

In the Driver's Seat: Chicago's Bus Drivers and Labor Insurgency in the Era of Black Power

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In 1968 African American bus drivers led two strikes that crippled public transportation and threatened Chicago's racial and economic order. During the first week of July and then again for three weeks beginning in late August, black bus drivers in Local 241 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) failed to report to work. Instead, they picketed bus depots and met in West and South Side churches to discuss strategies with local residents and community leaders. Through these two wildcat strikes—held without union leaders' authorization—these dissident unionists sought to remake their union along more democratic lines, to gain more power in their relationship with their employer, and, by the end of the second walkout, to transform the city's racial and economic structures in their favor. Although their demands and goals were not racially specific, the striking members of the ATU who formed the Concerned Transit Workers (CTW) were black men allied with a sympathetic minority of white bus drivers. On account of CTW's black leadership, the residents of Chicago's neighborhoods, political and civil rights leaders, and reporters saw the CTW as an embodiment of Black Power ideology.

Analysis of the CTW's 1968 strikes helps to explain the convergence and divergence of Black Power and organized labor in the late 1960s. Dismissed by many journalists and scholars as antiwhite, destructive, and apocalyptic, Black Power has

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been reconsidered by a new generation of historians.¹ Building upon the pioneering work of Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Charles Hamilton, who defined Black Power as “group solidarity [to] operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society,” these scholars have examined Black Power as an organizing principle for community control of local institutions as well as a vehicle to combat inner-city poverty.² In the recent edited collection titled *Neighborhood Rebels*, scholar Peniel Joseph explained how the field of Black Power studies has moved beyond treating its 1960s emergence as the “evil twin” of the civil rights movement. Instead, historians have begun to analyze the simultaneous and sometimes contradictory applications of Black Power in local contexts. Local studies, Joseph explains, reveal specific applications of the rich intellectual resources of Black Power, giving texture to the national narrative of urban, African American, and social movement history in America.³ Yet, these recent studies of Black Power have rarely focused attention on the workplace.⁴ In so doing, they overlook how Black Power inspired a generation of black activists on the job who sought to fuse union and community struggles.⁵ Close consideration of how Black Power animated the struggles of the black bus drivers in Chicago—how the drivers, their allies, and their opponents understood, talked about, and sought to use it—depicts Black Power in practice, rather than as a bundle of slogans, media stereotypes, or romantic illusions.⁶

The bus drivers’ campaign reveals that Black Power sustained multiple competing ideologies. While some understood Black Power as a means to obtain a place within current structures of authority, others saw the politics of Black Power as an opportunity to gain power to transform municipal institutions. African Americans

1. These studies include Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka and Black Power Politics in Newark* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

2. Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books edition, 1967, [1992 edition]), 44 and elsewhere.

3. See Joseph’s introduction to *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level*, ed. Peniel Joseph (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), quote from p. 1.

4. The few exceptions focus on the auto and steel industries. See Heather Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Race, and Labor in Modern America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1975); and Ruth Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

5. See Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 505; and Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

6. Joseph, “Introduction,” in Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels*, 2, 12; Countryman, *Up South*, 330; and Sugrue, *Sweet Land*, 338, 408, 420–27.

in the CTW, who made up a vital part of a blue-collar middle class in Chicago, sought to gain power within their unions and at their workplaces through appeals to racial unity. Yet they also emphasized connections between power in the workplace and power within and across communities, looking beyond the microlevel political economy. In so doing, they attempted to gain a citywide share of the power structure and believed such an approach could be replicated across urban America. Black bus drivers' fight for dignity illuminates a strain of Black Power ideology that was informed by class struggle and labor organization—an approach that both reflected and diverged from the civil rights unionism of the 1930–40s Popular Front generation. Much like black workers in the New Deal era, they focused on group-centered practices to transform inequalitarian institutions into more democratic ones. But informed by Black Power, these black transit workers emphasized racial solidarity over interracial approaches for inclusion. In so doing, they differentiated between Black Power and the placement of a token number of blacks in power.

II

The Chicago bus drivers' first wildcat strike was sparked by the premature adjournment of a Local 241 union meeting on June 30, 1968, when a black driver attempted to speak. This quick adjournment was not the first of its kind. At a couple of previous meetings, as soon as black drivers took the floor to express their grievances, a white member would motion to end the meeting and the president, James Hill, would tap the gavel and walk off the stage. Infuriated by this callous disregard within their own union, the black drivers formed a group called the Concerned Transit Workers that February.⁷ Most African American members of Local 241 did not bother to attend union meetings until the creation of the CTW gave them a new sense of their ability to change their working conditions. For years, both black and white drivers complained of bald tires, no heat, dirty seats, bad scheduling, and arbitrary disciplinary procedures, problems that existed across the city but were more frequent on the black-majority South and West Sides.⁸ These complaints fueled the black bus drivers' frustrations, but it was the treatment by their union that escalated their grievances into a strike ultimatum.

By the mid-1960s, black drivers held a slim majority of the approximately six thousand jobs on Chicago's buses, yet they held no leadership positions in the union. The black drivers should have been able to elect many of their own members into Local 241 offices, who would then handle grievances with the Chicago Transit

7. Bob Hunter, "Bus Strike Resumes: No Settlement Yet," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 3, 1968; Standish Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy: Black Labor Strife within the Chicago Transit Authority" (bachelor's thesis, University of Chicago, 1971), 8; and Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1981* (New York: International Publishers, 1981), 402.

8. CTW, press release, n.d. [1968], files 1118 and 1118A, CTW, 1968, box 226, series I, Chicago Red Squad Files, Chicago History Museum, hereafter CRS; Bob Hunter, "Bus Drivers Seek Cody's Help," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 9, 1968; and Curtis Hagens, interview by the author, Chicago, October 22, 2008.

Authority (CTA) through collective bargaining. Instead, the white drivers took careful steps to ensure that they controlled the local's entire leadership. In particular, they manipulated the retirees, who, through an ATU constitutional provision, voted in union elections. During the annual election of the union's leadership, its president chartered CTA buses to pick up retired members and bring them to the union hall on West Washington Street, and these pensioners voted in large numbers for Local 241 leaders.⁹ While on its surface this union policy seemed generational rather than racial, the retired employees represented an all-white voting bloc. The CTW drivers had sought the floor during union meetings in the spring of 1968 to demand that retired drivers be restricted to voting only on matters concerning their pensions. When President Hill adjourned rather than discuss the motion, African American bus driver Eugene Barnes threatened that if Hill did not reopen the meeting, the CTW-affiliated drivers would walk out on strike the next day. Hill considered this demand an idle threat and left the union hall.¹⁰

Despite the previous night's ultimatum, the next day's action shocked many in the ATU and CTA. Ozie Davis, a driver who worked out of the Sixty-Ninth Street garage on the South Side, heard about the strike on the radio and "just couldn't believe it." But when he showed up for his shift, members of the CTW "asked drivers not to report to work," and he went home.¹¹ In so doing, Davis and thousands of CTA drivers participated in this wildcat strike. Choosing to support the strike, however, was a very dangerous proposition: because they lacked their union's support, these drivers risked possible dismissal from the CTA. Yet this bold decision to strike, far from a spontaneous act, was produced by their union's long history of troubled race relations.

Local 241 of the ATU, formed in 1902, had long been a lily-white union. As a member of the American Federation of Labor, the ATU operated like other craft unions: it preserved seniority and fought for gradual wage gains while discouraging strikes or involvement in community issues.¹² During the 1930s and 1940s a coalition of African American civil rights and labor organizers, following the lead of the Chicago Council of the National Negro Congress (NNC), won its fight for skilled motorman and conductor positions on the streetcars, buses, and rail lines. While this coalition did not emphasize black nationalism, the original protest came from Garveyites who used their bodies to obstruct an all-white work crew that was extending streetcar tracks through their South Side neighborhood, resulting in the first blacks hired as laborers on the tracks. Building upon this gain to demand skilled positions on the trains, the NNC and other activist groups broke through during the Second World

9. Bob Hunter, "Black Drivers Sue CTA Union," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 10, 1968.

10. Chicago Police Department, Information Report, 16th District, August 31, 1968, CRS; and Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy," 7–8.

11. Ozie Davis, interview by the author, Chicago, November 20, 2008.

12. Amalgamated Transit Union, *A History of the Amalgamated Transit Union* (Washington, DC: ATU, 1992); and Amalgamated Transit Union, *The Amalgamated Transit Union (AFL-CIO/CLC): A Brief History* (Washington, DC: ATU, 1985).

War when a labor shortage occurred alongside the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). The CTA and ATU reluctantly hired and accepted union membership of the first skilled black workers in October 1943.¹³

After the war, a second wave of black employment built upon these wartime gains. The CTA began converting streetcar lines to bus routes in the 1950s and many old-timers retired rather than get retrained for the new vehicles. The general prosperity and growth of Chicago in the 1950s spurred the need for expanded bus routes. This growth created a number of openings for bus drivers—especially for runs through the increasingly black South and West Sides of the city. Most of these new black drivers had graduated high school and attended some college courses. The majority had been born in the Deep South, had military experience, and then migrated to Chicago as part of the second Great Migration. While they did not initially see their new CTA jobs as a career, their accrued seniority, steady wages, and flexible schedules convinced them to stay. Even after they began to see their jobs as more than temporary, these drivers remained uninterested in the union because its all-white leadership only grudgingly represented black members.¹⁴ It was not until job-related grievances began to pile up and civil rights struggles became more prominent in 1960s Chicago that these black drivers began to see their potential role within their West and South Side communities as neighborhood leaders. They saw organizing for rights on the job as key to this transformation. While some riders viewed bus driving as unenviable working-class positions, other riders, and especially ones in African American neighborhoods, saw these jobs—with relatively good pay and public authority—as representing a proudly blue-collar yet middle-class status.

Before they developed race consciousness on the job, most black drivers instead adopted liberal, individualist models of advancement. They made friends at work, tried to avoid prejudiced supervisors, and worked twice as hard as many of their white counterparts. The case of Wilford Spears symbolized this approach. Although a member of Local 308, the elevated train counterpart to Local 241 of the ATU, Spears typified the new black workforce on the CTA. Born in Louisiana, Spears served in the army during the Korean War and moved to Chicago shortly after his discharge. In 1953, Spears took a job with the CTA as an “extra guard,” a conductor who worked only during rush hour. When the company phased out this position, he took a job as a bus driver and then eventually worked his way back to the elevated trains by cross-training as a motorman, conductor, switchman, and tower worker. On the job, Spears endured a variety of racist provocations, including white

13. Erik S. Gellman, “‘Carthage Must Be Destroyed’: Race, City Politics, and the Campaign to Integrate Chicago Transportation Employment, 1929–1943,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2, no. 2 (2005): 81–114.

14. Wilford Spears, interview by the author, Chicago, October 9, 2008; Paul Alexander, interview by the author, Chicago, September 17, 2008; Hagens interview; Standish Willis, interview by the author, Chicago, January 29, 2009; Sam Shipp, interview by the author, Chicago, October 22, 2008; and Davis interview. Conversations with a much larger group of retired drivers at their monthly meeting on October 1, 2008, in River Oaks, Illinois, also helped shape this profile.

customers who threw their fares on the floor and assailants who put trashcans on the tracks when they saw a black motorman operating the oncoming train. Even so, Spears appreciated the steady pay and flexible hours of his job.¹⁵

Yet, in March 1964, Spears's attitude changed with a bang. Working as a switchman in the yard at Sixty-First Street, Spears was on duty when two trains collided. The accident was more the fault of the driver of one of the trains, but the CTA fired Spears anyway. The company rehired him a few weeks later, but the union and CTA agreed he would be demoted to conductor. In his ten years with the CTA Spears had seen "white employees receive token punishment for worse accidents" and concluded that "the demotion was the direct result of my race."¹⁶ He therefore decided to appeal his reprimand by the CTA and filed a claim with the Illinois FEPC, the state agency charged with resolving race-based workplace grievances.

The FEPC dismissed other complaints from black drivers for "lack of jurisdiction," but its staff found "substantial evidence" to support Spears's claim and issued a complaint. In July 1966 Spears got his day in court and won. In ruling that the state's Fair Employment Act had jurisdiction over the city's transit authority, the FEPC hearing examiner ordered the CTA to reinstate Spears at his previous job classification and pay his back wages.¹⁷ The CTA appealed and several months later another judge overturned the case. Now, if Spears wanted to fight back (nearly three years after the original incident), he had to come up with \$500 to post an appeal bond. Spears did not have that much money to spare, so he dropped the case.¹⁸ Dismayed by the CTA's appeal and at the union, which did nothing to support his complaint, Spears got more involved in Local 308. He decided to run for a spot on the union's board, and, because of the notoriety he garnered among other CTA workers during his case, Spears mobilized enough black voters from his section to win an assistant executive board member position, becoming the first African American to hold a leadership position in either Local 308 or Local 241.¹⁹

To the larger pool of black drivers, though, Spears's case showed their lack of power. After all, Spears had dropped his case after several unsuccessful years pursuing redress from the FEPC. Even if he had won, the case would have only addressed one incident—not the culture of their workplace at large. Black drivers believed that

15. Spears interview.

16. "FEPC Issues Bias Charge against CTA," *Chicago Tribune*, December 24, 1965.

17. Black attorney Garland Watt represented Spears and sought to apply the 1965 amendment to the Illinois FEPC act that gave the FEPC jurisdiction over government bodies. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) approved the strategy but pleaded poverty in assisting in the case. See Garland Watt to Robert Carter, January 22, 1966, and Carter to Watt, February 1, 1966, NAACP Legal Department Case Files, box V, 745, "Spears v. CTA," NAACP Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

18. James Yuenger, "Demands CTA Records on Eight for FEPC Case," *Chicago Tribune*, January 11, 1966; "CTA Hits FEPC Jurisdiction in Demotion Case," *Chicago Tribune*, March 23, 1966; "CTA Told to Reinstate Negro," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1966; "CTA Petition Asks Review in Race Case," *Chicago Tribune*, August 10, 1966; and Spears interview.

19. Spears interview.

the CTA and ATU cooperated in racially prejudiced policies that included undemocratic disciplinary and grievance procedures. To many black drivers, the Spears case showed how liberal ideas of individual advancement failed to change the white-dominated union and CTA management.

The Spears case also exposed the institutional hurdles facing blacks who sought more authority on the job—in particular, the deep connections between Mayor Richard J. Daley's Democratic machine and the CTA. The CTA's counsel, William J. Lynch, a former law partner of Mayor Daley, held the role of general counsel of the CTA until 1966 when President Lyndon Johnson, presumably upon Daley's recommendation, appointed Lynch to become a federal judge. Robert Lucas, head of Chicago's Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), challenged the nomination of Lynch at his Washington confirmation hearing. He decried the nomination on the basis of Lynch's anti-FEPC record as CTA counsel as well as his status as a crony of the Chicago mayor. The Senate confirmation subcommittee, which included James Eastland of Mississippi and John McClellan of Arkansas, both arch-segregationist Democrats, confirmed Lynch without hesitation. To CORE, the appointment and quick confirmation by Democratic politicians showed the harmony between outspoken southern racists and Chicago's mayor. In fact, to add insult to injury, the mayor appointed as Lynch's successor George Schaller, who grew up with Daley in Bridgeport and had worked with him as a clerk in the same law firm. When asked to comment on the appointment, George Dement, the CTA chairman, explained that while the CTA "did confer with Mayor Daley," "this appointment is not connected to politics."²⁰

Such political connections, stall tactics, and general incompetence of the state FEPC led black drivers to develop new strategies to advocate for themselves. These strategies first emerged from a group of young and increasingly militant West Side bus drivers at the Kedzie station—a "bus barn" that employed at least 90 percent black drivers. This racial segregation was produced by white drivers' preferences for North Side routes. They saw the West Side as dangerous because a large number of poor black migrants had settled there over the past two decades. With a rank-and-file black workforce and all-white supervisors and management at Kedzie, clashes became more frequent in the late 1960s as drivers became bolder in asserting their rights there.

One of these Kedzie drivers, Standish Willis, became immersed in the ideas of the Black Power movement. Born on Chicago's West Side, Willis finished high school and then enlisted in the Air Force. After returning from service, Willis began working for the CTA in 1964 and managed to earn enough seniority to pick a regular bus schedule so he could reenroll at Crane College. At Crane, Willis interacted with other black students who would eventually form a black history club. The history club read *Black Power* by Ture and Hamilton, the writings of Malcolm X, and articles about poverty, global politics, and civil rights. After learning about the dire

20. "Lynch, Named to U.S. Bench, Hit by C.O.R.E.," *Chicago Tribune*, February 25, 1966; and Thomas Buck, "Ex-aid of Daley Gets CTA Post," *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1966.

poverty of blacks in Mississippi, Willis began a canned goods food drive at the Kedzie station with another driver who sold grocery items there. Drivers bought and donated canned goods and Willis in turn gave them to a West Side community organization that sent truckloads of food to the Deep South.²¹

Through discussions at Crane and at his bus depot, Willis became an outspoken activist on the West Side. At Crane, he and his history club allies ran as a slate of candidates for student government with an overt political platform and won. As a result, the Black Student Alliance grew exponentially at Crane and attracted activists such as Fred Hampton, who recruited students into the newfound Chicago division of the Black Panthers. After the killing of three students by the National Guard in Orangeburg, South Carolina, Willis and other students organized a sympathy demonstration where hundreds of protesters carried a coffin to symbolize the martyrdom of their southern college allies. And when Crane decided to build a new campus, black students demanded that the college honor the slain black leader Malcolm X by naming it after him. “The student activism just spread over to the workplace,” Willis recalled, and, like him, a lot of other drivers were “well-educated” but “couldn’t get jobs because of racism so the buses were a good opportunity.”²²

West Side riders saw these jobs as prestigious positions in an otherwise impoverished job market. “The West Side,” Willis remembered, “was kind of the stepchild to the South Side” and “we used to have a joke that once you got a good-paying job on the West Side you moved to the South Side.” But Willis and other drivers also had a growing sense of pride in living on the West Side because “people on the South Side didn’t venture to the West Side because they thought it was a dangerous place.” On the job at the Kedzie bus depot, Willis wore a button featuring a picture of Malcolm X with the motto “By Any Means Necessary” and grew out his hair into an Afro. Although not every driver embraced Black Power to the extent Willis did, others such as Bob Clay became leaders in the workplace as well as the student movement.²³ Thus, within the Kedzie bus barn, a group of young, well-educated black bus drivers took pride in their jobs and felt a responsibility to the people on their bus routes.

This growing militancy at the Kedzie barn came to a head in December 1967 when drivers and CTA police clashed. For years, off-duty bus drivers had temporarily parked their cars in front of the Kedzie bus barn when they needed to get their belongings from inside the building. That holiday season, however, CTA police

21. Willis interview and Willis, “A Struggle for Democracy.”

22. Willis interview. See also “125 March at Crane for Slain Orangeburg Trio,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 21, 1968; and Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), chapter 3.

23. Willis interview. For more observations on South Side and West Side distinctions, see interviews in Timuel Black, *Bridges of Memory: Chicago’s First Wave of Black Migration* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), especially conversations with Rudy Nimocks, Barbara Bowman, and Mildred Bowden. John Rice suggests that the West Side proved fertile ground for organizing because recent migrants maintained southern traditions. See Rice, “The World of the Illinois Panthers,” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles outside the South: 1940–1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave, 2003), chapter 2.

decided to put an abrupt end to this practice. The all-white group of security officers, who, according to Willis, “distanced themselves” from the drivers and “acted authoritarian,” began to harass drivers who parked curbside. Then, on Christmas day, one of the most popular young black drivers, James Ridley, parked his car out front and got into a physical altercation with CTA police. Witnesses in the building saw four policemen attack Ridley, but the station’s superintendent responded by announcing the immediate suspension of two drivers and the firing of two more. The drivers at the Kedzie station huddled around George Clark, who implored them to walk out. Clark was a young driver from Alabama and a “very eloquent” speaker, according to Willis, who “kind of reminded you of Paul Robeson when he started talking.” After his impromptu speech, the drivers unanimously agreed and stopped working. With more than four hundred absent workers by the end of the day, the single-day protest resulted in a hasty meeting of the Kedzie drivers and CTA officials, who agreed to rehire the workers with amnesty. When other drivers and community members heard about the successful walkout they applauded, but more importantly, the experience provided the Kedzie station’s employees with “a sense of our power.”²⁴

The one-day action led to the February 1968 formation of the Concerned Transit Workers, a loose-knit group of dissatisfied bus drivers, influenced by Black Power, who sought to spread the momentum across the CTA’s workforce. The CTW drivers began to encourage members to attend ATU meetings, where, from the floor, these drivers put pressure on the all-white leadership of Local 241 to take up their grievances. As membership in this dissident group of transit workers increased, these drivers continued to push a militant black agenda, but they also realized veteran drivers, especially on the South Side, might not appreciate their sharp rhetoric. Besides, they reasoned, the younger drivers had much less to lose than old-timers, who had mortgages to pay and families to feed. The CTW started scheduling weekend meetings, a time when many younger drivers had to work but when older drivers could congregate. These meetings allowed older drivers to tap into and share long-standing grievances about “being excluded” and “discriminatory issues within the context of the bus” rather than “broad notions of empowerment and self-determination.” Willis remembered with pride that this idea to defer leadership was “very sophisticated on our part”; the two wildcat strikes that summer may never have materialized without this intergenerational solidarity.²⁵

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the retreat of younger drivers from leadership roles in the CTW as a move to preserve unity at the expense of political acumen. Many of the older drivers had held a variety of industrial jobs and had previous labor movement experience stretching back to the Second World War. Paul Alexander, who began working for the CTA in 1953, had previously worked at a soda bottling operation, a musical records distribution warehouse, and, after classes at a technical school, he applied his trade as a machinist at International Harvester.

24. Willis interview; “CTA Drivers Strike over ‘Brutality,’” *Chicago Defender*, December 31, 1967; and “CTA Drops Strike Charges,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1967.

25. Willis interview and Willis, “A Struggle for Democracy.”

This diverse yet irregular work record, which included getting turned away from trade jobs because of his race and being laid off from Harvester because of his lack of seniority, provided Alexander with knowledge about workplace discrimination and unions. Another driver, Curtis Hagens, learned about unionism from a military companion who had previously worked in the River Rouge plant in Detroit and participated in the struggles of the United Auto Workers there. Originally from Panama City, Florida, Hagens came to Chicago after the Second World War and applied to work for the airline industry, but the “only thing they had was a mop,” which he considered an insult. Instead, Hagens worked stints for Ford and General Motors in Chicago as well as International Harvester, where he became a union steward and “learned the way capitalism works” when negotiating with the company. Because of the flexibility of schedule and less labor-intensive tasks at the CTA, he took a job in 1958 as a conductor.²⁶ Sam Shipp, who would become the leader of the picketers at the Sixty-Ninth Street bus barn, had previously worked at the Young Spring and Wire factory in Chicago. In 1963, new owners of the car seat manufacturing plant raised quotas for the piecework to a backbreaking rate. This resulted in a slowdown, suspension of five employees, and then a wildcat strike where many of the company’s black workers, including Shipp, took leadership roles. A circuit court ruling that the walkout violated the machinist union’s contract with the company put a quick end to the wildcat. When Shipp and others showed up for work thereafter, they received pink slips and Chicago police escorted them off the property.²⁷

These drivers’ cumulative experiences convinced them that the ATU lacked the rank-and-file leadership and aggressiveness necessary to address their grievances. Alexander, for example, felt that the union was terrible because it lacked “intimacy.” He cited the unusual policy that “when you wanted to talk to your union [representative] you had to go up the window like you were talking to a clerk.” With a view similar to Alexander’s assessment, Hagens understood that the union “did not represent us” and was “more like a company union,” while Shipp called the union “just too soft.” Shipp knew from experience that when union members said Local 241 had “always been a certain way,” it did not mean that these conditions had to stay that way.²⁸ As the younger drivers soon discovered, veteran drivers may not have involved themselves in the student movement or Black Power activism, but they had a wealth of organizing experiences to draw upon.

III

On the first of July 1968, CTW leaders went to all twelve CTA bus barns to spread the word that the previous evening a driver named Eugene Barnes had made an ultimatum: “If buses roll out tomorrow, it will be over my dead body.” If union representatives “would do their job,” the CTW told the press, then the strikers would have

26. Hagens interview and Alexander interview.

27. Shipp interview and “Judge Rules Wire Walkout to Be Illegal,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1963.

28. Interviews with Alexander, Hagens, and Shipp.

“no reason to be upset.”²⁹ The solidarity among CTW members led to a near-total shut down of West and South Side bus barns during that first week of July, but the North Side presented a more formidable challenge. Chicago's housing segregation, which led to overlapping racial concentrations of workers at CTA bus barns, may have helped unify black drivers behind the CTW but it also isolated them from the white workforce.

The story of Frank Crowley, one of only a handful of white CTW leaders, shows both why white drivers had the potential to join the strike but also why most chose not to honor the CTW's picket line. Born on the near West Side of Chicago to parents from Northern Ireland, Crowley was raised Catholic and as a teenager attended a religious interracial gathering at the Association House where he asked a white woman in the office, “What do n——really want?” She was startled,” Crowley remembered, but she “recognized that this was my background, [that] despite my consciousness of Irish struggles I was fed the racism of daily life.” Becoming more politically aware of racism by the 1960s, Crowley came to embrace an antiwar and antiracist politics that led him to join the North Side Committee to End the War in Vietnam. In 1967 he quit his job as a bus driver to take a position on “King's staff” that dealt specifically with economic justice in the labor movement.³⁰

When the CTW formed, Crowley, who had gone back to work as a driver in early 1968, befriended many of the black drivers. A member of the CTW leadership asked him to join their executive board but Crowley asked the board to reconsider because previous activist affiliations in the antiwar and civil rights movement, he suggested, might compromise the larger group's identity by branding it as “left wing.” As important, Crowley remembered being “conscious of being white and therefore did not see myself as being indispensable.” Crowley devoted himself to the CTW but not as a formal leader of the group.³¹

Although the CTW did not attract many white members, members molded their strategy with whites in mind. The CTW members feared white interpretations of Black Power would lead to charges of reverse racism because many white journalists and workers defined Black Power as zero-sum game where blacks sought to take over and displace whites. Crowley and others sought to counteract this idea by promoting a cross-racial strategy that included adopting the image of a black and white handclasp as the CTW logo. Recruiting “white drivers, Irish guys like me” at the North Park car barn at Kedzie and Foster Avenue, Crowley fought an uphill battle. Only one day into the strike, the *Tribune* published an editorial that deemed “the black power group” who called the strike “obviously irresponsible” and “shameful.” After alluding to the “ominous feature of the strike” as the “Negro members of the union,” the editorial concluded, “the leadership of the union should be kept in the

29. Davis interview and Sheryl Fitzgerald, “Here's New Twist: Workers vs. Union,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 6, 1968.

30. Frank Crowley, interview with author, Chicago, September 25, 2008.

31. *Ibid.*



Figure 1. Striking bus drivers rally on July 2, 1968, at the Sunset Ballroom on South Halsted and Seventy-Ninth Street. Photograph by Bob Kotalik, courtesy of Sun-Times Media

hands of the men who understand a contract.”³² A writer for the CTW newsletter would later complain that “the news media has intentionally misled the public and many white drivers by constantly referring to [us] as a ‘racist organization.’”³³ As a result, Crowley remembered he only “got maybe four white drivers to go on strike for a period.”³⁴ The white-majority North Side car barns came to be an Achilles heel for the CTW in both the July strike and the longer August strike on the horizon.

Despite North Side recalcitrance, the CTW’s July shutdown of the West and South Side bus routes rankled Mayor Richard J. Daley. The mayor convened a meeting on July 6 with CTA officials, Chicago Federation of Labor representatives, and the leaders of the CTW. After seven hours of negotiations, all parties agreed to meet eleven of the twelve demands of the strikers. These included improvement of unsafe and dirty equipment, better scheduling, justification and investigation for disciplinary action, consideration of rank-and-file members for CTA executive positions, and no reprisals against the strikers by the CTA. The only point that the CTW did not win was back pay for those who went out on strike. The CTW ended the strike with

32. Crowley interview and “A Shameful Strike against the Public,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 3, 1968.

33. Concerned Transit Workers, *News Letter*, August 24, 1968, 1, personal papers of Frank Crowley.

34. Crowley interview.



Figure 2. Meanwhile, commuters wait in vain for buses in Chicago's downtown business Loop at South Michigan and Washington Streets on July 3, 1968. Photograph by Bob Kotalik, courtesy of Sun-Times Media

assurances from the mayor and CTA that they would implement the agreement once the drivers returned to work.³⁵

According to the CTA, the strike resulted in the loss of at least \$1 million in fares and left hundreds of thousands of passengers, mostly black riders on the West and South Sides, stranded for five days. Many of the riders, however, saw their sacrifice as worthwhile. After bus service resumed, a reporter from the *Defender* asked riders for their impressions of the strike. Passengers complained of sore feet but nonetheless approved of the walkout. "Granted, it was a little inconvenient," one rider said, "but who minds when the brothers have finally shown 'Mistah Charlie' that they intend to stick together from now on to get what they want." Riders greeted the black drivers with "Welcome back, baby," "Hey, my man, what's happening?," and "It's sure good to have you fellas back in the driver's seat."³⁶ The response from Chicago's black

35. Concerned Transit Workers, "Mayor, CTW Agree, Walkout Wins Results," *Concerned*, newsletter 1, no. 1 (July 28, 1968), 1, personal papers of Frank Crowley; Hunter, "Black Drivers Sue CTA Union"; and "CTA Bus, 'L' Service Gets Back in Stride," *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1968.

36. "Glad to See You Back, Driver," photo and caption and Bob Hunter, "Chicagoans Sigh; Riders Get Some Relief from Sore Feet," both in *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 8, 1968.

communities to the walkout, according to CTW chairman Waymon Benson, “gained us a new respect from the public and a new confidence in ourselves.”³⁷

Yet the response of the ATU, conspicuously absent from the meeting that ended the strike, portended further confrontation. The CTW newsletter confirmed that the agreement “should provide hope” for the bus drivers and the CTA’s riders, but it also warned that continued “unity” was needed to “ensure the full carrying out of the agreement.”³⁸ In fact, the delegation that agreed to the terms at City Hall actually did not have the blessing of the CTW leadership, who met at Jesse Jackson’s Operation Breadbasket offices on Forty-Seventh Street during the strike. When these men heard that the delegation they sent to find out the mayor’s terms made an agreement, they blew up with anger because they did not believe it would be carried out, and black leaders in Local 308 of the elevated trains were on the cusp of joining the strike.³⁹ Justifying the CTW’s fears, the ATU reacted with open defiance. James Hill, the union’s president, told the press, “I plan to raise hell with the company for their laxity” and the strikers “are in for a rude awakening” if they “think there are any commitments.” The union dispatched an international representative to Chicago who stated that “nothing . . . could have been more disruptive of future labor stability” than “the mayor’s decision, abetted by CTA management, to condone the unlawful conduct of a reckless band of self appointed dissidents.”⁴⁰ On the defensive, Daley pleaded ignorance, saying “all we tried to do was restore service to the city,” and later claimed that the agreements set forth in the meeting with the strikers represented only “suggestions.”⁴¹

Amid Daley’s backpedaling and the union’s counterattack, hundreds of CTW members turned out for the regular monthly meeting of ATU Local 241 in early August. The meeting was convened in Musician’s Hall to accommodate the huge turnout, and before long the tense atmosphere devolved into open defiance. When the union’s president ruled on a motion to limit the role of retired drivers as “out of order,” screaming erupted from the floor. Ignoring these black drivers, the union leaders then recognized a white bus driver. Much to the leadership’s surprise, this white driver, a temporary summer employee, declared open support for the CTW’s demands. Infuriated, President James Hill ruled several more motions as “out of order” and, citing hot and humid weather, hastily adjourned the meeting.⁴²

The CTW’s press release the following day was unequivocal: “We . . . have long since decided,” it read, “that the time is now to end this dictatorship.” On August

37. Waymon Benson, “Where Do We Go from Here?,” *Concerned*, newsletter 1, no. 1 (July 28, 1968), 1, 4, personal papers of Frank Crowley.

38. CTW, “Mayor, CTW Agree.”

39. Elwood Flowers, interview with author, Chicago, July 2, 2010.

40. “CTA, Dissident Head Pledge Return to Regular Schedule,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1968; and “Official of Transit Union Hits Daley on Action during Strike,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1968.

41. “Daley Reacts to Criticism on CTA Strike,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1968; and Willis, “A Struggle for Democracy,” 10.

42. James Strong, “Union Won’t Give In, Hill Tells Rebels,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1968; James Campbell, “Dissident CTA Drivers Ask Local to Quit Parent Union,” *Sun-Times*, Chicago, August 6, 1968.

6 the CTW announced that if its demands against the union and agreement with the mayor went unheeded, bus drivers would begin a new strike to coincide with the upcoming Democratic National Convention. With a wink and a smile, CTW leaders told the press that the August 24 deadline accidentally coincided with the start of the convention. The CTW believed that with a host of antiwar groups calling their members to converge on Chicago as well as other strike threats from cab drivers and electrical workers, Mayor Daley would capitulate to their demands to avoid embarrassment when hosting his fellow Democrats.⁴³

With a second strike looming, James Hill sought to forge a compromise that would nevertheless maintain white authority. Hill asked the parent body to put the local union into trusteeship.⁴⁴ In its first major act, the union international appointed seven black "assistants" who would serve on the executive board until the next election. The CTW saw this as an attempt to break their ranks, especially since many of those blacks appointed had little involvement in the previous strike. Nonetheless, pressure from the CTW led all of the appointed members to reject the offer because, the CTW explained, it did not want black faces to replace white ones but instead sought to overturn the authoritarian institutional culture of the ATU.⁴⁵

IV

On the eve of the Democratic convention the CTW explained "why we must walk out." A last-minute meeting with Mayor Daley and CTA officials, according to the CTW, showed "obvious disregard of us and their promises," and therefore "we are left with no other alternative." The CTW concluded that "unions were inaugurated to give the working man a voice in determining his own destiny but that era has long since been replaced by the tyrannical unions of today." Posing several questions about the ATU's handling of dues money at the local and international level, the CTW sought to expose the union's lack of democracy and transparency. Furthermore, the timing of the strike was strategic. If the CTW's late summer walkout succeeded in getting its members roles as potential bargaining agents, they could then negotiate a new contract with the CTA that expired in December.⁴⁶

This time all of the strikers' targets—the white press, mayor, CTA, and union—had time to prepare for a swift and unified response. The *Tribune* condemned the strike by asserting two beliefs: that a small band of radical black militants caused it and that these militants would enforce it with violence. "Professional

43. CTW, untitled flyer on August 4, 1968, meeting, copy in the author's possession, from the personal papers of Frank Crowley; "New Strike Threatens Demo Convention," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 6, 1968; and Willis interview.

44. ATU, *A History of the Amalgamated Transit Union*, 96–100; Fletcher Wilson, "A Trustee Takes over Local Defied by Bus Strikers," *Sun-Times*, Chicago, August 29, 1968.

45. Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy," 12–14; "CTW Wildcatters Crippling City," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 3, 1968; and James Strong, "Seven Negroes Named to CTA Union Jobs," *Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 1968.

46. CTW, *Newsletter*, August 24, 1968, 2–5.

Negro agitators” displayed a “lawless arrogance,” according to the newspaper, by disrupting the otherwise harmonious relationship between the transit union and CTA, where there had been “no general strike against the CTA or predecessor transit lines for 40 years.” Arguing that these outside agitators had no legitimate grievances, the editors claimed most drivers had “no sympathy with the walkout but [are] afraid they will be assaulted.”⁴⁷

The *Tribune*’s emphasis on violence contradicted police reports filed during the strike. The police superintendent deployed more than two hundred officers assigned in twelve-hour shifts to protect CTA property. Across the city, police arrested a dozen strikers during the first few days of the walkout, which mostly resulted from strikers caught puncturing the tires of buses or blocking CTA vehicles from leaving garages. Yet, most police reports concluded that the strikers remained peaceful in picketing the twelve bus barns. They watched as these protesters held picket signs that read “Jim Hill Is Out of Order” and “We Want the Voice to Vote.”⁴⁸ Sam Shipp, in charge of the Sixty-Ninth Street picket line, made sure the protesters remained orderly. When confronted by the barn’s white superintendent, Carl Gibbs, who told them to leave CTA property, Shipp calmly but firmly explained to the officers on duty that while no curb existed around the bus garage to allow buses a smooth exit onto the street, a sidewalk area still existed that should be considered public property. The officers agreed, and Gibbs walked back into the garage, but not before threatening retaliation by saying, “Shipp, this strike won’t last forever.”⁴⁹

Although distracted by the Democratic convention, the mayor found time to hold a secret meeting with transit officials at the Sherman Hotel. The CTA reported a daily loss of \$200,000, near-total outages on the South and West Sides of Chicago, but only a 20 percent decrease in runs on the white North Side.⁵⁰ And even though Democratic delegates hired private cars to drive them to and from the convention site at the International Amphitheater on South Forty-Third Street, hotels reported problems with their service employees coming in late for work or calling out sick because of the lack of transit options into the business Loop district.⁵¹ All of these disruptions convinced Daley that the strike would continue or get worse, so he allegedly told CTA representatives to appeal to a sympathetic local judge. The next day the CTA filed for an immediate injunction against the strikers on two counts: the transit union did not authorize it and the State of Illinois Supreme Court had ruled in 1965

47. “Time to Get Rough with the CTA Rebels,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1968.

48. The worst incidents included gunshots fired at a moving bus and a brick thrown through the front window of another. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 26, 1968, to September 11, 1968, CRS; and Sheryl Fitzgerald and Donald Mosby, “Report Abuse, Threats as Bus Strike Goes On,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 26, 1968.

49. Shipp interview.

50. Art Pelacque, “Expect CTA to Get Writ in Strike,” *Sun-Times*, Chicago, August 26, 1968.

51. Pelacque, “Expect CTA to Get Writ in Strike”; “Chasm between Striking Drivers, Union Widens,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 29, 1968; and Thomas Buck, “No End in Sight for Wildcat CTA Bus Strike,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1968.

that strikes of municipal employees were illegal. Circuit Court Judge Donald O'Brien approved and signed the injunction. With the law, the *Tribune*, and the mayor on his side, the CTA's George Dement boasted the injunction "gives us the right to throw the book at anyone in violation."⁵²

The strikers were not so easily deterred. At the Progressive Community Church on August 26, CTW attorney Nathan Howse told the large audience that the strikers did not have to obey the injunction. The injunction listed the names of thirty leaders of the CTW and "all members of the Concerned Transit Workers." The injunction language also required that leaders needed to direct "all members of said union not to engage in any strike or work stoppage against the plaintiff."⁵³ But who was an official member of the CTW? Since the previous February, transit workers had met as the CTW, but the organization had no bona fide union status, dues, or papers of incorporation. Thus, while the police could arrest workers for continuing the picket line, the attorneys felt that the order to desist did not include CTW rank-and-file drivers or community activists. The CTW leaders stayed out of sight and instead recruited their wives, children, and friends to walk the picket line, while other drivers held "burn-ins" to destroy the notices because, they concluded, the injunction did not apply to them.⁵⁴

The continuation of the strike also expanded the CTW's walkout into a movement in which civil rights and community activists pledged their support. At a meeting in late August, Al Raby, one of the key architects of the Chicago Freedom Movement, asked the audience if they would like the support of Jesse Jackson and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); the CTW unanimously voted in favor.⁵⁵ The involvement of SCLC helped widen the labor dispute to a citywide movement for racial justice. Many of the drivers in the strike began to relate their strike to King's 1966 Chicago campaign and to their memory of driving buses through the Chicago's West Side riot zone after his assassination on April 4, 1968. Paul Alexander remembered that "King meant a lot to us" and "they don't know what they did when they killed that man." Driving his bus down Ashland through the riot in April 1968, Alexander remembered the terrible acts when blacks "pulled whites off my bus and beat them." But King's memory also "gave me the courage" to go on strike. "Like

52. Thomas Buck, "Issues Bus Strike Injunction," *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1968; and Don Harris, "CTA Reports More Drivers Return to Work," *Chicago American*, August 27, 1968.

53. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 26, 1968, CRS; and T. B. O'Connor, general manager, CTA, to employees of the Chicago Transit Authority, August 26, 1968, with City of Chicago, injunction writ, *Chicago Transit Authority vs. William H. Allen, et al.*, signed by Judge Donald O'Brien, August 26, 1968, copy in the author's possession, from the personal papers of Frank Crowley.

54. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 26, 1968, CRS; "Transit Workers Vote to Continue Walkout," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 28, 1968; Willis interview; Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy," 19; and Shipp interview.

55. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 29, 1968, Progressive Community Church, CRS; James Ralph, *Martin Luther King Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and David Garrow, ed., *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1989).

me,” he thought, “King had a family. . . . He could have been a rich man” but instead he “sacrificed so much.”⁵⁶

Renowned activists on the South Side pledged their support as well. On August 27, the twenty-six-year-old Jesse Jackson spoke to the strikers at Shiloh Baptist Church on the South Side. He implored them to stay united and several days later declared that the strikers had the potential to create another Montgomery Bus Boycott. This 1955 campaign, Jackson surmised, helped spark the southern civil rights movement, and their movement could do the same in the urban north. To broaden the CTW walkout, Robert Lucas of CORE encouraged the community members in the audience to boycott the CTA in solidarity with the strikers. By the following week, Jackson’s Operation Breadbasket and the CTW, taking a page from the Montgomery playbook, began to organize car pools to get commuters to work without using the CTA.⁵⁷

Perhaps the most memorable CTW meeting occurred on September 4, when Muhammad Ali stepped up to the podium at Brethren Church. Ali told the large audience that he did not just represent the CTW but all black people, and that African Americans needed to build their own economic resources, respect their women, and forget about integration. The crowd erupted in applause.⁵⁸ Few blacks at the church shared Ali’s faith in the Nation of Islam, but they saw the former heavyweight-boxing champion as the personification of dignity, militancy, and Black Power. As Ozie Davis, a bus driver from the Sixty-Ninth Street Garage, remembered, “there was a lot of talk of black power and you felt it in your bones.” The application of Black Power ideas and civil rights tactics, he believed, made the drivers feel that “for the first time . . . if you stuck together you could get things done.”⁵⁹

The involvement of national and local civil rights leaders linked the strikers to black constituencies in Chicago, but the drivers themselves led the walkout. Seeking to show the kind of leadership they hoped to bring to the ATU, CTW members practiced a form of participatory democracy where all strikers had the right to speak and vote during each meeting. Waymon Benson, George Clark, and Eugene Blackmon were among the two dozen CTW members who emerged as rank-and-file leaders from the group of three thousand bus drivers. At nightly mass meetings they spoke on the same program as Jackson, Raby, Gus Savage, and black aldermen. The CTW also took collections for the strike and bail fund.⁶⁰ As the comedian and civil rights leader Dick Gregory told them as he pledged a donation, “navy beans cost only eight

56. Alexander interview; “Bus Service to Operate near Normal,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1968; Benson, “Where Do We Go from Here”; and Gus Savage, “A Righteous Cause,” *Concerned*, newsletter 2, no. 4.

57. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 30, 1968, meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church, CRS; Faith Christmas, “Breadbasket Supports CTA Strike; Makes Plans,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 4, 1968; and Bob Hunter, “Strike? What Strike? Bus Drivers,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 7, 1968.

58. Willis interview and Chicago Police Department, information report, September 5, 1968, CRS.

59. Davis interview.

60. Chicago Police Department, information reports, August 26–30, 1968, CRS; and Willis interview.

dollars a hundred pounds and are full of protein." After the collection went around and speeches ended, drivers voted each night to continue the strike. Knowing that black drivers held a slim majority of the total union membership, the CTW believed they had the potential to unite all black drivers as well as some white allies. Then, through democratic means, they could transform their union, making it a vehicle for economic advancement in both the transit industry as well as their Chicago communities. The Red Squad of Chicago's Police Department concurred that this movement had grown well beyond a labor dispute. "If some . . . groups come to the drivers' rescue as far as money is concerned," a confidential report of an August 31 meeting concluded, "we will have 'Big Trouble' with this crowd."⁶¹

Despite their momentum, the drivers ran into formidable roadblocks. Money increasingly became a problem for the striking drivers, but the most significant obstacle remained the lack of support at North Side garages. Not only did most buses continue during the strike, but also some South Side drivers, desperate for money, began to cross the picket line by reporting to North Side garages. In addition, the police employed a strategy where they arrested more black drivers on the North Side, while keeping their distance from strikers on the South and West Sides of the city. This policy deterred black drivers from congregating at bus garages at North Park and on North Clark Street. In response, CTW members reached out to the large white student population that had come to Chicago for the Democratic convention. For one night, at least, this strategy appeared to amass widespread support. On the first Tuesday evening of the strike, Black Panther Party chairman Bobby Seale spoke to a large crowd of demonstrators in Lincoln Park and urged them to follow him in support of the bus strikers. With bullhorn in hand, he led an estimated twelve hundred "hippies and yippies" out of the park. The police responded by shutting down several blocks of Clark Street for the impromptu march and then allowed the crowd to assemble at the Clark Street bus garage. According to police reports, the crowd behaved in an "acceptable, orderly manner" and demonstrated there for several hours.⁶²

Unfortunately for the drivers, this outpouring of support was quickly shut down. The very next day, the police, ordered to clear the downtown streets around Grant Park, began indiscriminately beating convention protesters, journalists, and bystanders. Despite the message and leafleting of radical political groups such as the Chicago Spartacist League and W. E. B. Du Bois Club, the CTW did not have much success in harnessing the chaotic energy of the white demonstrators. Only a few dozen white drivers helped the North Side black drivers stop buses from rolling out on their normal routes. Also, the idea of "hippies" allying with the drivers did not appeal to Frank Crowley and may have done more harm than good in recruiting

61. John Kelly, Chief of Patrol, 2nd district police memo, "Mass Meeting of Dissident Drivers in the 'Wildcat' Strike against Local 241 Which Is the Union for Employees of the CTA," Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, August 31, 1968, CRS; and Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy," 14–19.

62. Chicago Police Department, information report, August 27, 1968, CRS; Willis, "A Struggle for Democracy," 16–17; and Joe Berry, telephone interview by the author, Chicago, February 2, 2009.

skeptical white drivers to honor the walkout. After a spate of arrests, including a black striker who needed medical assistance after a bus deliberately hit him when leaving the Howard Street garage, support for North Side picket lines eroded. By the end of the first week of the strike and adjournment of the Democratic convention, bus service had returned to normal on North Side routes.⁶³

Broken picket lines on the North Side weakened but did not end the walkout. The CTA still lost hundreds of thousands of dollars each day the West and South Side buses remained idle, and the strikers got a boost from members of Operation Breadbasket, who agreed to swap picket lines with the CTW. These community activists picketed bus barns, and some of the drivers took up their cause by picketing the A&P grocery stores to hire more black clerks.⁶⁴ Breadbasket leader Calvin Morris confirmed the optimism of many CTW members and their supporters in the second week of the strike when he claimed that the drivers had become part of a revolution that could remake Chicago's racial status quo. With the help of Morris and other leaders, bus drivers organized a collection of private cars that shuttled blacks to work up and down the main boulevards, which gave striking drivers a chance to talk to riders and ask for their support.⁶⁵ Perhaps most importantly, the CTW began a series of closed meetings with sympathetic members of Local 308 of the elevated trains. Thereafter, these elevated workers formed the Concerned Rapid Transit Workers (CRTW), which claimed at least 250 supporters. After several meetings, the CRTW leader Robert O'Neill announced that they would walk out in solidarity beginning on Monday, September 9.⁶⁶

On the eve of what many drivers saw as their eminent victory, everything fell apart. During a meeting on September 8 at the Church of God and Christ on the South Side, Eugene Barnes, one of the most committed CTW drivers, suddenly urged the strikers to accept a proposal from Judge Walker Butler. Butler had suggested that if the drivers ended the walkout, he would agree to be lenient with those arrested for defying the injunction as well as look into the issue of whether the CTW could compete with the ATU in an election to represent the CTA's bus drivers. With no guarantees or moratorium against reprisals for the strike, the large audience overrode Barnes's plea as well as that of his relative, attorney and Twenty-First Ward alderman Wilson Frost. Because Barnes, as a driver, and Frost, as a self-appointed CTW attorney, had been instrumental since the first strike, many drivers left the

63. Chicago Spartacist League, "Left Must Back the Transit Walkout on August 25!," flyer, n.d. [August 1968]; Chicago Du Bois Clubs, "Support CTW*** Support Concerned Transit Workers (CTW)," flyer, August 31, 1968; "STOP THE BUSES," flyer [n.d.]; and North Side Committee to Support the Transit Workers, "Demonstration to Support the Transit Strike!," flyer, n.d. [August 1968], all in CTW files of CRS.

64. Chicago Police Department, information report, September 8, 1968, meeting at Operation Breadbasket, Tabernacle Baptist Church, CRS.

65. Chicago Police Department, information report, September 11, 1968, of September 6 meeting at 330 S. Albany Avenue, CRS; Faith Christmas, "Breadbasket Supports CTA Strike; Makes Plans," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 4, 1968; and "Start Car Pool to Help Blacks," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 14, 1968.

66. Robert Lewin, "Sympathy Walkout Voted," *Chicago Daily News*, September 6, 1968; and Hunter, "Bus Drivers Seek Cody's Help."

meeting confused. In a Red Squad police report, a detective overheard conversations in the audience expressing distrust in Frost, who was also an alderman in Daley's Democratic machine. Others claimed that SCLC would provide the CTW with new lawyers, but more than half of the dissident drivers, seeing this meeting as a sign of defeat, reported back to work during the third week of the strike.⁶⁷

Thus, the strike was broken unevenly. At least six hundred drivers continued the strike during the third week, but support began to fade when so many drivers went back to work. On September 10, the circuit court found six women guilty of defying the injunction, many of them wives of CTW members.⁶⁸ The following day, Gus Savage, compelled to testify about the CTW, almost was cited for contempt of court for providing vague answers about the nature of the organization and its twenty-four leaders on trial. The injunction-related arrests hinged on whether a cease-and-desist order could be applied to an informal organization. Pictures of meetings and newsletters presented as evidence contradicted the idea that the CTW did not really exist; soon thereafter its attorneys admitted defeat.⁶⁹ Frost told the press he would try his best to "save face" for the drivers and Nathan Howse blamed "outside influence" for preventing the strikers from agreeing to a fair settlement.⁷⁰

Upon the CTW's concessions, the white unionists and press rejoiced. The *Tribune* editorialized that the "public will heartily welcome both the end to this nuisance strike and the disciplining of its leaders," and the "lesson should be clear to all: Don't do it again."⁷¹ The ATU's counsel, also pleased with the strike's failure, dismissed the issues raised by the walkout as "strictly a power play."⁷² The CTA followed suit by punishing those who tried to return to work. On September 16, superintendents at bus barns told all returning drivers that they had to go downtown to ask for their jobs back. While the CTA management reinstated many of the workers, at least one hundred CTW drivers lost their jobs.⁷³

V

The strike ended with a defeat, but this did not end the CTW. Bob Cavens, one of its leaders, called this strike's end "only the second round." Those CTW members who returned to work had to downplay their CTW status, but those who were fired as a

67. Chicago Police Department, information report, September 10, 1968, of September 8 meeting at Church of God in Christ, CRS; Crowley interview; Davis interview; and Summary of Court proceedings, September 1968, and undated note, folder 29, box 1, Judge Walker Butler Papers, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago.

68. Bob Hunter, "Court Hits CTA Pickets," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 10, 1968.

69. Bob Hunter, "Savage Almost Cited for Contempt," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 11, 1968.

70. Bob Hunter, "Song's Ended for Striking Drivers, Their Lawyer Says," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 12, 1968; and "Seek Face-Saving 'Break' for Black Bus Drivers," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 14, 1968.

71. "Unlamented Wildcat," *Chicago Tribune*, September 16, 1968.

72. L. F. Palmer Jr., "Bus Drivers: What's Next Stop?," n.d. [September, 1968], unidentified news article, copy in CTW file, CRS.

73. Bob Hunter, "Twenty-Four Black Bus Drivers Go to Court Today," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 16, 1968; Shipp interview; Alexander interview; and Hagens interview.

result of the strike began a struggle to become the bargaining agents for the CTA's bus drivers. Cavens and other fired drivers understood that those who returned to work did so for legitimate reasons. "I expect to go to jail because of the contempt charge," he said, "but I'm not angry at the drivers who went back to work because I know they have families and have to eat, too." The CTW would continue to fight for its constituents, who CTW leaders believed represented a now-silent majority.⁷⁴

The fired drivers deepened their alliance with Jesse Jackson and other community activists to develop an independent union strategy. First, they would ask bus drivers who returned to work to secretly sign authorization cards with the Concerned Transit Workers Union (CTWU). Knowing that public support for the CTWU could lead to reprisals and expulsion from the union, the fired drivers explained that "only when CTWU is recognized as the bargaining agent" would "membership in the union become effective or public information." If the CTWU did not win in a union election, then the cards "will have no meaning whatsoever and shall be destroyed." Attendance at meetings dropped sharply because CTA drivers who kept their jobs feared reprisals, but the CTW claimed to have collected signed cards from three thousand drivers, showing their desire to have CTWU become their bargaining agent.⁷⁵

With these cards in hand, the CTW had to find someone to receive them who had the power to call for an election. The National Labor Relations Board only required 30 percent of the membership and CTWU had more than enough signed cards, but the problem remained one of authority. The CTW leaders filed a lawsuit with the City of Chicago to request a union election. In October Judge Walker Butler, despite his earlier indications of ruling in favor of a union election, now said he "lacked the authority" because such an order would be a "violation of the separation of legislative and judicial powers." In essence, the CTA claimed no authority over union matters, the city claimed it had no statutes pertaining to municipal workers' unions, and the state and federal governments considered city transit jobs not under their purview either. Stymied again, the CTW blamed the umbrella of racially discriminatory machine politics that included the union, CTA, and courts. They had little hope of "legislation in the aforementioned area pertaining to the representation of municipal employees" because such a law "would effect the obliteration of patronage jobs."⁷⁶

74. Hunter, "Seek Face-Saving 'Break' For Black Bus Drivers" and "Twenty-Four Black Bus Drivers Go to Court Today."

75. CTW, *Concerned Transit Workers Newsletter*, n.d. [September/October 1968], copy in CTW file of CRS; Chicago Police Department, information report, October 15, 1968, of CTW meeting "in the street" filed on October 10, CRS; and Chicago Transit Workers Union, authorization card, personal papers of Frank Crowley.

76. Christopher Hobson, "Black Union Stymied in Chicago," *Guardian*, New York, November 23, 1968; Concerned Transit Workers Newsletter, n.d. [December 1968], copy in CTW file, CRS; and "Judge Rules against Rebel CTA Drivers," *Chicago Tribune*, October 29, 1968, clipping in folder 29, box 1, Judge Walker Butler Papers. Not until 1983 did the General Assembly of Illinois pass the Illinois Public Relations Act, which gave the state authority over collective bargaining with public employees.

With the idea of a new union quashed by 1969, those CTW members who retained their jobs as bus drivers began to organize a slate of candidates who would challenge the leadership of ATU Local 241 in June elections. Interestingly, the dissident group of drivers nominated a white driver whose only handicap, they joked, was his name, George Wallace (the same as the segregationist governor of Alabama). The selection of Wallace showed that the black drivers cared more about the slate of reforms than the race of the candidate; they strategically picked Wallace because they hoped a white candidate might appeal to recalcitrant white drivers who also wanted to change their union but feared the implications of Black Power that they read about in local newspapers. In and out of bus garages, the drivers resurrected their old CTW communication networks in backing a slate of candidates who, they claimed, would turn the failure of the strike into a victory. They spent time off duty driving a campaign bus around the city and made sure the former CTW members turned out all Local 241 members to vote. Despite the turnout of sixty-two hundred voters for the election, the highest in the union's history, Warren Scholl beat Wallace by approximately eight hundred votes. This result indicated that some of the 1968 strikers did not vote for the CTW ticket. These defections probably stemmed from the ATU contract from the previous December, when the union and CTA, both with the strike in mind, agreed to unprecedented raises in both wages and benefits.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, those left on the outside of the CTA began to engage with riders on urban development issues. "You are going to see some leaders emerge from our ranks," Bob Cavens predicted after the strike, who "will become concerned with community, local, and national problems." Some former drivers, such as Herman Holmes, began working for black nationalist organizations, including the Black Appeals Fund, which sought to unify black caucuses from several unions and called for reparations from churches and other institutions.⁷⁸ Others joined community groups when the CTA announced in the fall of 1968 that it would raise fares from 30 to 40 cents by the end of the year. That December, seven community groups, including North Side church groups and the Illinois independent-voter organizations, joined the CTW in protesting the fare hike. They demanded that the CTA release its budget from 1967 to show how it spent its money, which, they reminded the public, included large subsidies from taxpayers. In late December the groups coordinated a "phone-in" to call the CTA to complain that the people who used it most could least afford a ten-cent fare hike.⁷⁹

While the CTA implemented its higher fares, CTW leaders began to further question the relationship among transit, jobs, and housing. They asked why the

77. Shipp interview; "Black CTA Drivers Lose Union Election," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 12, 1969; and ATU, *A History of the Amalgamated Transit Union*, 96–100.

78. Palmer, "Bus Drivers: What's Next Stop?"; and "Deny Reparations Fight Losing Ground in Chicago," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 12, 1969.

79. "Citizens Rap Fare Hike; Form Coalition," *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1968; "Religion, Race Unit Attacks Fare-Hike Talk," *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 1968; Sheryl Fitzgerald, "Transit Workers Plan City-wide Bus Boycott," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 17, 1968; and "Big 'Phone In' Is Slated against CTA in Fair Hike Protest Here," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 19, 1968.

CTA spent so much money on extensions into the suburbs when service in their own neighborhoods lacked clean and safe equipment. These demands led the Chicago Urban League to commission a study on transit in the early 1970s that confirmed the CTA prioritized expensive projects such as the development of the Skokie Swift suburban line and the extension of track along the Dan Ryan Expressway over city bus routes that served a much larger number of daily riders. These new routes theoretically connected inner-city riders to the outskirts of the city and some of its suburbs, but the report also noted that more trains went into the city during the morning rush hour and out of the city during the evening, thus prioritizing white commuters into the city rather than black commuters to the suburbs.⁸⁰ The fare hikes and mismanagement of the CTA led Jesse Jackson to deem its policy “taxation without representation.” He wrote president-elect Richard Nixon that an all-black transit company would fit the new Republican plan to promote black capitalism. Complaining that the CTA had focused too much on extending transit to the suburbs and not enough on the needs of the city, Jackson called for an inner-city transit authority.⁸¹ While this proposal never materialized, the energy and ideas about Black Power in unions filtered into other protest campaigns. Like never before, community activists felt that they had the right to contest the nature of Chicago’s urban planning and governance, which would lead to several more challenges to Daley’s system of “plantation politics” over the next several years.⁸²

VI

The CTW drivers looked back on the strike as both a victory and a tragedy, and these mixed feelings highlight competing conceptions of “race leadership.” As Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake noted in their 1945 sociological study, *Black Metropolis*, black Chicagoans attempting to gain power butted up against machine politics, and historically, blacks in Chicago “have preferred to deal with hardheaded realists who are willing to trade political positions . . . for votes” rather than support “the reformers.” This choice, according to the authors, led to a pragmatic definition of democracy “on the basis of political expediency rather than as a right.”⁸³

The leaders of Black Power politics in the late 1960s struggled with similar tensions. Wilson Frost, adept in the game of expediency, parlayed the strike into political capital for himself as well as for his relative Eugene Barnes. Frost’s aldermanic

80. Chicago Urban League, transportation study draft, December 16, 1970, folder 2939, box 278, Chicago Urban League Papers, University of Illinois at Chicago archives, hereafter CUL Papers.

81. Jesse Jackson to Mayor Richard J. Daley, n.d. [1969?], folder 1851, box 170, CUL Papers; and “Jesse Jackson Calls on Nixon to Back Black Bus Firms Here,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 21, 1968.

82. See Erik S. Gellman, “‘The Stone Wall Behind’: Chicago’s Coalition for United Community Action and Labor’s Overseers, 1968–1973,” in *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry*, ed. David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

83. Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 376–77, 394.

career, which began one year before the strike, rose dramatically after it ended. Under Daley's Democratic machine, Frost eventually became the president pro tempore of the Chicago City Council and served as one of the most powerful aldermen for the next two decades.⁸⁴ Barnes applied his political capital to become a state senator, and more symbolically, became chairman of the CTA, finding himself on the opposite side of the bargaining table during a 1979 transit strike.⁸⁵ Despite the charges by bus drivers that Frost and Barnes sold them out, other Chicagoans would come to see the careers of Frost and Barnes as the epitome of Black Power politics. These men, they reasoned, worked their way into a system that favored whites to become some of the most powerful black politicians in city and state Democratic politics.

Buoyed by the same energy that boosted Barnes to the CTA chairmanship, a number of African Americans who had not been at the forefront of the CTW gained leadership positions in the union and transit agency over the next two decades. According to Sam Shipp, the memory of the strike remained so strong that he turned down a promotion to become a superintendent. His job security, Shipp realized, would remain intact if he remained a supervisor (and part of the union's seniority system), but as soon as he accepted the position of superintendent (management), he risked termination by the CTA executives who remembered his past role as a CTW leader.⁸⁶ Yet, others who went back to work after the second week did rise to leadership positions, both in their unions and garages, and would look back on the strike as a victory because it allowed for the gradual opening of positions for African Americans to assume leadership in the ATU and CTA.⁸⁷

Yet the rise of Black Power politics that started and ended with blacks gaining more positions of authority should not overshadow the vision of the CTW strikers who fought to transform their union and their workplace. In envisioning a radically transformed union, the CTW leaders diverged from the "reformer" model in *Black Metropolis*. Instead, they sought to build an internally democratic union that would draw energy from and give resources back to the communities they serviced. This idea corresponded to the definition of Black Power put forth by Ture and Hamilton during the late 1960s. Black Power, they concluded, "does not mean *merely* putting black faces into office." Instead, the authors, like the CTW, demanded that the goal was not just black visibility but that "power must be that of a community and emanate from there."⁸⁸

The concept of power based on community responsibility had a particular resonance for black bus drivers. Most of the CTA's drivers worked out of bus barns close

84. William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 149-50, 165.

85. "Percy and Scott Get Support from PUSH," *Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 1972; Anne Keegan, "City Bus Drivers Hate that Word," *Chicago Tribune*, December 3, 1979; "Barnes Quits as CTA Chief," *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1982; and "A New Twist in Chicago Politics," editorial, *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1982.

86. Shipp interview.

87. Davis and Spears interviews.

88. Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 46.

to their own neighborhoods, and unlike other workers in Chicago, their shop floor was the city's streets and their customers included a broad range of neighborhood residents. Riders often considered the men behind the wheel as important and respectable members of their neighborhood, and daily exchanges between riders and bus drivers made these workers very perceptive to community issues and imbued many of them with a sense of responsibility beyond their job. While some connections between their struggles, such as that of fare increases to the CTW's labor demands, would only materialize after the second strike, many came to believe, through the common experience of church meetings, picketing, and car pools, that CTW goals represented community goals.

Black Power philosophy also influenced drivers within the larger union context, but not, as the *Tribune* or ATU defined it, as a zero-sum game for union control. Blacks held a slim majority in Local 241, and, as Ture and Hamilton wrote about larger alliances, "Black Power means proper representation and sharing of control" to change "patterns of oppression." This idea, therefore, built upon black unity but also sought alliances with whites to work on issues that stretched beyond all-black institutions and particular neighborhoods. The idea of alliances paralleled the CTW conception of Black Power. "This is the one time black men are leading white men," driver Waymon Benson said during the strike, and "they know what benefits us benefits them." Black Power, defined this way, helps explain why the CTW reached out to white workers as well as why it nominated the white driver George Wallace for president of Local 241.⁸⁹ Race mattered to CTW members, but they also saw class solidarity as a means to attain democratic and aggressive leadership.

While the strike and the CTW fell apart, the aftershocks eventually eroded the ATU's lily-white leadership and helped elect Chicago's first black mayor. At the national level, the ATU Black Caucus formed at the union's 1967 convention and its leaders became more aggressive after the Chicago strike, eventually forcing the union's leadership to elect a black vice president in 1971.⁹⁰ Locally, the ATU membership elected many more African American officers to Locals 241 and 308 over the next two decades and as a result became interested in a young and increasingly anti-machine black politician named Harold Washington. As one driver remembered, Washington would often eat with bus drivers at a Sixty-Third Street diner and knew them all by name. As a state representative in 1973, Washington connected the importance of transit work and fares. "Since the use of the CTA by millions of poor people make it possible for automobile owners to have access to tax supported high-ways," he wrote, "the existing tax on auto users . . . should be used in part to subsidize public transportation." A decade later, bus drivers would play a role in raising money and support for Washington's successful mayoral campaign. Once in office, opponents of

89. Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 46, and chapter 2; Benson quoted in Foner, *Organized Labor*, 403.

90. Amalgamated Transit Union, *Convention Proceedings* (Washington, DC: ATU, 1967); Amalgamated Transit Union, *Convention Proceedings*, 4, 48–49, 64–65; and ATU, *A History of the Amalgamated Transit Union*, 96–100.

the new mayor accused him of favoritism toward the ATU, which Washington did not deny. Both Chicago ATU locals endorsed him before any other labor union and met with him monthly once he took office.⁹¹

During his tenure, Washington tried to make the CTA into a more efficient and open institution. At his suggestion, the CTA board in 1986 appointed Robert Paaswell as its new leader, a transit expert who increased ridership and productivity. Washington also removed two members of the CTA board who opposed his funding proposal, claiming these opponents advocated "giving away the CTA to the suburbs."⁹² As Harold Washington's policy indicated, massive disinvestment in city infrastructure and job loss created structural problems that would have been difficult to solve even if the CTW had come to represent Chicago's bus drivers. Yet, these macroeconomic problems resulted not from a natural economic process but from the deliberate urban planning decisions and alliances of groups such as the CTA, ATU, and city's politicians who, after Harold Washington died in 1987, went back to "business as usual."⁹³

While the CTW should be remembered for its fight to democratize urban institutions, the CTW's history illuminates a new perspective on Black Power's ideology and efficacy. The CTW adherents in Chicago created alliances across generational lines, social classes, urban spaces, and political affiliations within African American communities, and to a lesser degree, they fostered coalitions with white progressives in Chicago. That said, divergent ideas about the scope and ends of Black Power, coupled with a barrage of negative stereotypes in the white media, also devolved these coalitions into a narrower movement that privileged a select class of black politicians. But this result should not lead us to the conclusion, voiced in 1968 by an influential historian, that infusing Black Power ideology into labor politics would not alleviate the more pressing problems of black urban neighborhoods because the blue-collar middle class was disconnected from a lower class that had little or no work at all.⁹⁴ To be sure, class distinctions existed among drivers, passengers, and political leaders as well as between West Side and South Side blacks, but the class of workers employed in the public sector proved in the decades that followed to be one of the few remaining avenues of economic advancement for African Americans in the city. By

91. Flowers interview; "Daley Office to Probe Role of Byrne Allies in Bus Deal," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1983.

92. Harold Washington, "Who's to Pay for the CTA?," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 22, 1973; Alexander interview; Hagens interview; Isaiah Taylor Jr., telephone interview by the author, Chicago, February 26, 2009; David Axelrod, "Madigan Raps Mayor as Tied to CTA Union," *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1983; David Young, "Mayor Studies Ways to Oust Two from CTA Board," *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1983; and Gary Washburn, "CTA Director Steps in with Mayor's Trust," *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1986.

93. The CTA board under Mayor Richard M. Daley forced out Paaswell and other transit professionals in favor of political patronage appointments. Robert Paaswell, telephone conversation with the author, July 6, 2010.

94. Christopher Lasch, "The Trouble with Black Power," *New York Review of Books*, February 29, 1968.

the 1980s, the public sector employed 40 percent of black women and 20 percent of black men nationally; by the next decade, these figures rose to more than half of all black professionals.⁹⁵ Thus, rather than representing an ineffective pivot of activism in Chicago when compared to the urban problems of housing, welfare rights, and police brutality, Black Power did shape union politics, especially in the public sector, and produced one of the most formidable challenges to racially discriminatory institutions in the late 1960s.

Moreover, the issues raised by black bus drivers in the late 1960s do not just serve as a historical corrective but also have urgent relevance to contemporary urban debates. In fact, understanding the struggles of the CTW enriches our current perspective on the “doomsday” scenarios proposed by government officials who have demanded increases in fares alongside cuts in service and union concessions. As a 1968 *Chicago Defender* editorial concluded, “the riders had a chance to see in graphic terms during the walk-out who the people were who rode which trains and buses, and the problems raised by the Concerned Transit Workers are still in the hearts and minds of the riders as well as the drivers and workers.”⁹⁶ Issues of work and community empowerment briefly blended together in Chicago, and this campaign shows both the potential and pitfall of how workers, by emphasizing rather than downplaying racial and class identities, can transform their unions, employers, and the urban landscape into more democratic institutions and spaces. ■

95. Sugrue, *Sweet Land*, 655, fn: “black political power still had.”

96. Doris Saunders, “Confetti” column, *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 8, 1968.