

University of Nevada, Reno

**Musicians and the Question of Integration: An Analysis of Factors
that Led to Integrating the Musicians' Unions in Chicago**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in History

By

Scot Krause

Dr. Greta de Jong/Thesis Advisor

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SCOT KRAUSE

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MASTER OF ARTS

Greta de Jong, Ph.D.

Advisor

Jacob Dorman, Ph.D.

Committee Member

Dennis Dworkin, Ph.D.

Committee Member

Christopher L. von Nagy, Ph.D.

Committee Member

Louis Niebur, Ph.D.

Graduate School Representative

David W. Zeh, Ph.D., Dean

Graduate School

May, 2021

Abstract

This thesis examines the factors that led to the integration of Locals 10 and 208, musicians' unions in Chicago, Illinois. I argue that, especially within Local 208, the Black musicians' union, the debate about whether or not to integrate the unions was more complicated and nuanced than the activists working towards or against integration let on in interviews and in the newspapers in any given article. Documentary evidence suggests that the debate about whether to integrate the unions or not took on dimensions beyond race and involved the participants' and their various organizations' identities related to class, education, and understanding of the history of musicians in Chicago. Furthermore, a close analysis of an unpublished manuscript by Charles Walton, a member of the Black Local 208, indicates that, while reflecting on the 1966 integration of the two unions, musicians and other people close to the process of integrating the unions demonstrated that many of the reservations the separatists had were later realized. The final chapter examines the short-term and long-term outcomes of integrating the unions.

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Introduction

In 1966, the segregated musicians' unions in Chicago integrated. The period before the integration was tumultuous in many of the expected ways. There were members of the white musicians' union, Local 10, that wanted nothing to do with Local 208, the Black musicians' union. This white resistance will come as no surprise to anybody that has studied the Civil Rights era. However, a topic that has been given far less attention is the resistance and infighting within the Black musicians' union regarding the subject of integration. This thesis will examine the various arguments made by musicians in Local 208 that wanted to integrate unions as well as the arguments made by other musicians in Local 208 that wanted to remain a separate union.

Local 208 was the first Black musicians' union in the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). It was chartered in 1902 and had a long history of limited success in the first half of the twentieth century. Although it is the subject of several studies, scholars have overlooked some important aspects of the debates over integration that divided its members in the 1960s. In some ways, the debates over integration reflected a clash of two important figures in Local 208, Red Saunders and Harry Gray. Red Saunders was a successful drummer and bandleader that played a central role in many of the union's most profitable musical jobs. Harry Gray was the last president of Local 208 and he was described as a tough union boss. He was president of the union during its

greatest periods of growth and, until the clashes with Saunders, he was seen as an effective leader by most.

There were other factors that led to the eventual merger between Locals 10 and 208 to form Local 10-208, but this thesis focuses on key events and historical changes that were occurring throughout the 1960s. Some of these factors were substantial yet brief, such as the day a group of Black musicians decided to join Local 10 in 1963 before an official agreement had been made between the two unions. Others took longer, like the year-long trusteeship that Local 10 was subjected to by the AFM because of its resistance to integration. Throughout the period, Local 208 members considered the potential benefits and drawbacks of the merger in the context of their personal experiences with segregation in Chicago, the rise of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and the ability of the union to address the problems facing black musicians, all of which helped shape people's views of the merger.

This thesis will describe the factors that affected the debate about the merits of the integration movement within the Black Local 208. These debates reflected the intersection of many variables, such as class, race, and artistic visions. I will show that the musicians in Local 208 had a history of working within and outside of the AFM and AFL-CIO structures, and the integrationists saw themselves as highly trained professionals earning wages that did not match their middle class ambitions. Leaders of the executive board and leaders of the dissenting group of integrationists had all demonstrated loyalty to the members of Local 208 in their own ways, but their methods of attaining the best possible

outcomes for their members differed not only with regard to how Local 208 should merge with Local 10, but whether or not the local should merge at all. These debates played out in a way that, on the surface, resembles the popular historical dichotomy of the Civil Rights movement versus the Black Power movements, but as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, the arguments were more nuanced than any one of the sources at the time reveals.

Historiography

Existing studies of Local 208 have frequently touched on the debates over integration in some way. In Donald Spivey's 1984 introduction to a transcription of an oral history given by Local 208 member William Everett Samuels, Spivey prefaces Samuels' oral history of Local 208 and music in Chicago by tracing present-day professional Black musicians to the royal musicians in Ethiopia and Egypt and to the Griots in West Africa. Later histories and references about Local 208 that focus on integration would begin at the Great Migration or even as late as the 1960s. By placing integration as one event in a longer history that goes back to pre-colonial Africa, Spivey is demonstrating the musical professionalism William Everett Samuels and other musicians in Local 208 would have aspired towards. Spivey's theme is that of survival, and it reflected his belief that no matter what happened, integration or segregation, Black musical culture would survive and likely even thrive despite constant threats. Spivey's introduction mirrors arguments integrationist leaders like Red Saunders made when he produced shows tracing the history of jazz from Africa to the then-present time as

well as when he collaborated with African musicians like Guy Warren from Ghana.¹

Clark Halker's 1988 article, "A History of Local 208 and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the AFM," points out that talk of merging unions was not first seriously discussed in the 1960s. Instead, integration talks had been happening, on and off, since the beginning of the 20th century. Halker names eight prominent Local 10 members that had expressed interest in integrating Local 10 based on interviews from 1939. There was also support for integrating Local 10 from the early leaders of Local 208. But, as Halker asserts, those Local 208 members "knew they ought to be suspicious when Thomas Kennedy, the head of the white Local 10, approached them in 1901 about joining the union as equal members."² Halker explains that Local 10, being affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), was not likely to be an ally in integration efforts. In the end, Local 208 rejected Kennedy's invitation.

George Seltzer's 1989 book *Music Matters: The Performer and the AFM* explains that the motivations behind Black resistance to the integration of local musicians' unions was multifaceted. He wrote, "A few black locals had a higher per-capita treasury than the white local in the same jurisdiction; black officers would lose their jobs and trips to annual conventions in a merger with a larger white local; members of locals would lose their sense of identity and

¹ William Everett Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician: The Narrative of William Everett Samuels and Chicago Local 208* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 1.

² Clark Halker, "A History of Local 208," *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (Autumn 1988): 207–222.

“brotherhood”; and (in some cases) it was painful to be forced to integrate with whites who had turned them down in the past.”³

Seltzer’s generalizations do not paint the full picture that the members of Local 208 faced in the 1960s. It is apparent that the union had influence over the musical institutions in South Chicago. There certainly were fewer members in Local 208 than in Local 10, but there was work to be had by musicians in the Black union. Who got this work was a point of contention that led to much of the frustration on the part of integrationists and will be examined within this thesis. Seltzer’s point about black officers losing their positions and roles on union boards was certainly a realistic fear held especially by the old guard of Local 208. This old guard was, on average, older in age and more established in their careers. They were more likely to have lived in the South and migrated to Chicago to escape Jim Crow laws. While the negotiations that were agreed to before the merger included a guarantee that a small number of leaders from Local 208 would be able to have leadership positions in Local 10-208, the representation itself was minimal and only guaranteed for a short time.

Amy Absher discusses this integration in a wider chronological context in her 2014 book *The Black Musician and the White City: Race and Music in Chicago, 1900-1967*. Absher describes the “daily acts of resistance” to union authority that were common among Black musicians in Chicago. Two times, when James Petrillo led Local 10 and the AFM, the musicians’ unions held a

³ George Seltzer, *Music Matters: The Performer and the American Federation of Musicians* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 111.

strike in order to secure better contracts for musicians. During Petrillo's 1941 and 1948 bans on recording music, musicians in Local 208 recorded and sold music. Absher described this as a "way to reach beyond the physical boundaries of segregation."⁴ Absher also suggests that these acts of resistance would be needed against not only white-dominated organizations like the AFM and the AFL-CIO broadly, but also to rise above the limitations of Black-led organizations like Local 208 itself.⁵

One way Absher traces the movement towards desegregation is through the story of violinist Carol Anderson. Anderson was a recent graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music and had been hired to play with the Chicago Symphony in 1963. However, Anderson received a phone call from Mrs. Palmer, the chairwoman of the symphony, who told Anderson that, as a Black musician, she was not allowed to perform with the symphony. Absher goes on to explain that the fallout from this event, which included the conductor quitting, one fifth of the symphony walking out in protest, and community members contacting the symphony board repeatedly, led to Carol Anderson being offered a soloist spot in a concert series. Anderson agreed to do just one concert and refused to take a long-term position with the symphony afterwards.⁶ This story illustrates the period when Local 208 was encountering serious challenges from integrationists within the union. Black musicians were frequently performing with white musicians

⁴ Amy Absher, *The Black Musician and the White City: Race and Music in Chicago, 1900-1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 83.

⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

⁶ *Ibid*, 119-120.

without being given permission from Locals 10 or 208. This event brought the reality of musicians who had been ignoring union rules about segregation into the public eye. The public outcry and support of one fifth of the musicians in the symphony also indicate that members of Local 10 and white patrons were becoming more serious about integration efforts.

My work builds on earlier studies by focusing on the day-to-day experiences of Black musicians and placing the debates over integration in the context of what historian Jacqueline Dowd Hall has called “the long civil rights movement.” By noting early antecedents to both the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and their overlapping agendas before the 1960s, Hall’s analysis has expanded the way historians characterize the struggle for equality African Americans have faced while reminding historians that civil rights rhetoric has often been misrepresented and over-dichotomized to accommodate later political agendas.⁷ By analyzing a variety of sources such as oral histories, union minutes, *Chicago Defender* articles, and an incomplete manuscript of a history of the merger of Locals 10 and 208, this thesis shows that the historical precedent and eventual move towards integration of the unions was not only necessary by law and AFM mandate, but the integration also fits a wider understanding within the long civil rights movement. This widening of the chronology of the civil rights movement allows for less room for the previously mentioned dichotomy of Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

⁷ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March, 2005): 1235.

By examining the actions of members of Local 208 as actions fitting a broader range of Black freedom struggle activities, it is easier to let go of the labels of Civil Rights and Black Power movements that might confine a study of integration to start at *Brown v. Board of Education* and end with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, or in this case, the merger of Locals 10 and 208 to the hyphenated Local 10-208.⁸ This strategy of widening our scope of what might otherwise be seen as a brief history of integration allows us to avoid what Hall referred to as the “formulaic mantras on which political narratives usually rely.”⁹

The primary focus of this thesis is to understand how musicians in Local 208 predicted integration would affect their lives musically, financially, and in terms of their own identity. There were musicians in Local 208 that wanted to integrate completely into Local 10, some who wanted to merge the two unions, and there were others that did not want integration at all. The eventual result was merging the unions into the hyphenated Local 10-208. When the *Chicago Defender* interviewed leaders from either side of the debate about whether or not to merge unions, the quoted musicians used language that overly simplified the arguments the other side was making. To an extent, this may have been a product of the nature of newspaper journalism. Even the most careful journalists are not able to talk to everybody and get in-depth information from people on all sides of an issue. Journalists have deadlines to meet and many parties such as

⁸ For a critique of the Long Civil Rights thesis, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, “The “Long Movement” as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007): 265-288, <http://jstor.org/stable/20064183>.

⁹ Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement,” 1262.

editors and the general public to please. With that in mind, it is still valuable to see this issue not as a rigid dichotomy—to integrate or not to integrate—but instead to look for the varying reasons, often conflicting, people had for wanting to integrate or remain separate.

This story of integration is important because it does not follow the commonly understood script of the civil rights movement. The way the civil rights movement has been characterized in popular histories might make a person think that in the 1960s there were essentially completely separate kinds of thought regarding Black rights: Black Americans arguing for integration, Black Americans resisting integration, racist white Americans against integration, and socially conscious white Americans for integration. Those different groups, for and against integration, are often viewed as ardent followers of either Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcom X, and there is little room for utilizing the arguments of both men and their philosophies. This integration story, however, demonstrates the challenges in characterizing Black freedom struggle activists in the shadow of the legacies of popular ideologies. This is because the members of Local 208 were more complex than the caricatured memories of the larger movement's leaders and their philosophies. Instead of viewing Local 208 members through the lens of civil rights or Black Nationalist activist perspectives, it is valuable to take a step back and try to analyze the reasoning behind specific members' activism. This complicates the narrative, and in doing so, helps to frame this particular integration narrative within the long civil rights movement because it

allows for the understanding that the integrationists had a myriad of competing reasons and rationales for working towards or away from integration.

Perhaps the most telling arguments made by both sides in favor of their integrationist or separatist ideas had to do with their cultural identities as Black musicians and the financial possibilities available with or without an integrated union. The Black musicians that were for integrating the unions often based their argument on the fact that if they were part of an integrated union, they would have an increased number of opportunities for musical jobs that they were capable of and qualified for. Secondly, Black musicians in Chicago argued that, historically, the musical traditions in the United States were clearly based on cultural contributions from Black musicians. Those musicians argued that if they were more closely connected to the protections offered by Local 10 they would be able to take what some saw as their rightful place in American musical culture. Certainly, integrating the unions would allow Black musicians opportunities to profit from music that had roots in Black musical traditions.

Integrationists had both ideological and practical reasons for wanting to merge the unions. Integrationists were, by and large, not part of the inner circle of executive board members in Local 208, so in some instances, as was argued by the segregationists in Local 208, the integrationists did not always recognize the work being done on the executive board level to increase the amount of work for members of Local 208. Yet the integrationists were not given equal opportunities to work within Local 208 because of what they considered cronyism and racketeering within the inner circle of the union leadership committees and

boards. There were musicians that had broken Local 10 and 208's rules and had performed together, and musicians from both of those unions acknowledged that, given a fair chance, musicians from Local 208 would be able to compete with musicians from Local 10 for jobs.

At each level of labor organizing in this study (Local 208, the AFM, and the AFL-CIO), there were expressions of discontent by groups that were the result of rackets. Each level of the union had insider groups whose interests and needs were accounted for handsomely, but the needs of other members of the group were often ignored or at least less regarded. Discontent with this system continued to swell within Local 208 under President Harry Gray and within Local 10 under President James Petrillo and his successor Bernard Richards. As frustration among the segregated unions continued to swell, so too did movements away from the old guard of leadership within these unions. Movement away from Harry Gray's leadership was a result of Black musicians who thought that they had reached their maximum potential in a segregated union. Those against Petrillo's leadership in Local 10 disliked the threatening reelection behaviors and payment schemes benefiting friendly subgroups within the union. And those against Richards' presidency, although he remained president of Local 10 and later the integrated Local 10-208, were against Richards' inability to govern without obvious influence from executive board members.

My work enhances historians' understanding of the integration debate by exploring the factions' interactions with each other, the more senior members of

the local, the executive board, competing interests within Local 10, the print media such as the *Chicago Defender* and *Chicago Tribune*, and the wider national movements of labor and race in relation to integration efforts. This research shows that there was a wide coalition to move forward towards an integrated union, despite concerns that merging the unions would make finding work more difficult for some members of Local 208 and make representation within the executive board and other union subcommittees less effective and representative of the Black musicians in the Chicago area. This is in contrast with how the news organizations such as the *Chicago Defender* and *Chicago Tribune* treated the series of events leading to the official integration, which they often characterized in overly simplistic terms and with little explanation of the reasons behind some musicians preferring a separate union, effectively recharacterizing their views as segregationist instead of separatist. These news organizations mostly either talked about race or labor, and rarely did these accounts consider the diverse backgrounds of the individuals leading the integration movements. Many of the news organizations covered the integration efforts using terminology such as “rebel,” despite the fact that the movement was, at that time, quickly moving towards representing a majority of Local 208.¹⁰ This surprising vocabulary is worth noting because, today, these terms are associated with the Black Power movement. However, broadly speaking, the Black Power movement

¹⁰ Bob Hunter, “200 Musicians Revolt, Join Mixed Union: Musicians Rebel, Bolt Jim Crow Union Local Here,” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, March 21, 1963; Thomas Willis, “Music Union Row Rekindles: Rebels and Man They Elected Clash,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 16, 1963, sec. 1; Thomas Willis, “Musicians Out of Harmony; Hold Election Tuesday,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 1965, sec. 1.

was not the traditional catalyst of integration movements in the United States and has instead been understood as a separatist movement emphasizing Black empowerment within Black communities. However, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, the push to integrate included references to Black Nationalist and integrationist rhetoric, and in doing so, showed a wider web of political connections amongst Local 208 integration activists that are not easily understood using just one lens such as race. Class and social status factored heavily into a person's outlook on integration, as did their understanding of the nature of race and musical expertise in the United States. Instead, it would be helpful to remember that integrationists came from a wide variety of perspectives and utilized many differing rhetorical techniques in advocating for their integrationist policies.

The musicians in this study must be viewed not only as Black people advocating for the integration of two segregated musicians' unions, but they must also be seen as musicians, laborers, community leaders, and any number of characterizing qualities. In order to understand how these qualities affected these musicians' rhetoric and actions, it is vital to recognize how each of these qualities worked together. The mostly separatist executive board and media's portrayal of the board rarely did justice to exactly what the integrationists were trying to accomplish. An example of this failure in characterizing the members of the integrationist movement will be explored in a chapter that traces the careers, philosophies, and activism of members from Local 208, such as James Mack and Red Saunders. Both men were successful musicians. Both men directly and

indirectly were responsible for the successes of later generations of Black and white musicians around Chicago. But the two men had different histories and relationships to music. These aesthetic interests, although flexible and wide-reaching, generally put James Mack in the classical chamber music and university teaching work and Red Saunders in the jazz and promotions work. Mack struggled to find work as a Black flutist, and it likely would not surprise most to find that he supported integration. But in interviews, oral histories, and quotes from newspapers in Chicago, it becomes apparent that Mack subscribed to an uplift model of integration and community betterment.

Contrasting Mack's subscription to uplift politics with Red Saunders' political beliefs and the script of integrationist politics becomes even more messy. Saunders had a monthly editorial in the *Chicago Defender* where he was able to promote Black entertainment, give voice to Black leaders and their ideas, and generally reminisce about the successes of South Chicago's music scene. Saunders and his orchestra played with Guy Warren, a percussionist from Ghana, on an album called "Africa Speaks, America Answers." Throughout these activities Saunders positioned many of his integrationist arguments within an increasingly common and rhetorically helpful framework of Pan-Africanism. This Pan-Africanism and Black empowerment rhetoric does not typically evoke thoughts of integration. On the other side of the expected argument, those seeking to promote the real or perceived African qualities of Black Americans in a labor market or artistic expression would be seen as separatists. This failure to

recognize the complex nature of the integrationists' arguments for the union merger has oversimplified the rhetorical efforts made by those integrationists.

Sources

Charles Walton's "Bronzeville Conversations: The Tempo of the Times: The Struggle for an Integrated Musician's Union" is a manuscript that, although never published, serves as a guide to some of the most prominent reflections and narrations of this integration story that were recorded. Charles Walton was a drummer who was active on and off in Local 208 and later Local 10-208. He was a university student during the merger, and while he was not directly involved in most of the processes of integration until 1966 due to his studies and limited time for union work, he was interested in and concerned with the way the integration would occur. In writing "Bronzeville Conversations," Walton sought to understand the concerns and interests held by members of the Black and white unions. The final product was never completed, but the last version from 1993 shows not only some of Walton's analysis of the events of the 1966 integration, but also includes some of the reflections prominent musicians and promoters described to Walton decades after the integration.

Although Walton's attention was elsewhere during the early 1960s when the movement for the union merger was growing, he did participate in some of the most important and publicly successful events in the integration story. In 1963, after the first wave of Local 208 musicians joined Local 10, Walton became the first Black man to get a record spinner position at a previously white-only

radio station. Walton worked for WCFL, which was a radio station that the Chicago Federation of Labor owned and operated.¹¹ In the same article that announced Walton's new position, members of the Chicago Musicians for Harmonious Integration (CMHI) as well as white leaders from Local 10 provided commentary on the event and contextualized Walton's new job as part of an opportunity for Black musicians to work at "any and all kinds of jobs."¹²

Walton's work is invaluable in understanding the perspectives of his contemporaries, but it must also be viewed within the limitations of such a source. For starters, the book was never completed. Walton wrote, "A story of the development and unification is told below in the words of participants, and of interested observers in both locals, and of others who were aware of actions and problems. There is also a cross section of the views being expressed regarding benefits and faults of unification."¹³ The writing itself is a combination of quotations from oral history tapings and analysis from Walton himself, but the writing is full of notes, editing marks, and large jumps in theme and chronology. Thus, its incompleteness must be recognized and accounted for when appropriate. The transcribed interviews with Local 208 members included in the manuscript provide insight into Black musicians' lives, political leanings, and reasons for supporting or opposing the union merger.

¹¹ Bob Hunter, "First Negro Record Spinner Hired By WCFL," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, August 12, 1963.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Charles Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations: The Tempo of the Times: The Struggle for an Integrated Musicians Union," unpublished manuscript, 1993, Folder 24, Box 4, Harsh Research Collection, Chicago Public Library Archives, Chicago, IL, 1.

Many of Walton's interviews took place decades after the integration. "Bronzeville Conversations" was written in 1993 but is about events in the 1950s and 1960s. Memory is not always consistent, and although oral histories are an important component of many histories, it is useful to remember that these interviews occurred decades later.

A second kind of source used in this analysis is newspaper articles published mostly by the *Chicago Defender* and the *Chicago Tribune*. These papers, especially the *Chicago Defender*, frequently included articles about music in South Chicago, the musicians themselves, Local 208 and the eventual merger with Local 10, and weekly columns that told stories about musicians in Chicago.

One such example of a column that is useful to understand the perspectives of musicians in Chicago and politics more broadly is the monthly article that Red Saunders wrote, often with Ted Watson of the *Chicago Defender*. Each of the pieces starts by crediting both men, saying, "By Red Saunders as told to Ted Watson."¹⁴ Watson was a reporter and columnist with the *Defender* until 1978.¹⁵ These columns, mostly written in the mid-1970s, allowed Saunders, by then a household name in South Chicago, an opportunity to share his thoughts on the music industry nationally and locally, the state of politics and Black America, as well as more intimate thoughts on prayer and marriage. These pieces have not been referenced widely in the literature about Chicago's musical

¹⁴ Red Saunders, "Disc Hits and Talent Galore," *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, December 1, 1973.

¹⁵ "Ted Watson of Defender," *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1987.

and racial histories. Saunders was a charismatic figure that worked in many concentric circles throughout musical scenes ranging from Chicago, to New York City, as well as some projects with internationally famous performers. The nature of these essays is wide-reaching, and therefore of great interest to many kinds of inquiry, not just musical. Saunders reminisced about Chicago in the 1920s, gave marital advice to performers, reviewed music and theater, and was even featured in a section called “What Prayer Means to Me.”¹⁶

Organization of Thesis

The first chapter contextualizes the integration of Locals 10 and 208 within a longer chronological history that includes the Great Migration that brought African Americans away from the Jim Crow South to establish communities in Chicago and other places throughout the United States during the 20th century. The characteristics of the destinations, in this case, Chicago, were typically segregated and, as such, the communities that formed were self-sufficient, existing despite de jure and de facto segregationist policies. As direct experience with Jim Crow laws became more uncommon to Chicagoans that had never lived in the South, newer generations of musicians, within the context of the Civil Rights movement, desired integration. The older musicians that resisted

¹⁶ Red Saunders, “Red Remembers Chicago in '20s,” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, February 16, 1974; “Remember Theaters Charging 10c?” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, December 22, 1973; “The Death of the Regal Theatre,” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, November 24, 1973; “What Prayer Means to Me,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, February 26, 1955; Red Saunders, “Musicians Make Good Husbands? One Tells Why Answer Is ‘Yes’: Red Saunders Speaks For Successful Ones,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, August 7, 1954.

integration were not the segregationists that newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* or integrationist leaders like Red Saunders made them out to be. Instead, they were acting on the same cautions that served them well when they had first rooted themselves as professionals in Chicago. Those older musicians knew that traditionally white institutions, not just musical businesses like record labels and musical venues, were unlikely to change their segregationist stances easily, and it also seemed unlikely that the power of an integrated musicians' union would hold the clout or even desire to push integration into practice.

The second chapter describes the events that led up to the official integration itself. Local 10 and 208 officials had many official and unofficial meetings in order to try to establish conditions that were agreeable to both sides throughout the 1960s, but the leaders of the unions were unable to secure an agreement until the AFM put the unions in a trusteeship. There were glimmers of hope that a few seemingly sudden actions might have given the integration effort the momentum it would need in order to complete its mission, but even those actions were not enough for Local 208's executive board to budge. Other factors that continued to push along the official integration included a battering of pro-integration articles from the *Chicago Defender*, most often penned by Bob Hunter. Perhaps one of the most important factors in the eventual turn towards integration was the change in leadership from Harry Gray to Red Saunders. Both men were widely respected members and leaders within Local 208.

Harry Gray's presidency oversaw a period of incredible growth for Local 208, substantially increasing the union's influence. However, after a few

elections, the music industry itself was beginning to change in ways that even the most powerful union bosses would not be able to protect his members from. As James Petrillo, the president of the AFM, was finding at the national level, the recording industry was going to continue cutting deep into what would have, decades earlier, been the wages of in-person musicians. Just when the union had become strongest under Gray's leadership, the rug was pulled out from under him and his traditional ways of employing his members were disappearing. This was exacerbated by the fact that Black musicians were often not given the same musical recording deals as white musicians.

Red Saunders, who had been a member of Local 208 for long enough to establish himself not only as a solid drummer, but also as a contractor and organizer, was the perfect candidate to begin the open questioning of Harry Gray's leadership in the 1960s. Saunders was a known musician and had a career most could only dream of. He had consistent engagements with established venues like Club DeLisa and the Regal Theater. He had made money playing in big bands and other types of popular music. People who had played in his big bands often were able to move up into higher-paying bands with national recognition. He had a column in the *Chicago Defender* for many years. He was seen as somebody who had achieved a great deal and had firmly established himself as middle class with his home and family, proving that he and his wife, who was a professional dancer, were examples of what could happen in a sort of best-case-scenario for a professional musician.

These factors, such as the *Chicago Defender's* advocacy of integration, the union trusteeship, and the battle of Gray's and Saunders' personalities, include some of the most important factors that will be explored in the second chapter.

The final chapter examines the immediate and long-term outcomes associated with the 1966 integration. Integration was necessary for the musicians in Local 208 to continue to compete in the musical economies of the 1960s and 1970s given the challenges of breaking into the recording and radio industries that were growing quickly. Ultimately, this chapter will show that the integration itself had positive outcomes that were not outweighed by the negative drawbacks, but those drawbacks still need to be described and acknowledged. Importantly, some of these results validated the concerns that many old guard members of Local 208 had expressed during the debates over integration.

The terms that Locals 10 and 208 eventually agreed on included to guarantee certain board positions to members of what was Local 208 that could only be voted on by musicians who had been members of Local 208 before the merger. This guarantee did little to protect the interests and needs of Black musicians in the union, and once those protections timed out there was not enough consensus to maintain any voting bloc that was strong enough to consistently place Black members in leadership positions. After an initial representation of Local 208 in leadership positions, the perfunctory representation would soon wear off and what little representation musicians had

in Local 10-208 eroded and Black musicians soon did not have proportional representation in the union.

Other drawbacks to the integrated union included the fact that much of the work that Local 208 members anticipated becoming available to them upon integration did not become as widely available as they had hoped. Although the union itself was integrated and allowed Black musicians to join, the union, like much of the American public, was characterized by deep racial in-groupings.¹⁷ Black musicians found themselves in a union that was not characterized by a simple dichotomy of Black and white musicians. Instead, the Black musicians found themselves as one subgroup within a union of many subgroups that were all vying for influence and security within the union sphere of economic power. There were established Italian, Polish, and German groups that were already at odds with each other before the integration, and they remained at odds after the integration. Black musicians quickly found that although the integrated union might provide more opportunities than the separatist Local 208, they were going to need grassroots organizing to achieve the musical and economic goals they had set out to achieve in integrating the musicians' unions.

¹⁷ Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician*, 17.

Chapter One: Local 208 and Segregated Chicago

This chapter aims to explain the conditions working musicians experienced in Chicago up to and during the 1960s. Jim Crow oppression in the South and the Great Migration in the early twentieth century led to an increase of the Black population in Chicago. The neighborhoods that developed in Chicago were sharply segregated. Despite being subjected to this segregation, Black neighborhoods like Bronzeville had many sources of pride, especially in music. Schools, as underfunded as they were, attracted teachers like Captain Walter Dyett who was himself an accomplished musician and director in Chicago. Local bands and venues also provided jobs for Black musicians and other kinds of performers and often had an eager audience of Black Chicagoans who, because of segregation, had few other options for entertainment.

The musicians' union, Local 208, had emerged from a period of ineffective leadership and sometimes outright mismanagement but during Harry Gray's presidency the union grew in size and influence. Gray and his loyal executive board members accomplished a lot more than increasing the pay for work and the amount of available work. They added a credit union that would loan to Black musicians. They built a union building with practice areas for their members. The union also bought an apartment complex to provide housing for some of its members.

This chapter also describes how these improvements eventually were not enough for the musicians that were seeing local and national efforts to integrate institutions of all kinds, including unions. One of the forces that pushed the members of Local 208 towards integration was the message from the AFM and the AFL-CIO leadership that integration was morally right, beneficial for union members, and, after passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, required by law.

Great Migration and Musical Education in Chicago

Many of the musicians in Local 208 were first- or second-generation Chicagoans. The Great Migration of the early and mid-20th century brought Black Americans to each region of the United States, including the Midwest. As Black southerners moved north in an effort to escape the cruelty of Jim Crow legislation as well as interpersonal racism, major cities like Chicago saw a massive influx of migrants. Of course, Chicago was and continues to be a segregated city, but the living conditions were notably better for most people, and even if there was not an equitable amount of work for Black residents in Chicago, the work was more varied and cities like Chicago continued to grow throughout the 20th century.

With this growth came the need for schools. While the schools were anything but equal with regards to funding compared to schools in white neighborhoods, there was still a great deal of pride taken in the schools that began to open in predominantly Black neighborhoods. One such school was DuSable High School in the Bronzeville neighborhood of the southern side of

Chicago. DuSable High School had an outstanding music program that was led by Captain Walter Dyett, himself a member of Local 208. By 1960, this program had taught successful musical professionals including Nat King Cole, Dorothy Donegan, Ray Nance, Gene Ammons, Benny Green, Johnny Griffin, and Muhal Richard Abrams.¹⁸

Dyett was considered to be part of the old guard within Local 208. Absher describes Dyett as being one of the strongest voices against ending segregation within Local 208.¹⁹ He had a close history with many of the most well-known musicians in Chicago as a result of his educational roles in multiple schools, but most importantly DuSable High School. Dyett's approval and tutelage nurtured many careers in entertainment, and to people involved with the performing arts in Chicago, a connection to Dyett often spelled success simply based on the network of performers connected to Dyett throughout his musical career in Chicago.

Dyett found time to be involved in more than teaching music in Chicago's Bronzeville. He was also an active member of Chicago's musical scene. He was a member of Local 208, organizing bands, performing with bands, and serving on various committees and boards.²⁰ Even in the midst of the tumultuous integration of Locals 10 and 208, Dyett was chosen to lead a concert band of 50 musicians at a Chicago Music Association (CMA) event scheduled to induct new officers

¹⁸ Rob Roy, "Walter Dyett, Instructor, Musician Rates With Best," *Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, January 26, 1960; Absher, *Black Musician and the White City*, 185.

¹⁹ Absher, *Black Musician and the White City*, 121.

²⁰ "Walter Dyett Trained Musicians Included In Most Service Bands," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, January 31, 1953.

into the group.²¹ What is even more surprising about choosing Dyett to lead the band was that the CMA was directed by Herman Kenin, then president of the AFM, who was one of the leading forces behind integrating the unions in Chicago. Given the direction towards integration the union was taking, it is telling that Dyett led the band instead of a figure like Saunders who was also a popular bandleader but was a leading figure in the integration movement.

Dyett's network of ex-students and admirers would prove to be a major hurdle that Red Saunders and the integrationist movement would have to overcome. These musicians had done much to improve their lives in Bronzeville. Many of them had moved from the South to escape Jim Crow legislation and culture only to arrive in the highly segregated Chicago. Given how segregated Chicago was, as well as bearing in mind the associated problems that came with that segregation like unequal access to public services, banking, and housing, just to name a few, it cannot be surprising that there was a substantial portion of African Americans in Chicago that either did not trust the integration process enough to see it through or simply felt that African Americans would be more successful without integration. They had accomplished so much given the systemic forms of racism that plagued communities of color. Segregated neighborhoods like Bronzeville, which grew especially during the Great Migration, had no choice but to establish communities with Black businesses that were frequented by Black clientele. This led to a great deal of pride in past

²¹ "Dyett Band Concert Sun. For Music Association," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, July 31, 1965.

accomplishments and, in some cases, fear of what integration might do to those businesses that survived and often thrived during segregation. Perhaps the greatest fear was that integration would lead to a loss of control over important economic and cultural institutions.

As Absher writes in the conclusion of *The Black Musician and the White City*, the legacy of Dyett and his contemporaries is not hard to see. About the music from that time period, she states that it “gave a voice to the troubles and thoughts of the Great Migration. Partly as a result of their efforts, modern Black musicians have access to recording contracts and a diverse audience.” She concludes that individual musicians and organizations helped bring about these changes in Chicago.²² The agency that Absher describes is the same agency that people feared would erode as integration continued to take hold.

Music and Place in Chicago

The two most prominent and well-known musical venues the musicians in Local 208 played at were Club DeLisa and the Regal Theater. While later recording industries and radio jobs brought Black entertainment to white audiences, these venues provided the space needed to maintain and encourage performing arts in formal settings.

The Regal Theater, which was destroyed in 1973 and replaced by a parking lot, was a place where Black musicians were able to thrive and begin

²² Absher, *Black Musician and the White City*, 147.

careers.²³ Construction of the building was completed in 1928 and, including furnishings, cost 1.5 million dollars. The building was a structure that included a “silhouette of Moorish castles under a blue sky” while also including grand marble floors from Italy, Chinese silks, Belgian crystal chandeliers, and seats made out of Moroccan leather.²⁴ According to Red Saunders, the Regal Theater was “the black entertainment center of the world.”²⁵ Each week there were comedians, show tunes, traveling bands, and local groups performing at the venue. During live events at the theater, Red Saunders often was the contractor and band leader.²⁶ Occasionally the theater functioned as a movie theater too, which allowed for an even greater proportion of Bronzeville to attend events at the Regal Theater across wider income levels.

The Regal Theater was owned by various white men until 1960, when Samuel B. Fuller began the only period of Black ownership of the Regal Theater that lasted until 1968. As Clovis Semmes notes, “Black ownership of the Regal symbolized new entrepreneurial opportunities that were emerging for African Americans in Black communities as Whites relinquished control of certain business practices.”²⁷ Considering the context of growing racial consciousness during the 1960s, including burgeoning movements like the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, this local ownership was an exciting opportunity for

²³ Clovis Semmes, *The Regal Theater and Black Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁵ Red Saunders, “The Death of the Regal Theatre,” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, November 24, 1973.

²⁶ Walton, “Bronzeville Conversations,” 31.

²⁷ Semmes, *Regal Theater*, 13.

Black Americans to profit from the labor of Black entertainers for the first time in the history of the Regal Theater. However, this investment came at a time when it was convenient and prudent for white owners of property in Black regions of Chicago to sell. The population in Bronzeville and the Grand Boulevard region was both declining and aging. Even though the Black population of Chicago nearly doubled from 1950 until 1960, the population of Grand Boulevard declined from 114,557 to 80,076. The number of adults that were between the ages of 20 and 64 also dropped from 69.3% to 43.2% during that same time period, whereas the 65 and older population nearly doubled from 5.6% to 11%.²⁸

Ongoing changes in musical markets had immense impacts on musicians in Local 208 and later in Local 10-208. Institutions such as the Regal Theater and Club DeLisa struggled during the 1950s and 1960s, prompting musicians in those unions to need to expand their labor opportunities by ending segregated unions. The closures of venues like Club DeLisa and the Regal Theater had lasting effects on the community and the musicians themselves.

In 1958, the *Chicago Defender* published a piece called “Red Saunders Hailed In Return To Southside, Via Roberts Cafe.”²⁹ The emphasis placed on returning to the South Side as opposed to simply performing at the club highlights the great pride the South Side had for Saunders, but also the necessity such prolific performers must have felt in that they needed to expand their geographic reach in order to make livings as performers. Again, as Semmes

²⁸ Ibid, 173.

²⁹ “Red Saunders Hailed In Return To Southside, Via Roberts Café,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, July 10, 1958.

notes, South Side and West Side institutions were struggling to maintain followings due to demographic changes throughout the mid-20th century.³⁰

Segregated Chicago and Local 208

Despite dissenters within Local 208 having a consistent message of Local 208's failure to protect the interests of musicians in Chicago, it is clear that the union had some important amenities that were unavailable to many Black laborers throughout the country, especially musicians. Beryl Satter's study of housing discrimination in Chicago shows how white flight was not the primary cause of Chicago's slums and struggles, but instead the problem was systemic in nature, involving many institutions such as banks, real estate companies, and, of course, local and federal governments.³¹ In an era when African Americans found it difficult to secure bank loans and mortgages, Local 208 partnered with a credit union that allowed its members access to banking opportunities not often afforded to other Black laborers, especially in Chicago or the southern states that many of Local 208's members had migrated from.

According to Bernadine Samuels McCants, a former Local 208 clerk and daughter of Local 208 leader Everett Samuels, Harry Gray worked hard to fight against the inequities in housing, banking, and retirement. She told Charles Walton that Harry Gray was "for the underdog" and that he was the driving force

³⁰ Semmes, *Regal Theater*, 173.

³¹ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (New York: Picador, 2010), 13.

for the discounted-rate apartments on Drexel Avenue. He also advocated for a pension fund but was unsuccessful until Local 208 merged with Local 10.³²

Redlining and housing speculation became an overwhelming force that cleared entire neighborhoods in the south and west sides of Chicago. Satter focuses on the properties her father, Mark Satter, owned in west Chicago starting in the 1940s until after his death in the 1960s. Beryl Satter's retelling of Mark Satter's story of a real estate owner and activist-attorney shows that the problem of housing and banking left most of Chicago's Black population without sufficient housing. Banks across the nation would not make loans to Black Americans, and as such, the market for what is known as purchasing properties "on contract" became increasingly popular. White real estate managers utilized the cheap property left behind by white homeowners during white flight and bought out massive swaths of real estate for generous bargains. Those real estate agents then turned around and, because banks would not give loans to Black Chicagoans, sold untenable housing contracts that involved incredibly high payment schemes that even the most highly paid had difficulty affording. Because these contracts were not connected to official banks, the real estate agents were able to include stipulations in the contract that made the property even more valuable for the agent yet unfailingly difficult for buyers to pay off. For example, one common rule was that "the buyer forfeits the property if he or she misses even a single payment."³³

³² Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 12-13.

³³ Beryl Satter, "Project MUSE - Reflections: On Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America," March 2013.

Exploitative practices like these contributed to Black Chicagoans' general mistrust of white people. Efforts to integrate into the much larger white musicians' union was seen as a risky move by many of those in Local 208 because of the racism of many of the major institutions that had devastating impacts on Black Americans. As Richard Rothstein shows in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Black workers were consistently shortchanged in income, benefits, and general employment outlook within the larger labor movement. Rothstein shows that at least 30 unions in the AFL during the 1940s and 1950s explicitly outlawed Black membership, including many of the largest unions like the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and the Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers of America.³⁴ Even when the unions did integrate, or were already integrated, Black workers were not given the same types of employment opportunities as the white members of that same union. Rothstein points to the federal legislation that, at least in theory, banned many of the discriminatory practices private companies used while being paid government contracts. However, these "toothless" legislative attempts to thwart discrimination in private and governmental employment were nearly always evaded.³⁵

The integrationists in Local 208 were loyal to the union, but what they really wanted was a wider availability of work than could be found in their highly segregated city. Integrationist leaders like Red Saunders routinely evaded union rules before leading the first wave of Local 208 musicians to joining Local 10

³⁴ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2018), 160.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 169.

without permission from the Black musicians' union leader Harry Gray. Ted Saunders Jr., Red Saunders' son, told Charles Walton that in 1961 Saunders was to lead the orchestra at the Regal Theater. "Dad, as the contractor and leader of the orchestra, had the responsibility of hiring those additional musicians. Wanting the best talent available, Dad hired only White violinists and a White accordionist through Local 10. When the officers of Local 208 found what he had done, they summoned him to appear before the Board of Directors, and he was fined."³⁶ This happened at least one more time in 1962. Both times, Saunders was brought before the Board of Directors and fined. Saunders was an active member of the union, and a highly sought after musician, contractor, and bandleader, and the reality of possessing all of those roles, at least to Saunders, necessitated the use of the best possible musician in each situation, regardless of union affiliation.

Harry Gray

Although Local 208 was not able to protect its members from discriminatory practices, the union was able to provide protections and stability that were apparently worthy of members' union dues until the 1950s when the rumblings of civil rights activists and dissenters like the Krole Facts Association (KFA) led by Saunders began to emerge in greater force.

³⁶ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 4.

During Harry Gray's presidency, Local 208 provided a level of stability and working conditions that would not constantly be available to African Americans in other types of employment in Chicago, whether those types of employment were segregated or not. William Everett Samuels provides many examples of the good work Gray had accomplished in his oral history *Union and the Black Musician: The Narrative of William Everett Samuels and Chicago Local 208*. He describes Gray as having "straightened things out" after the Great Depression had nearly wiped out the union. Gray reduced the joining fee and dues and slightly increased the union's share of each job, allowing for an increase in death benefits. When the union had appeared to be likely to go under, Gray not only kept it going, but grew its influence and size considerably throughout the 1930s.³⁷ One *Chicago Defender* article announcing the reelection of Harry Gray in 1941 called him "the most outstanding and courageous president that Local 208 has ever had." Later in the article, after discussing Gray's numerous accolades, the writer also describes him as an important figure in the community due to his generous work to put on and promote benefit concerts that provided funding for local organizations as well as sick and unemployed members of Local 208.³⁸

Gray's local celebrity continued to grow during the 40s and 50s. His birthday party in 1942 was covered by the *Chicago Defender*. The party, held at his home, included live music by Tommy Powell's "Hi De Ho" boys, gifts, and cocktails and champagne. Many of the most important musicians and industry

³⁷ Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician*, 52-53.

³⁸ "Harry Gray Again Named Head Of Musicians' Union," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, November 22, 1941.

connections were at the party including Charles Elgar, a member of the union that eventually held board positions and fought against integration. Red Saunders and Viola Kemp, his wife, also attended the event, showing that at least in 1942 Red Saunders and Harry Gray had a working relationship.³⁹

The stability achieved under Gray's leadership was limited geographically, stylistically, and of course, racially. As James Mack told Charles Walton, "I found that for the Blacks there was no way for them to get into classical performance. Many times I would approach people about classical work and I would be told, "Oh we contract through Local 10". A stonewall."⁴⁰

Sometimes this geographic isolation was seen as useful by members of Local 208. Vernal Fournier, for example, spoke with Charles Walton about playing drums with the Ahamad Jamal Trio and other bands for close to ten years before ever even trying to play on the (white) North Side. He said, "Wasn't nothing there for me. I was making money on the South side. You could make a living playing music on the South side. Working in your environment, you didn't have to go North."⁴¹ Walton did not specify when this interview took place, but it is likely that Walton and Fournier had talked in the late 1980s or early 1990s when most of the other interviews took place.

³⁹ "Music Head Notes Birthday At Gay Party: Harry W. Gray Is Honored By Wife," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, October 3, 1942, sec. Mostly About Women.

⁴⁰ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 9.

Local 10 Before the Merger

As in Local 208, there were different factions among white musicians in Chicago. Local 10 was the largest union for musicians in Illinois, and the third largest in the nation behind the AFM chapters in New York City and Los Angeles. Its size and power compounded on itself, enabling its members to take advantage of emerging musical markets such as radio and recording. Its size also ensured a degree of political rivalries and infighting.

Bernard Richards was the president of Local 10 starting in 1962 and continued his presidency throughout the early years of the merged Local 10-208. Richards beat then-president James Petrillo, a long-time union leader that would go on to the national level AFM to work towards integration. Petrillo's work helping to integrate unions under the leadership of AFM president Herman Kenin was ironic given Petrillo's disinterest and general avoidance of discussing anything related to integration during his own time as president of Local 10, although his reputation among musicians and labor organizations was often praised.⁴²

Richards attempted to establish the reputation of being an effective union leader that was less interested in the inner-politics of large unions, although he was obviously very mindful of how his reputation of a leader should be affected by the push and pull of union leadership. Richards encountered frequent issues as the leader of such a large union, and it is impressive that he maintained

⁴² Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 24.

support throughout the 1960s and 1970s, before and after the merger. Charles Walton contrasted Richards with Petrillo in “Bronzeville Conversations” throughout his own commentary and the added comments of multiple interviewees.

Two examples that Walton used to contrast Richards and Petrillo were Barney Bigard and Bobby Christian. Bigard outright said that Petrillo was connected to “that gangster bunch” in Chicago. Christian said that Petrillo alienated Local 10 from the stagehand, actor, and electrical unions—so much so that there was concern over how effective a Local 10 picket line would be because other unions would not be guaranteed to honor that action. Christian credited Cecil Reed, a musician in Local 10, for the improvements in pension benefits, a commonly cited achievement touted by Petrillo and his supporters.⁴³

Walton also interviewed Bob Blair, a drummer who Walton labeled as a “Steering Committee member” of Chicago Musicians for Union Democracy (CMUD), an organization of white classical musicians that fought for integrating the unions and grew in power quickly during the 1960s. Aside from confirming what Christian told Walton about how other unions were unlikely to honor Local 10’s picket lines, Blair also said that Petrillo’s negotiations were often conducted over the phone and that little effort went into improving the wages of Local 10 jobs. These negotiations via phone calls were not just for low-level, one-time contracts either, as the phone call negotiations were apparently used during

⁴³ Ibid, 18.

symphony orchestra negotiations too. Petrillo's failure to negotiate satisfactorily even in the biggest, most stable and high-paying work available to Local 10 members was one of the reasons CMUD formed, which in turn led to the election of Richards and the eventual integration of the unions.⁴⁴

Richards was intent on navigating the increasingly complex musical businesses in Chicago by keeping the union disciplined and calling out many conflicts of interest among the governing boards of Local 10. In a *Chicago Tribune* article called "Music Union's Boss Upsets Board Ruling: Strike by Symphony Averted," Richards is shown in a positive light working against Local 10's board by vetoing the "unfair" listing of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO). Local 10's board had voted to strike against the CSO after Richards vetoed an "unfair" listing of the CSO that would likely have led to a strike. Richards continued to push back against the insular board in a *Chicago Tribune* article where he stated, "For the good of the union and the good of the city of Chicago, the symphony will continue to play." Richards told the *Chicago Tribune* that, according to the contract, striking was prohibited for relatively minor grievances like those that sparked the "unfair" listing.⁴⁵

When Richards won the election over Petrillo, it was not initially because Richards had a massive and enthusiastic base of support. Richards' win was interpreted by many to be more of a loss on Petrillo's part. Anybody associated with Petrillo would have had a difficult time disassociating themselves with

⁴⁴ Ibid, 21.

⁴⁵ "Music Union's Boss Upsets Board Ruling: Strike by Symphony Averted," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), December 11, 1963, sec. 1.

Petrillo. Petrillo's own son, who later ran for Local 10 president but lost to Richards in his reelection, was considered so unpopular that Bob Clair said that Mickey Mouse could have beaten him for the Financial Secretary Treasurer's office.⁴⁶

Richards also warned certain board members like Joseph Golan that they should have abstained from the voting because of their current contracts with the symphony. At the meeting before this warning, the union members present at the Local 10 meeting had voted 124 to 61 in a vote of confidence for Richards, so it appeared that despite some negative press implying Richards was as corrupt as Petrillo had a reputation for being, the typical Local 10 member appreciated the vision Richards had for the association.

After the election, Richards quickly became overwhelmed, but apparently was appreciated for being a change from Petrillo. Bob Clair stated that Richards "was not a persuasive or fearless negotiator; he was trying to run the union as a friendly band leader might run a job. He was afraid to use his powers."⁴⁷ It became apparent that the union may have overcorrected or chosen a new president who was too inexperienced to lead it effectively, although for all of the criticism Richards encountered throughout his time as president of Local 10, the criticism he received rarely resembled what Petrillo received. Richards might not have been the tough union boss Petrillo was, but he was consistent and won

⁴⁶ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 22.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 23.

multiple elections throughout multiple periods of substantial change in Local 10 and later Local 10-208.

Richards' tenure of union presidency was characterized by frequent instances of challenges to his leadership. In 1963, *Chicago Tribune* writer Thomas Willis wrote an article with the exciting title, "Music Union Row Rekindles: Rebels and Man They Elected Clash."⁴⁸ Richards was seen as the successor to the union politics favored by the more active CMUD branches of the classical musicians in orchestras and symphonies. Reporter Willis wrote, "In a move reminiscent of the unilateral acts of his predecessor, James Caesar Petrillo, Bernard F. Richards, president of the Chicago musicians' union, Local 10, invoked presidential emergency powers last Tuesday to veto a board of directors decision to put the Orchestral Association on the union's "unfair" list." However, as the article continues, Willis' tone mellows. Halfway through explaining that two violists from Local 10 had not been fully reimbursed for an extra rehearsal as well as some travel expenses, Willis wrote that "None of the complaints are new. None involves much money. Even the two players who fear for continued tenure could have at one time settled at negligible immediate financial loss." The real concern, it turned out, was that Richards was unwilling to strong-arm the CSO in a dispute that was minor in scope and all parties were willing to negotiate.

⁴⁸ Thomas Willis, "Music Union Row Rekindles: Rebels and Man They Elected Clash," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), December 16, 1963, sec. 1.

Ken Sweet, a member of Local 10 who was a member of what Walton calls CMUD's Steering Committee and went on to serve as the Recording Secretary of Local 10-208, described the on-the-ground situation faced by incoming Black musicians in Local 10 and the later conditions of Local 10-208. He credited CMUD and the symphony musicians broadly for shifting the sentiment towards integration in Local 10, as the jazz musicians were already in favor of integration by and large. When asked about Local 10's attitude toward the merger he said, "Jazz players were for the merger, but the jobbers were disappointing down through the years. I found them to be just as bigoted as anyone else. At the ethnic clubs I would hear the word nigger used from time to time. When I would recommend Black musicians to Whites the first question asked was, 'Can he read music?' as if Blacks were considered unschooled."⁴⁹

For professional musicians trained to play in a wide variety of styles at a high level, racist comments like these must have especially stung. As William Everett Samuels notes, Local 208 had been established to help differentiate the most capable and fluent Black musicians from the rest of the working musicians. When Samuels told Donald Spivey, the historian that edited this oral history transcription, about the earliest types of work available to musicians in Local 208 he described the theaters and night clubs. Samuels explained that there was a "toss-up" between the two types of work. The musicians that worked in the theaters did not work in the night clubs, and vice versa. He said, "You had to be

⁴⁹ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 20.

able to read the music to play those scores and things so everybody had to read. If you couldn't read music you didn't join the union in the first place. All those musicians were good."⁵⁰

The *Chicago Defender* also reported on Local 10 news, increasingly so the closer integration was. In one of Bob Hunter's articles, Bernard Richards' win over James Petrillo is used to show the progress that integration movements within Local 10 and Local 208 were making. The accompanying photograph is of Red Saunders and Barney Richards, shaking hands the first day musicians from Local 208 joined Local 10. The caption claims that "some 200 Negro musicians from all-Negro union, Local 208, join up with the previously all-white unit."⁵¹ Most of the other articles estimate that there were closer to 100 musicians that initially joined Local 10 that day.⁵² Hunter quoted Charles Egar, a vice president of Local 208, who said he was present at Local 10 when Local 208 members began to apply for membership, saying that "There weren't 200 members from our local, there were only 46."⁵³ The dispute over the exact number of Local 208 musicians that joined Local 10 demonstrates that both integrationists from Local 208 and the *Chicago Defender* and separatists from Local 208 understood that the issue of integration would not only be discussed in the union hall but within the public

⁵⁰ Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician*, 54.

⁵¹ Bob Hunter, "Musicians Union Battle Looms Over Integration: Local Officials Hint They'll Fight," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, March 23, 1963.

⁵² "2 Music Unions Summoned for Merger Talks," *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)*, February 29, 1964, sec. 1; "Music Union's Boss Upsets Board Ruling: Strike by Symphony Averted," *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)*, December 11, 1963, sec. 1; "Musicians Adopt 'Watch, Wait Policy,'" *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973)*, September 17, 1963.

⁵³ Bob Hunter, "Musicians Union Battle Looms Over Integration: Local Officials Hint They'll Fight," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, March 23, 1963.

sphere as well. Overestimating or underestimating the number of Black musicians that joined Local 10 served the purpose of either showing the integrationists as a small group dissenters without major support, while exaggerating that number might have encouraged other musicians to join Local 10 and continue to fight for the unions to merge. Bob Hunter wrote another article the next week, clarifying that 47 Black musicians joined during the initial “raid” and that “more than 100” had joined since March 20, so it is also possible that both the integrationists and separatists were not deliberately exaggerating their claims as much as they were describing the “raid” at whatever moment would be most beneficial to their cause.⁵⁴

The rest of the article quotes leaders of the integrationist CMHI as well as the musicians wishing to join Local 10. Hunter contextualizes the integration as being made possible by the election of Richards, whom Hunter refers to as “a rebel leader” when comparing him to leaders from integrationist organizations like the white-led CMUD and the African American-led CMHI and KFA. Musicians like Lester Walton and James Mack talked about the economic improvements they anticipated upon joining Local 10 such as a more diverse variety of work, improved death benefits, lower quarterly dues and the flat 2% tax on musical earnings as opposed to the sliding scale used by Local 208 that ranged from 2–4%.

⁵⁴ Bob Hunter, “Southside Musicians Prexy For Integration: Explains Stand After 100 Revolt,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, March 30, 1963.

With the two locals unofficially beginning to merge, the tensions between the infighting factions of Local 208 as well as the arguments between integrationist and segregationist white musicians would continue to complicate the narrative of this integration story. Those competing narratives sought to drive public understanding of the issues of integration. So-called “rebel” factions from both unions were fine-tuning their arguments, although neither side could know that it would not be until 1966, three years after Black musicians first joined Local 10, that the integrated Local 10-208 would be officially formed.

American Federation of Musicians and the AFL-CIO

Chicago’s musicians’ unions, Locals 208 and 10, belonged to the AFM, part of the AFL, which merged with the CIO in 1955 to become the AFL-CIO. James Petrillo was the president of Local 10, and later became the president of the AFM itself from 1940 until 1958. Petrillo orchestrated multiple strikes within the AFM that banned the recording of new music in response to concerns such as the recording industry taking away 60 percent of his musicians’ work in live settings.⁵⁵ Another ban on recorded music took place in an effort to challenge the Taft-Hartley Act that threatened to restrict union welfare funding.⁵⁶

Petrillo was an effective organizer, although his leadership style and methods were viewed with suspicion by some union members. There are many

⁵⁵ Jack Ellis, “Recording Band to Hit Race Musicians: Petrillo, Local 10 Head Says Canned Music Effects Live Musicians’ Employment,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, December 26, 1936.

⁵⁶ Absher, *Black Musician and the White City*, 87.

descriptions of Petrillo in Walton's "Bronzeville Conversations" that show the racketeering side of Petrillo's presidency style. There was reportedly a very real concern for the safety, economic and physical, of those who opposed Petrillo's recurring reelections. Members who opposed Petrillo's reelection risked losing their union cards up until the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act mandated secret ballots in union elections. Speaking with Walton, Jack Richards, Barney Richards' son, recalled, "No one wanted to run against Petrillo because of potential threats during the election. There was a fear that all sorts of vindictive things might be done after the election."⁵⁷ Petrillo's upward trajectory in union leadership would serve as a point of pride for many white musicians in Chicago, although his evasive strategy regarding integration won him few supporters among Black musicians in Chicago. This contrasting view and appreciation of Petrillo's work serves as an example of the larger theoretical and practical debates that were playing out within the greater AFL-CIO political landscape. The AFL had a history of discriminatory actions and rhetoric towards Black members and workers beyond the union. Historian Ibram Kendi describes the AFL's first president Samuel Gompers, who served from 1886 to 1924, and the AFL more generally as a "hotbed of discriminators."⁵⁸

Facing competition from the interracial CIO after its formation in 1935, the AFL was forced to pay more attention to Black workers, and the two organizations merged in 1955. In 1963, Walter Reuther, a vice president of the

⁵⁷ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 24-25, 29-30.

⁵⁸ Ibram Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 274.

AFL-CIO, gave a speech at the annual convention that admonished labor leaders from around the United States for their continued failure to promote the rights of Black workers. Labor leaders from across the nation and the world had gathered for the meeting held in New York. Reuther called on labor organizers to “strip the mask from those Americans who practice what I call high octane hypocrisy, who sound off and make noble noises about human brotherhood and, having made these noble noises, they drop the ‘brother’ and keep the ‘hood.’”⁵⁹

Vice President Asa Philip Randolph, a Black leader with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, reiterated this view, saying, “The Negro’s traditional loyalties toward organized labor have been put to a severe strain. The Negro-labor alliance, needed now as never before, is being pulled apart. It is being pulled apart not only by the persistence of racial discrimination in a number of unions, but also by the failure of labor to throw its full weight into the civil rights revolution in every community.”⁶⁰ Reuther and Randolph believed that, even in cases of what appeared to be successful integration, the actual results did not deliver with regards to real equality. They also pointed out that integration, even at a perfunctory level, was not occurring in many unions throughout the United States.

Despite these expressions of dissent, most of the other speakers at the convention highlighted the successes in integration the AFL-CIO had seen in recent years. President William George Meany gave a speech where he

⁵⁹ AFL-CIO, *Proceedings of the 5th Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO* ([Washington, D.C.]: AFL-CIO, 1963), 223.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 209.

commended the efforts of the unions within his organization in their attempts to integrate. He said, "Now, in the field of civil rights and discrimination inside the movement; this, of course, has been a problem. It is a continuing problem. You will get a full report on this problem from our standing committee. This will show very definite progress within the unions, although they still have a long way to go. It will show more and more unions setting up machinery of their own to deal with this problem."⁶¹

Meany, who had served as the last president of the AFL before the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, did have reason to celebrate the efforts of many of his unions. There were unions that had merged with and without the demand of the international, including musicians' unions that had belonged to the more centrist AFM before the AFL-CIO merger. However, the "machinery" that unions were developing to continue integrating the more challenging unions did not seem to account for deeply segregated cities such as Chicago.

Herman Kenin, the president of the AFM, would likely have been in attendance for this speech. He also might have felt some pride in the accomplishments many of the locals in the AFM had seen in the past few years. Many of his biggest, most influential locals had integrated with varying levels of success before the AFL-CIO convention, including San Francisco, Denver, Sioux City, Hartford, and Cleveland.⁶² However, this pride would have been tempered by the fact that Local 10 and Local 208, the white and Black musicians' unions

⁶¹ AFL-CIO, *Summary of the 5th Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO* ([Washington, D.C.]: AFL-CIO, 1963), 26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 175

from Chicago, were at a divisive crossroads. Union leadership and rank-and-file members from each local debated not only the terms of the upcoming integration, but also whether or not the integration should take place at all.

Contrasting the messages, goals, and rhetoric of the United States' most powerful people provides a window into how labor and integration were viewed from the top down. When president John F. Kennedy spoke at the labor convention in 1963, he explained his position that the most important issue facing the United States was that of unemployment. He tied the issue of unemployment to race later in his speech to the unions. He said, "This is a year of prosperity, of record prosperity. 1954 was a year of recession. Yet our unemployment rate is as high today as it was in 1954. Last year's loss of man hours in terms of those billion workdays lost is equivalent to shutting down the entire country for three weeks with no pay. That is an intolerable waste for this rich country of ours. That is why I say that economic security is the number one issue today."⁶³

Kennedy described the need for the upcoming civil rights law-making, and in the presence of a major voting bloc and financial supporters, made clear that he prioritized both the labor movement and the Black freedom movement. Kennedy paired the civil rights laws with the labor movement when he said, "No one gains from a fair employment practices bill if there is no employment to be had; no one gains by being admitted to a lunch counter if he has no money to spend; no one gains from attending a better school if he doesn't have a job after

⁶³ Ibid, 132.

graduation. No one thinks much of the right to own a good home and to sleep in a good hotel or go to the theater if he has no work and no money. The civil rights legislation is important. But to make that legislation effective we need jobs in the United States.”⁶⁴

It would be telling to hear responses to this speech from members of Gray’s and Saunders’ wings of Local 208. It is unlikely that they would have recognized the types of optimism in the future and celebrations of the present that were common at this AFL-CIO convention. Gray never publicly declared a dislike for integration, but, as this thesis will demonstrate, he clearly did not trust integrationists to negotiate deals that enabled Black laborers to secure equal employment opportunities. On the other hand, Saunders would have likely seen these speeches as perfunctory, not at all reflecting his experiences around Chicago and the rest of the country where he performed and recorded, despite being a successful and sought-after drummer and bandleader.

Two years later, at the next AFL-CIO convention, President Lyndon Johnson gave remarks that, by omission of civil rights dialogue, showed more concern for wartime foreign policy than civil rights or even labor issues as standalone issues. Much of his speech was defensive of his involvement in Vietnam and other Cold War proxy wars, although specific conflicts were not directly stated. He said, “We are there because, for all of our shortcomings, for all of our failings as a nation and a people, we remain fixed on the pursuit of

⁶⁴ Ibid, 132-133.

freedom as a deep and moral obligation that will not let us go.”⁶⁵ Johnson was clearly on the defensive in his role as president with his increasingly unpopular decisions to push the United States deeper and deeper into wars abroad. Despite the fact that substantial civil rights lawmaking was incoming, Johnson decided to read his audience of mostly white men representing middle and working class laborers across the country and focused his attention not on race but instead on the optics of his foreign entanglements.

Others giving speeches that day and throughout the convention were not as optimistic as Johnson. Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor under Johnson, talked about the need to improve domestic output and job opportunities within the United States. He explicitly spoke about Black unemployment, saying, “Negro unemployment is today listed at twice white unemployment. That is only a very small part of it. It leaves out the fact of under-employment, the fact of part time employment, the fact of being relegated to the indecent jobs in the economy.”⁶⁶

Local 208 had seen impressive success at a time when segregation made living in Chicago as a Black musician a difficult experience. Harry Gray and his supporters, often having first-hand knowledge of Jim Crow legislation as well as having experienced building Black economic and artistic institutions in Chicago throughout the Great Migration, had obvious reason to feel satisfaction in their achievements. But the national and local conversations were being tipped towards integration as was seen in the efforts of white and Black activists within

⁶⁵ AFL-CIO, *Proceedings of the 5th Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO* ([California]: AFL-CIO, 1965), 70.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

Locals 10 and 208 as well as the pronouncements of national leaders at the AFL-CIO convention. The coming conflict between the musicians that had grown Local 208 into what it was and the younger generation of musicians that wanted integration was about to escalate.

Chapter Two: Hyphenating the Locals

Leading up to the unofficial integration of Local 10 by Black musicians in 1963 and official merger of the two unions into Local 10-208 in 1966, there were many discussions regarding not only how the integration would occur, but also whether or not such integration would be ultimately beneficial to the members of Local 208. This chapter's purpose is to show how the hopefulness and economic needs of the integrationist branch of Local 208 prevailed while taking a closer look at the debates within Local 208. These debates show an argument that was more complicated than deciding whether or not to integrate the unions. As the integrationists often explained the conflict, the conflict was between the average members of Local 208 that wanted to join Local 10 against the elite members of the Local 208 executive board that sought to maintain their considerable control and economic advantages over their members. The executive board members often liked to remind the members of Local 208 that they were democratically elected to those positions, and that if there was a big enough movement within Local 208 to upend the makeup of that executive board, the democratic system would allow for such changes. The board also had seen a period of significant improvements for the lives and careers of their members, including securing housing within a union-owned apartment complex for families and single musicians alike, a credit union that was needed for its Black members to gain access to banking services in the "city of neighborhoods," as well as the regular guarantees of a musicians' union, such as consistent opportunities to work.

During this period, arguably one of the most important events occurred that led to the eventual merger between unions. On March 3, 1963, a contested number of Local 208 members joined Local 10 against the wishes of Local 208 president, Harry Gray.⁶⁷ March 3 was chosen as the day Red Saunders and others decided to join the historically white union because Herman Kenin, the president of the AFM, had declared that the unions must integrate by March 4, 1963.⁶⁸ Although the unions missed the March 4 deadline, this event shows the increasing support the integration movement had by 1963, and after that day, support of integration from within Local 208 continued to grow.

The musicians on both sides of the integration debate can be understood through analyzing multiple types of sources. In the cases of the integrationists, the most useful sources include the many articles written for the *Chicago Defender*, especially those by reporter Bob Hunter and by Red Saunders. Saunders and the various advocacy groups he was involved with made efforts to garner support for integration that were supported by a wide-reaching increase in integration efforts across Chicago, the AFM, the AFL-CIO, and in other facets of the United States. Saunders was a charismatic leader that many of the musicians in Local 208 admired, and that social capital allowed him to successfully take on Harry Gray's separatist goals despite Gray's previously high social position in the hierarchy of the music industry in Chicago.

⁶⁷ Bob Hunter, "200 Musicians Revolt, Join Mixed Union: Musicians Rebel, Bolt Jim Crow Union Local Here," *Chicago Daily Defender (Local Edition)*, March 21, 1963.

⁶⁸ Bob Hunter, "Music Locals Must Merge By March 4—Kenin," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, September 9, 1963.

The *Chicago Defender* and Bob Hunter

The integrationist position was well-represented in the *Chicago Defender*, possibly because of Red Saunders' close connections to the paper, but it also reflects the paper's activist role in the Black freedom movement. The *Chicago Defender's* connection to the Great Migration has been documented as a driving force behind the movement. Alan DeSantis, a communications professor, has shown how Robert Sengstacke Abbott, the paper's founder, sold hope to African Americans in the South by showcasing the best Chicago had to offer to the most fortunate, encouraging Black southerners to migrate to the city by the thousands.⁶⁹

Of course, the reality of Chicago did not typically meet the expectations that the *Chicago Defender* promised. Migrants came to realize that Chicago was a deeply segregated city, and naturally the *Chicago Defender* followed suit and began to run more stories about segregation and the growing movement toward integration. John Sengstacke, Robert Sengstacke Abbott's nephew, took control of the *Chicago Defender* in 1940 and in 1956 turned the paper into a daily. Sengstacke's advocacy for integration was known throughout the United States, so much so that he was on the commission President Harry Truman formed to desegregate the military.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Alan D DeSantis, "Selling the American Dream Myth to Black Southerners: The Chicago Defender and the Great Migration of 1915-1919," *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 474-511.

⁷⁰ Steven C. Tracy, *Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance* (Baltimore, United States: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 293-294.

It should come as no surprise then, with the history of Robert Sengstacke Abbott's advocacy for African Americans in Chicago and under the leadership of his nephew John Sengstacke, that *Chicago Defender* journalists wrote articles poignantly sympathetic to the integrationist cause and rarely paid attention to voices running contrary to integrationist tactics or message. In 1963, Bob Hunter wrote many articles about the progress that was underway with regards to integration. He profiled members of organizations like KFA and CMHI, including a piece called "Music Man Scores Integration 'Hit'" that profiled Red Saunders by drawing parallels between his integrationist union work and his musical achievements. Saunders was characterized as a "family man," as well as an established musician with important connections to performers such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Gene Krupa.⁷¹

Hunter's language became increasingly candid throughout his reporting on the integration efforts. In September 1963, Hunter wrote an article that advertised a "Party and Politics" session held by CMHI. This article was perhaps Hunter's most tame article on the subject of the year. CMHI had invited members of Local 208 to a ballroom to try to convince more musicians to voice support for integrating the unions. The piece is filled with fiery quotes by CMHI but has fewer editorial asides than Hunter's later articles.⁷²

⁷¹ Bob Hunter, "Music Man Scores Integration 'Hit,'" *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, March 30, 1963.

⁷² Bob Hunter, "CMHI Musicians Blast Local 208 Officials," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, September 24, 1963.

However, most of Hunter's articles, both before and after the "Party and Politics" advertisement, closely mirrored what one might assume were John Sengstacke's editorial preferences with pro-integrationist language. In "Music Locals Must Merge by March 4," Hunter opened with "The death knell for Musicians' Local 208 (predominantly Negro) is about to be sounded, and quite understandably, officials there are scurrying about."⁷³ As the year went on and support for integration grew within Local 208, Hunter did not let up. After referring to the increasing support as "the onrushing tide," he explained that President Gray and other Local 208 officials were avoiding integration because of fear for the future of their high-paying positions or simply due to laziness and complacency.⁷⁴

Hunter's idealism and faith in the promises of integration extended far beyond musicians' unions. He wrote passionately about York, a cooperative housing project in Chicago that embraced integration. The cooperative expected homeowners to participate in a quota of labor hours in handiwork around the neighborhood. Hunter explained the concept as "freedom of residence or open occupancy."⁷⁵ A later *Chicago Tribune* article described two moments that might have also strengthened Hunter's impression of the cooperative. There was a motion to exclude Blacks at one cooperative meeting, but the motion was defeated. Some members left the cooperative, yet according to journalist Betty

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bob Hunter, "Future Of Jim Crow Musicians Union At Stake In Integration Battle," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, March 25, 1963.

⁷⁵ Bob Hunter, "How Open Occupancy Works In Interracial Suburb," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, May 6, 1963, sec. Magazine.

Lundy, the incident strengthened the integrationist resolve of the members. Soon after, the York cooperative tried to secure Federal Housing Authority mortgage insurance but was turned down because the area was cited as “blighted” despite meeting all of the criteria for the insurance.⁷⁶

Red Saunders and Black Middle Class Rhetoric

Hunter’s reporting on integration meshed well with the views of Red Saunders, a drummer known not only in the South of Chicago music scene, but as a musician that played with some of the biggest names in the country. He was a bandleader, with residencies at some of the most prestigious clubs in Chicago like Club DeLisa. Saunders, a Black man, could have passed as white, and no doubt this influenced his attempts at integration. In an oral history interview with Black musician Dorothy Donegan conducted by Jeannie Cheatham of the Smithsonian Institute, Cheatham asked Donegan if she ever performed with Saunders. Donegan replied, “Well, he’d give me some gigs you know. And I remember once, one of the ladies said, ‘Miss Donegan, you’re very democratic, you’re hiring a white man.’ I said, ‘No, he’s been passing for colored for many years.’ (laughs) You’re talking about Red Saunders, an oreo.”⁷⁷

Saunders began playing music professionally when he was 16 years old and living in Memphis, Tennessee. He had been born in Memphis in the 1920s,

⁷⁶ Betty Lundy, “Cooperation is the Glue of York Center,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 1988.

⁷⁷ Dorothy Donegan, interview by Jeannie Cheatham, April 5, 1998, transcript, Smithsonian Institute, 4.

but his family moved to Chicago when he was seven years old. In Chicago, he lived with Louis and Lil Armstrong for a short period of time.⁷⁸ During this time, he developed a rapport with both of the Armstrongs, and had opportunities to play music with both of them throughout his later musical career. At 14 years old, Saunders moved back to Memphis, but two years later, he returned to Chicago and began his career.⁷⁹

Early in Saunders' career, he joined a walk-a-thon band. Walk-a-thon events, much like dance-a-thons, were when a band would play and entertain during a multi-day competition where participants would walk day and night with limited opportunities to rest until there was only one couple remaining. The band that Saunders played with included some of the most important connections Saunders made as a musician and promoter, most notably Count Basie and his band. Throughout the years, many of the members of the Red Saunders Orchestra would go on to have successful careers as members of the Count Basie Orchestra and other major groups from that time.⁸⁰

One of the ways Saunders gained and maintained prominence within the circles of performers in Chicago was as the promoter, announcer, and frequent performer at Club DeLisa, a club on the South Side of Chicago frequently visited

⁷⁸ Lil Armstrong and Saunders' sisters were friends, according to Saunders in an interview with Studs Terkel. Studs Terkel, "Red Saunders Discusses Jazz Music and Jazz Musicians," March 16, 1978, Studs Terkel Radio Archive.

⁷⁹ "Red Saunders Picked Up His Yen For Jazz Playing In Roaring '20s," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, February 5, 1963, 21; Studs Terkel, "Red Saunders Discusses Jazz Music and Jazz Musicians," March 16, 1978, Studs Terkel Radio Archive.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

by many Black residents. Club DeLisa started in the 1930s after prohibition ended.⁸¹

Besides his work at Club DeLisa, Saunders was a prolific recording musician. He worked with many notable musicians and arrangers in Chicago and around the country at the time. Saunders and his orchestra played arrangements of Gershwin's "Summertime" and Terry's "Riverboat" in 1953. One of Saunders' biggest commercial successes was the children's song "Hambone." Although Saunders was a well-known musician throughout Chicago in the 1940s and 1950s, "Hambone" was the recording that Saunders needed to become relevant nationwide as a touring musician and promoter.⁸² Saunders also performed with LaVern Baker, then known as Little Miss Sharecropper.

Saunders' image and reputation among musicians and other residents of Chicago was one of respectability and uplift. The *Chicago Defender* frequently carried pieces Saunders had written ranging from musical criticism to advice on family life. His position of leadership and respectability eventually made it difficult for Local 208 or Local 10 officials to attack the man's principles or intentions, and while they certainly did try to attack him in such ways, there is little wonder why such attacks did not stick or carry their intended weight when published or discussed.

⁸¹ "Saunders Resigns From Union To Organize His Own Firm," *Chicago Daily Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, December 21, 1968.

⁸² "Red Saunders 'Hambone' Is Meaty And Tuneful," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, April 5, 1952.

An article that showed many of Saunders' philosophies of gender, labor, and general human relations and decency is his 1954 *Chicago Defender* exclusive titled "Musicians Make Good Husbands? One Tells Why Answer is 'Yes.'"⁸³ Saunders' focus in the exclusive centers on the idea that musicians are capable of rising above what he called the "old story of musicians being fickle in love, splurging their earnings in reefer dens or at the race tracks." He calls this expectation "baloney" and emphasizes the potential for musicians and other performers to be able to live happy, mindfully domestic existences.

The article speaks to Saunders' adherence and aspiration towards middle class status and recognition among other middle class workers. His union work, his methods of personal entertainment, his relationship to his work and his work's relationship to his personal life, all relate to the idea that Saunders wanted to be able to see performance as a realistic method of achieving middle class stability and status as opposed to "allowing artistic temperament to destroy their dispositions."⁸⁴

Saunders acknowledged the pitfalls many musicians encounter in marriages. He wrote that musicians often viewed themselves as more central to a relationship than their partner and demanded "special consideration and understanding from their mates, using the excuse that they are in showbusiness and that this makes marriage a different kind of proposition as far as they are

⁸³ Red Saunders, "Musicians Make Good Husbands? One Tells Why Answer Is 'Yes': Red Saunders Speaks For Successful Ones," *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, August 7, 1954.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

concerned.” Saunders rejected this idea and described his actions within marriage as being “just like any other man—carpenter, doctor, bricklayer or plumber—who loves his wife and wants to keep his home peaceful and satisfying.”⁸⁵

Saunders’ public philosophy of marriage reflected Cold War era labor ideas and gender relations within the family. Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound*, a study of mid-century American families, includes a discussion of sexuality and professionals that is relevant here. She writes, “At home, sexuality could be safely unleashed by both men and women, where it would provide a positive force to enhance family life. It is no wonder, then, that professionals attempted to promote a vision of the family that would contain the social, sexual, and political dangers of the day and would root the revitalized home in time-honored traditional values.”⁸⁶

At the same time, Saunders’ article highlights Viola Kemp’s sexuality in multiple public ways. The most obvious is the photograph of Kemp that accompanied the article itself. In Kemp’s photo, placed next to Saunders’ photograph where he is seen in profile form, wearing a suit and appearing professional and masculine, she is wearing a revealing outfit that might have been used in one of her dancing or contortionist performances. Her body is facing backwards and to the side, while her face is turned towards the camera, smiling. There was social pressure to conform to what would have been

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 99.

considered by some traditional gender roles and sexuality in the 1950s. Yet Saunders was unapologetic about the nature of his and Kemp's careers. He knew that those kinds of work were not going to be interpreted by all as decent and familial, but he was confident that his experience as a musician and traditional family man could be imitated by others.

Complicating perceptions of him as an "oreo" seeking to assimilate into white American society, Saunders' career also included instances when he used his status to try to elevate a kind of Africa-centric pride, especially related to the arts. He worked with Guy Warren, a percussionist and composer from Ghana, who came to the United States in the 1950s and performed with many of the biggest names in jazz at the time. As a promoter and union organizer, Saunders could easily leverage his work with any major star of national or international fame as attempting to produce opportunities for professional growth that his musicians would enjoy. However, as a civil rights organizer, Saunders must have realized that his 1958 album "Africa Speaks, America Answers" with Pan-Africanist figure like Warren might ostracize him from a civil rights movement that was actively moving against Africa-centric movements and rhetoric as a result of the intensifying Cold War rhetoric against Africa, unionizing, and general Red Scare tactics.⁸⁷ Saunders was also a community organizer. He worked with

⁸⁷ Penny M. Von Eschen describes the connections between Pan-Africanism, labor organizing, and communism and the problems these posed for civil rights activists in *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 45.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) by creating a program about African music, dance, and storytelling.⁸⁸

Saunders never directly advocated by name for a cause or ideology other than integration. This fluidity, or refusal to subscribe to any one label like Black Power or Pan-Africanism, shows that Saunders' main focus was integration through whatever means garnered enough support. Saunders did not want the various political factions that caused tension within Local 208 to make integration any more complicated than it already was. Ingrid Monson points out that "although political differences were very real, they do not divide very easily into the common associations of leftist/nationalist/separatist and liberal/accommodationist/integrationist."⁸⁹ Similarly, Saunders' work with Warren in the late 1950s defied categories. In his book *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times*, Robin Kelley refers to the album Saunders and Warren produced as "collapsing the constructed boundaries of genre, style, culture, and nation."⁹⁰ Even if there were interviews asking Saunders what he hoped to achieve by working with Warren, it is unrealistic to expect that Saunders would be able to answer with a thorough enough response that would satisfy the competing demands of his needs as a musician, promotor, union leader, civil rights activist, and community figure. Each of these roles Saunders took on had

⁸⁸ Material relating to these activities are in Folder 21, Box 4, Charles Walton Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library.

⁸⁹ Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 175.

⁹⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (Cambridge, United States: Harvard University Press, 2012), 8.

different needs and responsibilities, and to characterize his intentions as fitting within a political ideology does little justice to the complexity of studying a figure so attuned to his public image.

Initial Integration Efforts and Resistance

One of the most important events that led to the integration movement was when Red Saunders led a number of Black musicians to join Local 10, undermining Gray's leadership. Charles Walton's notes for his unpublished "Bronzeville Conversations" include oral histories where musician activists from Local 208 spoke about Saunders' efforts in integrating the unions. Frank Derrick, a saxophonist, and Earl "Sunny" Turner, a trumpet player, both in Saunders' band, spoke about the private meetings Saunders held at his home with his growing number of supporters from Local 208. Turner said that Saunders approached him at the Regal Theater. "While I was standing back stage, Red approached me and asked how I felt about there being two separate musicians' unions in Chicago based solely on racial differences," he recalled. "I made clear that I would approve of a single union. Red said that others of that opinion had been meeting at his house to discuss the matter of union consolidation. He invited me to join them at their next meeting."⁹¹ Turner had recently moved from Chattanooga, Tennessee where he had been unable to work in the all-white union and where the all-Black union rarely provided work. Saunders continued to

⁹¹ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 5.

find more and more people that would take the risk of angering Local 208 leadership by plunging into Local 10.

On March 3, 1963, Red Saunders and an estimated 100 musicians in Local 208 went to register for Local 10 despite protest from the executive council. James Mack, another leader from the pro-integration group, talked about the work he and Saunders did to make the first steps of integration succeed. Mack told Walton: "Red and I worked with a couple of other people in order to do this. We read the charter of Local 10 and found there was nothing there we could see that would restrict us from joining Local 10... We organized a bunch of my people and a bunch of other musicians and about 100 or so of us went down to Local 10, one day, and joined Local 10, therefore, becoming dual members of Locals 10 and 208."⁹²

Saunders was not only supported by his fellow musicians in both Locals 10 and 208, but he was also indirectly supported by Herman Kenin, the president of the AFM. Kenin had declared that the two unions must merge by March 4 that year. Although the official merger would not be successful by March 4, the March 3 registration "raid" would be one of the major turning points that led to increased negotiations between both unions' leadership. Public pressure to integrate, Local 10 being put in a trusteeship, and March 3 were some of the key factors that led to the eventual integration.⁹³

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hunter, "Music Locals Must Merge."

The minutes for a Local 208 special meeting in August 1965, after members of Local 208 joined Local 10, paint the picture of a tense and contentious meeting.⁹⁴ The purpose of the meeting was to point out the problems, as Gray saw them, of the unofficial integration of the two unions. The meeting began at 1:45 PM and there were 85 members present. The written purpose of the meeting was to debate “holding in abeyance the order of the International Executive Board” regarding the 1963 order to integrate locals.⁹⁵ However, this meeting became a sounding board of last minute concerns held by the inner circle of the executive board regarding the impending merger. Throughout the meeting, Gray recalled the integration efforts, starting with the raid on March 3, 1963 until the time of the meeting, outlining what he and other board members saw as irresponsible behavior on the part of the integrationist movement in Local 208.

The first official business involved Harry Gray deriding the “questionable leadership” of Red Saunders and his efforts to begin the process of integration by encouraging 47 “irresponsible, radical, and short-sighted members” to join Local 10. In the following point in the minutes, Gray said that he contacted AFM President Herman Kenin to request that a “status quo be effective until the matter could be discussed.” Kenin denied this request and required that presidents Gray and Richards continue to meet in an effort to come to an agreement regarding the integration. In April 1963, the AFM retained an attorney to facilitate what Gray

⁹⁴ “Minutes of the Special Meeting, Local 208, AFM,” Meeting Minutes, August 15, 1965, Folder 24, Box 4, Harsh Research Collection, Chicago Public Library Archives, Chicago, IL.

⁹⁵ Hunter, “Music Locals Must Merge.”

called “an equitable merger of Locals 10-208.” These steps did not lead to any further resolutions between the parties.

Then, in July 1963, Richards told Bob Hunter from the *Chicago Defender* that Gray had sent letters to all of the members of Local 208 that had also joined Local 10 telling them that they had to make a decision about which union they would remain in. Richards went on to explain that the bylaws of the AFM stated that a musician could join as many locals as they paid dues for.⁹⁶

If Gray thought that this tactic would stall out interest in merging the unions, news of better work was becoming more and more common for Black musicians in Local 10. One Bob Hunter article highlighted the television stations that were hiring the most Black musicians like WBBM and WNBQ-TV while putting pressure on stations like WGN-TV and WGN Radio having the fewest Black musicians in their bands, ahead only of WIND and WLS, radio stations that had not hired any Black musicians.⁹⁷

Throughout 1965 there were occasional meetings, but it was not until January of 1966 that the unions announced an official merger. Local 10 had been in a trusteeship since August of 1964. William Samuels became an administrative vice president, and the three initial directors that were elected from Local 208 included Leroy Gentry, Carter Webster, and Walter Dyett. Meanwhile,

⁹⁶ Bob Hunter, “New Charges Aired In Musicians Hassle,” *Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, July 27, 1963.

⁹⁷ Bob Hunter, “Local TV Stations Getting Into Race Act,” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, July 30, 1963.

Harry Gray, in protest of what he maintained was a Local 10 “raid” on Local 208, did not run for any office.⁹⁸

Debating the Merger from Within Local 208

The fact that Local 10, the white union, debated the merits of integration will come as no surprise to most people today, but the debates within the Black Local 208 are likely to be of interest to people whose knowledge of the Civil Rights era begins and ends with an overly simplistic view of racial politics in the 1960s. Just as the positions taken by Red Saunders and the integrationist faction were driven by a variety of factors, those of Harry Gray and his supporters reflected a complex mix of motivations as well.

The argument that played out between factions in Local 208 were the result of tensions that had been growing for many years. There were essentially two main camps within the local, one of which was led by Harry Gray, the longtime president of 208. He and his executive council were considered the old guard and had brought the union from one of worrying financial stability to an era of relative stability. Harry Gray was cautious and generally against integrating Local 208 with Local 10. The reasons for this were widely debated. Bob Hunter, a reporter with the *Chicago Daily Defender*, covered developments in the integration as it unfolded. In an article written in September of 1963, three years before the integration actually took place, Hunter wrote “From an outside

⁹⁸ George Bliss, “Music Locals Unite; Trustee Ends Control,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), January 12, 1966, sec. Section 2.

standpoint, the entire hassle seems to center around the loss of high paying jobs for Local 208 officers if a merger is realized.”⁹⁹ Gray defended the resistance in a quote within the same article by saying, “The officials of Local 208 are, and always have been, in favor of integration in its true sense,” Gray said. “However, integration means different things to different people.”¹⁰⁰ Gray had been representing Local 208 in meetings with leadership from Local 10 and was concerned about what level of representation would be available to musicians from his own local.

At one Local 208 meeting on November 7, 1965, a resolution was passed by a broad coalition of members from all sides of the integration debate, complicating the narrative that had been pushed by the *Chicago Defender* that those questioning or outright against the integration were so far removed from any level of support from the rest of the union. The board’s resolution was as follows.

“WHEREAS, President Harry Gray has dutifully, honestly and vigorously led Local Union No. 208, AFM, for twenty-eight years; and

WHEREAS, President Gray has successfully led Local 208 thru the unprecedented arduous task of complying with the Merger Mandate of the American Federation of Musicians International Union; and

WHEREAS, President Gray by his unselfish, dedicated efforts, has led Local 208 from virtual bankrupt status, to a solvent organization with assets of over \$250,000.00, and,

⁹⁹ Hunter, “Music Locals Must Merge.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

WHEREAS, President Gray served on the Jurisprudence Committee of the AFM, and is acknowledged throughout the AFM as the highest ranking expert on AFM administration, because of the experience gained by participation and serving on the Jurisprudence Committee for twenty-five years; there be it

RESOLVED, That we, the members of Local 208, AFM, request by this resolution that an Executive Office on the level of Vice-President Emeritus be established for the duration of his life for Harry W. Gray, in the merged union, the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local 10-208, AFM, and that the duties of said newly established Executive Office be determined by the Joint Executive Advisory Committee, and further, that the salary of said Executive Office of Vice-President Emeritus be the salary equivalent to that of the elected Vice-President.

Be it further resolved, that the provisions set forth hereabove, shall become an integral part of the merger agreement between Local No. 10 and No. 208; It is verily believed that in this way only, will justice, equality and friendship permeate the purposeful objectives of the merged Local 10-208."¹⁰¹

Local 208 was not able to negotiate this resolution into the final agreements when they merged with Local 10, but the support of this resolution demonstrates a more complicated picture of the political landscape within Local 208 right before the merger. The minutes do not indicate any type of argument over this resolution besides tightening up the language in the final "further" resolution, indicating that support for President Gray was greater and broader than one might gather by just reading the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Defender*, both of which went to great lengths to highlight voices from the KFA and CMUD.

This resolution and its broad support foreshadowed the later issues faced by Black musicians in Local 10-208. Local 208 had improved the lives of so many

¹⁰¹ "Minutes of the Meeting for the Nomination of Officers of Local 208", Local 208, AFM," Meeting Minutes, November 7, 1965, Harsh Research Collection, Chicago Public Library Archives, Chicago, IL.

musicians that it was easy to question the logic of integration. Given the failures of integration movements across the nation not just in unions, but in schools, housing, and other facets of life, it was reasonable to wonder what the short-term and long-term effects of integration would be. Musicians in Local 208 had access to a credit union for some of the best banking available to African Americans in Chicago of any class. With improved banking, home ownership was more possible than it would have been to other African Americans in Chicago. Again, despite the fact that most of the musicians in Local 208 were not earning enough to be considered upper class, they were getting banking and housing opportunities that African Americans in Chicago and many other parts of the United States could still only advocate for.

Stipulations of the Merger

Eventually, the unions officially merged. There was not one singular event that led to the merger, but there were factors such as increasing social pressure, especially in *The Chicago Defender*, as well as the 1963 “raid”, and Local 10’s year-long trusteeship. The terms stipulated that former members of Locals 10 and 208 would be on an equal footing with no preference given to one group or another. Any person that belonged to Local 208 in 1965 would be able to vote for their own representatives in the new Local 10-208 from their previous Local 208 membership. This included three of the eight executive board seats, one administrative vice president role, two of the eleven trial board members, one of the three examining board members, and three of the six convention delegates.

Musicians that were not a part of Local 208 in 1965 would not get to vote for those specific positions until 1969. Then, in 1969, some of those guaranteed positions would be removed, leaving “an administrative vice president and two executive board members.”¹⁰²

The concern that musicians from Local 208 would not have representation on the board, and that if they did have representation on the executive board, that it would be too little and not sustained, was a well-founded fear. It turned out that, as Gray and the executive board had suspected, even if a musician that had belonged to Local 208 had the support of everybody who had also belonged to Local 208, there was no guarantee that such a voting bloc would be enough to win executive board seats within Local 10-208.

On March 8, 1967, Herman Kenin, president of the AFM, sent a letter to Everett Samuels, the administrative vice-president of Local 10-208, that outlined some of the mandated merger rules. He wrote, “Those members in good standing of Local 10-208 who on December 1, 1965 were members in good standing of Local 208 will have the sole and exclusive right to nominate candidates for Administrative Vice President and for two Executive Board memberships and to vote for those offices among the nominees specifically nominated for those three positions. Those members will also have the right at the Local 10-208 election to nominate and to vote with respect to all other offices to be filled at that election.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Halker, “A History of Local 208,” 207–22, 219.

¹⁰³ Herman Kenin, “Mr. Wm. Everett Samuels, Administrative Vice-President,” March 8, 1967, Folder 21, Box 4, Charles Walton Papers.

Despite these guarantees and protections, the merger played out in a way that confirmed many of the separatists' fears. Charles Walton pointed out that even if all of the former Local 208 members voted in a perfectly uniform bloc, there would have only been about 500 votes in a union consisting of thousands of people with long-established voting patterns and, with or without the Gray faction of 208, Black leadership within Local 10-208 would be severely limited once the guaranteed Local 208 terms expired.¹⁰⁴

After leading Local 208 from a meager beginning, Harry Gray lost the influence he once held in Local 208. Whether Gray truly wanted integration but was holding out for the best deal possible from Local 10 leadership or if Gray was simply trying to wait out the clock and continue trying to grow Local 208 as a segregated union might only be up for reasoned speculation. What is more certain is that a collection of factors over the past years such as the "raid" in 1963, Local 10's trusteeship, and a general increase in social pressure for integration, led to the eventual merger of the two unions. Local 10 and Local 208 were no more, and Local 10-208 had begun.

¹⁰⁴ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 33-34.

Chapter Three: Integration and Beyond

The purpose of this chapter is to examine what experiences Black musicians had in Chicago following the official 1966 integration. By and large, the results of the integration were that more Black musicians had access to a larger range of jobs that frequently paid better than what was available in Local 208. However, a careful reading of Red Saunders' articles for the *Chicago Defender* and the interviews Charles Walton conducted for "Bronzeville Conversations" shows that despite the progress, many problems remained unchanged, or at least not completely resolved. The positive effects of integration were well-recorded. When musicians got prestigious or unique jobs, there would often be brief articles about the musician and their job in the *Chicago Defender* or later in Walton's "Bronzeville Conversations" interviews. However, there were limits to what integration brought Black members of Local 10-208. There was a concern that the insider group led by Harry Gray had been replaced by those close with leaders like Red Saunders. This period of integration also coincided with deindustrialization which devastated historically Black communities by removing many of the opportunities for work which in turn weakened the growing economic power that would have enabled Chicagoans to support musicians and other artists. Lingering segregationist business practices also made certain musical careers difficult or impossible for Black musicians to take part in.

Integrationists after the Merger

After Locals 10 and 208 merged, Red Saunders was promoted to special assistant to Bernard Richards, the president of Local 10-208. Richards, who was also the last president of Local 10, had hired Saunders as an assistant in order to help the transition of integrating the unions go smoothly, as Saunders was one of the leaders of the integration movement within Local 208. His position as a leader within the existing social circles of Local 208 was only really challenged by members of the previous Local 208 executive board. However, even with the guaranteed minimum number of board and other leadership roles that were afforded to members of what was Local 208, time and time again those musicians failed to secure additional representation in the union.

Charles Walton wrote in "Bronzeville Conversations" that after the merger, the members of the Gray faction attempted to sow discord in Local 10-208 from afar. Walton described the situation as being like "two separate unions in one building."¹⁰⁵ Two members of the Gray faction lost their Local 10-208 board seats to Frank Derrick and King Fleming, who were also both previously members of Local 208 but were part of the integration movement. Although they were elected by members of the old Local 208, these board members spoke to Walton about their intentions to reach across racial divisions that were being upheld and stoked by the Gray faction. Derrick and Fleming were quoted in Walton's "Bronzeville Conversations" as trying to continually open the dialogue between all members

¹⁰⁵ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 31.

of Local 10-208 by “listening more than talking” and reaching out to members of the previously all-white musicians’ union like Ken Sweet.¹⁰⁶

Derrick and Fleming were reaching out to leaders like Sweet because of the leadership roles, both formal and informal, Sweet had taken on over the past decades. Sweet was a member of CMUD. Sweet described CMUD as being only marginally popular among chamber musicians, but incredibly organized and focused so that its influence over the rest of Local 10 was far-reaching. For example, CMUD was one of the forces that ousted Petrillo from Local 10.¹⁰⁷

Eventually, Saunders left his union position and began focusing more on his organization called Saunders & Associates. The *Chicago Daily Defender* published a piece in 1968 about Saunders & Associates, describing the organization as “an umbrella corporation which shelters a music publishing house, an artists’ management wing and theatrical production firm. Also, Saunders said he would spend more time producing traveling shows which appear in schools on the city’s South and West sides.”¹⁰⁸ Saunders would continue to provide performing arts opportunities to professional and student groups throughout Chicago, including the Pan Africanist show and the history of jazz show performed in Title I schools, leading and promoting bands, and participating in many local fundraisers for southern and western Chicago organizations.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 31-32.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 19-20.

¹⁰⁸ “Saunders Resigns From Union To Organize His Own Firm,” *Chicago Daily Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, December 21, 1968.

Saunders leaving his leadership role in Local 10-208 could be understood as an indication that he no longer believed that the union could provide equal opportunities for Black musicians, but he was still involved in organizations that managed and advocated for musicians like the KFA and his own promotions in ways that demonstrated a continued interest and faith in the ability of Local 10-208 to produce equitable opportunities for Black musicians. One *Chicago Daily Defender* article quoted Saunders as saying he “would not put his baton into retirement, but instead would have a pencil built into it.”¹⁰⁹

An example of the work the KFA was taking part in could be seen in a *Chicago Daily Defender* article. The article was published in 1970, seven years after dozens of Local 208 members shocked their leadership by requesting membership within Local 10, and four years after the official merger that integrated the two Locals into Local 10-208. The problem was that when members of the then Local 208 requested membership in Local 10, leadership from Local 10 promised the Black musicians that their \$100 would be repaid by the union as soon as Local 10 and 208 merged. This was contrary to the bylaws of the AFM, which stipulated that “no member has to pay duplicate joining fees in the same geographical jurisdiction.”¹¹⁰

However, the musicians were not repaid due to the protest in 1966 of Harry Gray, the former president of Local 208. Eventually, this issue was kicked up to the executive board of the AFM, and they ordered, in 1968, that Local 10

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “Black Musician Union Victory: Black Chicago Musicians Win Suit Against National Musicians' Union,” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, April 22, 1970.

(then Local 10-208) repay the Black musicians that had paid \$100 in 1963. Local 10's leadership fought back against this decision and the issue was then brought before the office of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) after the musicians had attempted to utilize "various federal agencies and the federal courts."¹¹¹ The EEOC attempted to bring both leaders from Local 10-208 and the AFM to the table to negotiate a payment. This was unsuccessful, so the issue went to a federal court.

The AFM union argued that the "jurisdictional prerequisites for filing a suit under the (Civil Rights) Act had not been met."¹¹² However, the court decided that the AFM argument went contrary to the purposes of the Civil Rights Act and maintained that the AFM must repay the \$100 to the Black musicians. The AFM finally paid the Black musicians back, and it was in no small thanks to the work of Kole Facts Musicians Association members like Saunders, as well as the officers and members mentioned in the *Chicago Daily Defender* article including Charles Walton and King Fleming.¹¹³

This series of events illustrates the fears held by separatists within Local 208 that an integrated union would "swallow" Black musicians while collecting dues. The fact that these events were discussed at length in many of the interviews Walton conducted for "Bronzeville Conversations" also demonstrates that many of the pro-integration musicians realized that this problem of mistreatment within a larger institution remained serious. All of the people Walton

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

interviewed were positive about the integration, but many of them made it clear that they were given reasons to be suspicious of their new leaders like Richards. This distrust of leadership was justified by events like the issue of the \$100 union fee being paid twice. Some musicians had left Local 208 due to what they perceived as mismanagement of union funds, lazy leadership, and abuse of power and now similar problems were emerging in the integrated Local 10-208. This event only added to the disenfranchisement of Black musicians. This mismanagement, whether deliberate or not, continued to be an issue at the integrated union, and led to further distrust of the union's leadership, even though the union really was providing more opportunities.

Insider Groups and Reform

Fears of Local 208 being swallowed by Local 10 in the making of Local 10-208 turned out to be well-founded. Musicians from the Black musicians' union were able to expand their musical opportunities, this much was true, but many of the benefits of segregated unions were lost for the Black members of 10-208 as well. George Seltzer wrote, "In 1975, Petrillo resigned from the AFM's Civil Rights Department (he was almost eighty-three years old) thinking, no doubt, that the task of integration was completed. It was not. Blacks were not integrated into the white locals, they were submerged. Fewer and fewer black musicians were

delegates at the national and regional conventions: There was just a sea of white faces.”¹¹⁴

Seltzer went on to write that the 1974 AFM convention only had ten black delegates out of 1,096 total delegates. These statistics improved gradually, but only after an amendment to the AFM constitution. The amendment read that, “A merged Local, whose merger was the result of compliance with the Civil Rights policy of the American Federation of Musicians, shall be entitled to one additional delegate to be elected from the black membership of said Local.”¹¹⁵ It is apparent that the recently integrated Black musicians were, in fact, swallowed by the white unions. The hopeful stories of integration touted by the 1963 AFL-CIO Executive Summary, including “San Francisco, Denver, Sioux City, Hartford and Cleveland”¹¹⁶ as well as Chicago were not enough to gain secure or even proportional leadership positions within executive boards in their respective unions.

Seltzer was not the only one to describe the loss of Black autonomy in Local 10-208 once the unions merged. Ken Sweet, a pianist and Recording Secretary also used the terminology “swallowed” when referring to Black musicians in Local 10-208 when interviewed by Charles Walton for “Bronzeville Conversations.” Sweet was a member of CMUD, which advocated for integration. These musicians were mostly symphony players, although there were jazz musicians in CMUD as well.

¹¹⁴ Seltzer, *Music Matters*, 114.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

After talking about how the CMUD won 22 of 24 offices in the Local 10 election, Sweet explained that CMUD had enough political influence to be able to mark any Local 10 member against the upcoming merger as a bigot. He then said, "After that, unifying dragged on in both locals. Each local was afraid of being swallowed by the other. Looking at it today, politically, Local 208 fears weren't unfounded. It happened just that way. Local 208 was swallowed up by Local 10."¹¹⁷

In 1968, many of the musicians that had taken part in the initial movements towards integration were beginning to see jobs open that were unavailable before the merger. Unfortunately, as later oral histories as well as Absher's *The Black Musician and the White City* would express, these opportunities were not afforded to all members who had belonged to Local 208. Many of these union jobs and positions would be available to white musicians and members of the initial integrationist coalition, but those same jobs and positions were often out of reach for many of the Black musicians that joined Local 10-208 after the initial merger or who worked against the merger from within Local 208.¹¹⁸ This changing of the guard did little to resolve the issues of equality within unionizing that many of the Black musicians in Local 10-208 faced. The day-to-day function of Local 10-208 continued to maintain insider groups that funneled the best work to those within those groups while giving a

¹¹⁷ Walton, "Bronzeville Conversations," 19.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 33-34.

glimmer of hope to those wishing to move up in social status and rank within the union while outside of those social groups.

The decades following the 1966 merger had mixed outcomes for Black musicians in Local 10-208. Absher writes that, “Though there was a merger, the established network of connections that existed in the white local continued to dominate the Chicago union. The highest paying and steadiest jobs continued to go to the white musicians.”¹¹⁹ Absher goes on to explain that a sort of power reversal had taken place within the old networks of Local 208. Recalling that one of the most cited reasons for wanting to merge the unions was that the best, most consistent and prestigious work within Local 208 went to those in the inner circle of the local’s executive board, a similar racket had appeared with the emerging networks of Local 10-208’s Black musicians. Work done by Black musicians in Local 10-208 was often held by the inner circle of leadership in the CMHI.¹²⁰ These jobs included work with radio stations and television companies. The KFA, feeling the pressure to resolve concerns of unfair labor practices, was defensive when questioned about how and why it appeared that mostly members of the CMHI had been given priority for this relatively lucrative work.

One example of this inner circle getting a disproportional amount of work can be seen in a *Chicago Daily Defender* article that described the potential for local employment if the pilot for “The Red Saunders Show” would be picked up by WBKB-TV, a station in Chicago owned by ABC. The show would have been a

¹¹⁹ Absher, *Black Musician*, 139.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 140.

variety-show with all types of entertainers. The pilot did not initially utilize the Red Saunders Orchestra, but, as Red Saunders Jr. pointed out in the capacity of manager for his father, “The possibility exists, however, that the Saunders-aggregation will be featured on other programs.”¹²¹ Even though Saunders had stepped back away from his informal leadership roles in the union, he was still clearly an insider that had the ability to vastly improve the working opportunities for musicians in Chicago.

The show never made it past the pilot, but its impact would have had the opportunity to increase national coverage of Chicago and its performing arts, likely increasing working opportunities for musicians in Local 10-208. Near the end of the article about the pilot episode of the “Red Saunders Show”, the unnamed journalist highlights a list of musicians and groups that Saunders had worked with and would have had connections with that could have brought with them more exposure to musicians in Chicago by the proximity of their fame. Those musicians included members of the Count Basie and Duke Ellington big bands, and Saunders Jr. implied that those musicians would be called on to play with a Local 10-208 studio show band.

This pilot showcased Oscar Brown as the guest star. Oscar Brown was a relatively prolific musician that sang and composed, and he was also known for his civil rights activism which was often blended into his role as a musician. One contribution Brown made to music and civil rights activism was as a lyricist to

¹²¹ “Bandleader ‘Red’ Saunders To Tape For TV: May Get Shot At Network Television,” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, March 21, 1968.

Max Roach's "We Insist! Freedom Now Suite" that outlined the history of African Americans by analyzing the history from multiple perspectives, including pre-colonization Africa, slavery in the United States, and then-modern Africa with special focus on apartheid-era South Africa. The liner notes to the album quoted Asa Philip Randolph: "A revolution in unfurling—America's unfinished revolution. It is unfurling in lunch counters, buses, libraries and schools—wherever the dignity and potential of men are denied. Youth and idealism are unfurling. Masses of Negroes are marching onto the stage of history and demanding their freedom now!"¹²²

External Challenges

Not all of Local 10-208's problems were the fault of its leadership or members. After the 1970s, labor unions faced a variety of challenges resulting from economic, political, and social transformations that strained their ability to effectively advocate for their members. Jefferson Cowie's *Stayin' Alive* describes some of the tensions that emerged around the relationships between race and class advocacy in labor organizing. These tensions, brought about by Cold War era rhetoric and Red Scare tactics, made advocating for a group of people based on their racial or class distinctions difficult because those types of dialogue were part of the conversation around communism. Working class Americans began to find themselves and their unions at odds with the same types of issues unions,

¹²² Nat Hentoff, "We Insist!: Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite," in the accompanying booklet, 1960. LP Record.

especially progressive ones like the CIO, were historically accustomed to dealing with. Cowie writes that, “Issues like the ERA, busing, abortion, and affirmative action, as well as the general trend of what would later be labeled as ‘identity politics’ or ‘rights consciousness,’ threw into question the limited definition of the working class that had originally empowered—but fundamentally limited—the idea of class in postwar America.”¹²³

The growing conservative movement in the United States, as seen in Cowie’s work, is also shown in Kim Phillips-Fein’s *Invisible Hands*. Phillips-Fein argues that the economic challenges in working class groups as well as conservative ideological movements led to the eventual weakening of labor movements in the United States, further minimizing whatever efforts labor organizations might make regarding race and class in their communities and beyond.¹²⁴

As labor unions became less influential and conservative movements continued their attacks on organized labor, smaller grassroots organizations started to take over some of the roles unions like Local 208 had assumed in previous decades. At the same time that unions around the country were finally beginning to integrate, often under unfavorable conditions for Black workers, those very unions were losing their influence and power at local and national levels due to deindustrialization and anti-union legislation. If Black musicians

¹²³ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. (New York: New Press, 2012), 71-72.

¹²⁴ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 87-88.

were going to advocate for their creative arts as a means of economic security or even simply to grow as performers and creative composers, the integrated unions would not be enough. Thus, grassroots movements began to spring up across the country where institutions like government or unions failed to adequately serve the interests of Black Americans.

“Ancient to the Future”

In 1965, the year before Locals 10 and 208 merged, an organization called the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) was established. The creation of the AACM reflected the growing concern in African American communities and organizations that recent or looming integration efforts promised increased economic opportunities but would likely leave the Black communities with fewer resources than they had created themselves before integration. The AACM saw the decreasing economic and creative opportunities for Black musicians in Chicago and decided that it would be up to their own community to thrive in the future.

One initial AACM motto was “Great Black Music: Ancient to the Future.” This motto reflected the way members viewed their music. The concert settings were initially formal musical venues, complete with programs to give the audience and dress codes for musicians and audiences alike. The AACM was not trying to prove that Black musicians could play formal white music. The music was not about Blackness in opposition to whiteness, instead it was more simply about showcasing “Great” creative music written and performed by Black

musicians. This motto also highlights the need members of the organization felt necessary in order to continue successfully creating music in ways that were not purely commercial. The integration movement at the time was primarily focused on making economic arguments about why integration would be a beneficial tool for class uplift in the Black community. Many of the initial members of the AACM were members of Local 208, and even more of the later members of the AACM were a part of Local 10-208, so it is useful to think of the intersectionality of these two organizations. What purposes did membership of an integrated union bring to the members of the AACM and what purposes did membership in both organizations have?

During a meeting for the nomination of Local 208 officers in November, 1965, Richard Abrams, later known as Muhal Richard Abrams and soon-to-be co-founder of the AACM, was among those Local 208 members that chose to recognize Harry Gray's contributions to the union and begin to advocate for his emeritus position as a vice president of Local 10-208.¹²⁵ The AACM worked hard to secure similar types of improvements to the economic lives of its members with its primary focus on developing opportunities for creative musical educational programs and performance experiences for its members.¹²⁶

The emergence of the AACM in the late 1960s and its growth in the 1970s occurred simultaneously with Saunders' nostalgic reflections on the music

¹²⁵ "Minutes of the Meeting for the Nomination of Officers of Local 208, AFM," November 7, 1965.

¹²⁶ Corey Hall, "From the Ancient to the Future and Back Again: AACM Celebrates 40 Years of 'Great Black Music,'" *Chicago Citizen*, May 4, 2005.

business earlier in his career when Chicago was segregated. Integration had led to more profitable jobs being available to Black musicians in the union, although whether the number of jobs increased at a rate proportional to the number of musicians added to the union was not clear. However, it is clear that Black musicians lost out on musical opportunities more than white musicians as a result of racist business practices in the performing industries. When Saunders wrote articles in the early to middle 1970s about the state of the music industry, he made frequent comparisons between the then-current landscape of the music industry versus the music industry that had worked so well in the past for Saunders.¹²⁷

The AACM began in 1965 and was originally conceived of by Chicago musicians Muhal Richard Abrams, Jodie Christian, Phil Cohran, and Steve McCall. The AACM's nine stated goals include "To provide a source of employment for worthy creative musicians," and "To uphold the tradition of cultured musicians handed down from the past."¹²⁸ These goals, in addition to the seven other AACM goals, resonate with the purposes and rhetoric of the KFA and the Musicians for Harmonious Integration groups. Members of these groups such as Red Saunders defied the script of integrationist/segregationist by continuously utilizing rhetoric associated with both movements. In Saunders' article "Red remembers Chicago in '20s" he reminisces on his earliest years in

¹²⁷ Red Saunders, "Black Musicians Need Black Contractors," *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, March 16, 1974; "Local Clubs Boost Black Performers," *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, October 13, 1973.

¹²⁸ George E Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008), 116.

Chicago by talking about his experiences with Lil Armstrong, Louis Armstrong's ex-wife. He also describes some of the musicians, singers, and music stores that were a part of the musical landscape of Chicago as "sensational" and "beautiful."¹²⁹ Given Saunders' efforts to integrate the union for greater equality and opportunity, some of his articles use even more surprisingly complimentary, even nostalgic, phrasing. It is difficult to separate what might have been simple reminiscing, but perhaps Saunders, without directly saying so, was reflecting on what had been lost in the process of integration. Saunders' own professional career as a musician (less so as a manager and bandleader) were shaped primarily within Black economic circles. He rarely played in integrated spaces, and it is possible that Saunders was concerned about the future of Black musicians in a white-majority union and musical market.

Chicago was not the only place where alternatives to musicians' unions were needed. In New York, an organization called Collective Black Artists emerged in the 1970s. Organizations like the Collective Black Artists and the AACM served as institutions seeking to create grassroots institutional opportunities for creative and economic improvements.¹³⁰

In one *Chicago Defender* article, Saunders began by writing, "This article will deal specifically with the early, early days of Chicago-when the living was easy and things were dirt cheap."¹³¹ This was, of course, a time before Local 10-

¹²⁹ Saunders, "Red Remembers Chicago in '20s."

¹³⁰ Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians As Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 220.

¹³¹ Red Saunders, "Do You Remember Jelly Roll Nite?" *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, December 15, 1973.

208 had integrated, and is perhaps more complimentary than one might expect of a musician who had spent the better part of the 1950s and 1960s trying to integrate his union. Saunders had just helped lead an integration movement less than 10 years earlier, mostly comprised of younger musicians who were not part of the first wave of migrants to the Midwest and North from the South, but he had experienced the inhumanity of the Jim Crow South, and the disappointment of the segregated “city of neighborhoods” that is Chicago. Chicago was certainly better than the South for Black Americans, but it was obviously not free from its own race-based issues. Yet, like the AACM, Saunders wanted to uphold the past and try to uplift the youngest Black musicians in Chicago by showing them the success Black musicians made for themselves earlier in the century.

Many of the institutions, venues, and bands that used to provide opportunities for economic stability for musicians in Local 208 eventually came upon hard times. As more and more of these institutions slowed or simply stopped, musicians began to feel the pinch as well, leading to a spiraling effect of less overall output of career musicians that used to belong to Local 208. Club DeLisa and the Regal Theater closing in the 1950s and 1960s respectively, plus the sale of the building where Local 208 had its offices and apartments, must have taken a toll on how Black musicians continued to view the 1966 merger.

Even the big bands that Saunders led, as well as the nationally and internationally famous big bands, were becoming less common and profitable. As Red Saunders explained in a 1978 interview with Studs Terkel, there were several reasons for the decline of the big band. He described the financial

difficulties of financing a big band, as well as the changing taste in music and performance, as well as what Saunders considered to be a lack of musical identity in the next generation of musicians.¹³² By musical identity, Saunders was referring to what he saw as a commercialization of jazz music that was inhibiting its future growth and change. He said, “You could identify the bands in the past. If Artie Shaw came on you knew there was Artie Shaw. Glenn Miller, you knew that was Glenn Miller. Duke Ellington, you knew that was Duke Ellington. From the sound, their voicing or their style. Not so much today. Everything is repetitious.” When Terkel pressed Saunders on what good big bands existed in 1978, he said, “See, you’ve got a few big bands, Maynard Ferguson got a terrific band, Buddy Rich has got a very good band, Count Basie, but you can count them all on one hand.”¹³³

Saunders had good reason to mourn the near death of the big band. It was through the big band, its venues, and its audience that he was able to make not only his own career, but the musical careers of many others in Chicago. Joe Williams, for example, was a singer whose career skyrocketed into stardom when he was performing at the Club DeLisa with Red Saunders. Eventually, Count Basie heard Williams at Club DeLisa, and Williams went on to perform and record multiple times with Count Basie’s big band. This allowed for Williams to continue his career with the notoriety of being associated with the Count Basie Band.¹³⁴

¹³² Terkel, “Red Saunders Discusses Jazz Music and Jazz Musicians.”

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

These venues, like the Club DeLisa and the Regal Theater, encouraged and enabled a greater number of jobs than later styles of jazz that were not only less popular and therefore less lucrative to the musicians, but they also led to fewer jobs held by other types of workers in conjunction with the big bands. Reflections upon the loss of these venues are similar to Saunders' "Do You Remember Jelly Roll Nite" in that they mourn not only the space themselves, but the history and cultural importance of those spaces.¹³⁵

Community Organizing After the Establishment of Local 10-208

Integration of Locals 10 and 208 certainly did lead to increased and broadened economic opportunities for Black musicians in Chicago. However, life in Chicago did not improve so much that Black Chicagoans had equitable economic opportunities in Local 10-208. One result of this reality was the emergence of Black-centric organizations that were designed to improve the lives of people in the community not just economically, but in terms of creativity, education, and camaraderie. Black-owned businesses were always running into problems that white-owned businesses did not encounter. For example, the Afro-Arts Center struggled to remain open for long periods of time in its earliest days.¹³⁶ Philip Cohran, also one of the founding members of the AACM, ran the

¹³⁵ Red Saunders, "The Death of the Regal Theatre," *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, November 24, 1973.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *Power Stronger than Itself*, 165.

center in its earliest days. Some of the issues the center went through were likely legitimate issues that a musician-turned-business owner might not think to account for, like the need for certain types of business licenses to operate the center as a performing arts center.¹³⁷

But the Afro-Arts Center, like other Black-owned businesses, continued to deal with legal issues and in some cases, police harassment. In one article, Bob Hunter wrote about how after initial licensure issues were resolved, Philip Cohran, the director of the center, was summoned to the city collector's office about an issue that Cohran was unable to articulate to Hunter. Hunter wrote that "The Affro-Arts Theater was closed by police last March 31 for much the same reason; only then the irregularities were known."¹³⁸ Later in the article, Cohran was asked why he was being targeted for what he thought were unfair violations. He said that he thought the actual reason behind the excessive violations was because he had held a concert to raise money for Doug Andrews and Edward Crawford, two people who were then in jail as suspects for arson after the "disturbances that shook the Westside April 5, 6, and 7."¹³⁹ Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated on April 4th and the following days in Chicago were

¹³⁷ Bob Hunter, "Officials Act To Re-Open Affro Arts Theatre: Blacks Sweep Through Legal Bind," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, April 9, 1968.

¹³⁸ Bob Hunter, "Affro-Arts Theater Again Is Shut For 'Violations,'" *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, May 6, 1968.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

chaotic with looting and arson.¹⁴⁰ In Hunter's article, Cohran also is quoted as saying the center was closed after Stokely Carmichael gave a speech.¹⁴¹

Examples of Black-owned businesses and community centers being decimated via legal or other strategies were widespread in Chicago, both before and after integration. Organizations like the AACM sought to fight back against the economic and social devastation of these community focal points struggling by providing community-based, self-reliant opportunities for growth. Although writers like George Lewis, who is part of the AACM and authored an extensive musicological and historical study of the organization, do not emphasize the historic economic conditions during what was soon-to-be integrated (de jure, not de facto) Chicago, it is likely that the struggling conditions of many educational and community institutions in Black neighborhoods were strong factors in the development of such institutions. The AACM declared that their organization had nine goals. These goals reflect many of the concerns that integrationist leaders in Local 208 referred to and expressed concerns towards throughout various means of public occurrences:

1. To cultivate young musicians and to create music of a high artistic level for the general public through the presentation of programs designed to magnify the importance of creative music.

¹⁴⁰ Donald Mostby, "Despite Guard, Cops, Federal Troops More Looting Hits Ghetto," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, April 8, 1968.

¹⁴¹ Bob Hunter, "Affro-Arts Theater Again Is Shut For 'Violations,'" *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, May 6, 1968.

2. To create an atmosphere conducive to artistic endeavors for the artistically inclined by maintaining a workshop for the express purpose of bringing talented musicians together.
3. To conduct a free training program for young aspirant musicians.
4. To contribute financially to the programs of the Abraham Lincoln Center, 700 E. Oakwood Blvd., Chicago, Ill., and other charitable organizations.
5. To provide a source of employment for worthy creative musicians.
6. To set an example of high moral standards for musicians and to uplift the public image of creative musicians.
7. To increase mutual respect between creative artists and musical men (booking agents, managers, promoters, and instrumental manufacturers, etc.).
8. To uphold the tradition of cultured musicians handed down from the past.
9. To stimulate spiritual growth in creative artists through recitals, concerts, etc., through participation in programs.¹⁴²

Besides number five, regarding the employment of musicians, these goals represent the time in Chicago's history when the unions were all but officially integrated, but many of the factors one might examine when looking at the quality of work available to Black working musicians were weak or weakening such as number of jobs, consistency of jobs, and the pay of those available jobs. There have always been strong musical education programs and mentorship in Chicago's Black communities. DuSable High School, the AACM, the Afro-Arts Center, and Red Saunders' Evolution of Africa program are just a few. The problem these programs continuously ran into was that they were not supported

¹⁴² Lewis, *Power Stronger than Itself*, 116.

by the greater community outside of the neighborhoods they were found in. The goals that the founding members of the AACM developed represent the harsh economic realities that educational programs in Black communities often face. Goals four and five are both directly about the financial wellbeing of the AACM and other organizations in South Chicago. More of the goals are at least in part products of those same realities.

The second goal was about bringing musicians together for workshops and performances, which required consistent spaces for collaboration. The Regal and DeLisa theaters had closed by then, and venues like the Afro-Arts Center were often on shaky financial and legal footing. This was designed to ensure that Black musicians in Chicago would have consistent opportunities and space to continue a tradition of musicianship and creativity. Local 10-208 might have been able to help musicians network for improving their performance skills, but there was still little to offer any musicians, especially Black musicians, regarding the teaching of creative composition outside of the music colleges.

The seventh goal about developing positive working conditions with the business end of the music industry represented a real problem that was likely to get even worse—that mostly white business people would be profiting from the labor of Black musicians. This turned out to be a concern that Red Saunders had almost a decade after the unions had officially integrated. In a *Chicago Defender* article, Saunders rhetorically asks the reader who is at fault for the lack of Black contractors and explains that there were three reasons. First, it is in part due to the fact that some of the biggest stars such as Sammy Davis Jr. and Johnny

Mathis have not insisted on working with Black contractors. Second, Saunders blamed the major local production companies like Triangle Productions for not hiring Black contractors. Third, Saunders blamed Local 10-208 for not working with more Black contractors. He suggests the names of five “very capable men” who could be hired as Black contractors, himself included. His conclusion to the article emphasizes his frustrations with Local 10-208: “This is one of the weaknesses in an integrated union which does not negotiate for its minority, and for the black artists who could demand contractors, but do not do it.”¹⁴³

The AACM seemed to anticipate the concerns Saunders laid out in this article. The AACM’s eighth and ninth goals, related to culture and spirituality, were genuine concerns to Saunders as well as he pointed out in that same article. After Saunders wrote about the weaknesses of the integrated union and how such a union could fail its Black members, he wrote, “They (the musicians) soon forget their blackness. Until this condition is rectified, there will still be widespread unemployment among black members.” To the members of the AACM, this perceived loss of Blackness in an effort to succeed financially in a musical economic system run by white contractors employing Black musicians and the loss of Black culture being produced and profited on Black communities was of great concern.

The social, political, and economic networks that emerged in Black Chicago were breaking down as seen by the musical venues struggling, the

¹⁴³ Red Saunders, “Black Musicians Need Black Contractors,” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, March 16, 1974.

challenges in community schools, housing, banking, and countless other ways of looking at the success of a community. The AACM tried to begin reversing the causes of the loss of networks, and again, Saunders wrote a *Chicago Defender* article about the loss of networks Black Chicagoans had developed in the earliest days of the Great Migration. In “Red Remembers Chicago in ‘20s,” Saunders reminisced about the Black community in Chicago when he was young. He referenced blues singers Ethel Waters performing at the Grand Theatre, Lizzie Niles recording “Muscle Shoals Blues,” and Edith Wilson’s recording of “Wicked Blues.” The rest of the article is similar, as Saunders recounts the various venues, music shops, record labels, and of course, musicians.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in Saunders’ “What Became of the Old Producers?”, he wrote about which of his favorite show producers were alive and which performers had passed away or were still involved in music.¹⁴⁵ Despite the fact that there was an increasing amount of work available for Black musicians in the 1960s and integration continued its slow march, it was apparent to the members of the AACM in the late 1960s and Red Saunders in the 1970s that there were reasons to miss the old networks the Black community in Chicago worked so hard to establish and nurture. They had built and performed in lavish theaters like the Regal Theater and the DeLisa Theater, and the loss of those theaters and later communities carried with it the immediate concern of economic stability for musicians and the long term concern of cultural mentorship being lost.

¹⁴⁴ Saunders, “Red Remembers Chicago in ‘20s.”

¹⁴⁵ Red Saunders, “What Became of the Old Producers?” *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition)*, November 17, 1973.

The loss of Black institutions in Chicago might have also led to increased anxiety over the way the musicians and the general public viewed musicians as labor. Robin Kelley writes about the issue of how the labor of musicians has historically been viewed as entertainers as opposed to traditional labor. However, Kelley argues that “if we think about the work of making music and the context in which this work takes place, we cannot help but acknowledge the myriad ways musicians are affected by the whims and caprices of capital, the routinization of labor, and the often dehumanizing conditions of production.” Kelley goes on to explain that musicians and the work they do is, at least in some ways, more complex than many other types of skilled wage labor. Musicians “straddle class lines and historically possess a kind of cultural authority that may belie their material class position.”¹⁴⁶ As unions continued to lose what little power they had to legitimize musical labor, perhaps the issue of whether the music laborer was being viewed as “real” labor and not just an entertainer also increased the need for groups like the AACM and prompted Saunders’ surprisingly positive retrospective writing.

A recent incident involving a Chicago high school named after Captain Walter Dyett helps to illustrate some of the themes laid out in this chapter. Dyett High School has seen a lot of changes since the 1970s. Many of those changes demonstrate the loss of control in Bronzeville. The school was originally a community recreation center, complete with an indoor swimming pool, as well as

¹⁴⁶ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 124-125.

gymnastics and basketball programs for people of all ages. Controversially, the community recreation center's usage changed from strictly a community center to being a middle school during the day and reverting back to its original purpose of being a community recreation center during evenings and weekends. Residents eventually lost even more control of the center when it became Dyett High School as all of the community recreational events were canceled because of issues with space at the high school.¹⁴⁷

More recently, Dyett High School has struggled against CPS for more local control of their community school. Dyett High School was going to close for the 2016/17 school year. Community activists with the Coalition to Revitalize Dyett High School went on a 34-day hunger strike in an effort to advocate for the school to remain open as an open-enrollment community school (not a charter, magnet, or private school) and shift its curricular focus from general education to environmentalism, technology, and global leadership. Initially, the community activists were ignored, but their well-publicized hunger strike drummed up both public interest and the district's attention.

During the hunger strike, activists were featured in the *Chicago Tribune* multiple times. As tensions continued to rise between Bronzeville residents and CPS, Juan Perez Jr. from the *Chicago Tribune* reported that activists shouted down mayor Rahm Emanuel and "forced" him off the stage during a public hearing. Eventually, the school was allowed to reopen for the 2016/17 school

¹⁴⁷ Ben Joravsky, "Everybody Out of the Water," *Chicago Reader*, November 29, 2001.

year, only not as what the community activists had fought for. Instead of a curricular focus on environmentalism, technology, and global leadership, Dyett High School would become the Walter H. Dyett High School for the Arts. Activists had succeeded in keeping a school but were unsuccessful in getting a school that would represent the needs and wants of the community.¹⁴⁸

Despite the heavy-handed overhaul of community activists' desires about the future of their community school, CPS recognized one of the elements of historical pride in Bronzeville. Dyett was a part of many successful musical careers in Chicago, and he represents a time when Black Chicagoans and Americans more broadly successfully impacted the social-racial relations in the United States through the arts. However, the history of this school illustrates the loss of control over key institutions like schools.

In the decades following the merger of Locals 10 and 208, organizations like the AACM as well as the venues like the Afro-Arts Center attempted to carve out a niche for Black musicians and performers in Chicago as many factors like the weakening of labor unions and deindustrialization continued to work against Black performers. Although these organizations were diverse in their purposes, the timing of their emergence when even Red Saunders was growing nostalgic for the segregated Chicago of his youth reveals that the integration of Locals 10

¹⁴⁸ "After Hunger Strike, Dyett Reopens as Arts-Focused Neighborhood High School - Chicago Tribune," *Chicago Tribune*, September 6, 2016; Juan Perez Jr., "CPS Says Dyett to Reopen as Arts School; Hunger Strikers Not Appeased," *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 2015; "Dyett High School Hunger Strike Ends," *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 2015.

and 208 would not be enough to provide musicians all of the tools they needed to have artistically and economically fulfilling careers in the arts.

Conclusion

In the current website for Local 10-208, the history of the segregated unions is reduced to a single paragraph. The passage reads, “During the ensuing years, jurisdictional disputes arose and in 1901 the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local 10 was formed from a group of CMS musicians and other musicians’ unions. The Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 208 was formed one year later, for the excluded African American musicians. This segregation continued until 1966 when Local 10 and 208 finally merged.”¹⁴⁹ This is the only mention of segregation or the process of integration. The paragraph preceding the only mention of segregated locals or the process of integrating the locals into Local 10-208 refers only to the white union and makes no mention of Black Local 208.

An examination of documentary evidence reveals that this story of integration was fraught with complications and debate within Local 208. At the core of this argument, at least within Local 208, was the debate that played out between Red Saunders’ and Harry Gray’s supporters. Both were leaders of the union that had been able to leverage the union to have relatively outstanding and stable careers in music, which can often be an unstable career. Harry Gray and his supporters, hesitant to accept any offer of integration with Local 10, were frequently described as holding Local 208 members back with their antiquated

¹⁴⁹ Chicago Federation of Musicians, “Our History,” accessed January 17, 2021, <https://cfm10208.com/about/our-history>.

views. However, Gray seemed to anticipate the loss of Black control within the union and that, even with integration, it was unlikely that an integrated union with the best intentions would be able to work against other segregated institutions in Chicago.

Those fears turned out to be at least partially realized. Even within Local 10-208, Black leadership from Local 208 was frequently unable to successfully vote as a bloc to have Black musicians in union positions. This loss of community control was seen in more than just Local 10-208. In Eve Ewing's *Ghosts in the Schoolyard*, Ewing notes that Benjamin Willis, superintendent of CPS starting in 1953 and ending in 1966, attempted to put forward what could be described as a color-blind approach to schools. This conveniently allowed Willis to not acknowledge the racial makeups in the schools under his care.¹⁵⁰ Ewing describes a sequence of events during Willis' time as superintendent in 1958 when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) published an article called, "De Facto Segregation in the Chicago Public Schools," that highlighted the separate and unequal treatment of the massive CPS institution. Students at predominantly Black schools had less experienced teachers and the schools were funded poorly relative to the white schools run by CPS. Willis doubled down, acknowledging that segregation was, in fact, part of the reality of CPS-run schools, but claimed that segregation was "a circumstantial thing."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Eve Ewing, *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 77.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 78.

Major institutions, as large as CPS or as small as the musicians' unions in Chicago, struggled with de facto and de jure segregation. Even after segregation legally ended, and institutions like AFL-CIO affiliated unions were forced to write into their bylaws integrationist policies, de facto segregation remained a problem. Formally making segregation illegal through legislation has not been enough to provide opportunities for equitable social outcomes in Black communities throughout the United States. The stipulations in Local 10-208 that enabled previous members of Local 208 to have guaranteed representation certainly did allow for those new members of the merged local to have their geographic and cultural concerns addressed. However, as Amy Absher points out, even with the executive board representation of leaders from Local 208 and a pool of available jobs that had been increased substantially, it was not until 2002 that Tage Larson, a trumpeter, was hired as the first Black member of the CSO (Chicago Symphony Orchestra).¹⁵²

In recent years, the CSO has made efforts to engage musicians and concert-goers from Black communities with the creation of the CSO African American Network. Their stated mission is to “engage Chicago’s culturally rich African American community through the sharing and exchanging of unforgettable musical experiences while building relationships for generations to come.”¹⁵³ This organization has held events since at least 2016, including open rehearsals with the CSO, a speaker series, film screenings, and of course

¹⁵² Absher, *Black Musician and the White City*, 148.

¹⁵³ “CSOA’s African American Network,” accessed January 18, 2021, <https://cso.org/support/get-involved/african-american-network>

performances of music by the CSO and associated musicians and groups within the CSO.

Ultimately, integrating Local 10-208 led to increased musical opportunities for musicians across Chicago, including Black musicians from Local 208. However, these did not come without some costs. The concerns Harry Gray and his old-guard faction expressed and were dismissed over were real, and continue to be seen not only with regards to the music businesses in Chicago, but in the loss of Black cultural spaces, affordable housing, and unequal access to public resources like schools. Whether or not the integration-focused musicians saw these as Gray's faction's real concerns or if they really thought Gray only cared about keeping his influential career, the sources do not directly say. But Red Saunders' written reflections on the Chicago that he built his career within and proliferation of Black arts groups like the AACM demonstrates that Gray's concerns over integration were at least in part well-founded. Certainly, integrating the unions was the right thing to do, and it happened too slowly with resistance from many parties. However, overly simplified portrayals of the debate between Harry Gray and Red Saunders have falsely dichotomized the two men and their relative stances much more than what actually happened instead of highlighting what were carefully considered perspectives held by both leaders and their supporters. By taking a closer examination of the reporting of union integration as it occurred and pairing that documentary information with the reflections done in later oral histories, the nuanced perspectives guiding both arguments for and against integrating the musicians' unions become clearer.

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