

“A Price to Brotherhood”: Race, Conflict and Community Control in Portland’s Office of Economic Opportunity

In August of 1971, a Portland jury found community organizer and black power advocate R.L. Anderson guilty of illegally possessing a firearm and sentenced him to two and a half years in prison. The indictment marked an end to a turbulent six months of Anderson’s public life. In February of 1971, he was elected as treasurer of the Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee (PMSC), the local vessel for the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in America’s War on Poverty.¹ By the end of March, Anderson was forced to resign when the regional director of the OEO in Seattle threatened to withhold six million dollars of funds from Portland if Anderson did not step down from his post.

From its inception in 1964, the central aims of the OEO were to empower the poor and foster grassroots participation in government by employing members of local neighborhoods in bureaucratic positions.² The PMSC adhered to this mission. The organization’s “Articles of Incorporation” stated that one of the corporation’s main purposes was to “Act as a community action group for the Portland Metropolitan Area through which the local and state organizations and the Office of Economic Opportunity should work.”³ The PMSC, then, was to help “eliminate

¹ At the 1964 state of the Union, President Johnson announced, “This administration here and now declares unconditional war on poverty,” and soon after the Office of Economic Opportunity was launched. Building off of President Kennedy’s popularity and the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty was a nationwide program which sought to eradicate poverty in the United States with “maximum feasible participation” from the poor. Although it lasted 1980, when the Reagan Administration abolished the OEO, the War on Poverty is most commonly associated with the years 1964-1968, when President Johnson implored Americans to strive for the creation of “Great Society” that not only called for an “end to poverty and racial injustice” but for American to imagine a society that “serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.” Pouring nearly 1 billion dollars of federal funds into the fighting poverty, American poverty levels have never again been as high as they were in 1964, yet most historians have characterized the War as a failure. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazrijan, *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011): 1-24. For a more in depth review of the historiography of The War on Poverty see the section below titled the “War on Poverty.”

² Evelyn L. Forget, “A Tale of Two Communities: Fighting Poverty In the Great Society (1964-1968),” *History of Political Economy* 43 (2011): 200.

³ City of Portland Archives, Oregon, Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee Incorporation. 1964, 3.

the paradox of poverty by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.”⁴

R.L. Anderson’s story, however, demonstrates that despite a federal agenda to create a marriage between government bureaucracy and grassroots organizations, these two bodies came into direct conflict. Contrary to its original purpose, the Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee served as an arena in a battle over community control in which the city’s established institutions were the eventual victors. Thus, the election, resignation, and arrest of R.L. Anderson demonstrate that liberal antipoverty programs once meant to build a “Great Society” operated as a means for institutional authority to divorce grassroots activism from community organizing.

Roscoe Lavern Anderson became a community leader at a young age. Born in 1945 in Colorado, the third of seven children, Anderson moved to Portland as an infant. After attending grade-school in southeast Portland, Anderson moved with his family to Albina, the city’s only predominantly black district, where he attended Jefferson High School in the early 1960s. Anderson’s immersion into Albina came at a heated time. Characterized by the Vietnam War as well as the War on Poverty, the 1960s also saw the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of Black Power, marking the decade as a period of escalating tensions and widespread social change. Taking inspiration from African-American figures such as Malcolm X, Anderson became an advocate of Black Power and formed the Portland Black Berets, a citizen’s patrol group akin to the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, in 1968.⁵

⁴ City of Portland Archives, Oregon, Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee Incorporation. 1964, 2.

⁵ Andrew Mershon, “Former ‘Black Beret’ leader takes OEO treasurer post,” *The Oregonian*, 3 March 1971; “Black Berets on Guard,” *Jet Magazine*, 17 September 1970.

Already established as a community leader at just the age of 23, Anderson began participating in city government through anti-poverty programs. The Black Power advocate first made headlines in July of 1969 when he interrupted a Model Cities Program meeting by kicking in a door and demanding that the housing and urban development committee hire an African American from Portland to its board. Anderson's entrance to the meeting caused such a ruckus that it prompted the senior citizens in attendance to climb through the windows to escape.⁶ Anderson's boisterous political actions soon became more tempered. In 1970, Anderson won a position on the Albina Citizens Together board, a federally-financed community action agency and within a year was elected as its representative to the PMSC.⁷ He also directed Albina Citizen's Council, a local advocacy group, and founded Vernon Neighborhood Care, a free daycare program.⁸ In these posts, Anderson operated under the political theory he termed "reconstructionism." Anderson defined a reconstructionist as someone who disagrees with "the necessary standards of society or the establishment because they're not in the best interests of the general public" and therefore "believes in the redevelopment of this country and government to a point that democracy can be fully realized." In Portland, Anderson advocated for an autonomous socio-economic entity in Albina, operating with its own political hierarchy as well as police and fire services.⁹

While a rising political voice in Portland, Anderson was also a magnet for controversy. In 1971, Anderson was on appeals for two felony convictions. In 1969, Anderson was convicted of second-degree arson in a trial that ended in a five-year probation sentence, and in 1971, was

⁶ Portland Bureau of Planning, "The History of Portland's African American Community (1805 to the Present), (City of Portland, 1993), 131.

⁷ Andrew Mershon, "Former 'Black Beret' leader takes OEO treasurer post."

⁸ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee. A2004-005, 1986. Vernon Neighborhood Care, "A.W.L News," March 5, 1971, 1.

⁹ Andrew Mershon, "Former 'Black Beret' leader takes OEO treasurer post."

twice accused of being an ex-convict in possession of a firearm. Anderson attributed these accusations, as well as multiple traffic violations, to a negative relationship with the Portland police. He claimed the police made multiple attempts on his life and tried to sabotage his character, “shooting up the windows of [his] building one night” and planting dynamite in his car another.¹⁰ Anderson also got into regular fights, both physical and verbal, with other activists in Albina. In a police report, an unnamed community member referred to Anderson and Cleveland Gilcrease, chairman of the PMSC, as bitter enemies.¹¹ He was also a rival of community organizer and leader of the Portland Black Panther Party, Kent Ford, with the police once having to separate the two men in an altercation on Albina streets.¹²

[Picture]

(RL Anderson (right) with fellow Black Beret member Tom Wilson at a Portland Press Conference. From Frank Mt. Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives. Leatherby Libraries. Chapman University)

These two aspects of Anderson’s life, the political and the controversial, came to the forefront at a 1971 speech delivered to the Oregon State Black Student Union in Corvallis. Along with profanity-laden tangents mocking Richard Nixon and white perceptions of soul food, Anderson offered advice to the students of Oregon State University. Anderson expressed his desire for political autonomy of black communities, declaring, “We don’t want to hear nothing about a fair deal and a great society. We are talking about a new day, and that’s a black day. You better get ready for it.” He explained just as there was a “job to do in Alabama” there was a “job to do in Portland,” and just as there was a “job to do in Kentucky” there was a “job to do in this racist society of Corvallis.” He told the students of Corvallis that once they accomplished this job, and realized a “new unity” they would “become brothers,” but warned “there is a price for

¹⁰ Andrew Mershon, “Former ‘Black Beret’ leader takes OEO treasurer post.”

¹¹ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Interview, 5.

¹² “Fight jails Portlander,” *The Oregonian*. 29 August 1971.

blackness, there is a price to brotherhood.” This price, he expanded, was years lost, spent in jail. “Revolutionaries have to pay the price,” he asserted, foreshadowing the events that were to unfold in his own life.

On February 17, 1971, Anderson’s fellow board members recognized the merit of his work and elected him to the office of treasurer of the PMSC by a two-vote margin.¹³ Within one month, however, Anderson’s position was in jeopardy. OEO regulations demanded that board officials involved in distributing federal funds have a surety bonding of 25,000 dollars. Typically, this presented no problem, but the regular insurance company providing bonding to PMSC officials refused to back Anderson, citing his criminal past. In turn, Thomas H. Mercer, regional director of the OEO in Seattle, threatened to withhold 6.2 million dollars of federal funds from Portland if Anderson could not get bonding by April 5. In the meantime, the *Oregonian* and the *Oregon Journal* began publishing articles on the issue, emphasizing the amount of money potentially lost, and the Portland Bureau of Police opened an investigation of R.L. Anderson, keeping surveillance on both his public and private life. After receiving vocal and monetary support from the Albina community, Anderson nevertheless decided to step down from his post following a string of heated PMSC meetings concerning the committee’s future. The briefly tenured treasurer vowed to continue participating in the PMSC, but pressure from external institutions did not relent, and forced Anderson to play an increasingly diminishing role in Portland’s War on Poverty. Within one week after Anderson’s resignation, the Supplemental Training Employment Program (STEP) withheld 14,000 dollars of federal funds from two of the activist’s organizations, Vernon Neighborhood Care and the Albina Women’s League.¹⁴

Anderson’s name disappeared from newspaper headlines for the next few months, but the police

¹³ City of Portland Archives, Oregon, Board of Directors Minutes. A2000-007, 1971.

¹⁴ “Anderson Ouster Bogged,” *The Oregon Journal*, 20 March 1971.

continued their surveillance and impending court dates drew nearer. Finally, in August of 1971, following dismissed accusations of a mistrial, an all-white jury found Anderson guilty of being an ex-convict in possession of a firearm, and Judge Phillip J. Roth sentenced Anderson to a two-and-a-half year-long prison term, effectively ending Anderson's participation in the PMSC and its sub-committees.¹⁵

Following a survey of the necessary history needed to understand the political context of Portland and the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1971 and an analysis of Anderson's participation on the PMSC board, this paper will investigate how four different bodies and institutions—the Portland media, the Portland Bureau of Police, the Albina community, and the PMSC—interacted and competed with each other in the battle over community control surrounding the case of R.L. Anderson. Was Anderson merely a “victim of circumstances” as a fellow PMSC board member put it, or did specific institutions and individuals intentionally mute Anderson and his reconstructionist agenda in PMSC discussions in an effort to ensure grassroots militants would not be employed in Portland's War on Poverty?¹⁶

The War on Poverty

By 1971, the Office of Economic Opportunity had gone through numerous ideological shifts at the federal level. Established in 1964 under the direction of Sargent Shriver, founder of the Peace Corps and political aide to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, the

¹⁵ After the jury found Anderson guilty, one of the 12 jurors, who was reportedly the last to align with the unanimous jury told Judge Roth that during deliberations a male juror brought up allegations of Anderson that were not presented as evidence in the court. The defense appealed for a mistrial, and after deliberating for a month, Judge Roth denied the appeal and convicted Anderson to 2 ½ years in prison. During the sentence, Roth told Anderson “I'm am sure that the black citizens of Portland, who stand as tall in this court as anyone else, have been the most regretful observers of your conduct.” “Juror says irregularities swayed vote,” *The Oregonian*. 14 July 1971; “Albina Activist Sentenced,” *Oregon Journal*. 19 August 1971.

¹⁶ Andrew Mershon, “Former ‘Black Beret’ leader takes OEO treasurer post.”

agency was the functional center of America's "War on Poverty."¹⁷ The OEO operated as a multi-tiered bureaucracy. Political economist Evelyn Forget categorizes the different types of jobs in the OEO: "a few high-ranking administrators, a second-tier of social theorists, a large group of relatively senior bureaucrats and ideologues committed to getting the money spent and the job done, and the thousands of subprofessional jobs, many designed to engage the poor themselves in the operation of the OEO."¹⁸ Forget claims that to understand the history of the OEO under the Johnson administration is to understand two distinct communities that made up the second-tier. Initially occupied by a small intellectual community of liberal social theorists, the ideological architects of the OEO were gradually replaced by economists, who focused their efforts on traditional welfare programs rather than politicizing the poor. The ideological and personnel shifts matched that of public opinion. By 1968, the vision for a "Great Society" lost popular support and faded away from the American political landscape.

Most of the literature on Great Society considers Johnson's War on Poverty to be a failure, and assesses the reasons and the degree to which it failed. Typically, discussions of Great Society liberalism critique mistakes made at the federal level. Historians have attributed the shortcomings of the War on Poverty to a combination of lack of public support caused by alienation of the Democratic Party's traditional power base and diverted attention to the War in Vietnam.¹⁹ Perhaps the most influential interpretation of Johnson-era liberalism has been that of

¹⁷ Forget, "A Tale of Two Communities," 205.

¹⁸ Forget, "A Tale of Two Communities," 207.

¹⁹ See Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Gareth Davies, *From opportunity to Entitlement*, (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 1996) ; Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall. *Chain Reaction: the Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*. (New York: Norton, 1991), 30; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), 158; and Alan Brinkley, "1986 and the Unraveling of Liberal America," in *1968* (New York: Ballantine, 2004): 228-30. Mary and Thomas Edsall comment, "by the 1960s liberalism had begun to press an agenda that increasingly targeted benefits to minorities and provoked often divisive reactions—including cultural and racial antagonisms, anger over reverse discrimination as well as over threatened white hegemony." President Johnson

Patrick Moynihan, former senator and political aide to both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. The politician argued that the War on Poverty was a misuse of taxpayer funds. Expanding on the ideas first put forth in his controversial 1965 essay “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” Moynihan contended that liberal welfare policy caused dependency in black households thereby creating habitual poverty. Moynihan would later go as far to say that “Great Society destroyed the American family.”²⁰

Leftist critiques have combated Moynihan’s explanation and argue that Great Society Liberalism failed not because it fostered dependency in black households, but because it was never actually allied with them. In *The Unraveling of America*, Allen J. Matusow argued that the War on Poverty acted as a mask for “corporate liberalism” and ignored the actual causes of poverty, such as the unequal distribution of income.²¹ Political scientist Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward articulated a similar position immediately following the collapse of Great Society in their book *Regulating the Poor*. Piven and Cloward asserted that American welfare works as an ancillary function of a market economy, which controls the social order. In times of social unrest, they contend, implementing government relief programs is the most expeditious way of tempering political pressure among poor, urban blacks.²²

Although starkly divided along the political spectrum, historians of Great Society generally agree that the national program failed in its aspirations to eradicate poverty and end their assessments in 1968. In popular memory, the War on Poverty turned into a war on crime. Historians Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin argue “the demand for ‘law and order’ asserted

himself once stated “I knew from the start if I left a woman I really loved -- the Great Society -- in order to fight that bitch of a war in Vietnam then I would lose everything at home. My hopes my dreams.”

²⁰ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “How the Great Society Destroyed the American Family,” *The Public Interest* 108 (Summer 1992), 59-61.

²¹ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), xiv.

²² Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, (New York: Random House, 1971), 286.

the common grievances of ordinary people against the perversely misplaced sympathies of liberal politicians and intellectuals.”²³ This historiographical view is useful in understanding the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 and the so-called “rise of the right,” but is not a comprehensive assessment of the effects of Great Society. The political terminology may have disappeared in 1968, but the actual agency that fought the metaphorical war, the OEO, continued to operate through 1980. Annelise Orleck points out that while Presidents Nixon and Carter attempted to distance themselves from Johnson’s War on Poverty, they nonetheless carried out its programs and even initiated new anti-poverty measures, meaning that the War on Poverty did have lasting effects.²⁴

The War on Poverty did not cease to exist after the election of Nixon in 1968, but the Office of Economic Opportunity did undergo another ideological shift at the federal level. Whereas Sargent Shriver directed the OEO under Johnson, Nixon’s first appointment was staunch conservative Donald Rumsfeld.²⁵ But to understand the national effects of such a shift, it is not enough to merely look at high-level political appointments; instead it is necessary to investigate how the OEO operated at local levels. According to French philosopher Michel Foucault, “power is not a thing to be owned or held by somebody, but as ubiquitous, and ever-changing flow. The way in which this flow moves around depends very much on how different groups, institutions and discourses negotiate, relate to and compete with each other.”²⁶ Similarly, while individual figures such as Shriver and Johnson or Rumsfeld and Nixon no doubt influenced the direction of the OEO, it was the bureaucracy’s interactions with various

²³ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: the Civil War of the 1960s*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 211.

²⁴ Annelise Orleck, *The War on Poverty*, 6.

²⁵ Bradley Graham, *By His Own Rules: the ambitions, successes, and ultimate failures of Donald Rumsfeld*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 75.

²⁶ Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato, and Jen Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 80.

institutions and the people it worked with and employed that ultimately determined its functions and how it was to exercise its authority.

In his study of race and urban crisis in post-war Oakland, *American Babylon*, historian Robert O. Self articulates a similar position, he contends “to consider either the civil rights movement or the War on Poverty at the national level alone is to miss their primary area of significance: their articulation in local struggles over fairness, economic opportunity, and power in places like Oakland.”²⁷ My paper expands this understanding of local struggles in both time and place. Whereas Oakland is remembered as the epicenter of Black Power, Portland is perceived as the periphery. And whereas 1964-68 is remembered as the era of the War on Poverty, 1971 is perceived as three years after its collapse. Yet in 1971, Portland Black Power advocates engaged in the same sort of “opportunity politics” that Self’s historical subjects did in Oakland. Self describes “opportunity politics” as “bringing political and institutional power to African American communities.” “In doing so,” he contends “African Americans did more than engage in struggle. They called forth a deep philosophical debate about the meaning of the ghetto and by extension the city itself and the place of both African Americans and whites within it.”²⁸ Although not remembered as a hotbed for racial struggle, Portland too was opened up to a dialogue about the role of race, and specifically, how Portland’s predominantly black neighborhood of Albina fit into the city.

Segregated Portland

Just east of the Willamette River, in North Portland, Albina was founded as a company town and controlled by the Union Pacific Railroad until Portland annexed the district in 1891. At

²⁷ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press), 179.

²⁸ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon*, 180.

the turn of the century, most Portland blacks worked as Pullman porters for the railroad. Just across the Willamette from the railroad station, Albina was a logical settling point but by no means the only one. Small black communities formed in Northwest Portland and in other pockets east of the Willamette. At the turn of the nineteenth century, black Portlanders made up less than one percent of the population and were typically of the middle-class; most were well-educated and about half were homeowners. But just a few decades later, at the onset of World War II, over half of the nearly two-thousand blacks in Portland lived in impoverished conditions in a 4.3 square mile area in Albina.²⁹

Historically, racist practices by both the Oregon government and Portland real estate agents segregated Portland's black population. By popular vote in 1857, Oregon citizens added a clause to the state constitution making it illegal for blacks and "mulattoes" to vote, own property or even migrate to the state. The clause remained until 1926.³⁰ In addition, Oregon was one of only six states that refused to ratify the 15th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave all African-Americans U.S. citizenship and black men the right to vote. Although Oregon's racist laws were not universally enforced, they nonetheless fostered conditions for a racist society. In the 1920s, Oregon saw a spike in its membership of the Ku Klux Klan, numbering in the tens of thousands in the early 1920s.³¹ A large chapter of the Klan thrived in Portland and held initiation ceremonies on Mt. Scott, producing a "terrifying" environment for African Americans in the city, where "large burning crosses could be seen for miles."³² It was the Portland Realty Board, however, that had the most lasting impact implementing racist practices

²⁹ Karen J. Gibson, "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000," *Transforming Anthropology* 15 (2007): 6

³⁰ Boykoff and Gies, "We're Going to Defend Ourselves," 284.

³¹ Shawn Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 153-216.

³² Kimberly Mangun, "'As Citizens of Portland We Must Protest:' Beatrice Morrow Cannady and the African American Reponse to D.W. Griffith's 'Masterpiece'," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107 (Fall 2006): 393.

in Portland. In 1919, the board declared it unethical to sell property to “Negroes and Orientals” in white neighborhoods,³³ thereby tactically limiting decreasing property values to Albina and initiating the “ghettoization” of district.³⁴

The process of ghettoization continued through the mid-century. Between 1940 and 1945 Portland saw its black population grow from just 1,931 to over 20,000, as thousands migrated to the city seeking wartime jobs. By 1950, while black populations in other major western cities, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle, continued to grow, a housing shortage and little opportunity for jobs caused Portland’s black population to fall under 10,000.³⁵ Unlike Seattle,

[Picture]

(Map of Albina. From Portland Bureau of Planning)

where housing authorities created integrated defense housing, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) created segregated living arrangements which they closed following the conclusion of the Pacific War. In 1948, following a major flood in Vanport, Portland’s last significant black community outside of Albina, HAP continued enforcing segregated living arrangements, as the board channeled approximately 1,000 displaced African-Americans into Albina. As blacks continued to move in, the district fell victim to the phenomenon of “white-flight.”³⁶ While Albina’s black population grew by 7,300 in the 1940s, the white population fell by 23,000. In

³³ Karen J. Gibson, “Bleeding Albina,” 6.

³⁴ In *American Apartheid*, authors Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton describe intentionality in the process of ghettoization: “The emergence of the black ghetto did not happen as a chance by-product of other socioeconomic processes. Rather, white Americans made a series of deliberate decisions to deny black access to urban housing markets and to reinforce spatial segregation. Through its actions and inactions, white America built and maintained the residential structure of the ghetto.” Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: segregation and the making of the underclass*. (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1993): 33.

³⁵ Karen J. Gibson, “Bleeding Albina,” 9.

³⁶ White flight, as the term suggests, is the phenomenon first seen in post-World War II America of the mass migration of white Americans from urban cities to suburban areas out of fear and anxiety from increasing minority populations. In *White Flight*, Kevin Kruse that the phenomenon was instrumental in the making of modern conservatism. Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

1957, the City Club of Portland attempted to justify racist housing practices, asserting that since “negroes depress property values” if they were “to sell to negroes in white areas, their business [would] be hurt.”³⁷

As the African-American population increased in Albina, space for housing decreased. In 1959, state legislators passed the Fair Housing Law, making it illegal for property owners and real estate agents to discriminate “solely because of race, color, religion, or national origin” when selling, leasing, or renting property. Thus, city agencies had to turn to other means in perpetuating racist housing practices. In the 1950s and 60s, Albina was the subject of a string of urban renewal projects.³⁸ In 1956, voters approved the construction of Memorial Coliseum in Eliot, Albina’s southernmost neighborhood, demolishing 476 homes, roughly half of which belonged to blacks. In the same year, Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act, providing funds for the construction of Interstate 5 and Highway 99, both of which run north/south through Albina and displaced miles of residential and commercial roads. Finally, the Emanuel Hospital Project displaced hundreds of more African Americans from lower Albina. The Portland Development Commission claimed that the area encompassing the hospital was without doubt “the greatest concentration of Portland’s urban blight,” noting that the area which housed “approximately 75% to 80% of Portland’s Negro population” would not “improve without a concerted effort by urban renewal action.”³⁹ By the end of the 1960s, over eleven-hundred

³⁷ Karen J. Gibson, “Bleeding Albina,” 10.

³⁸ In *Dilemma of Urban America*, Robert Weaver explains that urban renewal, the general process of slum clearance and urban beautification, “was conceived in controversy and it had matured in controversy.” He describes two major schools of thought on urban renewal, generally aligning for and against the program. In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Thomas Sugrue analyzes the role of urban renewal in post-war Detroit, contributing it to aiding the devastation of the city in response to urban crisis in its postindustrial state. Sugrue characterizes Detroit as a “time bomb,” waiting to explode with riots of 1967. Robert C. Weaver, *Dilemmas of Urban Renewal*. (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1965): 40. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

³⁹ Karen J. Gibson, “Bleeding Albina,” 13.

housing units were destroyed in Lower Albina, forcing black residents to relocate to Upper Albina and further intensifying ghettoization. Anthropologist Karen Gibson asserts that after years of segregated housing practices and racially-charged urban renewal projects the relationship between the Albina community and city agencies could be characterized by “extremes of absolute neglect and active destruction.”⁴⁰

Dissatisfied with government programs that failed to create new jobs and adequate housing, Portland blacks began to create their own advocacy groups stressing political autonomy rather than integration. Peniel Joseph comments that in the face of urban crisis, most Americans saw cities in a state of “despair,” but “Black Power militants envisioned opportunity” to take control of the institutions that shaped life in black neighborhoods.⁴¹ Founded by Charles “CX” Debiew in July of 1961, the Black Muslims of Portland became the first organization to distance itself from an integrationist agenda in Portland and drew criticism from established Civil Rights groups such as the Urban League and the NAACP.⁴² Toward the end of the decade, local leaders R.L. Anderson and Kent Ford drew inspiration from national figures such as Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Huey Newton, and founded the Portland Black Berets and Portland Black Panther Party respectively. Operating out of Albina, both organizations established community survival programs such as free daycare and health services, thereby creating and running programs that shaped life in their local neighborhoods.⁴³ Although popular with Albina residents, the city’s established institutions did not know what to make of the emerging Black Power groups. While Portland Black Panthers were more tempered than their counterparts in Oakland,

⁴⁰ Karen J. Gibson, “Bleeding Albina,” 13.

⁴¹ Peniel E. Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 12.

⁴² Portland Bureau of Planning, “The History of Portland’s African American Community,” 123

⁴³ For an in depth history of Portland’s Black Panther Party see Jules Boykoff and Martha Gies, “‘We’re going to defend ourselves:’ The Portland Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Local Media Reponse,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111 (2010).

choosing not to openly display firearms, they were still more militant than any organization Portland had seen before. In response to the emergence of the Portland Black Panthers, *The Oregonian* published an article titled “Heroes or Criminals,” demonstrating its uncertainty about the city’s newest activists.⁴⁴

In the meantime city agencies funded by the War on Poverty were operating in Albina. In 1964, city organizers chose the district as the recipient of federal funds and established the PMSC. The organization, a board of twenty-seven members selected from city government and citizens of the Albina district, dispersed funds to the various programs meant to empower the poor, such as free legal services, family planning and job development training.⁴⁵ The organization, however, had little effect in curbing social unrest. In 1967, over 100 black youth rioted for two days at Irving Park after guest speaker Eldridge Cleaver, a prominent member of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, failed to show up at a planned “Sunday at the Park” event.⁴⁶ In response, Mayor Terry D. Shrunken set up a public hearing to discuss the troubling events. At the hearing members of The Society for New Action Politics, a Portland New Left organization, declared “Negroes serving on social agency and Office of Economic Opportunity boards in Albina are Uncle Toms. ‘Uncle Tomism’ seems to be running rampant over there right now.”⁴⁷

Anderson’s Election and Involvement in the PMSC

⁴⁴ Boykoff and Gies, “We’re Going to Defend Ourselves,”; 289. Portland Bureau of Planning, “The History of Portland’s African American Community,” 124.

⁴⁵ Portland Bureau of Planning, “The History of Portland’s African American Community,” 119

⁴⁶ Portland Bureau of Planning, “The History of Portland’s African American Community,” 125.

⁴⁷ Portland Bureau of Planning, “The History of Portland’s African American Community,” 127. The “New Left” is term used to describe 1960s leftist activism in the form of youthful protest, seen particularly in organizations such as Students for Democratic Society and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. M.J. Heale, “The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography,” *Reviews in American History*, 33 (2005), 139. Taken from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, “Uncle Tom” is a derogatory term that connotes a black man who is particularly subservient to authority.

With his election to the PMSC in 1970, R.L. Anderson began engaging in opportunity politics in Portland. The activist was quick to integrate his reconstructionist approach into his activity on the committee. A February meeting that took place just two weeks before Anderson was elected as treasurer typifies the activist's contribution to the board. His first act of the night was to table a budget proposal after the committee made changes to the report. Anderson stated the motion was to give enough time for the Albina community to study the new budget and respond to it in an adequate way. While the majority of the committee supported Anderson's motion, it nonetheless created debate among the board, with some arguing that tabling the proposal jeopardized the PMSC's ability to meet the deadline for their budget.⁴⁸ Later in the meeting, Anderson challenged standard protocol a second time, questioning why the committee financed three bureaucratic positions in the Office of Child Development while actual caretakers were overworked and underpaid. He claimed that such "top-heavy" administration interfered with getting enough funding to the community itself and accused the committee of "squandering federal money."⁴⁹ Anderson carried on with his systemic criticisms of the PMSC, accusing the board of discriminating against any organization that "might seem militant, controversial, or outspoken," triggering a discussion about the future chairing of subcommittee members.⁵⁰ In the final motion of the night, Anderson requested the Health Subcommittee investigate the activities of Kaiser in Albina, as he had received multiple complaints from community members about the health clinic's practices.⁵¹ The meeting finally came to an end at 12:30 A.M., hours after the typical time for adjournment.

⁴⁸ City of Portland Archives, Board of Directors Minutes. 1971.

⁴⁹ City of Portland Archives, Board of Directors Minutes, 1971.

⁵⁰ City of Portland Archives, Oregon, Board of Directors Minutes. A2000-007, 1971.

⁵¹ Kaiser explanation

While still a far cry from achieving political autonomy in Albina, Anderson's participation on the PMSC demonstrated that some form of merging of grassroots and government was taking place within Portland's chapter of the OEO. All four of Anderson's proposals were motivated by a desire to get the Albina community, the recipient of the OEO funds, more involved in the PMSC. Anderson's activity on the committee epitomizes Self's notion of opportunity politics. Not only was Anderson attempting to restructure the PMSC to better represent the Albina community, but was forcing the board members on the committee to question the role of the agency itself. After operating for seven years, the PMSC had reached a point where it was falling into routine. By arguing for bottom-up organizing, Anderson sought to challenge routine, and his efforts were noticed. At the committee's next meeting, on February 17, 1971, the office of treasurer was open and the PMSC elected Anderson to the position by a two vote margin.⁵² In his mid-twenties, a political revolutionary, and without previous government experience, Anderson was not the typical bureaucrat employed by the OEO. Nevertheless, Anderson's colleagues recognized the merit of his work. While Anderson won the position by a slim margin, not a single board member raised any objections to his appointment as treasurer. At the end of February, 1971, Anderson was not only starting what seemed like a promising political career, but was finding success in advocating for reconstructionism in Albina.

The Media

[Picture]

(A February 18, 1971 *Oregonian* article emphasizing Anderson's militancy)

⁵² City of Portland Archives, Oregon, Board of Directors Minutes. A2000-007, 1971.

Any celebration, however, was to be short lived. The following day, the *Oregonian* published a brief article with the headline “Black Militant Wins OEO Post,” highlighting Anderson’s election even though three other elections had taken place that night, including the position of PMSC chairman.⁵³ While nothing in the headline was untrue, the *Oregonian*’s emphasis on Anderson being a “black militant” rather than an activist or community leader is telling. In the essay, “Race, pigskin, and politics”, media and culture analyst, Charlton McIlwain argues that in political campaigns, advertisers connote the historical perception of black militancy to appeal to white fears of black criminality.⁵⁴ McIlwain draws influence from Angela Davis’ work “Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia,” in which Davis reflects on her own experience with appearances in the media. She contends that the media’s focus on her afro in photographic depictions caused the public to “remember her as a hairdo,” reducing “a politics of liberation to a politics of fashion.”⁵⁵ She asserts that such depictions portrayed her “as a conspiratorial and monstrous Communist (that is, anti-American) whose unruly natural hairdo symbolized Black militancy (that is, anti-whiteness).”⁵⁶ The *Oregonian* article from February 18, 1971 employed the same tactics. Cropping a close-up image of Anderson’s profile, the brief article emphasizes Anderson’s hairline along with his militancy, reinforcing fears of black criminality.

In an article titled “Former ‘Black Beret’ leader takes OEO treasurer post” published March 3, 1971, the *Oregonian* continued to tie Anderson’s political agenda to criminality. Journalist Andrew Mershon opened the piece recounting Anderson’s criminal record and followed with the statement, “he will also have a voice in how some \$6.2 million in federal War on Poverty funds is spent in the Portland area over the next year.” Notably, Mershon did not

⁵³ “Black Militant Wins OEO Post,” *The Oregonian* 18 February 1971. 4M.

⁵⁴ Charlton D. McIlwain, “Race, pigskin, and politics: A semiotic analysis of racial images in political advertising,” *Semiotica* 167 (2007): 171.

⁵⁵ Angela Y. Davis, “Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia,” *Critical Inquiry* 21 (Autumn 1994): 37.

⁵⁶ Angela Y. Davis, “Afro Images,” 39.

mention that the conviction of arson was on appeal and that the accusation of assault had been acquitted until halfway through the full-page article. Furthermore, the author delayed revealing that Anderson's main role as treasurer was to be a member of the PMSC Finance Committee and that he was not paid by and could not write checks on behalf of the organization. While the article claimed to be "a study in grass roots politics," its main focus was on criminality, not only juxtaposing statements about Anderson's criminal convictions with his political agenda, but opening and concluding with discussions on court proceedings and possible jail sentences. Mershon did include extensive quotes from Anderson, in which the Black Power activist defended his political philosophy and attributed his criminal convictions to a negative relationship with Portland Police, but also criticized Anderson's past political actions and raised questions about how Anderson supported himself financially.⁵⁷ The article prompted reader Sallie Krieg to write to the *Oregonian* the following week, accusing Mershon of participating in "yellow journalism" and tactfully placing negative information about Anderson's criminal history in the beginning of the article "knowing full well not many people go past more than two or three paragraphs." Krieg, indentifying herself as "white," concluded her letter criticizing the article for being in the "form of a smear" full of "allegations and half-truths."⁵⁸

The *Oregonian's* treatment of Anderson was typical of media depictions of Black Power activists. In *Framing the Black Panthers*, historian Jane Rhodes argues that mass media simultaneously participated in a federal agenda to discredit and eliminate the Black Panther Party while giving the party an avenue to make their political platform accessible to national audiences. Mershon's article does the same. The journalist dedicated an ample amount of space to Anderson's political motives, but ultimately painted a picture of Anderson as a dangerous

⁵⁷ Andrew Mershon, "Former 'Black Beret' leader takes OEO treasurer post."

⁵⁸ Sallie R. Krieg, "Anderson's smear," *The Oregonian*, 9 March 1971.

criminal. Rhodes comments that national media coverage of the Black Panther Party failed in its explanatory role, not differentiating between “the theatrics and hyperbole” of the party and instead “registered white Americans’ shock and fear over the Panthers’ style of protest.”⁵⁹ It was not uncommon for media to demonize Black Power, characterizing the movement as violent and anti-white. In *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, former Civil Rights activists and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader James Forman contests, “The press attacks on SNCC became ferocious, as reporters and columnists tried to make our spokesmen into monsters thirsting for the blood of whites.”⁶⁰ While the *Oregonian*’s depictions of Anderson were not so damning that they described the activist as a blood-thirsty monster, they nonetheless fit into a national trend of catering to white fears of Black Power.

The Police

Along with pressure from the Portland media, Anderson was the subject of constant surveillance by the Portland Bureau of Police, who assumed he was participating in criminal behavior. On February 27, 1971, The Portland Bureau of Police opened a surveillance file on Anderson, reasoning that since he “is always trying to make money off of other people” he would attempt to use the PMSC as a means to create fraudulent checks.⁶¹ After four months of extensive investigation, following Anderson to phone booths and writing down license plate numbers of friends’ cars, the police found no evidence of fraud on behalf of Anderson.⁶² In fact, the only case of fraud related to any of Anderson’s organizations was a 150 dollar check, stolen

⁵⁹ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: the Spectacular rise of a Black power icon*. (New York: New Press, 2007), 88.

⁶⁰ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 458.

⁶¹ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Intelligence Report, February 27, 1971, 3

⁶² City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee.

from Anderson's office and used to buy whiskey by a known alcoholic.⁶³ The police told the suspect that they would "assist him in his plight" to avoid a lengthy jail sentence if he provided information about R.L. Anderson, but after terminating the interview, the police concluded the suspect knew nothing of Anderson or his alleged operations.⁶⁴ The police's effort to bribe the suspect in exchange for incriminating evidence on Anderson demonstrates that they were actively searching for reason to arrest the Black Power advocate. Their judgment that Anderson was involved in criminal behavior was based on prejudice and fear rather than his actions.

The police eventually determined that Anderson was not running an illegal check ring, but still tried to associate the activist with a general misuse of funds, suspecting that Anderson was collaborating with the PMSC director, Cleveland Gilcrease, in fraud. In an interview with a former board member of the PMSC, the police were surprised to discover that contrary to their beliefs, Anderson and Gilcrease were not "of one mind," but usually opposed to each other and that there was no way the two were involved in fraudulent behavior within the PMSC.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the interviewee explained that any misuse of funds was because of fraud, but a result of systemic failures of the PMSC that put too much decision-making power in the hands of the director and placed incompetent bureaucrats in high-paying positions. The interviewee went on to say that he would "take 150 R.L. Andersons to one Mr. Gilcrease," revealing that he did not attribute misuse of OEO funds to the activist.⁶⁶ After concluding the interview, the police ceased investigating Anderson's involvement within the PMSC, but kept his surveillance file open.

⁶³ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Supplementary Report, April 2, 1971.

⁶⁴ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee, Police Supplementary Report, April 2, 1971.

⁶⁵ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee. Police Interview, 5.

⁶⁶ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Interview, 12

The investigation of Anderson on the PMSC board may not have been the result of malicious intent on behalf of the Portland Bureau of Police, but a fundamental misunderstanding of Black Power. The police could not fathom why Anderson, a young political revolutionary, wanted to participate in city government, and assumed his activity was motivated by criminal intentions. In the initial intelligence report filed about Anderson, the police's described the activist as "one of the more active militants" in Portland.⁶⁷ The police, like the media, correlated black militancy with crime and assumed to be militant meant to be violent. Martin Luther King Jr., who famously adhered to a philosophy of non-violence, described popular misperceptions of militancy. Explaining that "the word 'militant' is misunderstood because people think of militancy in military terms. But to be militant merely means to be demanding and to be persistent."⁶⁸ R.L. Anderson was militant in that he did everything within his power to achieve liberation for the Albina community. As much as this meant organizing citizen patrols in his younger days, it meant participating in city politics when the chance arose.

In addition, the police did not appreciate the Albina community's support of Anderson and sorely misinterpreted the role that race and racism played in their support of the recently elected treasurer. In the aforementioned interview with a former PMSC board member, a police officer questioned why it was that the PMSC does not "seem to get any [blacks] that seem to care too much about the people," ignoring the waves of support Anderson received from his community.⁶⁹ In a prior intelligence report, detailing a heated meeting concerning Anderson's future on the PMSC, an officer commented on the dozens of community members who had come out in support for Anderson, stating "it appears that these people are becoming more racist in

⁶⁷ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Intelligence Report, February 27, 1971, 1.

⁶⁸ Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Everett Gendler. 1968. "Conversation with Martin Luther King". In *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader*, ed. Clayborne Carson et. All. (Boston: Penguin Books, 1987) , 396.

⁶⁹ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Interview, 5.

their view and attitudes.”⁷⁰ The Portland police essentially understood the Albina community’s support of Anderson as racists extolling a criminal. This proved dangerous for Anderson and his political goals. They saw his participation in community programs as a criminal front rather than an effort to gain control of the institutions that shaped daily life in Albina. With this view in mind, the police resolved to do anything within their power to find cause for Anderson’s arrest and remove the activist from his position on the PMSC.

The Portland Bureau of Police, in short, was out of touch with black Portlanders in Albina. In the same week that R.L. Anderson announced his resignation from the office of treasurer, chief of Police Robert McNamara removed head of the Portland Police Community Relations division, Sergeant John Roe, from his post after Roe filed a report requesting the transfer of five allegedly racist officers out of Albina. Roe reportedly had upset police authority as well as other officers with his actions in Albina. According to James Long of *The Oregon Journal*, Roe drew criticism from fellow police officers for incidents such as using a police vehicle to help move furniture into the Black Panther’s free health clinic, testifying in defense at the trial of Albert Williams, a young black man shot by police, and for objecting to the use of nightsticks in an assault on leader of the Portland Black Panthers Kent Ford.⁷¹ R.L. Anderson, as it turned out, was more enraged at the news of Roe’s removal than his own resignation, stating that Roe, who had gained the confidence of the community, was a “victim of the establishment” and that his removal severely damaged the Police Community Relations program.⁷²

The Portland Bureau of Police’s actions can be understood within the national context of law enforcement’s relationship with Black Power. At the federal level, the FBI launched covert

⁷⁰ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Police Intelligence Report, March 22, 1971, 2.

⁷¹ James Long, “Series of Incidents Triggered Shakeup in PCR.” *The Oregon Journal*. April.

⁷² Robert Olmos, “Model Cities Aide Threatens To Blow Whistle on Police Shift.” *The Oregonian*. 31 March 1971.

operations through its COINTELPRO program in order to prevent stable or effective leftist and Black Nationalist groups from forming.⁷³ The Portland police were never as subversive as the FBI, but they did fall into national trend of actively attempting to stifle the success of Black Power. The Portland Bureau of Police did have interest in the revitalization of Albina, showing concern that federal OEO funds were being spent properly in aiding the poor. However, the police had no sense what this actually meant to impoverished people themselves, as they sought to remove both R.L. Anderson and John Roe, two men who had the support of the Albina community, from positions of power.

The Albina Community

For all the negative attention Anderson received from institutions such as the police and the newspaper media, Anderson received a considerable amount of support from his own community. A short editorial by KGW-TV, a local news station, argued that since Anderson did not actually handle any money in his role as treasurer, the real conflict was not Anderson's criminal convictions making him an unacceptable candidate but "whether local communities can, and should control some aspects of their own antipoverty programs." The Albina community, too, saw community control of antipoverty programs as the main issue in the demand for Anderson's resignation. In response to the various media reports on Anderson and the call for his resignation, a makeshift flyer posted in Albina argued:

When R.L Anderson was elected as a representative for Albina and the poor, all allegations that are not being called to the public's attention were well known by the community and state, and the PMSC board. The community, and the state, and the PMSC board had confidence in him and his community certainly has confidence in him now! Could it be possible that the PMSC board is racist? Could PMSC be practicing racism? Isn't voting a priviledge? After exercising your priviledge to vote, what or whom gives a few persons the right to crucify the voice of the people.

⁷³ John Drabble, "Fighting Black Power-New Left coalitions: Covert FBI media campaigns, and American cultural discourse, 1967-1971, *European Journal of American Culture* 27 (2008): 65.

Did this man violate any constitutional laws? If so read the charges. This is illegal and unconstitutional. Let the voice of the people be heard! All power to the people!⁷⁴

Far different than the Portland police officer's assessment, which attributed the community's support of Anderson to racism, the flyer exhibits the author being acutely aware of the political ramifications of Anderson's resignation. Historian Peniel Joseph asserts that historians have mistreated Black Power, attributing the movement to the demise of the Civil Rights era, but explains that recent scholarship has combated this characterization and realized that Black Power was a "movement for radical self-determination" that grew out of specific social and political contexts.⁷⁵ The argument presented on the flyer exemplifies this definition. Not only is there no evidence of "black rage" sparking the author's argument, but it is deeply rooted in a local political debate, illustrating the organic quality of Black Power in Portland. The multi-tiered argument advocated self-determination for the Albina community and condemned outside interference, contending that top-down authority had no right to undermine the results of the election of R.L. Anderson. The document epitomizes the meaning of grassroots. The author was not necessarily well-educated, misspelling and misusing the word "privilege," but nonetheless well-versed in local politics and conscious of the broader political and racial implications the case of R.L. Anderson had on his or her community.

The strongest showing of support for R.L. Anderson by the Albina community came at a March 20, 1971 PMSC meeting where committee members motioned for the removal of Anderson from the position of treasurer. Several committee members tried to force a vote, but before they could, another board member suggested the committee hear opinions from the some 150 spectators in the audience before making any decisions.⁷⁶ Every one of the dozens of

⁷⁴ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee: Flyer.

⁷⁵ Peniel E. Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels*, 11.

⁷⁶ City of Portland Archives, Board of Directors Minutes, 1971.

spectators who spoke at the meeting, spoke in order to “stand behind Anderson.”⁷⁷ While some members of the community fully supported Anderson’s politics another woman clarified that “I may not agree with everything he says, but I believe if we get to fighting among ourselves on this, he won’t be the first to fall.” Those who spoke on behalf of Anderson had varying opinions of his political methods but agreed that the reason Anderson was being persecuted was his race and that the community had to stand together on behalf of the treasurer.⁷⁸ One spectator proposed that if the usual insurance agency would not provide bonding for Anderson, that the Albina community should start a citizen’s fund to support Anderson, offering five dollars to start the fund. By the end of the night, several people contributed small bills and checks in support of Anderson and vowed to start an effort of public solicitation to raise their own bond for Anderson.⁷⁹

The community’s effort was marginally successful, triggering the PMSC to request a two-week extension to find surety bonding for Anderson, but in the end, the activist was forced to resign. The community’s effort to bond Anderson reveals a tragic element in the case of activist’s resignation. Ultimately, it was a matter of \$25,000 that decided the fate of Anderson’s role on the board, an amount of money that the impoverished Albina community had no chance of procuring. The Albina community continued their support for Anderson, attending protests organized by the former treasurer and appearing at future meetings in supporting Anderson’s political message, but as the flyer alluded, the OEO’s stringent regulations “crucified the voice of the people,” as they stifled the political ambitions of R.L. Anderson, turning a deaf ear to the many voices expressing their support for the activist.

⁷⁷ “Steering Panel Hits Snag On Surety Bond,” *The Oregonian*. 21 March 1971.

⁷⁸ City of Portland Archives, Black Community Survival Committee. Police Intelligence Report, March 20, 1971, 2.

⁷⁹ “Steering Panel Hits Snag On Surety Bond”

The PMSC

When Anderson was elected to the post of treasurer, there was seemingly no controversy on the matter. The activist only won by two votes, but the committee approved of his appointment unanimously.⁸⁰ Only one month later during the most heated debate concerning Anderson's role as treasurer and the future of the PMSC, the committee was split, with about half voicing favor for the activist and half advocating for his immediate resignation.⁸¹ With over six million dollars on the line, it is understandable that members of the PMSC called for Anderson's resignation. However, some board members admitted that they not only feared losing immediate funds, but were worried that even if Anderson were able to receive bonding that the OEO would cut future funding based on controversy surrounding Anderson and his character.⁸² Thus, about half the members of the PMSC were more concerned with preserving the institution itself than ensuring it functioned according to its founding principles.

Unable to make any decisions itself, the PMSC became stuck in a middle ground and transformed into an arena in which various city agencies vied for control over the Albina community. Approaching the federal deadline to acquire bonding, the PMSC came close to collapse and the greater Portland community began engaging in the debate of whether to preserve the goals of the agency or preserve the agency itself. As it turned out established institutions such as newspaper media and the Portland Bureau of Police suppressed the voice of the Albina community, the very people the PMSC was supposed to represent. Rather than nourish the growth of grassroots organizing in Portland, the PMSC stood frozen as an organization as institutional pressure rendered grassroots movements impotent.

⁸⁰ City of Portland Archives, Board of Directors Minutes, 1971.

⁸¹ City of Portland Archive, Black Community Survival Committee. Police Intelligence Report, March 22, 1971.

⁸² "Bonding Key to Job For Black Militant," *The Oregon Journal*. 22 March 1971.

Conclusions

“At the centre of the carceral city, and as if to hold it in place, there is, not the 'centre of power', not a network of forces, but a multiple network of diverse elements - walls, space, institution, rules, discourse; that the model of the carceral city is not, therefore, the body of the king, with the powers that emanate from it, nor the contractual meeting of wills from which a body that was both individual and collective was born, but a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels.” - Michel Foucault⁸³

Eventually, it was not the deliberations of the committee that forced Anderson to resign, but the sheer amount of pressure caused by the risk of losing 6.2 million dollars of federal funds. The purpose of the PMSC was to empower the poor within Albina, but in the case of R.L. Anderson, the activist had to adhere to federal regulations rather than the desires of the Albina community. The PMSC served contrary to its purpose because it was ultimately responsible to top-down authority rather than the people it was meant to represent. However, the regional director of the OEO in Seattle did not object to Anderson’s political philosophy or his criminal record, but the fact he could not secure surety bonding. In the end, it was the decision of a private insurance company that blocked Anderson from serving as treasurer on the PMSC.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault explains that the construction of the modern prison was not conducted under any central authority, but realized through an array of methods and institutions developed with different purposes and varying relations to the prison converging to create a system of disciplinary punishment. “Ultimately,” Foucault explains “what presides over all these mechanisms is not the unitary functioning of an apparatus or an institution, but the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy.”⁸⁴ In the case of the PMSC, it was not by design that a bonding company held the final authority on political appointments to the committee, but the converging of different agencies and methods of governance put an

⁸³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 307.

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 308

inordinate amount of power in the hands of the bonding firm. Furthermore, the forces that converged either to voice support for R.L. Anderson or call for his resignation did not operate to ensure the unitary functioning of the PMSC as an institution, but competed in a power struggle over control for the physical space, buildings, agencies, and communities that made up Albina in 1971. Since established institutions engaged in this conflict over community control not to save the PMSC, but as an exercise of ideological combat, their actions and motivations for these actions were not limited to the event of Anderson's resignation. The newspaper media continued to describe Anderson as a dangerous militant and the police continued to seek reason for his arrest until he was arrested nearly six months later and sentenced to over two years in jail. Outside pressure on Anderson would not relent until the activist no longer had a voice in the Albina community.

The resignation and arrest of R.L. Anderson demonstrate how the ideological shift from envisioning a great society to demanding one of law and order manifested at local levels. Whether one believes that Johnsonian liberalism was a genuine attempt to eradicate poverty or a means of suppressing dissidence among the disenfranchised poor, the War on Poverty demonstrated a fundamental belief that implementing antipoverty relief programs was the appropriate response to widespread social unrest. But with the election and landslide reelection of Richard Nixon, an emerging brand of conservatism arose in mainstream America and dictated that combating the perceived breakdown of lawful society was the proper response to curbing unrest.⁸⁵ In Portland with the case of R.L. Anderson, this meant objecting to a black militant

⁸⁵ Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3. Flamm describes three responses conservatives had to 1960s liberalism. The first was the assertion that the Civil Rights movement popularized the practice civil disobedience, thereby promoting disrespect for legal authority. The second is that in cases such as *Miranda* and *Escondida*, the Supreme Court promoted the rights of criminal defendants at the expense of law enforcement. The third, that Great Society rewarded undeserving minorities for criminal behavior, especially as seen in urban riots. Rick Perlstein cleverly dubs this period as "Nixonland," which he describes as being

filling a government post, but more specifically it meant mass media characterizing him as a dangerous criminal, the police opening an extensive investigation, a private insurance company refusing to bond him based on his status as an ex-convict, an all-white jury convicting him to a prison sentence, and the federal government responding to these converging forces by demanding his immediate resignation from the PMSC.

Anderson's political aspirations challenged the historic role and place of Albina within Portland. Reacting to decades of systemic racism in the city that enforced segregation and ghettoized Albina, the city's black community stood behind Anderson in his belief that the district needed to achieve some form of political autonomy in order to combat social injustice. It is difficult to say if Anderson had been allowed to continue his political career whether or not his philosophy of reconstructionism would have found success, but what is significant is that it was never given the chance. Instead of empowering and politicizing the poor, the PMSC created an avenue for established institutions to disarm grassroots movements, leaving the poor without a voice. In September of 1971, just one month after Anderson was sentenced to jail, the *Oregonian* published a study reporting that over 80 percent of residents living in target areas for Portland antipoverty funds were unaware of economic development programs in their neighborhoods, and the majority of those who were aware felt that funds were being wasted.⁸⁶ Perhaps if city agencies and institutions had sought to aid, rather than block, the poor in their effort to take control of the PMSC, perceived failure of the organization would not have been the case.

characterized by mainstream political paranoia from strongly divided sectors of America. Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and Fracturing of America*. (New York: Scribner, 2008).

⁸⁶ "Portlanders appear unaware of efforts to fight poverty," *The Oregonian*. 2 September 1971.

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