

GHETTO UPRISINGS RESULT OF REVOLT AGAINST "SYSTEM"

(In the following article by Fred Powledge of the New York Times, recent outbursts of violence in several of our northern cities are viewed as natural reactions to long-smouldering resentments and frustrations experienced by young Negroes in the ghettos of those tortured cities. The VOICE suggests that civic leaders in this community study the article in the perspective presented by a recent editorial in the Las Vegas Review-Journal reprinted on this page.)

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SIX MONTHS AGO, when the Northern Negro movement was almost exclusively concerned with the problem of de facto school segregation, a civil rights leader was asked why his attention was so concentrated on New York "Because as New York goes in civil rights," he replied, "so goes the rest of the North." His theory is now being proved, but not in the way he hoped. Rioting broke out in Harlem on July 18, in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section two days later, in Rochester on July 24, and in Jersey City on August 2.

The riots were similar in many ways, different in others. They all followed instances of police action against Negroes. In each case, the riot turned into nasty, guerrilla warfare between

Las Vegas Has Makings For Harlem-Style Trouble

The Negro riots in Harlem are not so far away that Las Vegas can afford to ignore either their implications or the lessons they offer.

On the surface they were caused by the shooting of a 15-year-old Negro boy by a white policeman.

This incident itself is strikingly similar to the shooting of a Negro youth by a sheriff's deputy here several months ago.

But the shooting alone does not explain the riots. The cause goes far deeper, and underlying them is the fact that New York's Negroes are confined to a ghetto of misery.

They are confined there because, admit it or not, most whites have a fear of being engulfed by a tide of different, dark-skinned people who will turn their neighborhoods into a slum, whether they mean to or not.

The fear may have some basis, but it is founded mostly in ignorance, misconception and the apparent need of too many persons to have someone they can look down upon.

We have, on the West Side of Las Vegas, the makings of the same kind of ghetto atmosphere that exists in New York. To be sure it is not as serious, not as near explosion. But the seeds are there, nevertheless.

Las Vegas has a growing Negro population that is now estimated conservatively at 15,000. It will continue to expand as the resort hotel industry expands because it attracts Negroes to work in traditional service fields.

There are some fine homes on the West Side, and in general it probably is an area far superior to that where Negroes live anywhere else in the nation. But there also are dwellings which easily match conditions in the South.

The point, however, is not whether the housing is good or bad, but that Negroes generally are confined to one specific area. There are exceptions, to be sure, but not many.

Realistically speaking, there seems little chance for significant change in the Las Vegas situation. Negroes are confined to the West Side either through economic conditions or the unwillingness of most of them to risk the rejection and otherwise face the struggle involved in attempting to move into white neighborhoods.

But this does not alter the fact that their confinement may be the very basis for eventual conflict here, just as we are now witnessing it in Harlem.

We could pave the way for better racial progress in Las Vegas if some steps were taken now toward residential integration of Negroes. It is bound to come, sooner or later, and closing our eyes to it, saying it will not and should not happen, is only inviting it to take place under the most painful circumstances.

Certainly the alternative is not a happy one—for either Negroes or whites.

LAS VEGAS Voice

SECOND SECTION

predominantly white policemen and gangs of marauding young Negroes.

Except for Harlem, where the trouble lasted several days, the riots started late at night, began again on the following night, and started to taper off on the third night.

SIMILARITIES STUDIED

Politicians, civil rights experts and sociologists have been studying these similarities since the Harlem riot started in an effort to draw some conclusions that might be helpful in discouraging future outbreaks.

One of their theories is that the teen-aged guerrillas have found in a stone, a brickbat, or a wine bottle full of gasoline a potent weapon of protest against the System, and that they are delighted with it.

These young people, to whom a voter registration campaign, a picket line, or an economic boycott mean very little, have found that they can stun an entire community by engaging in rioting. They can mobilize entire police forces and National Guard companies, keep mayors at their desks through the nights, and bring representatives of the news media from all over the country.

"And," said a young man in Jersey City last week, "they have nothing to lose when they do this. You say they stand a chance of losing their lives or their freedom. They say they don't have much in the way of freedom or lives anyway, so what the hell?"

"NOTHING BELONGS TO YOU"

Another theory concerns life in the ghetto itself. Except in Harlem, the ghettos where the rioting occurred are, invariable, sterile wastelands of small groceries, dry-cleaning and laundering establishments, cheap and dirty bars, a bordello or two and small clothing shops.

There are few of the attractions of the senses that the white sections have.

"You go out and look and you see nothing that belongs to you or your people," said Hannah Storrs, an official of the Congress of Racial Equality in Rochester, in the aftermath of that city's rioting.

Even in Harlem, with its flashy theaters and well-known watering spots, there is a feeling that these attractions are just deceptive, that the real theme is utter despair brought on by crowded living conditions, inadequate schools,

and a firm belief that the rest of the city wishes Harlem did not exist.

In the other cities, Negroes who seek the attractions of the senses are expected to go downtown (or uptown, as the saying goes in Jersey City), and share the city's resources with the whites.

But Negroes are not welcome in these places. They are expected to stay in "their neighborhood," a neighborhood that offers little more than mere subsistence.

The Northern ghettos are even more sterile than the Negro neighborhoods of the South. Most coastal towns there and many inland cities, have far more housing integration than the North.

ADVANTAGES IN SOUTH

And Negroes in the South, accustomed to de jure segregation, have combined their resources and established some intellectual, social, and entertainment centers that have no counterparts in the Harlems of the North.

There are probably more Negro-owned businesses on one street in Atlanta's Negro section than on all of 125th Street in New York.

A complicating factor in the Northern restlessness is the role of the civil rights leaders. Many of them are indulging in self-condemnation right now because they say, they failed to recognize the danger signals sent up by young people "in the street."

Others seem resentful because they are now expected by the white power structures to assume responsibility for what has happened.

They feel that the whites should share some of that responsibility, and they add that the violence should be interpreted as a class problem, not just a race problem. Raymond Brown, a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People official in Jersey City, said this week:

"All the middle-class groups of this city—Negroes in particular—have failed completely to communicate with these people."

Brown, and his colleagues in the other cities that have tasted riots in the last few weeks, seem certain that until the message from the streets reaches the traditional civil rights leaders and the officials in City Hall, there is a fair chance that rioting will become commonplace.

STEVENS

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