

## Who is Ronald Reed?

Ronald Reed, a former member of the Black United Front, was convicted of the 1970 shooting of a St. Paul police officer. Thirty-five years after the killing, Reed was arrested and convicted of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit first degree-murder. He is currently serving life in prison.

Reed is a former 60s civil rights activist. In 1969, Reed was among the students at St. Paul Central High School who demanded black history courses be offered and organized actions against racist teachers. He was also instrumental in helping to integrate college campuses in Minnesota. During this period, Reed began to look toward revolutionary theory and started to engage in political street theater with other young black revolutionaries in the city.

## Shooting on Hague Avenue

On May 22, 1970, St. Paul officer James Sackett was responding to a bogus emergency call at a home in the 800 block of Hague Avenue. While responding to the call, Sackett was ambushed by a sniper and killed. Police immediately looked at Black radicals as those responsible for the incident, arresting several men they claimed were members of the Black Panther Party. The men were released for lack of evidence.

Also arrested was a young woman by the name of Connie Trimble. She was charged with making the call that led to the ambush of the cop. She was tried but acquitted of the charges, despite the fact that it was revealed during the trial that Trimble was involved in the incident yet refused to give the names of the others involved. She did, however, served time in jail for contempt of court.

During the trial of Trimble, a confidential "informant" testified that Trimble was a Black Panther and she and other Black Panther comandos were acting under the orders of Panther leader Ronald Reed. Still no one else was tried.

## The Robbery

At 8 pm, on October 20, 1970, three armed men entered the Ames Plaza Bank in Omaha, Nebraska with the intent of expropriating funds. A shootout resulted between a security guard and the men involved in the expropriation. The guard, who was also an off-duty cop, was shot in the chest.

Ten days later Larry Clark, Reed's co-defendant was arrested in St. Paul. Reed was later arrested on November 13th in southeast Minneapolis.

Police claimed to have found Reed in possession of detailed notes laying out a plot to kidnap Minnesota's governor, Harold LeVander and St. Paul City Council Member Rosalie Butler.

Police also claimed they discovered a statement indicating plans to hijack a United Airlines jet out of Minneapolis. The plot was designed to win the release of Connie Trimble and Larry Clark. According to newspapers, Reed also intended to demand the release of Angela Davis and a young activist named Gary Hogan. Despite police claims, the charges of conspiring to commit air piracy were dismissed because there was no evidence of the conspiracy other than the notes.

In recent articles, Reed's brother has stated these charges were fabricated against his brother. Reed and Clark were still charged with the robbery and were extradited to Nebraska. They were each sentenced to 10-to-25 years in prison.

On October 26, 1976, Reed escaped, but was arrested in Los Angeles on February 3, 1977. Reed served 13 years and Larry served less than 8 years.

## The Arrests

The case regarding the death of the officer Sackett remained cold for nearly twenty-five years. But in 1994, during an interview with 5 Eyewitness News, Connie Trimble claimed that Ronald Reed was with her when she made the call. This statement re-opened an investigation.

In January 2005, during a grand jury hearing over the killing of Officer Sackett, Connie Trimble-Smith, repeated her claims that Reed was the one that encouraged her to make the call. The grand jury indicted Ronald Reed and Larry Clark and the two were arrested. Reed was living in Chicago, working as a pipe fitter. Clark was homeless living in Minneapolis.

Police stated the two men had been the prime suspects since the killing. Originally, they claimed Reed and Clark were Black Panthers bent on killing cops. According to the media and prosecutors, the Twin Cities Black Panthers were involved in drug dealing, bomb making and other acts of "terror" that led to the killing of Officer Sackett. The catch to these claims was that there was no Black Panther Party in the Twin Cities. No raids or arrests targeting Panthers, as seen in many different cities in the country at the time, ever took place in the Twin Cities.

Prosecutors later altered their position claiming that Reed and his co-defendant were "Black Militants" not "Black Panthers" - a term so broad it could have at one time included Jesse Jackson. Reed and others, they claim, engaged in the ambush in hopes of impressing the Black Panther leadership and starting a chapter in St. Paul.

## The Testimonies

The case rested on the testimony of several prosecution witnesses. Connie Trimble who earlier testified that Reed persuaded her to make the call that lured the cop into the ambush recanted some her earlier remarks. However during the trial, she claimed that Reed did not murder Sackett and, in fact, had been duped like her. She stated after the two made the call to the police, they went to Larry Clark's home and stayed together the rest of the night.

Trimble also testified that she made the call but that they were calling the cops on a neighbor who had been having a party and making too

much noise. Neither she nor Reed were aware of any plot to kill the officer.

Another witness, Joseph Garret who claimed to be a Panther with Reed, stated that Reed had asked him if he was interested in helping him "bring down the first pig." Garrett claimed he declined. Several days before the shooting, Garret was stopped by a traffic cop and was found in possession of a gun. After a discussion, Garrett told the officer to "watch the rooftops." He was arrested shortly after the shooting of Sackett, but was released.

John Griffin, presently serving a 30-year drug sentence, testified that Reed informed him what it was like to kill a cop and that Reed had also ordered a bombing campaign that Griffin backed out of. The problem with this testimony is that Reed was in prison serving 13 years in Nebraska during the time Griffin claimed these things took place.

The fact remains the police were not able to produce the murder weapon, an eyewitness to the shooting, or any physical evidence connecting Reed to the killing. Despite this, Reed and Clark were both found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

However, in 2008, the courts overturned Clark's conviction, stating the judge failed to instruct the jury that under Minnesota law a criminal conviction cannot be based on the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice. The prosecutor's case against Clark rested solely on the testimony of Trimble.

However in 2009, Clark pled guilty to conspiring to commit the first-degree murder of Officer James Sackett. Under the plea agreement - which dismissed the murder charge - Clark was sentenced to six years in prison, with the credit for time he already served since his arrest in 2005. Before his case was being overturned and the new plea agreement, Clark's attorney responded to a letter from ABCF demanding Clark not be placed on our list.

Reed was denied a new trial in 2007.

## **FREE RONALD REED**

**To write to Ronald Reed:  
Ronald Reed #219531  
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**Local Groups Supporting Reed:  
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## **FREE ALL Political Prisoners**

## **Ronald Reed**



**A FORMER CIVIL RIGHTS  
ACTIVIST WHO WAS FALSELY  
CONVICTED TO LIFE FOR A  
CRIME THAT TOOK PLACE 36  
YEARS PRIOR**

