"No Water for Niggers": The Hough Riots and the Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement

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‘No Water For Niggers:’
The Hough riots and the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of M.A. Honours in the School of History, University of St Andrews. January 2015.
‘I, Olivia Lapeyrolerie, attest that this dissertation, for submission to the School of History, University of St Andrews, is entirely my own work. It contains exactly 11,944 words.’

Signed: 
Date:
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List of Abbreviations:

SCLC : Southern Christian Leadership Council
SNCC : Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
RAM : Revolutionary Action Movement
CORE : Congress of Racial Equality
JFK House : Jomo Kenyatta Freedom House

Nota Bene: This dissertation used the same language, grammar and numerical expressions as stated in the original source.
Introduction:

The summer of 1966 was abnormally hot for Cleveland, Ohio. The average temperature in July was twenty-seven degrees Celsius, and there had been eighteen consecutive days of zero precipitation.¹ Mirroring the temperatures outside, the tensions inside the Seventy-Niner’s Café were running high on 18 July. Owned by Jewish brothers, Dave and Abe Feigenbaum, the Seventy-Niner’s Café was located at the corner of Hough Avenue and 79th Street in the Hough neighborhood. Stretching from East 55th to 105th between Superior and Euclid Avenues, Hough was only two square miles. The Seventy-Niner’s Café was not only the geographical center of the predominately, black neighborhood but also the center of the riots that would ravage the poorest, most overcrowded section of the city from 18 July until 23 July 23, 1966.²

While the relationship between local blacks and whites in Hough had been strained for a long time, it had not reached such violent proportions until the summer of 1966. At the end of June, there had been skirmishes between members of the majority white Cleveland Police Department and young, black teenagers in the adjacent neighborhood. On the evening of 18 July, an African-American man walked into the Seventy-Niner’s Café and ordered a bottle of wine to go and a cup of ice water. The Feigenbaums later told reporters that this black man was like all the other cheap, alcoholic denizens of their bar who tried to violate the Ohio law which prohibited carry-out wine to be consumed on the premises of the café: ‘The wine-heads dump the water and pour the wine into the glass. It’s cheaper than buying a straight glass of wine.’³ Enraged by the Feigenbaum’s poor treatment, the black customer left and posted a sign outside the bar that said, ‘No Water for Niggers.’⁴ Rumors of the sign quickly spread throughout the neighborhood, and a large crowd began to congregate outside the bar. The crowd became increasingly agitated as the night wore on, and the Feigenbaums decided to call the police. The police arrived after some delay yet failed to disperse the crowd.

¹ ‘Second Cool Mark is Set as Cleveland Stays Dry,’ The Cleveland Press (22 July, 1966).
³ Ibid.
The presence of the unpopular local authority only further excited the crowd, and the riot ensued.⁵ (See Appendix A).

The mob outside the café began to wreak havoc on the neighborhood into the early hours of 19 July. The newspapers reported that the rioters’ main targets were stores, apartment buildings, and police officers.⁶ After one night of chaos in Hough, Ohio Governor James A. Rhodes, Cleveland Mayor Ralph Locher and Chief of Police Richard Wagner decided to call over 2000 members of the National Guard to help contain the situation to no avail.⁷ The riots continued for five consecutive nights, and caused irreparable damage to the neighborhood and its citizens. Four Hough citizens died during the riots, none of whom were participating in the violence. Bullets in the exchange between ‘random snipers’ and police hit Joyce Arnett and Percy Giles. White vigilantes killed Sam Winchester and Benoris Toney in drive-by shootings.⁸

Before the National Guard left the neighborhood, the City of Cleveland wanted to discern who was behind the riots in the Hough. The Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots, chaired by the former editor of the Cleveland Press, Louis B. Seltzer, blamed the riots solely on ‘black power apostle(s):’ African-Americans whom the jury thought were ‘avowed believers in violence and extremism.’⁹ The report specifically named clubs in Hough that espoused the ideology of ‘black nationalism,’ and outside agitators for inciting the riots.¹⁰ Furthermore, the report said that the rate of reform was moving too fast for the Hough community to bear.¹¹ The Grand Jury lauded the Cleveland Police Department and the National Guard for their actions during the weeklong riots. Mayor Ralph Locher praised the Grand

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⁷ Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p. 16.
⁸ Ibid, pp.7-16.
Jury Report for its findings, and the jurors for their bravery in acknowledging the real perpetrators behind the violence.\textsuperscript{12}

Local Civil Rights leaders and the citizens of Hough were dissatisfied with the Grand Jury Report, and decided to hold their own hearings and to issue a report on the causes of the riots: \textit{The Report of the Panel on the Superior and Hough Disturbances by the Urban League of Cleveland}. One of the main dissenting voices of the Grand Jury Report was State Representative Carl Stokes. He referred to the Grand Jury Report as a ‘whitewash,’ and a classic attempt of the city’s government to avoid taking responsibility for their role in the deterioration of the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{13} In contrast, the Urban League Report cited the horrible conditions in the neighborhood as the underlying reason why a segment of the neighborhood rioted.\textsuperscript{14} The Urban League Report detailed problems with dilapidated housing, an inoperative University-Euclid Renewal Plan, high unemployment rates, an inadequate welfare system, and the discriminatory attitudes of white police officers and white shop owners who ran businesses in the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, the Urban League’s Report stressed that the citizens of Hough had attempted to register their grievances and suggestions with the city government through local civic organizations. The citizen’s efforts had been responded to with either indifference or promises that remained unfulfilled by the Locher administration.\textsuperscript{16} Further frustrating the citizens of Hough was the fact that the Urban League Report had no legal standing to ensure reforms in the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{17}

Hough, however, was not the only neighborhood to explode during the 1960’s. From Los Angeles to New York, northern ghettos were rioting during the summers of 1965 until 1967. The recurring phenomena, which first started in the Watts neighborhood

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Report of the Panel on the Superior and Hough Disturbances by the Urban League of Cleveland} (Cleveland, 1966), p. 5.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid}, pp.5-14.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid}, p.17.
\end{flushleft}
of Los Angeles in 1965, was coined the ‘long, hot summers’ by journalists. The ‘long, hot summers’ had crucial commonalities. First, tensions were high in each ghetto; one rumor was sufficient to incite individuals to riot. Second, the rioters had carefully chosen targets: prejudiced police officers and discriminatory shopkeepers. Finally, the contemporary reaction to the riots varied based on political persuasion. There were two major riot reports produced during the decade, which historians use to represent the opposing reactions to these summers of turmoil. The first major report on the riots was Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning?: A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965, also referred to as the Watts Commission. Similar to Cleveland’s Grand Jury Report, the conservative Watts Commission believed that degenerates from outside of Los Angeles had agitated the 1965 riots. Even though the 1967 National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders focused on the entire ‘long, hot summer’ phenomena, the findings of the commission are comparable with the Urban League’s findings. The National Advisory Report countered the Watts Commission with a liberal indictment of deeply rooted racism in America as the main cause of urban violence. The different conclusions about the riots reached by these reports illustrate the difficulty of making sense out of a chaotic situation.

Interpretations of the race riots are as varied today as they were in the 1960’s. The ‘long, hot summers’ are often depicted as a decisive moment in the declension narrative of the American Civil Rights Movement. An example of ‘public memory,’ the narrative draws heavily on the very stories, events and personalities that prevailed in the media accounts of the period. With a sole focus on black organizing activities in the

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21 Ibid.
South, the declension narrative is the most popular lens used to recount the Civil Rights Movement. By emphasizing the activities of groups like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the narrative implies that the struggle for black equality only consisted of nonviolent protests in the segregated South. The declension narrative dates the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement with the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and its ending with the Watts Riots in 1965. Watts and other mid-decade race riots are used to represent the decline of the Civil Rights Movement, and the beginning of Black Power advocacy.\(^{24}\) The ‘long, hot summers’ effectively splintered the fragile coalition between the major Civil Rights groups as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) broke away from the dogma of SCLC and embraced Black Power ideology in 1966.\(^{25}\) Poor blacks living in the ghetto were too busy surviving to effectively organize against their oppression in a nonviolent fashion.\(^{26}\) The violence was reflective of the ghetto residents’ low socio-economic stature. The declension narrative argues that the riots led to the emergence of Black Power, which was the only form of activism in the North.\(^{27}\) Proponents of the narrative considered the Black Power and the Civil Rights Movements to be dialectic ideologies. While the former espoused revolutionary violence, the latter espoused peaceful integration. The dichotomy in the declension narrative is clear: the riots and Black Power Movement were a negative contrast to nonviolent protest and the Civil Rights Movement.\(^{28}\)

This dissertation aims to disprove the declension narrative’s interpretation of the ‘long, hot summers’ by specifically examining the Hough riots. Historiographical trends demonstrate that the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were not separate, sequenced periods, delineated by the riots into two, distinct ideologies.\(^{29}\) Existing in the


\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{29}\) *Ibid.*
North before the riots, both movements were more complex than the narratives’ moralistic binary. The Civil Rights Movement sought to restore to African-Americans the rights of citizenship guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments through legislative change. In its most essential form, the Black Power Movement called for the independent development of political and social institutions for black people and emphasized pride in black culture.\textsuperscript{30} The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were two different approaches to the amelioration of the black condition in America.\textsuperscript{31} This dissertation will argue that the Hough riots, including its cause and aftermath, were at the intersection of both these strategies.

The first chapter will analyze the failure of Cleveland’s black political organizing scene to engender reforms to improve the conditions in Hough prior to the riots. Their failure to instigate reform was not for lack of trying, but rather the result of an unresponsive municipal government under the administration of Mayor Locher. The second chapter will compare the Grand Jury and Urban League Reports to show how violence was used as a currency to draw attention to the sources of black frustration in Hough. The riot’s messaging, however, was ineffective in changing the apathetic sentiments of the Locher administration. The third chapter will examine the role the Hough riots played in Cleveland’s 1967 mayoral election. The aftermath of the riots demonstrated to Cleveland’s black community that the only way to improve the conditions in Hough was for black issues to become a priority in City Hall. This dissertation aims to prove that while the ultimate aim of the riots was to spur reform that would help improve the conditions in Hough, the tactics used to achieve this goal drew from both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. A culmination of a thwarted political process, the Hough riots were an articulate form of expression to garner the public’s attention about the conditions in the neighborhood; however, the Locher administration’s response to the riots demonstrated to blacks that the only way to achieve reform in Hough was through self-determination. Hence, the Hough riots becomes an

\textsuperscript{30} Rafael Torrubia, \textit{Culture from the midnight hour : a critical reassessment of the black power movement in twentieth century America}, 23 June 2011, <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/1884>
\textsuperscript{31} Theoharis, ‘Alabama on Avalon,’ pp.29-30.
exemplary case study in indicating the declension narrative’s flawed interpretation of black political activism in the 1960’s.
Chapter 1: A Thwarted Political Process

‘Promise a lot; deliver a little. Lead people to believe they will be much better off, but let there be no dramatic improvement.’

Cleveland’s black political organizing community was unable to improve the conditions in Hough through nonviolent actions prior to the 1966 riots. Their failure to instigate reform was not for lack of trying but rather the result of an unresponsive municipal government. An analysis of the conditions illustrates why citizens in Hough were protesting. The rapid demographic and socio-economic changes that took place in Hough during the 1950’s prompted many studies of the neighborhood such as Western Reserve University’s 1959 *Hough, Cleveland Ohio: A Study of Social Life and Change*, and the 1966 *United States Civil Rights Commission*. The Civil Rights Commission diagnosed Hough’s ills to be ‘the classic ones of the ghetto: inadequate housing, schools and jobs.’

The Hough ghetto was created and perpetuated by the persistent discrimination of the post-World War II period. While life in Hough was far from the well-advertised American dream, the residents of the neighborhood were attempting to improve the conditions in Hough. Cleveland had a vibrant black activism scene comprised of groups that existed before the riots. From the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), these ideologically diverse groups worked together in an attempt to enforce housing codes, improve local schools, increase welfare funding and end job discrimination in Hough. Despite the activist’s efforts, Mayor Ralph M. Locher was not swayed. Locher did not understand the plight of Hough citizens. He continually made promises about urban renewal in Hough that his administration failed to uphold. The mayor failed to even acknowledge criticism about the police department and instances of police brutality against blacks. While the riots
may have started after an incident at a bar, the mob’s outburst stemmed from a deep-seated frustration over the slow rate of reform that had failed to improve the conditions in Hough. Ultimately, the Hough riots were the culmination of a thwarted political process.

An Analysis of the Conditions in Hough:

The conditions in Hough during the 1966 riots were a result of demographic shifts that occurred during the previous decade. Hough went from being a middle-class, white neighborhood to a black ghetto in less than ten years. This shift was a combination of the Great Migration and white flight to the suburbs. Cleveland was one of the most popular destinations of the Great Migration, a term used to describe the mass, black exodus from the Jim Crow South to the legally desegregated North from 1910 until 1970. The African-American population in Cleveland went from being 8,000 in 1910 to 275,000 in 1960. Cleveland had a higher proportion of blacks born in the South than in any other Northern city, at 48% in 1960. In spite of being in the legally desegregated North, Cleveland shared some striking similarities with the South. Charles Perry, co-founder of Cleveland’s preeminent black insurance agency, the Pinkney-Perry Insurance Agency, described the pervasive nature of segregation in the region before the riots: ‘It was James Crow in the North.’ Cleveland was the second most segregated-city in America in 1966. 90% of blacks lived in predominately black neighborhoods. Cedar-Central, the oldest African-American ward in the city, became overcrowded during

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40 Hough, Cleveland Ohio: A Study of Social Life and Change (Cleveland, 1959), p. 5.
41 Sudhir Venkatesh, American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto (Boston, 2002), p. 9.
43 Commission on Civil Rights, p. 646.
44 Perry Interview (14 August, 2014).
46 Commission on Civil Rights, p. 873.
World War II as more Southern blacks came to Cleveland to help the war effort. Blacks were able to leave the overcrowded Cedar-Central and move into neighborhoods like Hough as whites began to leave the city during the post-World War II period. From 1950 to 1960, Cleveland lost almost 39,000 residents as a result of white flight to the suburbs. The non-white population in Hough went from being 1% percent in 1940 to around 60% in 1960 to almost 90% in 1966. The demographic shift resulted in a drastic socio-economic change that would determine the fate of Hough in the next decade.

The African-Americans living in the newly formed Hough ghetto during the 1960’s were trapped in a cycle of poverty that reinforced patterns of racial inequality. Job and housing discrimination created the conditions in Hough. Blacks had less disposable income because they were confined to the most unsecure jobs. Financial viability was a major obstacle to secure housing. The median family income in Hough at the time of the riots was $4,050, which was $2,945 less than the median family income in the rest of the city. 50% of the neighborhood’s residents worked in the semi-skilled trades, which were the lowest paid jobs and most susceptible to layoffs. The unemployment rate in Hough was 6.3% in 1966 while the rest of Cleveland only had an unemployment rate of 5.5%. Hough contained 25% of all the welfare cases in the city. African-Americans had difficulty securing accommodations in Cleveland’s housing projects. Despite city ordinances that desegregated public housing, the local housing officials segregated housing projects. There were almost no white families on the waiting list for public housing. Nonetheless, blacks on the list were not offered a place to live in unoccupied, units in predominately white-buildings. Blacks were essentially barred from the private

49 *A Study of Social Life and Change*, p. 5.
54 *Ibid*.
55 *Commission on Civil Rights*, pp. 697-701.
mortgage loan market by banks and brokers.\textsuperscript{56} The rental market was small and expensive but was the last resort for many citizens in Hough. Residents did not have the necessary funds to move out of Hough or secure loans to improve the deteriorating housing stock.\textsuperscript{57}

The low number and poor quality of homes in Hough furthered blight and encouraged exploitative practices. There were not enough houses in the neighborhood to match the influx of migrants. Only two new houses had been built in Hough since World War II. \textsuperscript{58} 82\% of the residential structures in Hough were over 50 years old.\textsuperscript{59} Existing non-residential buildings were made into homes, and single-family homes were made into multiple-family properties to house Hough’s ever-growing population. \textsuperscript{60} 21.2\% of the housing in Hough was considered overcrowded.\textsuperscript{61} In the 1960’s, there were about forty-five persons per acre in Hough compared to the range of ten to thirty-five persons per acre in other parts of the city.\textsuperscript{62} When the University-Euclid Plan displaced low-income African-Americans from other parts of the city, they often moved to Hough. From 1962 to 1965, the city displaced nearly 4,500 families without helping them find new accommodations.\textsuperscript{63} Absentee landlords in Hough neglected their properties, and exploited the blacks desperate for housing by overcharging them to live in dilapidated housing stock. \textsuperscript{64} 40\% of the housing in Hough was considered deteriorated or dilapidated by the government.\textsuperscript{65} 1,300 black families in Hough could only afford rents of $60 to $70 a month but were paying as much as $100 a month.\textsuperscript{66} Landlords knew they could exploit the blacks desperate for housing, because African-Americans had very few alternatives.

The racial and socio-economic composition of Hough was also reflected in the local school system. Housing policy reinforced the existing pattern of school segregation

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, p.651.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{A Study of Social Life and Change}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{60} Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p. 40.
\textsuperscript{62} ‘30,000 Live Behind Hough’s High Wall,’ \textit{The Plain Dealer} (September, 1965).
\textsuperscript{63} ‘Slum Fight Remains At A Standstill,’ \textit{Ibid} (26 July, 1966).
and furthered the cycle of poverty. All of the twenty-five new schools completed between 1952 and 1966 in Cleveland were de-facto segregated. Blacks received an inferior education in comparison to their white counterparts. The gap became evident between black and white Kindergarteners only after six months of school. The youth population in Hough had increased an average of 10% every year since 1950, and there were not enough elementary schools to match this baby boom. Dunham Elementary School, Hough’s primary school, tried to accommodate the population growth by building portable classrooms in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Eventually, students at Dunham had to attend school in half-day shifts due to overcrowding. These conditions adversely affected the education and job prospects of Hough’s youth. The youth unemployment rate in Hough was 77%. Inferior education confined black youths to the bottom of the socio-economic system. Instead of accepting their situation, the residents of Hough actively fought to improve the conditions in their neighborhood so that the future generations would not be committed to the same cycle of poverty.

**Black Political Activism in Cleveland:**

The rampant discrimination and segregation in Cleveland galvanized a crucible of nonviolent, black activism before the riots. With a focus on the national campaigns of the major Civil Rights groups like SNCC and SCLC, the declension narrative does not provide an accurate account of black political activism in the post-World War II period. The organizing activities of various local groups reveal the multi-faceted nature of the black struggle for equal rights. Black groups from the entire political spectrum were committed to engendering reform in Hough despite ideological differences. Before Hough became a black ghetto or the nonviolence espoused by King became popular,

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65 Ibid.
66 *Commission on Civil Rights*, p. 755.
68 Donald Freeman Interview (21 August, 2014).
blacks in Cleveland were fighting to improve their socio-economic stature. The Future Outlook League was founded in Cleveland in 1935 to help blacks in the Cedar-Central area find jobs. The organization was active in Hough in the 1960’s, but its strategies could not easily be labeled as either black nationalist or integrationist.  

A predecessor to the Black Panther Party, RAM was first convened in Cleveland in 1961. While this black militant organization wanted to overthrow the imperialist system imposed by the government, RAM worked with local Civil Rights groups to raise awareness about issues like police brutality. Cleveland had a vibrant CORE chapter. CORE organized many rent strikes in Hough. These rent strikes were an effort to get the municipal government to better enforce the housing code, which would bring an end to the exploitative practices of Hough’s absentee landlords. Cleveland was one of the nation’s first centers of open housing activism.

The fight over segregated education, persistent workplace discrimination and poverty was not only championed by local political organizations but also by the efforts of individual Hough citizens. Two mothers from Hough organized the school desegregation campaign of 1964. Daisy Craggett and Fanny Louis organized the campaign to demand an end to relay schooling, using protest techniques such as picketing and boycotts to raise awareness about the conditions in Hough’s public schools. In 1966, Cleveland was the first city in America where black contractors formed an association to combat workplace discrimination. The heads of the black contractors’ union were from Hough. Hough residents partook in an organized, nonviolent march from Cleveland to the state capitol in Columbus to secure more welfare relief from Governor James A. Rhodes. Hough residents formed a group called Citizens for Better Housing that wrote letters to the mayor voicing their frustration with the rate of urban renewal. Despite their best efforts, these activists failed to instigate any legislation or

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
reforms that would end job discrimination, improve the conditions in Hough’s public schools or increase welfare funding.

*The Locher Administration:*

Evidenced by the strained relationship between Mayor Locher and the Hough community, a riot is more likely to occur when citizens feel alienated from their local government. Locher became Mayor in late 1962, when racial tensions were already simmering in Cleveland. By 1963, the school desegregation crisis was escalating, and the conditions in Hough were well known throughout the city. Mr. Perry summarized how people in Hough felt about Mayor Locher: ‘He was an old-Romanian man from Slavic village. He didn’t know anything about black people or what was going on in Hough.’ During his testimony in front of the Civil Rights Commission, Mayor Locher said that the Southern migrants ‘had to be taught to become useful, contributing members of the community.’ He implied that Hough citizens were partially responsible for the conditions in the neighborhood because of their lackadaisical nature: ‘Our history shows, I believe, that where there has been a deep concern and commitment by citizens, there has been great success and improvement in total living.’ Locher’s sweeping generalizations demonstrated how little he understood the discrimination faced by the residents of Hough and their political activity.

Locher’s attitude toward the African-American community, coupled with instances of negligence by the Cleveland police, further exacerbated the tensions between Hough and City Hall. A group of Hough residents and Civil Rights leaders went to the Mayor’s office a few days before the riots. The group wanted to air their grievances about the police mishandling of the Superior-Sowinski skirmishes in June of 1966. A white man had shot a young, black boy, and the police failed to write down the bystander’s description of the shooter. The group also wanted to talk about Chief of Police Richard Wagner, who had a history of making racially charged comments. Locher

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81 Charles Perry Interview (14 August, 2014).
82 Commission on Civil Rights, pp. 11-15.
83 Ibid.
84 Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p. 47.
refused to meet with them and threatened to put the group in jail when they refused to leave his office. 85 While Locher wanted peace, he refused to engage with the necessary parties to prevent disorder in Hough.

Evidenced by the slow rate of reform, the Locher Administration was ineffective in combatting the conditions in Hough. One local politician described Locher’s leadership style as being nothing more than ‘a long list of studies, plans and broken promises.’ 86 The University-Euclid Plan intended to revitalize Hough and renew investment in the neighborhood. The project promised to build three major shopping centers, high-rise apartments, and new land for industrial expansion in 1962. 87 The city only deemed half of the neighborhood fit for renewal. The other half, from 55th to 79th and from Superior to Chester Avenues, was considered unfit for renewal because 40% of the housing stock in this section of Hough was either deteriorated or dilapidated. This was the poorest section of Hough, which would have benefited the most from renewal—30% of the families in this section earned less than $3000 a year. 88 By 1966, no new homes had been built in Hough because the University-Euclid Project lacked the adequate staff. 89 The sluggish pace of renewal discouraged property owners from investing in Hough. One real estate agent described the unfavorable conditions: ‘The area is just dead as far as real estate goes. No one is buying. No one is fixing up properties to encourage others. Everyone seems to be just sitting, watching their investments slide to nothing.’ 90 Because of the University-Euclid Plan’s nonfulfillment, Cleveland lost a federal grant to build more recreational facilities in July of 1966. 91 The Locher administration failed to uphold their promises to revitalize the neighborhood, and the residents of Hough were forced to live with the repercussions.

85 Ibid.
87 Souther, ‘Acropolis of the Middle-West,’ pp.30-58.
88 ’30,000 Live Behind Hough’s High Wall,’ The Plain Dealer (September, 1965).
89 Ibid.
90 ‘Lawyer Can’t Sell Property, Says Renewal Area is Dead,’ The Cleveland Press (1 April, 1965).
91 Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p. 46.
Source Analysis:

While providing excellent statistical analysis, each primary source reaches different conclusions about the conditions in Hough. The interpretations are reflective of each report’s individual purpose and staff. The 1957 Western Reserve Study was commissioned in conjunction with the Cleveland Foundation in an effort to provide more funding for welfare programs in Hough.92 Richard Wagner, who would later be the Chief of Police during the riots, was a member of the advisory board that stated that Hough’s new black migrants ‘brought with them from the South the racial attitudes which are characteristic in that part of the country.’93 While segregation may have been legalized in the South, racism existed in the North before the onslaught of the Great Migration. The United States Civil Rights Commission was first created in 1957 to address civil rights violations across the country.94 The 1966 Civil Rights Commissions’ hearings held in Cleveland were more cognizant of the role that discrimination played in shaping Hough: ‘A major cause of this ghettoization has been racial prejudice and misunderstanding.’95 Providing examples of blight and black activism in Hough, the Civil Rights Commission analyzed the Locher administration’s policy failures and the sluggish rate of urban renewal. The findings of 1966 Civil Rights Commission are supported by historians to elucidate the conditions in the ghetto, and the frustrated sentiments of its residents.

Conclusion:

Ironically, Mayor Locher was supposed to visit Hough on 19 July, the morning after the riots started. The visit had been scheduled following the Superior-Sowinski incident the previous month so that the out-of-touch Mayor could see for himself the conditions in the neighborhood.96 While Locher’s intentions were honest, his actions were too late. The seeds of racial discontent were sowed in Hough long before 1966.97 Blacks in Cleveland had been treated like second-class citizens since the beginning of the

93 *Ibid*, p.87.
94 *Commission on Civil Rights*, pp. 1-5.
96 ‘Locher to Tour Glenville Area to Check Jackson’s Complaint,’ *The Cleveland Press* (18 July, 1966).
twentieth century. Despite the findings of the declension narrative, the residents of Hough had tried prior to the riots to improve the neighborhood through democratic channels to no avail. Following the example set in Watts the previous summer, the residents of Hough retaliated when confronted by the police outside the Seventy-Niner’s Café. Cleveland was a racially-charged powder keg, and on 18 July, 1966 it exploded.
Chapter 2: Violence as a Form of Protest

‘This isn’t Black Power talking. It is black frustration.’

Even though the Hough riots only lasted for one week in July of 1966, they embodied years of frustration in the neighborhood. The initial reaction of the Locher administration to the Hough riots was not to reconstruct the damaged community but rather to find out who caused the riots. The Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots was the government’s way to evade blame for the conditions in the neighborhood. The report attributed the violence to ‘black power apostle(s).’ Praising the Grand Jury’s findings, Mayor Locher said the riots had absolutely no connection with the Civil Rights Movement. Not only does this notion simplify the complex ideology of both movements, the Grand Jury Report effectively denied the longstanding nature and significance of the grievances felt in Hough. The citizens of Hough and local Civil Rights organizations were so indignant over the Grand Jury Report that they decided to issue their own report on the riots: The Report of the Panel on the Superior and Hough Disturbances by the Urban League of Cleveland. Deemed the ‘citizens’ report’ by local newspapers, the Urban League hearings were open to the public and chaired by people cognizant of the deplorable conditions in the neighborhood. The Urban League Report was more representative of the sentiments of the Hough neighborhood than the Grand Jury Report. A proponent of the declension narrative, the Grand Jury Report concluded that the riots were an act of revolutionary violence promulgated by a small coalition of Black Power radicals. By disproving the findings of the Grand Jury Report, the Urban League Report demonstrated that the Hough riots were an articulate form of protest that drew attention to the conditions in the neighborhood.

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100 Ibid, p.21.
The Grand Jury Report:

The Special Grand Jury Report Relating to the Hough Riots was the government’s way to circumvent responsibility for its role in the deterioration of the neighborhood. Cleveland’s Grand Jury Report was similar to the conservative Commission on the 1965-Watts riots. Both reports purported the riff-raff theory, which argued that only a small, degenerate segment of the neighborhood incited and participated in the riots. The riff-raff theory was a way for the local government to escape culpability. If the government said the riots were a form of political expression, the government would have to blame themselves for not better responding to the plethora of previous calls for reform. The Locher administration was willing to go to extralegal means to escape liability. It was a direct violation of Ohio code to name perpetrators without sufficient evidence to indict. One of the clubs cited in the report was the Jomo Freedom Kenyatta (JFK) House, a youth club in Hough. While the JFK House tried to cultivate a sense of black pride in the local youth, the club did not advocate violence. The founders of the JFK House described the Grand Jury investigation of the Hough riots as ‘a witch hunt seeking scapegoats for the troubles in Hough.’

The procedure and findings of the Grand Jury Report demonstrated how little Cleveland’s white power structure knew about the Hough community. Before the hearings began on 25 July, the fifteen members of the all-white jury, all of whom resided outside of Hough, took a fifty-minute bus tour of the neighborhood. Upon the jury’s return to the Criminal Courts Building, Grand Jury Foreman Louis Seltzer stated that the jurors had seen enough on their bus tour to realize ‘the violence was organized and planned.’ The jurors believed that they only needed the testimony of one Hough teenager to substantiate Seltzer’s claims. This one teenager’s testimony trumpeted the

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107 Freeman Interview (21 August, 2014).
testimonies of two undercover agents, who had infiltrated the cited clubs and never heard any mention of riot planning. The jurors believed that the riot agitators were ‘black power apostle(s)’ because they were ‘avowed believers in violence and extremism.’ The JFK House, along with the Deacons for Defense, RAM and the Medgar Evers Rifle Club were cited in the report as the coordinators of the violence. The main witness said that he also saw members of the Community Youth Party and W.E.B. DuBois club from outside of Cleveland encouraging lawlessness in Hough a few days before the disorders. The local clubs and outside agitators had allegedly circulated 2,000 pieces of literature about police brutality on the eve of the riots. The Grand Jury found that these clubs had ‘a bitter hatred for all whites,’ and indoctrinated youths to their ‘philosophy of violence.’ These organizations purportedly supplied the rioters with arms, ammunition, and instructions on how to use Molotov cocktails.

Despite an active black freedom movement in Cleveland, the Grand Jury denied the longstanding nature and significance of the grievances felt in Hough. In the preface to the Grand Jury Report, Seltzer wrote that the riots taking place throughout the country were the result of the ‘steady erosion of ideals and principles of God and Country and their persistent replacement by the deification of material idols and material principals.’ This erosion was being accelerated by the notion that ‘the Negro Community was moving too fast for the total community to bear,’ implying that blacks in Hough should be content with their circumstances. The Locher administration was not ready to fulfill the basic rights of Cleveland’s black citizens. One Hough resident described the report as evidence that ‘the white adults in the big world outside the classroom have been busy proving that democracy is for whites. The leftover crumbs…are for Negroes.’

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112 Special Grand Jury Report, pp.3-5.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid, p. 15.
Reinforcing the irreproachability of the Locher administration, the Grand Jury Report continually stressed that the majority of the neighborhood were ‘law-abiding citizens’ who did not partake in the violence.\textsuperscript{119} Not every single resident of Hough condoned the riots. The contemporary perception was that only teenagers were rioting.\textsuperscript{120} Franklin Sanders, an unemployed father from Hough, condemned the youth violence for interrupting his daily routine: ‘Sure, I’d like a job. But you don’t solve nothing by burning everything down. These kids doing these thing don’t have to go to the store.’\textsuperscript{121}

The average age of the rioters, however, was twenty-five.\textsuperscript{122} Some of the people on the streets were simply taking advantage of the chaotic situation.\textsuperscript{123} While the violence did alienate some members of the community, no resident of Hough was immune to the conditions in the neighborhood or the accompanying frustrations. Community Relations Director Bertram E. Gardner said ‘actually, the living conditions were the things that caused the riots. They (the rioters) didn’t need any Communists to tell them that they were suffering.’\textsuperscript{124}

\textit{The Urban League Report:}

Hough citizens and Civil Rights groups came together to explain the role that the frustrations played in the riots in \textit{The Report of the Panel on the Superior and Hough Disturbances by the Urban League of Cleveland}. The Urban League Report was similar to the National Commission on the ‘long, hot summers,’ because both reports examined the actual sources of frustration in the ghetto instead of allocating blame. Local residents, Civil Rights and community leaders were so disappointed with the Grand Jury findings that they felt it was ‘their civic duty’ to hold their own hearings.\textsuperscript{125} The group included representatives from CORE, the Urban League, Hough Opportunity Council, the Council of Churches, the Negro Pastors Association, Wade Park Citizens Group and the National Association of Social Workers. Unlike the Grand Jury Hearings, organizations connected

\textsuperscript{119} Special Grand Jury, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{121} ‘Hate, Revenge, Sorrow and Shock Divide Hough Residents,’ \textit{The Plain Dealer} (20 July, 1966).
\textsuperscript{122} Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p.16.
\textsuperscript{123} ‘I Ran Scared With Hough Area Looters,’ \textit{The Call and Post} (23 July, 1966).
\textsuperscript{124} ‘Whitewash,’ \textit{The Plain Dealer} (11 August, 1966).
\textsuperscript{125} ‘Quashing’ \textit{The Cleveland Press} (5 October, 1966).
with the neighborhood chaired the citizens’ panel hearings. The report disputed the findings of the Grand Jury Report and spent the bulk of its pages detailing not only the conditions in the neighborhood, but also the thwarted political process as a cause of the riots.

Protesting the squalor of the slums, the Hough riots attempted to highlight the racial subordination and segregation that had made the neighborhood a ghetto. The rioters targeted the sources of black frustration in Hough: ‘The pattern of destruction on Hough Avenue seems to be a tangible expression of these feelings of exploitation.’ These targets included shops with a history of poor treatment of blacks, buildings associated with urban renewal and police officers. Some historians refer to the ‘long, hot summers’ as commodity riots. In other words, the rioters were re-appropriating the goods denied to them by the price-gauging white shop owners. The shops attacked in Hough, like the Cut Rate Drug Store, were known for mistreating their black patrons either by not accepting food stamps or overcharging for sub-quality produce. The Urban League hearings confirmed ‘the well-known adage that “the poor pay more.”’ One citizen explained why he was partaking in the chaos: ‘It is the cheating by white merchants. People getting gypped all the time. High prices for relief people. The lousy credit buying.’ The riots expressed the dissatisfaction with the economic inequality in Hough.

Additionally, Hough’s frustration over the sluggish rate of the University-Euclid Renewal Project was displayed during the riots. Two of the buildings burned down were projects associated with urban renewal. One was an apartment building that was soon to be renovated to provide low-income housing for Hough families. The other

126 Ibid.
building was a recreational center that had been recently renovated.\textsuperscript{135} All of Cleveland’s news media questioned why the rioters would want to cause further damage to the already deteriorating neighborhood. There were three main Cleveland newspapers in the 1960’s: \textit{The Plain Dealer}, \textit{The Cleveland Press} and the black newspaper \textit{The Call and Post}. Advocates of the declension narrative, these news outlets played an active role in pandering to readers in order to sell their publication.\textsuperscript{136} Even though all of the Cleveland newspapers indicated that urban renewal was a source of frustration in the neighborhood, the riots were portrayed as senseless.\textsuperscript{137} While the riots did cause further damage to the neighborhood, urban renewal was described in the Urban League Report as also ‘contributing to the decline of the areas and of creating new slums where none previously existed.’\textsuperscript{138} The riots were simply drawing attention to the failure of the University-Euclid Renewal Plan: ‘It is not entirely coincidental that much of the destruction during the riots centered on dilapidated buildings that the city had failed to demolish.’\textsuperscript{139} The University-Euclid Renewal Plan had failed to improve the conditions in Hough. So the rioters chose to hasten the neighborhood’s decline on their own by attacking the police officers who tried to thwart the destruction. (See Appendix B).

The recurring instances of police misconduct and brutality were another cause of the Hough riots.\textsuperscript{140} Residents of Hough saw themselves as victims of inadequate police protection.\textsuperscript{141} The police symbolized the city government in Hough.\textsuperscript{142} The scarcity of black police officers played a crucial role in shaping white officers attitudes and in delegitimizing law enforcement in the eyes of blacks.\textsuperscript{143} In the Cleveland Police force, there were only 183 black officers out of a total of 2754 officers.\textsuperscript{144} Police took longer to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{135} ‘Irony of Riot: Fire Hurt Poor Most of All,’ \textit{The Plain Dealer} (21 July, 1966).
  \item \textsuperscript{137} ‘Terror Must Stop!’ \textit{The Cleveland Press} (20 July, 1966).
  \item \textsuperscript{138} \textit{Report by Urban League}, pp. 7-10.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Sitkoff, \textit{The Struggle}, pp. 188-189.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} \textit{A Study of Social Life and Change}, p. 77.
  \item \textsuperscript{143} Sugrue, \textit{Sweet Land of Liberty}, p. 329.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{Commission on Civil Rights}, p. 825.
\end{itemize}
respond to calls in Hough than in other parts of Cleveland even though the neighborhood had the highest crime rate in the entire city.\textsuperscript{145} Because of the segregated nature of the city, the only interaction that the majority of Cleveland’s police officers had with blacks was in relation to the illegal economy.\textsuperscript{146} Evidenced by their conduct during the riots, the police assumed that all blacks had criminal proclivities.

The Cleveland Police’s racist assumptions about the citizens of Hough were demonstrated during the riots. Effectively denying the role the police played in the riots, the Grand Jury Report commended the actions of the Cleveland Police Department and National Guard in the riot.\textsuperscript{147} Many officers were overly aggressive even with Hough citizens who were not partaking in the violence:

‘The tenants wanted to know why policeman kicked in doors, broke up furniture and chased defenseless women and children in the safe confines of their home, into the street to face bricks, bottles, bullets and down-pouring range...All tenants said police used epithets in speaking to them.’\textsuperscript{148}

The Urban League Report asked for the Grand Jury to investigate the shooting of the Townes Family, and the deaths of Joyce Arnett and Percy Giles.\textsuperscript{149} The Townes Family was trying to leave their home in Hough after a fire started in an adjacent building. Previous reports said that Mr. Townes was trying to run over police officers, which prompted the police to fire into the family’s car. The car lurched forward, because the police were pulling and striking Mr. Townes, causing him to lose control of the vehicle. As a result of the shooting, members of the Townes family received permanent injuries that handicapped them for life.\textsuperscript{150} Unidentified snipers reportedly shot Percy Giles and Joyce Arnett, but the Urban League Report believed that it could have been police officers that killed these two Hough residents.\textsuperscript{151} The news media, the Grand Jury Report and subsequently the declension narrative failed to reveal the numerous acts of injustice experienced by the residents of Hough.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, pp. 826-827.
\textsuperscript{146} Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty, p. 346.
\textsuperscript{147} Special Grand Jury, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{148} ‘Tenants Charge Unnecessary Vandalism, Roughness,’ The Call and Post (23 July, 1966).
\textsuperscript{149} Report by Urban League, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
Conclusion:

One Hough resident described the ultimate aim of the riots: ‘In the end, the white man will recognize Negroes and give us consideration.’ However articulate, the riots failed to change the sentiments of the Locher administration. The Grand Jury Report and the declension narrative did not view what happened in Hough as a form of protest, or to have any relation with the aims of the Civil Rights Movement. Instead of admitting its responsibility for the conditions in Hough, the Locher administration believed that the racial turbulence was caused by Black Power radicals who wanted to usurp the neighborhood. The Urban League Report demonstrated that the rioters hoped to draw attention to the deteriorating conditions in Hough. Discriminatory shops, buildings associated with urban renewal and police officers were targeted, because they symbolized the role that racial subordination and segregation had played in the deterioration of Hough. While instructive, the Urban League Report had no ability to enact reform, and could only urge the Locher administration to take constructive action in Hough. The Cleveland Press’ Editorial Board was fearful that City Hall’s disregard of the conditions in the Hough would spark another riot: ‘Because once the community assigns the Hough looting, shooting, burning and general hell raising to a travelling band from Havana or Peking, the door will be open for another riot.’

Cleveland’s black community had other designs to improve the neighborhood.

Chapter 3: Cleveland’s First Black Mayor

While the riots may have stopped on 23 July, 1966, the citizens of Hough did not give up their efforts to improve the neighborhood. The conditions in Hough remained dire after the riots. Hough, as one journalist described, was literally ‘going out of business.’\textsuperscript{153} Despite the recommendations of the Urban League Report, the Locher administration made no substantive policy changes.\textsuperscript{154} Locher’s ineptitude demonstrated to Cleveland’s black community that the only way to improve Hough was if they elected a mayor who was sympathetic to the plight of the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{155} State Representative Carl Stokes was viewed as the ideal candidate to represent Hough’s interests in City Hall, because he was an African-American man born in the Cleveland housing projects. Spurred by the riots, Cleveland’s black community secured Stokes’ 1967 victory in an unprecedented voter turnout.\textsuperscript{156} Stokes’ opponents tried to use Stokes’ race to deter white voters. Regardless, the white community viewed Stokes’ race as an asset; he was the only candidate who could prevent any further racial unrest.\textsuperscript{157} The predicament of the Hough neighborhood played a critical role in the 1967 mayoral election. Cleveland realized that the only way to achieve lasting peace in Hough was to elect Carl Stokes as the first black mayor of a major American city. The post-riot period proved that the Civil Rights Movement did not end with the riots nor was the movement completely separate from Black Power ideology: the black community in Cleveland used self-determination to improve the conditions in Hough after the riots had failed to prompt Mayor Locher to enact reform.

\textsuperscript{154} Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p.64.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid}, p.53-57.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid}.  

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Mayor Locher’s Political Demise:

The post-riot period demonstrated Mayor Locher’s political incompetence as his administration continued to neglect the Hough neighborhood. The Locher administration made no effort to help or even clean up the neighborhood. Five months after the riots, residents of Hough said that the conditions were as bad as they were before the riots. The empty shells of the burned buildings were a daily reminder of the lack of progress.\(^{158}\) Unemployment rates in Hough continued to be the highest in the city, and welfare payments in Hough remained below the poverty line. The Police Department made no effort to hire more black police officers in 1967.\(^{159}\) Reverend Friar Albert Koklowski summarized the general feeling in Hough toward the Locher administration: ‘We are moving too slowly. We’re crawling when we should be running. City Hall’s apathy is the main problem.’\(^{160}\) This sentiment was even echoed by the Mayor’s Inner-City Action Committee. Locher created the task force of civic and community leaders to help improve the sluggish urban renewal program. The task force polled local residents of the community and presented its report in January of 1967. The Chairman of the Committee, Ralph M. Beese, said that ‘conditions in Hough are awful…the core of the problem is at City Hall.’\(^{161}\) Locher responded to the committee’s report by promising to build more recreational facilities in Hough, another project that would never come to fruition. In the summer of 1967, the Department of Housing and Urban Development froze the City’s urban renewal funds and withdrew an additional $10 million committed to downtown commercial development, because the city had failed to complete a single urban renewal project.\(^{162}\) Many observers predicted that there would be another riot during the summer of 1967 because of Locher’s insensitivity to the needs of Hough.\(^{163}\) Since riots and previous calls for reform had failed to spur the Locher administration, Cleveland’s black community resorted to an alternative method to improve the conditions in Hough. Locher lost the 1967 mayoral election, because he was unresponsive to the needs of the ghetto.

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\(^{159}\) Lackwritz, ‘Hough Riots,’ p.64.

\(^{160}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{162}\) Moore, *Carl B. Stokes*, p.54.

\(^{163}\) *Ibid.*
The Election of Carl Stokes:

The post-riot period showed that Hough would only improve if black interests became a priority in City Hall. The aftermath of the riots served to heighten group consciousness, cohesion and a growing sense of group power amongst Cleveland blacks. Mr. Perry said that ‘the riots unified the black community…what happened in Hough permeated throughout our community.’ The 1967 Carl Stokes campaign was cognizant of this attitude change amongst Cleveland’s black community and sold Stokes’ ‘blackness’ in numerous voter registration drives in Hough. One campaign worker said: ‘We tried to convince people that this was their opportunity to vote for a brother and make him mayor of the city.’ State Representative Carl Stokes was born in Cleveland and grew up in the Outhwaite Homes, Cleveland’s first federally funded housing project. His reliability was precisely his appeal to blacks voters like George Smith, a resident of Cleveland during the 1960’s: ‘He was one of us. He was from the projects.’ It was not simply his race that made Stokes appeal to the African-American community. During the Civil Rights Commission, Stokes was propelled into the national spotlight as one of the main voices combatting urban poverty. Stokes also publicly condemned the Grand Jury Report and Mayor Locher for ‘sweeping the city’s mistakes under the rug.’ Throughout his campaign, Stokes promised to revitalize Hough by increasing funding for housing, education, health and welfare. Additionally, Stokes promised to integrate the police department and to improve the city’s urban renewal program. Stokes won the black vote, because he was affective at articulating the needs of the Hough community that had been continually ignored by Mayor Locher.

164 Perry Interview (14 August, 2014).
165 William E. Nelson and Philip J. Meranto, Electing Black Mayors: Political Action in the Black Community (Columbus, 1986), p.120.
167 Interview (14 August, 2014).
168 George Smith Interview (17 August, 2014).
169 Moore, Carl B. Stokes, pp.45-55.
170 Whitewash,’ The Plain Dealer (11 August, 1966).
171 Moore, Carl B. Stokes, p.54.
172 Ibid, pp.54-74.
173 Ibid.
Carl Stokes was able to become the first African-American mayor of a major American city because the Hough riots solidified the black community’s opposition to politics as usual. This change is demonstrated by comparing Stokes’ election results in 1965 to his victory in 1967. Carl Stokes lost to Mayor Locher by less than 1% in 1965, a loss that was attributed to low turnout in the black wards. The election of Carl Stokes in 1967 was the highest voter turnout in Cleveland’s black wards. 95% of the predominately black wards voted for Stokes in both the Democratic primary and general election. Even the more radical black political groups in Cleveland agreed to tone down their rhetoric during the Stokes’ campaign, because the activists believed a Stokes’ administration would make a concerted effort to improve the conditions in the neighborhood.

Stokes convinced whites in Cleveland that he was the only candidate who could keep the lid on racial unrest. In order to win the election, Stokes had to win over both black and white voters. Mr. Smith believed Carl Stokes was able to win the election because ‘he was able to crossover. He was like Michael Jackson, he appealed to everybody.’ Carl Stokes had two opponents during the 1967 election: Mayor Locher in the Democratic primary and Republican, Seth Taft in the general election. Both Locher and Taft tried to use Stokes’ race to fuel fear amongst white voters. The Locher campaign printed out flyers to demonstrate the major role that the radical Martin Luther King Jr. would play in the Stokes’ administration. ‘Dictatorship in Cleveland: Previews of Stokes and MLK as Mayor. Do you want MLK and his disciples running your city?’ Supporters of Taft circulated an anonymous pamphlet the day before the election that negatively equated Stokes with Black Power and the end of racial segregation: ‘Stokes is Black Power. Vote White- Vote Right. You can rest assured that if Stokes is elected Mayor of Cleveland you will get negroes for neighbors and your children will have

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174 Ibid.
176 Moore, Carl B. Stokes, p.55.
177 Ibid.
178 Smith Interview (17 August, 2014).
179 Moore, Carl B. Stokes, p.57.
180 Nelson and Meranto, Electing Black Mayors, p.159.
niggers for playmates.' The Locher and Taft campaigns only further augmented the black community’s support of Stokes, who wanted to end the racism in City Hall. One Hough supporter said: ‘I don’t want to see Cleveland face that again…Stokes knows the black man’s problems.’ It was precisely Stokes’ connection with the black community that helped him garner the 20% of the white vote necessary to win the election. Stokes used his race as a form of riot insurance. Mr. Perry argued that ‘the white community felt that if we (African-Americans) got a good chief, we would follow.’ Regardless of race, Stokes’ supporters hoped that his 1967 victory would increase the effectiveness of Cleveland’s municipal government.

Conclusion:

The election of Carl Stokes in 1967 disproves the declension narrative by embodying both the multi-faceted nature of Black Power and the continuation of the Civil Rights Movement after the Hough riots. Although articulate, the riots had failed to engender the necessary improvements in Hough. The problem did not stem from a lack of awareness about the conditions in the neighborhood rather from City Hall’s apathy. The mayor made no effort to stop the further deterioration of Hough. This proved to Cleveland’s black community that no form of protest could change Locher’s racist sentiments, and many speculated that there would be more riots in Hough. Blacks in Cleveland had not given up on their goal to spur reform in Hough; they simply decided to try a new tactic. The African-American community drew on the Black Power notion of self-determination to oust Locher in favor of Carl Stokes, who became the first black mayor of a major American city in 1967. Even though his opponents tried to use his race against him, Stokes won the election because of his relationship with Cleveland’s black community. To prevent any further racial unrest, Stokes promised to make black issues a priority in City Hall. The 1967 election was uplifting for the Hough community. Stokes’ ascension to City Hall meant the end of a decade’s worth of frustration in Hough: ‘In the

181 Ibid.
182 ‘Hough looks up with Hope to Stokes,’ The Cleveland Press (10 November, 1967).
183 Miller and Wheeler, ‘Cleveland’ in Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader, p. 44.
184 Perry Interview (14 August, 2014).
heart of the Negro Ghetto, Carl Stokes is more than just the new mayor. He is hope…inspiration…and maybe a swift kick in the pants.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{185} ‘Hope,’ \textit{The Cleveland Press} (10 November, 1967).
Conclusion:

Malcolm X and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are often depicted in the declension narrative as the face of two contrasting ideologies: Black Power and Civil Rights respectively.\(^{186}\) It is crucial to analyze two, separate speeches these leaders made in Cleveland pertaining to the Hough riots in order to illustrate the inaccuracies of the narrative’s timeline and interpretations of the ‘long, hot summers.’ Malcolm made his famous ‘The Ballot or the Bullet’ speech at the Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland in 1964, in which he predicted that the riots would be the result of a thwarted political process.\(^{187}\) Malcolm X espoused an ideology of Black Power even before the Watts riots in 1965. Yet in this particular speech, Malcolm talked about many of the same themes that the declension narrative associates with the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement such as voting rights. While Malcolm urged blacks in Cleveland to exercise their right to vote, he cautioned what would happen if the government continued to deny black’s full equality:

‘So today, our people are disillusioned. They’ve become disenchanted. They’ve become dissatisfied. And in their frustrations they want action. And in 1964 you’ll see this young black man, this new generation, asking for the ballot or the bullet.’\(^{188}\)

Malcolm X failed to foresee that Hough would ultimately choose the ballot, after the bullet failed to usher in any substantive improvements to the neighborhood.

As evidenced by his 1967 speech for the Stokes’ campaign, King continued to champion Civil Rights after the riots, with nuances in his viewpoints.\(^{189}\) King was advocating for self-determination, a principal commonly associated with the teachings of Malcolm X. While condemning the riots, King urged African-Americans to exercise their voting power and to improve their lot by electing a black mayor:

‘Our power does not lie in Molotov cocktails… Our power lies in our ability to unite around concrete programs. Our power lies in our ability to say nonviolently that we aren’t going to take it any longer…one of the things that we need in every city is political

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\(^{188}\) *Ibid*
\(^{189}\) King’s Speech,’ *Cleveland Magazine* (April, 2012).
power.190

After the failure of the riots, Cleveland’s black community followed King’s advice and elected Carl Stokes, because he promised to improve the conditions in Hough. Lacking proper source analysis, the declension narrative fails to account for the complexity of activism in Cleveland’s ghetto. The people of Hough went from ballot to bullet but ultimately decided to return to the ballot in an effort to improve the conditions in their neighborhood.

This dissertation endeavored to analyze the causes behind and subsequent aftermath of the Hough riots to disprove the declension narrative’s placement and portrayal of the ‘long, hot summer’ riots. The narrative posits that the riots were the beginning of black activism in the North. The first chapter illustrated that Cleveland was a crucible of black activism before the riots to combat the horrible conditions in the ghetto. Civil Rights and Black Power groups worked together in an attempt to enforce housing codes, improve local schools, increase welfare funding and end police brutality. Despite the activist’s effort to ameliorate Hough, their concerns were not enacted upon by City Hall. Mayor Ralph Locher did not understand the plight of Hough citizens, and his administration failed to uphold the promises made to the neighborhood regarding urban renewal. The Hough riots were the result of a thwarted political process; residents of Hough chose to protest by rioting because they had no other viable strategy for change.

The second chapter aimed to refute the declension narrative’s notion that the riots were an example of revolutionary violence by comparing the Grand Jury and Urban League Reports on the Hough riots. The Urban League Report was more representative of the sentiments of the Hough community than the findings of the Grand Jury Report. The Urban League Report illustrated that the riots were an articulate form of expression to garner the public’s attention about the deterioration of the neighborhood. The Locher administration’s response to the week of violence demonstrated that City Hall failed to grasp the meaning of the riots. The Grand Jury Report blamed the riots on Black Power agitators, so the municipal government could circumvent responsibility for their role in the deterioration of the neighborhood. The Locher administration effectively denied the

190 Ibid.
longstanding nature and significance of the grievances felt in Hough. While some believed this denial would spark another riot in the neighborhood, the residents of Hough resorted to a new tactic to improve the conditions in their community.

The third chapter analyzed the post-riot period to prove that the Civil Rights Movement did not end with the riots, nor was the Civil Rights Movement completely separate from Black Power ideology as purported by the declension narrative. Although the Hough riots failed to achieve their ultimate goal of reform, they encouraged a sense of group consciousness and unity amongst blacks in Cleveland. African-American’s realized that the only way to ensure the improvement of Hough was through self-determination, which could be achieved by electing Carl Stokes. Stokes won the 1967 election because he promised to represent black interests in City Hall, and to prevent further racial unrest. Ultimately, this dissertation aimed to prove that the Hough riots were at the intersection of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and drew upon both tactics to improve the conditions in the neighborhood.

Epilogue: What happened to Hough after Carl Stokes was elected?

The election of Carl Stokes in 1967 was meant to represent the ultimate fulfillment of the aims of the Hough riots. Stokes failed to prevent another riot. He and the following six mayors of Cleveland, two of who are also African-American, failed to improve the conditions in Hough. The period from 1967 until the present demonstrate that the Hough riots failed to ever incite lasting reform in Hough. In 1968, black nationalists in the adjacent neighborhood of Glenville had a shoot-out with the police, which resulted in the death of seven citizens. The Stokes’ administration became mired in scandal when it was discovered that Ahmed Evans, leader of the black nationalists in Glenville, had received money from Stokes' Cleveland Now Foundation to start his radical organization. Evans and his associates were essentially a band of hoodlums who used black nationalism to cement their position as the reigning gang of the neighborhood.

The election of Carl Stokes did not stop the exodus out of Hough. 1967 was the first year in the twentieth-century when the population in Hough began to decline, and

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191 Miller and Wheeler, ‘Cleveland’ in Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader, p. 44.
the process never stopped. The population in Hough went from 71,575 in 1960 to 14,618 in 1980. Mr. Smith sardonically surmised the demographic change that took place in Hough: 'When the whites move out...the blacks move in. When the blacks move out, the wrecking ball moves in.' Nick Savmor, owner of the Pick N Pay Supermarket, was able to survive the riots despite his unpopularity with local black residents. He was unable to survive the cancellation of his insurance plan. White owned insurance companies were hesitant to write insurance plans for businesses in Hough following the riots. Mr. Perry and his insurance company were one of the few to profit from the exodus out of Hough. As white businesses moved out, black businesses began to take their place and the Pinkney-Perry Company wrote their insurance policies. This golden era of a black-run neighborhood was short lived as it became easier for African-Americans to move into Cleveland’s suburbs. By the 1980s, there was not even a laundromat in Hough. A local resident described how life in Hough in the 1980s was worse off than before the riots: ‘The biggest difference from 1966 until now is that there is nothing here no more, no businesses.’

Despite the local activists’ valiant efforts to improve the conditions in Hough, the problems they faced in 1966 are still prevalent today. Hough is currently a peculiar mélange of boarded up houses, vacant lots and large prefabricated homes. These homes were built as a part of a tax incentive to encourage people to leave the suburbs and move back into the city. The gentrified portion of the neighborhood is located on the side of Hough adjacent to the world famous Cleveland Clinic Hospital, the same portion of the neighborhood designated for renewal by the University-Euclid Plan in the 1960’s. These suburban-esque homes serve as a façade to mask the rest of Hough’s poverty and desolation. The only evidence that a riot occurred in the neighborhood is a small memorial at the corner of 79th and Hough Avenue. An obelisk and plaque stand opposite to the lot where the Seventy-Niner’s Café used to be. Formerly the center of the neighborhood, the place where the 1966 riots started is presently an overgrown, vacant lot.

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192 ‘Isolated Hough largely ignored,’ The Plain Dealer (14 September, 1980).
193 Smith Interview (17 August, 2014).
195 Perry Interview (14 August, 2014).
196 ‘Isolated,’ The Plain Dealer (14 September, 1980).
lot. At the corner of 79th and Hough, in a strange twist of fate, the riots are staring their unintended, yet ultimate effect in the face.
Appendix A:

Fig. 1: Map of Cleveland, Marc Lackwritz, ‘The Hough Riots of 1966,’ (Senior Thesis, Princeton University, 1968).

Fig. 2: Photo of crowd during the 1966 Hough riots, Courtesy of Cleveland Public Library’s Digital Gallery.
Appendix B:

Fig. 3: Photo of Cut Rate Drug Store during the 1966 Hough riots, Courtesy of Cleveland Public Library’s Digital Gallery.

Fig. 4: Photo of apartment building during the 1966 Hough Riots, Courtesy of Cleveland Public Library’s Digital Gallery.
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