



## **Urban Race Riots: Are They Predictable, Preventable, and Pedagogically Relevant?**

Curriculum Unit 11.02.05

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### **Introduction**

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"To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications." <sup>1</sup>

It may surprise readers to discover the preceding passage from a book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, published in 1781. The power of the passage comes not from its tone, which was probably common during the Revolutionary period of American history, but from the identity of its author. He was Thomas Jefferson, the author of a better-known passage, published only five years earlier, which had proclaimed, "all men are created equal."

If Jefferson saw no contradiction in these passages, then it should come as no surprise that a conflict between the ideas of political equality and racial inequality has persisted throughout American history. It is certainly evident to the students I teach, in a racially diverse New Haven public school. And yet, my students too rarely see the connection between their country's past and their own present.

Therefore, my unit will use Jefferson's contradictions to support an exploration of our own regarding race conflict. The question addressed, under what circumstances does this type of conflict explode, is far too broad to explore in all of its macro-dimensions, so the unit will focus itself as a comparative study of two micro-topics. One case will focus on a riot that did happen, in 1967, in my home city of Detroit, and the other, a riot that did not happen, in 1970, in the city in which I teach and in which most of my students live, New Haven, Connecticut.

## Rationale

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Cooperative Arts and Humanities Magnet High School (Coop) serves a diverse student body that is composed of African-American, Hispanic, and White individuals. As a result, Coop is a real-life example of political equality and racial inequality at work: some students hail from highly impoverished neighborhoods in New Haven, others live in wealthy neighborhoods with better access to elite economic, political, and social circles. My students need space to work through this structure of society. Hence, this unit, by using original sources – archives, newspaper and magazine articles from the period, interviews from surviving witnesses – will allow my students to be able to relate Jefferson's contradiction to two specific crises that ended in different ways. This is in itself a contradiction: racial tension sometimes explodes into violence, and sometimes does not. I want my students to reach their own conclusions as to why using the materials I have provided them with the hope that they will gain a deeper understanding of history, and hence of the society in which they live.

At the same time, students will be able to address a bigger idea about history; that is, knowing history allows us to prevent its repetition. However, this social studies pedagogical dogma has not been successful over the years, in part because students are often unable to connect historical ideas together over time. Thus, this unit will project a different perspective to students about urban race riots. It will present a viewpoint that John Gaddis, a professor of history at Yale University, presents in his book *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, by asking students to recognize the historical process involves the study of many different events to inform future decisions. However, as Gaddis suggests, being a historian does not give students the tools to predict future events. Rather it gives students the ability to recognize the unpredictability of the world. At the same time, understanding that race riots have only resulted in negative outcomes for those involved can push individuals to work towards preventing a race conflict crisis from a violent resolution. <sup>2</sup>

## Were The Detroit Riots of 1967 and the New Haven May Day Protests in 1970 Predictable and Preventable?

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### I. The Origins of Race Conflict in the United States

The history of race conflict does not begin with Jefferson, but his ideas are firmly entrenched in American society by 1967, 1970, and 2011. Using Jefferson in this context does not imply that the cause of race tension has been discovered. Rather it is to dramatize how an idea from history influences the world in 2011. Jefferson's ideas from *Notes on the State of Virginia* permanently became thinking processes that became structures of society – in other words, people following Jefferson built upon his ideas with more concrete theories such as Social Darwinism. Using Social Darwinism as justification, society went through a variety of phases: Slavery begat Jim Crow Laws begat "separate but equal" begat voting disenfranchisement begat housing and job discrimination begat law enforcement discrimination. Jefferson's ideas have grown over time to become structures in society and barriers for some groups of people.

Students need to be challenged to think about these structures and processes for themselves. The abstract nature of this concept makes it difficult to understand for high school students. However, as they begin to recognize how Jefferson's ideas connect to legislative and individual actions in American society over time, they will be pushed to some important conclusions. The most important revelation is the idea that race

conflict almost inevitably will repeat itself. This being true, we can also conclude that race conflict is not predictable and requires the idealism of no racial conflict to be pushed aside for a more pragmatic approach.

## **II. Chaos Theory for Historical Methodology**

Chaos theory is not an obvious part of this unit, but it is vital for helping students make the preceding conclusions. Jumping from Jefferson to the 1960s and explaining the connection clearly is not an easy task. Chaos theory will allow the space for students exploring this unit to use scientific reasoning to understand and explain the content. The first area that chaos theory impacts is that it allows a historian to create self-similarity across scale – that is things look very similar whether looking at one individual's actions or trends of all citizens in the United States. This idea is accomplished in the following way within this unit. By using macro – generalized history from a textbook – and micro history – individual stories students will begin to recognize that whether you are looking at the landscape of Detroit or New Haven from near or far, the generalizations that have the strongest historical support appear similar no matter the location. From this process, students should engage in these materials as historians do; across scales much like they are drawing a landscape of the respective cities being explored from the human terrain.

The other chaos theory that will prove to be significant towards students being able to connect difficult content is "sensitive dependence on initial conditions", also known as the butterfly effect. <sup>3</sup> This idea recognizes that little events have big consequences. Acknowledging this in the examination of Detroit and New Haven demonstrates that how crises are handled before they become too unmanageable may make the difference between violence and its absence.

## **III. The Battle for Racial Equality in the 1960s: Who matters?**

Each movement important to the 1960s is distinct, telling a larger story about the multitude of factions battling the idealism of political equality with the reality of racial inequality. However, it takes a careful examination of the individuals and the movements involved to understand the power of race conflict. After all, racial quarrels did not begin in a large city in Michigan in 1967 or a small city in Connecticut in 1970. The events in the late 1960s and the early 1970s were a result of individual ideas gaining traction in society and creating the conditions for people to push change.

The 1960s are best known for major ideologies such as the Counterculture and Civil Rights movements, which focused on changing specific structures that were rigid in the American social and political order. In response to this shifting culture, the Conservative Reactionary movement emerged trying to retain traditional structures in American society.

Within these bigger movements lived a number of people that help historians understand the 1960s on the micro level. People like J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI who headed many programs with militaristic goals including COINTELPRO, which sabotaged black radical groups, and the police chiefs in New Haven and Detroit who used military-style policing, are representative of the Conservative Reactionary Movement. People like Yale President from 1963-1977 Kingman Brewster; Warren Kimbro, a New Haven resident and a central character in the Black Panther Trials in New Haven; and Yale student William Farley, one of the first black students at Yale who bridged the Black Panthers ideas with the Yale's conservative politics, are representative of a group felt that reform would happen most effectively by the institutions being responsive to their constituents. Last, people like Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, founders of the Black Panther Party, John Sinclair, founder of the White Panther Party, Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, founders of the Youth International Party or Yippies, felt the system of institutions should be destroyed and rebuilt anew.

These individuals forced society to ask questions about institutions, racial inequality, and hierarchies that had existed for decades. Groups like the Yippies, the Nation of Islam, The Black Panther Party, and the White Panther Party resisted the institutions and wanted change. The moderate group of Republicans realized that the forces of change were too great, but that change happens best when it is measured and reflective, not reactive. From the study of the individuals, the students will have a solid micro history understanding of characters in New Haven and Detroit. This will set the stage for macro analysis of Detroit and New Haven, where students will reflect on common patterns in the two cities as well as make bigger observations about American society during the 1960s.

#### **IV. Here Comes Punctuated Equilibrium: Detroit and New Haven prior to 1967 and 1970**

The 1960s illustrated a number of social, economic, and political divides that the American public had faced for years. New Haven and Detroit were both experiencing problems that were unique to the industrial North in the United States. They were cities that were ripe to experience a "punctuated equilibrium. In a historical context, this type of evolution does not happen with a slow, gradual process, but rather from one or a series of events that cause a sudden shift. This theory will be useful for explaining the "why now" of Detroit and New Haven. <sup>4</sup>

Detroit and New Haven faced a number of problems with policing tactics, housing, education, and job discrimination in the 1960s. The unpredictable nature of these interactions slowly accumulated in each city and had an effect on the each city's population, especially its African-American citizens. As the nature of these problems grew, an increasing number of people were ready to commit to change and many wanted immediate reconciliation of the racial divide.

Two individuals that were emblematic of the bigger problems that Detroit and New Haven faced were Warren Kimbro and John Sinclair. They were disaffected individuals whose decisions, while not necessarily congruous, demonstrated a desire for immediate change. Kimbro was born in New Haven in 1934 and raised as a middle-class black individual in the city. He was in and out of school; he experienced the effects of "urban renewal" first-hand. He observed race and job discrimination on his community of peers. He worked hard, mostly stayed out of trouble as an adult, and eventually became heavily involved in community organizing. He was engaged in the politics of the period around Civil Rights and was a peacekeeper during major events such as the day MLK Jr. was assassinated. He was similar to his peers in many respects, except for his extraordinary decision to join the Black Panthers and murder a "supposed" informant named Alex Rackley. His individual decisions changed New Haven's history forever and nearly plunged the city into chaos. <sup>5</sup>

John Sinclair was a product of the metro Detroit region. He grew up right outside of Flint, MI, then the home to General Motors. He attended high school in a mostly white high school and had little experience with the Flint inner city, which was similar to New Haven in size and similar to Detroit and New Haven with its changing demographics. He attended Albion College, a small liberal arts school in Albion, MI, and during his time there observed a speech by Malcolm X, which forced him to think about racial inequality. This speech prompted a conscious decision by Sinclair to become a white activist. He also was a member of the hippie movement and a musician. Eventually, Sinclair relocated with his friends in Detroit near 12<sup>th</sup> street, which became the ignition point of the 1967 riots. As he observed black citizens suffer from institutional and individual discrimination, he became more adamant that the system was constructed inequitably. He was responsible for starting the White Panthers, which supported Huey Newton and the Black Panthers' objectives. Both men made small decisions, which proved to have serious consequences. Ironically, these two men followed paths, which were eventually mirrored by their respective cities. His decisions, while equally as small as Warren

Kimbro's, eventually contribute to Detroit exploding in 1967, leaving the city's black community in ruins and the history of the city changed forever. <sup>6</sup>

The introduction of the individuals that create the micro history of the 1960s eventually produces a macro history that creates self-similarity between the cities. Detroit and New Haven appeared very similar before their race conflicts. In the 1940s, American cities were faced with heightened race tension as "The Great Migration" increased the population of African Americans by unprecedented amounts. Both cities had explosive growth that mirrored the migratory patterns along racial lines. Between 1950 and 1967, the population of African-Americans in Detroit rose from 303,000 of the population to 487,000. <sup>7</sup> Similarly, New Haven saw the population of African-Americans jump from 6,235 on the 1940 census <sup>8</sup> to 36,157 on the 1970 census <sup>9</sup>. The equilibrium was changing rapidly forcing leaders in both cities to make difficult decisions about small events.

The education systems in Detroit and New Haven showed remarkable similarities as well. Sydney Fine, a professor of history from the University of Michigan, noted that Detroit in 1966 was embroiled in bitter struggles over the integration of the school system as the population of nonwhites in the schools increased from 26.7% - 34.8% of the population. <sup>10</sup> The schools citizens of Detroit attended were largely homogenous racially and economically. Teachers were ill-prepared and biased against the students they served, and largely different races from their students. Equity struggles came to a head in 1966 when Detroit Northern High School, a school of 2,300 that was 98% black, had a boycott. The boycott began in resistance to the censorship of an editorial written by 12<sup>th</sup> grader Charles Coddling entitled, "Educational Camouflage", which discussed the policies of social promotion and the low quality education at his school and other local black schools. Coddling controversially wondered in his editorial whether "these schools were 'being operated on the principle that Negroes aren't as capable of learning as whites, so why bother with them'". <sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the community reacted to the censorship by boycotting the school and demanding changes. These demands were mostly ignored; the lone exception being only the principal being released from his job. The white community had a visceral reaction to the boycott feeling that the principal's removal signified letting the students control the school. The situation created opponents in the community. It also requires an important question to be asked: had the demands of the boycott been dealt with more effectively, could Detroit have avoided a violent explosion?

New Haven also struggled with its changing student population. Many of their young people ended up casualties of the streets, including Germano Kimbro, the son of Warren Kimbro. His involvement in the drug trade pulled him and many other young men from Wilbur Cross High School. <sup>12</sup> An important inference from the lack of community outreach for young men like Germano Kimbro was that education in New Haven struggled to negotiate for the educational rights of their young African-Americans. As a result, the city itself had African-American students who did not complete their formal education. Luckily, for New Haven, they did not have a boycott that polarized the people of the city similar to Detroit's.

Detroit and New Haven experienced urban renewal similarly as highways to connect the urban with the suburban often split black communities. Route 34 in New Haven cut directly through Kimbro's old neighborhood. "Urban renewal involved buying hundreds of low-end properties - virtually everything from Warren's childhood and adolescence - and bulldozing existing building". <sup>13</sup> Detroit built Interstate 75, which cut directly through another black community of homes. Approximately 70% of the 43,096 people displaced in Detroit by projects for urban renewal were black. <sup>14</sup> The process of renewing cities was not limited to highways. Renewal also involved building low-income housing that replaced displaced citizen's homes;

however, most were shoddily constructed. Kimbro noted in New Haven that a housing project called Ethan Gardens contained plans for circuit breakers and three coats of paint in each apartment. Developers built these places with only drywall and cheaper fuses. <sup>15</sup> This is a small decision with extraordinary consequences; in this case, Kimbro increasingly felt angered by a lack of integrity in the builders and the belief that much of it was related to racial differences between the builders and the residents of the project.

Detroit and New Haven also established militaristic policing tactics, especially in areas with high concentrations of poverty. Beyond the typical verbal haranguing that black citizens anticipated from the police, the police departments developed squads well known in the black community for excessive force. Detroit police force employed a group called the "Big Four police cruisers", or the TAC-squad, which was composed of "three plainclothesmen and the uniformed driver riding in these vehicles". <sup>16</sup> This group, armed with automatic weaponry and riot gear, often abused their black targets by beating them and enforcing strict curfews. They were feared and hated. Likewise, New Haven experienced similar police abuse, even struggling to reform a military police style until 1990. Among the problems that New Haven experienced was "a vanload of cops known as the 'Beat-Down Posse'...stopped at street corners when they saw black kids hanging out, then pummeled the kids". <sup>17</sup> Each city used tactics that were meant to ensure the safety of its citizens, but each small instance of abuse eventually turning into simmering resentment. With each similarity, they all point to something analogous to loading a spring. Each separate instance loaded the spring tighter and tighter. The spring representing the cities was all too ready to experience a quick and painful social, political, or economic change - punctuated equilibrium was ready to occur and the simmering tension predicted greater challenges ahead.

Both cities also have differences that are worth noting in the comparison. Detroit, by the 1960s, had become a hot bed for revolutionary music with Motown records representing the black ghettos with acts like Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, and Stevie Wonder. Likewise, the suburbs of Detroit were well represented with acts like The Stooges, Alice Cooper, and Motor City Five (MC5). Each of these groups sang about the problems and conflicts in society. The artistic aspect of Detroit served the city as an outlet to raise awareness of the plight of the citizens. People like Stevie Wonder sung about the struggles in the ghettos of Detroit and Los Angeles. John Sinclair, manager of the MC5, involved the white suburban band in the countercultural antiracist experience, helping the group join the White Panther Party, which Sinclair founded. <sup>18</sup> The struggles of the black community in Detroit were mainstream by the mid-1960s. This may serve as an important distinction between them and New Haven as this publicity may have acted as a conduit for violence.

Detroit and New Haven both had higher education institutions that were of importance. However, they were strikingly different. Wayne State University, found in the heart of midtown Detroit, was a public university meant to serve the city of Detroit. The artistic scene attracted a large population of beatnik, hippie, and activist students as well as serving the metro Detroit community at-large. The result then, and still today, is that Detroit has an eclectic group of thinkers such as Sinclair as well as professors who were part of activism. One example of professors taking part in activism was the partnership they developed with Detroit Northern High School students during the lockout in the spring of 1966. They collaborated to start the Freedom School and served over 1,000 students for nearly two weeks. <sup>19</sup> This is an example of a small decision by individuals having enormous consequences. Rather than serving as a mediator between different communities, Wayne State took sides, and further divided the communities.

Yale University found in the center of New Haven was a private institution, meant to serve the political, economic, and social elite of New England. The Yale has long been a place where influential men resided



during their academic careers. Yale has also characteristically been slow to change. They were one of the last schools to accept women and African-Americans onto their campuses. Kingman Brewster approached the Black Panther Trials in a measured way, viewing all the competing perspectives as the only way that healthy democratic reform happened. With his measured approach, he served the city and the radical black community admirably, perhaps even heroically, as violence was averted.

Ultimately, the comparison of the two cities is not to suggest that they are same, but to suggest that the conditions of citizens had many similarities and differences. Before the riot and protest, social and political conditions were tense – quick change was possible if the pressure was not relieved. Likewise, the conditions also differed in small ways that it is possible to ask "what if" Brewster had resided in Detroit.

## **V. Punctuated Equilibrium: The 1967 Detroit Riots and the 1970 New Haven May Day Protests**

The loaded spring snapped in Detroit on Sunday, July 23, 1967 at a blind pig. Blind pigs were after-hours bars that served middle class blacks segregated from downtown establishments. The pig at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Clairmount was raided; inside were 85 people celebrating the return of two African-American Vietnam veterans. The Sergeant Arthur Howison decided to arrest everyone at the celebration. He made this decision without enough paddy wagons available. As a result, the arrests took a few hours, and with 12<sup>th</sup> Street being a thorough-fare for the black community, the crowd swelled to over 200 people. The crowd was not hostile until the police were perceived to be treating their prisoners with excessive force. Two young African-American men began agitating the crowd and the police began to feel threatened. By 4:40 AM, the police pulled out of the area and the crowd proclaimed victory.

"The crowd that gathered at the scene of the precipitating incident [was] an indispensable precondition for a riot".<sup>20</sup> The crowd continued to grow to 3,000 by 7:50 AM and it being Sunday in the summer meant that mobilizing the police force became difficult. Bottle and rock throwing intensified and police presence coupled with a growing mob caused the police sweep to fail. Reports went around on the streets that a black man was bayoneted to death. At this point, it is clear the riot was going to happen and it could never have been predicted. The second statement is particularly important because it recognizes how a "series of chance events – an unusually large number of people in the blind pig, the decision to arrest them all, a steel door, the physical shape of the alley behind the pig, and a lost paddy wagon" could not have been avoided.<sup>21</sup> The butterfly effect would be a useful tool for students to explain how something like this happens in one swift blow.

The damage to Detroit was viscerally frightening. 2,509 stores were "looted and/or burned".<sup>22</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> Street area, which was mostly black and Chaldean, owned had 20% of its storefronts damaged to the point of no return.<sup>23</sup> 43 people died, at least 30 at the hands of law enforcement, and 17 at the hands of the Detroit police.<sup>24</sup> The economic cost of the riot was estimated at \$11.6 million just for city personnel with another \$11 million lost in personal and real property.<sup>25</sup> The cost of the decisions of a number of individuals in the city of Detroit created far worse conditions than originally existed. It should prompt someone to consider the small events, of which there are many, that contributed to a wave of violence that destroyed a city. Had these different events, like the Detroit Northern boycott been dealt with differently, would the tension have been so great to precipitate violence? And, why did the violence explode on this given day and not another? Regardless of the answers, the product of the riot was a worsened outcome for the city of Detroit.

New Haven, with Yale as its epicenter, was not known for its radical elements until the Black Panther party found a home in the 1960s. The Black Panthers found a home in New Haven after the murder of John Huggins,

a New Haven resident. Huggins, like many young African-Americans in the 1960s, felt disillusioned with the gradual social change happening in the United States. After serving in Vietnam, he met Ericka Jenkins at a teacher's college and they relocated to UCLA. Huggins was the Black Panther UCLA campus leader; FBI informants from another black radical group, United Slaves, murdered him. Huggins' sudden death prompted his wife, Ericka Huggins relocation to New Haven. The Panthers capitalized on this death as Huggins and Kimbro became friends, then lovers. The result of this relationship changed the historical path for the city of New Haven; luckily, this change did not result in the same type of destruction that Detroit saw in 1967.

"On the night of Tuesday, May 20, 1969, four men sped north from New Haven, Connecticut, in a borrowed Buick Riviera." <sup>26</sup> All were members of the Panthers and their trip to the Coginchaug River in Middlefield, Connecticut would result in the trip home being one man lighter. Alex Rackley was the man whose life was about to end abruptly. He was a 19-year-old member of the Panthers who was originally from Florida and had spent time with the chapter in Harlem. He also was being accused of being an FBI informant, unsurprising considering J. Edgar Hoover's FBI had embarked on a directive called COINTELPRO (counterintelligence program). The mission was to infiltrate the black revolutionary groups and then utilize tactics to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize" these groups trying to change the social conditions of the country. <sup>27</sup> Kimbro killed Rackley. His death was the beginning of a trial that would engage the city of New Haven and the nation about the possibility of race conflict.

Following the capture of Kimbro and colleague, George Sams, the case became national news. Sams revealed to police that Bobby Seale, then the chairperson of the Black Panther Party, was responsible for ordering the hit on Rackley. <sup>28</sup> The trial was set for New Haven a year following the murder. Nineteen seventy proved to be a tumultuous year, especially as college campuses across the country united against the war in Vietnam. Yale was different. It took the Black Panther Trials to create an uproar on campus.

Kingman Brewster was the Yale President in 1970 and determined to prevent the violence that was occurring on college campuses across the nation from reaching the gates of Yale University. In early April, the Black Panthers began a concerted effort to agitate universities on the Eastern Seaboard. Yale hosted Elbert Howard, a speaker and editor of the Black Panther newspaper, which was attended by 1,700 white Yale students. April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) with the help of the Yippie leader Abbie Hoffman organized a protest outside of Harvard University beginning in Harvard Square. Harvard officials chose to close the gates to Harvard Yard and the protestors erupted injuring 214 people and causing over \$100,000 in damage. Hoffman vowed to burn down Yale on May 1. The May Day Protests on New Haven Green was expected to be as bloody a race riot as there had ever been. Brewster sprang into action.

Brewster and his assistant, Sam Chauncey, met with Harvard officials to discuss their incident. They advised the Yale leaders to leave their gates open for the black revolutionaries. <sup>29</sup> Following that meeting, Brewster met with the Mayor of New Haven, Bart Guida, and the Chief of Police, Jim Ahern. Here, another turning point in the lead up to the protests occurred as Guida attempted to shut Yale out of the process of securing the safety of the city. Ahern thought otherwise, letting Chauncey know that "he, not Guida, would make the decisions on May Day". <sup>30</sup> The differences between Detroit and New Haven, at this point are numerous. Detroit, which had an outraged black community, had seen resistance from their attempts to be heard. Complaints about the school systems, police forces, and housing conditions were largely ignored. Demands were disregarded. New Haven had welcomed the Black Panthers and thanks to Brewster, had created conditions that welcomed a change in the system, with hopes that it would not become violent. Major leaders in New Haven were proactively looking for ways to reform a broken system without destroying it.



The confrontation grew as Yale's involvement in the matter grew. Doug Miranda, the Black Panther chair following Seale's imprisonment, was already on Yale's campus a few weeks before the scheduled protests. Speaking to a group of Yale students, including blacks, he insisted, "if you really want to do something, you ought to get some guns, and go get Chairman Bobby out of jail!" <sup>31</sup> This statement attracted William Farley, one of the young black Yale students, who later spoke to Miranda and realized that his intentions were to encourage Yale students to strike in protest of the trials in New Haven. The plan worked as Yale's students protested and shut down the college. The Yale Daily News, on April 16, 1970, published an article titled "Group Votes Moratorium In Support of Panthers" discussing the students' decision to take a three-day attendance stoppage of their classes as well as a demand that the Yale Corporation donate \$500,000 from their coffers in support of the Panther Legal Defense Fund. <sup>32</sup> Eventually, the pressure from the students forced Brewster to negotiate a compromise allowing students to complete work during the summer break. Following this compromise, Brewster made a stunning admission to the faculty, which made its way into the media. During a speech to the faculty and student leaders, Brewster said the following: "I personally want to say that I am appalled and ashamed that things should have come to such a pass in this country that I am skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States. In large part this atmosphere has been created by police actions and prosecutions against the Panthers in many parts of the country". <sup>33</sup> The involvement of Brewster was meaningful towards the release of tensions and the support of the black community.

May Day came and passed rather quickly with only small incidents provoked by people not involved with the hippie or black revolutionary groups. The National Guard, while tense, did not provoke incidents. The police served as a liaison with Yale to prevent escalation of tensions. Yale's involvement, while seemingly small, was indispensable towards creating a valve that released tensions in the city and the country. The expectation of a close to 100,000 people only amounted to 15,000, mostly white students protesting the oppression of a black revolutionary. Seale was not convicted; Yale and New Haven had avoided a catastrophe that many campuses did not. This story deserves a deeper look than Detroit's because of the outcome of a bleak situation. Brewster while heroic was also fortuitous that many events contributed to a peaceful resolution. However,

## **VI. The Future of Race Conflict**

Forty years after the height of the tension in Detroit and New Haven, the two cities are in resoundingly different places. New Haven has struggled as the industrial base of the country has shrunk, but it has recently seen its population. It struggles with common urban problems that most American cities see with cycles of violence, poverty, and drug abuse. However, it also has a strong creative community, multiple universities with considerable power including Yale, and a diverse population. Detroit has similar problems compounded with economic isolation, a mostly homogenous population compromised of either African-Americans or Hispanic-Americans, and the continued shrinking of a once proud industrial base. <sup>34</sup> Two cities that once followed converging paths continue to diverge from each other. Yet, they also have race conflict today that they must continue to deal with. Each community must use the history that they have to build strong cases for recognizing a number of important points: 1) race conflict is not going away anytime soon 2) small decisions can have enormous consequences 3) Race tension escalating to race violence should be avoided at all costs. If politicians, institutions, and individuals recognize these three ideas, our country and its cities have an opportunity to work hard to prevent future race riots.

*Overarching Class Essential Question*

1. Is it possible to use the past to prevent race conflict from becoming violent conflict in the present and the future?

### *Unit Specific Essential Questions*

1. Are urban riots preventable and/or predictable by examining the events themselves or does it require a greater examination of the structures of society and deeper-seated changes in the beliefs that individuals hold? What indicators make them preventable and/or predicatable?
2. What do urban riots tell us about our American identity?

### *Objectives of the Unit*

It is important to note that classes meet three times a week at Coop, twice for approximately 90-minutes and once for 45-minutes. Therefore, all lessons are written in a way that fits the block schedule – the single period days are modified wherever they fall.

### *Unit Overview*

Facing History and Ourselves <sup>35</sup> is an ethical and moral curriculum that asks students to address historical issues by understanding individuals involved in the particular events, on both micro and macro scales. This unit, which lends itself to US History survey or Sociology-based, will use the Facing History scope and sequence as a guide starting with Jefferson, his contradiction and the power of acceptance and membership. The comparative case study will resume these membership and acceptance questions by examining the lives of Warren Kimbro and John Sinclair. Those two individuals will drive a larger examination of the riots, the people involved, and the legacy of both cities conflicts. Last, and most important, students will determine how to mitigate future race tension, with the hopes that their deep understanding of the riot and the protest can result in more protests in the future and less riots.

The beginning of the unit will probe identity issues by examining Thomas Jefferson, utilizing excerpts from his book published in 1785. It will ask students to evaluate the origins of race conflict in the United States. While this work by Jefferson may not be the first instance of racism in the country, it is surely is one of the first recorded instances by a member of the political elite. However, Jefferson is more complex than his 1785 writings suggest. He wrote the *Declaration of Independence* and yet he fathered children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. Jefferson's actions seem to be directly in conflict with his written beliefs. Regardless, his ideas have been perpetuated and entrenched beliefs of both white and black Americans.

Following this, we will jump into examining the 1960s. In particular, students will think critically about how individual citizens, many who are law-abiding, get caught up in passive or violent resistance to laws. What caused Warren Kimbro, a law-abiding civil servant, to join the New Haven chapter of the Black Panthers and then kill a man? How did a man like this, by all accounts, a peaceful and a positive civil servant, transform? Likewise, what caused a man like John Sinclair, a white hippie and supporter of the militant black movement, to advocate the dismantling of the institutions and laws that governed the country? How did this man, by all accounts peaceful, come to be a symbol of the struggles of the counterculture and of the black communities? As Kimbro is black and Sinclair is white, we will spend time examining how race blurs with ideas like acceptance and membership. In this discourse, students should begin probing the questions that revolve around marginalization and the best ways to create an inclusive society.

Following this, will be the case studies of Detroit and New Haven, with glimpses into the before, during, and after phases of each event in history. At this point, students will be asked to determine whether race riots are predictable and preventable. They will also be asked to demonstrate an understanding of chaos theories such as the butterfly effect and punctuated equilibrium, and synthesize an understanding of how Jefferson's work connects with Detroit and New Haven. This will take us through approximately half of the unit.

Finally, the unit will finish with a contemporary event that focuses on the current New Haven community. Students will devote the final two weeks towards the creation of an urban crisis plan that will develop a systematic manual with a checklist for an average citizen, an embedded institution, and the leaders of local municipalities. This will be modeled after a document that some credit for leading the uprisings in the Arab Spring of 2011 called *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* written by Gene Sharp, a professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.<sup>36</sup> In the process, students will demonstrate the ability to synthesize how racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic tensions may rise and what the roles different citizens can play to "pop the bubble" that exists without this tension manifesting itself in a riot.

## Lesson Plans

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### Lesson Plan 1

Key Question: How does Thomas Jefferson complicate the ideas of inferior and superior races? Why is it important to trace the origins of race conflict to a man like Thomas Jefferson?

Lesson Goals: 1) Identify the racial beliefs that Thomas Jefferson expressed and the ambivalence of his actions  
2) Analyze how Thomas Jefferson's views on race and writings are important thinking processes that become part of the structures of the nation

Homework: Using local newspapers, find an article that addresses race or socioeconomics. Read and bring for class discussion.

Teaching Strategies: Chunking Difficult Text, Big Paper analysis + Discussion debrief, Pre-Reading with predicative writing

Narrative: The ability of students to connect historical events to make meaningful analysis or synthesis is predicated by the teacher's ability to utilize a teaching methodology like Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding By Design* framework, which implores teachers to plan by starting with their final product.<sup>37</sup> Using a method like this allows a teacher to identify the components necessary to create the final product. In this case, Thomas Jefferson, as a Founding Father, has been identified as a responsible party for the creation of a thinking structure that still exists around race inferior and superiority. In order for students to understand the manifestation of race tension as a structure – a riot or a protest – they must be able to trace the roots of the problem. The suggestion in this case is to utilize a teaching technique, like Big Paper, to pull out small pieces of Jefferson's ideas from his writings on race. Big Paper is a silent conversation on poster boards around quotes, pictures, or ideas to provoke bigger conversations in a classroom.<sup>38</sup> The quotes from Jefferson should not be identified because the context might be in question. A number of different questions should be asked

by the teacher, including thinking around using context clues as well as thinking about the content itself. After the Big Paper exercise, Thomas Jefferson should be introduced. The complexity of this lesson revolves around Jefferson's hypocritical behaviors comparing his writing to his actions. For dramatic effect, Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings could be used. *The Declaration of Independence* should also be used to complicate the man. This lesson will culminate with students writing multiple paragraphs in class about Jefferson as well as discuss how they believe Jefferson connects to race conflict in the 1960s. They will discuss with each other and peer edit each other's work.

## **Lesson Plan 2**

Key Question: What does chaos theory such as the "butterfly effect" have to do with understanding race riots and protests of the 1960s?

Lesson Goals: 1) Demonstrate understanding of the butterfly effect through modern examples 2) Create counterfactual history stories about important historical events to illustrate understanding of the butterfly effect

Homework: Write about the butterfly effect at work in your own life - Explain the point of origin, the resolution, and how a small event created a large outcome. It can be positive or negative.

Teaching Strategies: Teaching with technology - examples of butterfly effect, Primary Source Document Analysis, Understanding Historical Methodology, Fishbowl discussion

Narrative: This lesson is predicated on the belief that in order for students to be successful in this unit they must be able to connect theories to historical content. This practice is what I refer to as the connective tissue of history. This terminology is fitting because it is necessary for students to understand how history connects over time. Likewise, it is important for students to understand and be able to explain how individuals are able to influence events throughout the world. This class will examine a variety of examples of the butterfly effect and counterfactual history. The lesson will begin with students posting their newspaper articles around the room. Students will examine the articles with one central premise in mind: How does the issue in the article connect to Thomas Jefferson's beliefs in the 1780s? The class will spend 15 minutes reading the articles and spend an additional 15 minutes discussing as a group. The outcome is to push students to connect the past with the present in order to understand how conditions today are an outcome of previous decisions by individuals and groups. Following that, we will explore the butterfly effect by watching a number of videos on YouTube and sharing observations and reflections. Some examples are a commercial that shows the effect of a butterfly landing on a car and how that causes a series of events that result in a boat being thrown through the roof of a home. Once students understand this example, they will examine their own lives and share with each other an example of this theory in practice in their own lives. We will also examine the Arab Spring of 2011 because Mohammed Bouazizi setting himself on fire is a visible and easy to digest way to understand how history is affected by the butterfly effect. In the process, we will devise a list of central questions that can be asked to challenge history and ask the question what if, such as what if Bouazizi had not set himself afire. The last part of class will involve introducing the 1960s, the movements of the 1960s, and the Detroit Riots in 1967, and the New Haven May Day Protests in 1970. The purpose of this is to give students background information about the cities, people, and movements that encapsulate the 1960s.

## **Lesson Plan 3**

Key Question: Why are New Haven and Detroit in the 1960s similar places to live? Why are they different?

Lesson Goals: 1) Demonstrate understanding of job and housing barriers that existed that prevented blacks from gaining acceptance into mainstream urban societies 2) Compare and contrast Detroit and New Haven in 1960s before the riot/protest to see how they are similar and different

Homework: Group 1: Read Chapter 1 and 2 – *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer* Group 2: Read P 52 – 57 – *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967* with role specific question for literature circles

Teaching Strategies: Analysis of tables and graphs, Small group discussion, Pre-reading – using lesson to prepare students for reading homework

Narrative: This class is meant establish problems that African-Americans struggled with during the Civil Rights Movement. It will establish a number of issues that are similar to New Haven and Detroit before the riots in 1967 and the protests in 1970. Both cities have clear connections with migratory patterns, housing, job, and education discrimination. Similarly, they also struggled with police departments that subscribed to militaristic-styles of policing, which effected community relations. For this reason, this class will led students through a number of exercises that establish the role of identities in the creation of conflict. The class will begin with a simple exercise – we will watch a short clip entitled "The Lunch Date", which is a clever scenario where a black man and white woman interact without words. The white woman ends up believing the black individual, who is shoddily dressed, steals her salad. She is wrong and gets a laugh about the situation, but it calls into question many ideas about the power of pre-judging someone. This will lead us into an examination of tables and graphs that show information about Detroit and New Haven's housing and job markets, and education system. Immediately following these inferences, the students will view pieces from "Eyes on the Prize" from PBS, which has some really excellent pieces on race and race inequality surrounding the problems from the 1960s<sup>39</sup> or read a story about struggles in a city like Chicago with these issues. The purpose of pushing students in this direction, which will leave New Haven and Detroit, is to establish that these two cities problems were not unique; rather, they were a part of general trend of institutional discrimination, which put people in many cities, including Detroit and New Haven in a position where they had no choice but to fight back. This day will serve to establish a base for students reading text, some of which is difficult to understand.

#### **Lesson Plan 4**

Key Question: How does the lack of democratic process for some groups create conditions where revolt is the only possible solution?

Lesson Goals: 1) Identify the role of marginalization, stereotyping and, membership in creating rule followers or rule resisters 2) Analyze how these ideas affect people like Warren Kimbro and John Sinclair.

Homework: Visit website [http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d\\_index.htm](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d_index.htm) and write a one-page summary about the Detroit riots OR read chapter 5 in *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer*

Teaching Strategies: Literature Circle (reading comprehension with a Butterfly Effect Commentator, People Pundit, Connection Queen or King, Comparison Connoisseur, Event Expert)

Narrative: This class is going to introduce Kimbro and Sinclair in Detroit and New Haven. These characters were part of radical movements. Kimbro eventually resorted to murder while Sinclair was the founder of the

White Panther Party. The class will be introduced to the two characters – Sinclair through an autobiographical documentary called *Twenty to Life: The Life and Times of John Sinclair* and Kimbro through a piece of the chapter entitled "The Making of a Panther" from *Murder in the Model City*. The purpose of this exercise will be to help develop a deeper understanding of the connection between people feeling oppressed or marginalized and the impact that has on individual's behavior. Students will then have a literature circle to discuss their reading assignment from the previous class. The roles mentioned above will have students prepare for group work very specifically – for example, the butterfly effect commentator will seek examples of the butterfly effect in the reading. To do this, they must know what eventually happened in Detroit and New Haven. The people pundit will talk about the people involved. The Connection Queen or King will connect Jefferson to the reading and events that happen. The comparison connoisseur will examine Detroit and New Haven for differences and similarities. The event expert will be able to explain the Detroit and New Haven events in detail. This small group discussion will enhance understanding of the reading while also allowing students to answer, in detail, the question of the day from lesson plans 3 and 4.

## Lesson Plan 5

Key Question: What is punctuated equilibrium? Why does Detroit explode into one of the biggest riots in our nation's history and what effect does it have on the city?

Lesson Goals: 1) Identify the events in the Detroit riots in 1967; the factors that caused the riot, and determine whether it was preventable 2) Analyze how music portrays a deeper understanding of the racial divisions of Detroit and the differences between cities and suburbs.

Homework: Read Chapter 14 and Chapter 16 from *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer*

Teaching Strategies: Chalk Talk – Using white board to help facilitate group discussion

Narrative: This class will begin with a short reading that discusses the riots and how they began. We will especially focus on a number of details that had to happen in order for there to be an escalation and eventual implosion of order in the city of Detroit. This again relates to the butterfly effect because if the blind pig that was raided was not raided or raided differently, would the riot have occurred? If the riot had not occurred then, would it ever have occurred? Following this examination the beginning of the riot, we will watch a large majority of the BBC documentary "Motor City's Burning: From Motown to the Stooges", which does an excellent job of contextualizing Detroit through the lens of music that acted as a vehicle of defiance. <sup>40</sup> In light of the Northern High School walk out, it is a great place to bring the class because it connects the riot itself to bigger movements happening during the time. The class will conclude or homework will be added for students to research the lyrics of 3 out of 4 songs that have origins from Detroit – possibly The Stooges "1969", Diana Ross and the Supremes "Love Child", Stevie Wonder "Living in the City", and MC5 "The American Muse" are all good options, but there a large number of songs that are social critiques about urban living. This is just an interesting way of presenting Detroit in more detail to understand what happened and why it is important.

## Lesson Plan 6

Key Question: What happens in New Haven? Why does it not become a seminal event in the history of New Haven and our nation?



Lesson Goals: 1) Identify the events in the New Haven May Day Protests in 1970, the factors that prevented it from becoming a riot, and determine what prevented it from being worse 2) Analyze how knowing the differences between Detroit and New Haven can help us predict future events

Homework: Read Chapter 14 and Chapter 16 from *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer*

Teaching Strategy: Teacherless Discussion (Socratic seminar) with technology – scripting conversation on overhead projector for students to reference and teacher to grade, Primary Source Analysis

Narrative: This class will focus a discussion around the protests in New Haven. At this point, students should be familiar with the events that transpired because of the various readings that they should have done. This class will begin with a Big Paper conversation that centers on photographs, speeches, and *Yale Daily News* articles from the lead up to and the May Day Protests. From here, we will conduct a formal discussion called a teacherless discussion that will begin pressing students to question how this event happens in New Haven and how they avoid it becoming a bigger event. This discussion acts much like a Socratic seminar with central questions that push the conversation. However, as the teacher, I am only there to clarify points of interest and script the conversation, which I do with the technology in the room. The scripting allows me to record the conversation for assessment as well as allows students to reference their peer's thoughts. Ultimately, this class is a summative assessment of student understanding. In the process, students should be questioning how Jefferson's ideas have become structures in society, how Detroit could have become a riot, and New Haven did not. They should also be prepared to say whether riots are predictable and preventable.

## **Lesson Plan 7 - 11**

Key Question: How are Thomas Jefferson and his writings related to the New Haven May Day Protests in 1970, and the Detroit Riots in 1967? How can understanding all of these things and how they are intertwined allow us to be better prepared to prevent these things in the future?

Lesson Goals: 1) Analyze the connection between Thomas Jefferson's writings, the Detroit Riots of 1967, and the New Haven May Day Protests in 1970 2) Create a top 10 list and manual for individuals, institutions, and for understanding racial tension and preventing future racial tension

Homework: Prepare for formal writing assessment where students answer one of the unit essential questions in essay form (4-paragraph minimum with thesis).

AND group preparation for Mayor briefing presentation on how this history can be used to prevent, predict, and avoid future conflicts in New Haven, or at least help them end peacefully.

Narrative: The final lessons will be devoted the creation of a final product. One academic work that students could be exposed to is an opinion editorial in the *New York Times* written by Thomas Sugrue entitled "A Dream Still Deferred" that discusses the problems Detroit faces today. <sup>41</sup> Likewise, it would be ideal to engage the students with projects ongoing in New Haven to address inequality and discuss whether these are effective options for improving race relations. You may even ask kids to research other race riots and research them as a comparison to the two already discussed in class. The final product in the class will be to create a checklist for three different types of individuals to utilize much like an airplane pilot uses checklists to prepare for departure or arrival. These checklists will be for the average citizen, for an institution like a university, and for

a government institution like the mayor's office and the police department. They will also be responsible for writing a two-page policy brief from their checklist that will be presented to the leader of a government or private entity in New Haven. The purpose of this brief is that the students will develop a presentation for a member of the city government. The teacher will be responsible for inviting a prominent member of the city government or institutional community in the city you reside. The purpose is to add meaning to the learning because students will be required to utilize the past to generalize and inform the future. The goal with this project is to develop something that could potentially be publishable on a school-wide scale. In the process, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of how individuals play a major role in the creation of history as well as how we can use the past to inform the present and affect the future.

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Fine, Sydney. *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riots of 1967*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2007. This source is for a teacher and high-level readers in your class. It does an excellent job of extrapolating the before, during, and after of the Detroit Riots in 1967.

Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002. This is a source for a teacher of any academic subject that deconstructs the methodology historians use to create their understandings of the world.

Gordon, Bob. "Group Votes Moratorium In Support of Panthers." *Yale Daily News*, Vol. 121 (New Haven, CT), April 16, 1970. Accessed July 2, 2011, <http://digital.library.yale.edu/cdm/cliparticle.php?id=DIVL71&CISOBJECT=11226&CCISOROO=/yale-ydn&CISOPTR=11220&DMSCALE=0&DMTEXT=%2520May%2520Day%25201970>. Archives of the *Yale Daily News* - accessible for your students.

Jefferson, Thomas. "Excerpts from *Notes on the State of Virginia*". Accessed June 25, 2011, <http://www.historytools.org/sources/Jefferson-Race.pdf> - Excerpts of Thomas Jefferson's views on the African Race from his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. This is student friendly and can be used as a primary source in class. It has been modified.

Sharp, Gene. *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*. Boston, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2003. This is a rulebook for nonviolent revolution. This should serve as a guide for the final product.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of The Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. This book is a general history background about the social and economic conditions in Detroit before the riot of 1967. For teachers and high level readers only.

*Twenty to Life: Life and Times of John Sinclair*. Directed by Steve Gebhardt. 2004. Michigan: Steve Gebhardt, 2007. DVD. Documentary film about John Sinclair, his involvement in the counterculture, music, and antiracism. This is suited for high school.

Wiggins, Grant, and Jay McTighe. *Understanding By Design, Expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005. Resource for teachers that theoretical and practically discusses the usefulness with backwards planning for designing curriculum.

## Electronic Resources

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/tv/detroit/> - The documentary is available on youtube searching the title. It connects how the music industry in Detroit was a vehicle for social critique. For teachers and for students, but watch the language.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQuUD6tC2H8> - YouTube link to *Motor City's Burning* documentary. A list of the music is listed in the comments section. Student friendly, but screen first for some parts that may be inappropriate for a classroom.

<http://www.facinghistory.org/teachingstrategies> - Facing History and Ourselves website has many student-centered teaching strategies found here. Excellent source for improving pedagogy activities in the classroom.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/27/opinion/27Sugrue.html?hp> - Opinion editorial from Thomas Sugrue 3/27/2011 about Detroit's blight in 2011

[http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d\\_index.htm](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d_index.htm) - Website with information about the Detroit riots along with first-hand account interviews with people involved in the events in Detroit 1967.

[http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_06-godeeper.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_06-godeeper.htm) - This site provides curriculum connected with the PBS series "Eyes on the Prize" and has excellent casual materials about how communities of individuals are affected by racializing housing and jobs.

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands> - National Council for the Social Studies National Standards.

## Appendix A: Implementing National, State, and New Haven Curriculum Standards

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National Council of the Social Studies Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.

It is important that students know how institutions are formed, what controls and influences them, how they control and influence individuals and culture, and how institutions can be maintained or changed. The study of individuals, groups, and institutions, drawing upon sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines, prepares students to ask and answer questions such as: What is the role of institutions in this and other societies? How am I influenced by institutions? How do institutions change? What is my role in institutional change? <sup>42</sup>

State of Connecticut History 1.2 Students will be able to describe the importance of significant events in local and Connecticut history and their connections to United States history. Thread 14. Describe how major events in U.S. History affected Connecticut citizens.

New Haven USII 9.3 Students will evaluate the development and impact of counterculture in the 1950s and 1960s and New Haven USII 9.4 Students will compare and contrast political and social leaders of the 1960s.

This unit will utilize national, state, and district standards that teach about institutions such as government and universities and how they affect and are affected by their local environment, including people. New Haven's May Day protests demonstrate an interesting time in Connecticut's history that relates it with the country as a whole. For this reason, it can connect the students of the city of New Haven to the greater movements in the 1960s.

## Endnotes:

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- 11 Ibid, 53.
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- 22 Ibid, 291.
- 23 Ibid, 291.
- 24 Ibid, 299.
- 25 Ibid, 299.
- 26 Base and Rae, 3.
- 27 Ibid, 102.
- 28 Ibid, 68 – 69.
- 29 Ibid, 121.
- 30 Ibid, 124- 125.
- 31 Ibid, 127.
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