

Lecture Notes on Sugrue's "The Origins of the Urban Crisis"

1. Two race riots in Detroit: 1943 and 1967:
 - a. '43 riot mainly whites attacking blacks (10,000 rampage through Paradise Valley after blacks loot white stores there). Elsewhere (Harlem, Mobile, LA, Chicago) whites attack blacks. Racially motivated strikes of white workers (protesting blacks being hired) close workplaces in Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.
 - b. 1967 one of several "long, hot summers" of 60s. Growing black resentments, militancy, "black power," rise of Black Panthers. '65 Watts riot precursor. '68 saw nationwide unrest in wake of King's assassination.
 - c. What are connections between the two events? What happened in the interim re. Politics/economics? What role did "race" play? How did policymakers/intellecuals respond to and interpret/rationalize these events?
[What connections do YOU see if any between these two events?]
2. Some key factors: discrimination, de-industrialization, white flight/resistance/backlash:
 - a. Discrimination – in jobs/housing/schooling. Note some mechanisms of workplace discr.: racial job competition; occupational segregation; hiring by referral network, unions, seniority, racial stereotypes, historical inertia. Importance of social capital. Resist anti-discrim. legislation – ideology/interests. CRA '64 a long time coming.
 - b. De-industrialization – job flight south and abroad. Wages/taxes push up costs. Plant closings, lose of manufacturing employment for low skilled. Laissez faire economic policy vs. needs of affected people. (Adjustment costs; parallels today's globalization debates.) Consequences for families/communities. (crime/welfare, marriage; rising non-work among adults; alienation of youth. (60's survey of 300.)
 - c. Resistance: Racial power asymmetry; white resistance dates from 40's; move to suburbs avoids housing/school integration; *Milliken v. Bradley* counters *Brown*. General issue of local public goods and Tiebout effects; of liberty vs. equality when some resources key to human development provided mainly via informal social ties.
 - d. Backlash: Race a key factor in local/national politics (*Canarsie*). Wallace '68, Nixon '72, Reagan '80. Democratic party loses base among northern, working class whites. Crime/busing/civil rights key themes. From 68-88 Dems. win one of six presidential elections (post-Watergate fluke). Sugrue stresses that roots of this much deeper than Dems. 60s/70s racial liberalism. Consequences for national policy non-trivial. Is Clinton-ism the solution? (Welfare reform; tough on crime.)
[In retrospect, what policies do YOU think could have made a difference?]
3. Some larger themes:
 - a. Coleman Young (first black mayor, '74) and '67 riot blamed for city's decline. But, as Sugrue argues (p. 270) "By the time Coleman Young was inaugurated, the forces of economic decay and racial animosity were far too powerful for a single elected official to stem."
 - b. War on Poverty strategies misdirected: skills-enhancements miss structural probs.
 - c. Moynihan Controversy (black family); undeserving poor; reactionary consequences of individual-focused social explanations that neglect economic structure, political process and racial ideology. Contemporary echoes?

[Where in today's public discourse do YOU see parallels to these historical themes?]