tinari as the most active lawyers on the group's behalf, among others.¹⁰⁷

A. Benjamin Johnson

A. Benjamin "Ben" Johnson, considered by some to be the successor to "Cecil B. Moore in criminal trial brilliance,"¹⁰⁸ began his career as an associate and protégé of Moore in the late 1950s. His legal reputation made him one of the most sought-after attorneys in the city,¹⁰⁹ and his back load of cases resulted in actions being taken by the Disciplinary Board of the state Supreme Court on several occasions from 1976 through 1982.¹¹⁰ While Johnson is identified by law enforcement as an attorney for the Black Mafia, I have found no cases listing him as counsel to a Black Mafia affiliate.

Barry H. Denker

Barry Denker was also among the city's busiest, and most flamboyant, defense attorneys. He handled 400 to 500 criminal cases per year, and his trademark was a mink coat and cowboy boots.¹¹¹ A one-time law clerk for former Pennsylvania Senator Hugh Scott, Denker began practicing law in Philadelphia in 1967. While he also represented defendants "with alleged ties to organized crime and numerous murder suspects," he "first gained prominence in the early 1970s representing reputed members of Black Inc., Philadelphia's so-called Black Mafia, in a series of drug cases."¹¹² Among other cases, he was counsel for Nudie Mims in the DuBrow Furniture store robbery/arson/homicide. On March 22, 1983, Denker was arrested on a morals charge for his supposed involvement in an incident with a 12-year-old girl.¹¹³ Common Pleas Judge Harvey N. Schmidt acquitted him on June 2, 1983. Denker's attorney, A Charles Peruto Sr., explained that the girl made up the allegations in an effort to "get even with her mother" for punishing her over a poor

107 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 14.

108 "The Tribute That Melted an Iron Warrior to Tears."

109 Dave Racher, "Prominent Lawyer Suspended," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 15, 1981, Local, p. 8. One of Johnson's biggest cases was the defense of MOVE member Consuela Dotson (Africa) in the August 8, 1978 death of police officer James Ramp. Dotson was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder in 1980, and was sentenced to ten-to-twenty years in prison in February of 1982.

110 Michael Sokolove, "Time Seems Suspended for Benched Lawyer," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 25, 1982, Local, p. 14.

111 Jill Porter, "How a Fixer Operates," *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 15, 1988, p. 7.

112 Joe O'Dowd and Maria Gallagher, "Lawyer Arrested on Morals Charge," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 23, 1983, Local, p. 7.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 7. The incident occurred in February 1983 in Denker's law office in the Land Title Building, Broad and Chestnut Sts. Though Denker admitted he paid off officials to secure an acquittal, the facts of the case are not clear. The allegations were that Denker gave \$100 to a 34-year-old mother, one of his clients, to buy her 12 year-old daughter a dress. He then supposedly asked the girl to strip naked and try on the dress, and she complied.

report card.¹¹⁴ Denker later admitted paying Court of Common Pleas judge Herbert R. Cain Jr. and defense attorney Harry Seay (Seay and Kenneth Harris were former law partners) a total of \$10,000 to secure the acquittal.¹¹⁵

In August 1986, Denker was confronted with taped evidence that he had bribed a state parole agent. He agreed to cooperate with a joint federal and local probe into misconduct in Philadelphia's courts, and pleaded guilty on September 14, 1987, to mail fraud. Consequently, Denker was disbarred.¹¹⁶ While awaiting sentencing, Denker relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico until he became concerned for his safety, and was placed in the witness-protection program.¹¹⁷ On May 26, 1989, Denker was sent to a federal prison in the South for a year and a day. He died on March 1, 1996 at age 53.¹¹⁸

Kenneth S. Harris

Kenneth Harris was also one of the busiest defense attorneys in the city, handling more than 7,000 cases, before becoming a Philadelphia Municipal Court judge in January 1976.¹¹⁹ He had earlier worked in the firms of Cecil B. Moore and Robert N.C. Nix Jr. (who eventually became chief justice of the State Supreme Court), and was active in civil rights issues.¹²⁰ One of the last cases Harris handled as a lawyer was the defense of Thelma Darby, wife and co-defendant of Frank Matthews' associate, John "Pop" Darby. John Darby was convicted and served nine years in federal prison. Following his June 12, 1984 release from the Federal Correctional Institution at Lewisburg (PA), Darby contacted Harris for advice regarding "a variety of civil matters."¹²¹ Harris referred Darby to another attorney, Romaine G.

114 Dave Racher, "Lawyer Innocent of Corrupting Girl," *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 3, 1983, Local, p. 6.

115 Toni Loci and Jim Smith, "Judge-Case Witness: I Paid 10G Bribe," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 22, 1987, Local, p. 20.

116 See *In the Matter of Disbarment of Barry Howard Denker*, No. D-745, Supreme Court of the United States, 488 U.S. 963; 109 S. Ct. 487; 102 L. ed. 2d 524; 1988 U.S. LEXIS 5280, November 28, 1988; and *In the Matter of Disbarment of Barry Howard Denker*, No. D-745, Supreme Court of the United States, 489 U.S. 1004; 109 S. Ct. 1107; 103 L. Ed. 2d 172; 1989 U.S. Lexis 625, February 21, 1989.

117 Toni Locy, "He Couldn't Leave the Limelight: Witness in 'Hiding' Sought Publicity," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 12, 1988, p. 6.

118 Alfred Lubrano, "Barry Denker, 53, Exiled Lawyer," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 5, 1996, Local, p. B05.

119 Harris won a second term in 1981, and was later elected to a ten-year Common Pleas Court term in 1983. He served as a Common Pleas judge from 1984 until November 1986, when he was removed from deciding cases after notifying court officials that he was a target of a federal investigation.

120 Nix, son of prominent Philadelphia politician Robert N.C. Nix Sr., was appointed to the Philadelphia bar in 1956. He was elected a Common Pleas Court judge in 1967, and became the first African-American to serve on the state Supreme Court in 1972. In January of 1984, Nix became the first African-American chief justice in the nation. He held his position until his July 31, 1996 retirement. See Gene Seymour, "Robert N.C. Nix Jr.: The Son Also Rises," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 15, 1983, p. 20; Christopher Hepp, "No Nixing for Nix: Justice's Triumph," *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 4, 1981, p. 4; and Joseph R. Daughen, "In Retiring, Nix Isn't Shy," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 31, 1996.

121 Toni Locy, "Lawyer: Judge Harris Fee Based on Cocaine," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 3, 1987, Local, p. 3.

Phillips, who counseled Darby on several matters, and billed him for his efforts. Harris later berated Phillips for charging Darby because he had a private arrangement with Darby “whereby he would give cocaine to the judge in exchange for free legal services from Phillips.”¹²² At the time of the dispute, the FBI was actively monitoring Harris for various offenses regarding the fixing of cases.¹²³ He was at the center of one of the city’s most publicized corruption investigations, and was accused by a federal prosecutor of practicing “cesspool justice.”¹²⁴ Harris was indicted on August 20, 1987, and convicted on January 26, 1988, of racketeering, extortion and conspiracy for soliciting payoffs from defendants, their relatives or their lawyers in fourteen criminal cases pending before him.¹²⁵ Despite the character witness testimony of Judge Paul Dandridge,¹²⁶ he was sentenced to twelve years in prison on March 1, 1988,¹²⁷ The key evidence used against Harris was obtained by Barry Denker. In return for leniency in sentencing for his own case-fixing schemes, Denker agreed to tape conversations with Harris and other corrupt officials, including fellow judges Thomas N. Shiomos and Herbert R. Cain Jr.¹²⁸ In addition to Denker’s assistance, the FBI used extensive recordings made by hidden microphones placed in Harris’ robing room and chambers.¹²⁹ The last of the truly prominent defense attorneys listed in intelligence files as representing Black Mafia affiliates is Nino Tinari.

Nino V. Tinari

Tinari, whose clientele over the years included Willard Moran (the triggerman in the killing of Roofers Union Local 30 president John McCullough, who was aligned with several high-profile organized criminals), and assorted Philadelphia Italian-American gangsters,¹³⁰ was so much in demand that he was barred from taking new

122 Locy, “‘Heroin Kingpin’.”

123 See *United States of America v. Kenneth S. Harris, et al.*, Criminal No. 87-296, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1987 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10975, November 24, 1987.

124 Toni Locy, “Harris Accused of ‘Cesspool Justice,’” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 23, 1988, Local, p. 4.

125 Toni Locy, “New Twist at Harris Trial,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 4, 1988, p. 4. In addition to the fourteen cases in the immediate prosecution, Harris had been suspended from the bench in 1986 for accepting money from the Roofers Union Local 30 in 1985.

126 Toni Locy, “Off the Bench & Into the Game: 6 Judges Slated as Witnesses in Judicial Corruption Trial,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 6, 1988, p. 10.

127 Harris was later convicted of similar charges arising from the fixing of cases. See Jim Smith, “Judge Gets More Time,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 23, 1991, p. 10.

128 Joseph R. Daughen, “Live-Wire Attorney,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 16, 1987, Local, p. 38. Denker also testified that African-American judges had a “strong pipeline” to State Supreme Court Justice Robert N.C. Nix Jr. Toni Locy, “Denker: Bribes Widespread,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 16, 1988, Local, p. 3.

129 In addition to the other citations for this narrative, see *United States of America v. Kenneth S. Harris, Romaine G. Phillips, Matthias Brown, a/k/a “Sonny”*, Criminal No. 87-00296, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 700 F. Supp. 226; 1988 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1881, March 14, 1988.

130 See, for example, Dave Racher, “Three’s Company: Mob Figures Chat, Let Their Lawyers do the Arguing,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 29, 1984, p. 5; Toni Locy, “Merlino Turns Informant on

cases twice in the 1980s until he reduced his backlog in the city's court system. In 1989, he unsuccessfully defended Junior Black Mafia (JBM) member William McNeil against drug charges.¹³¹ Tinari was indicted on December 17, 1991 for tax evasion,¹³² and pleaded guilty on February 25, 1992 to evading \$441,000 in taxes over five years.¹³³ Following the character-witness testimony of A. Charles Peruto Sr., one of Philadelphia's best-known lawyers, he was sentenced to twelve months in custody on July 17, 1992.¹³⁴ Tinari served six months in a federal penitentiary and six months in a halfway house.

Other lawyers working for the Black Mafia were Sparrow Meade, Harold Randolph, and Joel Moldovsky.¹³⁵ The latter was mentioned along with Johnson, Denker and Tinari as one of the staunchest defense attorneys in the city.¹³⁶ Randolph, who was sponsored by his longtime friend Justice Robert N.C. Nix Jr., was appointed to the original 1972 state Disciplinary Board for lawyers. He was immediately the subject of controversy when he was accused of misconduct by his own clients. With Randolph facing probation and public censure, Nix and the Supreme Court "bypassed regular procedures and opted for a lesser punishment."¹³⁷ A. Charles Peruto Sr., who represented many of the city's white mobsters, was also mentioned as working for the Black Mafia. He withdrew his services to the Black Mafia once it became apparent there would be a conflict between his clients.¹³⁸

As the complex social and political sets of relationships demonstrate, the atmosphere in Philadelphia was akin to those in other U.S. metropolitan areas during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Black Mafia played upon these themes by consorting

Ex-Boss Scarfo," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 9, 1989, p. 5; and Emilie Lounsberry, "Leonetti Says He Defected from Mob for His Son's Sake," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 1990, p. A01.

131 Kitty Caparella, "JBM Lab Figure Given 21 Yrs.," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 8, 1989, p. 4.

132 Emile Lounsberry, "Defense Lawyer Faces Charges of Tax Evasion," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 18, 1991, Local, p. B01.

133 Henry Goldman and Emile Lounsberry, "Tinari Pleads Guilty to Tax Evasion," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 25, 1992, Local, p. B01.

134 Emile Lounsberry, "Noted Defense Lawyer is Given Year in Tax Case," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 18, 1992, Local, p. B01.

135 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 14.

136 Nels Nelson, "It Pays to Court," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 11, 1980, Local, p. 8. Muldovsky defended such infamous defendants as Philadelphia cop-killers Pedro Vega (convicted of the shooting of Sgt. Ralph Galdi) and Alan Ginn (convicted along with his brother Tucker of the shooting of Officer Charles Knox Jr.). See Dave Racher, "Vega 'Happy' To Get Life," *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 29, 1986, p. 3; and Racher, "2 To Stand Trial in Cop Killing: Brothers Admit Shooting Knox, Partner," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 12, 1993, p. 6.

137 Daniel R. Biddle and L. Stuart Ditzen, "As A Watchdog, Penna. Supreme Court Lacks Bite," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 17, 1983, Local, p. A15.

138 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 14.

with high-profile personalities in the hopes of dissuading victims, witnesses and authorities from pursuing cases against them. Importantly, the cultural environment also created other opportunities for the group. These included various “community development” initiatives, discussed next in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICS OF IGNORANCE AND THE ART OF EXPLOITATION

The collective social phenomena enumerated in previous chapters (i.e. the civil rights and black nationalist movements) impacted and influenced the Black Mafia's activities and also law enforcement's responses to them. The most obvious example concerned the group's "community development organizations".

COMMUNITY "FRONT" ORGANIZATIONS

The Politics of "Community Development"

Behind the scenes of the Black Mafia's overt criminal activities, the group was taking full advantage of the favorable political climate to obtain government funding for projects designed to enhance the country's inner cities, specifically African-American communities.¹ That is, "as crime and riots thrust America's urban problems on the front page of every newspaper, planners and city officials turned to the federal government for salvation."² The Community Action and Model Cities programs, for instance, "were intended to encourage the poor themselves to participate in the making and implementation of policy."³ Local neighborhood councils would then coordinate the distribution of the funds. Thus, the programs were "designed to enhance the political power of the disadvantaged and aid them in securing what they wanted not only from the federal government but from the local authorities as well."⁴ Some of these funding policies were based on the belief that the "grassroots" organizations, even if they included known gang members (in some cases this was apparently preferable), knew what was best for their respective communities. There is also the likelihood some of these grant projects were doled out in fear – of racial demagogues' vitriol and of civil unrest. Social commentator Tom Wolfe (1970) uniquely described the scene in his controversial *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers*. According to Wolfe, "mau-mauing" the "flak

1 For a substantive analysis of these initiatives, including a discussion of the economic and demographic trends predating the 1960s community development push, see Ronald W. Bailey (ed.), *Black Business Enterprise: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York, Basic Books, 1971).

2 Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City: Problem, Promise, and Reality* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 136.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

4 *Ibid.*

catchers” was the practice, rather the art, of African-American militants threatening civil disobedience or worse if white bureaucrats did not meet their demands.

When black people first started using the confrontation tactic, they made a secret discovery. There was an extra dividend to this tactic. There was a creamy dessert. It wasn't just that you registered your protest and showed the white man that you meant business and weakened his resolve to keep up the walls of oppression. It wasn't just that you got poverty money and influence. There was something sweet that happened right there on the spot. You made the white man quake. You brought *fear* into his face. Black people began to realize for the first time that the white man, particularly the educated white man, the leadership, had a deep ... fear of the black man's masculinity. This was a revelation. For two hundred years, wherever black people lived, north or south, mothers had been raising their sons to be meek, to be mild, to check their manhood at the front door in all things that had to do with white people, for fear of incurring the wrath of the Man. The *Man* was the white man. He was the only *man*. And now, when you got him up close and growled, this all-powerful superior animal turned out to be terrified ... So for the black man mau-mauing was a beautiful trip. It not only stood to bring you certain practical gains like money and power. It also energized your batteries. It recharged your masculinity ... Mau-mauing brought you respect in its cash forms: namely, fear and envy.⁵ (emphases in original)

An example of the mindset behind these policies can be gleaned by looking into the 1967 selection of Sonny Carson to the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation board.

Carson was in his mid-twenties when he began working for the Brooklyn (NY) branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in the early sixties. He had a past filled with criminal activities dating back to his childhood. Carson was an “accomplished mugger” by junior high school, spent time in a reformatory in high school (and while there was considered one of the toughest youths), “went AWOL several times before being wounded in Korea,” returned to the U.S. and began dealing drugs and running an illegal gambling joint. “After a while, this too bored him, and he was drifting more or less when he stumbled into racial politics.”⁶ He was enthralled by the Black Power movement and by the words of Malcolm X. He was thus not entirely in line with the integrationist tones of CORE, but the organization's leadership was looking for engaged members to generate attention. Carson was happy to oblige, and it didn't take long before people started taking notice that Brooklyn CORE was different. “Harmony is not the goal and never should have been. The struggle is about power – power to control our own destinies. For Black people, integration means relinquishing power. Why would we want to do that?” he asked.⁷ “Committed to Black secession and armed self-defense, he seemed to personify the fearless bravado of the Black Power movement,”⁸ and was head of Brooklyn CORE by 1967. Because of his position, and because of his knack for a

5 Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (New York: Noonday Press, 1970), pp. 119-120.

6 Tamar Jacoby, *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), p. 19.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

good quote (he once stated that the rioting and fires in cities across the country “were a good way of getting attention,” and that African-Americans “should have burnt them all down,” especially because blacks “didn’t own nothing (sic) of [their] own in those communities.”⁹), he began attracting media attention. This, in turn, gave him an aura of credibility, especially among politicians “trying to communicate with poor, angry Blacks,”¹⁰ which resulted in Senator Robert Kennedy appointing him to the “Bed-Stuy” Restoration Corp. board. His role on the board later played a part in getting Ford Foundation funding.¹¹ When asked why the government was “flirting with toughs like Carson, Kennedy replied impatiently, ‘These are the people we have to reach. Some people may not like it, but they are in the street and that is where the ball game is being played.’”¹² Tom Wolfe summarized the situation thusly:

The idea that the real leadership in the ghetto might be with the *gangs* hung on with the poverty-youth-welfare establishment. It was considered a very sophisticated insight. The youth gangs weren’t petty criminals ... they were ‘social bandits,’ primitive revolutionaries ... Of course, they were hidden from public view. That was why the true nature of ghetto leadership had eluded everyone for so long ... So the poverty professionals were always on the lookout for the bad-acting dudes who were the “real leaders,” the “natural leaders,” the charismatic figures in the ghetto jungle. These were the kind of people the social-welfare professionals in the Kennedy Administration had in mind when they planned the poverty program in the first place. It was a truly adventurous and experimental approach ... From the beginning, the poverty program was aimed at helping ghetto people rise up against their oppressors.¹³ (emphasis in original)

He concludes by stating the majority of the poverty budget went into so-called “community organizing,” which was the bureaucratic term for ‘power to the people,’ the term for finding the real leaders of the ghetto and helping them to organize the poor.”¹⁴

Carson would later be “sentenced in 1975 to seven years in prison for his part in the kidnapping and shooting of a Brooklyn man.”¹⁵ McGeorge Bundy, head of the Ford Foundation circa 1968, was asked if he was concerned about funding Black Power militants. He stated the oft-repeated phrase “Picketing is better than rioting.”¹⁶ In 1968, the foundation’s race-related funding efforts were approximately \$40 million per year.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 For background into the Ford Foundation’s decision-making process regarding the funding of race initiatives, see Jacoby, pp. 183-184.

12 Jacoby, p. 122, quoting from Jack Newfield’s *Robert Kennedy: A Memoir* (New York: Dutton, 1969).

13 Wolfe, p. 122.

14 Ibid., p. 123.

15 Michael R. Blood, “An Odd Nod For Freddy,” *Daily News* (New York), September 6, 2001, p. 4. As of 1989, Carson had not lost his edge. When asked about anti-Semitic comments he made in the 1960s, Carson replied “I’m anti-white. I don’t limit my antis to just being one little group of people, and I think you would insult me if you tried to do that.”

16 Jacoby, p. 163.

The concept of African-American criminals pilfering government funds was perhaps best exploited by Chicago's infamous Black P. Stone Nation, which received a \$937,000 grant from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity in 1968 to help gang members find jobs.¹⁷ As Wolfe noted, "the police would argue that in giving all that money to gangs like the [Black P. Stone Nation] the poverty bureaucrats were financing criminal elements and helping to destroy the community. The poverty bureaucrats would argue that they were doing just the opposite. They were bringing the gangs into the system."¹⁸ The Black P. Stone Nation scandal was investigated by the McClellan Committee in 1968. The "investigation and other reviews uncovered an astounding picture of the consequent corruption, fraud, and crime that resulted from these grants."¹⁹ Like Philadelphia's Black Mafia, the group had hoodwinked several clergymen and politicians into viewing them as a bonafide organization. The group was initially a neighborhood gang called the Blackstone Rangers, until 1965 when, following gang warfare, they became part of a twenty-one gang "coalition" and adopted a new name. The Rangers and the "Nation" were headed by Jeff Fort, a flamboyant leader who was imprisoned for contempt of Congress and embezzlement of federal funds in 1972. While in prison, Jeff Fort founded another organization, the El Rukns, which was ostensibly a "Moorish" religious organization. Following his release, he transformed the "Nation" headquarters into the Grand Major Temple, of which he was Prince Malik. He was convicted of narcotics violations in 1982, and was convicted in 1987 along with other El Rukns for plotting terrorist acts on behalf of Libya's Moammar Gadhafi.²⁰ Another '70s Chicago group that specialized in narcotics trafficking and extortion, the Gangster Disciples (GD's), had a community front group named "Save the Children Promotions, Inc."

Philadelphia's War on Poverty

In 1962, Democrat James H. J. Tate was elected Mayor of Philadelphia, along with a handful of Democratic, reformer councilmen. "Under the reform administration and the Tate regime, blacks moved into numerous high city posts, becoming deputy mayor, department heads of antipoverty and urban improvement programs."²¹ The

17 William Kleinknecht, *The New Ethnic Mobs: The Changing Face of Organized Crime in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 231; and Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New York: Garland, 1996), p. 201, place this figure at \$1 million.

18 Wolfe, p. 141.

19 Malcolm W. Klein, *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 83.

20 Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime* second edition (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985), pp. 289-291.

21 Dennis Clark, "Urban Blacks and Irishmen: Brothers in Prejudice," in Miriam Ershkowitz and Joseph Zikmund II (eds.), *Black Politics in Philadelphia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973), p. 25. By the end of the 1960s, there were only three African-American city councilmen out of seventeen.

Black Mafia would exploit these programs on several (known) occasions in the early 1970s.

Charles Bowser worked in City Hall in the 1960s, including a stint as deputy mayor. He has commented that nearly one-third of Philadelphia's budget came from President Johnson's "Great Society" programs. "I was a grantsman ... We didn't care about [Pennsylvania state capital] Harrisburg. The big cities had a pipeline to the federal government."²² Analysts question, however, how the resources were allocated. Graham Finney, president of a "local good-government group" called the 21st Century League, discussed this matter with *Philadelphia Inquirer* economy analyst Andrew Cassel, who (1999) wrote:

As Finney recalled ... no city in the country was more successful than Philadelphia at extracting funds from Washington back in the 50s and 60s. Rather than promoting urban revival, however, those funds often ended up padding local bureaucracies, sustaining political fiefdoms, and convincing private entrepreneurs to risk their money somewhere else.²³

Philadelphia's "war on poverty" had its origins in May 1964, with Mayor James Tate's new agency, "Program for the Elimination of Poverty" (PEP).²⁴ PEP consisted entirely of current and former members of the mayor's administration, and for this reason was not supported by local or federal officials. The mandate was clear: lower economic groups were to be represented and included in the decision-making process. The mayor next turned to the Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement (PCCA), "a local nonprofit group financed by the Ford Foundation to deal with poverty problems in North Philadelphia."²⁵ Part of the reason Tate entertained this option was because the city could not fund its share of the program and hoped PCCA would provide the money. The mayor's selection of PCCA came under "heavy criticism from the Philadelphia branches of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)," and the NAACP for its own failures to "obtain grassroots support for its efforts in North Philadelphia."²⁶ Following his second PEP successive failure, Tate set up a new agency, the "Mayor's Antipoverty Program" (MAPP). "The essential difference between PEP and MAPP was that the latter included a Human Services Committee (HSC) composed of almost every conceivable type of local religious, business, civic, and ethnic group," but the HSC still received no real power. Thus the federal Office of Economic Opportunity rejected all MAPP proposals in October 1965. The ultimate solution was to incorporate the HSC into the pre-existing Philadelphia Antipoverty Action Committee (PAAC), founded in February 1965. The PAAC

22 Peter Binzen, "Bowser is an Old Hand at Playing the Political Game in Philadelphia," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 13, 1991.

23 Andrew Cassel, "Painful Adjustments Lie Ahead for Phila., But to What Result?" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 3, 1999.

24 Harry A. Bailey, Jr., "Poverty, Politics, and Administration: The Philadelphia Experience," in Ershkowitz and Zikmund, p. 168.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

26 *Ibid.*

“developed an acceptable organizational structure for a community antipoverty agency, including ample representation of the poor” and thus “PAAC became the city’s official advisory agency to carry out those phases of the antipoverty war.”²⁷

It is clear there were any number of public, private and public-private programs targeting poverty and community development in Philadelphia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Philadelphia’s Black Mafia successfully exploited these initiatives on several occasions, starting in 1970.

Council for Youth and Urban Development, Inc., and Community Urban Development, Inc.

Because of the lack of good intelligence prior to April 1972, it is not known how the Council for Youth and Urban Development, and the Community Urban Development, Inc., were started. And it is not known what these groups actually did, if anything, in the community. It is possible to highlight the people listed as incorporators and officers. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, there were six officers listed in the incorporation of the Council for Youth and Urban Development (in 1970). Of the six, at least four were actively involved in extortion and other violent crimes. Charles Robinson was the former leader of Philadelphia’s notorious 20th and Carpenter Street gang, and his brother William was also a member of the gang, while James Fox and Russell Barnes were active in the Black Mafia.

*FIGURE 6.1 Incorporation Papers for Council for Youth and Urban Development Inc.*²⁸

Date of Incorporation: March 30, 1970.

Registered Office: 2001 Fidelity Building, 123 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia.

Incorporators: Charles E. Robinson, 1919 Carpenter Street; William Robinson, 1919 Carpenter Street; James G. Fox, 1019 Cleveland Avenue; Russell L. Barnes, 2117 Reed Street; Theresa Pinkett, 5850 Rodman Street; Kenneth Brown, 2407 Hartranft Street.

Purposes: Charitable, scientific and educational. The purpose of this corporation is not to influence legislation – and the only compensation given to the employees and the directors will be compensating them in some small way for the services given: only a token compensation. If the corporation is dissolved, the assets will be divided up among other non-profit corporations.

Attorney: No attorney shown.

The officers of Community Urban Development Incorporated are listed in Figure 6.2 below. Of the eleven listed officers (in 1972), several had records and even more had extensive police intelligence files concerning them.

27 Bailey, p. 170. For a detailed analysis of PAAC’s organizational and financial structures, see pp. 170-185.

28 Incorporation data contained in OCU Black Mafia files. I have been unable to identify when CYUD formally ceased operations. The last reference to CYUD in the intelligence files is contained in the OCU’s “Investigation of James Fox,” December 14, 1973. Fox was still active in the “organization” at that time.

*FIGURE 6.2 Incorporation Papers for Community Urban Development Inc.*²⁹

Date of Incorporation: April 28, 1972.

Registered Office: 5326 Westminister Avenue, Philadelphia.

Incorporators: John Clark, 659 N. 56th Street; Daniel Baldwin, 106 S. 60th Street; Marvin Blaylock, 2043 N 62nd Street; Devota Clark, 1226 E. Stafford Street; Darrel Dixon, 2426 N. 15th Street; Lucille Lockett, 33 E. Upsal Street; Jesse Mays, 645 S. 57th Street; Melton Minnis, 4975 Stiles Street; Frank Roberts, 5326 Westminister Avenue; John Lee Roberts, 5711 Larchwood Avenue; Nancy Young, 2116 W. 66th Avenue.

One of the listed incorporators, John “Johnny” Clark (no relation to the John W. Clark involved in the Hanafi murders and the Kelly robbery), was a contractor who worked in Camden, New Jersey.³⁰ Clark’s involvement with the Black Mafia seems minimal at best, according to intelligence files. It is believed that he was duped into thinking that Community Urban Development (CUD) would be a bonafide organization specializing in low-cost home repair.³¹ Authorities would later call it a “virtually nonexistent company.”³² He was murdered by Black Mafia affiliates for matters related to his involvement in CUD. While not one of the incorporators, George Mc Allister (aka George Epps) served as secretary and treasurer to Community Urban Development.³³ In December of 1972, he withdrew all of the organization’s money without the permission or knowledge of other CUD officers, and CUD ceased operations with Clark and Mc Allister on bad terms. Sometime in mid-October 1973, Mc Allister attempted to get together with Clark again for the purpose of re-starting CUD. When Clark rebuffed Mc Allister’s proposal, he became a liability to others in the organization because he possessed incriminating CUD documents.³⁴ Thus, on October 29, 1973, Mc Allister, along with Edgar Rice, Lucious Jones and Eugene Coffey entered Clark’s Camden row house and demanded the “silver seal and original papers” for CUD.³⁵ When Clark refused to provide the materials, Jones shot him in the chest in front of his wife, Debra, and his two-year-old son, John Clark, Jr. Two of the men then proceeded to set him on fire by placing paper around Clark’s lower extremities.³⁶ Following Clark’s death, the Black Mafia

29 Incorporation data contained in OCU Black Mafia files.

30 Jane M. Von Bergen, “A Fugitive for 13 Years, Phila. Man Held in Killing of Camden Contractor,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 20, 1986, Local, p. B02.

31 Camden, New Jersey Police Department, supplementary offense report (homicide arson), “Interview with source,” November 13, 1973, p. 1.

32 Von Bergen, p. B02.

33 Camden, New Jersey Police Department, supplementary offense report (homicide arson), “Interview with source,” November 17, 1973, p. 1.

34 Camden, New Jersey Police Department, Detective Division, memo regarding information received from the FBI, November 8, 1973.

35 Camden, New Jersey Police Department, supplementary offense report (homicide arson), “Interview with source,” November 17, 1973, p. 1. Also see The Associated Press, “Man Held for 1973 Murder,” *The Bergen Record*, November 21, 1986, p. A15.

36 Camden, New Jersey Division of Fire, “Fire Investigation Report – 564 Division Street,” October 29, 1973.

was temporarily left without a community “front.” Within a month they created another organization, one which would become legendary.

Black B., Inc.

Unlike the first two “community” groups the Black Mafia created, it is possible to shed light on precisely how the same general cast of characters incorporated a third “community-based” center with the ostensible goal of helping neighborhoods deal with gang warfare. (In an ironic twist, the Black Mafia may have, in fact, achieved their supposed goal by taking over territories previously controlled by gangs for themselves.) According to the Black Mafia’s own records, the group first thought of opening another community center at their May 20, 1972 meeting.³⁷ The minutes of the meeting state, “the Chairman spoke about hooking up something along the lines of the Help Organization. We may even call our organization Help.”³⁸ In fact, several intelligence records indicate that many in the group referred to it as “Black Help, Inc.” even after the formal name became Black B. Inc. (short for Black Brothers, Inc.), when they were promoting their activities. As illustrated in Figure 6.3, Larris “Tank” Frazier, a well-known Black Mafia member, was the only listed incorporator. At the time of the incorporation, Frazier was the active target of several OCU and DEA investigations for dealing large quantities of heroin, cocaine and marijuana.³⁹ Frazier would later be convicted of murdering a fellow Black Mafia affiliate (discussed in Chapter 7).

*FIGURE 6.3 Incorporation Papers for Black B. Inc.*⁴⁰

Date of incorporation: November 9, 1973.

Registered Office: 1443 South Street, Philadelphia, 19146.

Sole Incorporator: Larris Frazier, 422 S. 60th Street.

Purposes: To promote general welfare and improve conditions of our community and to improve the plight of our brethren as a whole by collecting money through sponsoring shows, dances, cabarets, acceptance of donations. Said money to be utilized to clean up the community – to stop gang warfare through better human relations – stop violent crime in the black community – stop drug traffic and malicious graffiti – and to stop any and all activities that do not benefit the community. If this corporation is dissolved, assets will be distributed to other non-profit organizations.

Attorney: No attorney shown.

37 Confiscated documents; contained in the Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

38 Confiscated documents; contained in the Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

39 DEA report, “Vernon Earl WALDEN/ Larris FRAZIER ORGANIZATION: West Philadelphia; 60th and Pine Streets/60th and Market Streets,” n.d.

40 Incorporation data contained in OCU Black Mafia files.

The structure of the “organization” was a mirror image of the Black Mafia’s. It had a board, a set of officers, and a cadre of youths active at the bottom of the hierarchical chart. See Figure 6.4 for a comparison of the structures of the Black Mafia and Black B. Inc., which were one and the same organization, made up of the same individuals.

FIGURE 6.4 Structural Comparison of Black Mafia and Black B. Inc.

<i>Black Mafia</i>	<i>Black B. Inc.</i>
Board	Board
Officers	Officers
Gangs	Youths

The stated roles for each set of individuals differed, of course, from those of the Black Mafia. For instance, the board of Black B. Inc. was purportedly to organize community functions and to assist youths in getting jobs, while the officers were to promote a cleaner neighborhood. The youths were to assist the group’s leaders in getting gang members to join Black B. Inc. in the hope of curbing ghetto violence. Part of the dilemma for law enforcement and for citizens was the difficulty in distinguishing theory from reality. While the leaders of Black B. Inc. did, in fact, organize social functions for youths, heavily promoted with posters throughout South Philadelphia, they used these gatherings to sell narcotics and to raise funds for their own purposes. Additionally, Black B. Inc. employed many youths in their narcotics and extortion rackets. The youths were outfitted in black shirts carrying the organization’s name, leaving a confusing impression on those in the community.⁴¹

Black Inc. officers distributed trashcans in the community, with “Black, Inc.” painted on them (which received much favorable media coverage). However, distribution was limited to businesses that paid off the Black Mafia. Black Inc. distributed stickers to homeowners which read “Warning! Burglars Beware! This House Protected by BLACK, INC.” Once again, these were only provided to people who had paid them off.

The group successfully manipulated their extensive extortion racket into a public relations coup. For instance, when the Black Mafia celebrated the opening of Black B. Inc., they hosted several media representatives⁴², including Tyree Johnson of the *Philadelphia Daily News*. Johnson, like many of the media present, wrote a mostly favorable article, “5 Black Gangs Now War on Trash,” on the group and its stated goals. For instance, he generously quoted noteworthy gangsters James Fox, Lonnie

41 Joe O’Dowd, “70s Drug Gang Figure Found Murdered,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 23, 1986, Local, p. 4.

42 The Black Mafia also invited City Councilman Tom Foglietta to celebrate the opening of Black Inc.’s South Street headquarters. Foglietta planned to attend until he was informed of the group’s true background and the possible ramifications which would result from his attendance. He realized that his presence would lend credibility to the group, and could also cause political troubles for himself, and he stayed away. Author’s interview with “Patrick Kelly”.

Dawson and Eugene Hearn, who would each later receive significant prison terms. Nevertheless, at that moment, some took the group seriously. Johnson wrote, “Black, Inc., a community group of 50 young black men wants to clean up South Philadelphia’s gangs, crime and trash.” James Fox, “secretary of the group”, was quoted in the article saying, “We are doing this today to show there is pride in our neighborhood.” Johnson deftly wrote, “The group said its main objective was to stop the gang killings,” and he next quoted the group’s “treasurer”, Lonnie Dawson, as saying “We were aware that our younger brothers were being neglected.” Tyree Johnson quickly learned that it really was the Black Mafia, however. In 1986, John F. Morrison noted Johnson’s realization:

In the fall of 1973, Daily News reporter Tyree Johnson accepted an invitation to attend the grand opening of the office of a new organization dedicated to fighting juvenile crime in the Black neighborhoods of South Philadelphia. Johnson ... thought these new civic leaders, who called themselves Black Inc., a bit flashy for what they said they were up to. They were handsome young men in expensive tailored suits, and they pulled up to the South Street office in sleek Cadillacs. Johnson duly reported in the Daily News the inaugural event of this alleged new war on youth crime, but the next day he got his first inkling of who these guys really were: the leaders of the “Black Mafia”.⁴³

Following Johnson’s initial encounter with the group, his sources began detailing the true activities of the group, and from that point forward his articles were critical of Black B. Inc.’s role in the community. Several other reporters also wrote negative pieces about the group. This brought mounting public pressure against the group. In late September 1973, the Black Mafia began “handing out leaflets extolling the virtues and good works of ‘Black Inc.’” in an effort to regain public favor.⁴⁴ It is apparent from confiscated documents that the group had access to politicians and grant writers, perhaps best illustrated by one set of the guidelines they used to apply for government funding. (See Appendix G.) Several sources have identified City Councilmen Earl Vann⁴⁵ and Thomas Foglietta⁴⁶, and Judge Paul Dandridge⁴⁷ as the

43 John F. Morrison, “‘Black Mafia’ Was Short-Lived,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 24, 1986, Local, p. 4.

44 OCU debriefing report, “Black Mafia Notes,” September 24, 1973, p. 1

45 Earl Vann, an African-American deeply involved in politics and civil rights, was elected to an at-large Council seat in 1975 and became a South Philadelphia Democratic leader. He later served in the state House of Representatives for three consecutive terms before he suffered an irreversible political setback by supporting Frank Rizzo’s mayoral bid in 1978. Vann died on October 23, 1985 at age 72. Douglas A. Campbell, “Earl K. Vann, 72, Leader of South Phila. Democrats,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 26, 1985.

46 Thomas Foglietta served five terms as a city councilman-at-large, starting in 1955, before resigning to run as the Republican candidate for mayor against Frank Rizzo in 1975. He finished third behind Rizzo and independent Charlie Bowser, and failed to win a single ward. He switched his party affiliation to Independent to run for Congress in 1980. He won, switched party again to Democrat in 1981, and served until 1998 when he accepted the position of U.S. Ambassador to Italy. Foglietta stepped down as Ambassador in 2001 to join Cassidy & Associates as a senior vice president based in Rome. Not surprisingly, during his tenure in political life, Foglietta concentrated on urban policy initiatives with a focus on the urban poor. In 1991, he was the founding chairman of the Urban Caucus. Among other awards, Foglietta was recognized for his “leadership in the struggle against

primary backers of the group.⁴⁸ It is not clear, however, precisely what roles each played in the garnering of government “community development” monies. These same sources, some of whom investigated the links between these influential public officials and the Black Mafia, state that Vann, Foglietta and Dandridge were each duped into believing the organization was a bonafide self-help group, and that there is no evidence of corruption.⁴⁹ Rather, this was apparently a case best explained by a

youth violence.” State Department of the United States, “Biography: Thomas M. Foglietta, U.S. Ambassador to Italy,” n.d. The following sources have been utilized in the above summary on Foglietta’s professional history. Mark Manoff, “Foglietta Eyes Myers’ Seat,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 21, 1980; Bob Warner, “Dark Days Past, Foglietta is Proud,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 6, 1980; Bibliography Directory of the United States Congress, “Foglietta, Thomas Michael,” n.d.; and Cassidy & Associates, “Press Release: Ambassador to Italy Thomas M. Foglietta Joins Cassidy & Associates,” June 7, 2001.

47 Paul Dandridge served as a Municipal Court judge from 1968 to 1973, and served for the Court of Common Pleas from 1974 to 1984. He was chief of community rights as an Assistant District Attorney under D.A. Arlen Specter (R) prior to becoming a judge. In the early 1970s, Dandridge was considered as a potential Republican candidate for mayor. Later, D.A. Ed Rendell called him “too lenient” on the bench when he advocated things like the legalization of heroin. He was especially known for “Dandridge Specials,” which were cases in which Dandridge refused to adjudicate juveniles with extensive criminal histories delinquent. One noteworthy case had a twelve year-old accrue 27 arrests before Dandridge ruled him delinquent. In 1982, Specter supported Dandridge for the post of U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District before being removed from consideration when he failed the requisite FBI background check. Though numerous news articles have been written about the Specter-Dandridge bid, the reason for the FBI concerns has never been disclosed. One common speculation revolves around a 1972 testimonial dinner, organized by two lawyers who had appeared before him 54 times. The dinner raised \$23,500 for Dandridge’s personal use, and the matter was later taken up by the State Supreme Court which ordered him to turn the money over to the state. In 1975, the Court’s Judicial Inquiry and Review Board wrote, “The acceptance of the said proceeds by Judge Dandridge for his own personal use gave the appearance of impropriety and was improper.” See Larry Eichel, “U.S. Senators at Odds on Prosecutor,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 5, 1981, p. B01. As Eichel points out, “Ironically, the speaker at the dinner was Arlen Specter, who was then Philadelphia’s District Attorney.” Beginning on August 17, 1983, Dandridge began serving part-time as the city’s bailmaster. Philadelphia’s prison system was under a court order to reduce its prison population, and Dandridge would conduct hearings to identify non-violent persons eligible for bail in the hopes of releasing them to ameliorate the overcrowding problem.

Dandridge, 75, as of 2002 is still listed in business and political ventures, including serving: on the board of directors for First Chesapeake Financial Corp.; as chairman of Philadelphia Health Management Corp.; as a Temple University trustee. The following sources, among others, have been utilized in the above summary on Dandridge’s professional history. Elliot Jaspin, “Judge Dandridge: Discretion vs. Delinquency,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 23, 1981, p. 22; Larry Eichel, “Impasse Broken: City Judge in Line to be U.S. Attorney,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 7, 1981, p. A01; Susan Bennett, “Search On Again for U.S. Attorney,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 21, 1982, p. 12; Linn Washington, “34 Released to Cut Crowd in City Prisons,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 2, 1984, p. 5; H.G. Bissinger and Daniel R. Biddle, “Party and Family Ties Shape the Payroll,” fourth in the series “Memo: Disorder in the Court,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 29, 1986, p. A01; and Joseph N. DiStefano, “The Philadelphia Inquirer Loose Change Column,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 19, 2000.

48 Author’s interview of “Patrick Kelly”, taped interview with confidential source. Also see, for example, Strike Force’s “Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” n.d.

49 Author’s interviews of “Patrick Kelly,” “John P. Gallagher,” and “Patricia Traynor”. Also, taped interview of confidential source.

combination of factors, notably a lack of oversight, and the social and political climates of the times mentioned above.

Within a few months after Black B. Inc. began operating at 1443 South Street, the group quickly began calling themselves “Black Inc.,” and informants were describing the stockpile of weapons being maintained in the group’s South Street basement.⁵⁰ Several civic leaders and news reporters called for the group’s ouster after they realized they had been duped into believing it was a serious civic organization. Community meetings were held on this issue, including one hosted by the Reverend Wyncliffe Jangdharrie on February 11, 1974 in South Philadelphia. According to the minutes of the meeting, thirty-one people attended including several police representatives. Jangdharrie explained that when Jimmie Lester, an early advocate of the group, “found out that Sam Christian and his group were dope pushers and planned to use Black B. Incorporated to distribute narcotics, he quit.” After further stating that “a State Representative and several City Councilmen were instrumental in starting this organization, and a couple are still involved,” Jangdharrie called on those present to contact their local politicians.⁵¹ One of the other vocal civic opponents at the time was the Reverend Muhammad Kenyatta. Following his voiced criticism of Black B. Inc., Kenyatta, a “militant civil rights preacher”, had a contract put on his life.⁵² For an undisclosed period of time he took to carrying a gun. He survived. Within a year of Black B. Inc.’s incorporation, its headquarters at 1443 South Street was firebombed, though the “organization” continued for some time.⁵³

The best summation of Black B. Inc’s negative influence in the city came years later from United States District Judge Mary Johnson Lowe. In a parole-related court proceeding for Eugene “Bo” Baynes, Judge Lowe (1988) stated the following:

This conspiracy, in which you are named as the highest-ranking member, held itself out to the community to be a legitimate organization towards self-improvement for Blacks. The criminal activities of this group did irreparable damage to the community and to the respect of law, especially to Black youths, for whom as self-claimed Black leaders, you and your co-conspirators set forth an insidious example, and to whom, you and your co-conspirators sold heroin.⁵⁴

The difficult task of deciphering a set of criminal conspiracies is always aggravated with the involvement, if not complicity, of government officials. In the

50 See, for example, OCU debriefing report, “Information from informant,” February 6, 1974.

51 Philadelphia Police Department Intelligence Unit debriefing report, “Black B Incorporated,” February 13, 1973, p. 1. I have tried unsuccessfully to identify the politicians to whom the Reverend referred. As I have stated above, the clear backers were Councilmen Thomas Foglietta and Earl Vann, and Court of Common Pleas Judge Paul Dandridge. Beyond these three figures, I have been unable to identify political figures who assisted the Black Mafia in getting government funds.

52 Andy Wallace, “Rev. Muhammad Kenyatta, Activist,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 7, 1992, Local, p. B05.

53 Author’s interview with “Joseph Vincent”; and Morrison, “‘Black Mafia’ Was Short-Lived,” p. 4.

54 United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, *Eugene Baynes v. United States Parole Commission and Warden of Otisville Federal Correctional Institution*, No. 86 Civ. 7075, September 9, 1988.

case of Philadelphia's Black Mafia, this was true, although the broader cultural atmosphere during this time period created additional challenges for law enforcement.

LAW ENFORCEMENT'S "RESPONSE" TO THE BLACK MAFIA

While law enforcement had first-hand knowledge of individual group members throughout the 1960s, notably Sam Christian, Ronald Harvey, Donnie Day, Richard James, Nudie Mims, Bo Baynes, and Roosevelt Fitzgerald, the earliest intelligence on the "Black Mafia" as a real organization was developed by the BNDD in 1969: "An organization known as the Black Mafia is active in the Philadelphia area and is composed of several Negro criminals who have set up a racket of selling protection to Negro narcotics violators in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania."⁵⁵ Ironically, law enforcement intelligence records have a few scattered references to a group of African-American men meeting at various locations along the 52nd Street "strip" in West Philadelphia starting in 1969. Other records indicate observations of similar activities involving 50 to 60 black men meeting along the strip in 1971. It was not until several years later, however, that law enforcement realized what they had unwittingly observed were the meetings of the newly-created Black Mafia.

The District Attorney's Office was further aware of the Black Mafia's growing penchant for violence as early as April of 1970, when it handled the murder prosecution of Robert "Bop Daddy" Fairbanks. In Fairbanks' initial trial in October of 1970, the prosecution's opening remarks stated that Fairbanks was "an executioner for a group that's loosely called ... the Black Mafia."⁵⁶ The Drug Enforcement Administration documented the Black Mafia's foray into the narcotics traffic in 1971.⁵⁷ A September, 1972 ODALE Intelligence Report states that "there appears to be a loosely formed Black crime syndicate in Philadelphia made up primarily of narcotics traffickers who are defended by the same defense attorneys ... operating for the benefit of the syndicate and not their individual clients."⁵⁸ Yet, as mentioned above, the Philadelphia Police Department's Organized Crime Unit did not open an active file on the Black Mafia until April of 1972. The Atlantic City (NJ) Prosecutor's Office had contacted the PPDOCU for information on the group in response to the slaying of the Black Mafia's chief New York City/Frank Matthews drug contact, "Fat" Tyrone Palmer. The OCU, and the Strike Force for that matter, had no intelligence on a Philadelphia group called the "Black Mafia." As one twenty-year veteran of the Strike Force told me, the notion of an African-American organized crime group at that time (1972) "wasn't even on our radar screen."⁵⁹ Nor

55 BNDD, Philadelphia, PA regional office, "debriefing report," September 18, 1969.

56 *Commonwealth v. Fairbanks*, No. 469, Jan. T., 1971, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 453 Pa. 90; 306 A.2d 866, July 2, 1973.

57 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d., p. 4.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

59 Author's interview with "Connor Jamison".

was it on the “radar screens” of police officers who missed the opportunity to develop intelligence at the meetings they had witnessed along the 52nd Street strip as early as 1969. They had fallen prey to the “ethnicity trap” discussed below. Nevertheless, an investigation into the group, headed by PPD’s OCU, was initiated in response to the Atlantic City solicitation.

It is significant that there was no comprehensive intelligence file generated until 1972, of course, because the group had formed sometime in 1968. While it is true the structure of the police organization may have contributed to this situation (i.e. individual narcotics units and detective divisions, in addition to the Intelligence Unit, may have been developing their own respective cases independently), a more fundamental explanation exists, namely the OCU’s mandate.

Law Enforcement’s Pre-Occupation with Italian-American Organized Crime

Philadelphia’s OCU was born as a unit (initially named InterSect) in the early 1960s as a response to the 1957 meeting of a large number of Italian gangsters in Apalachin, New York, a small town outside of Binghamton, by the New York State Police (NYSP).⁶⁰ Indeed, other police departments created units with similar mandates (i.e. thwarting Italian-American organized crime), and allocated resources in this regard. For example, in 1970, a “highly placed law enforcement official” in New York City stated that until the late 1960s, “when we went after organized crime, we only went after Italians.”⁶¹ To demonstrate the widespread nature of this absolute focus on Italian-American gangsters at the expense of investigations on other significant groups, consider the following two examples. Frank Matthews, then one of the world’s most important players in the heroin and cocaine trades, hosted a meeting of African-American gangsters on June 27, 1972 in the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. The Sands was hosting the Muhammad Ali – Jerry Quarry fight, and thus served as a convenient meeting place for the Matthews crowd. The meeting included some of the most influential people in organized crime along the Eastern seaboard. Ironically, the U.S. Attorney’s Strike Force Against Organized Crime in California was investigating other organized crime links to the fight promoters. The FBI was concerned that California gangster Nick Licata and New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello were involved in raising money for the prizefight. An FBI airtel dated May 12, 1972, states:

Informants of the Los Angeles Office have furnished information regarding the involvement of several hoodlum and con-men type individuals being involved in the promotional aspect

60 From 1965-1967, the NYSP sponsored a series of conferences in Albany focused on combating the “Mafia”. As Dwight C. Smith, Jr. states, the meetings “sustained a network of law-enforcement personnel who had been principal supporters [of the “Cosa Nostra”, alien conspiracy hypothesis].” *The Mafia Mystique* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 220.

61 *New York Times*, July 24, 1970, p. 18, cited in Smith, p. 324.

of a proposed boxing match between MOHAMED (sic) ALI and JERRY QUARRY on 6/26/72, in Las Vegas, Nevada.⁶²

Consequently, the FBI was conducting surveillance at the Ali-Quarry fight, and throughout the Sands Hotel. It is therefore striking, though predictable, that, despite the FBI's interest in the circumstances surrounding the fight, there was no effort targeting the Matthews organization convening on the premises.

Recently, the Bureau's preoccupation with Italian-American crime groups came under scrutiny. On September 17, 2002, former FBI agent John J. Connolly, Jr., was sentenced for assisting Irish-American organized crime figures who were his confidential informers. Connolly was a "handler" for James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi, each members of the FBI's "Top Echelon Informant Program."⁶³ Bulger and Flemmi were leaders of Boston's Winter Hill Gang, who engaged in various criminal rackets in South Boston ("Southie") for decades. Connolly "was considered a star agent for his help in breaking up the New England Mafia in the 1970s and 80s by using information he obtained" from Bulger and Flemmi.⁶⁴ The recently publicized scandal was borne out of the FBI's zeal to crush Italian-American organized crime. In essence, the Bureau would permit Bulger and Flemmi to continue many of their criminal enterprises as long as they provided authorities with information on members of "La Cosa Nostra" who, according to authorities, were more significant.⁶⁵ The focus on LCN figures was so intense that, according to the Associated Press following a review of confidential documents, "field memos showed that for more than 20 years, FBI headquarters in Washington knew that its agents in Boston were using professional killers and mob leaders as informants and shielding them from prosecution for serious crimes, including murder."⁶⁶ For instance, in May 2002, Congressional investigators

62 Federal Bureau of Investigation, AIRTEL, SAC, Los Angeles to the Acting Director, FBI, May 12, 1972. This memorandum is included in the Bureau's Freedom of Information Act file (#92-13267) on Jerry Quarry.

63 See Amanda J. Schreiber, "Dealing with the Devil: An Examination of the FBI's Troubled Relationship With its Confidential Informants," *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems*, vol. 34 (2001), pp. 301-368. The particular analysis of Bulger and Flemmi appears in pp. 330-340.

64 Associated Press, "Ex-FBI Agent Sentenced for Tipping Off Mobsters," *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2002, p. A2.

65 See Jay Lindsay, "Ex-agent on trial in mob case," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Associated Press), May 9, 2002.

66 Associated Press, "Ex-FBI Agent". Connolly "took bribes from Bulger ... tipped him off to government investigations and provided information that led to the killings of rival gangsters." Fox Butterfield, "Ex-F.B.I. Agent Sentenced for Helping Mob Leaders," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2002. Connolly was convicted in May 2002 of racketeering, obstruction of justice and lying to an FBI agent for tipping off Bulger and Flemmi to investigations and warning them of a coming indictment in 1995. Bulger fled and remains a fugitive on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list, while Flemmi is serving ten years for money laundering, extortion and obstruction. As of September 2002, Flemmi is awaiting trial for his role in ten murders, all committed while he was an FBI informant. Connolly was sentenced to ten years in prison, the maximum under federal sentencing guidelines. He is also being sued, as is the FBI, for their supposed roles in the murders of 22 people Bulger and Flemmi have been charged with killing. Lawsuits against the FBI relating to the Connolly/Bulger/Flemmi scandal total approximately \$2 billion. For the most comprehensive

discovered a 1965 memo to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover informing him of four innocent men imprisoned for life for a murder committed by FBI informant Flemmi. The memo further stated Flemmi would likely kill again, but the “informant’s potential outweighs the risks.”⁶⁷

Given the aforementioned examples of law enforcement’s fixation on the “Mafia”/“La Cosa Nostra”, it is not surprising Philadelphia OCU’s primary mission was, and largely still is, to investigate Italian-American organized crime. This mission kept attention and resources away from groups such as the Black Mafia, which was hitting its violent stride just a few years after the Unit’s inception. While the Black Mafia’s origins were in the late ‘60s, several years passed before the OCU opened an active file despite several references to the group in local and federal intelligence files, some of which were discussed above. This had very real and important ramifications “on the street” beyond the fact that Black Mafia affiliates were not being subjected to a necessarily grand-scale investigation from 1968 through 1972. Several informants detailed the general sentiment among citizens in Black Mafia-dominated territories, and it centered on the lack of a police response to the illicit activities described in detail above. According to police and media sources, the sentiment was that the Black Mafia had corrupted law enforcement officials, and thus the group’s “untouchable” label became increasingly applicable. As mentioned above, victims and witnesses feared testifying against the group because of the Black Mafia’s established penchant for brutalizing its enemies and detractors. Potential complainants were now even less likely to test the criminal justice system waters because of the (misguided) belief in the corruption legend.⁶⁸ The effect “in the field” was to permit the Black Mafia’s reputation, and thus the related criminal activities dependent on intimidation (i.e. extortion), to flourish.

Fear and Intimidation

Even though the Philadelphia Police Department’s Organized Crime Unit began investigating the Black Mafia in April of 1972, and found a generous amount of intelligence already generated by various units, departments and agencies, and despite the amount of criminal activities the Black Mafia was engaged in, the Department still had problems bringing cases against members of the group. This was partly attributable to the relative lack of African-Americans in law enforcement to work undercover. However, the main reason was because of the “extreme

analysis, see Dick Lehr and Gerard O’Neill, *Black Mass: The Irish Mob, The FBI, and a Devil’s Deal* (New York: Public Affairs [Perseus], 2000).

67 Fox Butterfield, “F.B.I. Covered Up for Boston Mobsters, Lawsuits Assert,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2002. Two of the four innocent men died in prison, a third had his sentence commuted after serving 30 years in prison, and the fourth was released in 2002.

68 Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 240), states “Those distant from power may sense a loss of control, stripped of authority over the basic decisions that shape their lives ... For many, conspiracy thinking proves an antidote to powerlessness.”

difficulties encountered in obtaining complainants (victims/witnesses) concerning this group.”⁶⁹ This may be partly attributable to the confluence of events, real (i.e. violence against witnesses and victims) and imagined (i.e. the supposed corruption of police officers), but is also likely because of the failure of law enforcement to identify the problem in a timely fashion which resulted in the group’s increase in status and influence.

Examples of victim and witness intimidation can be derived from Philadelphia Police Department intelligence files. The Department theoretically scored a large victory when, after a series of arrests, they confiscated what came to be known as the “Black Mafia Notebook”. There were several occasions on which arrests took place and critical notes and the minutes of Black Mafia meetings were confiscated. Two of the more important arrests in which documents were found included the arrest of William Christian on February 8, 1973 for the robbery and kidnapping of the Kelly family and the arrest of Gregory Hill for illegal gambling on October 20, 1973. It is not clear precisely when the Black Mafia notebook was confiscated. Nevertheless, the notebook was quite literally a copybook, the type most often associated with grade school children, and was replete with explicit names, dates, and figures relating to the Black Mafia’s vast extortion networks. The targets included small legitimate business owners, quasi-legitimate business owners (e.g. bar owners who were complicit in vice activities), drug dealers and gambling entrepreneurs.⁷⁰ Detectives were assigned to interview those persons listed in the Black Mafia notebook as current or prospective targets. Though police had other, independent, evidence the notebook was accurate on many occasions, they still could not persuade individuals to come forward.

The standard procedure for Black Mafia extortion activities included a preliminary, unannounced visit by several Black Mafia affiliates during which a “request” was made for a “donation” to any of the group’s front organizations. The “visit” would conclude with a suggested donation amount, and a statement regarding when the affiliates would return to collect. Interestingly enough, even among founded, prosecuted cases, threats were not explicitly uttered or implied in most of these conferences. If a target did not pay when the group returned, violence and/or vandalism would eventually ensue. One high-profile case occurred on the 1200 block of Poplar Street on October 29, 1973. Black Mafia delegates met with the target five or six weeks prior, and at that time “asked” the target to “contribute” \$100 per week to Black Inc. When the delegates returned to collect on the 29th of October, the target refused and was shot in front of his property (he survived).⁷¹

Even if the Black Mafia’s response brought forth no immediate gain from the target, assuming he or she was sincerely without the funds demanded by the group, the Black Mafia gained from the reputation they promulgated in future extortion

69 OCU debriefing report, “Information Re: Black Mafia,” November 7, 1973, p. 1.

70 Listed among the targets was the legendary numbers operator Caesar Nelson.

71 Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime Unit, memo, “December 18, 1973”, in the Black Mafia files.

efforts. The following narrative is illustrative of a Black Mafia extortion case, derived from a detective's interview of a target listed in the Black Mafia notebook.⁷²

Q: Have you ever heard of the Black Mafia or Black Inc.?

A: Yes. A couple of months ago three black men came into the store and asked me to donate to their organization. I refused.

Q: Did they make any threats?

A: No. They weren't mean. They just asked for donations.

Q: Have you had any problems in your store since then?

A: Oh, yes. About two months ago, a crowd of boys – about four of them – came in and busted up my store and me. I went to the [author's deletion] hospital along with my friend [author's deletion]. They beat me and [him] up pretty good, and busted my store, the windows and all. This was three weeks after the three men came from the organization.

Q: Did they have a reason to do all this?

A: No. They never said anything, just came in and did their work.

Q: Have these men ever returned?

A: No.

Q: Could you identify any of these men?

A: No!

Q: Do you think your store and you were broken up was [sic] the result of not giving a donation to the organization?

A: Yes, sir. That's why they did it!

Ambivalence and Animosity

There may also be an alternative or additional explanation for the lack of victim/witness participation in Black Mafia cases, namely ambivalence – if not animosity – toward law enforcement and the criminal justice system in general. Ambivalence can be easily explained when viewed through the prism of Daniel Bell's "Queer Ladder of Social Mobility" hypothesis. Bell argued that groups shut out of the normal avenues of social mobility would turn to crime as a means of advancement.⁷³

72 I have deleted any identifying information from the police interview for the safety of the target/victim. Similarly, I do not want to offer an explicit citation. The interview concerned activities conducted in 1973.

73 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1988), pp. 127-150. Also see, for example, Desmond Cartey, "How Black Enterprises Do Their Thing: An Odyssey Through Ghetto Capitalism," in Glenn Jacobs (ed.), *The Participant Observer* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), pp. 19-47; and Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Contemporary and historical examples of disadvantaged groups turning to organized crime and participation in the vices are plentiful, and thus it is not particularly noteworthy that a percentage of African-Americans also followed this path to socioeconomic ascendance.⁷⁴ As Ianni (1974) documented:

Poverty and powerlessness are at the root of both community acceptance of organized crime and the recruitment into its networks. Conditions of poverty also nurture community desires for the services organized criminal operations provide. Escapism accounts in part for both wide-spread drug use and numbers gambling; the resentment poverty and powerlessness brings in the subordinated population makes drugs and gambling attractive as mechanisms of rebellion. Organized crime is esteemed for the very reason that society outlaws it.⁷⁵

Thus, it is not striking that in some cases, like other prominent organized criminals of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, African-American gangsters became community heroes who garnered “social honors.”⁷⁶ However, it is relevant and significant that African-Americans so identified with criminal elements within their communities that they refused to assist authorities during investigations.⁷⁷

While other racial and ethnic organized crime groups can each lay claim to ambivalent populations of potential prosecution witnesses, the animosity certain African-American communities held toward the criminal justice apparatus in the 1960s and 1970s is historically and sociologically noteworthy. In the case of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia, there were numerous community members who possessed vital, often incriminating, information who would not contact police. Rather, they would contact news organizations to make their case. For instance, Jim Nicholson, then with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, fielded a steady stream of these calls, and when appropriate he passed on information to authorities. Francis Ianni’s ethnographic research in Harlem, New York and Paterson, New Jersey, during roughly the same time period, discovered antipathy toward “the system” as a key impediment to victim/witness participation in African-American communities. This

74 See, for example, Mark H. Haller, “Urban Crime and Criminal Justice: The Chicago Case,” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 57, no. 3 (December 1970), pp. 619-635.

75 Francis A.J. Ianni, *Black Mafia: Ethnic Succession in Organized Crime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p.325.

76 See, for example, James M. O’Kane, *The Crooked Ladder: Gangsters, Ethnicity, and the American Dream* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1992), pp. 132-135. O’Kane provides an analysis of the “Gangster’s Social Honor”, including the case of legendary Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson circa 1967-68. Also see St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1945]), pp. 470-494.

77 More recently, Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), pp. 132-133, re-stated this finding in his ethnographic work in Philadelphia. He stated:

People residing in the drug-infested, depressed inner-city community may understand the economic need for the drug trade. Many residents have become demoralized yet often try to coexist with it, rationalizing that the boys who deal drugs are not necessarily bad boys but are simply doing what they think they need to do to make money ... Many have come to believe the police and the public officials don’t care about their communities, and this belief encourages them to give up any hope of doing something about the drug trade. As a result, they condemn the dealing but also tolerate it.

was particularly true when he examined criminals who doubled as, or associated with, black militants.

The black community ... sees the black crime activist as at once the victim and the protagonist of the white power structure. Patronage, acceptance and admiration toward black ... organized criminals define the attitudes of many of the blacks we spoke with ... The reasons are not difficult to find: black crime activists are “making it” – in spite of and in conflict with an oppressive white establishment.⁷⁸

In November of 1973, the OCU enlisted the services of agencies, and began a series of meetings in order to create a strategy which would not require witnesses to successfully prosecute the group. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the decision to focus on the group’s possession of weapons. The ATF representative on the Strike Force noted that “most of the members of the (Black Mafia) probably had felony convictions and since federal law forbids their owning a firearm of any type; arrest and prosecution by ATF through the Strike Force would be a very effective way of resolving the problems [the Black Mafia] presents to the public.”⁷⁹ A review of the prosecutions of the group’s affiliates questions the success of this tactic, however, because there are no identifiable cases which were predicated on the possession of firearms – by felons or otherwise.⁸⁰

The wholesale prosecutions in 1974/1975 mentioned above were assisted by the Black Mafia’s own detailed notes, and were made possible primarily because the group had switched from an extortion-based to a narcotics-based organization. While high-profile crimes brought attention to the Black Mafia, witnesses would still not testify against the group. Thus, the Strike Force developed strong cases centered on narcotics conspiracies. Drug offenses, and most importantly the long sentences associated with them, were largely responsible for the group’s demise.

Political and Racial Sensitivity

It is clear that Philadelphia’s law enforcement community did not confront African-American organized crime groups with nearly the vigor it did Italian-American groups until late 1972.⁸¹ Once authorities began their investigation of the Black

78 Ianni, p. 323.

79 ATF, “debriefing report,” November 5, 1973.

80 To clarify, I am not aware of any cases developed after the Strike Force meetings that were predicated on gun possession alone. Because of the nature of Black Mafia activities, weapons violations had been common charges levied against group affiliates for years. For instance, Philadelphia police arrested Lonnie Dawson on May 18, 1973 for violating the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act (“VUFA” in criminal justice circles). He was ultimately acquitted of the charges in State court, but the arrest for possession of a firearm violated Condition No. 6 of his parole. Thus, he was “recommitted to State prison as a technical parole violator on July 26, 1974”. *Commonwealth ex rel. Lonnie Dawson, Plaintiff, v. Board of Probation and Parole*, Defendant, No. 1081 C.D. 1974, Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, 17 Pa. Commw. 550; 333 A.2d 796; 1975 Pa. Commw. LEXIS 834, March 6, 1975.

81 This argument holds for other ethnic organized crime groups as well. Some have posited the reason law enforcement did not respond appropriately to Philadelphia’s Black Mafia lies in a bias against

Mafia, they had difficulties bringing successful cases against the group's membership because victims and witnesses would rarely cooperate.⁸² Furthermore, law enforcement agencies had few African-American officers to utilize in undercover operations that organized crime investigations generally require. While the inability to obtain witnesses and to develop undercover operatives stalled many Black Mafia investigations, there was also an unmistakable concern on the part of investigators to "get it right" before going public with any statements, and before arresting offenders, according to several interviews. Reporter Jim Nicholson also discovered this concern through his sources. One police officer explained, "It's a politically explosive subject. Everybody's afraid people will think a racial issue is being created by (police) saying there is a Black Mafia."⁸³ In 1973, an anonymous white politician similarly stated:

"If we attack the (Black Mafia), people would think a racial issue was being created. I don't believe the politicians will touch it because first, they don't have a feel for it and second, they will not move unless they are sure. And police can't really move until the politicians send down the word."⁸⁴

Authorities were afraid of unfavorable press stories, and the subsequent public criticism, which they believed was inevitable if they began arresting large numbers of African-Americans. The administration's apprehensiveness was not lost on the Black Mafia, which parlayed it into acquiring government funds in addition to several city properties including an old firehouse.⁸⁵ Additionally, prominent civil

minorities since the vast majority of their victims were African-Americans. While it is nearly impossible to entirely discount this line of reasoning as a researcher, I have interviewed many people in and out of the criminal justice system who each dismiss this as a possibility. One of the many confounding variables to such logic revolves around the fundamental, albeit informal, reward system in policing circles. Because civil servants are not rewarded in the same fashion as their private sector peers (i.e. merit raises, bonuses, etc.), police administrators must find creative ways to promote positive activities. See, for example, Samuel Walker, *The Police in America* 3rd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999), and John Crank, *Understanding Police Culture* (Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing, 1998). These may include honors, awards, citations, etc. and other public events that acknowledge, and thus promote, appropriate actions. Another tactic is to pay officers overtime for court appearances. This has been the dominant strategy in Philadelphia for some time. The logic is simple – arrests (generally positive police actions) lead to court appearances which lead to overtime pay. The notion of law enforcers ignoring criminal activities (and thus arrests) for racist reasons (i.e. the officers were predominantly white and the complainants were predominantly African-American) goes against this logic, and supposes that officers working in minority neighborhoods are willing to sacrifice substantial financial sums because of bias. In the case of Philadelphia's Black Mafia, this is even more difficult to fathom, considering the high-profile nature of the crimes they committed, and the peer-status increase and financial windfalls that awaited the arresting officer(s).

82 Though law enforcement officials often could not get victims and witnesses to cooperate, this does not mean officials do not have a concrete idea who is responsible for certain crimes. Often, authorities may have gleaned enough knowledge from informants but for a variety of reasons including the problems inherent in relying exclusively on informant testimony, cases stalled.

83 James Nicholson, "Philadelphia's Black Mafia," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, TODAY, August 12, 1973, p. T-11.

84 "The Underworld on the Brink of War: Part 1 – The Muslim Mob Gets It On," *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 1973, p. 126. Nicholson was quoting an anonymous white politician.

85 Author's interview with "John P. Gallagher".

rights attorneys and activists came to their defense, and “some of the city’s black leaders claimed the Black Mafia was a figment of the imagination of the white-controlled press.”⁸⁶ These matters often caused further political and legal dilemmas for authorities.⁸⁷

Jim Nicholson’s (and to a lesser extent, Tyree Johnson’s pieces in the *Philadelphia Daily News*) articles publicized the group’s suspect activities, and greatly influenced public sentiment in favor of the city administration. Even Nicholson, though, had to deal with the political sensitivity of the issue. He was confronted with a great deal of hostility and apprehension by the *Philadelphia Inquirer’s* editors who were very concerned about the potential fallout of his seminal Black Mafia article.⁸⁸ Their concerns were apparently validated, because with each successive article Nicholson wrote for the newspaper, it became more difficult to get the work into print. Of course, this had implications for activities on the street, since he was essentially the “mouthpiece” for the victimized, and exploited, African-American community for a period of time. One African-American community organizer implored Nicholson to continue his work on the Black Mafia, because he was “doin’ a service to the black community.”⁸⁹ Several African-American community leaders mounted a phone drive to put pressure on the *Inquirer’s* management to publish Nicholson’s “research findings” – much of which was derived from ethnographic work on the streets with these same concerned African-American citizens. Interviews with several members of Philadelphia’s criminal justice system cited Nicholson’s seminal article, “Philadelphia’s Black Mafia”, as one of the keys to obtaining public support for their investigations. While this, and subsequent related articles, did not entirely stop the charges of racism levied against authorities and the media, they largely ended the view of the Black Mafia as a figment or tool of the white establishment. This vital public support and subsequent political backing (which was not present until then) led to the prosecution of practically every living member of the organization. As an influential community member later told Nicholson in a taped interview, “If you had never gotten that stuff in there [*The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Philadelphia Bulletin*], shit, I don’t know what this neighborhood’d look like.”⁹⁰

86 Morrison, “‘Black Mafia’ Was Short-Lived,” p. 4.

87 For a detailed discussion of the political power of Philadelphia’s African-American community, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, see Ershkowitz and Zikmund’s *Black Politics in Philadelphia*.

88 Author’s interview with Jim Nicholson.

89 Taped interview of confidential source, September 4, 1973.

PART II: SOCIAL HISTORY 1975–2002

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CHAPTER 7

1975–1984: PHILADELPHIA’S BLACK MAFIA ON THE WANE¹

John and Thelma “Flossie” Darby, along with several others, were indicted by a Brooklyn, New York, federal grand jury on January 29, 1975, for “conspiring between September, 1968, and January, 1975, to import into the United States, and to distribute and possess with intent to distribute, substantial quantities of heroin and cocaine”² in “black communities in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Newark, N.J., and Baltimore.”³ Federal officials called the group the largest in the country selling predominantly to African-Americans.⁴ The government considered John Darby a “key lieutenant” in the Frank Matthews organization, who “supervised the distribution of narcotics in Pennsylvania.” Importantly, Darby’s wife, Thelma, was an active participant in the network. As the government illustrated during trial:

After [John] Darby was arrested in September, 1972, and later sentenced on a state ‘gun’ charge to imprisonment in New York ... Thelma Darby assumed his functions in the organization. In 1974, in particular, she had frequent contact with Walter Rosenbaum, who supplied the organization with mannitol and quinine used in cutting narcotics.⁵

Following a ten-week jury trial ending on October 8, 1975, John and Thelma Darby (and others) were convicted of conspiracy to violate federal narcotics laws. John was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment, while his wife Thelma received a five-year prison term. The Darby connection was vital to Black Mafia markets, and thus the New York case severely crippled the organization.

Following the grand-scale prosecutions of Black Mafia affiliates in 1974, and after the massive case in New York City involving Philadelphia suppliers from the

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- 1 Following the grand-scale prosecution of the already-depleted Black Mafia’s hierarchy in late 1974/early 1975, Philadelphia’s Organized Crime Unit and other agencies quickly began scaling down their investigations into the group’s activities. The Black Mafia’s activities became more fragmented and investigations were lower level and dispersed throughout a variety of departments, units, divisions, etc. Thus, it is helpful, and in some cases necessary, to look beyond law enforcement intelligence files for the miscellaneous activities of the Black Mafia affiliates which remained in “business” since that point in time.
 - 2 *United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Barbara Hinton, William Beckwith, Charles William Cameron, James W. Carter, John Darby, Thelma Darby, David Bates and Scarvey McCargo, Defendants- Appellants*, Nos. 1018, 1019, 1023, 1062-1065, 1390 – September Term, 1975. Nos. 75-1402, 75-1418, 75-1441 – 75-1445, 76-1024, United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 543 F.2d 1002; 1976 U.S. App. LEXIS 6904, September 27, 1976, p. 2.
 - 3 Toni Locy, “‘Heroin Kingpin’ 2 Decades Ago Linked to Harris,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 9, 1987, Local, p. 10.
 - 4 Max H. Siegel, “8 Convicted as Members of a Drug Ring for Blacks,” *The New York Times*, October 9, 1975.
 - 5 *U.S. v. Hinton et al.*, p. 4.

Matthews organization, another blow to the group occurred when the Honorable Elijah Muhammad died in February 1975. In Muhammad's last years, his control over the national chain of mosques had waned considerably. This allowed the Black Mafia in Philadelphia to enjoy relative freedom.⁶ Black Muslim headquarters, however, kept watch and simmered. The Strike Force received intelligence in September of 1973 that the "Black Muslim headquarters in Chicago was considering wiping out the Philadelphia Muslim Mosque because of the great deal of bad publicity they had brought upon the Muslims."⁷ One of reporter Jim Nicholson's sources told him that "Chicago" (Black Muslim headquarters) was not upset over commission of the high-profile crimes such as the Hanafi and Coxson murders, "but rather the sin of getting caught."⁸ Following the death of Elijah Muhammad on February 25, 1975, the Black Muslim movement fragmented. His immediate successor was his son, Wallace D. Muhammad, who began a series of reforms called the "Second Resurrection."⁹ He transformed the Nation of Islam religiously, organizationally, and politically.

The reforms were more in line with the teachings of the late Malcolm X, who, following a pilgrimage to Mecca, split from Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam because he favored incorporating all ethnic groups into the Mosque. Wallace Muhammad disbanded the "Fruit of Islam" (F.O.I.) and, in November 1976, changed the name of the organization to the World Community of Al-Islam in the West (WCIW).¹⁰ These reforms were very dramatic in Philadelphia, where the local

6 Jim Nicholson, "Muslim Plan," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 13, 1978, Local, p. 5. Also see the Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d.

7 Strike Force's "Intelligence Summary, Black Organized Crime – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," n.d.

8 Ibid.

9 Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); and Tyree Johnson, "Muslim Changes Revealed," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 20, 1978, Local, p. 12.

10 Tyree Johnson, "Con May Be Cleaning Up Mosque," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 20, 1978, Local, p. 5; and Gardell, pp. 109-110. Wallace changed the name of the organization from WCIW to the American Muslim Mission in April 1978. The reforms were considered radical to many within the movement, and two other factions split from the larger Muslim community. Louis Farrakhan was first moved to Chicago following Elijah Muhammad's death. In 1977, Louis Farrakhan and Silis Muhammad each left Wallace D. Muhammad's community and created their own sects to reform the Nation of Islam as it was under Elijah Muhammad. On August 21, 1977, Silis declared he was creating the Lost Found Nation of Islam (LFNOI), and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. Farrakhan announced he had re-founded the Nation of Islam in Chicago in November 1977. The majority of Elijah Muhammad's followers went with Farrakhan, though Jeremiah Shabazz aligned himself with Silis Muhammad. Shabazz explained his rationale in Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Touchstone [Simon & Schuster], 1991), pp. 295-296.

Farrakhan's rise to power began years previously in Boston. He then succeeded his former mentor, Malcolm X, as minister of the Harlem Mosque after Malcolm's assassination and eventually became Elijah Muhammad's National Representative. Lincoln, p. 128. After 25 years of vitriolic discord (Farrakhan considered Wallace Muhammad a "soft-minded heretic"), Farrakhan and Wallace Muhammad "celebrated a symbolic reunification of their rival Black Muslim factions" on February 26, 2000. William Claiborne, "Farrakhan reunites two rival factions," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 26, 2000; Dirk Johnson, "Farrakhan Ends Longtime Rivalry With Orthodox Muslims," *The*

temple was referred to nationally as the “Hoodlum Mosque.”¹¹ The membership for Philadelphia’s Black Muslims following the reforms was estimated at 2,000 in 1978, down from 10,000 in the early 1970s. “Apparently, after years of being told by the late Elijah Muhammad that ‘all’ whites couldn’t be trusted and were the source of their degradation, many members dropped out rather than accept the possibility of sitting next to a white in the temple.”¹² To distinguish itself from the new WCIW, the front door of Mosque No. 12 at 605 S. Broad Street read, “The All Black Nation of Islam is for righteous Muslims only. All devils, hypocrites and disbelievers must stay away.”¹³

The leader of Philadelphia’s Black Muslims, Jeremiah Shabazz, was ousted in the changes. Shabazz was initially moved to New York and appointed head of the East Coast Region, replacing Minister Abdul Hareem Farrakhan (Louis Farrakhan).¹⁴ Shabazz was suspended in early February 1976 by Wallace Muhammad, and later left to join former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali’s entourage. Jim Nicholson’s sources stated the primary reason Shabazz was ousted concerned Wallace Muhammad’s displeasure with the circumstances surrounding the Black Mafia, “a crime syndicate the police have termed ‘Black Muslim-dominated’.” Around that time, Shabazz was so disgusted with the media coverage he and Mosque No. 12 were receiving that they “threw a 200-man cordon of Black Muslim soldiers” around *The Philadelphia Inquirer* offices. Editor Gene Roberts eventually met with Shabazz, who demanded “that the newspaper stop referring to him as the Godfather of the Black Mafia.”¹⁵ Shabazz once commented, “some of the alleged Black Mafia members came out of my temple, but I would no more accept responsibility than the Catholic priests would accept responsibility for the Mafia.”¹⁶ Wallace Muhammad convened his national council of ministers on November 30, 1975 in Chicago. The three mosques receiving the most criticism were Atlanta, San Francisco and Philadelphia. As Nicholson noted, Philadelphia’s Mosque No. 12 had earlier received attention in the June 9, 1975 issue of *New York Magazine*:

New York Times, February 28, 2000; and Annette John-Hall, “Farrakhan Joins Old Foe to Renounce Separatism,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 28, 2000.

11 Johnson, “Muslim Changes Revealed.” Shabazz died on January 7, 1998. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (“Metro News in Brief” section), January 8, 1998.

12 Ibid.

13 Maida Odom, “Nation of Islam stands divided,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 23, 1978. Other signs placed on the front of the mosque read: “The Original Black Nation of Islam: The Home of the So-Called Negro”; Muhammad’s Temple’s Defense Dept.: Self-Help, Registration, Separation & Correction Headquarters”; “Nation of Islam: Muhammad’s Mosque No.12, Under the Guidance and Leadership of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad, Last Messenger of Allah.”

14 Harry Amana, “Jeremiah Shabazz Suspended by Muslims,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 10, 1976, p. 1.

15 Les Payne, “The Man Who Drew Cassius Clay to Islam,” *Newsday*, February 16, 1997, p. G06.

16 Ibid.

It is no secret that if there is any temple that has gone out of control, it's Philadelphia. Some Muslim sources refer to it as the 'hit Mosque.' It is the one temple where the rehabilitation of Muslim converts seems to have failed miserably.¹⁷

Those Black Mafia members who had served as the enforcement arm of the Black Muslims now found themselves without the prominent backing they had enjoyed under Elijah Muhammad's watch. Additionally, the "religious veil" had been lifted, and the trickle down effect to successful applications for search warrants and prosecutions was evident. When combined with the convictions of the group's hierarchy just months prior, the Black Muslim "Resurrection" caused serious organizational problems for the Black Mafia.

The group's *formal* hierarchical structure was no longer maintained, nor were the semi-regular meetings which had been convened for over five years. While the remaining affiliates continued their operations and still used the group's name, their influence had dissipated considerably. For a group predicated upon power and fear, the results were predictable. Affiliates began operating more independently, fearful of further prosecutions if they remained intact, and rival dealers quickly began staking their own territories. Most of the Black Mafia activities no longer merited consideration from Philadelphia's Organized Crime Unit, and whatever investigations were necessary generally went through the Narcotics Unit starting in 1974. This had as much to do with the fact that extortion had been wholly replaced by narcotics distribution, as it did with the group's lack of organization. Two of the Organized Crime Unit's last Black Mafia investigations were the shootings of Jerome Barnes, and of the "Jolly Green Giant."¹⁸

Black Mafia co-founder and enforcer Jerome Barnes was shot in the back of the head on June 15, 1975. He was critically wounded as a result of the assault, which took place as he stood outside at 13th and Kater Streets. Police had no leads in the shooting.¹⁹ That would not be the case in the Herschell Williams investigation.

THE MURDER OF HERSCHELL "JOLLY GREEN GIANT" WILLIAMS

On November 5, 1975, an otherwise "traditional" internecine killing took place. Herschell "Jolly Green Giant" Williams was slain by three other Black Mafia affiliates. One of the Black Mafia hit men was leader Lonnie Dawson, who later said the Williams assault was "to get him back in line with the dope business."²⁰

17 Jim Nicholson, "Black Mafia Blamed in Shabazz Ouster," *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 16, 1976. Nicholson is quoting William Brashler from the June 9, 1975 issue of *New York Magazine*.

18 I should note the group was also engaged in various credit card scams throughout 1974 and 1975. I have, unfortunately, discovered no law enforcement intelligence information or interview data regarding the frauds. See, Mike Leary, "Now the Black Mafia Bilks Banks," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 24, 1975.

19 George Murray and Mike Leary, "Black Mafia Figure is Shot, Critically Hurt," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 6, 1975.

20 Lonnie Dawson's statement to the police; contained in Common Pleas Court of Phila. Co., *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Lonnie Dawson*, Nos. 2747-2748, 12 Phila. 659; June 28, 1985, p. 3. Also see *United States of America v. Lonnie Dawson, aka "Abdul Salim"*, Criminal Mo. 82-128,

Williams, nicknamed because of his 6’6” frame, was murdered over a \$2,000 cocaine debt relating to his involvement in Black Brothers, Inc., an organization “which engaged in the illegal distribution of drugs”.²¹ Roy Hoskins and Joseph “Jo-Jo” Rhone shot Williams repeatedly “while his two children, Herschell and Keesha, looked on outside their Mount Airy home.”²² Hoskins and Rhone collectively shot fourteen rounds, hitting Williams with twelve bullets, and were driven away by Dawson. The shooting was observed by Robert Brown, who was eventually the key witness in the case. Police immediately received a description of the car and persons involved in the shooting, and Dawson, Hoskins and Rhone were spotted together in the vehicle and arrested hours after the incident. Hoskins was allegedly beaten with a nightstick during his interrogation. That evening, Hoskins’ attorney, Barry Denker, contacted Common Pleas Judge Paul Dandridge for permission to get Hoskins into a hospital. Hoskins sued the city and later settled for \$21,000.²³

The initial trial resulted in convictions for Hoskins and Dawson in 1976, and each received life sentences. Rhone was still a fugitive after jumping bail, though he did not leave the area entirely. On April 11, 1976 he murdered fellow Black Mafia affiliate James “Monk” Hadley in front of Sherman’s Bar at 20th and Pierce Streets over a dispute. Rhone was not arrested until 1989. Re-trials for Hoskins and Dawson were granted in 1979 by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, which offered different reasons for the respective cases. In Dawson’s case, the Court ruled the voluntariness of his inculpatory statement, following the police assault on Hoskins, was not properly vetted in the initial trial.²⁴ The Court granted Hoskins a retrial because the prosecution erred by questioning Hoskins about his involvement in Black Muslim Mosque No. 12 in his initial trial. The Court stated, “We cannot ignore the fact that

United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1987 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 3567, September 21, 1988.

In addition, the following newspaper articles have been referenced to add details to the “Dawson/Hoskins/Rhone” narrative: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dick Cooper, “FBI Agent: 2 Suspects Controlled Drug Ring,” April 7, 1982, Local, p. B01; Dick Cooper, “Indictment Says 4 Were in Drug Ring,” June 24, 1982, Local, p. B06; Dick Cooper, “3 Guilty in Heroin, Cocaine Dealing,” October 30, 1982, Local, p. B02; Dick Cooper, “2 in ‘Black Mafia’ Get Stiff Terms – Each Sentenced to Over 125 Years,” December 14, 1982, Local, p.B01; and Edward Colimore, “6 Suspects in Drug Ring Are Arrested,” August 13, 1983, Local, p. 01; *Philadelphia Daily News*, Jim Smith, “5 Held on Drug Charges After Gun-Blazing Chase,” April 5, 1982, p. 5; Dave Racher, “‘Black Mafia’ Murder Witness to Testify Today,” July 28, 1982, p. 9; Dave Racher and Gloria Campisi, “Alleged Black Mafia Boss Denies Slaying,” August 4, 1982; Dave Racher, “Dawson Guilty in Slaying,” August 10, 1982, p. 4; Jim Smith, “3 Black Mafia Leaders Guilty in Drug Sale, Murder Try,” October 30, 1982, p. 6; Jim Smith, “Black Mob Bosses Get Stiff Jail Terms,” December 13, 1982, p. 3; Jim Smith, “Killer Sentences for 2 Drug Dealers,” December 14, 1982, p. 8; Jim Smith, “City Men Held in Heroin Ring,” June 29, 1983, p. 3; and Ron Goldwyn, “Sentences Ring Out Black Mafia,” November 29, 1983, p. 6.

21 *Commonwealth v. Dawson*, p. 3.

22 Kitty Caparella, “Fugitive Kept His Hands in Drugs, Authorities Say,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 26, 1989, p. 5. Williams lived on Bayard Street near Ivyhill Road.

23 Jim Smith, “City Oks 21G Settlement in Police Beating Suit,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 22, 1981, p. 6. On appeal, Hoskins was represented by Joel Harvey Slomsky.

24 See *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Lonnie Dawson, Appellant*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 486 Pa. 321; 405 A.2d 1230; 1979 Pa. LEXIS 615, June 5, 1979.

certain adherents of the Muslim faith known as the ‘Black Muslims’ have been the subject of widespread unfavorable publicity, primarily because of some of its follower’s involvement in criminal activity.”²⁵ Thus, the Court argued, injecting this discussion served to prejudice the jury against Hoskins unless the prosecution could demonstrate the relevancy of that line of questioning. The Court in overturning the conviction stated “At no time ... was any effort made by the assistant district attorney to show the relevance of the cross-examination questions concerning ‘drug trafficking’ and the ‘Muslim’ religion.”²⁶ Thus, Dawson and Hoskins were each released from prison, pending retrial.

Soon after their return to the streets, Dawson and Hoskins approached prominent Black Mafia member Larris “Tank” Frazier about regaining control of the group’s narcotics territories. Frazier reluctantly agreed, although, as described below, his decision became irrelevant a short time later. While the Black Mafia’s criminal enterprises were less varied and less significant by this time, their acts of violence and intimidation continued.

THE GRUBY AND KELLY MURDERS

A darker side to the 1971 Dubrow Furniture Store case involved the execution-style murders of the key witness in the prosecution, Louis Gruby, 67, and his wife Yetta, 63. Louis Gruby, a retired Army sergeant, was employed at Dubrow’s as a “greeter.”²⁷ He “would ask prospective customers what they were looking for and then direct them to the proper area and salesman. Gruby and another employee, Audrey Dimeo, were the only employees able to identify any of the participants in the crime.”²⁸ The Grubys were found, both shot in the head, in their home in January of 1976, just months after Gruby’s testimony.²⁹ Michael Gruby, their son, discovered the bodies in their home at 2117 Faunce Street (in the Rhawnhurst section of Northeast Philadelphia). The killings were the first violent crimes in that neighborhood in several years. A search of the home by police found nothing disturbed or taken. “The body of Louis Gruby was on the sofa with a bullet wound in the neck and another in the head. His wife’s body was over his. She was killed by a bullet behind her ear.”³⁰ The autopsy disclosed Louis Gruby’s wounds were inflicted from a distance of less than twelve inches. His wife had been shot in the back of the head from one inch away. “Powder burns surrounded all three

25 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellee, v. William Hoskins, Appellant*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 485 Pa. 452; 403 A.2d. 521; 1979 Pa. LEXIS 621, July 5, 1979, p. 5. This document contains the most detailed analysis of the Williams homicide.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

27 “Motive sought in slayings,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 27, 1976, p. B01 (n.a.).

28 *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Robert Minis, Appellant* (two cases), Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 481 Pa. 275; 392 A.2d 1290; 1978 Pa. LEXIS 994, October 5, 1978.

29 Howard Goodman, “Convict Says Prosecutor Barred Blacks from Jury,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1992. Local, p. B01.

30 Robert Fowler and Robert Fensterer, “Man, wife are slain in home,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 26, 1976, p. A01.

wounds.”³¹ The only clue derived from the immediate canvass and investigation was from a witness who described a white Cadillac whose two occupants asked for directions to the 2100 block of Faunce Street.³² The murders have never been solved, and the Black Mafia is considered by police to have been involved in the homicides. Upon retrial in 1981, which was granted in part due to the ineffective counsel of Robert “Nudie” Mims’ attorney, Barry Denker, Gruby’s testimony was read to the jury.³³ This theme of murdered or intimidated witnesses, especially when cases were on appeal, was clear and repetitive throughout the twenty or so years the Black Mafia rotated in and out of the community and the criminal justice system. Another case in point was the murder of Barry Kelly.

In 1980, approximately five years after the Kelly robbery/kidnapping case was tried in court, Ernest Kelly received an anonymous phone call akin to the threatening calls he had received years earlier during the Black Mafia-related trial. This time the caller directed Kelly to 23rd and Diamond Streets, where he could find his car which had been stolen one week earlier. Kelly, then 56, located the car and immediately detected a strong odor emanating from it. Upon opening the trunk, Kelly discovered the badly decomposed body of his son, Barry, 29.³⁴ Police ruled out robbery as a possible motive, and while the case has never been solved, the Black Mafia is believed to be behind the killing.³⁵

In April 1981, Larris Frazier was convicted of third-degree murder for the drug-related shooting death of fellow Black Mafia affiliate Frederick “Smiley” Armour. “Smiley” was slain in 1980 over activities within Frazier’s primary territory, the Richard Allen Projects in North Philadelphia.³⁶ Frazier was awarded a new trial because of prejudicial comments made by the prosecutor. Before the matter could be heard on appeal, Frazier was convicted of heroin trafficking. DEA informants detailed Frazier’s *modus operandi*, including Frazier’s use of two units in the Richard Allen Homes that he rented for the purpose of selling drugs. He was sentenced on August 4, 1983 to fifteen years in prison and twenty years on probation following his imprisonment.³⁷ Frazier’s murder conviction for the Armour killing was later reinstated on appeal. With Frazier no longer a factor, Dawson and Hoskins

31 “Autopsy Fails to set time of 2 slayings,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 28, 1976 (n.a.).

32 c“Police seeking two in double slaying,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 30, 1976 (n.a.).

33 Dave Racher, “Dubrow Case,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 9, 1978, Local, p. 12.

34 Jim Nicholson, “Witness Against Muslims Finds Son’s Body in Car,” *The Philadelphia Daily News*, June 12, 1980, p.3. Barry Kelly could have been a witness in the trial, but was never called to testify.

35 Ibid., and author’s interview with “John P. Gallagher”.

36 Frazier was convicted with Eugene Beckman. *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellant, v. Larris Frazier. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellant, v. Eugene Beckman, a/k/a Eugene Beckham*, Superior Court of Pennsylvania, 331 Pa. Super. 128; 480 A 2d 276; 1984 Pa. Super LEXIS 5401, July 13, 1984. Also see Linn Washington and Joe Blake, “Allen ‘Mafia’ Hires Killers to Silence Women Foes,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 16, 1980, p. 5.

37 Russell Cooke, “Drug Dealer Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 5, 1983, p. B06; and Jim Smith, “Heroin Dealer Will Remain in the Tank,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 6, 1983, p. 4.

controlled some of their old territories while awaiting re-trial for the Herschell Williams murder. Their already-depleted networks would be irreversibly felled in the coming years, spelling the end of any semblance of Black Mafia organization for the first time since 1968.

THE BLACK MAFIA'S LAST (NOTEWORTHY) STAND

In May of 1980, the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court granted Robert "Nudie" Mims ("Ameen Jabbar") a new trial for the 1971 murder of DuBrow Furniture store janitor Alton Barker. He was freed on \$300,000 bail, and went back into the drug trade. Philadelphia narcotics officers developed intelligence resulting in a search warrant for his Northeast Philadelphia apartment. On May 13, 1981, police executed the warrant, discovering two ounces of cocaine (estimated to be worth between \$2,000-\$5,000), "an empty Thompson submachine gun, and a loaded Israeli Army Ouzi submachine gun" in addition to drug related equipment.³⁸ Meanwhile, that same month, Dawson ("Abdul Salim") and Hoskins ("Muhammad Waliyud-Din") approached an underling in the neighborhood narcotics racket, Lawrence Simons, with a \$10,000 offer to kill Robert Brown, the witness largely responsible for their first conviction in the Williams murder case. Hoskins and Dawson did not know, however, that Simons was working with both the FBI and DEA as an informant. Simons was facing charges for an unrelated 1975 murder, and agreed to develop intelligence on other cases. In October of 1981:

Simons was incarcerated at Holmesburg Prison, working as a government informant and present at a meeting of various persons associated with Dawson. The persons at the meeting concluded that Robbie Brown, a member of Dawson's organization, was an informant and developed a plan to murder him. Simons was asked to contact Dawson for the purpose of asking Dawson to contact [Simon's and Dawson's defense attorney Daniel] Preminger to ask his view of whether Brown was an informant. Simons was told that Preminger was in possession of a file that would reveal whether Brown was an informant. This conversation was taped by the government.³⁹

Until February 1982, Simons routinely purchased drugs from Dawson, and he also worked in a store owned and operated by Dawson until April 5, 1982.

Simons relayed the Dawson-Hoskins plot to federal authorities, and continued to "lay low" in the area while putting off the proposed "hit" until April 4, 1982, when he was seen meeting with FBI agents in a West Philadelphia bar by Lonnie Dawson. Early the next morning, Simons was driving in Philadelphia when he was spotted again by Dawson, Hoskins and two others in another vehicle who were on their way to kill Simons. A high-speed chase ensued, with Dawson and company speeding after Simons on Interstate 95 from Philadelphia to Chester, Pennsylvania, all the

38 Joe O'Dowd and Frank Dougherty, "Alleged Dubrow Slayer Held in Drug Bust," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 14, 1981, Local, p. B03. Mims was later re-convicted for the murder of Alton Barker.

39 *Lonnie Dawson v. United States of America*, Civil No. 97-7420, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1999 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 16909, November 2, 1999, p. 4.

while shooting at the informant from their moving vehicle. The chase ended when Dawson’s car crashed into a tree, and several hours later all its occupants were apprehended.

The investigation that ultimately imprisoned Dawson, Hoskins, and lower-level associates Robert Hardwick and others in the large trafficking conspiracy began in earnest in 1981.⁴⁰ The investigation involved several court-authorized wiretaps, but benefited greatest from the cooperation of informant Simons. An appellate court described the situation thusly:

The government’s first witness, Simons, gave testimony on the details of the drug organization operated by defendants Dawson, Hoskins and Hardwick from February, 1981, to [April 5, 1982] ... Consensual Body recordings in which defendants Dawson and Hoskins discussed the manufacture and distribution of controlled substances with informant Simons on six separate occasions were heard by the jury and admitted into evidence ... These consensual body recordings, as well as other testimony and evidence, independently corroborated the testimony of Simons with respect to the drug conspiracy, continuing enterprise, and individual distributions of controlled substances ... Wiretapped conversations of defendants Dawson, Hoskins and Hardwick were also admitted into evidence as the result of intercepts of telephone conversations during August and September, 1981, and March and April, 1982, by federal officials pursuant to court authorization⁴¹

Related to these initiatives, on March 18, 1981, Federal agents William Glanz and Richard Compton witnessed Lonnie Dawson pick up two 55-gallon drums containing methylamine in Wilmington, Delaware. Methylamine is an essential ingredient for the manufacturing of methamphetamine. Dawson operated with an African-American female who was allegedly the “principal”, i.e. the key contact, in Wilmington, Maureen Alston. On that occasion, authorities believed Dawson was accompanied by Alston and a chemist, Tyrone Adderly.⁴² According to an internal Philadelphia Police Department memo, the two drums could make 130 pounds of methamphetamine. Additionally, authorities executed search warrants on September 12, 1981 at two cutting houses overseen by Dawson and Hoskins but “under the immediate supervision of Michael Johnson.” “The fruits of these searches [included] large quantities of heroin, drug paraphernalia [sic], and cutting agents used to stretch heroin.”⁴³

All of these investigative efforts compelled an appellate court to state, “Sufficient evidence was introduced to show that the drug operation was large in scale and that

40 See *United States of America v. Lonnie Dawson*, No. 87-1352, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 857 F.2d 923; 1988 U.S. App. LEXIS 12775, September 21, 1988.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

42 Philadelphia Police Department, Organized Crime Unit, “Lonnie Dawson”, April 7, 1981. Adderly was imprisoned later that month for an unrelated investigation, though it was also for manufacturing methamphetamine.

43 *United States of America v. Lonnie Dawson, a/k/a “Abdul Salim”, William Roy Hoskins, a/k/a “Muhammad Waliyud-Din”, Robert Hardwick, a/k/a “Fareed Abdul Shakoore”*, Criminal No. 82-00128-01, 82-00128-02, 82-00128-03, United States District Court for the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania, 556 F. Supp. 418; 1982 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 16787; 12 Fed R. Evid. Serv. (Callaghan) 353, December 21, 1982.

Dawson and Hoskins obtained a substantial income by virtue of their management positions.” The trial lasted almost three weeks before the jury returned its verdict on October 29, 1982. Dawson and Hoskins were convicted on multiple drug-related charges, including possessing and distributing heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine and engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise. They were later sentenced to 134 and 126 years, respectively, on December 13, 1982, and fined a total of \$440,000.⁴⁴ Federal law enforcement officials claimed the sentences Dawson and Hoskins received were the harshest ever imposed by a federal judge in the Philadelphia area for drug offenses, and were believed to be the stiffest for any federal offense in the area.⁴⁵ With this conviction, Philadelphia’s Black Mafia was at its weakest point in the past fifteen years. “It’s a milestone getting them out of the community, especially the black community,” stated DEA agent in charge Norton J. Wilder.⁴⁶ There was perhaps a larger importance to the case, also. The Dawson case represented the first joint FBI-DEA drug probe in the Philadelphia area.⁴⁷ Then-Associate Attorney General (the “number three” man in the Justice Department) Rudolph Giuliani stated it was “a perfect example of what can be accomplished by cooperation” between the DEA and FBI.⁴⁸

Vernon Earl Walden was a significant Black Mafia affiliate who trafficked narcotics with Larris “Tank” Frazier. Law enforcement believed Walden was making up to \$1 million a year in the early 1970s, and he was indicted by a federal grand jury for evading taxes in 1970 and 1971. The IRS ultimately seized two buildings and a Lincoln Continental Mark IV. He was convicted in 1977 and sentenced to fifteen years in prison and lifetime probation for his role in a heroin ring. At the time, the IRS considered Walden “one of the biggest narcotics dealers in the Philadelphia area.”⁴⁹ In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the federal drug sentencing statutes under which Walden was convicted were flawed, and Walden was therefore released. On October 12, 1983, Walden and another man attempted to rob Girard Bank’s Bala branch at Bala and City Avenues in Lower Merion Township. In a kidnapping/robbery reminiscent of the February 1973 Kelly family incident, the two men followed the branch’s assistant manager from her home in the morning. They bumped into her car at a stop sign and when she got out to survey the damage, Walden put a shotgun to her neck and forced her into the passenger seat.

44 On January 23, 1985, the Third Circuit reduced Dawson’s sentence to 65 years, and his fine to \$100,000. Hoskins had his sentence reduced to 62 ½ years. See *United States of America v. William Roy Hoskins, a/k/a Muhammad Walliyud-Din*, Crim. No. 82-128-02, Civil No. 97-2974, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1998 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15159, September 23, 1998.

45 Smith, “Black Mob Bosses Get Stiff Jail Terms,” p. 3.

46 Ibid.

47 Cooper, “2 in ‘Black Mafia’ Get Stiff Terms,” p. B01.

48 Smith, “Killer Sentences for 2 Drug Dealers,” p. 8.

49 Kurt Heine, Julia Lawlor and Joe O’Dowd, “Hostage Freed in Surrender to Stone,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 13, 1983, p. 3. Also see DEA, report, “Vernon Earl WALDEN/ Larris FRAZIER ORGANIZATION: West Philadelphia; 60th and Pine Streets/60th and Market Streets,” n.d.

After the three arrived at the bank, the bank manager realized something was amiss, and contacted authorities immediately. A brief hostage situation ensued, ending with no injuries and the offenders surrendering to *Philadelphia Daily News* senior editor Chuck Stone.

In June and August 1983, Philadelphia District Attorney Edward Rendell indicted the suppliers to Dawson and Hoskins’ drug network.⁵⁰ The primary figure was Albert “Sid” Butts, who was the key conduit for heroin brought to Philadelphia from Harlem wholesaler Charles Copeland. Dawson, Hoskins and eleven other conspirators were indicted for operating a heroin and methamphetamine distribution network in the Philadelphia region.⁵¹ The indictments were the outgrowth of the information provided by Simons. His statements were augmented by information gleaned from FBI and DEA wiretaps conducted in August and September 1981. Following the convictions of the eleven defendants and the sentencing(s) in November of 1983, DEA Special Agent Nick Broughton proclaimed the combined efforts of the DEA, FBI and the PPD Narcotics Unit had “put a stop to the effectiveness of the [Black Mafia].”⁵² This was, however, not the end of the group’s activities. Remnants of the group continued on, seeking out new partners and networks. The results were predictable, though, since law enforcement was familiar with the trade and was no longer burdened with the political concerns which prevented immediate action in previous times. Thus, on February 23, 1984, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor “announced that a federal grand jury (had) returned seventeen indictments charging twenty-eight individuals with various violations of the Federal narcotics laws, specifically conspiracy and the distribution of controlled substances, including heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.”⁵³ For all intents and purposes, this round of arrests and successful prosecutions represented the end of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia as a functioning organization.

50 Smith, “City Men Held in Heroin Ring,” p. 3; Colimore, “6 Suspects in Drug Ring Are Arrested,” p. 1; and Goldwyn, “Sentences Ring Out Black Mafia,” p. 6.

51 Colimore, “6 Suspects in Drug Ring are Arrested,” p. B01.

52 Goldwyn, “Sentences Ring Out Black Mafia,” p. 6.

53 PPD, “News Release,” February 23, 1984, included in the Black Mafia files.

CHAPTER 8

1985–2002: OLD HEADS, OLD HABITS

Following the heavy round of convictions and lengthy sentences imposed in late 1984 – early 1985, the majority of the Black Mafia’s remaining actions occurred when imprisoned members got out and attempted to take back their territories. Most of these attempts failed, although several members were able to regain prominence in the heroin trade.¹ One of the group’s members who made a failed attempt to take back his territory was hit man Russell Barnes. Barnes was released sometime in 1985, after serving almost ten years on heroin distribution charges, and immediately attempted to re-establish himself as a powerful heroin dealer in South Philadelphia. Barnes aligned himself with the 20th and Carpenter Street gang, and began extorting numbers-house operators and drug dealers. He also hired himself out as an enforcer. Barnes apparently overstepped his bounds when he played a role in the slaying of Edward “Boney Bill” Perry on December 7, 1985. Perry worked for one of the top heroin wholesalers in the city, “Cadillac” Willie Rispers – a “Fat” Tyrone Palmer protégé, who put a contract out on Barnes.² Barnes began wearing a bulletproof vest and stopped traveling alone. Nevertheless, on January 23, 1986, he was found dead in a vacant lot in the 1200 block of South Hanson Street in Southwest Philadelphia.³ Barnes, who was 37 years of age, had been shot three times: once each in the left eye, the left ear and the left shoulder. His death started another gang war between rival drug factions involving the 20th and Carpenter Street gang.

Eugene Hearn served five years of a fifteen-year sentence for his part in a heroin operation, and was released in 1980. Hearn, who had changed his name to Fareed Ahmed, became the focus of controversy in the mayoral race of 1984 when it was discovered he volunteered on Mayor Wilson Goode’s campaign staff as a fundraiser. Goode successfully dodged the issue by claiming he had no knowledge of Hearn’s past because he only knew him by his Muslim name.⁴ At the time, Hearn listed himself as the founder of the Southwest Center City Civic Association. The Association had received \$10,000 in city funds for a Summer Youth Program after the 1983 primary.

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- 1 Scott Flander, Joe O’Dowd and Kitty Caparella, “Death of a Dealer: S. Phila. Drug Seller Found Executed,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 24, 1986, Local, p. 4. Kitty Caparella, “Gang War Looms After Black Mafia Killings,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 4, 1986, Local, p. 6.
 - 2 See Kitty Caparella, “Slain Drug Kingpin Knew He Was a Marked Man,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 14, 1986, p. 5.
 - 3 Robert J. Terry and Paul Nussbaum, “Reputed Black Mafia Leader Slain,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 24, 1986, p. B03.
 - 4 Christopher Hepp, “Accusations Fly During First Debate,” and “Target of Leonard Charge Takes Issue with Being One,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 27, 1983, p. 3 (both articles).

Hearn later served as one of Mayor Goode's three negotiators in the May 1985 MOVE imbroglio.⁵ One month afterward, Hearn testified as a defense witness for confessed Black Mafia contract killer Russell Barnes, who was appealing his 1975 heroin conspiracy conviction (in which Hearn was a co-defendant). That same month, Goode's press secretary defended the Mayor's ongoing relationship with

5 MOVE was a radical group founded by Vincent Leaphart (John Africa) in 1972. It began as a "peaceful, back-to-nature cult," which "believed man should not conduct research or invent technology." The group's members "did not bathe, their children ran naked because it was natural, garbage was buried in their communal backyard, and all of God's creatures – especially rats – were treated with equanimity. Group members adopted the last name of Africa in honor of Leaphart, whom they regarded as a sort of living spirit." Kitty Caparella, "MOVE Siege Ends," *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 8, 1978, Local, p. 37. The group's activities became increasingly frustrating to neighbors and authorities, and MOVE reacted more aggressively with each criticism and effort to have them evicted. The group assembled an arsenal of weapons, which they displayed often, including guns, bombs and TNT. The first major MOVE-police confrontation came on August 8, 1978, when authorities attempted to serve warrants on federal weapons charges at the group's West Philadelphia Powelton Village headquarters. One officer was killed in the gunfire, and another officer and a fireman were also shot. Nine MOVE members were eventually convicted on murder charges. A narrative on the events appears in S.A. Paolantonio, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993), pp. 220-227.

The group reappeared approximately three years later with a new "headquarters" at 6221 Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia. Once again, the group became involved in heated arguments with neighbors and officials who were sent out to the site to handle the disturbances the group was creating. Much of the commotion involved MOVE's "protests against the convictions – some in the form of obscenity-laden harangues over bullhorns late at night." Miriam Hill, "MOVE, 2002: Modern home, original beliefs," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 7, 2002. The group also continued to display its arsenal to the public from its "compound." In 1985, MOVE constructed a "reinforced steel and wood bunker" on the compound's roof, from which they would peer out with weapons in hand. Once again, police had warrants to serve to members of the group. Accounts of precisely what occurred on May 13, 1985 when negotiations failed differ. However, the Philadelphia Police Department's Bomb Squad dropped an explosive device from a helicopter onto the roof of the compound in order to destroy the bunker, and to tear a hole into the building, after which they planned to drop canisters of tear gas into the property. The explosion caused gasoline on the roof to ignite, and a fire began to spread. When firefighters approached the property, they were greeted with gunfire and retreated. A decision was made to allow the fire to burn, after which eleven people inside the compound were killed, 61 homes were destroyed and 250 neighborhood residents were left temporarily homeless. The fire was considered to be one of the worst in the city's history. L. Stuart Ditzen, "City: MOVE Fire Caused by Explosive; Fire Report Cites Police. 'Entry Device'," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1985, Local, p. A01; and Paolantonio, pp. 295-296. One could write, and debate, about MOVE at length, and I do not claim to do service to the controversial history because it is not central to this study. For interested parties, Paolantonio employs the following sources among others: John Anderson and Hilary Hevenor, *Burning Down the House: Move and the Tragedy of Philadelphia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987); Charles Bowser, *Let the Bunker Burn* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1989); and Michael Boyette and Randi Boyette, *Let It Burn! The Philadelphia Tragedy* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989).

Several years after the 1985 events, a grand jury cleared Mayor Goode, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor, Managing Director Leo Brooks and "everyone who had been on the scene" of any criminal culpability. Frank Friel and John Guinther, *Breaking the Mob* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), p. 299. MOVE, in some capacity, remains active.

Hearn (they met “regularly”⁶), calling him a “respected leader” in the community for the past seven years. This was, of course, not possible, since Hearn had only been released from prison in 1980.

Hearn was also a paid staffer on Robert Williams Jr.’s campaign for District Attorney throughout 1985. Williams’ campaign director, John Sharp, claimed he too had not known of Hearn’s background because he only knew him by his Muslim name.⁷ Sharp had apparently missed the October 1984, 31-article, six-part series in the *Philadelphia Daily News*, “The Straight Dope,”⁸ in which Hearn was repeatedly identified by FBI and DEA sources as a “drug kingpin” who was still one of the city’s biggest traffickers. The series depicted a heroin network operated out of each of the city’s three prisons, the House of Correction, Holmesburg Prison, and the Detention Center, where Lonnie Dawson was being housed. Dawson controlled the overall network, and Hearn was responsible for overseeing its operations in South and West Philadelphia.

According to federal authorities, Lonnie Dawson (“Abdul Salim”) was returned to the Detention Center from the federal prison in Marion, Illinois in 1982, for legal proceedings in Philadelphia. Inmates at the Detention Center said that almost immediately upon his return, Dawson forced the leader of the Center’s American Muslim Mission to step down, and assumed the role. Additionally, he “worked his way into a leadership position in the prison’s Betterment Committee, a council whose members are elected by inmates, and began cultivating contacts with guards and inmates alike, consolidating and increasing his power.”⁹ According to authorities and inmates, Dawson’s network also included guards who were given favors in and out of the prison in return for their cooperation. His network of guards was supposedly so complex he had to keep records of what guards were involved in certain transactions. According to inmates and guards, Dawson was able to get inmates transferred to his cellblock in order to do business with them. He used his position on the Betterment Committee to affect the transfers by filing complaints or doing favors for guards. Inside the prison, Dawson was able to take care of “problem” inmates for the guards on his payroll. One prison guard commented on Dawson’s significance, “If you have a problem with a (trouble inmate), you’d say, ‘Lonnie, why don’t you talk sense to the guy?’ And he’ll talk to him.”¹⁰

On the outside, in addition to the financial payoffs, he provided sex for guards with several females in South Philadelphia. Dawson was meeting regularly with Afghan heroin smugglers inside the prison, and dictated trafficking in areas of North

6 This was according to Jerome Mondesire, an aide to U.S. Rep. William Gray III (and head of the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP as of 10/02). Kitty Caparella, “Drug Dealer Listed on Campaign Staff,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 4, 1985, Local, p. 5.

7 Ibid.

8 Kitty Caparella, “The Straight Dope: Drugs in Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Daily News*. The series ran from October 22, 1984 through October 27, 1984.

9 Kitty Caparella, “Dawson: Key Man Behind Bars; Even Behind Bars, Drug Kingpin Ruled Over an Empire,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 21, 1984, Local, p. 28.

10 Kitty Caparella, “Drugs in Philadelphia: Prison Drug Traffic – The Light’s Green,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 21, 1984, Local, p. 3.

Philadelphia, and the Germantown and Mount Airy sections of the city. Three of the Afghans were caught on December 7, 1973 smuggling a quarter-pound of high-grade heroin into the city after the FBI monitored calls between Dawson and his associates. Dawson had the “fortune” of being housed in the same prison as a former drug associate, Raymond “Long John” Martorano of the Bruno crime “family.”¹¹ Prior to being imprisoned, the two had “met frequently to negotiate the purchase of P2P, the key chemical needed to manufacture methamphetamine (‘speed’).”¹² They ran a new heroin business together out of the Detention Center.

Dawson’s Black Mafia peer “Nudie” Mims (Ameen Jabbar) conducted similar business from his cell in Graterford Prison in Montgomery County, PA, and concentrated his efforts on North Philadelphia. The FBI monitored calls between Mims, Dawson, Martorano and others in the network for some time. Mims, as the head of the prison’s American Muslim Mission, was permitted to receive visitors at his prison office and chapel, and was very influential in the prison culture. He was visited in 1982 by Martorano’s son, George (“Cowboy”), who was also a narcotics dealer.¹³ Following the meeting, the FBI monitored phone calls to Dawson and Mims which focused on the quantities of heroin they wanted from the younger Martorano. George Martorano also told an undercover FBI agent, during another monitored conversation, that he controlled “all of North Philly”, because two groups of Black Muslims worked with him. Mims and Dawson, of course, orchestrated the

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- 11 Raymond “Long John” Martorano was serving a ten-year sentence for a 1982 drug conviction. In the early 1980s, Fortune magazine named him as one of the wealthiest Americans, estimating his worth at \$8 million based on traceable income. He was later found guilty, with co-defendant Albert Daidone, on July 31, 1984, of arranging the December 16, 1980 slaying of John McCullough. Martorano and Daidone had recruited Willard Moran to kill McCullough, one of the late Angelo Bruno’s chief associates, because he was trying to organize an Atlantic City, New Jersey bartenders’ union to rival Local 33, of which Daidone was vice president. After Moran and an accomplice, Howard Dale Young, were arrested in South Jersey, Moran consulted Martorano about the possibility of Young cooperating with the prosecution. Martorano responded, “Don’t worry about Howard Dale Young, because when (he) gets over to Philadelphia, I’m a large contributor to the Black Muslims.” Maria Gallagher, “Killer Says Defendants Helped Keep Tabs on Murder Probe,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 25, 1984, Local, p. 18. Young did testify, however, and Moran was convicted in July 1982, and later sentenced to death. Moran then agreed to cooperate with authorities to avoid the electric chair, resulting in the successful prosecutions of Martorano and Daidone. Each received a life sentence for their first-degree murder convictions. Dave Racher, “Life in Prison for Martorano, Daidone,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 3, 1984, p. 3. Martorano and Daidone were released from prison in November 1999, after “the state high court agreed with a lower court ruling that the misconduct by former top city prosecutor Barbara Christie was so egregious, [and] neither should be retried on grounds of double jeopardy.” Kitty Caparella, “Aged Mobster was ‘King of the Quadruple-Cross,’” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 6, 2002. After his release from prison, Martorano spent some time in Las Vegas before returning to the Philadelphia – Southern New Jersey region. He was shot and killed in a “gangland-style” murder in 2002. See, for example, George Anastasia and Thomas J. Gibbons, Jr., “Mobster Shot in Center City,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 2002.
- 12 Kitty Caparella, “The Straight Dope: Drugs in Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 23, 1984, Local, p. 8.
- 13 Frank Friel, a former captain of the Philadelphia Police Department’s Organized Crime Unit, has stated that George Martorano and the Black Mafia sold cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and Quaaludes. Frank Friel and John Guinther, *Breaking the Mob* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), p. 204.

two groups. According to reporter Kitty Caparella's intelligence sources, "Mims and Dawson separately (said) they could sell two kilograms a month – about \$400,000 worth of heroin."¹⁴

One of the corrupt guards, Kevin Pearson, agreed to cooperate with the FBI's probe of inmate-guard drug trafficking. He described the prison drug-trafficking network in detail, including his off-duty role as a courier for George Martorano,¹⁵ and was a key link in trafficking at all three prisons. Pearson admitted receiving \$6,000, a car and a half-kilogram of cocaine in exchange for testimony favorable to Raymond Martorano. On March 8, 1984, Pearson received a death threat by an anonymous phone caller, which he suspected was a prisoner.¹⁶ According to FBI sources, "he had agreed to testify against at least two other guards before he shot himself with a rifle through his left temple at his [North] Philadelphia home" on March 16th, just hours after giving the FBI a briefing on the network.¹⁷ While the prison system undertook its own investigation, the FBI, without its key source, discontinued its formal probe in June of 1984. Dawson was subsequently removed from his positions of power, and placed on administrative segregation before eventually being sent back to the federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois.¹⁸

Dawson's activities were revisited when Frank "Frankie Flowers" D'Alfonso was killed "gangland-style" as he walked his dog on July 23, 1985. D'Alfonso was a major figure in Philadelphia's underworld, and also one of the twenty-plus casualties of the mob war that began with the killing of leader Angelo Bruno on March 21, 1980. Two gunmen approached D'Alfonso on a South Philadelphia corner (Percy and Catherine Streets) and shot him five times. Authorities immediately considered his connections to the Black Mafia, and to Dawson in particular, as a possible reason for his murder. This was in part because approximately four years prior, federal informant Lawrence Simons described for authorities a meeting between Dawson and D'Alfonso, who was identified in an affidavit filed by FBI agent Henry J. Sweeney as "a principal member of the Angelo Bruno organized crime family." The two met in June of 1981 in a West Philadelphia bar in order to quell "territorial disputes in the distribution of narcotics by the Black Mafia and the Bruno organized crime family." Law enforcement officials were considering the possibility

14 Kitty Caparella, "The Straight Dope: Drugs in Philadelphia; Sidebar to Second of Six Parts – The Kingpins: Who's in Charge? Men Behind Bars," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 23, 1984, Local, p. 28.

15 George Martorano, represented by attorney Robert Simone, pleaded guilty in September of 1984 to controlling a \$75-million-a-year drug ring. He was sentenced to life in prison, and forfeited his two airplanes, a Florida airstrip and a Center City (Phila.) bar.

16 Maria Gallagher, "Dead Man Had Been Threatened," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 20, 1984, p. 3.

17 Caparella, "Drugs in Philadelphia: Prison Drug Traffic," p. 3. It was later discovered that Pearson was also expected to testify in the McCullough murder-conspiracy case against Martorano and Daidone, verifying Moran's version of events. Jim Smith and Joe O'Dowd, "Martorano Trial Witness Found Dead," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 17, 1984, Local, p. 3.

18 Kitty Caparella, "D.A.'s Office Probing Corruption in Prisons: Inmate Drug Kingpin Shifted," *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 3, 1985, p. 5.

D'Alfonso was murdered because of his alliance with Dawson and his crowd. This explanation was quickly ruled out, however, as authorities discovered the D'Alfonso slaying concerned matters within the city's dominant Italian-American syndicate.¹⁹

Throughout this time period, Nudie Mims remained in power at Graterford. Mims was credited by authorities for having a significant role in the creation of the Junior Black Mafia (JBM) organization. Some reports had him serving as advisor to the new, ultra-violent drug-running group, while others considered him to be its leader. The group was known for its motto, "Get down or lay down" – i.e. cooperate or be killed.²⁰ The JBM started as a handful of cocaine dealers in the city's Germantown section in 1985. They were notorious for their ostentatious lifestyles that included expensive clothes, luxury cars, and especially for their trademark, diamond-encrusted rings bearing the initials "JBM" (see Appendix H).²¹ Two of the group's founders, James and Hayward Coles, were enforcers and runners for the Black Mafia in the 1970s. The JBM continued to grow, filling the vacuum in the Philadelphia narcotics trade created by the extensive investigations into the Scarfo mob in the mid- to late-1980s, and the already-vanquished Black Mafia.²² They dealt

19 The D'Alfonso murder, including law enforcement's investigation and the trial of several Scarfo "family" operatives, is recounted in Frank Friel and John Guinther, *Breaking the Mob* (New York: Warner Books, 1990). Eight defendants, including "family boss" Nicodemo Scarfo, were convicted in the slaying. According to Friel and Guinther, p. 378, Scarfo was "the first don in the history of organized crime to be convicted of first-degree murder." The convictions were later overturned in 1997. George Anastasia, "Casinos' Keep-Out List Has Many Mob Figures," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 28, 2002.

20 Kitty Caparella, "JBM: Its Rise to Power; Brash Young Men Rule Over Drug Trade," *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 25, 1989, p. 5.

21 Kitty Caparella, "High Profile Dealers:'JBM' Called Flash in the Pan," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 18, 1988, p. 15.

22 Because the discussion is not central to this study, I do not examine whether the Junior Black Mafia is best described in terms of an organized crime group or a "drug gang." Unlike its predecessor, the JBM was exclusively a narcotics distribution organization. Thus, a reasonable argument can be made the group did not meet widely-held characteristics of organized crime (i.e. they were never engaged in multiple enterprises). There is no consensus in the academic literature on this matter, however. Some gang researchers delineate between gangs and "drug gangs," with the latter obviously focusing on the drug trade and monopolizing sales market territories instead of residential territories, among other differences. See, for example, Malcolm W. Klein, *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 131-135; and Jerome H. Skolnick, Theodore Correl and Elizabeth Navarro, "The Social Structure of Street Drug Dealing," *American Journal of Police*, vol. 9 (1990), pp. 1-41. Other researchers argue some gangs have become so sophisticated they are in fact organized crime groups. See, for example, Scott H. Decker, Tim Bynum and Deborah Weisel, "A Tale of Two Cities: Gangs as Organized Crime Groups," *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3 (September 1998), pp. 395-425. Decker et al. (p. 423) argue Chicago's Gangster Disciples "exhibited many characteristics of organized crime groups. In structure, activities, and relationships, this gang has moved well beyond the rather disorganized, informal quality marking groups that have appeared in most American cities in the [1990s]." Scott H. Decker and G. David Curry, "Addressing key factors of gang membership: Measuring the involvement of young members," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 28 (2000), p. 474, explain the debate:

At the heart of the controversy over the level of gang organization in crime is the extent to which offenders articulate and embrace common goals, motivate others to join them in a

primarily in cocaine, and worked loosely with remaining factions of both the Black Mafia and the ‘Scarfo group.’²³ For instance, Michael Youngblood was a Junior Black Mafia affiliate who worked in concert with Lonnie Dawson and “Nudie” Mims in several of the monitored narcotics deals mentioned above. Youngblood, who was also a federal informant, was associated at times with Salvatore Testa in the methamphetamine trade.²⁴ Law enforcement started receiving good intelligence on the Junior Black Mafia in 1987, and a federal strike force was assigned to investigate it in 1989. Most of the group’s members who survived the numerous internecine battles were arrested in 1990 and 1991, and the remaining infrastructure was decimated in March of 1992, when 26 defendants went on trial for operating “a continuing criminal enterprise known as the JBM.”²⁵

Law enforcement efforts, assisted as always by imprudent gangsters, had thus severely crippled three of the most significant organized crime groups in the Philadelphia-Southern New Jersey region. This is evidenced by the coalitions of formerly independent criminal organizations that previously competed for various illicit networks and markets. Remaining affiliates of the Black Mafia, Junior Black Mafia, and Bruno/Scarfo/Merlino “family” (and also Pagan Motorcycle Club) have worked in concert on several recent occasions, mostly in the drug trade and in the extortion of gambling entrepreneurs.²⁶ As of October 2001, the Joey Merlino group was still actively networking with various other groups, former groups and gangs, including former Black Mafia and JBM members.

common enterprise, and maintain a structured monetary and emotional commitment to crime as a group enterprise.

A recent New Jersey case involving the Latin Kings exhibits these definitional quandaries. Traditionally a “street gang”, 41 members of the Kings were arrested running a fairly sophisticated operation in Paterson and Newark. The indictments for drug, weapons, and racketeering charges were announced on October 30, 2002. Court documents disclosed a structured organization, complete with a leadership, membership dues – often extorted from underlings, and a division of labor. Jake Wahman, “Street Gang Members Arrested,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 30, 2002. A good primer on gangs can be found in Malcolm W. Klein, Cheryl L. Maxson and Jody Miller (eds.), *The Modern Gang Reader* (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing, 1995).

- 23 Kitty Caparella, “Sources: Mob Buys Coke From the JBM,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 30, 1989, Local, p. 3.
- 24 George Anastasia, “Police Investigating Reports of a Junior Black Mafia,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 18, 1988, p. B01.
- 25 Kitty Caparella, “The JBM Mother of All Trials: Prosecution of 3 Bosses to Chronicle Rise and Fall of Organization,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 30, 1992, Local, p. 5.
- 26 *Philadelphia Daily News* reporter Kitty Caparella has covered these alliances, with all of their permutations, for over ten years. See, for example, “Sources: Mob Buys Coke From the JBM,” August 30, 1989; “Black Mafia Bigwig Visits Merlino,” February 10, 1999; “Mob-Pagan pact,” March 11, 1999; “New Team Already Flexes Its Muscles,” March 11, 1999; “Joey Losing Faces,” June 22, 1999; and “Bank of Charges: Feds Accuse Suspect in 5 More Heists,” August 7, 1999; and “Reputed Merlino ally to testify against Junior Black Mafia associate,” January 23, 2002. Also see George Anastasia, “From an insider, a glimpse into Phila. Mob,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 5, 2002; and Jim Barry, “Junior Mince: The JBM and La Cosa Nostra are getting cozy,” *City Paper*, October 25 – November 1, 2001.

Before prosecutions felled the JBM in 1992, Sam Christian had attempted to take the group over. Christian, who was paroled on November 4, 1988, then 50 years old, attempted to gain the favor of the group on numerous occasions for two years. According to law enforcement sources, Christian was trying to negotiate a truce between warring factions. One investigator at the time stated, "Sam's back and wants to teach these kids some self-discipline."²⁷ He was rebuffed by the young members for unknown reasons, although one law enforcement official stated that he "didn't have the network, fidelity, contacts, supply or distribution" necessary to make his leadership a commodity.²⁸ One also has to wonder if the JBM crowd knew what little credibility the seminal Black Mafia had in matters of "self-discipline". Christian was later arrested in July of 1990 for possession of crack cocaine, in violation of his parole.²⁹

On October 25, 1989, Philadelphia police and FBI agents entered a home on Watkins Street near 20th and found Joseph "Jo Jo" Rhone asleep on a sofa. Before Rhone could reach a .38 caliber handgun lying on the floor nearby, authorities arrested him, ending his thirteen-year run as a fugitive from the Hershell Williams murder in 1975.³⁰ After the Williams killing, Rhone hid in various mosques in Atlanta, Chicago and Detroit. After his 1989 arrest, Rhone was charged with the Hadley murder. The key witness against him, Lonnie Diggs, refused to testify against him. This was because in 1976, when Diggs named Rhone as the shooter, "the house of Diggs' mother was firebombed and his sister was shot and wounded."³¹ Federal authorities believed Rhone had stayed in contact with local drug organizations and may have been one of their sources. Rhone kept in touch with Lonnie Dawson, William Roy Hoskins and Eugene Hearn, among others, according to federal authorities.³² Rhone was eventually convicted for the Williams and Hadley murders.³³

During his twenty-one years at Graterford, Nudie Mims accomplished what Lonnie Dawson had in the Philadelphia prison system. He had corrupted the system through payoffs to guards, in cash, narcotics, and sexual favors that were carried out in his Muslim "office" by prostitutes posing as religious volunteers. Significantly, Mims also provided invaluable civility to the prison through his influence on other

27 George Anastasia and Robert J. Terry, "JBM: Internal Struggles, External Rivalries," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 1989, p. B01.

28 Kitty Caparella, "The Warlords of Crack – Old Guard Leader Makes Bid to Rule JBM: Convicted Killer an Organizer," *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 25, 1989, Local, p. 18.

29 Terry and Copeland, "Gang Leader Slips Through Cracks," p. A01.

30 Kitty Caparella, "Fugitive Kept His Hands in Drugs, Authorities Say," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 26, 1989, p. 5. Rhone was arrested in his daughter's home.

31 Linda Lloyd, "Reputed Mobster Convicted in 1976 Shooting Death," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 16, 1991, Local, p. B03; and Dave Racher, "3rd-Degree Murder for Ex-Fugitive," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 16, 1991, Local, p. 7.

32 Caparella, "Fugitive Kept His Hands," p. 5.

33 Dave Racher, "Justice Deferred: He Gets Life for Drug-Related 1975 Killing," *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 10, 1991, p. 9. Rhone received a life sentence for the Williams murder. See *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Joseph Rhone, Appellant*, No. 00625 Philadelphia 1992, Superior Court of Pennsylvania, 422 Pa. Super. 521; 619 A.2d 1080; 1993 Pa/ Super. LEXIS 403, January 27, 1993.

inmates. As one law enforcement official stated, “Nudie keeps the lid on things and everything is under his control. Yeah, we have drugs, prostitution ... but that’s the tradeoff” for peace.³⁴ Mims was the leader, or Imam, of over half of Graterford’s prison population. Officials estimated the Muslim community at 1,800, while the prison’s total population was less than 3,600. “Officials described him as a power unto himself, controlling other inmates through fear or respect, and the reputed overlord of part of the prison’s underground economy.”³⁵ For example, in 1993, Cythnia Link was a nine-year veteran guard in Graterford Prison. At the time, Mims was a 21-year veteran of the institution. Link recalled the occasion of an evacuation drill that went awry when more than 100 men refused the orders of several guards to participate. She stated:

The awesome sight of all of these people out of their cells and not budging was intimidating. They refused to move in deference to Mims. I said, ‘Okay, go get Imam and tell him I need him to move these people.’ He came over and moved his hand, and it was done. Then he came up to me and said, ‘I move them when I need to move them.’³⁶

Mims was “banished from his kingdom” at Graterford in October of 1995, when 650 state troopers and prison guards, along with 30 drug-sniffing dogs, raided the prison in an attempt to break the prison’s cycle of corruption.³⁷ The search resulted in the confiscation of 200 weapons, 55 packets of cocaine, 122 assorted pills and six stashes of marijuana. Governor Tom Ridge estimated the cost of the effort at \$2 million.³⁸ Mims was among twelve inmates transferred in the effort, and was sent to the state prison at Camp Hill.³⁹ He still maintained his networks, and was “traded” to Minnesota for another inmate serving a life sentence. Pennsylvania Department of Corrections spokesman Mike Lukens said of Mims’ reputation in the state system, “He was just somebody we couldn’t move anywhere. He had too much influence in the prison.”⁴⁰

With Dawson in Illinois, Mims in Minnesota, and the remainder of the Black Mafia hierarchy from years past dead, in prison, or too old to organize crime, the *group* no longer exists. The successor JBM is not an organization in any real sense, either. Rather, individual affiliates of each group make fleeting deals as possible or necessary. Two of the founding Black Mafia members were recently back in the spotlight, however.

34 Ibid.

35 Julia Cass, “Second-Guessing Follows Prison Raid,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 29, 1995, Local, p. E01.

36 Rich Henson, “At Graterford, Officials Collected Stories Along with Contraband,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27, 1995.

37 Kitty Caparella and Marianne Costantinou, “Inmate Throne for Loss: Prisoner’s ‘Kingdom’ Toppled,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 26, 1995, Local, p. 5.

38 Marianne Costantinou, “Flush With Success? Few Drugs Found, But Inmate Power Structure Broken, Officials Say,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 27, 1995, p. 3.

39 Other high-profile inmates transferred were Philadelphia “mob underboss” Salvatore “Chuckie” Merlino, “mob captain” Francis “Faffy” Iannerella, and associate Joseph Ligambi.

40 Del Quentin Wilber, “States swap their worst for prisons’ sake,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 29, 1999. Also, author’s interview of “Jill Rockview”.

Robert “Bop Daddy” Fairbanks, “the executioner”, “the enforcer” for the Black Mafia circa 1970, made the front page of the *Philadelphia Daily News* in July 2001. The District Attorney’s Office had just launched a new unit targeting the city’s repeat offenders, including Fairbanks. On April 2, 2001, Fairbanks was involved in a shooting that left an innocent bystander who was hit in the gunfire paralyzed. At the time of his arrest, Fairbanks had tallied 28 arrests and had served time for a 1970 homicide. “He was equally well-known to the community as a cranky bookie who allegedly ran an illegal numbers-writing business out of a nondescript, brick storefront on South 52nd Street.”⁴¹

On January 22, 2002, members of the Violent Traffickers Project, including members of the FBI, Philadelphia police and others, arrested Black Mafia founder Sam Christian in South Philadelphia. New York authorities had requested the Philadelphia FBI office arrest Christian, 62, on a Nov. 20, 2000 warrant for a parole violation. The notorious, once-feared, 5’10”, 220 lb. gangster was described by FBI special agent in charge of drug investigations, Jim Sweeney, as gaunt and gray-haired with a white beard. In a comment that fittingly serves as a metaphor for Philadelphia’s Black Mafia, Sweeney stated that Christian “was a shadow of his former self”.

41 Dana DiFilippo and Dave Racher, “Cops, DA target city’s worst thugs,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 30, 2001, p. 3.

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**PART III: CRIMINOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME**

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CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION: CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE BLACK MAFIA AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME

Having examined Philadelphia's Black Mafia, it would be instructive to critique current interpretations of the group, and to explore how the more general topic of African-American organized crime is presented in popular academic literature. These two analyses appear below. The common, though unstated, threads between the following analyses and commentary are the inter-related matters of primary source data, field research and the study of organized crime. These are more fully examined in the epilogue.

ON CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PHILADELPHIA'S BLACK MAFIA AND PRIMARY SOURCES¹

In the history and the study of organized crime, the validity and reliability of sources have been particularly problematic matters.² Governmental fact-finding bodies are frequently cited in this research area, including the now-defunct Pennsylvania Crime Commission. For instance, studies and discussions of organized crime occasionally reference Philadelphia's Black Mafia and each of these academic inquiries relies upon the work of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission for information and "analysis" of the group.³ The Commission's reports thus have primacy in the history

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- 1 This narrative is adapted from Sean Patrick Griffin, "Philadelphia's 'Black Mafia': Assessing and Advancing Current Interpretations," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, forthcoming 2003.
 - 2 See Alan A. Block, "History and the Study of Organized Crime," *Urban Life: A Journal of Ethnographic Research*, vol. 6 (January 1978), pp. 455-474, "Organized Crime: History and Historiography"; James D. Calder, "Al Capone and the Internal Revenue Service: State-sanctioned Criminology of Organized Crime," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1-23; John F. Galliher and James A. Cain, "Citation Support for the Mafia Myth in Criminology Textbooks," *American Sociologist*, vol. 9 (May 1974), pp. 68-74; Gordon Hawkins, "God and the Mafia," *The Public Interest*, vol. 14 (1969), pp. 24-51; James A. Inciardi, Alan A. Block and Lyle A. Hollowell, *Historical Approaches to Crime: Research Strategies and Issues* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977); William H. Moore, *The Kefauver Committee and the Politics of Crime* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1974); Jonathan Rubenstein and Peter Reuter, "Fact, Fancy and Organized Crime," *Public Interest*, vol. 53 (1978), pp. 45-67; and Dwight C. Smith, *The Mafia Mystique* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
 - 3 See, for example, Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime* sixth edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000); Frank E. Hagan, *Introduction to Criminology: Theories, Methods, and Criminal Behavior* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002); Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter, "The Politics and Mythology of Organized Crime: A Philadelphia Case Study," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 15 (1987), pp. 473-484; William Kleinknecht, *The New Ethnic Mobs: The Changing Face of Organized Crime in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Don Liddick, *The Mob's Daily Number: Organized*

of organized crime research and theory.⁴ The reports, and others like them, should therefore be subjected to a rigorous vetting. Below I present and critique the Pennsylvania Crime Commission's analyses and findings as they relate to Philadelphia's Black Mafia group. A few current assumptions regarding Philadelphia's Black Mafia are challenged, and the group's history is placed in context for studies of organized crime and criminological theory. Additionally, this brief analysis illustrates the value of research based on primary source data.

The Pennsylvania Crime Commission Analyses of Philadelphia's Black Mafia

Black Mafia discussions most frequently cite the Pennsylvania Crime Commission reports for the years 1980, 1988, 1990 and 1991.⁵ In the following analysis, I summarize each of these analyses in chronological order. I next comment on general methodological concerns, followed by more general concerns relating to the Commission's Black Mafia analyses. Specific criticisms regarding the Commission's Black Mafia analyses, including explicit examples of misleading comments and superficial findings, are examined last.

Commission Reports: 1980, 1988, 1990 and 1991

The Commission's most substantive analysis of the Black Mafia is presented in its 1980 report. The narrative begins by correctly stating Black Mafia "members engaged in narcotics, extortion, physical assault, and other violent crimes," and also that the group's leader "in the late 1960s and early 1970s was Samuel Christian."⁶ The analysis is three pages in length, and provides such basic information as a list of fifteen Black Mafia affiliates known to the Commission. There is no discussion as to when these persons held positions in the group, nor what influence they maintained. The Commission next provides an overview of the Black Mafia's criminal activities, with subsections briefly examining the group's forays into "Drugs", "The Numbers Racket", "Murder and Extortion" and "A Large Car Theft Ring".

Crime and the Numbers Gambling Industry (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999); Michael D. Lyman and Gary W. Potter, *Organized Crime* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000); Gary W. Potter and Philip Jenkins, *The City and the Syndicate: Organizing Crime in Philadelphia* (Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishers, 1985); Gary W. Potter, *Criminal Organizations: Vice Racketeering, and Politics in an American City* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1994); and Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New York: Garland, 1996).

- 4 I have not taken the time to examine "second generation" articles and books that are based upon works relying on the Commission reports. For example, George F. Cole and Christopher E. Smith, *Criminal Justice in America* third edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002), discuss organized crime among various ethnic groups based on Kleinknecht's *The New Ethnic Mobs*, and the Commission's reports are not mentioned or cited. Thus, the Commission's findings are likely more widely utilized than I have illustrated.
- 5 Pennsylvania Crime Commission (PCC), *A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1980 Report; Annual Report (1988); Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1990 Report; Annual Report (1991)*, Conshohocken, PA: PCC.
- 6 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania*, p. 18.

A one-sentence reference to Black Mafia leader Robert “Nudie” Mims in the founding of the successor Junior Black Mafia (JBM) represents the sole discussion of the group in the Commission’s 1988 Report.⁷ A synopsis of the JBM is then presented in the following two paragraphs. The Commission merely drew upon its 1980 analysis for the discussion of the Black Mafia in its 1990 report, *Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: A Decade of Change*.⁸ This brief, six-paragraph mention is followed by a more incisive, three-page analysis of the JBM. Lastly, the Commission’s 1991 Report exclusively focuses on “The Demise of the Junior Black Mafia”.⁹ In sum, the Commission devotes approximately four pages total to the “original” Black Mafia in these cited reports.¹⁰

General Methodological Concerns

The Pennsylvania Crime Commission began operating in 1968.¹¹ According to Jay Albanese (1996), it was a government-funded, bipartisan group whose investigators had “police status but no arrest authority.”¹² The Commission “was allowed to expire in 1994, two months after it issued a report linking the State Attorney General to illegal poker vendors.”¹³ Because it was a governmental, fact-finding body, social scientists must consider the possibility of politically biased reporting. The Commission’s status may have narrowed or restricted its investigations and what findings were ultimately included in the Commission’s reports. Of primacy, the reports were not peer-reviewed, and the Commission does not maintain a listing of sources used, nor of persons interviewed in its reports. Furthermore, the Commission does not explain its choice of topics, its analytical approach and other methodological issues. It is thus impossible to determine the validity and reliability of the data and the subsequent analysis.

General Concerns Relating to the Commission’s Black Mafia Analyses

Without getting into errors of interpretation at this point in my critique of the Commission’s findings, a few comments are necessary regarding the scope of the Commission’s analysis. The Commission did not conduct formal sociological or historical analyses because these were not its mandates. Thus, the Commission

7 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *Annual Report (1988)*, p. 15.

8 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *Organized Crime in Pennsylvania*, pp. 228-229.

9 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *Annual Report (1991)*, p. 28.

10 Jenkins and Potter have noted the Pennsylvania Crime Commission was pre-occupied with Italian-American organized crime, despite knowledge of significant activities by other groups.

11 Don Liddick, “The Enterprise ‘Model’ of Organized Crime: Assessing Theoretical Propositions,” *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1999, p. 410.

12 Jay S. Albanese, *Organized Crime in America* third edition (Cincinnati: Anderson, 1996), pp. 182-183. On the Pennsylvania Crime Commission, and on crime commissions in general, see Charles H. Rogovin and Frederick T. Martens, “The Role of Crime Commissions in Organized Crime Control,” in Robert J. Kelly, Ko-Lin Chin, and Rufus Schatzberg (eds.) *The Handbook of Organized Crime in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), pp. 389-400.

13 Ibid. On the demise of the Commission, see George Anastasia, “Pa. Crime Commission Ready to Cap Its Poisoned, Pithy Pen,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 1993, p. C01.

never explored several areas of inquiry that would have been of interest to academicians and public policy makers. Most importantly, the predatory crimes of extortion and murder were considerably under-investigated. Furthermore, the significant and politically-sensitive incidents involving the misappropriation of government (and other) funds and the involvement of members of Black Muslim Mosque No.12 were entirely ignored by the Commission. The Commission's commentary on the Black Mafia's demise is flawed as well.

Specific Concerns Relating to the Commission's Black Mafia Analyses

Studies referencing Philadelphia's Black Mafia have exclusively relied upon the Commission reports. I have reviewed the Commission's reports that discuss the Black Mafia, have analyzed much of the same data the Commission utilized, and have also interviewed law enforcement authorities on the accuracy of the Commission's findings. I conclude the Commission's reports are misleading and superficial in several respects. The reports are misleading on a variety of matters. For instance, the Commission's most extensive coverage of the group appears in its 1980 report, "A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania," in which there is a focus on "a large car theft ring" which operated from 1973 to 1976.¹⁴ The Commission cites "federal sources" for this narrative, although the offenders do not appear in the federal Strike Force's 1976 master Black Mafia list of 228 members and 118 associates, nor are they mentioned in any of the Philadelphia Police Department's Black Mafia files. Additionally, there is no mention, let alone analysis, of the complex and significant role certain Black Muslims played in the history of the Black Mafia. There is also no analysis of another politically-sensitive issue, namely the group's misappropriation of government funds for their "community groups".

The reports are superficial as well, particularly with respect to the analyses of the group's significance in narcotics trafficking, extortion and the multifarious aspects of murders committed by the Black Mafia. For instance, the subsection of the Commission's 1980 report entitled "Murder and Extortion" is fully one paragraph in length:

Hershel "James" Williams, another former member of the Black Mafia, was killed in gangland style in front of his residence in 1978. Williams, along with Donnie Day and several other members of the Black Mafia, had been involved in extortion in 1975.

This short shrift "analysis" is noteworthy in light of the significance extortion played in the group's rise to power and influence, and furthermore when considering the relatively large number of Black Mafia murders (32 from 1968 to 1976) which served several purposes. See Appendix I for a complete list of Black Mafia murders.

The Commission's analysis regarding the vitality of the Black Mafia as a functioning organization is equally unsophisticated. The grand-scale prosecutions in 1974/1975 were assisted by the Black Mafia's own detailed notes (that had been

14 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania*, p. 19.

confiscated by authorities), and were made possible primarily because the group had switched from an extortion-based to a narcotics-based organization. The massive prosecution in 1984 was also for narcotics and related offenses. This contradicts the commonly-held wisdom maintained by the Commission, namely that the Black Mafia's proclivity for violence almost exclusively accounted for its downfall.¹⁵ Thus, the Commission (1990) stated, "the heavy reliance on violence exposed members to danger both from rivals and from increased law enforcement scrutiny."¹⁶ While no one would argue that high-profile assaults and murders did not bring attention to the Black Mafia, it is still the case that witnesses would generally not testify against the group. The Commission's conclusions do not address the fact that drug offenses, and most importantly the long sentences associated with them, were responsible for the group's demise. The Black Mafia's fate was sealed when it chose to switch from an extortion-based organization to one that was grounded on the narcotics trade. While the change was more lucrative for the group, the risks far outweighed the increase in profits. Law enforcement was able to successfully prosecute narcotics violations much easier than they could either homicide or extortion.

Lastly, the Commission's reports do not examine the broader cultural and legal factors that combined to weaken organized crime, beginning in the late 1960s (examined below). These changes have collectively had a dramatic negative effect on organized crime activities. Thus, the likelihood of certain long-term, deeply-entrenched organized crime operations was diminishing at precisely the time the Black Mafia emerged as major racketeers.

The shortcomings of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission reports illustrate the need for more research on organized crime based on primary source data. Thus, the implications of this analysis go beyond the specific case of Philadelphia's Black Mafia and the validity of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission reports to more general methodological concerns over data sourcing in analogous qualitative, historical analyses. Primary source research will enable the development of reliable histories and theoretical propositions about the flexing social system of organized crime.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME: AN "EMERGING" PHENOMENON?¹⁷

In the academic literature, the broader discussion of African-American organized crime regarding its existence and significance is often framed in the "emerging" organized crime paradigm. That is, assuming African-American organized crime

15 There is not much debate as to the detrimental impact of recurring violence on an organized crime group. For an analysis of this phenomenon, see Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Invisible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 144-145.

16 Pennsylvania Crime Commission, *Organized Crime in Pennsylvania*, p. 229.

17 This narrative is adapted from Sean Patrick Griffin, "'Emerging' Organized Crime Hypotheses in Criminology Textbooks," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* (forthcoming 2003).

exists, it must be a recent phenomenon and thus African-American organized crime is only now emerging. So many colleagues and reviewers have repeated, independently, the same arguments that I thought it would be instructive to review these discussions as they appear in contemporary criminology and criminal justice textbooks.¹⁸ Because introductory courses are likely the most universal and reach the largest population of students (criminal justice/criminology majors and non-majors), one can reasonably surmise textbooks used in these courses disproportionately affect the social construction of non-Italian/Sicilian organized crime. Thus, the following review was conducted to shed light on the discourse surrounding whether or not African-American organized crime is an “emerging” phenomenon.

What is “Emerging”?

The discussion of organized crime in criminology and criminal justice textbooks exhibits remarkable variation.¹⁹ One hypothesis commonly found in these texts argues that organized crime committed by groups other than Sicilian/Italian-Americans is emerging. There is a competing hypothesis that argues many supposedly emerging groups have long organized crime, and that it is the research in this area that is emerging. This divergence of opinion is fairly straightforward, though the possible reasons for it are multiple. Several possible explanations accounting for the competing hypotheses are discussed below, but first I will briefly provide examples of the two “camps” of thought regarding non-Sicilian/Italian-American organized crime.

Non-Sicilian/Italian Organized Crime is Emerging

Several authors have adopted this theme, either explicitly or by implication.²⁰ For instance, John Conklin explicitly states, “*In recent years, ethnic and national groups other than Italian-Americans have developed organizations to pursue profits through illegal means*” (emphasis added).²¹ Of course, this comment applies to a myriad of ethnic organized crime groups. The following are quotations from introductory textbooks specifically commenting on the emergence of African-American organized crime.

18 See Appendix J for a complete listing of textbooks reviewed.

19 Readers will note Appendix J lists far more textbooks than identified in the following analysis. This is because many texts do not examine organized crime.

20 Lewis Yablonsky, *Criminology: Crime and Criminality* fourth edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1990); Freda Adler, Gerhard O.W. Mueller and William S. Laufer, *Criminology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992); C.J. Larson and G.R. Garrett, *Crime, Justice, and Society* second ed. (Dix Hills, NY: General Hall, 1996); S.T. Reid, *Crime and Criminology* eighth ed. (Madison, WS: Brown and Benchmark, 1997); Freda Adler, Gerhard O.W. Mueller and William S. Laufer, *Criminal Justice: An Introduction* second edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000); Hugh D. Barlow and David Kauzlarich, *Introduction to Criminology* eighth edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2002); George F. Cole and Christopher E. Smith, *Criminal Justice in America* third edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002).

21 John E. Conklin, *Criminology* fifth edition (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995), p. 357.

“Today there is increasing evidence that African-Americans ... have begun to manage [organized crime-related] enterprises in some cities”.²²

“African-American ... racketeers now compete with the more traditional groups, overseeing the distribution of drugs, prostitution, and gambling in a symbiotic relationship with old-line racketeers”.²³

“Until recently there has been a notable absence of African-Americans involved in crime syndicates.”²⁴

“Today, gangs of ... African-Americans have usurped power traditionally held by the Cosa Nostra in many parts of the country.”²⁵

There is another manner this discussion is presented in criminology/criminal justice texts. Several texts do not address this debate specifically, but implicitly adopt the emerging group paradigm by omitting any reference to groups other than Sicilian/Italian-Americans.²⁶ The competing argument (i.e. research on non-Sicilian/Italian-American organized crime is emerging) is discussed next.

Non-Sicilian/Italian Organized Crime Research is Emerging

This subset of textbooks casts doubt on the “emerging” organized crime hypothesis and, either explicitly or by inference, argues that it is the research on non-Sicilian/Italian-American organized crime that is emerging.²⁷ Just as above, I will provide more general examples, and also one specifically commenting on African-American organized crime. Concerning the broad concept of emerging organized crime, James Inciardi notes, “historically, discussions of organized crime have focused almost exclusively on ... groups like the Mafia and *La Cosa Nostra* ... more recent analyses, however, have extended their interest to other criminal groups ...”(emphasis added).²⁸

22 George F. Cole, *The American System of Criminal Justice* sixth edition (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1992), p. 74.

23 Larry J. Siegel, *Criminology* seventh edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), p. 415.

24 Stephen E. Brown, Finn-Aage Esbensen and Gilbert Geis, *Criminology: Explaining Crime and Its Context* fourth edition (Cincinnati: Anderson, 2001), p. 485.

25 Frank Schmalleger, *Criminal Justice Today: An Introductory Text for the 21st Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), p. 70.

26 See, for example, Robert D. Pursley, *Introduction to Criminal Justice* fifth edition (New York: Macmillan, 1991); Gennaro F. Vito and Ronald M. Holmes, *Criminology: Theory, Research, and Policy* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994); Jay Livingston, *Crime and Criminology* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996); Clemens Bartollas and Michael Braswell, *American Criminal Justice: An Introduction* second edition (Cincinnati: Anderson, 1997); and Dean J. Champion, *Criminal Justice in the United States* second edition (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1998).

27 See, for example, Howard Abadinsky, *Crime and Justice: An Introduction* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987); Joseph J. Senna and Larry J. Siegel, *Introduction to Criminal Justice* sixth edition (Minneapolis-St.Paul: West, 1993); Lydia Voigt, William E. Thornton Jr., Leo Barrile and Jerrol M. Seaman, *Criminology and Justice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994); Leonard Glick, *Criminology* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995); and Leonard Territo, James B. Halsted and Max L. Bromley, *Crime and Justice in America: A Human Perspective* fifth edition (Boston: Oxford, 1998).

28 James A. Inciardi, *Criminal Justice* seventh edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 2002), p. 90.

The following are quotations from introductory textbooks commenting on the notion of supposedly “emerging” organized crime groups:

“It is important to keep in mind that members of organized crime networks in the United States are by no means exclusively of Italian descent, nor were they ever.”²⁹

“Thanks in large part to popular culture and the media, organized crime is often associated with the Italian Mafia. Indeed, to many, organized crime and the Mafia are synonymous, and the myth has become more powerful than reality. In fact, organized crime is an equal opportunity field of criminal activity, with nearly every ethnic group ... represented.”³⁰

In his introductory criminology textbook, Frank Hagan – who has a research agenda on organized crime – states:

While the last fifty years in the United States have witnessed the period of Sicilian-Italian domination of syndicate crime, this was preceded by Jewish ... and Irish domination. Prior to these groups, WASPS (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) controlled organized crime. During these periods, many other ethnic groups – for example, Germans, Lebanese, Greeks, blacks – also participated in organized crime.³¹

Hagan then directly addresses the issue of whether African-American organized crime groups are a new phenomenon: He states, “Black organized crime groups are not examples of emerging groups; they have existed for decades.”³²

Some texts make no specific mention of ethnicity, though they make plain that organized crime is not an exclusively Sicilian/Italian phenomenon. These discuss structural, cultural, economic and political issues alone, thus leaving the reader to apply the models discussed to particular groups.³³

Lastly, Steve Barkan argues the “emerging” organized crime logic is not only incorrect but also damaging to criminological study. He states that emphasizing Sicilian/Italian-American groups:

ignores the long history of organized crime before Italian immigration and overlooks the involvement of many other ethnic and racial groups. It also diverts attention away from organized crime’s roots in poverty, in the readiness of citizens to pay for the goods and services it provides, and in the willingness of politicians, law enforcement agents, and legitimate businesses to take bribes and otherwise cooperate with organized crime.³⁴

29 Ronald J. Berger, Marvin Free and Patricia Searles, *Crime, Justice and Society: Criminology and the Sociological Imagination* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), p. 319.

30 Larry K. Gaines and Roger LeRoy Miller, *Criminal Justice in Action* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), p. 9.

31 Frank E. Hagan, *Introduction to Criminology: Theories, Methods, and Criminal Behavior* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002), p. 448.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 448.

33 See, for example, Walter S. DeKerseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, *Contemporary Criminology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996); Piers Beirne and James Messerschmidt, *Criminology* third edition (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000); Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology* third edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000); and Steven M. Cox and John E. Wade, *The Criminal Justice Network: An Introduction* fourth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

34 Steve E. Barkan, *Criminology: A Sociological Understanding* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), p. 430.

Having summarized the divergence in the organized crime discussion found in criminal justice and criminology textbooks, it is helpful to account – if only partially – for the lack of consistency regarding the “emerging” hypothesis.

Possible Reasons for the Competing Hypotheses

There are two related reasons for the competing emerging organized crime paradigms. The first concerns how authors define “organized crime”, and the second revolves around the utter lack of quality data regarding non-Sicilian/Italian organized crime (though I would argue data is also lacking for these groups as well). The lack of data directly affects the ability to operationally define organized crime, of course. I will briefly address each of these inter-related matters.

On the Definition of Organized Crime

As Jeffrey McIllwain has noted, “Defining organized crime has always been a difficult task, akin to nailing Jello to a wall.”³⁵ If mere participation in the vices and/or racketeering and/or political graft alone is the operational threshold, there should be no debate about the existence of African-American organized crime dating back to the 1800s (as the below analysis demonstrates). Conversely, one could adopt a more stringent threshold, such as mandating that groups exhibit: division of labor, corruption or use of violence to maintain networks and thus group continuity.³⁶ If

35 Jeffrey Scott McIllwain, “From Tong War to Organized Crime: Revising the Historical Perception of Violence in Chinatown”, *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 1997), p. 29. McIllwain (p. 52) amalgamated two existing lists of organized crime characteristics, each one a previously-collated effort, resulting in his comprehensive list of eleven organized crime attributes: nonideological; organized hierarchy and/or continuing enterprise; violence; restricted membership; rational profit through illegal activities; public demand, corruption and/or immunity; monopoly; specialization; code of secrecy; and extensive planning. See Albanese, *Organized Crime in America*, and Dennis J. Kenney and James O. Finckenauer, *Organized Crime in America* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1995). The lists compiled information from the following sources in chronological order: 1950/1951 – Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce, Senator Estes Kefauver, Chair; 1963 – Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI), Senator John L. McClellan, Chair; 1966 – New York State Oyster Bay Conferences (as cited in Smith, *The Mafia Mystique*); 1967 – Task Force on Organized Crime, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice; 1968 – Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act (Public Law 90-351); 1969 – Donald R. Cressey, *Theft of the Nation: The Structures and Operation of Organized Crime* (New York: Harper & Row); 1975 – Smith, *The Mafia Mystique*; 1976 – Task Force on Organized Crime, National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals; 1976 – Joseph L. Albin, “Syndicated Crime: Its Structure, Function, and Modus Operandi,” in Francis A.J. Ianni and Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni (eds.), *The Crime Society: Organized Crime and Corruption in America* (New York: Times-Mirror), pp. 24-41; and 1983 – President Ronald Reagan’s Commission on Organized Crime.

36 See, for example, Michael D. Maltz, “On Defining ‘Organized Crime’,” *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 22 (1976), pp. 338-346; Mark H. Haller, “Illegal Enterprise: A Theoretical and Historical Interpretation,” *Criminology*, vol. 28, no. 2 (May 1990), pp. 207-235; Petrus C. Van Duyne, “Organized Crime and Business Crime-Enterprises in the Netherlands,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1993), pp. 103-142; R.T. Naylor, “Mafias, Myths, and Markets: On the

this latter approach is adopted, the issue regarding whether African-American organized crime has a long history is less settled since there are few substantive studies, and perhaps even less data, on the matter.

On the Relative Lack of African-American Organized Crime Data

There may be numerous reasons for the lack of African-American organized crime research, and this issue is addressed in the epilogue below.³⁷ Nevertheless, one glaring reason must be noted regarding the absence of data in this area, namely the government's absolute preoccupation with Sicilian/Italian-American organized crime. The Federal Government has convened a number of panels and committees over the years to address the issue of criminal syndicates and to create related policies. Most notable are the following: Senator Estes Kefauver's Committee (1951); Senator John L. McClellan's Committee (1963); President Johnson's Task Force (1967); the National Advisory Committee's Task Force (1976); and, most recently, President Reagan's Commission on Organized Crime (1983). The clear preoccupation of these panels has been the so-called "National Crime Syndicate," and "La Cosa Nostra." Although President's Reagan's Commission did, somewhat tentatively, expand the boundaries of organized crime beyond Italian-Americans, certainly they were the major emphasis. Frederick Martens, the former head of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission, (1990) addressed this issue:

While (Reagan's) Commission made some respectable inroads into areas of organized crime that were heretofore ignored (e.g., corrupt attorneys and labor unions, money laundering, Colombian networks), it too failed to address African-American organized crime in any substantive degree This occurred despite the fact that a notorious black gangster testified before this Commission, outlining what was clearly an African-American crime syndicate.³⁸

In fact, members of the Reagan Commission acknowledged this very deficiency, stating it "has failed to address the roles of American Black organizations in organized crime."³⁹ On a state level, the situation is much the same. Pennsylvania's commissions and task forces have also consistently focused on Italian-American groups rather than others. As Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter noted in 1987, "The [Pennsylvania Crime Commission] itself has mentioned in passing that black-run numbers banks were dealing in annual sums several times greater than Italian-run organizations. But it is Italian criminality that is discussed at length."⁴⁰

Theory and Practice of Enterprise Crime," *Transnational Organized Crime*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 1-45.

37 See, for example, Jenkins and Potter, and Frederick T. Martens, "African-American Organized Crime, An Ignored Phenomenon," *Federal Probation*, vol. 54, no. 4 (1990).

38 Martens, p. 44.

39 The President's Commission on Organized Crime, *The Impact: Organized Crime Today* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1986), pp. 79, 177.

40 Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter, "The Politics and Mythology of Organized Crime: A Philadelphia Case Study," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 15 (1987), p. 483.

Scholars may have thus confined their studies of organized crime to Sicilian/Italian-American groups partly because of the attention being paid them. Furthermore, the government's focus necessarily affects other components in the criminal justice system, many of which produce the data of criminological studies. For example, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, of course, adopted the focus on Sicilian/Italian-American groups, and thus researchers who used this data exclusively arrived at narrow, and biased, conclusions.⁴¹ Donald Cressey's *Theft of the Nation* is perhaps the embodiment, and certainly among the most significant examples, of the literature promoting this paradigm. He wrote (1969), "an Italian organization in fact controls all but an insignificant proportion of the organized-crime activities in the United State." He added, "if one understands Cosa Nostra he understands organized crime in the United States."⁴² Perhaps such conclusions prompted Frank Bovenkerk (1998) to sarcastically note that while discussion of Prohibition has centered around smugglers who were Italians, Irish and Jewish in Chicago and Northeastern cities, "thirsty people must also have lived outside these cities; but who was distilling and selling bootleg liquor in the American South and in the rural areas where there were few if any recent immigrants?"⁴³

Since substantive research has generally focused on Sicilian/Italian-American groups, it is necessary to point prospective authors and instructors on the matter to some specific and related studies of African-American vice and organized crime. This review will assist in making informed decisions on how best to approach the divergent views in the literature described above.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME-SPECIFIC AND -RELATED LITERATURE: A REVIEW⁴⁴

There are several ways one could approach this review (i.e. by chronology of the research, by geographic region, by activity, and by combinations of these). I have opted to group studies by illicit activity. Within each category of illicit activity, I present the activities in chronological order (i.e. not by chronological order of the *studies* conducted). Importantly, the following descriptive groupings are not exclusive. That is, while I have grouped these studies neatly by illicit activity, the categories merely reflect the emphasis of that article or book. Thus, several of these

41 See, for example, James D. Calder, "Al Capone and the Internal Revenue Service: State-sanctioned Criminology of Organized Crime," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1-23.

42 Cressey, *Theft of the Nation*, p. 21.

43 Frank Bovenkerk, "Organized Crime and Ethnic Minorities: Is There a Link?" *Transnational Organized Crime* vol. 4 (1998), p. 112.

44 I have not included several works that essentially summarized previous research. For example, see Rufus Schatzberg, "African American Organized Crime," in Kelly et al, *The Handbook of Organized Crime in the United States*, pp. 189-212; Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New York: Garland, 1996); and Robert J. Kelly, "African-American Organized Crime: Racial Servitude and Mutiny," in Stanley Einstein and Menachem Amir (eds.), *Organized Crime: Uncertainties and Dilemmas* (Chicago: Office of International Criminal Justice, 1999), pp. 271-290.

studies examine multiple criminal activities and I have subjectively placed them into a category based on my review. In the aggregate, studies of African-American gambling are most prominent, and I will thus identify these first.

Gambling and Political Graft

Of all the studies examining these areas, few authors explicitly studied African-American gambling operations, namely Ivan Light, Mark Haller and Rufus Schatzberg. The other analyses are findings from projects with broader or different foci than these works. Thus, with the exception of the Light, Haller and Schatzberg studies, each analysis referenced in this subsection of studies did not have a focus on African-American gambling or graft.

In the W.E.B. DuBois classic *The Philadelphia Negro*, he described the interplay between Philadelphia's "political clubs" in the late 1800s and the bribery of black votes.⁴⁵ This history is remarkably similar to other ethnic groups in different times and places (e.g. New York's Tammany Hall) in that underclass votes were exchanged for access to municipal positions. Further, DuBois documented the ubiquitous gambling throughout "slum sections" of Philadelphia that included patrons and operators who were African-American.⁴⁶ Future studies of black inner city America would discover similar findings. For instance, Allan Spear studied Chicago from 1890-1920 and commented on the "shadies" – persons involved in "shady" occupations such as gambling houses.⁴⁷ Spear also noted the protection for African-American gambling operations in exchange for votes.⁴⁸ Historian Mark Haller also studied organized crime in Chicago at the turn-of-the-century, and stated:

There has, in fact, long been a close relationship of vice activities and Negro life in the cities ... In the operation of entertainment facilities and policy rackets, black entrepreneurs found their major outlet and black politicians found their chief support.⁴⁹

Haller later analyzed gambling and black politics in Chicago for the period 1900-1940, chronicling the changes that permitted or restricted black-operated policy

45 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996 [1899]), pp. 378-379. For a discussion of DuBois and his work on "organized crime," see Shaun Gabbidon, "W.E.B. DuBois and the 'Atlanta School' of Social Scientific Research, 1897-1913," *Journal of Criminal Justice Research*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 26-27.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 265-267.

47 Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 76-77.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 187-189.

49 Mark H. Haller, "Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Social History*, Winter 1971-1972, p. 221. In a related article, Haller cites a study that identified the "108 directors of the Chicago underworld", of which 12 percent were African-Americans. Mark H. Haller, "Urban Crime and Criminal Justice: The Chicago Case," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 57, no. 3 (December 1970), p. 620, summarizing William F. Ogburn and Clark Tibbits. "A Memorandum on the Nativity of Certain Criminal Classes Engaged in Organized Crime, and of Certain Related Criminal and Non-Criminal Groups in Chicago," July 30, 1930, Charles E. Merriam Papers (University of Chicago Library).

syndicates.⁵⁰ Rufus Schatzberg explicitly addressed African-American gambling in New York from 1920-1930.⁵¹ In *Black Organized Crime in Harlem*, Schatzberg used volumes of primary source data to augment the existing literature illustrating policy rackets in urban communities. This is a comprehensive analysis that examines many facets of the numbers racket. Schatzberg concluded illicit gambling “gave employment to many blacks,” and that “the racket in the 1920s appears to have stimulated black capitalism more than any other activity at the time.”⁵² Perhaps his most noteworthy finding concerned the significance of policy in African-American communities.

The popularity of the game suggests that maybe the dominant social structures have been unresponsive in satisfying the social and economic needs of the poor in black communities where racial biases were openly practiced by industrial and political leaders. Blacks played numbers to fill both economic and social voids.⁵³

Gunnar Myrdal’s (1944) treatise *An American Dilemma* included the “Note on Shady Occupations,” in which he discussed the “Negro underworld” in America’s big cities.⁵⁴ Myrdal also examined the moral complexity of vice activities in the inner city, stating that although churches were, of course, against gambling, policy “among the members of the congregation is too widespread to be stamped out, and often the contributions from Negro policy racketeers – especially in the North – are a major source of support for the church.”⁵⁵ Myrdal covered numerous related topics in the 1000-plus pages of analysis, and it is not possible to do his work justice in a forum such as this. Nevertheless, gambling and related issues are examined at intermittent points in *An American Dilemma*. A more specific analysis of African-American life circa 1940 is presented in St. Clair Drake’s and Horace Cayton’s *Black Metropolis*.⁵⁶ Of importance to this survey, the authors’ study of “Bronzeville” in Chicago devoted an entire chapter to “Business Under A Cloud,” which discussed among other issues the neighborhood policy king as a “race hero.”⁵⁷ Their analysis includes economic and social issues, some of which were highlighted above regarding other studies (i.e. gambling as an alternative to “traditional” social mobility, necessitated by blocked “legitimate” avenues). Another salient and

50 Haller, “Policy Gambling, Entertainment, and the Emergence of Black Politics: Chicago from 1900 to 1940,” *Journal of Social History* vol. 24 (Summer 1991), pp. 719-739.

51 Rufus Schatzberg, *Black Organized Crime in Harlem: 1920-1930* (New York: Garland Press, 1993).

52 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

54 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: Volume II The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997 [1944]), pp. 330-333.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 940.

56 St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1945]).

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 470-494. On numbers gambling among African-Americans in Detroit circa 1940, see Gustav G. Carlson, *Numbers Gambling: A Study of a Culture Complex* (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI: Doctoral dissertation, 1940).

familiar theme is the interaction of policy syndicates, politicians and police officials.⁵⁸ They comment on the social system thusly:

The strength of the 'policy racket' in the Negro community may be due to Bronzeville's penchant for gambling, but it is perpetuated by the intricate tie-up with the 'downtown' political powers, who render protection not only from the police, but also from attempts of civic leaders to interfere with the game.⁵⁹

Prominent studies next examined the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York City. Each of these studies utilized rich, primary source data, and one focused specifically on gambling while the other examined a broader spectrum of activities. Harold Lasswell and Jeremiah McKenna utilized primary source data, including law enforcement intelligence files, to synthesize the narcotics and gambling operations of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community in Brooklyn.⁶⁰ In addition to their qualitative, historical examination, the authors also conducted numerous quantitative analyses concerning gambling- and narcotics-related economic and social indicators. The study includes such quality data as financial flow charts, betting sheets, organizational charts of the narcotics traffic, in addition to more traditional crime and arrest data. Their conclusion is discussed below.

Don Liddick was granted rare access to New York City Police Department intelligence files on gambling enterprises during the 1960s and 1970s. Included in his analysis is a breakdown of numbers workers by ethnicity. He found that 23% of these workers were African-American, and that these workers were equally distributed by role within the numbers syndicates.⁶¹ Perhaps the greatest utility of Liddick's study, in addition to the analysis based on primary source data, is the framing of organized crime and gambling as a social system of patron-client networks.⁶² This analysis is particularly attractive in light of the debate over "emerging" organized crime groups, since it permits an unbiased critique of the factors that account for organized crime.

The last two studies referenced examine activities dating back approximately 30 years, and yet these are the last activities to be studied in this manner.⁶³ That is, subsequent studies have examined broader themes in general. One of the preeminent scholars on the broader significance of gambling among African-Americans is Ivan Light. Light has not only studied the more general "ethnic vice industry", but also

58 Ibid., pp. 481-484.

59 Ibid., p. 484.

60 Harold D. Lasswell and Jeremiah B. McKenna, *The Impact of Organized Crime on an Inner-City Community* (New York: Policy Sciences Center, 1972).

61 Don Liddick, *The Mob's Daily Number: Organized Crime and the Numbers Gambling Industry* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999). Liddick deconstructed numbers workers into the following groups: bankers, controllers, collectors, pickup persons and clerks (pp. 120-121).

62 Ibid., pp. 151-168.

63 I should note that the Pennsylvania Crime Commission has documented several African-American gambling syndicates. See Pennsylvania Crime Commission (PCC), *A Decade of Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1980 Report*; and *Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: 1990 Report*. These were not included in my formal review because they are not "studies" *per se*.

numbers gambling as filling a vacuum in African-American communities.⁶⁴ He concluded, “numbers gambling banks became sources of capital and a major savings device of urban black communities”.⁶⁵ The reasons for this phenomenon are explored in his article, including documented and suspected racist policies and attitudes within established banking institutions which thus forced African-Americans to seek alternatives.

Prostitution and Drug Trafficking

There has not been as much explicit historical research on African-American involvement in prostitution or in drug trafficking as there has been in gambling. This may be misleading, however, since many of the studies already referenced in this review also discuss these areas. Furthermore, some of the works discussed below that focus on “organized crime” predictably examine prostitution and narcotics trafficking. Haller has studied organized crime in different places and times, including studies of the late 1800s and early 1900s.⁶⁶ Regarding urban crime and violence at the turn-of-the-century, Haller stated:

In Philadelphia, as in other American cities, discrimination against blacks meant that opportunities as prostitutes, pimps, maids, and musicians in the vice districts were among the most attractive open to them.⁶⁷

Similarly, Barbara Meil Hobson studied the inner cities at the turn-of-the-century, and found “for immigrants and Blacks denied access to legitimate commercial ventures, brothels, gambling and saloons were marginal businesses that allowed some movement up the economic ladder”.⁶⁸

Regarding narcotics trafficking, a few studies have unwittingly discovered networks involving African-Americans. Historian and criminologist Alan Block studied the cocaine trade in New York City in the 1910s.⁶⁹ His findings included, among other things, the existence of independent African-American narcotics dealers, thus suggesting other like inquiries may yield similar results. Alfred McCoy, like Block an historian, examined narcotics and organized crime in Australia. His research found that the heroin trade between Sydney and New York in

64 Ivan Light, “Numbers Gambling Among Blacks: A Financial Institution,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 42 (December 1977), pp. 892-904; and “The Ethnic Vice Industry, 1880-1944,” *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 42 (June 1977), pp. 464-79.

65 Light, “Numbers Gambling Among Blacks: A Financial Institution,” p. 892.

66 Mark H. Haller, “Organized Crime in Urban Society,” and *Life Under Bruno: The Economics of an Organized Crime Family* (Conshohocken, PA: Pennsylvania Crime Commission, 1991).

67 Mark H. Haller, “Recurring Themes,” in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (eds.), *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), p. 285.

68 Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 44.

69 Alan A. Block, “The Snowman Cometh: Coke in Progressive New York,” *Criminology* vol. 17 (May 1979), pp. 75-96.

the 1960s involved “major black dealers” in New York City.⁷⁰ Left open to debate, however, was whether these African-American “dealers” were independent or if they were simply “fronts” for Italian-American organizations. Investigative journalist Donald Goddard did not conduct a formal anthropological or sociological analysis, *per se*, but illustrated African-American drug networks that originated in New York and distributed along the Eastern seaboard. In *Easy Money*, Goddard presented interviews with several prominent “players” in the cocaine and heroin markets, including his primary source, George Ramos.⁷¹ Ramos was a government witness, and chronicled the symbiotic relationships between gangsters of various ethnicities in New York City, particularly those between African-American and Hispanic groups. Though the more general analysis is substantive, *Easy Money* is perhaps more significant because it contains the most detailed discussion of the infamous narcotics trafficker, Frank Matthews. Matthews is also mentioned briefly in another analysis of narcotics dealing.

The staff and editors of *Newsday* examined the global heroin trade circa 1973.⁷² In *The Heroin Trade*, the authors also studied the entry points for heroin and the local (New York) market. Their domestic, and New York-specific analysis documented several African-American entrepreneurs and organizations.⁷³ Other studies examining drug trafficking by African-American syndicates are discussed in the following section on organized crime.

Organized Crime and Racketeering

As stated above, there are few substantive studies of African-American organized crime. If the more restrictive criteria are used to define “organized crime” (i.e. involvement in multiple enterprises, group continuity, corruption and/or violence), there are at most two studies worthy of mention.⁷⁴ Each of these studies chronicles and examines activities in the 1960s and 1970s. The first was briefly referenced above in the discussion of gambling. In *The Impact of Organized Crime on an Inner-City Community*, Harold Lasswell and Jeremiah McKenna provide one of the

70 Alfred W. McCoy, *Drug Traffic: Narcotics and Organized Crime in Australia* (Artarmon, NSW [Australia]: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 263.

71 Donald Goddard, *Easy Money* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978).

72 *Newsday*, *The Heroin Trail* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 204-207.

74 While these “defining characteristics” of organized crime are commonly cited among scholars, this should not be interpreted as settling the issue. For instance, there is no consensus regarding what constitutes “continuity”. Continuity of a group, of a conspiracy, of a crime pattern? What duration of time, regardless of which factor is chosen? Similarly, regarding “multiple enterprises”, how many and how would this be operationally defined? For example, an organization may be grounded on narcotics trafficking while by necessity evades taxes and launders money. Furthermore, it can be argued that violence and corruption are merely “management tools” and that criminal enterprises may indeed thrive without the necessity of these tools (e.g. if law enforcement is ignorant to the problem). Petrus C. Van Duyne, Marcel Pheijffer, Hans G. Kuijl, Arthur Th.H. van Dijk and Gerard J.C.M. Bakker, *Financial Investigation of Crime: A Tool of the Integral Law Enforcement Approach* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Vermande, 2001), p. 52.

most sophisticated and scientific analyses to date on organized crime. That the subject of inquiry is a predominantly African-American community is all the more remarkable. Lasswell and McKenna concluded that organized crime had “taken deep root in the Bedford Stuyvesant community of Brooklyn.” Furthermore, they stated:

By 1970, organized crime was grossing more revenue from its illegal policy and narcotics operations in Bedford-Stuyvesant than the federal government was collecting in income taxes from the same area. An examination of the same social processes of that same community reveals that organized crime is impacting in some way on every component of community life.⁷⁵

Though I have briefly discussed other studies of African-American vice activities and organized crime, it is necessary to entertain a more substantive review of Francis Ianni’s *Black Mafia: Ethnic Succession in Organized Crime* for several reasons.⁷⁶ First and foremost, it is the only study specifically centered on African-American organized crime networks as opposed to participation in the vices. Second, it is – predictably – the most widely cited study of African-American organized crime. Lastly, the research is based on primary source data, namely Ianni’s participant observation of several groups, which thus makes it one of the few studies of its kind.

Black Mafia was an extension of an earlier anthropological study by Ianni and his wife Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni, *A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime*.⁷⁷ *A Family Business* was based on Ianni’s participant-observation of a group, and detailed the inner-workings of an Italian-American crime “family.” Ianni and Reuss-Ianni note throughout *A Family Business* that African-Americans were playing increasing roles in certain crimes, and thus the seeds were planted for a study focusing on this “emerging” ethnic group. The authors also developed a controversial “ethnic succession” hypothesis that posited as immigrant and other downtrodden groups used organized crime as “a way station on the road to ultimately respectable roles in American society,” other ethnic organized crime groups would automatically be phased out.⁷⁸ Thus, based on their participant-observation of the “Lupollo” family, and the family’s dealings with African-American and other ethnic gangsters, they predicted the following: “The outlook for the Italian families is not promising. Ethnic succession will force them out.”⁷⁹ Ianni’s *Black Mafia* then furthered the ethnic succession discussion, documenting and analyzing the activities of two African-American organized crime networks operating in Harlem, New York and Paterson, New Jersey, respectively.

The ethnic succession hypothesis has since been criticized and dismissed by some organized crime researchers, as time has shown there is not a finite amount of crime

75 Lasswell and McKenna, p. 4.

76 Francis A. J. Ianni, *Black Mafia: Ethnic Succession in Organized Crime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

77 Francis A.J. Ianni and Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni, *Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972).

78 *Ibid.*, p. 213.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 214.

which exists to be organized.⁸⁰ That is, history has illustrated that the success of one ethnic group need not come at the expense of another. Some scholars may therefore have dismissed African-American organized crime as a topic because of Ianni's controversial hypothesis. That is, researchers may have "thrown the baby (African-American organized crime as an area of academic inquiry) out with the bathwater (ethnic succession)." To discount the *possibility* that other African-American groups could or would organize crime in larger, more complex and significant ways merely because Ianni extended his descriptive study into an inferential one was in error. As evidenced by the Black Mafia group in Philadelphia, it was possible. Thus, while Ianni's ethnic succession predictions may have been more inferential than one would like, it was an error to discount his methodology and attention to detail. His research on African-American organized crime, complete with his analysis of the role black militancy played, and his observation of African-American discontentment with the "system", proved to be historically correct. As evidenced in the quote (first cited in Chapter 4) by Black Mafia member Donald Abney on December 18, 1973 to an extortion target, Ulysses Rice, owner of Nookie's Tavern in West Philadelphia, "the system" and its oppressive nature were often the rationalization for the group's activities. According to Abney, if the target could "pay taxes to the white man and the government," he could pay them to the Black Mafia.⁸¹ What Ianni was describing in Harlem and Paterson, New Jersey in the late 1960s and early 1970s, may have been a capsule look at what was happening in many cities in the United States. We simply do not know if this is so, however, because of the methodological reasons described above (i.e. operational definition and data issues). Ianni's critics discounted the significance of his path-breaking research. Neither Ianni nor anyone else could have foreseen the number of legal and cultural factors that would eventually suppress particular variants of organized crime activity. I will briefly summarize these factors next.

Just as it became apparent that African-American organized criminals were operating in several cities (New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Miami, Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Baltimore, Washington, D.C.)⁸² in the 1970s, law enforcement was actively looking for new and creative ways to curtail organized crime activities.⁸³ The extended use of Title IX of the Organized Crime Control Act, "Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations" (RICO), which had only been drafted in 1970, wiretapping and other means to investigate and prosecute criminal organizations were having a profound impact on the battle between

80 See, for example, Kenney and Finckenaer, p. 23.

81 United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, *United States of America v. Larry Starks, Clarence Starks, Alonzo Robinson, Donald Everett, Abney Merrill*, 515 F.2d 112; 1975 U.S. App.

82 Insights into these networks can be gleaned from a variety of sources, including the Philadelphia Police Department Organized Crime Unit's "Black Mafia" files. Also see Metropolitan Police Department (DC), Intelligence Division, "Criminal Profile of John Brown," January 31, 1986; and New York City Police Department, Intelligence Division, "The Black Narcotic System: A Brief History," May 1972.

83 See, for example, James B. Jacobs, *Busting the Mob: United States v. Cosa Nostra* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

organized crime and law enforcement. Add to this the heavier-handed drug laws, and the legal environment focusing on career criminals was far more aggressive than ever before.⁸⁴ Furthermore, urban political machines and labor unions waned considerably as power brokers,⁸⁵ concurrent with the “liberalization of sexual mores” (which adversely impacted prostitution as a market) and the “growing legalization of lotteries” (which drastically reduced illicit gambling opportunities).⁸⁶ It is clear, when these factors are considered together, that the likelihood of certain long-term, deeply-entrenched organized crime operations – for all ethnic groups – was diminishing at precisely the time African-Americans had *publicly* emerged as major racketeers.⁸⁷ For example, these circumstances have collectively decimated three predominant organized crime groups in Philadelphia (i.e. Black Mafia, Junior Black Mafia, and Bruno (Merlino) “family”).

In sum, non-Italian/Sicilian-American, including African-American, groups have existed for generations, though their structure and significance have been the subject of considerable debate. There is not enough evidence to substantiate the claim that African-American groups prior to the 1960s fit the more restrictive list of characteristics employed in much of the organized crime literature (i.e. division of labor, corruption/use of violence, continuity, etc.). Importantly, this should not be interpreted as evidence such groups did not exist. Future research may discover that the many rackets dominated by African-Americans dating to the late nineteenth century were indeed organized in a fashion consistent with today’s typologies.

84 On this point, see for example Jay Albanese, *Organized Crime in America*, third edition (Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing, 1996) and “The Mafia Mystique: Organized Crime,” in Joseph F. Shely (ed.), *Criminology* third edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), pp. 265-285.

85 For example, union membership in the United States as of 2001 was 13.5% of the workforce, compared with 20.1% in 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available. Nancy Cleland, “Union membership remains at 13.5%,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2002, summarizing a 2001 Bureau of Labor Statistics report. In 2001, more of the union membership consisted of white-collar workers than previously as “labor’s traditional blue-collar base has eroded over the past twenty years.” Thomas Lee, “Joining Forces,” *Anderson Independent-Mail* (SC), October 29, 2001. Thus, with respect to organized crime, these figures are significant because they demonstrate why criminals in the traditional extortion rackets involving blue-collar enterprises have had their opportunities greatly reduced. The future for organized crime predicated on union strength is not bright. As a financial commentator stated, “Unions are most effective in situations where competition is minimal, capital is entrenched and technology cannot replace humans ... Labor, capital and technology are just too mobile (and plentiful) in a world of six billion people and instant telecommunications. It’s [not reasonable] to think you can make a cartel of some segment of the work force, raise the cost of doing business and prevent the kinds of economic changes you consider detrimental to your membership.” Daniel Akst, “A New Idea for Unions: Forget the Past,” *The New York Times*, December 5, 1999.

86 James M. O’Kane, *The Crooked Ladder: Gangsters, Ethnicity, and the American Dream* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), p. 99.

87 For a detailed discussion of organized crime prosecutions in Philadelphia (though applicable in other areas), see Kitty Caparella, “The Straight Dope – Drugs in Philadelphia: Federal Enforcement – A New Drug War Pays Off in Court,” (sidebar to the first of six parts) *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 22, 1984, Local, p. 53. Caparella chronicles the changes in philosophy of law enforcement agencies, specifically the greater coordination of local and federal authorities, additional manpower and funding for related initiatives and increased use of several legal tools.

Another problem with the “emerging” organized crime debate concerns the operational definition of the term “recent”. Authors who loosely state that organized crime among African-Americans (and other) groups has “recently” emerged leave open a host of possible interpretations. If “recent” refers to activities within the past five or ten years, these characterizations are flawed. As others and I have documented, African-American organized crime groups, fitting the more restrictive characterization of organized crime, were present in numerous U.S. cities as early as the 1960s.

I hope this analysis encourages authors to incorporate a more comprehensive history of organized crime, one that includes analyses of groups in addition to Italian/Sicilian-Americans. One example of such an analysis is Jeffrey McIllwain’s historical work on Chinese organized crime. His study of New York City circa 1900 found that Chinese organized crime “predates, in structure and sophistication, organizations of other ethnic origins later recognized as ‘modern’ organized crime by academics, the media and the government.”⁸⁸ He thus concluded the discussion of Chinese organized crime as “emerging” is a-historic. Another recent historical analysis concluded much of the current academic literature on African-American organized crime in Chicago is equally unsophisticated and suspect.⁸⁹ Similar research on other groups in different times and places would advance our understanding of organized crime, and would also place the current discussions of ethnic organized crime in historical context.

88 McIllwain, p. 25.

89 Robert M. Lombardo, “The Black Mafia: African-American organized crime in Chicago, 1890-1960,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 38, no. 1 (2002), pp. 33-65.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

Several years ago when the term “Organized Crime” was used, the average citizen and even some law enforcement officers across the country felt this term applied exclusively to one ethnic group. Recently, however, we have come to realize that Blacks in this country play a major part in the distribution of heroin. They no longer depend solely on the White elements of organized crime for their major source of drugs.¹

New York City Police Department, Intelligence Division (1972)

In Philadelphia, as in other American cities, discrimination against blacks meant that opportunities as prostitutes, pimps, maids, and musicians in the vice districts were among the most attractive open to them.²

Mark H. Haller (1973), referring to urban crime and violence at the turn-of-the-century.

“We learn from history that we do not learn from history.”

George Bernard Shaw

Philadelphia’s Black Mafia was a self-named, finite group of individuals who organized crime in predominantly African-American sections of the city beginning in the late 1960s. The group began as an extortion-centered organization and grew into major players in the narcotics trade throughout the Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey region. The group’s hierarchy throughout the early 1970s consisted of individuals who each had violent, criminal histories. Even after law enforcement officials began investigating the Black Mafia, they had difficulties prosecuting its affiliates because witnesses feared testifying against the group. From 1968 through the late 1970s, the Black Mafia engaged in a variety of illicit activities, including predatory crimes such as extortion, contracted acts of violence and murder, and robbery, in addition to other crimes such as drug use and trafficking, embezzlement and the misuse of government funds. The group also controlled several numbers territories, and sanctioned independent gambling operations.

“Ordinary” citizens were not the group’s primary extortion targets roughly from 1968 through 1971. Rather, Black Mafia targets were people who could not take

1 New York City Police Department, Intelligence Division, “The Black Narcotic System: A Brief History,” May 1972, p. 1.

2 Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (eds.), *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), p. 285.

their problems to the police (i.e. narcotics dealers, gambling entrepreneurs, and other criminals), and especially bar owners who permitted any of those acts to occur in their establishments. The Black Mafia kept extensive records on extortion targets, including the nature of “business” the target conducted, the volume of business, and the locations the target conducted business. In addition to the weekly tally sheets for the extortion kitty, records were kept detailing precisely what rates certain targets were paying for protection throughout the city’s African-American neighborhoods. Extortion, both in revenues generated and in sheer level of activity, was perhaps only surpassed by drug trafficking in significance. The group and its ruthless reputation were founded on extortion. For the most part, the Black Mafia refrained from targeting legitimate business operators until after the “merger” with Nation of Islam Mosque No. 12.

Murder often served a dual purpose for the Black Mafia – it “addressed” the situation at hand (e.g. prevented a witness or potential witness from testifying against the group in court, settled a debt or vendetta, etc.), while it also established a reputation for violence that was essential for their extortion networks. The Black Mafia is known to have murdered over 30 individuals from 1968 through 1984, 25 of whom were slain between ‘69 and ‘73 during the group’s rise to power. Robbery was the activity the group engaged in the least. The Black Mafia’s targets were not restricted to illicit parties, although they did victimize drug dealers disproportionately. They were known for using ski masks in the commission of robberies, and for tying up cashiers, clerks, etc. They also frequently pistol-whipped and shot victims and witnesses during the incidents.

While the Black Mafia initially refrained from actively engaging in the drug trade, opting to extort dealers instead, for a few years (1968 – 1970/71), they were apparently not satisfied with the extortion proceeds. Thus, with the influence granted them by their street reputation and by their Black Muslim backing, the Black Mafia commandeered vast segments of Philadelphia’s lucrative heroin and (to a lesser extent) cocaine networks. The group’s main source for narcotics was the New York-based Frank Matthews organization.

For a period of approximately five years ending with the death of Elijah Muhammad in February 1975, criminal elements within Philadelphia’s Black Muslim Mosque No. 12 worked in concert with the Black Mafia to commandeer lucrative drug territories and in other criminal conspiracies. This relationship caused political difficulties for law enforcement and public officials. During this time, the group also benefited in various ways through their multifaceted relationships with some of the city’s most influential civil rights leaders, politicians and other public officials. Thus, despite the murderous years ‘69-’73, the Black Mafia was simultaneously misappropriating government funding for so-called “grassroots” community development.

The late 1970s saw the demise of the Black Mafia as a functioning organization on a large scale. For a variety of reasons, the group was almost exclusively grounded in the drug trade beginning in the late 1970s, and thus law enforcement could much easier conduct investigations and prosecute Black Mafia affiliates. Nineteen seventy-three marked the high point for Philadelphia’s Black Mafia, as numerous

prosecutions were in the process for those who would survive their violent compatriots. The primary figures of the Black Mafia would rotate in and out of the criminal justice system and back into their “territories” over the next twenty years or so, but their presence was never quite the same as during their heyday. Nor was the group ever as structured as it was in the late 1960s through the mid- to late-1970s. The death knell for the first incarnation of the Black Mafia came in 1984 as yet another large-scale prosecution took place. As the initial Black Mafia faded, either because of internecine warfare or imprisonment, a successor group was formed. The Junior Black Mafia started in 1985, and had fleeting relationships with former Black Mafia leaders Robert “Nudie” Mims, Lonnie Dawson and Sam Christian. Most high-ranking JBM affiliates were imprisoned or killed by 1992, primarily because of their predilection for violence and total reliance on the drug trade.

PATRON-CLIENT NETWORKS AND THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF ORGANIZED CRIME

While the fluid nature of the Black Mafia’s hierarchy revolved slightly around drug connections, the greater cause for the seemingly constant change was the flight from prosecution. For example, the command changes illustrated in Figure 4.3 above mirror precisely who was being sought by authorities at any given time. Thus, the change from May of 1972 listing Sam Christian and Ronald Harvey as Co-Chairmen to Bo Baynes (as the lone Chairman) in July of 1973, is a reflection of their flight from the murder charges stemming from the Palmer, Coxson and Hanafi cases, just as the change from Baynes to Hearn in February of 1974 was motivated by Baynes’ flight from an IRS prosecution. One of the few in the command structure who was not removed because of difficulties with law enforcement was Donnie Day. However, he became addicted to the heroin he was peddling, and thus was no longer trusted by the organization.³ These and other activities I have chronicled emphasize why organized crime must be adaptable to the frequent changes in markets⁴ and patron-client networks.⁵ Alan Block (1994) considers patron-client networks to be “complex grids of constantly changing social power holding precariously together professional criminals, their clients and victims, criminal lawyers, police, [and] politicians.” Furthermore, he argues these are “the predominant form of association

3 FBI debriefing report, “Narcotics Information: Black Mafia,” December 20, 1973, containing information received by the FBI from informant, p. 2.

4 See, for example, the MPD’s “Criminal Profile of John Brown,” p. 10, in which there are discussions of “heroin panics” and the like which necessitated the ability to adapt to changes in markets and networks.

5 On patron-client networks in organized crime, see Joseph L. Albin, *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971); Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Invisible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); and Don Liddick, *The Mob’s Daily Number: Organized Crime and the Numbers Gambling Industry* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), especially pp. 153-172.

characteristic of underworlds.”⁶ The activities encompassing the Black Mafia have also illustrated why organized crime is best explained through the prism of social systems.

Social systems have been used to refer “to the notion that organized crime is a phenomenon recognizable by reciprocal services performed by professional criminals, politicians and clients.”⁷ This certainly characterized the Black Mafia’s tenure in Philadelphia. One of the key lessons to be learned from the group’s history is that organized crime is necessarily fluid, in order to adapt to changes in markets, particularly with respect to narcotics markets.⁸ The suppression of the “French Connection” and other significant events (e.g. the Black Muslim commandeering of narcotics and extortion territories), and factors such as the fleeting popularity of a particular drug (i.e. the switch in popularity from heroin in the 60s and 70s to cocaine – in various forms – in the late 70s and 80s), combine to create a rather unpredictable, at times chaotic, underworld. Naylor (1997) has commented on the consequences of dealing in illegal markets like narcotics. He stated that the “fact of illegality produces three risks”: underworld contracts are not legally enforceable; the entrepreneur might be arrested; and criminal assets might be seized.⁹

Obviating the first [risk] might require recourse to the threat of violence, which compounds the risk. The second must be dealt with by subterfuge (hiding the activity) or manipulation (corrupting the authorities) or, on rare occasions, intimidation (attempting to scare off the regulators). And the third, assuming criminal assets reach a substantial amount, requires the use of a complex series of technical maneuvers to hide their existence or disguise their nature. These realities have profound implications for the nature and scope of the criminal firm, and all militate against the notion of broad conspiracies to control the marketplace for contraband goods and service.¹⁰

Thus, membership in an organized crime group, in addition to providing access to networking channels and social relationships, increases – *to some extent* – the predictability of illegal ventures.¹¹

Describing and analyzing these shifting relationships and inter-relationships between politicians, lawyers, financiers (the “upperworld”) and organized criminals

- 6 Alan A. Block, “Organized Crime: History and Historiography,” in Robert J. Kelly, Ko-Lin Chin and Rufus Schatzberg (eds.), *Handbook of Organized Crime in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), p. 49.
- 7 Alan A. Block, *East Side-West Side: Organizing Crime in New York, 1930-1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), p. 10. For an extension of Block’s model, see Jeffrey Scott McIllwain, “Organized Crime: A Social Network Approach,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1999), pp. 301-323.
- 8 Block, *East Side – West Side*, p. 256, similarly found “the most efficient ‘organized criminals’ were the most individualistic, the least committed to particular structures.”
- 9 R.T. Naylor, “Mafias, Myths, and Markets: On the Theory and Practice of Enterprise Crime,” *Transnational Organized Crime*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), p. 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Mark H. Haller, “Bureaucracy and the Mafia: An Alternative View,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, vol. 8, no. 1 (February 1992), pp. 2-3. On this point, and on others relating to the significance of membership in a crime group, see Mary McIntosh, *The Organisation of Crime* (London: MacMillan, 1975), especially pp. 24-25.

(the “underworld”) is a complicated task. This study illustrates why any discussion of organized crime must be developmental and predicated on social systems. It is not a static environment, but rather is one susceptible to many outside factors such as changes in political and economic structures, and to internal ones such as competition for power and access to resources – in addition to secrecy and security concerns.¹² As Chambliss (1978) found when he studied organized crime in Seattle, “‘The mob’ is a cross section of people wealthy enough to invest or hungry enough to do the shit-work necessary to maximize profits and minimize risks in the ever changing, ever challenging world of illegal business.”¹³ The role played by Major Coxson perhaps best embodied the amorphous environment in which the seminal Black Mafia operated.

As described above, Coxson was at once a mayoral candidate, flamboyant entrepreneur, media darling, civil rights activist, inner-city power broker, fraudster, drug financier and intermediary between Italian-American and African-American gangsters. He ultimately expended his primary asset, political capital, was thus no longer needed by the Black Mafia, and was murdered over a relatively trivial failed narcotics transaction. Coxson’s variegated life history, as it applies to the understanding of organized crime, mirrors what other researchers have found in different times and places. Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter (1987) analyzed the activities and role of “Squire” William McMullin, a Democratic boss of the South Philadelphia’s Fourth Ward in the mid-nineteenth century.

By the 1840s he led an Irish street gang, which also provided ‘canvassers’ and organizers for the Democrats. Gang chaos soon gave way to machine organization. From the 1850s, McMullin led the ‘Keystone Club,’ a Democratic society that kept his ward a loyal fief. He was a saloon-keeper who monopolized gambling and prostitution in his area. As party boss, he also administered the police in his ward.¹⁴

Haller (1972), in his analysis of Chicago at the turn-of-the-century, similarly discussed the career of William “Billy” Skidmore. In the 1890s, Skidmore owned a saloon and a cigar store while operating a major policy wheel on the city’s West Side. By 1903, he had become a local ward committeeman and his political influence grew so significantly that he was the Democratic National Convention’s Sergeant-at-Arms in 1912.

Despite his success as gambler and politician, his saloon, until well into the 1920s, was a hangout for pickpockets and con men; and “Skid” provided bail and political protection for his criminal friends. In the twenties Skidmore branched into the junk business and made a fortune selling junk obtained through contracts with the county government. Not until the

12 A good illustration of the endemic chaos in the “underworld” can be gleaned from former FBI agent Joseph D. Pistone (with Richard Woodley), *Donnie Brasco: My Undercover Life in the Mafia* (New York: Signet [Penguin], 1987).

13 William Chambliss, *On the Take: From Petty Crooks to Presidents* second edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 168.

14 Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter, “The Politics and Mythology of Organized Crime: A Philadelphia Case Study,” *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 15 (1987), p. 476.

early 1940s did he finally go to prison, the victim of a federal charge of income tax evasion.¹⁵

As Haller suggests, “it would be impossible to unravel the diverse careers to determine whether he was saloon keeper, gambler, politician or businessman.”¹⁶

Major Coxson was one of many such figures in the social milieu of Philadelphia’s Black Mafia – figures who filled certain roles at precise times depending on the particular needs of a variety of inter-related and inter-dependent actors. On paper, both in the group’s own notes and throughout intelligence files, the early Black Mafia was a hierarchically-structured organization with explicit rules. Importantly, though, a thorough analysis of the data shows that the stated roles of “members”, etc. did not hold operationally. Rather, access to power was obtained through force, access to better networks and other means beyond those formal criteria listed in the minutes of Black Mafia meetings. The social system of patron-client networks accounted for the group’s persistence, not the Black Mafia’s adherence to a protocol or set of commonly-held group values or coterie of corrupt officials. The social system also explains why organized crime persists in Philadelphia, despite numerous successful prosecutions and other proactive strategies mentioned above. This is evidenced by the current (1989-2002) alliances of the remaining Black Mafia, Junior Black Mafia, Merlino “family” and Pagan Motorcycle Club members. As researchers gain better access to explicit data, many preconceptions of bureaucracy will fall by the wayside and allow for a broader, more dynamic analysis of organized crime.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

There are numerous questions specifically regarding the Black Mafia remaining to be explored in future research. Perhaps the most appealing study would analyze the similarities and differences between the Black Mafia and the dominant Italian-American group in the city for the same period of time. Such a study could investigate such factors as the age distribution within the groups and their “hierarchies”, illicit activities, markets monopolized, murders by group, structures, formal and informal rules and others. The law enforcement response to the groups could also be examined. Any of these analyses would be difficult to conduct, however, since fundamental methodological challenges are multiple. For example, a standard analysis of group membership would yield unreliable results since there are no operational definitions for “members”, “associates” or “affiliates”. Thus, while studies have identified 58 Bruno “family” members in the late 1960s¹⁷ and 75 in the

15 Mark H. Haller, “Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Social History*, Winter 1971-1972, p. 213.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Mark H. Haller, “The Bruno Family of Philadelphia: Organized Crime as a Regulatory Agency,” in Robert J. Kelly, Ko-Lin Chin and Rufus Schatzberg (eds.), *Handbook of Organized Crime in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), p. 155.

late 1970s¹⁸, these should not be compared to the Black Mafia membership of 62 in 1972 and 96 in 1974. Contrasting the groups as to the use of violence would also be affected by the lack of affiliate definitions. Thus, there are challenges in defining which acts were independently executed, especially by low level/"fringe" associates, as opposed to those ordered by the organization's hierarchy. Studies of structure, modus operandi and other matters of sociological significance would also be problematic since identifying the actual, flexing roles of affiliates are often distinctly different than those stated in official documents and other sources. Several commonalities between the two groups, however, are evident.

The Bruno group and the Black Mafia have each suffered through internecine warfare, though at different points in time.¹⁹ Each group has gone through various permutations (e.g. Bruno to Scarfo to Natale to Merlino Family; Black Mafia to Junior Black Mafia to an amorphous collection of each), involving changes in organization that, among other things, are affected by market changes and law enforcement investigations.²⁰ Both groups have experienced fluctuations in power and influence, on the streets of Philadelphia and in prisons. Lastly, because of the combination of successful prosecutions and significant internal warfare, each group has been decimated since at least the late 1980s.²¹ Thus, these formerly independent

18 Annelise Graebner Anderson, *The Business of Crime: A Cosa Nostra Family* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), p. 148.

19 For instance, the "Bruno Family war" started with the killing of leader Angelo Bruno on March 21, 1980 and ended in 1985 by which time 28 affiliates were dead, dozens were imprisoned and six "full-fledged members" were cooperating with the government as informants. Kitty Caparella and Joe O'Dowd, "Stanfa Family Eyed in Hit Try," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 5, 1992. Also see George Anastasia, *Blood and Honor: Inside the Scarfo Mob – the Mafia's Most Violent Family* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991); and Mark H. Haller, *Life Under Bruno: The Economics of an Organized Crime Family* (St. David's, PA: Pennsylvania Crime Commission, 1991).

20 See, for example, George Anastasia, *The Goodfella Tapes* (New York: Avon Books, 1998); Kitty Caparella, "The Straight Dope – Drugs in Philadelphia: Federal Enforcement – A New Drug War Pays Off in Court," *The Philadelphia Daily News*, October 22, 1984; and Frank Friel and John Guinther, *Breaking the Mob* (New York: Warner Books, 1990).

21 See, for example, Associated Press, "Philadelphia Mob is Hurting but Still Alive, U.S. Says," *The New York Times*, December 21, 2001. Joseph "Skinny Joey" Merlino is the latest "family boss" felled by prosecution. Merlino was convicted, along with his six top associates, for his involvement in bookmaking and loan-sharking businesses. Merlino was sentenced to fourteen years in prison in the summer of 2001 for racketeering. Thus, he joined the ranks of predecessors Ralph Natale, John Stanfa, and Nicodemo Scarfo. The organization was allegedly taken over by Joseph Ligambi in 1999 after Merlino was arrested. Ligambi served ten years in prison for the 1985 murder of Frank "Frankie Flowers" D'Alfonso. His conviction was overturned, thus nullifying his life sentence, and he was acquitted in the retrial. On January 17, 2002, Raymond "Long John" Martorano was shot as he drove near Eighth and Spruce Streets. Martorano was shot three times, once each in the abdomen, chest and right arm, and later died from his wounds on February 5, 2002. Preliminary investigations have centered on Ligambi's possible role in the murder. The two leading theories are that Martorano was attempting to exert his influence on Ligambi's gambling and extortion rackets and/or that two organized crime underlings were trying to impress Ligambi and thus murdered Martorano. See George Anastasia and Thomas J. Gibbons, Jr., "Mobster Shot in Center City," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 2002; George Anastasia, Thomas J. Gibbons and Leonard Fleming, "Mobster Under Guard, May Lose Arm," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 19, 2002; George Anastasia and Thomas Gibbons, Jr., "Wiseguy Shot as Warning, Police Believe," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*,

criminal organizations – that previously competed for various illicit networks and markets – have worked in concert on several recent occasions.

More Black Mafia-specific research could explore the nexus with the JBM, and also the differences between the two groups regarding activities, socio-political issues, and law enforcement responses. Studies might also analyze the backgrounds of individual affiliates, linkages with – and comparisons to – African-American and other groups in various cities, as well as more substantive examinations of broader social settings. Research could also examine explicit details of individual actors and their activities, the numerous political – and, in this particular case study, racial – issues, and many other things in more substantive detail. For instance, the narcotics traffic, alone, would be compelling and significant work. That is, studies could examine the international points of origin for coca and opium, refining locales and operandi, transshipment points for the cocaine and heroin, and ultimately the domestic destination points and distribution networks beginning in the 1960s that accounted for the Black Mafia's vast supply.²²

Of course, there is also the issue of criminological theory and the motivation of Black Mafia actors. I have opted to present a history rather than expressly investigate theoretical applications. Future research could look into similarities between the various characteristics I have presented surrounding Black Mafia actors and activities, and synthesize current explanations of criminal behavior with this analysis. These suggested analyses and others would fill voids in the academic literature.

SUMMING UP

Michael Lyman and Gary Potter (2000) stated, “with the exception of historical data incorporated in Ianni's [1974] important work *Black Mafia*, no comprehensive history of the African-American role in organized crime exists.”²³ More recently, Robert Lombardo (2002) echoed this sentiment in his historical analysis of African-American organized crime in Chicago.²⁴ This study thus addresses the implicit and

January 20, 2002; Kitty Caparella, “Aged Mobster was ‘King of the Quadruple-Cross,’” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 6, 2002; Kitty Caparella and Nicole Weisensee Egan, “Martorano Succumbs 19 Days After Hit,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 6, 2002; George Anastasia and Thomas J. Gibbons, Jr., “Martorano's Death Raises Ante in Mob Hit,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 6, 2002; and George Anastasia, “N.J. Request Bars Reputed Mob Boss at Casinos,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 2002.

22 Any study of international narcotics trafficking during the 1960s and 1970s should at least consider the following works on heroin and cocaine, respectively. Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991); and Rensselaer W. Lee III, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine & Political Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990).

23 Michael D. Lyman and Gary W. Potter, *Organized Crime* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), p. 247.

24 Robert M. Lombardo, “The Black Mafia: African-American organized crime in Chicago, 1890-1960,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 38, no. 1 (2002), pp. 33-65.

explicit calls for more research on African-American organized crime.²⁵ Using volumes of rich, primary source data, I have examined an African-American organized crime group that has operated, with varying degrees of success and significance, in a major U.S. city for decades.

Importantly, I am not arguing that because the Black Mafia existed that African-American organized crime exists or existed in all or most major U.S. cities. It is clear that we cannot say with confidence whether or not such groups existed, nor in what form or to what extent, without further study based on primary sources. Such inquiry is intuitively appealing for as Frank Bovenkerk (1998) noted, “organized crime by minorities can be a sign of social deprivation, the formation of an underclass or discrimination.”²⁶ Thus, as Daniel Bell (1960) and others have argued, organized crime provides a means of social mobility for persons who experience – or perceive – blocked legitimate paths to socioeconomic progress.²⁷

25 Alan A. Block, “Organized Crime: History and Historiography”; Frank Bovenkerk, “Organized Crime and Ethnic Minorities: Is There a Link?” *Transnational Organized Crime*, vol. 4 (1998), pp. 109-126; Jenkins and Potter; Lyman and Potter; Frederick T. Martens, “African-American Organized Crime, An Ignored Phenomenon,” *Federal Probation*, vol. 54, no. 4 (1990), pp. 43-50; and Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New York: Garland, 1996).

26 Bovenkerk, p. 111.

27 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1988), pp. 127-150. For an international perspective, see Josine Junger-Tas, “Ethnic Minorities, Social Integration and Crime,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 5-29. Please note I state there is a possibility criminal actors *perceive* blocked paths to social mobility. A review of academic literature in this field often reveals a superficial understanding of, or explanation for, criminality. That is, scholars often view poverty as a powerful explanatory variable, while discounting other explanations for criminal behavior. On this matter, see James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* revised edition (New York: First Vintage Books [Random House], 1985). For example, Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.81, found the “social context of poverty becomes a fertile field for the growth of the drug culture.” He reprised this argument in *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999). He (p. 36) states, “At the extreme of the street-oriented group are those who make up the criminal element. People in this class are profound casualties of the social and economic system.” Furthermore, he (pp. 133-134) states “the economic unraveling in so many of these communities puts people up against the wall and encourages them to do things that they would otherwise be morally reluctant to do.” Also see Elliot Liebow, *Tally’s Corner: A Study of Streetcorner Negro Men* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1967); and Jay MacLeod, *Ain’t No Makin’ It: Aspirations & Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995). Importantly, these analyses largely ignore the fact that studies of organized crime have discovered gains in social lifestyle, the street status and ego benefits, the adrenaline “rush” and fascination associated with certain crimes, and other factors are often key motivations. See, for example, Mark H. Haller, “Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Social History*, Winter 1971-1972, pp. 210-234; Peter Klerks, “Motives and lifestyle of drug millionaires,” paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, November 2000; and Peter Lupsha, “Individual Choice, Material Culture, and Organized Crime,” *Criminology* vol. 19, no. 1 (May 1981), pp. 3-24. Then there is the rationalization by offenders that others, particularly those in higher socioeconomic and authority positions, are engaging in equally dubious or worse activities. Furthermore, the hypothesis posited by some scholars emphasizing the strain experienced by members of the underclass discounts the large volume of criminal events involving wealthy offenders that cannot be explained by understanding the

Historian Mark Haller (1971) pointed out the interrelated worlds of crime, politics, labor leadership, politically-related business, sports and night life were, taken collectively, an essential path to social mobility for poor, urban immigrants (i.e. the target population for government and academic interest in organized crime) in the 1920s.²⁸ As I have demonstrated in the pages above, Haller could just as easily have been describing the social circumstances of Philadelphia's poor, urban African-Americans in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – the population which spawned the Black Mafia.

“social context of poverty.” For a summary of research on the similarities between “organized crime” and “white-collar” crime, see Sean Patrick Griffin, “Actors or Activities? On the Social Construction of ‘White-Collar’ Crime in the United States,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2002), pp. 245-276.

28 Haller, “Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century,” p. 216. Haller argued that these “occupations” shared a value system which idolized deal-makers.

EPILOGUE

ON THE LACK OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN (AND OTHER) ORGANIZED CRIME RESEARCH

THE RELATIVE DEARTH OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME RESEARCH

I began this research in 1992 when a colleague asked me if I could investigate the activities and networks of an African-American gangster named Jack Brown.¹ My associate was particularly interested in Brown's operations in the Philadelphia region in the 1970s. Local and federal law enforcement officials in the area did not have – or at least did not offer – much information on Jack Brown, though they did maintain extensive files on a relatively large and significant organized crime group named the “Black Mafia”.

When I was first introduced to the topic, and more importantly shown the voluminous files within several agencies, my reaction was one of amazement. The files were substantial. Many of the group's activities, as has been demonstrated in the pages above, were notorious – the DuBrow Furniture robbery/arson/murder, the Hanafi murders, the misappropriation of community “seed” money, the murder of Major Coxson, and the complex role of Philadelphia's Black Muslim Mosque #12 – including the relationships of boxing legend Muhammad Ali to Major Coxson and to Jeremiah Shabazz. In addition to other noteworthy aspects of the group, there were the astronomical number of internecine murders, and the facts that two of the Black Mafia founding members spent time on the FBI's Most Wanted list (which has only listed 458 people since its inception), and that for a time the group accounted for 80% of the city's heroin market. Then there were the significant activities of Black Mafia members as they rotated in and out of the prison system over the course of approximately 25 years. Lastly, though significantly, there were the actions and relationships of high-profile attorneys and officials who were part of the social and political history of the group. The superlatives simply went on and on. And yet, despite my insatiable appetite for reading academic inquiries into the phenomenon

1 Brown was a career criminal who elevated himself into a major narcotics figure along the eastern seaboard of the United States in the mid-1950s. He had particularly strong connections in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and most significantly in New York City. Brown started in the heroin trade but over time increasingly dealt in cocaine. His main contacts in New York were higher-level dealers Benny Intersimone and Frank Moten. Like many of his compatriots, Brown spent stints in prison for narcotics dealing and eventually had a contract out on his life by others in his social network. Fearing for his safety, Brown turned himself into the FBI in Washington, DC on April 6, 1975. See the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department Intelligence Division, “Criminal Profile of John Brown,” January 31, 1986.

of organized crime, I had never heard of this group of African-American criminals (or read substantive studies of any others).

As I got more and more into the research, I could not help but catch myself thinking, "If this was a coterie of Italian-Americans, is there any question regarding whether we would have known about this group?" It was a rhetorical question, of course, because I didn't doubt for a moment that if the files were replete with Italian-Americans consorting at social clubs instead of African-Americans meeting at Black Muslim Mosques, law enforcement and academic attention would have been both immediate and extensive. With each colleague and associate who heard of my research, the response was almost identical to my initial reaction, "African-American organized crime? Could it be? And, if so, how substantial or significant could any particular group *really* have been, because we certainly would have read about them, right?" These have been the refrains at academic conferences by respected scholars, as well as those of my students. Thus, if African-American organized crime is an under-researched topic, as I argue and as my experience suggests, what are the possible reasons for this dearth of inquiry? While it is not possible to fully answer this question, it is useful to consider a few possibilities.

Since the start of my research into African-American organized crime in general, and into Philadelphia's Black Mafia group in particular, I have presented portions of it in numerous courses taught at Penn State University (University Park, PA) and Clemson University (Clemson, SC). Furthermore, I have presented several papers at academic conferences and have submitted papers to peer-reviewed academic forums, all of which were derived from my field research. To say the responses have been "interesting" would be an intellectually dishonest interpretation.

For the most part, undergraduate and graduate students are simply curious and receptive to this new information. Of course, it is a mystery to them as to why they are not frequently introduced to extra-Italian/Sicilian organized crime in the media and in the academy. I suspect attendance at academic conferences and a perusal of reviews of my previously submitted manuscripts would solve the mystery for them to a degree. Essentially, the responses of colleagues to my African-American organized crime research fall into two categories, and they partially explain the lack of research in this area. Academicians either claim that African-Americans do not organize crime, or they suggest researching African-American organized crime is immoral (or worse) and thus should not be pursued. Below is a sampling of comments made by academic colleagues regarding the broader concept of African-American organized crime:

African-Americans do not organize crime

“Blacks don’t have the political power to organize crime.”² (Colleague at Penn State, 1996).

“Unlike ‘traditional organized crime’, African-Americans have been unable to transcend the gap between street gangsterism and organized crime.” (Anonymous journal reviewer).

“Blacks don’t organize crime. They have gangs.” (Numerous colleagues, particularly reviewers for academic journals).

“You realize the government was/is conspiring to imprison as many blacks as possible don’t you? Thus, this could all have been a large conspiracy against African-Americans.” (Several colleagues are convinced the government wanted people to *believe* African-Americans were organizing crime, and thus law enforcement was conspiring to create black syndicates on paper).³

Researching African-American organized crime is immoral (or worse)

“Why are you calling them the ‘Black Mafia’ instead of the ‘African-American Mafia’?” (Numerous colleagues over the years, beginning in graduate school at Penn State).

“Why are you ‘piling on’ (African-Americans)?” (Several colleagues over the years have asked this in some fashion, including this colleague at the meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, 2000).

“Why study African-American organized crime? Why not research RJR Reynolds or the NRA?” (Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Toronto, 1999).

“Why do you feel the need to bring Black Muslims into this?” (Meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Orlando, 1999).

“Maybe you should put more information about the victims [who were overwhelmingly African-American] to fend off possible charges of racism” (Several manuscript reviewers, 2001–2002).

The latter grouping of responses makes the former head of the Pennsylvania Crime Commission appear clairvoyant in retrospect. When Frederick Martens wrote “African-American Organized Crime: An Ignored Phenomenon” in 1990, he argued

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- 2 This comment struck me as particularly odd, if not misinformed, given the political success of African-Americans in several cities. For instance, “at one time in the 1980s, Philadelphia had an African-American mayor, City Council president, police chief and school superintendent.” Tom Infield and Maida Odom, “Putting the NAACP Back on the Local Map,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 4, 1998. Also see Tom Infield and Herbert Lowe, “Black Political Power in Phila. Has Come Far in a Generation,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 16, 1998. For a national and historical perspective on the growing political power of African-Americans, with an emphasis on metropolitan cities, see Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom’s, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).
 - 3 Other colleagues have suggested that while such a grand conspiracy was difficult for law enforcement to draft and manage, components of the Black Mafia cases must have been dubious given the tradition of racism and persecution in the U.S. In fact, some have suggested I interview victims of Black Mafia crimes to prove the existence of the group, including interviewing relatives of the murdered victims.

that black organized crime as a research topic had been largely dismissed. He noted “this may ... suggest that it is one topic that dare not be discussed, for fear of racism being attributed to the discussants.”⁴ It is difficult to quantify this line of reasoning, of course, but anecdotal evidence supports the proposition to some degree.⁵ Nevertheless, my experience suggests the former grouping of responses represents the larger portion of the explanation for the relative dearth of African-American organized crime research. The “African-Americans do not organize crime” argument is, of course, inter-related with the “emerging organized crime” discourse examined in Chapter 9, and grounded at least partly on what Alan Block calls the “conspiracy trap.”

Alan Block (1978) stated there are two components of the conspiracy trap. The first is the focus in the organized crime literature on an “alien conspiracy,” and the second is the “ineluctable drive (in the literature) toward consolidation and confederation.”⁶ Alien conspiracy theorists essentially argue Italian immigrants brought organized crime to the United States in the early part of the twentieth century.⁷ A body of literature has developed debunking the numerous myths upon which these models are based.⁸ Nevertheless, a thorough review of the scholarly literature suggests the alien conspiracy trap remains a problem in the ongoing study of the phenomenon. For example, Rufus Schatzberg and Robert Kelly published *African-American Organized Crime: A Social History* in 1996. There are several

4 Frederick T. Martens, “African-American Organized Crime, An Ignored Phenomenon,” *Federal Probation*, vol. 54, no. 4 (1990), p. 43.

5 In addition to my personal experiences on this matter, a few colleagues have also shared their similar experiences with me. This proposition is also validated by several letters to the editor of the *Philadelphia Daily News* regarding a series of articles chronicling the activities of Black Mafia members. See, for example, November 9, 1984 and January 24, 1986.

6 Alan A. Block, “History and the Study of Organized Crime,” *Urban Life: A Journal of Ethnographic Research*, vol. 6 (January 1978), p. 470.

7 On broader explanations for the common, unsophisticated beliefs in such conspiracies, see Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). Goldberg pays particular attention to the progressive era, which holds a special place in the history of organized crime. He examines the roles of the media, especially “muckraking” journalists, in relation to matters such as immigration that had a direct influence on the social construction of the organized crime phenomenon. For example, he states (p. 2) “American diversity ... deepened suspicions of unfamiliar identities and gnawed at the sense of internal security. Resonating with core values and fueled by ethnic, racial, and religious differences, conspiracy thinking became an American tradition.” Goldberg also examines the role Hollywood played upon these themes. On this point, also see historian David E. Ruth’s *Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Culture, 1918 – 1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). He (p. 1) states that just after World War I:

many Americans came to believe that rampant crime was a defining element of their society. Attention soon centered on the gangster, the paragon of modern criminality and eventually the subject of innumerable newspaper and magazine articles, scores of novels and plays, and more than a hundred Hollywood movies. The media gangster was an invention, much less an accurate reflection of reality than a projection created from various Americans’ beliefs, concerns, and ideas about what would sell.

8 See, for example, Gary W. Potter and Philip Jenkins, *The City and the Syndicate: Organizing Crime in Philadelphia* (Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishers, 1985).

historical problems with *African-American Organized Crime*, not the least of which are the reliance on the Castellammarese War myth⁹ and the overstated claims of a National Mafia Ruling Commission (for which, ironically, and predictably, they provide no citations). Because these themes are at times interwoven with the *real* activities of African-American gangsters, it is occasionally difficult to evaluate the significance of the work on black organized crime.¹⁰ For instance, the authors argue the:

death of (“Mafia boss” Salvatore) Maranzano gave birth to crime as a fledgling national confederation in which everyone was to understand that cooperation, consolidation, and a sense of order would be the rules governing operations. A commission not only replaced a dictatorial figure, but also served as a regulatory mechanism for disputes among families. What remained intact as a legacy of the Castellammarese War were the crime families that were to become the nucleus, the core, of organized criminal activities on a national scale.¹¹

Furthermore, they state that this new “centralization” of organized criminal activities directly cost the African-American organizations their independence from white gangsters.¹² This reasoning exemplifies the second component of what Block termed the “conspiracy trap.”

The real choice ... is between explicit history, based on a careful examination of the sources, and implicit history, rooted in ideological preconceptions and uncritical acceptance of local mythology. Reliance on unsubstantiated accounts and the lawman’s ideological preconceptions has mired the study of organized crime in the bog of conspiracy, allowing the term itself to be carelessly transformed to stand for the monolithic organization of criminals.¹³

Some scholars argue that African-Americans failed to organize into a national crime syndicate and/or community, and thus cannot be considered “true” organized criminals.¹⁴ The implicit assumption in this line of reasoning is that such a crime community or organization exists for other ethnicities. Some academics have so carelessly embraced the many myths surrounding organized crime (which have robbed this area of research of legitimacy in some academic circles), that their research into other related areas is adversely affected. Thus, it is not surprising to read Schatzberg and Kelly (1996) state the following: “Unlike the Cosa Nostra with its obsessive concern for omerta (silence), ... and its highly-sophisticated methods of corruption, African-American mobs have primarily one method by which to enforce

9 See Block, “History and the Study of Organized Crime.”

10 On this point, also see Robert M. Lombardo, “The Black Mafia: African-American organized crime in Chicago, 1890-1960,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 38, no. 1 (2002), pp. 33-65.

11 Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New York: Garland, 1996), p. 32.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

13 Block, “History and the Study of Organized Crime,” p. 470.

14 See Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime* fifth edition (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997); Jay Albanese, *Organized Crime in America*, third edition (Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing, 1996); and Dennis J. Kenney and James O. Finckenauer, *Organized Crime in America* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1995).

silence-violence,”¹⁵ and “African American groups ... never developed a national structure like the Cosa Nostra and its Commission.”¹⁶

The focus in the literature on Italian-American groups and the “Commission” (“conspiracy traps”) referenced above is at least partly attributable to methodological concerns. Figure E.1 summarizes the different methodological approaches to the study of organized crime.¹⁷

FIGURE E.1 Models of Organized Crime Research



The two categories of models are fundamentally different because they begin with different assumptions and foci. The “governmental” et al. models focus on those involved in certain activities, while the “patron-client” et al. schools focus on the activities. Several scholars have argued the models that begin by focusing on “who” is organizing crime essentially become self-fulfilling hypotheses.¹⁸ The sample of criminal behavior on which the “governmental” theories are founded is biased as to ethnicity, since it virtually excludes non-Italian/Sicilian men. Edwin Sutherland’s comments on a different, though related, topic are appropriate. He said, “The bias is quite as certain as it would be if the scholars selected only red-haired criminals for study and reached the conclusion that redness of hair was the cause of crime.”¹⁹ Dwight Smith (1991) addressed this concern as it relates to the study of organized crime.

15 Schatzberg and Kelly, p. 131.

16 Ibid., p. 42.

17 Figure E.1 is adapted from Joseph L. Albin, “Donald Cressey’s Contribution to the Study of Organized Crime: An Evaluation,” *Crime & Delinquency*, vol. 34, no. 3 (July 1988), p. 338.

18 There is a growing body of literature supporting this paradigm (i.e. focusing on activities not people). See Dwight C. Smith, *The Mafia Mystique* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), Block, “History and the Study of Organized Crime,” Mark H. Haller, “Bureaucracy and the Mafia: An Alternative View,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, vol. 8, no. 1 (February 1992), pp. 1-10, and Robert J. Kelly, “Trapped in the Folds of Discourse: Theorizing about the Underworld,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, vol. 8, no. 1 (February 1992), pp. 11-35.

19 Edwin H. Sutherland, *White Collar Crime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, the uncut version), pp. 6-7.

The observer who looks first at events and then at the persons associated with them is more likely to adopt a scientific, value-free and causal analytical style. The observer who defines a universe by the people it contains is more prone to bias and nontestable assumptions – in short, to conclusions that are based more on ideology than on logic.²⁰

Collectively, the conspiracy traps and related methodological issues in some measure account for the lack of African-American organized crime research. These concerns are also the basis for the misguided, but vast, “nontraditional” organized crime literature (born in the 1980s)²¹ that argues non-Italian/Sicilian organized crime is “nontraditional” (e.g. Russian, Asian, multi-ethnic groups, etc.).²² The *research* on Italian-American organized crime may be “traditional” (I would argue stereotypical), but identifying the criminal *activities* of Italian-Americans as distinct from the American experience is a-historical.

There are also larger issues affecting the quantity and the quality of organized crime research in general. Some of these issues go beyond the general study of organized crime, in fact, to the state of contemporary sociological research, though I will generally restrict my commentary to the particular case of organized crime. The issues I will examine are the following as they affect organized crime research in the United States: the quantification of sociological research, graduate training in criminology, the trend away from inter-disciplinary research in criminology, the political nature of organized crime, and finally the dangerous and labor-intensive aspects of field research.

THE LACK (AND QUALITY) OF ORGANIZED CRIME RESEARCH

The Quantification of Sociological Research

The study of organized crime has generally been a sociological pursuit, though anthropologists, economists and historians have also contributed standout analyses. In the field of contemporary sociology, including its sub-fields of criminology and criminal justice,²³ there has been a growing trend toward quantification.²⁴ For the

20 Dwight C. Smith Jr., “Wickersham to Sutherland to Katzenbach: Evolving an ‘Official’ Definition for Organized Crime,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1991), p. 136. Also see Haller’s, “Bureaucracy and the Mafia.”

21 Michael D. Lyman and Gary W. Potter, *Organized Crime* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), p. 52.

22 On so-called “nontraditional organized crime,” see U.S. General Accounting Office, Office of Special Investigations (for the U.S. Senate, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations), *Nontraditional Organized Crime: Law Enforcement Officials’ Perspectives on Five Criminal Groups* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), Albanese, *Organized Crime in America*, pp. 145-166, Lyman and Potter, *Organized Crime*, pp. 52-54, Scott Decker, Tim Bynum and Deborah Weisel, “A Tale of Two Cities: Gangs as Organized Crime Groups,” *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3 (September 1998), pp. 395-425, Edwin J. Delattre, “New Faces of Organized Crime,” *American Enterprise*, vol. 1, no. 3 (May 1990), pp. 38-45, and William Kleinknecht, *The New Ethnic Mobs: The Changing Face of Organized Crime in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

23 For the purposes of this discussion, I have combined the technically distinct fields of criminology and criminal justice. “Criminology” has been defined as “the study of the causes of crime and the

“unenlightened”, some explanation may be helpful. Bruce DiChristina (1997) has enumerated reasons quantitative research has gained such prominence in the field. Some of his statements are these:

Scientific methods and scientific knowledge are highly valued, and quantitative data and statistical analyses are commonly viewed as defining characteristics of science. From the viewpoint of what appears to be a dominant culture of criminal justice research ... criminal justice researchers should be doing science, and they are not doing science unless they are producing and manipulating numbers.²⁵

Furthermore, he correctly adds, “Quantitative knowledge of crime and criminal justice processes are more marketable than qualitative knowledge, at least among criminal justice researchers ... Quantitative information is more likely to receive serious consideration and favorable reviews from the conforming intellectuals; consequently it is more likely to sell.”²⁶ Thus, recent generations of social scientists increasingly favor quantitative approaches to phenomena. Unfortunately for the general field of sociology, and especially for particular niche areas of research such as organized crime, the quantification of the field has come at a price.

In a recent collection of essays entitled *Lessons of Criminology*, prominent scholars who have led the last generation of criminologists offer their reflections on the field in general, and on their careers in particular.²⁷ In the introduction to the book, Gil Geis (2002) summarizes the experience of co-editing the book (with Mary Dodge). Among other things, he states, “Most of the writers are a bit annoyed at what they see as the tendency of their field to have moved too far from the human material that in its earlier days was the core of its work and into secondary analyses of data that is far removed from the persons who supplied it.”²⁸ One of the writers to whom Geis is referring is Frank Scarpitti. Scarpitti, a former president of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), states:

The increased statistical sophistication of all the social sciences is also evident in criminology. It is now difficult to read our journals without some knowledge of path analysis, structural equation models, or hierarchal loglinear models, often used to justify the

treatment of offenders”, while “criminal justice” represents “the management of the criminal justice system, including the study of police, courts, and corrections.” Jay S. Albanese, *Criminal Justice 2000 Update* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), p. 566.

24 Bruce DiChristina, “The Quantitative Emphasis in Criminal Justice Education,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* vol. 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997), p. 181. According to DiChristina, p. 187, R. Wright and M. Stein, “Seeing Ourselves: Exploring the Social Production of Criminological Knowledge in a Qualitative Methods Course,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 65-77, suggest that teaching qualitative methods courses, among other things, is perhaps too time-consuming and such courses are thus under-represented.

25 DiChristina, p. 190.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

27 The scholars, as they appear in the book, are Francis T. Cullen, Charles R. Tittle, Malcolm W. Klein, Frank R. Scarpitti, Joan McCord, Gary T. Marx, Jackson Toby, John Irwin, Richard Quinney, Julius Debro, Rita J. Simon, James F. Short, Jr., and Don C. Gibbons.

28 Gilbert Geis, “Introduction,” in Gilbert Geis and Mary Dodge (eds.), *Lessons of Criminology* (Cincinnati: Anderson, 2002), p. x.

rotation of one variable and to reach conclusions that are just as baffling as the statistic. Whether it is the inordinate pressure on young scholars to publish or their fascination with advanced statistical techniques, journal articles are becoming increasingly incomprehensible to all but the most knowledgeable readers.²⁹

He continues by stating, “it appears that we have become so obsessed with being scientists that we have ritualized the method while losing sight of the ultimate objective of our work.”³⁰ Additionally, he adds, “Criminology will be best served when scholars pay as much attention to ... a qualitative understanding of the process of criminal decision-making as they do to statistical contortions of often mundane data.”³¹

As stated above, there are valid reasons modern day social scientists opt for studies based upon secondary data. The trend away from field research has also been a problem in the quality and quantity of organized crime research. On the broader issue, Jeff Ferrell and Mark Hamm (1998) have recently stated:

Though in-depth field research may certainly lead to the publication of significant results, it hardly sets an agenda for rapid professional advancement. Field studies remain, in general, less attractive to funding agencies than do quantitative studies, which can produce at least the illusion of precise, measurable data. Given the long-term commitments of time and professional energy they require, in-depth field studies are also unlikely to produce journal articles as quickly or as prolifically as hiring or tenure committees may require. Instead, they may lend themselves to ‘book sociology’ or ‘book criminology’ in which long-term, detailed research findings can be presented and explored. Sadly, though, this is the very sort of scholarship that has, in many ways, been overtaken as a measure of contemporary academic success by what Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg call ‘mainstream article sociology,’ or what we might call in the present context a convenient ‘criminology of correlations’.³²

They continue, “Field researchers must deal with a problem ... they must overcome the gatekeepers of the dominant paradigm.”³³ That is, field researchers must overcome the phenomenon they so brilliantly introduce as “Hotel Criminology”. Hamm and Ferrell apply what “Henry James called Hotel Civilization – a social order characterized by too much stale comfort, void of the subtle shadows of everyday life” to the fields of contemporary sociology and criminology.³⁴ The authors argue that ethnographic work is routinely dismissed by funding agencies and mainstream textbooks and journals in favor of “quantitative

29 Frank R. Scarpitti, “The Good Boy in a High-Delinquency Area – 40 Years Later,” in Geis and Dodge, p. 90. Scarpitti has also served as Chair of the Crime, Law and Deviance section of the American Sociological Association.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Jeff Ferrell and Mark S. Hamm, “True Confessions: Crime, Deviance and Field Research,” in Ferrell and Hamm, *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime Deviance, and Field Research* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), p. 5. Also see Joe R. Feagin, Anthony M. Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg (eds.), *A Case for the Case Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

33 Mark S. Hamm and Jeff Ferrell, “Confessions of Danger and Humility,” in Ferrell and Hamm, p. 268.

34 Ibid., p. 269, citing Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York: Modern Library, 1881).

studies, with their unyielding emphasis on predicting the behavior of numbers.³⁵ Gil Geis, like Scarpitti, a former president of the ASC and one of the field's pre-eminent scholars (he has published more than 350 articles to date), has also addressed this issue.³⁶ His comments (2002) regarding white-collar crime research equally apply to the study of organized crime. He stated there was a "pressing need" for field research (as opposed to the more distant survey and other statistical research). He acknowledged this "would be demanding work."

Students of white-collar crime increasingly preferred to park themselves in front of computers in temperature-modulated environs and crunch out correlations between this and that aspect of a corporation and its record for criminal and regulatory act violations. There is an insufficiency of working in the field that determines first-hand those conditions, both objective and subjective, that trigger white-collar offending.³⁷

The pre-occupation with quantification in criminal justice/criminology can also account for wildly inaccurate, misleading and naïve (or worse, dubious) analyses and conclusions. One of the more noteworthy and recent examples of this phenomenon is Gottfredson's and Hirschi's (1990) oft-cited *General Theory of Crime*.³⁸ In their book, the authors drafted an entire discourse on white-collar crime based exclusively on the FBI's Uniform Crime Report data, which, importantly, do not include the overwhelming majority of white-collar cases.³⁹ The process of training future generations of social scientists has predictably come under criticism relating to the aforementioned concerns.

Graduate Training in Criminology

Two prominent criminologists have openly questioned modern graduate training in criminology/criminal justice. Malcolm Klein (2002) states the following:

35 Ibid., p. 269. Hamm and Ferrell state "In our ongoing ethnographies of crime and deviance, and in this collection, we seek to create human alternatives to the mechanized petrification of data sets and statistics, to serve if nothing else as troubling human ghosts inside the machinery of modern criminology and sociology."

36 Geis, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at the University of California, Irvine, was also a recipient of the American Society of Criminology's Edwin H. Sutherland Award for outstanding research among other accomplishments.

37 Gilbert Geis, "White-Collar Crime," in Gary W. Potter (ed.), *Controversies in White-Collar Crime* (Cincinnati: Anderson, 2002), p 50. Also see Robert J. Stevenson, *The Boiler Room and Other Telephone Sales Scams* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), especially p. 222.

38 Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990).

39 On this subject, see Sean Patrick Griffin and Alan A. Block, "PennyWise: Accounting for Fraud in the Penny-Stock Industry," in Henry N. Pontell and David Shichor (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Crime & Criminal Justice: Essays in Honor of Gilbert Geis* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), pp. 98-99; Sean Patrick Griffin, "Actors or Activities? On the Social Construction of 'White-Collar' Crime in the United States," *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 37, no. 3 (April 2002), p. 266; Gary E. Reed and Peter Cleary Yeager, "Organizational Offending and Neoclassical Criminology: Challenging the Reach of a General Theory of Crime," *Criminology*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1996), pp. 357-382; and Darrell Steffensmeier, "On the Causes of 'White-Collar' Crime: An Assessment of Hirschi and Gottfredson's Claims," *Criminology*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1989), pp 345-358.

I have been shocked by graduate students spewing out analyses of covariance and logistic regressions from their laptops with little or no idea how they relate to the particular data-gathering methods that generated the numbers. The role of the ethnographer, the validity of the self-report and police crime data ... are lost. It is the **logic of the research** that informs the utility of the statistical and computer sophistication, not the latter (emphasis in original).⁴⁰

Similarly, former ASC president Joan Petersilia (2000) wrote of criminology graduate students who could:

go on at length about beta coefficients, log-normal distributions, and whether their data are appropriately analyzed using probit or logit regressions. But ask them about the policy implications of their findings, how their 'solutions' might be constrained by politics or resources, or even who in the world should be interested in their research – and they often come up blank. Not their fault, they are clearly bright and competent. They are simply products of their academic training.⁴¹

This quote reminds me of a fascinating, and also troubling, remark uttered by a quantitative, well-known and respected scholar at Penn State several years ago.

I suggested to him that PhD students in the Sociology Department's Crime, Law and Justice Program were graduating with little sense of the world. I was referring to the almost absolute lack of course work that examined so-called "real world" issues in the field of criminal justice, whether that be the application of theory to policy, of policy to reality, the behavior of organizations (predominantly bureaucracies, of course, if examining criminal justice systems), and any number of related extra-theoretical, extra-statistical matters. Truth be told, there was not even an interest or appreciation for discussing these matters informally. His response has stuck with me, and I tell it frequently. "If graduate students know statistics, the topic they're studying is irrelevant. They can learn the topic quickly. It is the methodology that is important." I've tried to follow this for about six years now: If you know statistics, you can learn anything. This colleague is influential, to say the least, and he insists it is not necessary for prospective PhDs – in sociology no less – to understand the way the world works and why. Of course, even if one assumes graduate students are being trained in qualitative methodology, few graduate programs in the U.S. have courses examining organized crime.⁴² A concern related to the lack of field study is the lack of inter-disciplinary research in criminology.

40 Malcolm W. Klein, "Surrounded by Crime: Lessons from One Academic Career," in Geis and Dodge, p. 56. Klein is one of the most respected scholars in the study of street gangs, among other topics. He has authored or edited 14 books on a variety of topics, and has also received the American Society of Criminology's Edwin H. Sutherland Award for outstanding research in addition to numerous other achievements.

41 Joan Petersilia, "Policy Relevance and the Future of Criminology," in Barry W. Hancock and Paul M. Sharp (eds.), *Public Policy, Crime, and Criminal Justice* second edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 390. On the relevance of criminological research and publications, also see Todd R. Clear and Natasha A. Frost, "Criminology & Public Policy: A New Journal of the American Society of Criminology," *Criminology & Public Policy* vol. 1, no. 1 (November 2001), pp. 1-4.

42 Even among the few graduate programs offering a substantive analysis of organized crime, it is questionable as to what data is being employed and what information is being discussed. My

The Trend Away from Interdisciplinary Research

Though criminology was founded as a multi-disciplinary sub-field of sociology, the past generation has seen a diminution of work embracing varied methodological and theoretical perspectives. Criminology/criminal justice departments have increasingly hired individuals possessing criminology or criminal justice PhDs.⁴³ Research has consequently suffered from the narrow perspectives in the modern criminological academy. Joachim Savelsberg and Robert Sampson (2002) state this situation has undermined “interdisciplinary research and paradigmatic insights from parent disciplines.”⁴⁴ Returning to the collection of essays by prolific criminology scholars, Geis states:

“They are uneasy that newcomers today tend to be too heavily trained only in criminology and criminal justice, because they believe, perhaps unreasonable and anachronistically, that understanding of adjacent fields can enrich understanding of criminology. In this regard, several of the writers endorse immersion in another not-notably-close subject area in addition to criminology and criminal justice in order to provide a more cosmopolitan insight into their major criminological concerns.”⁴⁵

This lack of perspective affects the study of organized crime directly through the makeup of PhD committees; grant committees; and indirectly in other ways, though none is perhaps more significant as the manner in which it adversely affects academic journal publications – a key benchmark of a scholar’s vitality.

Like other qualitative research, the study of organized crime tends to produce lengthy manuscripts unsuitable for today’s academic journals. That is, in order to test the merits of a theory or proposition as it relates or applies to organized crime, one must accomplish several tasks in rather short order. Some traditional contents of an article (i.e. abstract, introduction, literature review, theoretical proposition being tested, data gathering and other methodological issues) often consume up to one-half of a paper’s length. This may be aggravated by the fact that most reviewers for the leading journals: a) operate with a quantitative orientation; and b) even those with a qualitative background are not likely to have any expertise in the niche area of organized crime (or in many others, of course). Thus, now operating with a very narrow window to explain the import of the study’s findings, the author must simultaneously: satisfy the reviewer’s all-but-certain questions (because s/he is wholly unfamiliar with the methodology and/or literature); satisfy the much smaller

suspicion is that a large percentage of the relatively few organized crime-related courses are predicated on outdated, a-historical, methodologically-dubious “studies”, first and foremost among them Donald Cressey’s *Theft of the Nation: The Structures and Operation of Organized Crime* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

43 Joachim J. Savelsberg and Robert J. Sampson, “Mutual Engagement: Criminology and Sociology,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* vol. 37, no. 2 (March 2002), p. 101. Also see D. Wayne Osgood, “Interdisciplinary Integration: Building Criminology by Stealing from Our Friends,” *The Criminologist*, vol. 23, no. 4 (July/August 1998), p. 1.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

45 Geis, “Introduction,” p. xii.

audience of scholars who are, in fact, operating at a higher level of sophistication – just in case the editor somehow identifies one or more to review the manuscript; examine and explain exceedingly complex relationships of “upperworld” and “underworld” figures, their social networks and so on. All of this, generally speaking, must be accomplished in ten to twelve pages.

From my personal experience and from discussing this with organized crime-researching colleagues, this problem is widespread. If one adheres to the traditional journal manuscript design, the paper is too lengthy almost by default. Conversely, if one drafts an article terse enough to meet space constraints, the reviewers inevitably demand responses to so many questions that the resulting manuscript goes well beyond the prescribed format. Significantly, the vast majority of queries stem from a poor understanding of organized crime, and also from a lack of fundamental knowledge of ethnographic work, of historical, economical and other methodological approaches. Unlike other areas of modern criminology (e.g. class-crime and race-crime relationships demonstrated by employing statistical analyses), reviewers may literally have no basic knowledge of the methodology, and almost assuredly have no basic knowledge when it comes to organized crime (beyond ubiquitous media stereotypes). Next there is the issue of government funding for research, which is another ingredient in the recipe for academic tenure and promotion.

The Political Nature of Organized Crime Research

Corruption of public officials is endemic in, if not the defining characteristic of, the social system of organized crime. Needless to say, politicians who themselves may be complicit in various schemes and frauds, or those who are knowledgeable of others, would obviously have reason to thwart research projects whose ultimate outcome would adversely affect their careers or worse. This is exacerbated by the current structure of government funding for criminological research. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research arm of the Department of Justice and is one of the most influential granting agencies in the field of criminology/criminal justice.⁴⁶ Jeffrey Ian Ross worked for a time as a social science analyst for the Office of Research and Evaluation of NIJ.⁴⁷ After his experience, he (2000) documented the political nature of the agency.

Unlike many governmental or quasi-governmental organizations that conduct or sponsor research ... NIJ is intimately tied to the administration. Its director is appointed by the

46 NIJ is technically part of the Office of Justice Programs, one of seven branches of the Department of Justice along with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Executive Office of Weed and Seed, the Office of Victims of Crime, and the Violence Against Women Grants Program Office. Needless to say, organized crime research does not particularly fit in any of these areas.

47 Jeffrey Ian Ross, “Grants-R-Us: Inside a Federal Grant-Making Agency,” *American Behavioral Scientist* vol. 10, no. 10 (August 2000), pp. 1704-1723. Ross worked from September 1995 to June 1998.

President, and as part of the executive branch, NIJ is accountable to a variety of constituencies. Because NIJ is administered by a political appointee (approved by Congress), the leadership must address the policies of the President.⁴⁸

Thus, it is not surprising to hear Ross state “Because most of the critical decisions about research direction and funding were made either at higher levels of the organization or outside of NIJ (i.e., by the assistant attorney general, attorney general, White House, or Congress), my cohorts and I had minimal impact on the research agenda of NIJ.”⁴⁹ Lastly, issues involving the danger-laden, labor-intensive, document-based field research will be examined.

The Perils of Field Research

Needless to say, conducting research on any contemporary criminal activity may bring certain safety concerns.⁵⁰ This situation is arguably aggravated when dealing with individuals and groups who make their living in a world of violence. My sense, however, is that this is not among the primary reasons for the lack of field research on organized crime. Some of the reasons have been mentioned above, including the time-consuming aspects and the issue of how infrequently one can publish academic journal articles from such a research agenda when compared to one based on secondary data sets. There are still other supposed impediments to the study of organized crime. In 1975, William Chambliss noted “One reason for our myopic research vision is the widespread belief that gathering data on things like organized crime ... is all but impossible.”⁵¹ In *The Business of Crime*, written the following year, Humbert Nelli similarly stated:

There is a mistaken belief that primary source material is limited in extent and difficult to locate, when in fact a storehouse of information is available from interviews and in manuscript or printed form from the files of federal, state, and city agencies and archives; local, state, and federal courts; police departments; prosecuting attorneys; grand juries; private police agencies; and labor unions.⁵²

Many academics continue to adhere to this belief. Others insist that even if one took the time to develop contacts with the appropriate persons, particularly in law enforcement and other official agencies, the data would not be useful and thus such research is inefficient. For instance, Robert Kelly (1986) has stated “the files of government law enforcement agencies were never intended as research sources; they are police intelligence files focusing on the types of information necessary to seek indictments and hopefully obtain convictions of individual criminals.” Thus, such

48 Ibid., p. 1709.

49 Ibid., p. 1721.

50 See, for example, several of the essays in Ferrell and Hamm.

51 William Chambliss, “On the Paucity of Original Research on Organized Crime: A Footnote to Galliher and Cain,” *American Sociologist* vol. 10 (February 1975), p. 36.

52 Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 304.

data “tell little about how crime activities organize themselves and nothing of the relationship between organized crime and other sectors of American society.”⁵³ It is not possible or reasonable to speak universally about this, but my experience has not confirmed this in the least. Rather, as others and I have discovered, there is a tremendous amount of information contained in intelligence files.⁵⁴ Much of the information is not useful in criminal prosecution but is extremely important to a researcher seeking to understand broader issues of bureaucracy, politics, mismanagement, inter- and intra-agency coordination (and frequently discord), and also matters of neighborhood demographics and social movements, relationships between and among organized criminals and others, personal histories – including non-criminal matters such as educational backgrounds, family histories, civic involvement, etc. – for relevant “actors” and so on. I would therefore like to quote Chambliss, yet another past president of the ASC and a respected, heavily-cited criminologist of the past generation:

It is possible to find out what is going on ‘out there’. We are not permanently stuck with government reports and college students’ responses. The data on organized crime ... are much more available than we usually think. All we really have to do is get out of our offices and onto the streets. The data are there; the problem is that too often sociologists are not (emphases in original).⁵⁵

To summarize the rambling, wordy discourse above, the study of organized crime can be characterized as: labor-intensive (and thus not conducive to meeting tenure guidelines), potentially dangerous, politically sensitive (and thus un-funded), and exclusively qualitative (and thus essentially un-publishable in academic journals). It is difficult to argue this is a prosperous research area for aspiring scholars. It is equally challenging to believe – for a moment – the “gatekeepers of the Dark Ages,”⁵⁶ the Hotel Criminologists, the ruling sociology elites, will accept change anytime soon. Such is the state, and the foreseeable future, of sociological research.

53 Robert J. Kelly, “Criminal Underworld: Looking Down on Society,” in Kelly (ed.), *Organized Crime: A Global Perspective* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986), p. 11, cited in Alan A. Block, *The Business of Crime* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), pp. 20-21.

54 Block, *The Business of Crime*, pp. 20-21, stated his experience revealed police intelligence files contained: “name; aliases; nativity; residence; physical description; social security number; telephone number; crime family; former residences; banking; marital status; family history; legitimate business or corporation associates; criminal record; military record; education; hangouts; tax information; and surveillance reports.” Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Invisible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 188-197, provides insights into the strengths and weaknesses of various data sources in the study of organized crime. Also see James A. Inciardi, *Careers in Crime* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing, 1975), Appendix B, “The Sociologist as Historian and Detective ... An Essay on Methods and the Search for Evidence,” pp. 140-155; and Annelise Graebner Anderson, *The Business of Organized Crime: A Cosa Nostra Family* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), pp. 147-154.

55 Chambliss, p. 39.

56 Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, “Foreword: Moving Backward,” in Ferrell and Hamm, p. xiv, discuss the “Dark Ages”, or the time period when field research became increasingly problematic and thus more scarce, as beginning in the 1970s. Their discussion, pp. xii-xvi, on ethics and bureaucracy as they pertain to ethnographic work is incisive.

By implication, the trend away from organized crime research dating back to the 1980s seems destined to accelerate, further prohibiting us from developing a sophisticated understanding of one of American society's more interesting and significant phenomena.

APPENDIX A

GENERAL ORDERS FOR MOSQUE #12¹

1. To take charge of this post and all Temple property in view.
2. To walk my post in a perfect manner keeping always on the alert.
3. To report all violations of orders I am instructed to enforce.
4. To report all calls from posts more distant from the Temple than my own.
5. To quit my post only when properly relieved.
6. To receive, obey and pass on to the sentinel who relieves me all orders from the Commanding officer, officer of the day and non-commissioned officers of the guard only.
7. To talk to no one except in the line of duty.
8. In case of disorder, to give the alarm.
9. To allow no one to commit a nuisance on or near my post.
10. In any case not covered by inspection, call the guards.
11. To salute all officers and standards not cased.
12. To be especially watchful at nights during the time of meetings.

¹ Confiscated document from Ronald Smith aka Lt. Ronald 35X on May 14, 1975; contained in OCU Black Mafia files. Charges listed for that arrest were forgery, receiving stolen property and heroin possession. Each of the documents reproduced in the appendix is presented verbatim from the documents, including spelling and grammatical errors. The original documents are not suitable for publication, and I thus opted to type the information.

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GUARDING DOORS OF MOSQUE NO. 12¹

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Peace and Blessings upon His Servant and His Messenger, Muhammad, forever
AMEN

AS-SALAAM ALAIKUM

For the benefit of those Brothers, that don't see me, I am Lt. Ronald 35x.

Our class today will be instructions on securing the Inside Door Post, and the Outside Post.

Take notes and pay close attention, these are two very serious positions and not to be taken lightly.

The proper method for the Front Door Post is to keep eyes looking out the front door at all times..

2..If the Policemen comes up to the door, or a white person, you are to call the Guards, you are not to open the door yourself.

3..Be security minded, alert, and having your mind on the importance of that post.

4..If given other instructions, they should come from a Temple official, or someone in authority.

5..Be on time

6..If not sure of instructions, ask questions.

Proper method for Outside Post. is always looking, being alert, taking down the license numbers of all or any cars that keep circling the block.

2..Always on the lookout for the Minister, remember not always looking for his car, you are looking out for him. assist him immediately..

3..The brother on the outside post can help the sisters with their packages but is not to go inside, you are securing the outside.

4.. Be on the lookout for someone breaking into the believers cars, around the Temple's Property.

5..Open all car doors that are coming to the temple, lost-found, or what ever.

6..You Brothers don't be shaking believers hands, that throws you off guard and it might result in them throwing you, and having you at a disadvantage.

7..If asked questions, be brief, you can't engage in conversations, and be alert, and mindful of the post.

¹ Confiscated document from Ronald Smith aka Lt. Ronald 35X on May 14, 1975; contained in OCU Black Mafia files.

If for any reason you can't make the assigned post, and on-time, notify as soon as possible. The Posts must always be attended.

APPENDIX C

SURVEILLANCE PHOTO OF MOSQUE NO. 12, 3700
GERMANTOWN AVENUE



APPENDIX D

SURVEILLANCE PHOTO OF MOSQUE NO. 12, 41ST
STREET AND HAVERFORD AVENUE



APPENDIX E

WRITTEN RULES FOR BLACK B. INCORPORATED MEMBERS, DECEMBER 1973¹

1. Not more than one member from each natural family shall be permitted to serve on the (7) man Executive Board.
2. All members must agree to follow all laws, rules and regulations as agreed upon by the family and set forth by the Executive Board at any future time.
3. No one shall be recognized as a full fledged member until he has taken the oath and the pledge.
4. Every member is obligated to undergo a security examination upon entering the family and when Executive orders so demand for security proficiency.
5. All assignments for duties must have their own origin at the Executive Board level and all members are obligated to obey orders and recognize authority.
6. Once a member has been given an assignment, he must be made aware of who is directly over him and to whom he must be directly accountable.
7. All new members must remain on probation for a period of no less than (90) days from date of oath and pledge, and for a period not exceed (1) year.
8. When called before a selected panel, etc. to give testimony concerning his conduct or actions, or the actions of another member, he shall answer all questions forthright, honestly, and not be evasive, or arrogant.
9. For Family meetings regular or called, there will be a fine of \$5.00 for tardiness and a fine of \$15.00 for absences. However, absence from three (3) without legitimate excuse, could result in disciplinary action as set forth by the Executive Board.
10. All executive positions are for an indeterminate time. All executive officers shall remain in authority as long as they are physically and mentally capable of performing.
11. Retirement of Family members and the conditions to be discussed at a later time.
12. No alcoholic drinks, stimulants, or any drugs shall be administered or taken during any family meeting.
13. Each member must be searched upon entering the designated meeting place by the authorized and only those designated by the executive shall bear any

¹ Appendix E is titled, "Black B. Incorporated," rather than the common phrase "Black Mafia" because this is the name used in a notebook found on a member's person and confiscated by police. Appendix E is presented verbatim with the exception of rule 19, which contained two sentences that were barely legible, and thus omitted.

offensive weapons. Members are cautioned to exercise extreme caution when attending Family meetings.

14. The illicit Carnal Relationship clause (OATH) shall not apply to known or professional prostitutes, call girls, etc.
15. No penalties for violations shall be carried out against a family member, unless all (7) executive members are present and give a direct order to an enforcer. Not even Chief-Enforcers can issue orders to anyone to harm another Family member.
16. In cases of misconduct or discipline the accused shall have a right to present his defense before the Executive Board or, if he desires, the entire Family. The penalty can only be decided by the Executive.
17. All executive board members must be in attendance at their meetings. No less than (5) can make a binding decision.
18. The Enforcers shall remain anonymous to everyone, except their own squad, direct superior officer, and the Executive Board.
19. The Family does not condone INTOXICATION OR THE USE OF ANY DRUGS, etc. THAT may tend to render a FAMILY member helpless or defenseless.

APPENDIX F

OATH OF MEMBERSHIP¹

I (*repeat your name*), in the presence of the brethren of the honorable assembly and council, do hereby promise & swear by all that I consider to be good, decent, respectable, pure, and/or sacred, yea, even by the blood that sustains my children, that I will never divulge any pertinent information, or secrets that pertain to the family, and I shall ever be on guard against those would and report any such violations to members of higher authority to see that the violation are properly acted upon. I promise that i shall not be xxxxx by bribery or threat or refuse in any manner to report any & all violations. I promise xxxx that I will always aid & assist another family member if I believe him or his xxxx is in jeopardy, however I shall have no responsibility toward such a member xx xx xx xx xx a member refuses to heed wise counsel from me or another family member. I promise xxx further that I will not strike another family member in anger, in public, nor xxxxx xxx injury or hurt to come upon him without knowing for myself that such member has xxxx xxxx found guilty of violations that would justify such action. I promise & swear that I will not berate, slander, nor belittle another family member publicly in anger and I will always xxxx the family about any impending danger that exist for it. I pledge my life and soul as payment should I ever have an elicit carnal relationship with a family member's wife, xxxxx, betrothed, or mother knowingly, (except in cases xxx one is a known prostitute.) I promise and swear that I will not supplant or undermine another family member in any of his laudable undertakings, nor will I betray knowingly in any member xxxxx. I swear by my own life that I will not communicate any information to any law-enforcement official or anyone else in any way, that which could endanger the safety or freedom of another family member, nor will I write, print, draw, scribble or otherwise attempt to xxx xxx xxxxx or xxxx anything to any person or persons that would harm or jeopardize another member's freedom. I promise to always answer all signs and summons xxx me by the family, and xxx xxx xxx xxx my xxx to sustain the family and see to it xxxx. I promise and swear that i will obey all orders and xxxxx xxx me by a member in xxxx xxxxx nor any other position of authority higher than my own. I promise and swear that i will obey xxx xxx, rules, and regulations of the family, and never let xxxxx, xxxx, disgrace, or xxxx be brought upon the family because of me. I realize that this xxxxx xxxxxx xxxxx is unjust and unfair to my peers and that it may be that as I carry out the functions of family, xxxx, and standing for the principles that xx believe are xxxx right, that my xxxx xxxx mortally wounded and give my life in service. If

¹ Confiscated document; contained in the OCU's "History of Black B. Inc." report dated March, 1974, presented verbatim, including the use of capitals and grammatical errors. This document is in poor condition. The "x's" represent words which are not legible.

xxxx xxxx xx xxxx xxxx that I will not be buried as a criminal, or Vxxxx xxxx x
xxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxx a freedom fighter and fallen hero. I am insured by my
xxxxxx xxx xxxx xxxx member that my loved ones shall have the protection of the
family. I am assured that loved ones will be recipient of the family love as much as
they need and xxxx. xxx xxxx I do not serve the family well and honorably, and to
the best of my ability, that no xxxx xxxx shall be considered too severe or unjust for
such an xxxx xxxx as me. I xxx or is I violate any part of this sacred oath
knowingly, that my xxxx xxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxx will have the love and xxxx of the
family that no xxxx will ever be xxxx xx xxxx. (I repeat your name), do solemnly
promise and swear these things xxxx xx xxx xxxx and good judgment.

APPENDIX G

BLACK MAFIA GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING GOVERNMENT FUNDING¹

BLACK INC. CIVIC ASSOCIATION
1433 SOUTH STREET
Founding and Program Committee

Guideline for writing proposal to funding foundation:

1. Objective of the proposal.
2. Methods to be used to accomplish objective.
3. Geographical area in which the program will be conducted.
4. Period of time the project will take.
5. If an on-going program, how its continuation will be financed.
6. The funds required initially and during the period covered by the proposal with some detail on the budget breakdown.
7. The background of your organization, its general purpose, and how the proposal relates to your regular program.
8. The qualifications of your organization and the individuals involved to carry out your proposal.
9. Your organization's eligibility for tax-exempt status.
10. Whether similar projects have been undertaken previously by you or others, and the results obtained.
11. Whether support has been, or is being, requested of other foundations.
12. What moral and financial support you have or believe you can obtain for this project within your geographic community.

Now, finally, how do you get grants from foundations?

It is as simple and as complex as this:

1. Determine from the annual reports of the larger foundations what they have contributed to in the past. Come to know and use the directory of foundations.
2. Prepare a presentation which will be meaningful to your prospective donor as well as to you.
3. Try to finance your programs through resources in your own community, by making your plans intelligible and meaningful to these community resources as well as economically significant to them.

¹ Confiscated document; contained in OCU's "History of Black B. Inc.," March 7, 1974.

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4. Plan comprehensively enough that the proposal fits the geographical – and activity-interest scope of your prospective contributors.
 5. Ascertain that your plans are generally acceptable to the forces in your community, or, if they are not, that your explanation of the reasons therefore will be acceptable to your prospective contributors.
 6. Try to involve the gross business community in your scheme for planning, designing, presenting and carrying out your ideas. It is easier to get financial support from those who have an interest and stake in the program.
 7. Do not think of foundation, trusts and company-sponsored funds as the sole, exclusive or primary source for money for community activities. Remember, only 4% of the funds raised come from these sources. Think of them as possible sources for “seed money” contingent upon broad community financial support, and be sure that you can be assured of continued complete financial support from the community after the foundation grant runs out, if you are lucky enough to get one”.

APPENDIX H

JUNIOR BLACK MAFIA RING



APPENDIX I

BLACK MAFIA KILLINGS¹

<i>Victim</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Circumstances in brief (if known)</i>
Richard James	1969	Poisoned in prison to ensure silence in a Black Mafia case.
Nathaniel Williams	1969	Murdered on the street after setting up a crap game for the Black Mafia and then robbing it.
Alton Barker	1971	Janitor shot during the Black Mafia's robbery of the Dubrow Furniture store.
Wardell Green	1971	Shot by Black Mafia contract killer Russell Barnes for unknown reasons.
Velma Green	1971	Shot to death answering her door seven days before she was to testify against Barnes for her brother Wardell's murder.
Richard Harris	1972	Shot in a bar at 17th and Dauphin Sts. in North Philadelphia for "stiffing" Richard Smith on a narcotics deal.
Richard Smith	1972	Shot in a parking lot at 3700 Brown St. in Philadelphia for stiffing Tyrone Palmer from the Harris narcotics deal.
Tyrone Palmer	1972	Shot to death in Atlantic City's (NJ) Club Harlem for drug-related reasons (all involving the Harris and Smith murders).
Gilbert Satterwhite	1972	Shot with Palmer while serving as his bodyguard.
James Boatright	1972	Shot to death in South Philadelphia for unknown reasons.
Hanafi Muslims (7)	1973	Shot or drowned in a bathtub by seven Black Mafia affiliates stemming from an ideological dispute with Black Muslims.
Major Coxson	1973	Shot in his Cherry Hill (NJ) home by Ronald Harvey and other Black Mafia affiliates for renegeing on a drug deal.
Lita Luby	1973	Shot along with her common-law father, Coxson.
Hilton Stroud	1973	Shot in Camden (NJ) for intercepting a heroin shipment destined for Bo Baynes.
Walter Tillman	1973	Shot in Camden (NJ) for intercepting a heroin shipment destined for Bo Baynes.
Thomas Farrington	1973	Shot by Charles Russell (contracted by George "Bo" Abney) over a drug territory dispute.

¹ Appendix I's comprehensive list of Black Mafia murders is based on numerous sources referenced throughout the study.

Robert James	1973	Shot near his home (unknown reason).
Joseph Borisch	1973	Shot in his home in Bala Cynwyd, PA (unknown reason).
John Clark	1973	Shot in Camden (NJ) for his involvement in a Black Mafia community "front" group.
George Abney	1974	Decapitated after the Black Mafia put a contract on him for skimming narcotics proceeds from Farrington's former network.
Jeremiah Middleton	1974	Shot at 19th & Carpenter Sts. by Clarence Starks.
Charles Price	1974	Brutalized and hanged in prison for turning state's evidence against the Black Mafia in the 'Hanafi case.
Herschell Williams	1975	Shot by Jo-Jo Rhone and Roy Hoskins to get him "back in line with the dope business".
James Hadley	1976	Shot at 20th and Pierce Sts. by Jo-Jo Rhone over a dispute.
Louis Gruby	1976	Executed in his home for testifying against the Black Mafia in the 'Dubrow case.
Yetta Gruby	1976	Executed with Louis in their home.
Barry Kelly	1980	Killed in retaliation for his father's incriminating testimony in a robbery/kidnapping case.
Frederick Armour	1980	Shot by Larris Frazier over territorial dispute in the Richard Allen Projects.

APPENDIX J

“AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZED CRIME: AN ‘EMERGING’ PHENOMENON?”

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