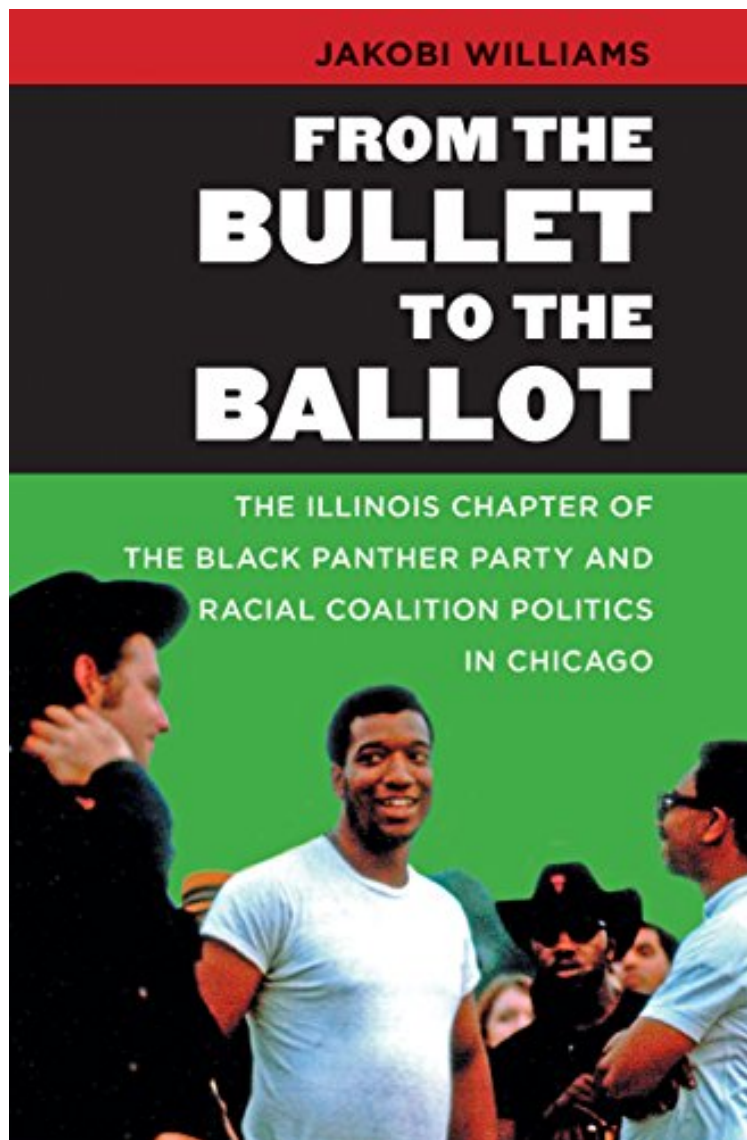


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## **From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture)**

*Jakobi Williams*

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**Jakobi Williams : From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture)**

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent insight By Michael D. McCarty An excellent insight into the dynamics of Fred Hampton's leadership of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party which was headquartered in Chicago. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. great read By Diana Kitching Every black male young and old should read and learn the truth about the black panthers and read about the author 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The Bullet to the Ballot by Jakobi Williams is a precious gem on Black Liberation By Komozi Woodard The Bullet to the Ballot by Jakobi Williams Jakobi Williams has presented a precious gem to Black Power Studies. One of the most heralded personalities in Black Panther lore is Fred Hampton; however, we have virtually no scholarly studies published on Fred Hampton and the history of the Illinois Black Panther Party. Thus, this new volume will fill an enormous gap in the scholarship on the Civil Rights-Black Power era. For more than a decade, experts have known of the unpublished dissertation of Jon Rice on the Chicago Panthers; however, Rice is not interested in turning that into a published book, providing us with only one chapter in the anthology, Freedom North. If the story of the origins of the Black Panther Party in Oakland has fascinated students for decades, then the story of the Black Panther Party in Chicago has remained a major mystery. There have always been hints that Fred Hampton and the Illinois Black Panther Party represented the best possible hope for a future as the BPP found itself in profound crisis. However, this new volume demonstrates that possibility was just the tip of the iceberg. Here we have the grossly neglected and exciting story of young people, beginning in high school, fighting for civil rights and the desegregation of public schools, recreation areas and specifically swimming pools. In other words, this is the big story of the grassroots struggle for justice in the Jim Crow North. A youth movement at the grassroots in Chicago and its suburbs, starting in its newly desegregated high schools and extending into its local colleges and universities, developed in the Civil Rights movement with Dr. King and local leaders of the Chicago Freedom Movement; and after those efforts to desegregate housing, employment and recreation, that movement developed into new heights. The Illinois Black Panther Party became the political vehicle for that student movement, particularly for high school students who found themselves physically and intellectually attacked on a daily basis. This volume shows that those young people searched for vehicles of expression before the arrival of the Black Panther Party. One of those young people was Fred Hampton who developed himself into a leader by representing the concerns of high school students in school and in the community, including the lack of desegregated recreational, cultural and intellectual spaces. Hampton stood out as a leader in everyday life, from his work as a patrol boy and Boy Scout in grammar school to his sports activities. Thus, one of the leaders of the local NAACP selected him to organize the youth branch of that civil rights organization. Because of his instinct for the social and cultural needs of young people, Hampton was able to recruit hundreds of new members in the first year. As a leader in the NAACP Hampton developed and spread a sense of the national Civil Rights struggle, including the marches and demonstrations not only in Chicago movement but also in the Mississippi movement. And he involved his members in drives supporting the Mississippi movement. Keeping abreast of those developments in the Black Revolt, he found out about the rise of the Black Power movement, including the Black Panthers in Lowndes County, Alabama and those in Oakland, California. Long before there was a Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, the Chicago black student movement was concerned with day to day issues of self-defense both during and after school. White students outnumbered black students and school fights triggered race riots. In addition to concerns about the lack of school and police protection against white mobs and problems of self-defense, students were concerned with the lack of diversity in the curriculum. Those issues galvanized black students from high school to college as they began to propose black history, black teachers and black studies courses. The black student movement was involved in the Chicago Freedom Movement and helped develop its agenda. Outside of school there were street organizations, including community groups, social clubs and gangs. And some of those groups, particularly the Young Lords were in a process of self-transformation before they knew of Black Panthers. Yet the model of the Black Panthers in terms of politics, methodology and social programs inspired the imaginative power of many of the youth groups to realize the power they had to develop solutions to their own problems. In addition to school issues, a host of young people were concerned about the urban renewal programs that threatened their daily lives with massive evictions. The Black Panther Party offered them a perspective that helped them change their sense of identity as young people from worthless to priceless. And in line with that they developed a number of programs for children that were hungry and for neighbors that were sick and needy. That grassroots political work gave young people a new sense of themselves and the future possibilities of their neighborhoods. For the first time, we have the important and compelling story of Fred Hampton's proposal for a Rainbow Coalition and Bob Lee's genius at organizing that vision into a political reality. This history introduces us to the ensemble of grassroots leadership that flowered around Fred Hampton and the Black Panthers. And it shows us very concretely how it spread from group to group and from neighborhood to neighborhood: Black Panthers, Young Lords, Young Patriots, Rising Up Angry, Student for a Democratic Society and so forth. We see the story high school by high school and college by college

without abstraction or mystification. Indeed, this study is the northern answer to the pioneering work of Charles Payne's examination of the organizing tradition in the Mississippi Movement. This book is at the high level of analysis that marks pioneering work like that of Donna Murch in the Bay Area, Matthew Countryman in Philadelphia as well as the best of the Southern studies (Payne, Dittmer, Jeffries, etc) that laid the foundation for this branch of scholarship. Above all, this book fleshes out a northern organizing tradition that flowered in the Civil Rights-Black Power era. There is also plenty of evidence here to contradict the cultural poverty arguments that make the successful organizational, political and institutional developments demonstrated here "unthinkable" in most American textbooks. In terms of this historiography, the book engages the pivotal and heated controversies about the origins, sources and anatomy of the Black Power movement by telling the distinctive and revealing story of Fred Hampton and the Illinois Black Panther Party. First, if some scholars have conceived a "Chinese Wall" between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, then Jakobi Williams demonstrates that the boundaries between those two were so porous and messy that only a careful analysis of the local movement would discern the thousands of threads that bound the two together. To switch metaphors, Williams suggests that the Black Revolt was an epic upsurge that mounted into successive waves. Thus, the Black Panther Party had its sources inside the Chicago Freedom Movement, particularly in the black student movement in the high schools and local colleges. Furthermore, the Black Panther Party took over the unfinished agenda of the Chicago Freedom Movement: desegregation of public schools, desegregation of youth recreation, horrifying housing conditions, high unemployment, persistent poverty, antiquated school curriculum, malnourished school children and so forth. The pivotal but neglected group in this drama was the black student movement: "Black Chicago youth were at the forefront of the city's civil rights struggle in the late 1960s." If high school student activism has been largely ignored in this scholarship, this book may mark the dramatic turning point after which it can no longer be overlooked. The students attending the high schools and community colleges have a very different class composition than the traditional student movements we've examined in the past. These are the children of working class and impoverished African Americans, Latinos and whites. And I have seen no better study of the nuances in the white working class than this. Rather than lump all the poor whites together, this book shows us the struggle that splits those young people into at least three camps: those in desegregated schools that wanted to get along with their new black classmates, those who joined hate groups to attack black students, and those who saw enough commonality in social class and aspirations to join with them in the Rainbow Coalition. I could go on and on about the virtues of this book; but as you can see there are many important reasons to study this epic tale of black liberation in the Jim Crow North. Komozi Woodard  
Esther Raushenbush Professor  
History, Public Policy and Africana Studies  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Bronxville, New York

In this comprehensive history of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (ILBPP), Chicago native Jakobi Williams demonstrates that the city's Black Power movement was both a response to and an extension of the city's civil rights movement. Williams focuses on the life and violent death of Fred Hampton, a charismatic leader who served as president of the NAACP Youth Council and continued to pursue a civil rights agenda when he became chairman of the revolutionary Chicago-based Black Panther Party. Framing the story of Hampton and the ILBPP as a social and political history and using, for the first time, sealed secret police files in Chicago and interviews conducted with often reticent former members of the ILBPP, Williams explores how Hampton helped develop racial coalitions between the ILBPP and other local activists and organizations. Williams also recounts the history of the original Rainbow Coalition, created in response to Richard J. Daley's Democratic machine, to show how the Panthers worked to create an antiracist, anticlass coalition to fight urban renewal, political corruption, and police brutality.

A fascinating work that everyone interested in the Black Panther party or racism in Chicago should read.--Journal of American History  
A vital historical intervention in African American history, urban and local histories, and Black Power studies. . . . A mandatory addition to the bookshelves of students and scholars.--History: s of New Books  
A major contribution to the literature and the definitive work on the Black Panther Party in the city of Chicago." --Register of the Kentucky Historical Society  
He paints a clear and engaging portrait of an organization that successfully blended elements of civil rights strategy and direct individual experience with the aims and possibilities of a new era of black radical resistance.--American Quarterly  
A book filled with passion and conviction. . . . This new book should be read by anyone interested in racism, civil rights, and public life in Chicago and the broader Midwest.--Middle West  
A welcome addition. . . to the substantive literature on the history of the Black Panther Party and on the contested legacies of the civil rights and Black Power movements in the United States.--H-1960s  
A first-rate piece of scholarship. Anyone interested in social history, urban history, or the history of Chicago must read this work of history.--Journal of Illinois History  
Deserves a wide audience." --Michigan Historical Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.--Choice  
Williams has produced an engrossing narrative of grassroots black urban politics during the era following the passage of landmark civil rights reforms. His account will compel subsequent historians to avoid simplistic generalizations distinguishing between the civil rights era and the black power era.--Clayborne Carson, Stanford University  
Williams provides a compelling, comprehensive, and much-needed account of Fred Hampton and

the Illinois Panthers. In so doing, he documents the history of the Illinois Black Panther Party and the indelible imprint it left not only on Chicago, but on American politics as well.--Yohuru R. Williams, Fairfield UniversityWilliams has produced the most comprehensive and thoughtful study of Fred Hampton and the Panthers in Chicago. He has given us a brilliant study of the anatomy of grassroots organizing across race . . . From the Bullet to the Ballot is more than a contribution to our local knowledge of the BPP; it will compel all Panther scholars to rethink or readjust the national narrative.--Robin D. G. Kelley, University of California at Los AngelesWilliams transforms the epic tale of the Illinois Black Panther Party into a compelling history. A gem of a book.--Komozi Woodard, Sarah Lawrence CollegeOne of the most significant, exhaustively researched, and conceptually sophisticated studies that I have read in quite some time. Williams' perceptive and well-executed study deepens our understanding of the roots of community and national coalition mobilization politics in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement that laid the groundwork essential to the future election of Barack Obama. His book is first rate.--Darlene Clark Hine, Northwestern University

About the AuthorJakobi Williams is Associate Professor in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies and the Department of History at Indiana University.