The Savage City: Race, Murder, and a Generation on the Edge Study Guide

The Savage City: Race, Murder, and a Generation on the Edge by T. J. English

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Author T.J. English introduces 'The Savage City' with a brief retrospect outlining the events leading up to what he describes as the inevitable hostilities pervading New York during the 1960's. He explains that his book discusses the ten-year period from 1963-1973 when New York City descended into mayhem. These events began not in New York, but far away and in the unlikely setting of rural Clarksdale, Mississippi. It was here on October 2, 1944, that the first mechanical cotton picker was demonstrated. The introduction of this machine was like the detonation of a demographic bomb in that it made sharecropping obsolete and forced the African Americans living in the south to migrate north in search of new opportunities. This huge and hasty exodus is historically considered to be one of the largest and most rapid internal movements within the United States ever. In consequence, the Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Jewish neighborhoods of New York City found themselves the recipients of a flood of poor, desperate Negroes from the south. They were greeted with hostility and bitterness. Meanwhile, the New York City police department was manned almost exclusively by working-class white men living in Brooklyn and the boroughs, the very neighborhoods that were becoming "overrun." For this reason, many of the police force chose to live elsewhere. This led to an attitude of exile and resentment, as their city began to seem more alien and impossible to salvage with every passing day. In turn, police bigotry and brutality towards African Americans reached epic proportions. The black citizens dreaded nothing more than the prospect of winding up in a police station as this was a guarantee of intimidation, humiliation, and merciless violence.

For the police force, this was business as usual. Soon, the African Americans living in New York began to hear of happenings in the South where blacks were standing up for themselves. This attitude of justified indignation was split into two camps: Martin Luther King's peaceful resistance and the violence-begets-violence posture of Malcolm X. English goes on to explain that his book is essentially a chronicle of three parallel lives: that of George Whitmore, a young Negro who is coerced into confessing to a series of dastardly crimes he did not commit; Bill Phillips, who is more a hustler than NYPD cop, who turns a snitch exposing the police department's most devastating scandal in history; and Dhoruba Bin Wahad, a black militant and key member of the Black Panther Party. English explains that these three men form points on a triangle: the scapegoat, the foot soldier, and the warrior. English explains that during this time, the NYPD was charged with the impossible task of holding back a tidal wave of revolution. Within the maelstrom there was also hope - a city yearning to be something better. English implores us to revisit this all-but-forgotten era of hope and desperation; a time of experimental democracy and deadly hostility.

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Chapter One - Blood of The Lamb

The first time Martin Luther King visited New York City, he was attacked by a criminally insane woman from Georgia who claimed King's movement had diminished her Catholic faith. He was signing copies of his new book for the public, when the woman came forward from the crowd and stabbed him in the chest with a letter opener. No one, not even the staunchest racist, could deny that this was an ironically poignant occurrence: Dr King, with his peaceful progress towards civil rights, assaulted in broad daylight in a city that should have welcomed his idealisms delightedly. The incident left a lasting impression, earning him added respect not only amongst his own, but also amongst those bent on opposing him.

Five years later, on August 28, 1963, King would lead the march on Washington and deliver his celebrated 'I Have a Dream' speech. Approximately two hundred thousand people, both black and white, witnessed this legendary event. It was broadcast across the United States, into homes, businesses and newsrooms.

Not long after King had finished his speech, a phone rang at the Twenty-third precinct in Manhattan. It was a distress call from a woman claiming her apartment had been broken into, saying she required police assistance immediately. The police took their time getting to the scene, since the address given was in an exclusive neighborhood where serious crime was rare. When they arrived at the apartment, however, they were greeted with a grisly scene. Patricia Tolles, the young woman who had made the call, had stumbled upon the brutally murdered corpses of her two roommates, Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert. The murder came to be known as the Career Girls Murder, since both of the victims were upper-class girls working and living in the city. It had scandal and headlines written all over it: the gruesome double homicide of innocent female victims in a high-class neighborhood with no clear suspects. Even after several weeks of investigation, the Manhattan police department had still gotten nowhere with the case. Across the river from New York, in Wildwood, New Jersey, lived a nineteen-year-old Negro boy named George Whitmore, Jr. He and his family lived in a shack on the outskirts of an automobile yard. He was thought to have a low IQ, but in fact he just needed glasses. On the day of the Wylie-Hoffert murders, George was working at a restaurant and spent most of the day watching Dr. King on television. George was a good kid who came from poverty and tried to remain anonymous, unseen and out of trouble. George's biggest downfall was arguably his naiveté. It was his unquestioning and trusting nature that would lead him down the darkest rabbit hole of his life.

Chapter Two - Business As Usual

Bill Phillips was a detective for the Seventeenth Detective Squad during the time of the Career Girls Murder. He was assigned to canvas the neighborhood to try and extract any information he could about the crime. Phillips was a seven-year veteran of the department who spent most of his time at work looking to score - extort or steal money from everyone and anyone who crossed his path. Phillips was just one of an entire police force brimming with corruption. There was a system to be followed, plain and simple. For one, good white kids were not the ones to arrest, even if they were causing trouble - save it for the "spooks," "spicks," and "chinks." To charge them for crimes they did not commit through violence or coercion was business as usual. Secondly, dirty money made the world go round; it determined who got promoted, who got the choice assignments, and who was punished. It was this mentality that infected the police force's work ethic, paving the way for laziness, brutality, racism, and sloppy police work. For the most part, it was this attitude that led detectives down the wrong path with the Career Girls Murder.

Meanwhile, the attitude of whites towards blacks was deteriorating, in part, because of the influx of heroin use that coincided with the massive Southern black migration that was underway. It was amidst all of this that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. America was shaken to its core by this act of atrocity, and as the stunned citizenry began to ask why, the notion that his murder was race-associated began to emerge. The summer before his assassination, the president had sent troops in to Mississippi to enforce civil rights laws, and then later that summer, he submitted his civil rights bill to Congress. The conjecture surrounding JFK's assassination still rages today and perhaps no one will ever know the whole story, but at the time, the notion that he was murdered for efforts towards civil rights certainly did not help matters of racism. They were reaching fever pitch proportions.

Chapter Three - The Bowels of Brooklyn

George Whitmore decided that he needed to strike out on his own for a while - head to the big city and look for work. When he left home, he spent many nights as a homeless person, or occasionally sleeping on the couch of his girlfriend or various relatives. One of his frequent over-night haunts was a ground-floor hallway where he would wrap himself in his coat and bed down. One morning, emerging disheveled and stiff, George was approached by Patrolman Frank Isola, who had asked George some questions the previous day that George willingly answered. Now, he confronted George wanting to know why he had lied to him. George was, of course, stunned. He had done nothing of the sort. It turned out that the police officer had written his name wrong the day before, and when he went to check into George's background, came up stymied. When the policeman asked George to accompany him to the station house to answer a few more questions, he went willingly, like cattle to the slaughter. He had no idea the whirlwind that lay before him. George was taken into custody, and held in a cell where he could be viewed by a woman named Elba Borrero, who had been assaulted two nights before. George was told to speak, and when she heard his voice, she identified George as her attacker. George insisted that it wasn't true, that she had made a mistake, but officer

Isola wasn't buying it. He had made a valuable discovery: an easily-manipulated nobody Negro boy upon whom unsolved crimes could be pinned and, as was best for everyone, tidied up. There was a saying amongst the cops in those days, "I like him for that murder." Through sleep-deprivation, coercion and manipulation, the police tag-teamed George until he had confessed to not only the Elba Borrero assault, but also the violent rape and murder of Minnie Edmonds.

Within the ranks of the NYPD detective bureau, no talent was higher prized than the ability to make a person confess to a crime - by any means necessary - and no detective was more notorious for the ability to 'get his man' than Edward J. Bulger. Bulger, at the time of George Whitmore's apprehension, was investigating the most famous case in the city, the Wylie-Hoffert Career Girls Murder. Bulger arrived at the station house while George was being interrogated, and began rifling through his belongings. In his wallet, he found a photograph of a young woman who resembled Janice Wylie. George had actually obtained the photograph near his home in New Jersey, in the junkyard. He found the photo and put it in his wallet to show to his friends and family, and boast that he had a white girlfriend.

George was promised if he did what he was told, and said what he was told to say, that it would all be over soon and he would be set free. Obviously, these were lies. Bulger, along with Detective Joseph Di Prima, spoon-fed George exactly what he needed to know about the crime scene and he went along blindly, signing a 61-page confession of remarkable detail, damning himself. The Manhattan police force preened, patting themselves on the back for a job well done. They were considered heroes by the press and the public, having supposedly removed from the streets the dangerous criminal who had committed these heinous crimes.

Chapter Four - "Get Those Niggers"

To the citizens who felt the "spicks" and "niggers" were ravaging their city, the arrest of an anonymous Negro boy claiming he was innocent was no big deal. To the rapidly growing and increasingly outraged black population, however, the situation was unacceptable. When Dhoruba Bin Wahad read about George's predicament, he too was incarcerated at the time. He knew in his gut that George was being framed. Bin Wahad grew up in the Bronx, finding his identity as so many black youths did, in a street gang. He had a real problem with authority during a time when the simple fact was: the police in New York saw it as their duty to forcefully keep colored people in their place. At the age of eighteen, after a brief stint in the army, Bin Wahad was in good standing with his gang, the Disciples, and was given the nickname "Torch" because of his restless energy that was likely to combust at the slightest provocation. He was sent to prison at the age of nineteen for felonious assault with a deadly weapon. Dhoruba found that life in prison mirrored life on the mean streets of New York City. All of the prison guards were inbred country boys, racist to the bone. As a result, Bin Wahad spent a lot of time in solitary confinement. As he served out his five-year-sentence, he was taken under the wing of a young Muslim named Mjuba, who supplied him with books and pamphlets that would change his way of thinking entirely. What began to emerge for him was a world he never

knew existed: a world of "theory, logic, and righteousness that, when combined with action, had the power to ignite a revolution." (p. 66).

George Whitmore, in the meantime, was sinking deeper and deeper into depression at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, where he had been ordered to go for evaluation. He understood now that he was facing the death penalty for crimes he did not commit, and he spent a lot of time pondering lethal injection vs. gas vs. the electric chair. George's attorney, Jerome Leftow, knew he had his hands full with the case. Leftow was stunned to discover through an offhand remark made by a female doctor at the hospital, that George was receiving unauthorized injections of sodium amytal, also known as "truth serum." Any objections Leftow made, however, were quickly squelched by the judge, in an effort to expedite prosecution of the Career Girls Murder.

Meanwhile, New York City was a powder keg ready to blow at the slightest provocation. The match that would ignite the Harlem riots of 1964 was not George Whitmore's coerced confession, but his story certainly contributed. On Thursday, July 16th, fifteen-year-old James Powell was waiting with fellow students near their school for summer school classes to begin. The neighborhood was predominantly white. A man watering his flowers nearby saw the black youths gathering and decided to turn the hose on them, in order to "wash them clean." (p. 71) James Powell went after the man, who dropped his hose and ran. An off-duty police officer named Thomas Gilligan saw nothing more than a black kid chasing a white man. The man Powell was chasing ducked into an apartment building, so he gave up the chase. When he turned around, Gilligan fired three shots and took Powell down. He was pronounced dead upon arriving at the hospital.

The community was outraged, and activists sounded off at the sight of the shooting about police brutality. The police department did not respond. The next day, The Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) led a sprawling, angry protest towards the Nineteenth Precinct station on East Sixty-seventh street. By Saturday, the group of protesters had grown to around five hundred people. The situation disintegrated into a war zone quickly when police reinforcements were called in to manage the crowd. By the second day of rioting, the police had given up the idea that shooting into the air would disperse the protestors, and began shooting into the crowd with non-police issue guns that were unregistered and untraceable. For three days and nights, Harlem raged, and then the chaos spread into Brooklyn. Looters flooded the streets with their arms full of merchandise. The Brooklyn riots also lasted for three days, until the skies opened above them and a heavy downpour saved the city from descending into further chaos. The official tally was that only one civilian was killed, 118 police and civilians injured, and 465 men and women arrested. Those who witnessed the insanity knew that the actual death toll was much, much higher, and there was a rumor amongst the cops that, for weeks afterwards, they were still pulling bodies from the lake in Central Park. The press and the public were stunned, not knowing how to respond to this unprecedented uprising. Many felt that the worst was over now that the Negroes had blown off some steam. This was wishful thinking, as the war between the Negroes and the police had only just begun.

In his 1963 book The Fire Next Time, Harlem-born writer James Baldwin stated that the black citizens of America had had everything taken away from them, including, most crucially, their sense of worth. He said, "People cannot live without this sense; they will do anything whatever to regain it. This is why the most dangerous creation of any society is that man who has nothing to lose." (p.70). It was an ominous, eerily accurate forecast of events that were about to occur in New York City. In the first chapter of The Savage City, we are introduced to point one on the triangle, George Whitmore. His is the lamb's blood; he is the scapegoat, the sacrifice, the one set up to fall. When he is taken off the streets and into the police station, he is the trusting cow who follows his master into the slaughterhouse. In Chapter two, we meet point two on the triangle, Officer Bill Phillips, behind whom the backdrop is a New York City that is simmering and bubbling like a pot preparing to boil over. Phillips is a part of the problem: a corrupt system of law keeping, run by racist hustlers who perpetuate the idea that to be anything but white is to be worth significantly less. The viewpoint of the NYPD was that the best thing for everyone would be to "tidy up" cases with loose ends. Everyone, that is, except the innocent persons upon whom false charges are being pinned. When Edward Bulger found the photograph of the white girl in George's wallet, he had to have known that it was not Janice Wylie. This detail shows very clearly the arrogance of the police force; if on the off chance that it was ever revealed that the photo was not Janice Wylie, would anyone ever care? George fit the profile perfectly - he was poor and black, so the slim risk of accountability notwithstanding, the NYPD made the decision to exploit him to whatever extent they deemed necessary. And within this system of corruption, the sky was the limit. When the judge learned George was receiving unauthorized "truth serum" injections, he shrugged this injustice off in favor of expediting the case. In the meantime, George is in prison, innocent, beginning to understand that he may be going to his death over the crimes to which he has confessed. He contemplates the least traumatic way to die, a perverse thought that belongs nowhere near his young mind. In chapter four, we meet point three on the triangle, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, who is also in jail, but who is an actual criminal. When we first meet Dhoruba, it is easy to understand why his nickname in his gang is "torch." He comes across as combustible, and it is immediately clear that his contribution to the melee will be fierce and fiery. He was still in jail when the Harlem riots began. The match thrown into the tinderbox was the pointless shooting death of a fifteen-year-old boy, and the city of New York was plunged into chaos. The rioting stopped when the sky opened up and issued forth with a downpour. This had to have been a poignant, almost divine moment to behold; the rain washing the blood off the street, cleansing New York City and persuading her to be reborn as something new and better. The city did emerge as something different, but it would not prove to be a positive change. Rather, as host to a seething, bitter black population forced to coexist with a bigoted white population and a tyrannical police force bent on violently subduing any and all who they deemed a threat.

Chapter Five: Getting Flopped - Chapter Nine: Fear

Chapter Five: Getting Flopped - Chapter Nine: Fear Summary and Analysis

Chapter Five - Getting Flopped

There were a few bright spots emerging in George Whitmore's criminal case: for one, the supposed photograph that he kept in his wallet was proved not to be of Janice Wylie. Secondly, he had a solid alibi: he was at work the day of the murders and there were witnesses to this fact.

Melvin Glass, a young prosecutor in the Manhattan D.A.'s office, was given a copy of Whitmore's "confession," and was asked to go over it with a fine-tuned comb. One detail stood out to him: Whitmore claimed to have used a razor blade out of a blue package found in the bathroom to slice the sheets and bind his victims. Glass knew that Edward Bulger had found this blue package of razors in the bathroom after all the evidence had been catalogued, because he complained about it having been overlooked. Glass knew that it had actually been left there by a careless investigator who was shaving in the Wylie-Hoffert bathroom during the investigation. Glass realized that this could mean only one thing: Whitmore had been spoon-fed this detail. After speaking with an unsuspecting Bulger, Glass suspected the worst. The entire confession was an elaborate concoction.

As the trial approached, Leftow received some startling news. A reporter told him that the Manhattan police had another suspect in the Career Girls Murder. But, when Leftow asked about this other suspect, he was told by the Manhattan Assistant District Attorneys that they had nothing that could help his case. The potential apprehension of the suspect was at a delicate stage. The ADA's knew if the word got out on the street that they were onto someone new, the suspect might panic and clam up. They needed a confession. Although Leftow knew he was being lied to, he understood that the ADA's felt reclaiming the case as a win for the Manhattan police force meant more than full disclosure and justice. Thus, George Whitmore was left in limbo. The overall attitude of the entire New York City criminal justice system in the 1960's was one of racial bigotry, and those manning the helm were overwhelmingly white. Many of NYC's cops felt that the citizenry were imploring them personally to keep them safe from the dangerous, desperate black people, and they took this plea very seriously. For others, like Bill Phillips and his mentor William "Wild Bill" Madden, who was known as a master extortionist, it was all about the almighty dollar. Phillips was making $1,500 - $2,000 under the table to augment his meager $200 weekly salary. Being a money-making cop gave Phillips a high stature amongst his fellow officers, which in turn enhanced his position on the street. While corruption in the pursuit of easy money was tolerated, infractions of police protocol were not. Phillips went too far one night when he exposed

two undercover cops in a bar and they reported the infraction to their supervisor. Phillips was stunned to find that he was thus being "flopped" out of the detective bureau and demoted to patrolmen. He realized too late that for every friend he had in the department, there was someone outside the loop looking to score. He was assigned to Harlem, which he would soon find to be a land of opportunity for a cop on the take.

Phillips was assigned foot patrol with, of all people, a Negro officer named Egbert Brown. Phillips was, of course, seriously prejudiced against blacks, as this was not only the norm, it was expected and encouraged. Matters were made worse when Phillips discovered Brown was skimming on the side and cutting Phillips out of the loop entirely. Eventually Phillips would go to the roll call officer, slip him a bribe and request "no more nigger partners." (p. 93). He felt that they were not to be trusted.

Chapter Six - On the Button

In preparation for the Elba Borrero case against him, George Whitmore had been transferred to the psych ward of King's County Hospital. He was charged in this case with one count of attempted rape and one count of assault. Whitmore's attorney, Jerome Leftow, had his doubts that an attempted rape had ever even occurred. The call had originally come in as a purse-snatching. Leftow had his suspicions that the sexual implications had been grafted on later, when the police had decided to implicate George in the Career Girls Murders because it would help them establish a pattern.

When she was called to the stand, it was apparent to Leftow that Elba Borrero had been well coached. She identified a button that she supposedly tore from her assailant's coat, and then she pointed at George Whitmore, identifying him as the man who had attacked her. The more Leftow challenged her, the more adamant Borrero became.

George, on the other hand, was putty in the hands of the prosecutor. He was suckered into making estimations about how many times he had been beaten, so that it looked as if he were lying. The prosecuting attorney then coupled this with the fact that after his "beating," George sat down for coffee and cigarettes with the police officers, and no bruises were shown in the photographs taken the following day.

The judge decided that evidence had been established beyond a reasonable doubt that George's confessions was voluntary, and that it would be allowed as evidence before the jury. The trial lasted six days. The police officers came across as consummate professionals, whereas George and his girlfriend Beverly Payne were inarticulate and seemed uneducated. The jury consisted of twelve white men from middle-class backgrounds.

In his closing arguments, Assistant District Attorney Sidney A. Lichtman produced the coat that George had supposedly worn the night of the attack, as well as the button that had allegedly been ripped from it. He asked the jury to take the coat with them into the jury room and ask themselves if it was coincidence or solidly guilty circumstance that the button and the coat matched. He said that he felt they had nailed George Whitmore "right on the button." (p. 102) The jury agreed. They deliberated for six hours and

returned a verdict of guilty on both counts. George was stunned when his guilty verdict was read, and then broke down into tears when he was led from the courtroom to a holding room.

Outside the courthouse, the press were waiting to interview Lichtman. One such newspaperman was Selwyn Raab, a reporter for the World Telegram & Sun. Raab overheard one of the jurors ask Lichtman why the button had not been sent to an FBI lab to establish irrefutably that it had come from the coat. Lichtman replied that they had done so, but the tests could not prove anything. Raab had been following the Whitmore case for months, and when he learned that the button report had never been mentioned in court, much less entered into evidence, he became curious. He began interviewing jurors from the Borrero case, and was disturbed to find out that although the subject of the Wylie-Hoffert case was supposed to be a strictly-forbidden topic amongst the jurors, it was something they often discussed openly amongst themselves. He was also shocked at the level of bigotry amongst them.

He decided to go a step further and track down the lab report that had been performed on the button. He discovered that it was no inconclusive report; it stated very plainly that the button was not a match to the coat in question. Holding back such evidence was clearly illegal according to the laws surrounding "discovery material."

Raab was frustrated to find that his editors were not interested in George's story, so he turned his information instead into a long feature story that he submitted to nationally circulated Harper's Magazine. At first, the editor was thrilled with the piece, wanting to rush it to press. Within a week, however, Raab was stunned to discover that they could not and would not run his piece because District Attorney Frank Hogan had asked them not to. He felt it contained information that would hinder the fair adjudication of legal matters in New York County. In other words, it would make the NYPD as well as the entire criminal justice system of New York State, look bad. So, the article was killed.

Raab decided to contact George's mother and persuade her to hire fresh lawyers on George's behalf. They met with Arthur H. Miller and Edwin Kaplan, who came on board pro bono. They also enlisted the assistance of Stanley J. Reiban who had met with George and was convinced of his innocence. Together, George's new lawyers decided it was time to push back against the press who were portraying George as a dangerous predator.

All of this was hugely to George's benefit, but everything turned around for him in January of 1965, when the Manhattan police announced that they had arrested a new suspect in the Career Girls Murder case. Twenty-one-year-old Ricky Robles was a junkie with many burglary arrests on his record. His friend, Nathan Delaney, knew Robles was guilty. Robles had gone to Delaney's apartment the night of the murders, covered in blood and rambling on incoherently about what he had done. Delaney had been arrested for the murder of a heroin peddler, and the police cut a deal with him; if he helped them set up Robles, he would be spared the electric chair. Delaney and his wife Marjorie lured Robles to their apartment that the police had rigged with microphones, supplied him with dope and got him talking. Listening next door, the police

heard what they needed to hear and swooped in. Before he would be allowed to see his lawyer, they needed a more specific confession and it took a while for Ricky to give them all that they required. In the end, he caved and told them exact details of the last minutes of Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert's lives. The NYPD now had two confessions on the record to the most notorious crime of the decade.

George's lawyers called for a meeting with Aaron Koota, the Brooklyn D.A. demanding that the murder charges against George be immediately dropped. When Koota refused, they decided it was time to get the NAACP involved, and classify his case for what it had really been all along: a civil rights matter. It was time for people to understand that George was being framed for no other reason than because he was a Negro. The NAACP set up a legal fund for George and one of the first purchases was a much needed pair of glasses for young George Whitmore. For the first time in a long while, he could see clearly what was happening around him.

Chapter Seven - Harlem Nocturne

During the 1960's, Malcolm X emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the budding black liberation movement. His method was an alternative to the peaceful protests of Martin Luther King; Malcolm X was militant. He considered resistance to be self-defense - intelligent and logical. Throughout 1964 and 1965, Malcolm X received several death threats. He had many enemies. Of course, the police and the media of the establishment despised him, but he was also considered a traitor amongst The Nation of Islam because of a disagreement between he and former mentor Elijah Muhammad. During an interview for CBS, Malcolm X spoke of George Whitmore, stating that the police were racist, and what had happened to George could have happened to any Negro in America. In making this statement, Malcolm X elevated George's case from a nothing story about a nobody Negro kid to a legend in the civil rights movement. Four weeks later, on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was giving a speech in Manhattan when a man approached the stage and shot Malcolm in the chest with a sawed-off shotgun. He was dead before he reached the hospital.

The murder of Malcolm X sent shock waves through the prison system. It occurred to a young inmate by the name of Richard Earl Moore, that the best way to honor the legacy of Malcolm X would be to convert to Islam, learn Swahili and change his name to Dhoruba al-Mujahid Bin Wahad. "Dhoruba" means, quite appropriately, 'he who is born into the storm' in Swahili.

Bin Wahad was not what you would call a model inmate. He was not what the prison authorities would call a "good Negro." He had a lot of fight in him, and often talked back to the guards. When he went in front of the parole board, he refused to play into the process of submission that was expected of him. When they addressed him by his given name, he was quick to correct them. His parole was denied, but he didn't care. He was three years into a five-year sentence that he would rather serve in full than acquiesce to the Man.

In the meantime, the city of New York was reaching a state of hysteria. A young woman named Kitty Genovese was brutally murdered on the sidewalk three doors away from her home. No less than thirty-eight people had heard her cries for help, and not one assisted her or even called the police. New York City was garnering a reputation for being a "cold-hearted urban jungle where people would let you die in the gutter without lifting a finger to help." (p. 119)

Throughout the spring and summer of 1965, a heated mayoral campaign was raging. Republican John V. Lindsay's view was that New York City was a dangerous place to live, and that fear had gripped its citizens. His opponent, conservative candidate William F. Buckley Jr., agreed with Lindsay, but he felt that what was needed was additional police force. Most of the NYPD did not care for John V. Lindsay, since he seemed too eager to yield to the minorities. During those days, according to Bill Phillips, it was very common for a black man to be brought in handcuffed, hung up on a mesh cage and left there all day while officers came into the room periodically to beat him. Unchecked police brutality and corruption were reaching epic proportions.

George Whitmore was still in jail, but at least he had the support of the NAACP. Though their efforts earned George some exposure in the press, his situation still did not change. Finally, with the cooperation of Gerald Corbin, juror number 7 at the Borrero trial, George's lawyers sent a memo to Judge David Malbin claiming charges of racial discrimination amongst the jurors. The charges were disturbing enough that a public hearing was granted. The judge determined that George did not receive a fair and impartial trial, that racial bias invaded the jury room, and that evidence had been withheld. The Borrero conviction was officially overturned. While this was a solid step in the right direction for George, his euphoria would be short-lived. The following day, Brooklyn D.A. Aaron Koota announced that his office would re-try George for the same charges. In addition, the Minnie Edmonds murder trial would take place one week later. The prosecuting attorney was again Sid Lichtman, and in this case, George was facing the death penalty.

Chapter Eight - Fathers and Sons

The NAACP, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was founded in 1909 when segregation was a deeply engrained social statute. The NAACP had a trying task on its hands during the 1960's: to change the way society viewed people of color, thereby disarming racism. During the time of the civil rights movement, the NAACP had close to ten thousand members, wealthy donors and undeniable social influence. For weeks before the Minnie Edmonds murder trial, the NAACP had been trying to convince the Manhattan D.A.'s office to drop the charges against George Whitmore in the Career Girls Murder case, but to no avail. They argued that there was no way George would be able to receive a fair trial.

One assistant D.A. told the New York Times that he was certain George Whitmore's confession was a result of hypnosis, brain-washing and coercion, and that if the Wylie-Hoffert murders had not been a famous case, an innocent Whitmore might have easily

slipped through the cracks and been executed. Fearing retribution and the loss of his job, he preferred to remain anonymous.

But the bottom line was: The entire criminal justice system from the cops who elicited a false confession to the press who had accepted the story without question, was guilty of playing a role in railroading George Whitmore, and they all knew it.

The prosecutors in the Minnie Edmonds trial had nothing on George except his confession. The trial began with what is known as a "Hundley hearing" during which George's attorneys would attempt to have his confession declared inadmissible. The police officers came forward, one by one, to tell lie after lie on the stand. In the end, Supreme Court Justice Dominic Rinaldi ruled that Whitmore had given the confession of his own accord.

Matters were made worse when George took the stand. He had been incarcerated for a year, and the never-ending bombardment of names, dates, times and details had worn him down. Again, the jury was made up of white men - and one Negro this time - but all of them from backgrounds far removed from the poverty in which George Whitmore was raised.

In his closing arguments, George's attorney Stanley Reiban pointed out to the jury that the prosecutors had not one speck of evidence against George, save his "confession." He referenced Nazi Germany, The Spanish Inquisition and the Salem witch trials as other examples in history when "confessions" were used to damn a person.

The jury deliberated bitterly for two days and in the end were hopelessly deadlocked. The result was a hung jury, and no resolution for George Whitmore. Three days after the trial was over, the Manhattan D.A.'s office finally dropped the Wylie-Hoffert charges against Whitmore, and the Brooklyn D.A.'s were chastised for not having dropped them sooner. For George, however, his ordeal was still far from over.

By this time, Dhoruba Bin Wahad had been behind bars for four years. Because of his obstinacy, and his involvement in a prison yard gang rumble, he was transferred to a maximum security facility. When he arrived at Green Haven Correctional Facility, he was told that someone in the yard wanted to see him. The man turned out to be his father. It took a moment before Dhoruba recognized him. Dhoruba did not have a close relationship with his father as a child, and the matriarchs of his family never had nice things to say about the man. Collins "Pops" Moore took the opportunity now to explain a few things to his son.

He explained that he was never accepted by Dhoruba's mother's family, and that right around the time Dhoruba was born, Pops Moore joined the army to show them he was not worthless. In 1945, however, he went AWOL, and this was an unforgivable disgrace in their eyes, and he was banished from the family. Dhoruba felt an unexpected emotional connection with his father upon hearing this news, and it helped him come to terms with the rebellious course his life had taken. Dhoruba's time with his father was

brief, as he was soon back in solitary confinement, where he would spend the remainder of his sentence.

George Whitmore was incarcerated at the Brooklyn House of Detention, and unlike Dhoruba, he had no release date to look forward to. He was told not to lose hope. His story had become a potent symbol of injustice. It was used to outlaw capital punishment in the State of New York, and also in the dissolving of "blue ribbon juries" - juries that excluded women and minorities. He was now considered by the press to be the most celebrated "wrong man" in the history of New York City. The very newspapers that had vilified him were suddenly taking up his case on the editorial pages. The New York Times even went so far as to ask the question: can the police be relied upon to control the misconduct of their own department? It was simply unheard of to challenge the authority of the NYPD.

In the fall of 1965, the trial of Ricky Robles in the Wylie-Hoffert Career Girls Murder case was underway. The conviction of Robles was a no-brainer: he was very clearly guilty. It took the jury five hours and fifty-five minutes to return a guilty verdict. And with that, now that he had used up his usefulness for the media, George Whitmore became a forgotten man.

Chapter Nine - Fear

While the Wylie-Hoffert murder trial was in session, John Lindsay was elected mayor of New York City. His stance on crime was that by improving civil rights for minorities, the level of tension in the city would lessen and thus there would be less crime. Lindsay was also interested in pursuing the idea of a Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) - a board to police the police, made up of police officials as well as nonaffiliated citizens. A Law Enforcement Task Force was sent in to examine the NYPD, and they immediately called for many reforms of the department. They endorsed the idea of the CCRB wholeheartedly. Lindsay also found that he was going to have to replace police commissioner Vincent L. Broderick, because he did not agree with Lindsay's position on the CCRB.

Opposing the CCRB with utter vehemence was not only the entire police force, but also the organization called the Policeman's Benevolent Association, or PBA. The president of the organization, John Cassese was quoted as saying: "I'm sick and tired of giving in to minority groups with their whims and their gripes and their shouting...I don't think we need a review board at all." (p. 155) And thus, the battle lines were drawn.

Lindsay had promised during his campaign that he would reform the city's widespread corruption, and govern with greater sensitivity to civil rights. This was now being put to the test. A new generation of activists were gathering and protesting, presenting example after example of atrocious acts of injustice inflicted upon the city's minority population. The police had little to say in response to these allegations, and the sense of urgency to implement an independent review board was mounting.

Rather than allow Lindsay to create a new CCRB by mayoral fiat, the PBA secured the thirty thousand petition signatures needed to add a referendum to the upcoming November ballot. What followed in the months to come was an expensive and aggressive advertising campaign in support of its referendum. The campaign exploited the city's atmosphere of terror and hysteria by portraying the NYPD as the only thing standing between the common citizen and the dangerous hoodlum on the street. For the most part, Mayor Lindsay ignored the pre-referendum campaign, but one billboard in particular got his hackles up. It was the image of a frightened white woman standing alone on a subway platform with the warning: "The Civilian Review Board must be stopped. Her life...your life...may depend on it." (p. 160) This was considered by the NAACP to be the "slimiest kind of racism." (p. 160)

Cops like Bill Phillips, of course, were opposed to the CCRB, but for their own reasons. The last thing they needed was an independent board with the power to examine the department's dirty laundry. As far as cops like Bill Phillips were concerned, the race baiting and fear mongering were simply smokescreens hiding a more elaborate truth. A police badge was essentially a license to steal, if one didn't get greedy and followed the rules. Phillips would know; his ten years on the force had been quite lucrative for him. When he made a score, he spread the wealth around. He knew that so many people within the system were in on it, he never imagined that he would be singled out for punishment.

Phillip's motto was: take the money and run. He made a point of not angering his victims too much, but rather to extort money out of them while making them think he was doing them a favor. He learned from the mistakes of others. He thought of himself as a thinking man's hustler. Even other cops who thought of him as a swindler would not interfere with his operations, because they never knew when they might need to call in a favor from him. Phillips was on the "right side of the Blue Wall of Silence." (p. 166)

In March of 1966, George Whitmore was back in court to be retried for the attempted rape of Elba Borrero. She was adamant on the witness stand that George was her attacker, and after a two-day trial, the jury delivered yet another guilty verdict against Whitmore. His attorneys immediately announced that they would appeal on the grounds of an unfair trial. The judge decided that before sentencing George, he wanted him to have a psychiatric evaluation. He was taken again to King's County Hospital where he passed the examination as he had done twice before. Despite his clean mental evaluation, the judge showed him no mercy, sentencing him with five to ten years on the attempted rape indictment, and two and a half years on the charge of assault with attempt to rape.

One month after the sentencing, however, the Supreme Court dropped a judicial bombshell that affected Whitmore's case. The Miranda decision grew out of a criminal case in Arizona where a suspect was tricked into confessing to a murder. The case had made it to the Supreme Court, where it was decided that henceforth, a suspect may not be impelled to incriminate himself, as it was unconstitutional. Also that the warning of a right to remain silent must be given and accompanied by the explanation that anything they say can and will be used against them in a court of law. George's case was one of

the primary cases sighted, and it played a crucial role in the court's decision. Why was it then that a Negro could find justice in the highest court in the land, but could not catch a break in Brooklyn, New York?

George and his lawyers were stunned when two days later, D.A. Koota was dropping the charges against George in the Minnie Edmonds murder. Now that all three murder charges against George had been dropped, it was argued that he should be free on bail pending his appeal of the Borrero conviction. George was given another psychiatric evaluation, the cost of his bail - $5,000 - was donated, and two years, two months, two weeks and five days after his ordeal began, George was released on his own recognizance.

He was taken home to the junkyard in Wildwood, and the joys of freedom lasted for a little while. They wore off quickly enough, though, when George began to realize the was right back where he had started.

While the citizens of New York were deciding which way they were going to vote in November, a summer of hatred was erupting, nowhere more so than in Brooklyn. On the night of July 21, 1966, a ten-year-old boy named Eric Dean was shot dead. The police arrested Ernest Gallashaw, a seventeen-year-old Negro boy with no criminal record. Eye witnesses insisted that the murderer was actually a white youth known as "Little Joe" who was a member of a white supremacist group called SPONGE, "Society for the Prevention of Niggers Getting Everything." The eye witness testimony was considered irrelevant, however, because those who saw the child gunned down were black. It seemed that it had become impossible to get a clear picture of what had happened, and the criminal justice system was rightly so discredited in the eyes of the minority community that they were beyond frustration. Ernest Gallashaw was found not guilty, which eased tensions some, but as the racial drama that was New York City in those days unfolded, more and more whites feared reverse discrimination.

There was not a huge turnout for voting on November 2, 1966, but the people had officially spoken: there would be no civilian review board of the NYPD. If the vote had gone the other way, who knows how it might have changed the course of history.

The police force in New York City during the 1960's and into the 1970's were much like a cadre of spiders; weaving their tangled webs in hopes of ensnaring a few civilian flies. If you were a fly, and you were caught up in the system, it was easy enough to pay off the predatory police - give the spiders their blood, so to speak - and escape with your life intact. Despite the level of corruption afoot, one was still required to follow the rules, as Bill Phillips was to discover. He figured he had greased the wheels well enough that he was immune to consequences, but he found out the hard way that this was not the truth. It is ironic that at the conclusion of his dealings with a black police officer, he felt they were the ones who were "untrustworthy." What they were, in actuality, were officers of the law working the system just as adeptly as Phillips was, who were merely in possession of a darker skin tone. Everything that was happening within the criminal justice system in those days could be boiled down one word: agenda. Everyone had their own agenda. The Manhattan D.A. office refused to give George Whitmore's

attorneys the truth about the new suspect in the Wylie-Hoffert murders because their agenda was to win the case away from Brooklyn and vindicate themselves. Frank Hogan's agenda in forbidding the scandalous article written by Selwyn Raab to be published was to protect the reputation of the NYPD, and to encourage the "upholding" of the law. Aaron Koota's agenda in retrying George after the Borrero case was overturned was to be able to make some crime - any crime - stick against him to save face for the Brooklyn D.A. office. To more and more people, it was becoming clear that George Whitmore had been framed and that he was innocent. He was being called the most celebrated "wrong man" in history, he had been mentioned by Malcolm X, his story was partly responsible for the overturning of blue ribbon juries and the establishment of Miranda rights, he had people doing the unthinkable: questioning the NYPD...and yet, nothing could be done to get him out of the woods and into the clear. Once the Wylie-Hoffert charges were dropped against him, and George Whitmore was once again just a young black man in jail for crimes against fellow minorities, he faded into oblivion. In actuality, he may never have received the exposure that he did, had he never been accused of the Wylie-Hoffert murders. Had he been merely charged with the attempted rape of Elba Borrero and the murder of Minnie Edmonds, one Hispanic and one black, George Whitmore may have easily been shuffled through the system, tried, convicted, sentenced even executed and no one would have cared. He was considered "lucky" to have been associated with such a famous case.

Chapter Ten: Black Power - Chapter Thirteen:

Chapter Ten: Black Power - Chapter Thirteen: Summary and Analysis

Chapter Ten - Black Power

On May 2, 1967, Dhoruba Bin Wahad was released free and clear from prison. He was stunned to see how much had changed, and interested to find a whole new generation of young Negroes who seemed ready to seize the day. Before long, Dhoruba was running with his old gang again, and they devised a plan to hold-up an after hours club in the Bronx. Predictably, the police were immediately in pursuit of them once they fled into the street after the heist, and Dhoruba knew he had to get out of the neighborhood and lay low for a while. He moved in with his grandfather in Queens, and was soon in leagues with the Shakur brothers who ran a Pan-African cultural center. Dhoruba was not as radical as the Shakur brothers, but he hastily purchased some recordings of Malcolm X's speeches along with the book Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements.

Dhoruba discovered that while he had been in prison, the civil rights movement had gotten well underway. The older, more frustrated generation of Negroes was now infused with a new generation primed for action. Malcolm X had said "A black man in America lives in a police state. He doesn't live in a democracy." (p. 182). He also said that the problem facing the Negroes of America was "not a problem of civil rights but a problem of human rights." (p. 183). Dhoruba saw that this new movement essentially needed to pick up where Malcolm X had left off, and that it would need to be laced with a whole new sense of zealous idealism.

One member of this new generation was Eddie Ellis, who had taken the death of Malcolm X as a call to arms. He, like many others, wondered what would be the best way to build on Malcolm X's message of empowerment. He knew one thing for sure - he would not rely on nonviolent resistance.

Ellis was a follower of a new leader on the scene, Stokely Carmichael. For those looking to follow in Malcolm X's footsteps, Stokely Carmichael was the man to watch. He had marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., taken part in the freedom rides and been arrested in the name of political activism twenty-seven times. He was the one who said "We been saying 'freedom' for six years and we ain't got nothing. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power." (p. 184) He spoke of Black Power as a right, not just a dream, and his philosophy made sense: black people would never obtain equality unless they had some power - in politics, in economics, in self-determination. He also pointed out that the white people associated Black Power with violence because they feared 'blackness' above all. Hence, the word Negro became the antiquated term, and

the correct term for people of color became black - eventually to be changed to Afro-American. A new era dawned when in Oakland, California, two young members of RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement) Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded a group they called the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. The symbol of the black panther had been chosen by Stokely Carmichael for its ferocity, beauty and strength, and the appeal spread far and wide. Soon, Eddie Ellis had teamed up with other activists to establish a New York chapter of the Black Panthers. The implication was that the members of this movement were going to take what they felt was morally and legally theirs - by force, if need be. Essentially, if you were young and black and teeming with righteous indignation (and what young black person off the street in those days was not?) the Black Panthers held the promise of retribution for years of abuse and injustice delivered by the powers that be. Not surprisingly, to the NYPD, this new militancy was an ominous, looming threat to social order.

George Whitmore's case may have been one of the sparks that ignited the Black Power revolution, but he had little time to invest in such things. He was trying to make a life for himself back in Wildwood while awaiting ruling on his appeal. His mother and father had separated, and she was now in Brooklyn. George found it miserable living with his father, but somehow in the midst of it all, George had managed to fall in love. She was Aida de Jesus, a seventeen-year-old Puerto Rican girl who lived in Brownsville. In January of 1967, in the interest of trying to find work and to be closer to his sweetheart, George returned to the lion's den - Brooklyn, amidst the searing racial tension of the day. He moved in with his mother, and quickly became frustrated in his job search. As soon as employers heard he was that George Whitmore, they told him to come back once he had won his case. He eventually did find a job as a security guard, and walking home from work one night, was mugged by a local Puerto Rican gang member who told him to stay away from Aida.

George decided to join the gang his brother, Gerald, was involved with because strength in numbers would provide him a little protection on the streets. Late on night, predictably, George was involved in an altercation between his gang and the Puerto Rican gang. One of the Puerto Rican gang members, a twenty-seven year old male, was badly injured and rushed to the hospital. George was detained and questioned, but he had learned his lesson and insisted on speaking to his lawyer first. The police were stunned to discover that they had in custody the famous George Whitmore. When Arthur Miller arrived, he was happy to discover that the police were treating George so politely they were actually calling him "Mister Whitmore." They had nothing to hold him on, so he was released. His brother was not as lucky. The Puerto Rican died in the hospital, and Gerald was the one the police were holding responsible. Within a few days it was revealed, however, that the pool cue Gerald had used as a weapon was not the cause of death and he, too was released.

Gerald and George both felt they had dodged a bullet, but Arthur Miller felt that George's presence in the old neighborhood was stirring up tensions, and the judge may find it prudent to revoke George's bail. A more pressing matter was the fact that Aida had become pregnant. They decided to get married, and move back to Wildwood. At

first they had no choice but to live in the shack with George's father, but soon they were able to move into their own apartment.

A month after the wedding, George was informed that his conviction in the Borrero case had once again been overturned. And again, Aaron Koota announced that George would be retried for the Borrero assault. This time they would have to move forward without Stanley Reiban, as George had been forced to let him go because of animosities between he and Arthur Miller. Instead, the enlisted Samuel Neuberger, a highly regarded veteran attorney.

In any normal circumstance, a person would not find themselves on trial a third time for the same crime, particularly a crime that individual didn't even commit. But Aaron Koota had a vested interest in seeing George found guilty and making it stick. Koota felt that the entire New York criminal justice system was as stake; in an effort to steal the famous Career Girls Murder out from under the Manhattan D.A., Brooklyn had hugely embarrassed itself by arresting an innocent man. The only thing that could turn around the ruined reputations of everyone involved would be to find George Whitmore guilty of something - anything. Unfortunately, Koota did have an ace in the hole: Borrero still adamantly insisted that George was her attacker.

It was ruled at the pretrial that George's confession would be admissible as evidence. The trial lasted three days, the jury deliberated for six hours and returned a guilty verdict. Three weeks later, George appeared for sentencing, and the judge was merciless. He was ordered to serve five to ten years for the attempted rape, plus another two and a half to five years for the assault - the maximum possible sentence. Neuberger pledged to appeal the verdict again.

George, who had been given his freedom only to have it snatched away again, now had everything to lose. As he was driven away in the prison bus, he watched as his pregnant wife sobbed on his mother's shoulder.

Chapter Eleven - "Holy Shit!"

The summer of 1967, much like the summer of 1966, was hostile and hot. New York City was "a tinderbox waiting for one wayward spark." (p. 196). The NYPD was on high alert, alarmed by the black liberation movement that rejected nonviolent civil disobedience in favor of militant force. It wasn't just the police force that was nervous. The "white power structure," as Malcolm X called it - white civic, political and business leaders - were unable to acknowledge the concept of Black Power and black liberation as anything more than a criminal conspiracy. In no way did they view the movement as any sort of outgrowth of civil rights. It seemed as though a race war was unavoidable.

It also seemed as though there was a pattern to riots - they occurred mostly in the summer and were triggered by confrontations between the police and the community. In mid-July, the worst riot yet occurred in Newark, New Jersey. African American taxi driver John Smith found himself blocked in by a police squad car that was double parked in the street. When Smith tried to pull around it, he was flagged down, yanked from his cab

and beaten in front of numerous onlookers. The officers claimed Smith was resisting, but Smith said he had not resisted at all. They beat him mercilessly. At his bail hearing the next day, he said, "There was no resistance on my part. That was a cover story by the police. They caved in my ribs, busted a hernia, and put a hole in my head." (p. 199).

News of Smith's mistreatment spread quickly, and in an era when the blacks were not going to take police brutality lying down any longer, things turned ugly fast. The five days and nights that followed were like the apocalypse; America had not seen the likes of such violence and chaos since the Civil War draft riots. The police force did not know how to respond to such a mass urban uprising, so they did the only thing they could do; deliver a massive display of force. All black people on the street were considered dangerous and were clubbed indiscriminately. The populace replied with Molotov cocktails, bricks and rocks, and whatever else they could hurl at the local police. By the third day, the governor of New Jersey called in the National Guard, which caused the situation to deteriorate into utter anarchy. There were snipers on rooftops shooting at Guardsmen, Guardsmen shooting at rioters, state police firing one way, Newark police firing another way - and eventually everyone accidentally shooting at each other.

Five days later when the rubble settled, there were 26 dead, 725 injured, 1,500 arrests, and 10 million dollars worth of property damage. Two weeks later, another riot erupted in Detroit that trumped even the Newark riot, with 43 dead, 467 injured, 7,200 arrests and 200 buildings burned to the ground.

New York felt it was lucky things had not been worse, and the Lindsay administration took credit for not allowing the riots to degenerate into something much more terrible. What they did not realize was that in New York, it was more of a slow-motion riot, a volcano that would periodically erupt over the next ten years.

As Dhoruba Bin Wahad watched the riots unfold, he pondered the idea that the concept of freedom was becoming synonymous with rebellion and dissent. He shared the same thought with many of the Black Power movement's leaders: if only this mob power could be channeled in a more productive way, the revolution they were on the cusp of could actually be forged into something real.

A few days after the riots, Dhoruba witnessed something unbelievable. Walking off the subway, he and several other innocent black youths were met by cops in riot gear who had set up a dragnet. None of those that were taken into custody had done anything wrong, it was just a way for the police to sweep a bunch of youths off the street and hold them for 24 hours. Dhoruba would have to make periodic court appearances for six months, until the charges against him were dismissed. Dhoruba saw this raid for exactly what it was - just one more indication of how the system was designed to criminalize innocent black people, even if they were doing nothing more than minding their own business, riding the subway.

The year was 1967, the year the Hippie movement had declared to be the Summer of Love. This was truly manifested for Dhoruba when he met a young woman named Iris Bull, to whom he was instantaneously attracted. They decided to get an apartment

together in the East Village, which was ground zero for the psychedelic sixties. Pooling resources with some friends, Dhoruba bought marijuana by the pound and earned a living selling it by the dime bag. Dhoruba and Iris were a striking couple. In an era of "black-is-beautiful," with their dynamic personalities and passions, they soon became a power couple. Their apartment was a gathering place for a diverse assemblage of artists, activists, hippies and black militants. Their parties came complete with tabs of acid, a huge bowl of joints and plenty of booze, and thus lasted sometimes all weekend long.

Dhoruba found himself being pulled in two different directions. On one hand, he felt the urge to exercise his newfound freedom amidst the self-indulgent debauchery of the era of free love, but on the other hand, he felt the need to continue the disciplined pursuit of his process of political enlightenment. Dhoruba was fascinated by the Black Panthers and vowed to learn more about them.

In October, Iris and Dhoruba donned matching African clothing, jumped in a friend's pickup truck, drove down to the Municipal Building in Manhattan and got married. Walking tall, hand in hand as husband and wife, the two shared a vast sense of possibility, like it was their time to seize a moment in history.

In keeping tabs on the Black Panthers, Dhoruba learned that Huey Newton, the party's chairman was in the hospital and under arrest for shooting and killing a cop. Huey and another Panther were driving in West Oakland when they were pulled over. The cop realized he had just pulled over the leader of the Black Panthers and called for backup. Newton was told to get out of the car, a scuffle ensued, and a policeman was shot dead. A huge "Free Huey" campaign soon began sweeping across America, and for Dhoruba, it was a call to enlist in the struggle for black liberation.

By 1968, stories like George Whitmore's were so common that they weren't even news anymore. An attorney named Myron Beldock became involved with George's case, and he was an expert in zeroing in on one specific legal detail that could change the course of a case. When Beldock met George, he, like many attorneys before him, soon discovered that George was the type of person who was not able to stand up to pressure. "If the police had told him 'it is all going to be over, all you have to do is sign a confession to the Lincoln assassination,' he would have signed it." (p. 211) George had met with so many lawyers who had paraded in front of him then disappeared into thin air that he had just about lost all hope. But, George was impressed with Beldock, and decided to put his faith in him.

Beldock found one very pertinent issue that had gone unresolved for too long: the circumstances surrounding Elba Borrero's identification of George. The only similarity between George and the original description Borrero gave of her assailant was that he was a black male. In addition, every possible police policy had been violated in the obtaining of this identification: George had not been put in a lineup, Borrero had peered at him through a peephole, George had been predisposed as a criminal to Borrero, and she had never been shown an array of photos from which to identify her assailant. Also, he was told to speak the words "I'm going to rape you, I'm going to kill you," (p. 211) a

line fed to him by the cops, and Borrero first expressed uncertainty before she became convinced that George was her attacker. Beldock decided he would appeal on the grounds that Borrero's identification of Whitmore had been obtained illegally, unconstitutionally, and under violation of his civil rights. Beldock felt optimistic.

In March of 1968, within the walls of Sing Sing prison, George had reason to feel optimistic, too. He received a letter from Aida informing him that he had become a father.

Chapter Twelve - Revolution

Eddie Ellis was running into some roadblocks in trying to establish the New York chapter of the Black Panthers. The vast majority of what was meant to be his military division - the muscle of the organization - had been arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit anarchy. Without them, the Black Panthers weren't much edgier than the NAACP. In addition, most of the members of the Black Panthers were churchgoing college kids and conventional political activists. What the founding members of the Panthers had intended was an organization of fearless revolutionaries.

It became clear in the summer of 1968 that a compromise between groups like the CORE (Congress for Racial Equality) and (SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and the West Coast Panthers would be impossible. The Black Panthers agreed to meet with James Forman, who is historically considered to be one of the civil rights movements "big four," in addition to Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins and Whitney M. Young. Forman had agreed to meet with Huey Newton's brother Melvin, and David Hilliard, chairman of the Black Panther Party in Huey's stead. Accounts would differ, but according to the newspapers, the Panthers walked into Forman's office, put a gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger three times. The gun had not been loaded, it was nothing more than a gesture of intimidation. Forman would deny that there was any torture or gunplay, but he did disassociate himself with the Black Panthers because he felt his personal safety was at risk from internal elements in the organization. The rumors of the incident with Forman contributed to the Panther's militant, take-no-prisoners reputation. Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information, responded by saying "You're either part of the solution or you're part of the problem." (p. 215). The old school way of doing things was part of the problem.

The Black Panthers also had another problem of which they were unaware. The Justice Department and the FBI, as far back as the cold war, had been infiltrating and spying on any organization they deemed to be "un-American," civil rights organizations included. There was a moment in time when the FBI considered Martin Luther King Jr. to be the most dangerous Negro in America, and now with the far more threatening Black Panther Party rapidly emerging, J. Edgar Hoover was in a near panic. From that point forward, any individual assuming a leadership role in the Black Power movement was designated as an enemy of the state and put on the "Black Agitator Index," a list of "bad Negroes" whose political beliefs warranted the state authority to monitor their movements.

In the spring of 1968, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, like so many other young black men, were reading the writings of Eldridge Cleaver, who, since Huey Newton had been imprisoned, had emerged as the visible leader of the Black Panther Party. He was a natural leader, and with his cool but fierce image he quickly became known as the epitome of Panther chic. Dhoruba felt Cleaver's writings were the best thing he had seen since Malcolm X.

Dhoruba was pushed over the edge and into the action after an incident that occurred on a now famous day in history, April 4, 1968. Martin Luther King was shot to death on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee by a white gunman named James Earl Ray. Like most of the black community, the news for Dhoruba was positively gut-wrenching. The idea that King, a peaceful, well respected man who had come to symbolize nonviolence, had been the one gunned down rather than one of the Black Panthers was unbelievable. It just went to show that compliance got you nowhere.

Within 48 hours of the assassination, Dhoruba was in the offices of the Black Panthers headquarters in Brooklyn wanting to know what he needed to do to sign up. He was told he would need to fill out an application form, and take some political education classes at Long Island University before he would be allowed to join. In reviewing the list of required books, he told the Panther officer that he had already read some of them while in prison upstate. The officer shook his hand and told him he had come to the right place.

George Whitmore choked up when he heard the news about Martin Luther King. King had once saved George's life, literally; his famous "I Have a Dream" speech had been George's alibi. George made a few dollar on the side, as he had after Malcolm X had been assassinated, painting portraits of King and selling them to inmates.

Bill Phillips, like the rest of the NYPD, wondered how long it would take for the rioting to start. By April 6th, there was full-fledged rioting in more than 100 American cities and the National Guard was called in to restore peace in Chicago, Baltimore and Washington DC. There was some rioting in New York City, but nothing near the magnitude of the previous summer's riots. The King assassination riots had left just one dead, seventy injured and 428 arrests.

One week after King's nationally televised funeral, Phillips and his partner were cruising in at squad car when at Park Avenue and West 122nd Street, a Hispanic woman came running at them shouting that her apartment was being robbed. Phillips went up to her apartment to find a black man in the hallway with his hands full of the woman's belongings. Phillips and the man tussled. Phillips' hand was sliced open with a knife and the man fled the scene. Phillips chased after him and fired one shot, severing the man's lung artery. The man's name was Calvin McCoy, and he died later that day at the hospital.

Mayor Lindsey's newly formed Urban Task Force was called in to investigate. The Force had been established to arrive on scenes and help keep the peace in potentially explosive situations. They wanted to know why the man had been shot, and when

Phillips explained how it had gone down, and they looked into McCoy's extensive criminal record, it was determined that Phillips had acted appropriately.

There was no rioting after the shooting of Calvin McCoy, but a few weeks later a young man arrived at the Twenty-fifth precinct wishing to speak with a detective. He said he was the brother of Calvin McCoy and wished to report his murder at the hands of Patrolman William Phillips. The young man was told to leave and nothing became of the incident, but it caused the police to speculate about the situation. Calvin McCoy was a young black man who was gunned down by a white cop, which, given the atmosphere of the day should have incited some backlash. However, McCoy had a long criminal record, and the death took place while he was burglarizing an apartment. These facts seemed to gauge the neighborhood's reaction to the shooting, but raised some theoretical questions. Does a perpetrator in the act of a crime deserve to die? And does the officer who shoots him deserve a medal of valor, as Phillips received? Phillips was far from proud of the incident, and at a grand jury hearing about the shooting a few months later came face to face with McCoy's mother, who said to him, simply, "you killed my son."

Meanwhile, Dhoruba Bin Wahad was excelling in his Black Panther classes. He was the perfect candidate for the group, as he had military training and knew about weapons, had begun his education while he was in prison and, above all, had joined the party with the correct attitude - he had enlisted to "fight the pigs," as he put it. (p. 225). He was one candidate that the Central Committee in Oakland were pegging as the one to watch. There were Black Panther chapters springing up all over the United States, and the branch in New York was forming up nicely. The police were on alert, naturally, because the formation of the New York Black Panther Party was, to them, the realization of everything they feared since Malcolm X first arrived on the scene. The Panthers began publishing a newspaper called Black Panther in the summer of 1968, and it was filled with attacks upon the criminal justice system, praise for Panthers on trial for shooting or killing police officers and, most offensively to the NYPD, promotion for the image of cops as "pigs." The entire paper, like the Panthers themselves, was brimming with disrespect and downright hatred of the police force that shocked and mystified most cops. There was no precedent for such sheer hostility towards civil authority in the history of American law enforcement. The Panthers were drawing their lines in the sand.

One August afternoon, Dhoruba arrived at party headquarters on Nostrand avenue, to a carnival attitude - people gathering in the street, and a man standing on a crate with a bullhorn explaining the party platform. It didn't take long for the police to come and break things up, and three Panthers were snatched and whisked away to the nearest precinct. A crowd of several hundred strong gathered and marched towards the station house. Dhoruba was a member of a four-man negotiation team that entered the precinct and persuaded the police to transfer the men to arraignment court immediately. Outside the courthouse, Dhoruba skirted the crowd that had now doubled in size. Television reporters arrived on the scene to capture what appeared to be shaping up as the first major showdown between the police and the Black Panthers.

One reporter approached Dhoruba asking him what he thought about the charges. He replied, "This was an unprovoked attack by the police. The brothers had a First Amendment right to be out on the street. This is typical fascist pig behavior. All power to the people." (p. 229) On the six o'clock and eleven o'clock news, Dhoruba was identified as a Black Panther spokesman, and just like that, he was the new face of the Black Panther Party in New York City.

That night, resentment over the incident hung heavy in the air. There were promises shouted at the police that they would see some Black Panther power before the morning came. Around midnight, two cops reporting to a domestic dispute were blasted with shotguns. They did not die, but they were wounded and rushed to the hospital. As the scene was being searched for evidence, the shotgun shells were found, along with a white button bearing the insignia of a black panther. If the war had not begun before this, it certainly had now.

Chapter Thirteen - "Off The Pigs!"

George Whitmore left prison on June 15, 1968, released on bail. He was able to rejoin with Aida and meet his less-than-a-year-old daughter for the first time. What he was not able to do was find any sort of employment. His lawyer, Arthur Miller eventually was able to find him part-time work through a federally funded program. He was to work under Minister Louis Farrakhan, national spokesman for the Islam Nation. George was told that while he was there, he was one of them, a brother. In truth, George never really got on well with the Muslims. They were exclusive, rigidly disciplined and overtly religious. No matter, it was work and he needed it, but the problems began immediately. George participated in many activities the Nation of Islam forbade: he smoked, he drank, he cursed, he ate pork. Eventually George simply stopped showing up for work. This was the closest he ever came to being directly associated with the black liberation movement.

In the meantime, the Black Panthers had established a Harlem branch as well as a South Bronx branch. New members were signing up in droves, as they were nationwide, and by the summer the Black Panthers would have tens of thousands of members. This growth spurt overwhelmed the original Oakland chapter of the Panthers. They sent as many emissaries as possible to ensure that any group calling themselves the Black Panthers were doing things according to the ten-point program and following the mission statement.

Social and political activists of all sorts were drawn to the party. One was Cleo Silvers of Philadelphia who came to New York as a volunteer in 1966. She first came in contact with the Panthers during an attempted take over of Lincoln Hospital by the healthcare workers. She was impressed with the Panthers' ideas and level of organization. She went to the Harlem office to sign up, and here she met Afeni Shakur, future mother of rapper Tupac Shakur. Shakur told Silvers that she could not join the Black Panthers until she learned how to properly wrap a gelee (an African-style head covering popular in the 60's and 70's.) Silvers watched as they wrapped her head, mimicked the motion, and became a member of the Panthers then and there. She soon quit her job to devote

herself fully. In her required political education classes, her teacher was Dhoruba Bin Wahad. She found him to be brilliant and firm. If you missed a question, he made you run laps around the block.

The female Panthers made up 20-40% of the New York membership. They were responsible for selling the Black Panther newspaper, organizing food and clothing drives, and maintaining communal apartments used by the Panthers. The male Panthers spent their days immersed in paranoia and the stress of almost daily conflict with the NYPD.

Everything about the Panthers enraged the police, with their 'the only good pig is a dead one' attitude. Before long, the police began to push back, and formed an organization called the Law Enforcement Group, or LEG. Often large numbers of policemen would turn up when a black militant was on file. On September 4th, there was a group of panthers on trial at the Criminal Court Building in Brooklyn, and roughly 150 off-duty police officers burst into the courtroom shouting "white power," "white tigers eat Black Panthers," and "Win with Wallace!" Many wore 'Wallace for President' buttons in support of the white supremist Alabama governor. It was considered to be one of the most astonishing displays of racism ever seen.

Later, in the hallway, five or six Panther supporters were attacked by the officers and beat senseless. The crowd of men disappeared from the building immediately after the brawl. The NAACP called for a grand jury investigation. While LEG was not officially supported or in any way endorsed by the upper brass, they did seem to represent the general consensus. The NYPD wanted to show the public that they were not about to be pushed around by a group of hoodlum black teenagers. This attitude was as much for morale as it was for combating the Panthers. But there were other forces at work towards the latter as well.

A little-known branch of the police department's Intelligence Division called the Bureau of Special Services (BOSS), set up during the cold war to monitor the Communist Party in New York, had shifted its focus onto "black hate groups." BOSS had placed six different undercover agents inside the New York Panthers. There was Panama-born Carlos Ashwood, recruited by the NYPD expressly for penetrating the Panthers. Also, Ralph White, who was known for his provocative advocacy of violence. And, most notoriously, Gene Roberts, whom very few people knew was actually NYPD. He was with Malcolm X when he had been shot, acting as his bodyguard and administering CPR to him as he lay dying, making him something of a legend in black activist circles.

Very few people inside the NYPD knew the details of BOSS operations. Their efforts to gather intelligence were ongoing through the summer of 1968, the goal being not only to monitor the Panthers, but to ultimately bring about their demise. On September 8, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover declared on the front page of the New York Times that the Black Panther Party was "the greatest single threat to the internal security of the country." (p. 244) The FBI was soon urged to accelerate thecounterintelligence program against the Panthers.

Because Dhoruba Bin Wahad was aware that snitches and spies were something of which he needed beware, he helped the Panthers establish a security detail. He was the natural choice for security field secretary with his gang and prison background. In September of 1968, Dhoruba and Iris left their East Village party life behind and moved to Harlem where Dhoruba was to become a true warrior in the revolution. The New York chapter of the Black Panthers was never to be the same that same fall, when Eldridge Cleaver finally made his New York debut. Dhoruba was put in charge of Cleaver's security detail and he was finally able to meet face-to-face with the man whose writings had drawn him towards the Black Panther Party to begin with. Cleaver was running for president on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket. The purpose of his campaign was not to win, rather to organize people and lay the ground for a revolutionary movement. Cleaver had a big personality and a big reputation. He carried himself like a star and delivered speeches that people came away from feeling as though they had witnessed a cultural phenomenon; even the media thought he was cool.

In the streets, it was a different story - a war was raging, and sometimes there were bystander casualties. Joseph "Jazz" Hayden, for example, was a black male, and in the eyes of the authorities, this was enough to make him a suspicious character. Huey P. Newton, the founder of the Panther Party, was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter of a police officer and sentenced to two to fifteen years in prison. His sentence caused the New York Panthers to respond by shooting some "pigs." The officers targeted were injured but not killed, and a city-wide alarm went out for the assailants.

Jazz Hayden was a small-time hustler who had nothing to do with the Black Panthers. He had of course heard of the Panthers, and was aware that the situation on the streets from the NYPD's perspective could be summed up as "It ain't no fun when the rabbit got the gun," (p 250) but he was not plugged-in enough to be aware of Newton's sentencing. Upon returning home one evening, he was shocked to find a bevy of police officers surrounding his home. He figured they were looking for someone else, until they spotted him, chased him and began shooting at him. He was able to escape on the roof but was hunted relentlessly for weeks. Finally, they caught up to him at his girlfriend's house, and he learned that he had been fingered by an ex-hustling partner who had been arrested in the shooting of two patrolmen. Hayden had nothing to do with this crime, and even though the cops didn't really think he was guilty, he was still charged with attempted murder and held without bail. He was charged with another count of attempted murder for supposedly firing on the cops while they were in pursuit of him, another false charge. The arresting detectives attempted to bribe Hayden down to one charge, but he found this ludicrous as neither charge was true, so he refused.

Hayden was found guilty and sentenced to eight and a half to twenty-five years. He served a year and a half before the charges were reversed. He was just collateral damage in a war zone where no one was safe.

Note

On page 244, English lists Eugene Richards as the BOSS operative that infiltrated the Black Panther Party, then on page 271, the same operative, who was by Malcolm X's

side when he was shot, is listed as Gene Roberts. The correct name is Gene Roberts, not Eugene Richards. Eugene Richards was a social activist and a photojournalist during the 1960's, and not directly associated with any of the stories in The Savage City.

The white community in New York City began to fear "reverse discrimination" during the era of the Black Panthers. The black liberation movement were not looking for superiority, merely equality. The white community was likely realizing what history has taught us repeatedly: when you oppress a people, they will stand for it only so long. There will come a point when enough will be enough, and there will be an uprising against the tyranny that holds the people under its thumb. And when a people are violently oppressed, they will violently revolt. Considering the atrocities that the black communities were exposed to, it is no surprise that a group like the Black Panthers would attract such a huge following. It must have felt so empowering to be a part of a militant group like the Panthers during that time - a time when a black person of any age or social standing was really not safe on the streets. To have the Panthers in your corner would have been like becoming a member of the fiercest gang on the block, or buddying up with the school bully. No one wanted to mess with the Panthers. Before anyone knew what was happening, the Black Panther Party had tens of thousands of members. It was an organization filled with righteously indignant, passionate, outspoken people, and the Central Committee in Oakland recognized that the little ripple they had started had turned into a huge tidal wave of revolution. When the Newark riots happened, it was a classic example of violence begetting violence. It was a show of force on behalf of the black community, as a way of saying "we are not going to take it any more." Many like Dhoruba Bin Wahad were learning that the only way to be free was through rebellion and dissent. He joined the Black Panthers when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated because to him, King's death proved that compliance would get you nowhere. King had tried to calmly change the world through peaceful non-violent resistance and according to the Black Panthers, this idealism had had its day; it was the old way of thinking. Now, said the Panthers, "its our turn." They went in fighting fire with fire. They worked on establishing their ferocious reputation by pulling stunts like the one when Melvin Newton and David Hilliard met with James Foreman.

Why would they deliberately walk into a man's office - someone who is fighting against the same injustices they were - put an unloaded gun in his mouth and pull the trigger? For no other reason than to establish themselves as insane and terrifying; to command respect, and to say, "we tried it your way, and now you are either part of the problem, or part of the solution." It was this attitude that Dhoruba Bin Wahad and so many others were so strongly drawn to. It was a like-mindedness shared across the nation. It mystified the police community, but it really should not have been surprising. When the powers-that-be began reading the Black Panther newspaper, they were mystified further. During a time when challenging the police was simply unheard of, the Black Panthers were exercising their freedom of speech to denounce and disrespect the cops, calling them pigs and racists. In turn, the police did things like storm the courthouse, 150 strong, and brutalize a small group of Panther supporters. They shouted racist slogans, supported a white supremacist running for president, and formed organizations like LEG (Law Enforcement Group) in an effort to "push back" against the uprising. They felt justified in these actions because to challenge their supreme authority was to go

against what they held as the correct social order. What they, meaning anyone who rejected the black liberation movement, were failing to realize was that the social order was due for a re-shuffle. The people of the black liberation movement were simply trying to rearrange the hierarchy in the name of injustice the only way such a thing can be done - by taking a collective stand and demanding that things change. But change, unfortunately, is something that petrifies the status-quo.

Chapter Fourteen: Whitmore's Last Stand - Chapter Sixteen: Panther Justice

Chapter Fourteen: Whitmore's Last Stand - Chapter Sixteen: Panther Justice Summary and Analysis

Chapter Fourteen - Whitmore's Last Stand

Many of the cops in the NYPD followed every confrontation between the Panthers and the police as though it were a sports competition, but most were rather disturbed by what they saw happening. For Bill Phillips, his top priority was, as always, the hustle. He had a reputation of knowing how to get it done, so much so that the rookie cops requested to ride with him frequently. He had many fly-by-night partnerships with fellow hustlers throughout the city.

When Bill's father began his elderly decline, no one could have predicted the profound effect his death would cause for the entire city. Phillips had become a cop because of his old man, who had also been a cop, and had taught Bill about being keeper of the code, the Blue Wall of Silence. When he died, Bill couldn't shake the feeling that the code had died with him.

George Whitmore left his wife, Aida, and returned to Wildwood when he discovered that she had become impregnated by another man. One day, drinking with his friend, Nate, they decided to take a road trip to Mexico. They hitchhiked and hopped trains and traveled to Tijuana. From there they traveled up the West Coast to Portland, Oregon. George was surprised to discover how friendly white people could be outside of New York. He could have stayed out west and remained anonymous, but jumping bail never crossed his mind. When he spoke to his lawyer, he was told to return hastily as there was a court date rapidly approaching.

Soon he was back in court again, listening again to the testimony of Elba Borrero and wondering if his grand adventure had only been a dream. This hearing was to decide if Whitmore deserved a fresh trial based on the grounds that Borrero's identification of him was invalid. Discrediting Borrero's ID had become Whitmore's last stand.

Beldock thought he had done a good job poking holes in Borrero's testimony, but the judge felt that her testimony had the unmistakable ring of truth to it, and no new trial would take place. Meanwhile, in the New York Times, it was revealed that in 1965, Governor Nelson Rockefeller had ordered an investigation into Whitmore's "confession," uncovering at least nineteen discrepancies in the facts. When this report made its way to the State House, the frame-up became a cover-up, and not a single public official accepted responsibility or was reprimanded. The report was buried for four years before it was leaked to the Times by an outside source. And George Whitmore still remained incarcerated.

When Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as the thirty-sixth president of the United States in 1969, things began to change dramatically for the Black Panthers. Nixon was a law-and-order sort of man, and he considered the Panthers to be a threat to the established order of things. Two weeks after his election, Eldridge Cleaver's parole was revoked and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Cleaver fled into exile, eventually establishing an international chapter of the Black Panthers in Algiers. Once Cleaver was exiled and Newton imprisoned, the Black Panthers had no clear national leadership. The police were simultaneously utilizing the media to reinforce the notion that the Panthers were nothing more than a militant underground group, and in no way a community-based social service organization.

One night in January, two officers approached a vehicle they assumed to be abandoned, and were surprised to be fired upon by two Black Panthers. The Panthers fled into a wooded area after the police returned fire, and in the car scrunched on the floor, the patrolmen found unarmed Panther female Joan Bird. Bird was arrested and beaten, and photos of her bruised and bloodied face were printed in the Black Panther. Dhoruba Bin Wahad felt that he could educate his people through propaganda, and he recognized the propaganda value of the Joan Bird incident. He had become one of the Black Panther Party's most vocal and visible leaders in New York, which of course also meant he was under the scrutiny of the NYPD's undercover operations.

Though he had always suspected Ralph White was a spy, he, and no one else, dreamed that Gene Roberts was an informant. He had been with Malcolm X when he was shot; his pedigree seemed beyond reproach. Bin Wahad had a few flickering moments of apprehension towards Roberts, but he wrote it off as the natural paranoia infiltrating his life as a Black Panther. One early morning in April, however, Dhoruba's worst fears were confirmed when he was apprehended at his apartment. Similar raids were taking place all over the city. In all, twenty-one were arrested, and they would come to be known as 'The Panther Twenty-One'. They were being charged with more than two hundred counts of conspiracy. The forces of the law had just, in one fell swoop, taken out the entire upper echelon of the Black Panthers in New York City.

Chapter Fifteen - The Rot Within

Many whites in new York City considered it to be downright un-American to question the motives and ethics of the police, and considered the Black Panthers to be communists, terrorists and black extremists all rolled into one. This perception provided a very convenient smoke screen for the NYPD. While they did want to take down the Panthers for a variety of reasons, the idea that the corruption in the police department might be exposed, many cops losing their jobs and reputations and even possibly going to jail, was terrifying. Taking down the Panthers would make the NYPD look like heroes in the eyes of the white populace, and give them an opportunity to possibly disband the party forever.

Now safe within his second term as mayor, Lindsay decided to establish via executive order, an independent commission to investigate the extent of the corruption within the city's police department. One of the police to be investigated was Bill Phillips, but he

wasn't the least bit worried. His payoffs went all the way up the chain of command; he felt that spreading the wealth would make him immune to reproach. It was inconceivable to him that the department's way of doing business could ever change.

The trial of the Panther Twenty-One dragged on for months. The most vocal of the accused was Dhoruba, who announced that he wasn't "going down like all those other niggers," (p. 283) referencing George Whitmore. Dhoruba felt that all he and his compatriots were asking for was justice, and, impassioned as he was, used profanity when addressing the judge. He was held in contempt and the proceedings were delayed. This would go on for twenty-four months in all, making it the longest criminal proceeding in New York State history. Of course, the trial proved a magnet for all manner of protest movements and the sidewalk in front of the courthouse became a circus of media and activists.

For Dhoruba, the trial brought out his most rebellious self. Dhoruba's story - former gangbanger turned Panther field secretary - was at the heart of everything the New York Panthers stood for. He was a rising star. Because he was a recognized leader, he would be held accountable by the West Coast Panthers for the infiltration that had led to the Panther Twenty-One situation. Huey Newton was still in prison, so his chief of staff and acting boss of the Panthers, David Hilliard, came to speak with Dhoruba. The Oakland chapter was enraged over the indictments of its members, but more importantly, they were afraid the New York Panthers might topple the entire national organization. Hilliard told Bin Wahad that they had decided to close the New York chapter. Dhoruba was enraged, naturally, as the New York Black Panther Party had become the nucleus of his existence, and he reminded Hilliard that the center of the black culture of the United States was Harlem. Neither he nor Newton could discount that. And besides, the Panther Twenty-One trial would bring in untold donations for the party. This got Hilliard's attention.

Hilliard had risen to his position of power in the party mostly because he was Huey Newton's childhood friend. He was someone for whom Dhoruba Bin Wahad had not one lick of respect. Hilliard conceded to put the entire New York chapter under suspension, except for the brothers and sisters in jail.

Dhoruba knew he had to meet with Huey Newton directly rather than just through Hilliard, whom he knew he could not trust. His fellow Panthers were becoming increasingly impressed with his leadership. In March of 1970, Afeni Shakur, Joan Bird, Michael "Cetewayo" Tabor and Dhoruba Bin Wahad were released on bail. Over the next few months, Dhoruba gave speeches all over the country to elicit support and raise funds for the Black Panthers and the Panther Twenty-One.

During this time, the Panther's Central Committee decided that since the New York chapter was riddled with informants, overseers from California, with authority to call the shots, were brought in. Not surprisingly, Dhoruba and the New York Panthers were not happy with this development. In August of 1970, Huey Newton's conviction was overturned on a technicality and the Panther universe rejoiced. Unfortunately, things had changed so dramatically in the time that he had been incarcerated - the tiny

community organization he'd started in Oakland had become a massive society with more than forty chapters nationwide - that Huey became overwhelmed. Both he and Hilliard were intimidated by New York. Dhoruba would recall that they had no sense of style, culture or, most unforgivably, history. Since Harlem was the geopolitical center of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism, the transplanted country boys from Oakland were unable to grasp the vastness of the international black culture. Newton seemed to be suffering from a massive inferiority complex and was never to bond with the New York Panthers. After the Panthers saw that Newton was only a man, and not the iconic legend they had expected, his image quickly tarnished.

But Newton was the legendary founder of the Black Panthers, and thus he found himself being courted by the elite: famous intellectuals and Manhattan celebrities. They were plying him with cognac and cocaine, which enflamed his ego, stoked his paranoia and caused him to play right into the hands of the FBI. The FBI had increased its counterintelligence program, hoping to exploit the rift in the factions of the Panther Party. The ultimate goal of their operation was to pit Panthers against one another in hopes that they would begin eliminating each other.

Huey P. Newton was very sensitive to any sort of criticism against him, and when Dhoruba Bin Wahad complained that certain funds raised by the Defense Committee could not be accounted for, he did not take kindly to it. Nor was he able to convincingly defend himself because, in truth, he had siphoned funds in order to finance his growing cocaine habit. The Oakland Panthers were not interested in discussing strategies to support the Panther Twenty-One, and Dhoruba was caught in the middle and acting as mediator. The Twenty-One defendants were becoming restless and frustrated. In January of 1971, eleven of them decided to publish an open letter criticizing Newton and demanding the immediate expulsion of Hilliard as Chief of Staff. In retribution, Newton expelled all eleven members who had signed the letter, and pulled out all Panther support. Dhoruba had not signed, but he was suspended along with Cetewayo, Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur.

The Black Panther party was fissuring before everyone's eyes. Dhoruba's faction had a very valuable spy in Cetewayo's wife, Connie Matthews. She was Newton's secretary, and her husband Cetewayo had been ordered to marry her so that she would escape deportation. Newton was sleeping with her, but he had not anticipated that she would actually fall in love with her own husband. She worried about Huey, because most of the time he was high on cocaine and behaving erratically, waving guns in the air and such. He called Dhoruba a "murder mouth," (p. 296) and a threat to his leadership. He vowed that this menace would be eliminated soon, one way or the other. At the same time, the FBI sent an anonymous letter to Newton's entourage alleging that Dhoruba and his people were planning to assassinate him when he came back to New York.

Whatever differences Dhoruba and the Panther Twenty-One had with Newton, they had made a conscious decision amongst themselves that they would not participate in any sort of conspiracy to eliminate him. To do so would be a tragedy, and after the deaths of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, they didn't want Newton's blood on their hands. They wanted to try one last time to reason with him. Dhoruba and Cetewayo were

allowed to speak with him surrounded by security, but found Newton under the influence of drugs and alcohol and unable to have a coherent conversation, much less make command decisions.

Realizing the time had come to drop into the underground, Dhoruba, Cetewayo, Jamal Joseph and Connie Matthews escaped New York and headed for Canada. Connie and Cetewayo flew to Algeria and never returned. Because they had jumped bail, warrants were issued for their arrests, as well as for Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur who was four-months pregnant. All of the renegade Panthers were purged from the party. Dhoruba and the other expelled were called enemies of the people, and the remaining New York Panthers began to fear for their lives.

When a Panther named Robert Webb, who was loyal to Dhoruba, surfaced from the underground in Harlem one day in March, it became clear the war over black liberation had degenerated into a war of Panther vs. Panther. He had returned from hiding because he heard the original Oakland Black Panther newspaper was being distributed on New York turf. He confronted a group of Newton-loyal Panthers and was ambushed and shot multiple times. He was left to die in the gutter near the Apollo Theatre, where Martin Luther King had spoken his peaceful, nonviolent messages eight years earlier.

Chapter Sixteen - Panther Justice

In October of 1970, the Black Panther Party made the decision to investigate the inner city drug situation for themselves to determine which police officers on the beat were receiving kick backs while the drug traffic flourished. The officers in question would be systematically murdered, and the first to go would be those in Harlem. The Panthers were also calling for decentralization of the police force to make way for community policing, which would have set a historic precedent in the United States. What worried cops like Bill Phillips, of course, was the possibility of the NYPD's corruption being dragged out into the light of day. He had made the decision to pull his hustling activities out of the ghetto for a while and focus on the East Side and Manhattan, and he was always on the lookout for new scores.

One night, drinking at his favorite watering hole, Phillips was approached by another detective who told him that a few blocks away, there was a high-class madam looking for a cop who could offer her protection. Phillips met with Xaviera Hollander, a thirty-five year old Dutch immigrant who was a professional hooker and businesswoman. Working with the patrolman who worked the East Fifty-fifth Street beat, Phillips agreed to help Hollander for $1100 a month split between the precinct, the borough, the division and Phillips. Hollander winced at the price, but she agreed. Present at the meeting was Teddy Ratnoff, who was introduced as Xaviera's "boyfriend." He, unbeknownst to all, was wearing a wire and working for the Knapp Commission, which was an undercover operation sent in to find dirty cops actively engaged in criminal scores that would reach throughout the command structure. They had just found their man in Bill Phillips.

In the weeks that followed, Knapp Commissioners monitored Phillips daily, but he never suspected. Such a thing was inconceivable to him since he knew he would be tipped off

by someone in the department; that was the way it worked. Before long, Phillips became suspicious of Ratnoff and exposed him. The Knapp investigators, listening in, quickly entered the building to assist Ratnoff. They did a risky thing; they let Phillips go so that he could consider the situation for a few days. Phillips knew that this development was going to turn life as he knew it on its ear. He was going to have to come clean on everything. He was about to become the most infamous snitch in the history of American policing.

Another organization undergoing internal struggles was the Black Panthers. They had been portrayed by the police and in the media as an organization designed for nothing more than killing cops. The Panthers were experiencing a phase of internal violence; the murder of Robert Webb would not be forgotten. Dhoruba knew he was on the hit list, but he had gone underground. Most people, including the cops, thought he had exiled himself to Algeria, but in fact he was moving from Panther pad to Panther pad in the Bronx. Nothing got under Dhoruba's skin more than the knowledge of Huey P. Newton setting up a West Coast branch of the Panthers in New York. They were distributing the Black Panther out of Queens, with none of the proceeds going to the New York Panthers operation. The Central Committee was plundering New York City and the "brothers from the block" were not taking kindly to it.

Dhoruba and a handful of others decided to burn down the Black Panther distribution center. During the confrontation that ensued, Sam Napier was bound, shot in the head and set on fire in the basement of the building. Dhoruba was not responsible for the brutal murder, rather it was Irving "Butch" Mason, who got caught up in the moment. To Dhoruba and the rest involved, the hit was the building, not the people inside. Everyone knew there would be consequences, and Dhoruba and Jamal Joseph went deeper underground.

Most were still under the impression that Dhoruba was in Algeria with Eldridge Cleaver. Since skipping bail on the Panther Twenty-One trial, Dhoruba had been roundly demonized by Newton, and he felt that he needed to explain his actions. He wrote a letter to the Times, which they sat on for months and printed three weeks after the death of Sam Napier. He attempted to explain the split between the East and West Coast Panthers, he criticized the Central Committee and he lambasted Newton, who he claimed was trying to derail the revolution, for living in plush penthouses at the expense of the "people's struggle." While Newton luxuriated in the uptown apartment of Panther supporter Jane Fonda, Dhoruba was underground, stockpiling weapons and plotting a revolution.

The Panther Twenty-One trial finally came to a close in May of 1971 and the defendants were found not-guilty on all counts. It had not been a total loss for law enforcement, since as a result the Black Panther Party was beyond recovery; this had been the goal from the start. Everyone was left wondering what would come next. The answer came on May 19th, when Patrolmen Thomas Curry and Nicholas Binetti were ambushed with a machine gun by a group of black men in a Ford Maverick. The police officers survived, just barely - Curry was disfigured and brain damaged, Binetti was paralyzed. Two days later, police officers Waverly Jones and Joseph Piagentini were called to a routine

domestic violence disturbance to discover that it was a hoax. As they were leaving the scene, Jones, an African American, was shot in the back of the head and killed. Piagentini was taken down with one shot, then one of the assailants approached, pulled Piagentini's own gun from his holster, and fired repeatedly. He died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

It was becoming apparent that out of the ashes of the Black Panthers was arising something more sinister. Earlier that day, a package containing the license plate of the Ford Maverick from the Curry-Binetti shooting was received at a local radio station from a new group called the Black Liberation Army. The day after the Jones-Piagentini shooting a note arrived at the same radio station claiming credit, signed, 'Revolutionary Justice.' This was unprecedented in the history of the NYPD - police officers being randomly executed just because they were cops, regardless of their skin color. Clearly, it was open season on the New York City Police Department. Not surprisingly, the response from the police was an attitude of retribution. President of the PBA, Edward J. Kiernan stated: "This is a war. I want all my men to understand that in any situation in which they have to draw their weapons, they are to shoot to kill. This is a battle to the death, and I want everyone to know that we won't be the only ones taking casualties." (p. 323)

After serving a nine-month sentence in New Jersey for attempted robbery, George Whitmore was released from jail. George mused that every time he was released from incarceration, the situation on the streets seemed to have disintegrated a little further. This time, New York City was a war zone. George did not support the black militants for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was how their actions might affect his future freedom. George may have been out of jail for the moment, but he was broke and jobless, and his freedom hung from a fragile thread. He got a call from Myron Beldock, who told him that a Hollywood screenwriter named Abby Mann wanted to meet him. Mann was working in conjunction with Universal Studios to adapt Selwyn Raab's book about George called Justice in the Back Room. In the interest of authenticity, Mann wanted to meet with George and discuss his story. George was intrigued, but broke as he was, he couldn't help but wonder how much he would be paid for his participation. He had to borrow money from his lawyer to get back home from the meeting. George felt like no matter how hard he tried, no matter how many promises were made to him, he was still stuck in the ghetto, struggling for shelter and sustenance, nothing more in the eyes of society than a black criminal with a rap sheet.

For Bill Phillips, the job of being a police officer was never about protecting and serving, it was always all about the hustle. He stepped out his door every morning wondering, "what can I get for me today?" Not, "who can I help today?" The "Blue Wall of Silence," for a cop like Bill Phillips, was nothing but a smokescreen to hide what was really going on. Of course, he was not by any means the only cop on the take. The entire police force was full of men going about their duties with the worst intentions. It could be argued that the Black Panthers was an organization that began with pretty good intentions - namely, to empower the black populace against the violence that was so inherent to the system. Essentially, the Panthers had been founded to help the Everyman, like George Whitmore, to fight back. When things began to fail in his

marriage, George decided to hop a train and see the country and basically live a little. Never having been out of New York state, George was amazed to see the wide open spaces, and surprised to see how nice white people could be outside of the city. He had the opportunity to just stay gone - to jump his bail and never return to his nightmare and ultimately, jail. But he did the "right" thing, and returned only to land himself back in the slammer.

George's story was a sad and frustrating one, and his predicament seemed to just get more ridiculous as it played out. He was one of the sparks that lit the flame of black liberation, but there wasn't much the Panthers could do to help George, unfortunately. Things had started to go horribly wrong for the Black Panthers. When Nixon took office, it was the beginning of the end for them. With Huey P. Newton in jail and Eldridge Cleaver in exile, there was no clear national leadership for the Panthers. Dhoruba Bin Wahad saw this void and stepped into it. He rose to the occasion in New York City, the heart of the Pan-African movement, the home of Harlem, so naturally he would come under scrutiny and become a target for law enforcement. When Dhoruba and the rest of the Panther Twenty-One were arrested, the police had intended to eliminate the entire upper echelon of the New York Black Panthers, and they did a pretty good job. Dhoruba was, as usual, the most indignant of the righteously indignant, behaving like an angry, caged animal. He was very vocal during the trial, swearing at the judge, and acting like - for all intents and purposes - the Panther poster boy. His story was the heart and soul of the Black Panthers; former gang member turned Panther field secretary who had stepped into a leadership role to ultimately be taken down by the "pigs." He told the judge that all he and his compatriots wanted was justice, and they were going to demand it. He let everyone know that when you send in Gestapo-type troops on a city street, the civilians will arm themselves and fight back. Its really no surprise that things did not go well between Dhoruba and the West Coast Panthers, like David Hilliard. To begin with, Hilliard did not earn his position, he was given it by Huey P. Newton because they had been friends all their lives. That sort of nepotism did not sit well with Dhoruba. So when Hilliard came into New York talking about shutting down the New York Black Panthers, while Dhoruba and his people were in jail defending their organization, of course things would turn ugly fast. Dhoruba was enraged to discover that in the end, it all came down to the almighty dollar. When Hilliard found out that the New York Panthers could generate revenue, he reconsidered. Then when Newton was released from jail and went to New York, he began siphoning money away from the Panther Twenty-One defendants and into his own pocket for his burgeoning cocaine habit. Dhoruba had no problem letting Newton know that this was unacceptable, and Newton began to see Dhoruba as a threat to his leadership. Meanwhile, the FBI was looking to exploit this rift and, essentially, all of these factors playing together meant the Panthers were doomed. It didn't take long for it to turn into a war of Panther vs. Panther. When we consider Dhoruba Bin Wahad vs. Huey P. Newton, it becomes very clear who deserved to be in a position of power with the Black Panthers, and to whom the organization meant the most. The Black Panthers were Dhoruba Bin Wahad's entire identity, the solar system around which he revolved. Newton had founded the organization, and he was a legend because of that fact, but he had been in jail when the Black Panthers exploded and became a society. He couldn't cope with the behemoth thing his little community project had become in his absence. But because he was the name behind

the movement, he became famous and he reveled in the luxury of that. Meanwhile, Dhoruba Bin Wahad is in the underground, on the run, stockpiling weapons and living the life of a true revolutionary. There is a stark contrast between these two men. In the end, the Panther Twenty-One were found not guilty on all counts, but the cops still got what they wanted. They had irreparably damaged the New York Panthers. They had divided them, but not all together conquered them. In fact, because they were wounded, the Panthers began lashing out, randomly killing cops just because they wore a badge, regardless of race. The police, of course, were not to be outgunned or intimidated and the result again was violence begetting violence and ultimately shoot-to-kill all-out war.

Chapter Seventeen: NEWKILL - Epilogue

Chapter Seventeen: NEWKILL - Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Chapter Seventeen - Newkill

While underground, Dhoruba Bin Wahad had been living by the doctrine of Carlos Marighella and his urban guerrilla manual. According to Marighella, those living underground had to steal to survive. Dhoruba and his crew chose the Triple-O social club as their target for a variety of reasons: it was an illegal after-hours club so they were not likely to call the police, their location was desolate, and Dhoruba knew he and his crew could intimidate their security by arriving with a small arsenal of weapons. Dhoruba was right on all counts - what he had not planned on was a cab driver passing by and seeing he and his men entering the club armed to the teeth. Before they could escape, Dhoruba and crew were surrounded. The police did not realize who they had at first. If they had, chances are pretty good that Dhoruba and his men probably would not have left the premises alive. Once the cops realized the catch they had just made, it was almost too good to be true. The FBI and NYPD had coordinated in secret to create 'Operation Newkill' whose main focus was to bring down anyone even remotely involved with the BLA. Their number one target was Dhoruba Bin Wahad, but they were under the impression that he was in exile. They began to suspect he was still in New York when his fingerprints, as well as those of Jamal Joseph, were found on the license plates from the Ford Maverick sent to the radio station.

Dhoruba knew that he was a prize catch and that any number of crimes may be pinned on him. The NYPD sent out a press release the day Dhoruba was transferred to the Bronx House of Detention stating that the submachine gun seized at the Triple-O club was the same gun used in the Curry-Binetti shooting. Throughout the summer of 1971, Dhoruba's indictments were rolled out one by one: there were to be seventy-five counts against Dhoruba, Jamal, Qualls, and Mason including robbery, grand larceny, possession of a weapon as a felony, burglary, assault and reckless endangerment. Also, Dhoruba, Jamal and Mason were being charged with murder and first-degree arson in the death of Sam Napier.

An interesting thing happened then; the police received a phone call from one Pauline Joseph, the common-law wife of Jamal Joseph. To the police, she would prove to be a "prize informant." She was a witness to the BLA's most active members' activities and was able to give the police many specific details about many of the city's recent crimes. She was to be questioned on the stand and her testimony would be crucial, thus she became a ward of the state and kept under armed guard 24-hours a day.

Then, the announcement that everyone in law enforcement had been waiting for was made: Dhoruba Bin Wahad would be charged in the attempted murders of Curry and Binetti. A plea of not guilty had to be entered on Dhoruba's behalf, because he angrily

refused - claiming that there weren't enough black people on the grand jury to make it a genuine panel of his peers. He was ordered to be held without bail.

The BLA, however, would not be defused as easily as taking Dhoruba and his crew out of the equation. One crew included Twymon Myers, Andrew Jackson and his girlfriend, the notorious Assata Shakur, who sported a signature afro and whom police identified as the "soul of the black militants." (p. 338). They, among others were responsible for facilitating the "underground railroad," through which BLA members on the run could travel to Canada and on to Algeria. At one point, Assata Shakur and Andrew Jackson were identified as the suspects who had lobbed a grenade into a moving police cruiser. Strangely, as the war against the police raged, the public outcry was conspicuously lacking. Because of the exposed corruption amongst the NYPD, according to the citizenry, the battle was no longer a cut-and-dried case of good vs. evil. Bill Phillips was the one responsible for this shift in civic viewpoint.

Phillips was clearly a man skilled in the art of deception, considering that he was able to remain an undercover operative for the Knapp Commission from June through October of 1971. But then the rumors began to spread. The full weight of what he had agreed to hit him hard when he realized he was going to have to go on live television and testify at a public tribunal. It took place on October 18, 1971, and Bill Phillips stepped into the spotlight to become the most infamous police informant in history. For the next three days, spectators were mesmerized by Phillips' calm, matter-of-fact demeanor as he unfolded for the press and the media the methods of corruption that represented the very framework of the NYPD. The Times printed a glossary of terms for the general public so that they could better follow along, including words like "bagman, pad, flake, kite, score, etc." (p. 342).

By the time Phillips had finished, New York would never again think of the NYPD as mostly good, but with a few bad apples. Phillips had revealed that the corruption was much deeper than that - pretty much everyone was on the take, and the honest cops out there just doing there job were very few and far between. But it didn't end there. For the following two weeks, other officers were called to testify and their stories corroborated with everything Phillips had said. The Knapp Commission hearings were wrapped up with Frank Serpico, one of the rare honest cops who had been trying for years to blow the whistle on the extortion he had witnessed every day on the job. Serpico had been shot in the face during a narcotics bust gone bad, and it was rumored that he had been set up by disgruntled cops. His testimony was the final nail in the coffin of NYPD's reputation. Ultimately it was Serpico, not Phillips, who would come to symbolize the historical moment; two years later, Al Pacino would portray Serpico in a major Hollywood film.

The white community was stunned by the revelations of the Knapp Commission hearings, but the black community had known about this corruption for a long time. The underlying racial disease remained untouchable by these revelations, and would fester for decades to come. Meanwhile, the NYPD vs. BLA war had not ceased to rage with each vying for space in the papers. Morale of the NYPD was at an all-time low. There were some cops who expressed dismay over how the black populace perceived them,

but it never seemed to enter into anyone's thought process that this may be perhaps because of the way blacks were treated by cops to begin with. Cops knew they were targets on the street, they knew the blacks hated them and now the white people did not trust them; the result was that many NYPD simply stopped doing their jobs. Their attitude was - do as little as possible, stay alive, and pick up a paycheck every two weeks.

In January of 1972 came the most disturbing police shooting to date. Officers Gregory Foster and Rocco Laurie, both rookies, were ambushed from behind and executed in the middle of an intersection. Fourteen bullets were unloaded into the officers. Foster's eyes were shot out, and Laurie was shot in the groin, then the gunman danced in the street and fired shots in the air in celebration. A letter from the "George Jackson Squad" was received the following day taking credit for the shootings. Jackson was a prominent Black Panther who had been killed trying to escape prison. The letter referenced Attica, the prison in upstate New York where three months earlier twenty-nine black and Hispanic inmates had been killed during a riot. The Foster-Laurie shootings created a level of hysteria in the press, and it was suggested that police Commissioner Murphy used this to divert attention from the fact that a series of criminal cases against cops stemming from the Knapp Commission hearings were being built. As if things weren't bad enough already, the NYPD's PR nightmare was just getting started.

George Whitmore was a black man fighting for freedom during a time when Martin Luther King's peaceful nonviolence had been replaced with a lethal culture of ambush, hatred, death and destruction. It was February of 1972 when Whitmore once again walked into court to hear whether his appeal would be approved or denied. The validity of Elba Borrero's identification of George was his last glimmer of hope in being exonerated. It took the court thirty seconds to deliver the verdict: denied. At hearing this, George lost all hope. He was visited a week later by Selwyn Raab, who came away from the meeting feeling more than ever that George was innocent, and wondering in frustration why something couldn't be done to make things right for him.

Chapter Eighteen - Long Time Coming

There was one detail in George Whitmore's case that had never been investigated for some reason: Elba Borrero's sister-in-law, Celeste Viruet, had supposedly witnessed the entire assault and given to the police her own description of the attacker. Raab and Beldock knew it was a long shot, but they pooled their money together and flew to Puerto Rico to find Viruet. Having no idea how to go about finding someone in a foreign country, Beldock had the amusing idea that they would simply have to start asking every person they saw if anybody knew her. Raab took this as a joke, but to prove he was serious, Beldock asked their poolside busboy and they were both flabbergasted to discover that the busboy's wife was none other than Celeste Viruet. They could not believe their luck.

Viruet was a wealth of information. She told Raab and Beldock that the man who had attacked Borrero had spoken to her in Spanish (George did not speak the language), and that his height, weight and clothing did not match those of George Whitmore. She

had been interviewed only once, never questioned again and never contacted by anyone from the District Attorney's office. The fact that the investigators of the case knew of Viruet's existence but she was never called to testify was grounds enough to reopen George's case. Additionally, Borrero had told Viruet a story substantially different than the one she had clung to for so many years on the stand. It was enough to potentially have George's case dismissed. Raab and Beldock put the wheels in motion for the court to reevaluate George's case. There was more good news: Aaron Koota was stepping down as D.A. in Brooklyn, and Eugene Gold was taking his place. Gold did not have the same agendas that Koota had, and would look at George's case with fresh, unbiased eyes. There was reason to hope after all.

Dhoruba Bin Wahad had been hopeful once, back in 1968, when the Black Panthers seemed like an idea whose time had come. It had been a cause for which he would have laid down his life, a cause that had given him his identity and something to fight for. But in seemingly no time at all, that dream had disintegrated into revolutionary suicide - a vicious cycle that had derailed the movement from the original point: civil rights. But Dhoruba was a fighter. He knew he should be held responsible for his role in the Triple-O robbery and the death of Sam Napier, what he was balking against was being charged with the double shooting of police officers. He was innocent of this charge, and it gave he and his supporters reason to view this as another battle to be fought against racism and corruption in the criminal justice system. Dhoruba pleaded guilty to the armed robbery and attempted grand larceny charge, and he was given seven years in prison. The trial of Sam Napier ended in a hung jury, but the Queens D.A. immediately re-indicted on the same charges.

Dhoruba was also tried for the Curry and Binetti shooting. The tone of the trial was set when both Curry and Binetti, now both either paralyzed or disfigured, took the stand and testified. The message was clear: someone had to pay. Though the prosecutors case was riddled with doubt, they did have the gun that was supposedly used, that they tried to link to Dhoruba. In then end, the judge had no choice but to declare a hung jury. In January there was another trial, which also ended in mistrial because the judge fell ill. Finally, in June, the D.A.'s office were granted what they sought: the jury declared Bin Wahad guilty. Dhoruba was livid. He stood at the defendant's table, pointing at the judge accusing him of denying him a fair trial. At sentencing, Dhoruba remained unrepentant. He was sentenced to life in prison. Dhoruba's reply was that his appeal would be over the barrel of a gun. He vowed that they would not break his spirit, and that he would fight until his dying day.

The Knapp Commission filed its final report in December of 1972, declaring that there were two types of corrupt cops: there were the "grass eaters," who accepted small bribes for small infractions of the law, but who did not seek out larger scams - and "meat eaters," who spent their time aggressively hunting situations to exploit for financial gain. The report was overshadowed by an unexpected development, however. Bill Phillips had been accused of a double murder that had occurred on Christmas Eve of 1968. A detective named John Justy saw Phillips on TV and thought he looked like a composite sketch given by a surviving witness of the crime.

Phillips swore that he was innocent of these charges and had a solid alibi as to where he had been the night of the crime. He had the gut feeling that the NYPD was framing him as payback for the Knapp testimony. The trial against Phillips lasted three weeks and ended in a hung jury. He would be re-tried, but was out on bail and arranging to have his memoir entitled On The Pad, written by Leonard Shecter, published. He was confident that he would beat the charges at the next trial.

George Whitmore was taken to the sick ward of Green Haven prison by the warden himself, Leon Vincent, so that he could watch the television movie based on his story in privacy. It was a strange experience for George, and at times it was too painful to watch. In the movie, one of the detectives was named Theo Kojak, played by Telly Savalas, and this character was such a hit that it would spin off into its own series entitled "Kojak," one of the most iconic cop shows in TV history.

The movie had been a success, but what had it really done for George? He still sat in prison, guilty according to the law and to everyone on the outside. There were exciting things happening on the outside, though, that George did not know about. D.A. Gold sent two investigators to question Celeste Viruet and confirmed what Raab and Beldock had reported. Gold announced that the George Whitmore case would be re-opened. Raab and Beldock decided not to tell George. Why get his hopes up yet again unless they were relatively certain there would be a positive end result.? In April, Beldock go the call he had been waiting for: there would be a hearing in the state supreme courtroom with D.A. Gold in attendance. The fact that the D.A. himself would be there was reason enough to raise hope; it meant something significant would occur.

On April 9th, 1973, George was told that he would be transferred to New York for a court appearance. At first he felt trepidacious, having been taught through years inside the system not to trust and not to hope. The guards were under strict orders not to tell him what was happening. He was taken to New York by helicopter, and the journey left a lasting impression on him. He had a feeling something monumental was about to happen. He was given a suit and a meal and taken into a courtroom. He wasn't prepared for what he found there: a courtroom full of reporters, his attorneys and his family.

A startling fact was revealed during this hearing: Elba Borrero had been shown mug shots before she saw George Whitmore, and identified the real attacker long before she ever peered at George through the door. This fact had never been revealed once in all the criminal proceedings to date. Gold went on to say that any case they may have had against George was thus rendered so weak that any possibility of conviction was negated, that they were dismissing the indictment and that George was to be discharged immediately. Gold added, " Your Honor, if in fact George Whitmore is guilty of these charges, surely his debt has been paid by his incarceration.If in fact he is innocent, I pray that my action today will in some measure repay society's debt to him." (p. 376)

To which the judge replied, " It is indeed disgraceful that this defendant has been subjected to nine years of prosecution and appeals. I hereby declare that he be

released from custody immediately and that all charges against him be dismissed. Mister Whitmore, I would like to say to you on behalf of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, I am sorry for what you have had to go through." (p. 376)

George could not believe it; this is what he had been dreaming of for ten long years. Finally, he was a free man.

Epilogue -

Bill Phillips: During his murder re-trial, eyewitness Charles Gonzales told the jury that Phillips was without a doubt the one who committed the murders on Christmas Eve. He said he would never forget his face for as long as he lived. Phillips was found guilty and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. He began studying the law in the prison library and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. He used his time in incarceration well, helping other prisoners with their court cases, doing charity work and re-writing the prison's substance and alcohol treatment program. He went before the parole board every few years and was repeatedly denied. He realized that until he accepted responsibility for a crime he didn't commit, they would not release him on parole. After thirty-three years in prison, at seventy-eight years old, Phillips was finally released. As of 2010, he was working with filmmakers to produce a documentary about his life.

Dhoruba Bin Wahad: While in prison, Wahad began reading about the FBI's efforts to infiltrate and destabilize the black liberation movement. If he could prove that he had been a target, he might have grounds to claim that his civil rights had been violated, and he might be able to prove that he had been framed to take the rap for the Curry-Binetti shootings. In 1973, he met Robert Boyle, a twenty-year old sociology student who would go on to become a lawyer. With the assistance of civil rights attorney Elizabeth Fink, they began filing legal injunctions against the FBI and NYPD in an effort to obtain any files relating to Dhoruba Bin Wahad. After pouring over the files they received, they felt they had enough evidence to have Bin Wahad's conviction overturned. Mainly because of conflicting evidence presented by Pauline Joseph, in March of 1990, Justice Peter J. McQuillan vacated Dhoruba's conviction. Dhoruba had served nineteen years in prison. He became a popular speaker at political rallies, and appeared on television. He sued the FBI and NYPD, and in 1995 was awarded $400,000. In 2000, he received $490,000 from the City of New York. He moved to Africa and constructed a school for children, and assisted in the production of a drug used as treatment for narcotics addiction.

George Whitmore: After his release in 1973, George moved back to New Jersey where he tried to live an anonymous life, but he was constantly asked about his case. He filed a lawsuit against the City of New York for improper arrest and malicious prosecution. At first, the suit was dismissed and George was quoted as saying, "They wrecked my life and they still won't admit they did anything wrong. If justice prevails, let it prevail for me." (p. 391). In 1982, the ruling was overturned and George received a $560,000 settlement. George bought a beautiful home in the predominantly-white neighborhood of Denisville that turned out to be, according to George, haunted. Also, one day he came home to find someone had written 'nigger get out' on the side of his garage. He sold his

house at a loss, bought a scallop boat with the remaining money he had, and started a fishing business. His boat was eventually repossessed for non-payment, and between 1990 and 2005, George was arrested twenty-four times for charges as varied as driving while intoxicated, criminal trespassing, simple assault and contempt of court. Bad luck seemed to follow George everywhere. He had three heart attacks and broke several bones. In 2010 he was robbed at the Western Union counter, and when he ran after the thief, he was hit by a car. He was dragged twenty feet and taken to the hospital in the flight for life helicopter. When he came to, he was high above the city, as he had been once before on that miraculous day in 1973when he was finally released from prison. Despite all of the heartbreak and hardship George Whitmore endured in his life, one thing about him can definitely be said: he certainly is a survivor.

New York City: In the 1980's, the city exploded with the latest drug trend, crack cocaine. From 1970 to 1990, the number of homicides doubled. In 1990, New York elected its first African American mayor, David Dinkins. After Dinkins came Rudolph Giuliani, whose administration saw a decline in crime and an increase in police brutality. Since the 9-11 terrorist attacks on New York City, crime has remained low. In 2009 there were only 496 murders, the fewest since statistical reporting began in 1963. Unfortunately, assumptions based on race and class are still the norm; African American and Latino youths are frisked nine times more than whites. Today New York is considered the safest big city in America, but the system is still based on fear and the scars of past events will remain forever. One never can tell when the Savage City may rise again.

Dhoruba Bin Wahad was arrested after the botched attempted robbery of an after-hours club, and the police went ahead and pinned a cop double-shooting on him as well. He was willing to accept his punishment for the crimes that he had committed, but to be accused of something he did not do, he found unacceptable. While he was having to deal with the considerable stress of being accused and incarcerated, his beloved Black Panther Party was coming apart at the seams right before his eyes. Angrily lashing out and ultimately unrepentant, he was sentenced to life in prison, and he vowed to rage against the status quo until his dying day. In the end he did get his vindication; his conviction was vacated. He sued both the city of New York and the federal government, and won. One can't help but wonder: if it had not been for Dhoruba Bin Wahad, a man whose name has been largely forgotten with the time that has passed, where would the African- American populace of America be today? Its hard to believe that we would still be where we were in the mid-sixties, but its difficult to say for sure. Without a doubt it can be said that the Black Panthers developed as a reaction to the atrocious racism and violence that pervaded the civil rights era, and that they arrived on the scene just in time. Without their influence on society as a whole, perhaps America would not have come such a long way in the battle for equality. While Dhoruba was fighting his battles off the streets, on the outside a war was raging. Curiously, the public outcry against the police shootings was conspicuously absent. No longer did the general populace view the NYPD as their knights in shining armor, positioned valorously to stand in front of the innocent and shield them from evil forces. Since Bill Phillips had spilled the beans and put the whole reeking truth out on display, public opinion of the NYPD had sunk to an all-time low. Also the morale of the police force sunk to an all-time low. It is safe to say that this was the worst time in history to be a cop in New York: the white citizens no

longer trusted and revered them, the black population was out to kill them, and they could no longer rely even each other. The result was that officers would show up to work for no other reason than to collect their pay, and during the workday would do as little as possible to fight crime, and as much as possible to stay out of harm's way. Meanwhile, there was finally some good luck for George Whitmore. After almost ten years, the day he had been dreaming about finally happened: he was released from incarceration and even got an apology from a judge. It was almost more than he could ever have hoped for. Although he did receive a decent settlement in the end, bad luck followed George around like an unwanted, flea-bitten stray dog. The Savage City is dedicated to George Whitmore, and in learning about his story, the reader can't help but feel compelled to seek him out and shake his hand. George Whitmore's suffering and tribulation were a portion of the stripes by which our society was healed. The healing process is not complete, alas, but it certainly has come a long way. Sometimes getting from point A to point B can be a bumpy and roundabout journey, but at least we are getting somewhere.

Characters

George Whitmore

The Savage City is dedicated by author T.J. English to George Whitmore. George represents the scapegoat in this narrative. When the NYPD plucked George off the streets of New Jersey, he was a painfully naïve teenager whom they tortured into confessing to a series of crimes he did not commit. Included in these crimes was the brutal slaying of Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert, also known as the infamous Career Girls Murder. When the black community heard of George's predicament, the reaction was one of outrage and his story was one of the sparks that ignited the black liberation movement. George became the most famous "wrong man" of the age, representing any black man, as what had happened to him could have happened to any young black man on the street in those days. It would take George ten years to escape his ensnarement by the NYPD and the corrupt New York criminal justice system.

Bill Phillips

During a time when corruption within the criminal justice system was the norm, Bill Phillips was the typical cop on the take. To Phillips, New York City was a playground teeming with opportunity. During the course of any given night on his beat, Phillips would come across countless examples of people doing any number of illegal things, and they would pay him to look the other way. Phillips considered himself the thinking man's hustler, because he knew how to grease the wheel and buy protection all the way up the chain of command. Phillips was exposed by an investigation internal to the NYPD, and became the most notorious snitch in the history of the police force in New York City. As a result of Phillip's testimony at the Knapp Commission hearings, the NYPD's dirty laundry was aired for all to see. Possibly in the name of retribution, Phillips was framed to take the fall for a double homicide he did not commit and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Dhoruba Bin Wahad

His given name was Richard Moore, but after the assassination of Malcolm X, he changed his name to Dhoruba, which in Swahili means "he who is born in the storm." This would turn out to be a very apt name, indeed, since Dhoruba Bin Wahad would live through a time of revolution when white America would be forced to take a good hard look at its racist posturing. Bin Wahad joined up with the Black Panther Party after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. because to him, the murder represented the notion that non-violent compliance got a person nowhere but dead. The idea behind the Black Panther uprising was to fight back - that violence begat violence, and that self defense was the human right of those being oppressed. Dhoruba Bin Wahad stepped into a leadership role amongst the New York Black Panthers and was one the famous

Panther Twenty-One representing the upper echelon of Panther leadership who were all arrested on the same night. Bin Wahad eventually split from the Oakland Central Committee of the Black Panthers, and was forced underground before being indicted on multiple charges including grand larceny, conspiracy, and murder.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Baptist minister and social activist, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the heart and soul of the non-violent civil rights movement. King delivered his inspiring and celebrated 'I have a dream' speech in 1963 at the massive March on Washington and he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. His ideas of non-violent resistance began giving way to the self-defense attitude of Malcolm X and his followers, and then with the uprising of the Black Panther movement, his passive philosophies became the "old way of thinking" in the face of militancy and rebellion. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel by James Earl Ray.

Malcolm X

During the early 1960's, Malcolm X was a prominent figure in the Nation of Islam and a leader in the African-American community. His opinions revolved around racial pride and black nationalism and he disagreed with the concept of non-violent resistance. He believed that to defend oneself against attack was only logical, and his attitude resonated powerfully with the mainstream black communities of New York City. He received numerous death threats and had many enemies and he was assassinated in 1965 while delivering a speech in New York City. His death sent shock waves through the prison systems and had a great impact towards the black liberation movement.

Huey P Newton

Along with Bobby Seale, David Hilliard and others, Huey P. Newton is credited with forming the original Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. The message of the Panthers caught on like wildfire and spread rapidly across the nation to New York City, the heart of the Pan-African movement. The image that many held in their minds as the quintessential representation of the Black Panther was Huey Newton sitting in his wicker chair on a zebra skin rug, dressed like a member of the militia, holding an African spear in one hand and a long-barreled rifle in the other. Newton was in jail when the Black Panther movement exploded from a few dozen members in the Oakland chapter to tens of thousands nationwide. By the time of his release, Newton was a legendary character amongst the black liberation society.

Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert

Janice Wylie, Emily Hoffert, and Patricia Tolles were roommates in Manhattan in 1963. Tolles came home on August 28, 1963, a few hours after Martin Luther King delivered

his famous 'I have a dream' speech at the March on Washington, to discover Wylie and Hoffert bound and brutally murdered in their apartment. The case would come to be known as the Career Girls Murder and it had scandal written all over it: two young, upper-class white girls murdered in their apartment in a good neighborhood with no clear suspects to be found. Scrambling to solve the case and vindicate themselves after weeks of fruitless searching, the Brooklyn D.A. and police department forced a young George Whitmore into confessing to this and two other heinous crimes that he did not commit.

Elba Borrero and Minnie Edmonds

46-year-old Minnie Edmonds was found sexually assaulted and murdered in Brooklyn New York on April 14, 1964. Nine days later, 20-year-old Elba Borrero was attacked in the same neighborhood, but was able to escape her assailant. Later that day, George Whitmore would be brought to the police station where Borrero would identify George as the man who had attempted to rape her. On the witness stand, Borrero would adamantly defend her identification of George to be genuine for years to come. It was later revealed that Borrero had originally not been sure that George was really the man who had attacked her and that the officers who were detaining George would help to convince her otherwise.

Celeste Viruet

The testimony of Elba Borrero's sister-in-law, Celeste Viruet, would prove to be the last ray of hope for George Whitmore. George had been incarcerated almost ten years when it was finally decided that the one loose end - Celeste Viruet, who had supposedly seen the Elba Borrero attack take place through her window and was told the description of the assailant by Borrero had only been interviewed one time and never called upon to witness. By luck, George's attorneys found her in Puerto Rico and what she told them was enough to get George's case reexamined and George ultimately freed from incarceration.

Selwyn Raab

After George Whitmore was found guilty in the attempted rape of Elba Borrero, a young reported named Selwyn Raab overheard the prosecuting attorney mention that the evidence report on a button supposedly torn from George's coat on the night of the attack was found to be inconclusive. Raab decided to track down this report and when he did, he learned that the button had been found not to be a match for the coat at all. This led Raab down a rabbit hole of one discovery after another regarding George's case, and before long he knew the truth: George Whitmore had been set up to take the fall for crimes he had not committed. Raab poured everything he knew into an article for Harper's Magazine, but it was killed at the last minute by D.A. Frank Hogan, who

declared that the printing of such a scandalous piece of journalism would be a hindrance to the upholding of the law in New York state.

Ricky Robles

Ricky Robles, the real killer in the Career Girls Murder case, was a twenty-one-year old junkie with a long series of crimes on his rap sheet. The NYPD had help ensnaring Robles from Nathan and Marjorie Delaney, friends of Robles, who knew he had committed the murders. He appeared at their door the night of the murders, covered in blood and babbling incoherently about what he had done. The Delaneys allowed their apartment to be wired, plied Robles with drugs and got him talking. Soon the police had enough of a confession that they were able to apprehend Robles, and he then gave them the specific details about the incident that they needed to indict him in the murders.

Objects/Places

New York City

The Savage City is set in New York City, the home of Harlem, heart of the Pan-African movement, also home of the NYPD and a corrupt and bigoted criminal justice system. New York City during the civil rights movement and into the 1970's, saw a plethora of important events unfold: the assassination of both Malcolm X, the Wylie-Hoffert murders, and the Newark and Brooklyn riots, to name a few.

The Junkyard in Wildwood

The junkyard in Wildwood, New Jersey, was where George Whitmore grew up in poverty. He and his mother and father lived in a shack on the outskirts of an automobile scrap yard and throughout his life and ordeals, George would find himself back at the junkyard more than a few times. It was in this junkyard that George found the photo of the white girl that he would try to pass off as his girlfriend and that detectives in the NYPD would try to use to link him to the Wylie-Hoffert murders.

The Photograph

When George Whitmore was in the back room of the police station being coerced into confessing to the Wylie-Hoffert murders, detective Edward Bulger rifled through his wallet and discovered a picture of a white girl. Bulger decided that it looked enough like Janice Wylie to pass as her and he made George say that he had found the photo at the scene of the crime. It was discovered in the end that the photo was not Janice Wylie and that what George had told police about finding the photo was true.

The Packet of Razors

A blue packet of razors was carelessly left behind by a careless detective who was shaving in the bathroom of the apartment where Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert were found dead. The police spoon-fed George Whitmore the details of using the razors to slice the sheet with which he supposedly bound his victims. When this detail was discovered by an investigator who knew the razors had been placed in the bathroom after the fact, it was slowly revealed that George had been coerced into his "confession."

The Button

Entered into evidence in the Elba Borrero attempted rape trial against George Whitmore, was a button supposedly torn from the coat of Borrero's attacker. George's

coat and the button were both entered in as evidence, but it was never mentioned in court that according to lab tests, the button and the coat were not a match. The prosecutors knew this but kept it a secret and this detail was uncovered by Selwyn Raab whose efforts on George's behalf would prove invaluable.

Harlem

Harlem is a neighborhood in the borough of Manhattan in New York City and the heart of the Pan-African movement in America. Harlem has for decades been known as a predominantly African-American community and during the 1960's and 1970's, it was ground zero for the black liberation movement. Harlem is the beat to which Bill Phillips was assigned after he was "flopped" from the detective department of the NYPD. In July of 1964, Harlem was the site of the first major race riot during the civil rights era.

Manhattan

Manhattan is the most densely populated of the five boroughs in New York City. It was in one of Manhattan's most exclusive neighborhoods that Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert were murdered in their apartment. This event would spark a scandalous investigation that would leave the Manhattan and Brooklyn police departments and District Attorney's offices battling over territory and ultimately lead to the railroading of George Whitmore in the name of "justice." In the end, it was the Manhattan police who apprehended Ricky Robles, the real killer, and the Brooklyn department was shamed for the arrest and coercion of George Whitmore.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn is the neighborhood in New York City where George Whitmore was taken from the streets and to a police station where he was identified by Elba Borrero as her attacker. Brooklyn D.A. Aaron Koota held a vendetta against George Whitmore, knowing that the reputation of the Brooklyn criminal justice system was at stake, he tried time and again to get some charge - any charge - to stick against George.

Newark

This was one of the worst riots of the civil rights era began on July 12, 1967 in Newark, New Jersey. It was in Newark that cab driver John Smith was pulled from his vehicle and beat mercilessly by police officers in front of onlookers. As news of his story spread, Newark descended into madness and chaos over the following five days and nights. Official totals were 26 dead, 725 injured, 1500 arrests and approximately 10 million dollars in property damage.

Oakland, California

Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and David Hilliard were living in Oakland, Ca. when they founded an organization known as the Black Panthers. Newton would go to jail when the Panthers were still a tiny, local group, and by the time he would be released there would be ten thousand members and nearly fifty chapters nationwide. Newton and Hilliard maintained the Central Committee of the Black Panthers from Oakland, and it was from there that emissaries were sent everywhere in America to ensure that any new chapter of the Black Panthers was keeping with their original teachings and philosophies.

Themes

Racism

One of the main themes of The Savage City is that of racism. Had racism somehow not been a factor in the happenings of New York City during the 60's and early 70's, things may not have reached the fever pitch they did. As it was, racism was the fuel to the fire in a powder keg situation. When the black communities of the south began migrating north in the 1940's due to the elimination of sharecropping, many Irish, Italian and Eastern European communities of New York City reacted poorly to the influx of "Negroes" into their neighborhoods. Many of the police officers who lived in these neighborhoods found themselves moving further from the city into upstate into predominantly white neighborhoods. This resulted in an attitude of exile amongst the police force, which led to resentment and hatred. Back in the city, where hostilities ran hot and territorialism was the natural order, it didn't take long for the situation to degenerate into violence. The police force attempted to keep the peace through brute force, which naturally caused the oppressed black community to react in kind. Violence begets violence was the order of the day. Today, racism has not been eradicated entirely, but hopefully our society has come a little closer to Martin Luther King Jr.'s plea that we learn to judge a person not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

A System of Corruption

The New York City Police Department during the 1960's was a system of corruption, constructed of a hierarchy of criminal justice practitioners who operated under the same premise: dirty money makes the world go 'round. Extorted money was the grease for the wheel, deciding where any given person would rank on the totem pole, on and off the streets. Officer Bill Phillips was a classic example. To Phillips, the job was not so much about protecting and serving, as it was about finding people doing what they shouldn't and having them pay him off to look the other way. Phillips was on the job during an era when the streets were teeming with opportunity for a cop on the take. The corruption worked its way all the way up the ladder, from patrolmen to arraignment clerks to judges. The system was dismantled with the Knapp Commission, an internal covert operation looking to expose the corruption inherent in the system. Bill Phillips was discovered to be a crooked cop, and turned snitch betraying the "Blue Wall of Silence." He went on live television and rolled out the NYPD's dirty laundry for all the world to see. As a result, he was framed to take the fall for a double murder he did not commit.

The Black Liberation Movement

One of the sparks that ignited the black liberation movement was the story of George Whitmore. Minding his own business and hoping to remain invisible and anonymous,

George was plucked from the streets and railroaded into confessing to crimes he did not commit. One of these crimes was the infamous Career Girls Murder, the brutal slaying of two upper-middle class Manhattan women. Meanwhile, in the streets of New York City, the oppression of the black populace at the hands of a brutally violent NYPD was reaching epic proportions. It wasn't just New York City, of course, the racial tension could be felt across the nation. The result was an uprising amongst the black citizens who were simply not going to take it any more. Thus, in Oakland, CA, was formed an organization called The Black Panthers, an armed militant group whose aim was to empower black people. What ensued was akin to revolution, at the heart of which was an oppressed people pushing back against a tyrannical status quo. The black liberation movement spanned across America and spread like wildfire. Before long, the Black Panthers had more than ten thousand members and nearly fifty chapters nationwide. The goal of the black liberation movement, with all of the organizations and factions of which it was comprised, was to change the way America viewed others unlike themselves and to demand equality for all races.

Style

Perspective

The Savage City is told from a third-person and omniscient perspective and is told as a piece of journalistic reporting. Author T.J. English clearly spent a great deal of time and effort compiling the materials needed to deliver a narrative so laden with meticulous detail. The Savage City breaks down into three points of a triangle, which are represented by three key characters of the story: George Whitmore, Bill Phillips, and Dhoruba Bin Wahad. English tells each of these three men's true stories from a third-party perspective, removed from the action, but privy to the very specific details needed to piece together the picture as a whole. Whitmore, Phillips and Wahad never directly interacted with one another, but they each represent a different and important angle of the New York City drama during the 1960's and 1970's. Whitmore's perspective is the view from the streets; he grew up in poverty and tried to remain anonymous, but was thrust unwittingly into a crooked criminal justice system and spent ten years trying to become untangled from the web of corruption. He is the unfortunate scapegoat, the everyman and what happened to him could have happened to any black man on the streets in those days. Phillips' perspective shows us inside the NYPD. His story chronicles the life of the cop on the beat; he is a hustler and an opportunist as were most cops in those days. His story shows us how deep-seated the corruption on the police force was, and what it was like to have to turn snitch and shake the system down to its core. Lastly comes the perspective of Dhoruba Bin Wahad, whose story begins with a street gang and prison and on to becoming an important member of the Black Panthers and the black liberation movement. His angle allows us to see inside the black and white power struggle and helps us to understand that for the people on the wrong side of the oppression, enough had become enough and the time had arrived for fighting back. These three perspectives laced together give us a thorough insight into the incendiary events that occurred in New York City during and directly subsequent to the civil rights movement.

Tone

The overall tone of The Savage City is one of journalistic and historical documentation. There are three additional tones within the content of this piece and they stem from the perspectives of George Whitmore, Bill Phillips, and Dhoruba Bin Wahad. The tone of George Whitmore's perspective is one of victimization and helplessness as he was swept away by a bigoted police force and spent ten years of his life trying to disentangle himself from a corrupt criminal justice system. The reader can't help but share in the frustration George must have felt facing years of unjust jail time and exasperating court hearings that never seemed to swing in his favor. George's story has a happy ending in that he is exonerated in the end, and the tone then becomes one of vindication and jubilation. The tone of Bill Phillips' perspective is one of racism and opportunism. Phillips was a cop who knew how to work the system in his favor and who was less interested in

doing his job than turning a buck. His priority was extortion and he was an apt representation of the typical police officer during the 60's and 70's in New York City. The police force was predominantly white and according to Phillips and most other cops as well, to be black was to be suspect. Finally, the tone of Dhoruba Bin Wahad's perspective is one of fierceness and rebellion. Bin Wahad ran with a gang in his younger days and landed in prison, to be released into a society where the atrocities being visited upon the minority communities was unconscionable. He was quick to join up with the revolutionary organization The Black Panthers, and violent insurgence was the order of the day. Bin Wahad's story gives us a glimpse into the world of the black liberation movement through the eyes of a black militant who was one of the warriors in a revolution that changed our country.

Structure

T.J. English's book The Savage City consists of an introduction, nine chapters in Part One, nine chapters in Part Two, and an epilogue. It is 474 pages including sources, notes, and index. English explains to us in the introduction that New York City experienced an influx of minorities in the 40's and 50's, and the racial tensions led to the extreme violence of the 60's and 70's. Throughout the body of the text, English weaves together the stories of George Whitmore, Bill Phillips, and Dhoruba Bin Wahad, often segueing between them several times within each chapter. In George's story, we travel with him through the process of coercion at the hands of the NYPD, through his court battles and stints in jail to his exoneration in 1973. With Bill Phillips, we travel down the streets of New York City during a time of explosive violence and racial tension, but also great opportunity for a crooked cop on the take. Phillips' journey ends in prison, but not before he turns snitch and exposes the corruption of the NYPD. Finally, dovetailed into these is the story of Dhoruba Bin Wahad, former gang member turned Black Panther whose tale takes the reader inside the famous militant organization and then underground after he and the Panthers part ways. Overall, The Savage City is a journey that spans ten years from 1963-1973 during which time New York City descended into violence and mayhem.

Quotes

"When we allow freedom's ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up the day when all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" (Martin Luther King, Jr., Chapter One, Blood of the Lamb, p. 7.)

"I was very tired, almost falling asleep. I was in a drowsy fog. The light in the room was sweating. I was sweating. The detective put a pencil in my hand and helped me sketch. He was explaining to me where the bathroom and the bedroom was...They said, 'You stay awake; you're not going to sleep. As soon as we're done, we'll let you get some sleep.'" (George Whitmore, Chapter Three, The Bowels of Brooklyn, p. 49).

"The racism that existed in the prison system was an advanced stage of what existed in the street; it was overt. The guards and commissary employees were mostly inbred country boys from upstate, and they were racist to the core." (Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Chapter Four, "Get Those Niggers," p. 65).

"We declare our right on this earth to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, and to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary." (Malcolm X, Chapter Four, "Get Those Niggers," p. 67).

"The noise was incredible, an ocean of sound that came in waves - people screaming, sirens wailing, the sound of breaking glass, shots fired. Traffic had been diverted from 125th Street and was backed up on the side streets, with horns honking and white people in their cars looking terrified. On 125th Street was a Battleground, with police and looters in hand-to-hand combat. Some cops were firing warning shots into the air, which caused people to scatter, regroup, and then come back with even more force." (Robert Leuci on the Harlem riots of 1964, Chapter Four, "Get Those Niggers," p. 71).

"That was that: Leftow knew he wasn't getting anything more from thee two men. In his gut, he knew they were lying: the Manhattan D.A.'s office was making a calculated decision to protect their investigation. Reclaiming what they believed was rightfully theirs - the Wylie-Hoffert murder case - meant more to them than full disclosure; it meant more to them than justice. Leftow's client, the illiterate Negro kid from Brooklyn, was left twisting in the wind." (Chapter Five, Getting Flopped, p. 83).

"Take this coat into the jury room with you...and put this coat alongside of the threads which are missing from the upper part, underneath the collar...Is it a coincidence or is it solidly guilty circumstances that the button and the coat match? Gentlemen, mister foreman, haven't we nailed George Whitmore right on the button, in the truest sense of the word, in the truest sense of the word." (Sidney A. Lichtman, Chapter Six, On the Button, p. 102).

"It is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks...It doesn't mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time I am not against using violence in self-defense. I don't call it violence when it's self-defense. I call it intelligence." (Malcolm X, Chapter Seven, Harlem Nocturne, p. 113).

"For far too long black people in this country have been dealing with racist police. What happened to George Whitmore could have happened to any other so-called Negro in America." (Malcolm X, Chapter Seven, Harlem Nocturne, p. 114).

"After reading about the Whitmore case, I decided there are things going on in this town that they wouldn't do to a dog in Mississippi." (Dick Gregory, Chapter Seven, Harlem Nocturne, p. 127).

"The daily indignities of police-community relations became part of a larger narrative, a catalog of grievances that had become a malignant tumor on the body politic. Even small encounters took on huge significance until it seemed as though the city, on any given night, could fracture into a million pieces." (Chapter Nine, Fear, p. 155).

"You smack a guy around, take his money, take his junk, take his ring, leave him destitute and say, come back tomorrow and bring me three hundred dollars, he's going to be absolutely enraged....My motto is: take the money and run. Don't get anybody too pissed off." (Bill Phillips, Chapter Nine, Fear, p. 165).

"This country knows what power is; it knows it very well. And it knows what Black Power is 'cause it deprived black people of it for four hundred years...The question is, why do white people in this country associate Black Power with violence? And the answer is because of their own inability to deal with blackness. If we said Negro Power, nobody would get scared....Or if we said power for colored people, everybody'd be for that. It is the word black that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine." (Stokely Carmichael, Chapter Ten, Black Power, p. 183).

"Growing up in Harlem, I didn't know nothing about racism, 'cause it was all black people. In my community I could walk from 155th Street to 125th Street every Sunday to go to the movies, and every block I pass they waving, and everybody dressed up going to church. And now here I am caught up in this black/white dichotomy. The guards were all white, country boys; they had tobacco juice dripping down their shirts. Clubs big as baseball bats. They ran everything. All the good jobs in prison went to the white guys. They has all the positions of power." (Jazz Hayden, Chapter Thirteen, "Off The Pigs," p. 250).

"It ain't no fun when the rabbit got the gun. Suddenly the hunted turned the tables. It was a whole new ballgame. Of course I felt pride in that. But at the same time - survival. The economic circumstances are critical. I stayed away from the Panthers because I had business to take care of." (Jazz Hayden, Chapter Thirteen, "Off The Pigs," p. 250).

Topics for Discussion

Discuss racism. Why are people racist? Do people more often become racist as a reaction to circumstances, or is it more likely that racism is something taught to one by their parents? How would the situations in The Savage City been made more amiable if racism was taken out of the equation?

Consider the civil rights era through the perspective of the Black Panther Party. If you were in the same situation, are you the kind of person who would join up with an organization like the Panthers? Why or why not?

Consider the civil rights era in New York City through the perspective of an NYPD officer. Towards the end of the 1960's, New York City police officers were being hunted down and murdered at random. How would you react to this type of aggression? Would it be worth it to put your life on the line everyday to earn peanuts and protect a populace who hated you?

Discuss the corruption within the NYPD. Would the extortion and the payoffs make putting one's self in harm's way daily make it worthwhile? How hard would it have been during that era to be one of the few honest cops?

Discuss agenda. How did different people's personal vendettas and agendas affect George Whitmore's freedom?

Why was the downfall of the Black Panthers inevitable? Discuss Huey P. Newton's corruptibility vs Dhoruba Bin Wahad's fierce revolutionary stance.

Having learned about the vast amount of corruption within the NYPD during the era of The Savage City, discuss why or why not an independent review board to keep tabs on the police force is a good idea.

Bill Phillips was a dirty cop, but he turned snitch and exposed a system of corruption that had been allowed to operate for far too long. How did you feel when he was indicted on murder charges in the end? Do you feel that Karma did its job in this case or was it entirely unfair for Phillips to take the fall?

Was the formation of a group like the Black Panthers inevitable and do you feel that they as an organization contributed to shaping the America we live in today?

As unfortunate as it is that George Whitmore had to live through his ordeal, why was his case such an important one in the history of American law enforcement?