

Long-Delayed Chicago Civil Suit On Black Panther Raid Is Begun

NYTimes By SETH S. KING Special to The New York Times JAN 23 1976

CHICAGO, Jan. 22—After that followed, Mr. Hampton more than five years of legal disputes, a civil suit against Edward V. Hanrahan, former Cook County State's Attorney, and other county and Federal officials involved in a raid on a Black Panther headquarters in 1969 was finally under way here today.

The families of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, the two Black Panther leaders slain in the raid, and the seven survivors of heavy gunfire in the pre-dawn raid are seeking \$47.7 million in damages from 31 defendants in the Federal District Court suit.

The plaintiffs argue that their civil rights were violated by a murder conspiracy and cover-up by law enforcement officers after the raid.

A jury of one man and five women, one of them black, was finally chosen today after more than three weeks of argument and bickering and among attorneys for both sides and Judge Joseph S. Perry.

The raid was carried out by Chicago police assigned to Mr. Hanrahan's office. In the darkness of Dec. 4, 1969, the raiding party, carrying a warrant to search for illegal weapons, burst into the shabby West Side apartment the Black Panthers were using as a headquarters.

In the brief, wild shooting

was killed in his bed. Mr. Clark was shot to death in an adjoining room and four of their companions were wounded.

A Federal grand jury later investigated the shooting, but returned no indictments. While the raiders said that they had been met with a fusillade from the apartment as they entered, the grand jury reported evidence showed that more than 90 bullets had been fired by the police into the dwelling and only one shot appeared to have been fired out toward them. The jury said it was not clear who had fired that one shot.

In the summer of 1972, Mr. Hanrahan, fourteen police officers involved in the raid, and an assistant states attorney were tried in Cook County Circuit Court on charges that they had conspired to withhold evidence in the case. They were acquitted by Judge Phillip Romitti, who ruled that Special Prosecutor Barnabas Sears had failed to prove a conspiracy existed.

Among the defendants in the civil suit are Marlin Johnson, who was head of the Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the time of the raid. He is now head of the Chicago Police Board. An F.B.I. agent who passed information on the Black Panthers to the raiders and a paid F.B.I. informer who had infiltrated the Black Panther unit are also among the defendants.

Files of F.B.I. Involved

After months of legal maneuvering, attorneys for the plaintiffs succeeded in getting permission to present F.B.I. files as part of their evidence in the case.

They hope to convince the jury that the raid was deliberately organized as a cover to attack and kill the Black Panthers as they slept in their headquarters.

During the prolonged jury selection Judge Perry ruled that a panel of six jurors and four alternates was sufficient to hear the case. He predicted the trial would last three to five months.

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On Fred Hampton
and Mark Clark:

29 Dec 69

23 May 70

18 Dec 71 et seq.