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It's around 7:00 A.M. on December 4, 1969, and attorney Jeff Haas is in a police lockup in Chicago, interviewing Fred Hampton's fiancée. She is describing how the police pulled her from the room as Fred lay unconscious on their bed. She heard one officer say, "He's still alive." She then heard two shots. A second officer said, "He's good and dead now." She looks at Jeff and asks, "What can you do?"

The Assassination of Fred Hampton is Haas's personal account of how he and People's Law Office partner Flint Taylor pursued Hampton's assassins, ultimately prevailing over unlimited government resources and FBI conspiracy. Not only a story of justice delivered, the book puts Hampton in a new light as a dynamic community leader and an inspiration in the fight against injustice.

The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther Details

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From Reader Review The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther for online ebook

Janet says

I have always heard Fred Hampton's name but I didn't know anything about him. I purchased this on my kindle on a whim and I'm glad I did. This is more about the fight for justice for the murder of a young man that the government thought would be a problem. This story is really infuriating to read because it's that people in power can do what they want and basically get away with it. While reading this I did get a little confused with the law lingo but thankfully the author does explain things. There isn't really much else I could add to this but if you would like to learn a little bit about Fred Hampton, the fight to bring his murderers to justice and about a little about the black panthers this is a good start. It is an easy read and the only reason it took me so long to get through it was because I don't bring my kindle with me on my daily commute.

Ricky says

Whether it's by reading this book, seeing a film, whatever, learning about Fred Hampton is mandatory in our struggle for justice, especially those of us who are Chicago-based.

I had no idea how many ways the "legal" system has and continues to incubate and perpetuate racism and classism until I read this book.

The scariest part is that I have ZERO doubts that the legacy of COINTELPRO is being continued through the Patriot Act, etc. There are still informants, there are still death threats, there is still murder.

And of course, take or leave the author's personal narrative entwined :)

Cassie Pouliot says

The more I learned about Fred Hampton, the more I began to wish that he was able to continue to impact the world around him. Fred Hampton would've truly been a person to bring multiple sides together through discussion rather than violence.

Sean Estelle says

Damn - I thought I knew the facts about the assassination of Fred Hampton but this was so much more! Highly recommend even if you know the basic facts of what happened; the court case is a riveting story.

Maritza says

Was not super in love with the author's voice and felt much more autobiographical to me than anything else, but there's so much information detailing the history of Fred Hampton's assassination that I think it is definitely a worthwhile read-- just took a little patience!

Ness says

Brilliant, well-written, and incisive. Highly recommended for anyone interested in racial justice, the Black Panther Party, and learning more about the history of State-sanctioned racism in the United States.

Kusaimamekirai says

On December 4th, 1969, the Chicago police staged a predawn raid of a Black Panther apartment on the west side of Chicago. Ostensibly acting on a tip from an informant that the Panthers were stockpiling illegal weapons there, the police burst into the apartment, firing 90 shots in total to the Panthers 1 (forensics later established that this one shot was moving in an upward trajectory indicative of someone falling backwards as the weapon accidentally discharged.

When it was all over two men, Mark Clark and Fred Hampton, the latter being a rising star in the Panther movement were dead. Just 20 years old at the time, Hampton was killed by two bullet wounds to the head fired at close range and was later found to have the powerful sedative Seconal in his system at the time of his death. By eyewitness accounts, he never left his bed as bullets rained down on the apartment and never knew what hit him.

This book briefly goes into the background of Hampton's rise in Chicago and his talents as an orator and organizer for the burgeoning Panther movement. It is however mainly concerned with his death and the subsequent trial Haas and his fellow attorneys spent over ten years trying to get justice for.

What he presents here is quite simply shocking. How does one even begin to process police denials of premeditated murder when confronted with, among other things, eyewitness accounts of an officer going into Hampton's bedroom as he slept and firing two shots into his head while saying "he's good as dead now"?

The police having a detailed floor plan of the apartment with Hampton's bed circled (this was later discovered to be courtesy of a FBI informant who had infiltrated the Panthers and passed information on to police and federal agents). The FBI, Chicago's district attorney, and local police all having extensive contact leading up to the raid. And of course, the 90 police shots in the apartment to the Panthers one.

This is all before the trials even began in which the FBI withheld evidence, judges acted with extreme prejudice, and attorneys lied, threatened, and cajoled witnesses. It's easy to get lost in a sea of outrage while reading this book. The actions of law enforcement here are particularly egregious even for 1960's era police brutality and political repression. If you have the stomach for it try googling "Fred Hampton, smiling, police officers". If that picture doesn't enrage you or enflame your sense of injustice than this probably isn't the book for you.

Rather than just be angry however, I took two things in particular away from this book.

The first being that the author and the attorneys he worked with spent a good part of their lives and with very little financial gain to themselves trying to bring those responsible for this political murder to justice. This book is as much about the Hampton trial as it is about the author and his long fight to expose the dark

corners of our society to the light. I have read some reviews stating they wished the author spoke less about how he experienced the trial personally but I didn't feel that. I thought his perspective as someone who had done legal work for Hampton and the Panthers and considered him a friend made his cause that much more noble. I applaud him for his perseverance.

The second being the life of Hampton himself. Much has been written about the Panthers. Some good such as their free meals for children programs, building hospitals, and restoring pride to Black communities. Some negative such as accusations of violence or sexism within the movement. The latter being corroborated by more than a few members. Hampton seemingly was different though. He didn't drink or do drugs, he employed women in the highest levels of the Chicago Panthers, and by most accounts would not allow any of the female Panthers in his presence to be disrespected or abused by male members.

Most of all he was a dynamic speaker who at age 20 was surely slated for bigger things. Having already galvanised the Chicago Panthers, the national Panthers were already looking at bringing him into a leadership position. What would have come from this is one of history's great questions but sadly we will never know.

When thinking about how to close this review, I thought about using Hampton's own words to describe the ideals that attracted him to so many and that he lived and ultimately died for. I chose part of a speech he gave three months before his death and out on bail from trumped up charges over robbing an ice cream man(seriously).

They are words that perfectly describe who Fred Hampton was and what kind of life we all should strive for:

If you ever think about me and you ain't gonna do no revolutionary act, forget about me. I don't want myself on your mind if you're not going to work for the people. If you're asked to make a commitment at the age of twenty, and you say I don't want to make a commitment at the age of twenty, only because of the reason that I'm too young to die, I want to live a little longer, then you're dead already. You have to understand that people have to pay a price for peace. If you dare to struggle, you dare to win. If you dare not struggle then damn it, you don't deserve to win. Let me say peace to you if you're willing to fight for it.

Emma says

The story of Fred Hampton's execution is infinitely compelling, mandatory reading. This book becomes very bogged down in the legal wrangling for the civil case and the lives of his lawyers (and their dispute over fees) to such an extent that the reality is sometimes obscured; that a civil case is secondary compared to the criminal charges that should have been laid and the convictions that should have followed for shooting a drugged defenceless man in his bed and shooting others in his apartment. A northern lynching indeed. This is not to downplay the book and the achievements of those who fought for some sort of justice. Sometimes I just felt that the law obscured the story and the amazing people who occupy it.

Lacy says

It's a good book. Fred Hampton and his assassination are worth learning about. My only complaint, I just wish there would have been less bits about the author's personal life.

Keisha Scott says

Amazingly Speechless

Absolutely speechless!!! I have read many books on the Black Panthers, and have admired Fred Hampton from the very first time I learned about him as a little girl in the 1980s. While I enjoyed reading this soon-to-be classic on my kindle, this is a must-have hardcopy book for my collection. Mr. Haas, I just have no words - in a good way. I have experienced every range of emotions possible...anger, sadness, worry, joy...my eyes are still watery. I just want to say thank you...

Dan Sirotkin says

The fact that you know who Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were but likely have little idea who Fred Hampton was is damn near a disgrace.

This is far and away the most thorough and powerful autobiographical account of life during the fight for African-American Civil Rights since The Autobiography of Malcolm X. The author, Jeffery Haas, was one of the lead prosecutors in the case against the government after Hampton's assassination in 1969, a moment that in many ways ended the black nationalist movement. Having lived through the events, he writes with a passion that is second-to-none, and makes the complexities of a series of trials that stretched on well past a decade simple to digest.

Haas weaves a gripping and moving narrative about the months leading up to the assassination and then the years of trial that would follow, he challenges John Grisham in terms of making you engaged, frustrated, and spellbound with courtroom events.

If you any interest at all about the struggle for Civil Rights, you absolutely must read this book.

Ernesto Aguilar says

Among some circles, Fred Hampton is a luminary without peers. Though new generations may only catch his reference in a song, his legacy in Chicago and to the Black liberation movement is without question. The charismatic Black Panther Party chapter leader demonstrated a natural gift for reaching people, and marshaled young people into political action for the first time. His brutal murder — in which Chicago police, after wounding him as he slept, delivered two rounds to the head, killing him — horrified the world. He was just 21 years old.

The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and Chicago Police Murdered A Black Panther is the account of attorney Jeff Haas' fight to ensure justice for the families of Hampton and Mark Clark, killed in the police raid spun by authorities at the time as repelling a Panther attack. It is also a chilling chronicle of the depths authorities will sink to silence dissent and to cover it up.

Haas and three other lawyers set up the People's Law Office in 1969, and he defended many social justice activists since then. The Hampton case, however, drove Haas. It dragged on for years, facing defeats along the way, until a settlement. The book is as much about the commitment of scores of people, who poured in

their time and energies to see that justice was done, as it is the quest to hold the police officers and establishment involved accountable.

Subsequent investigations of Fred Hampton's murder would reveal involvement by a Federal Bureau of Investigation informant and collaboration with local police that resulted in the organizer's assassination. Few knew it at the time, but what occurred would be shown to be part of a sophisticated federal effort, labeled COINTELPRO, aimed at disrupting, demoralizing, dividing and exterminating Black activism primarily among social justice tendencies. It wasn't until activists burglarized a Pennsylvania FBI office and released documents in 1971 that COINTELPRO was exposed. Operative William O'Neal, working through the bureau's Racial Matters unit, provided key information just hours before the murder. His work, and the war the FBI waged on Black revolutionaries, figures prominently in the book.

Those familiar with writings that trace legal trajectories will find *The Assassination of Fred Hampton* cuts a familiar path, yet one that takes on a particular heft given the case. The final days of Hampton's life is imparted, but it is the excruciating detail with which the murder is told that is where Haas' legal background brings the story out. Culled from volumes of testimony, research, released documents and other sources, Haas compares what happened with conflicting police testimony and justifications. His writing presents a penetrating image of law enforcement bent on protecting its own, even if some recognized the fault in their actions. Indirectly, the book shows the determination of the Hampton and Clark families as well as the legal team to counter the coverup in court and in the community.

Though contemporary political movements in the United States have few comparisons quite like the Fred Hampton case in terms of severity today, Haas' book is a primer on how a movement can challenge official misconduct through a diversity of efforts. *The Assassination of Fred Hampton* stands out, just as Hampton himself did all those years ago.

Richard says

It continues to blow my mind to see how institutionalized racism in our criminal justice system operated, and continues to operate to this day. And it's bewildering at times to become aware of all that I was taught regarding the Black Panthers, Attica, and other incidents has been mostly lies concocted to protect white supremacy in American society.

I checked the box for biography, but the focus of this book is on Fred Hampton's murder and the subsequent cover-up. It's biographical to a degree, but really operates as an expose of the racist criminal justice system, not just in Chicago, but at the federal level as well. I really cannot understand how these racist pigs - and I don't just mean police, but prosecutors, judges, lawyers, everyone it seems in the criminal justice system - can sleep at night.

We simply have so much more work to do.

Caroline Lampinen says

This book should be required reading for American History. When I first heard of Fred Hampton, I was shocked that he isn't as widely circulated as Malcolm X and Dr Martin Luther King Jr - reading this book I'm

still angry about it, but now see (as usual) how deliberately the US government white washes and covers up Civil Rights icons.

Haas's story is a page turner for the entire book, even when you know the blood and deceit. He writes in a way that owns his narrative and his experience, while still giving great insight into other major players.

Leaving this book makes me really wonder about the rift between the PLO and Montgomery as well as why Akua backs out of the story. I want to do more research.

Over all VERY worth the 350 pages - split into easy to read chapters and filled with colorful language and a sentiment all liberals and anyone with a bone for justice can identify with.

Skip says

Wow. Author/attorney Jeffrey Haas sets the stage for a December 1969 predawn raid by the Chicago police on a Black Panther apartment, where an eloquent and popular rising black leader named Fred Hampton was killed. Supposedly acting on a tip from an informant that illegal weapons were there, the police burst into the apartment, firing 90 shots in total to the Panthers one. The book reviews in tremendous detail how the courts and police tried to cover up the fact that Hampton has likely been drugged, set-up by an FBI informant, and then murdered in cold blood: shot twice point blank in the head. Haas and his small law firm of young idealists took on the legal and law enforcement systems, and despite many setbacks, persevered, eventually ending up with an appeals judge, who believed in fairness. Highly recommended for people interested in racial justice, the Black Panther Party, and learning more about the history of government-sanctioned racism in the United States.

My only complaint is that we did not really get a real sense for Fred Hampton himself, whose life ended at age 21, who might have become as important a leader for social change through non-violence and community organizing as Martin Luther King. Growing up in the Chicago suburb of Maywood, Hampton joined the NAACP, building a youth council of 500 members (in a town of 27,000) and worked to build a recreational center/pool and better education for the local black community. Hampton was then drawn to the Black Panthers and its ten-point program, emphasizing education, health, welfare, and self-determination.
