

Detroit's Decline after 1929

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce prozkoumává stěžejní události, které formovaly průmyslovou, politickou a sociální oblast v Detroitu od roku 1929, aby tak zjistila, co způsobilo úpadek tohoto města. Tyto oblasti veřejného zájmu byly úzce propojené v průběhu celého 20. století. Jakmile se Detroit změnil ve město s pouze jedním hlavním průmyslem, stal se tak na tomto průmyslu a jeho zástupcích závislým. A následný úspěch či neúspěch v hospodaření tohoto průmyslu měl velký dopad na obyvatele Detroitu a celkové sociální pozadí. Politická správa po většinu času selhávala udržovat krok s měnící se situací v těchto oblastech, a tudíž nebyla schopna pomoci. Události, které formovaly Detroit, jsou popsány chronologicky a ve vzájemné návaznosti. Za použití zmíněného postupu si tato bakalářská práce dává za cíl odhalit společnou hybnou sílu za těmito událostmi. Během tohoto procesu jsou popsány problémy, jež se vyskytovaly v průmyslové, politické i sociální oblasti.

Klíčová slova: Detroit, pracovní odbory, automobilový průmysl, Ford, General Motors, občanské výtržnosti, rasová nerovnost, bydlení, politická situace v Detroitu.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the fundamental events that shaped Detroit's industrial, political and social sphere since 1929 in order to discover what caused the city's decline. These spheres of general interest were closely related throughout the whole 20th century. As Detroit turned into a single-industry city, it became heavily dependent on its automobile manufacturers. The subsequent economic activities of the city leading car producers have been affecting the city's social situation tremendously. The political representatives were mostly failing to follow the changing situations in those areas in time and to provide any help. The events that shaped Detroit are looked upon chronologically and in correlation with each other. With this approach the thesis aims to ascertain the common agent behind these events. In the process of doing so, problems of industrial, political and social sphere are presented.

Keywords: Detroit, labor unions, automobile industry, Ford, General Motors, civilian riots, racial inequality, housing, Detroit politics.

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INTRODUCTION

When Detroit filed for bankruptcy on 18th July, 2013, many people in the United States bowed their heads in melancholy, remembering the city's greatest years. Explanations as to what stood behind its decline emerged both from researchers and local citizens. Whereas economists conducted complex financial analyses, the residents simply pointed towards racial conflicts. Topic of race has been subsequently adopted by worldwide media whose readers are often exposed to articles blaming race and not providing any further details about the city's decline.

It is true that racial conflicts were omnipresent in Detroit for the larger part of the 20th century. However, to believe that only race itself, caused the city's fall might be narrow-minded. Rather it would be interesting to examine how Detroit was slowly changing with its most influential events. In order to find out what caused Detroit's decline after 1929, this thesis looks upon its history chronologically and particularly with respect to economic, political and social matters.

Moreover, this thesis would also like to discover how a prosperous city such as Detroit, which was at the beginning of the 20th in the United States spoken about only in superlatives, started to decline over the course of the century, while other cities in the U. S. tended to grow and expand.

1 PRE-1929 PERIOD

At the beginning of the 20th century a mix of various industries could be found in Detroit: stove making, shipbuilding, cigars, clothing and many others. It was a city of numerous possibilities for anyone who sought to become a part of Detroit's prosperous age in the United States. However, at the turn of the 1920s, automobile industry dominated the city and it was now Big Three's responsibility to ensure a positive future for Detroit. The term Big Three stands for the three automobile giants in Detroit: Ford Motor Company, Chrysler and General Motors.

In 1920 these companies were manufacturing half of the total number of cars produced in the USA at that time. Despite this impressive output, Detroit had to lay off eighty thousand jobs in response to the economic depression of 1920-1921 as the economy sharply contracted. Detroit's inability to adapt to the overall circumstances became first evident during this period. The city enabled only one type of industry to prevail and with that it lost almost all of its differentiations, which usually ensures there are other sources of prosperity in case one type of industry struggles. As there was only one type of industrial employer – the automobile giants – the possibilities for further city development narrowed down.

At the beginning of the 1920s Detroit was on the top of the world, so to speak. The United States of America widely demanded one item that Detroit had abundance of: automobiles. The city was getting rich and it growing financially and socially during this decade. These were the times when Detroit was considered the greatest manufacturing city in the world, the industrial heart of America, the flesh and blood of the capitalistic Western society, simply the city of tomorrow and an ideal representation of the American dream come true. Nothing could jeopardize the city's promising future or so it seemed.

As to the city's population, the statistics from 1920 suggest that only one of four Detroit's citizens was born in the Michigan area. Detroit could be in fact seen as a city of migrants, and it was only thanks to the constant influx of African Americans from the South that the city had enough labor force and was able to grow.

This industrial dream began to crumble for the first time in 1929 when the Great Depression¹ hit the whole nation. Several months after the stock market crash, Detroit lost

¹ The Great Depression was a worldwide economic recession that affected the 1930's. It was triggered by a stock market collapse in 1929.

a third of its automobile jobs, which meant no source of income for more than 150,000 workers. The very consequences of the Great Depression are not that important for the scope of this thesis. What is noteworthy is how Detroit reacted to this economic downfall, or rather did not. In the following years and decades after the Depression, Detroit's rotten cornerstones in the form of economic, political and social functioning were starting to be uncovered one by one. The year 1929 was only the beginning of a much greater crisis that befell Detroit.

2 FROM 1929 TO 1950

From 1929, Detroit was stumbling down from its prime years. The period from 1929 to 1950 proved to be crucial in the city's history since every incident in this era shaped Detroit's future; unfortunately for the city, most of them formed Detroit in negative ways.

After the Great Depression the atmosphere in Detroit was hostile, as the political movement of Black Legion began to grow and usurp political power by the means of criminal practices. They provoked racial inequality and all the social problems that Detroit is still afflicted by to this date.

Apart from that, there also occurred issues concerning housing and unions. Burdensome state of affair in terms of housing received a much needed federal help when Eleanor Roosevelt launched a construction of new housing units. However, the local political scene failed to carry the project through properly and created many unnecessary problems instead. Later on in the 1940s restriction deeds placed upon housing were terminated by the US Supreme Court and Detroit was one step closer towards housing equality.

The period from 1929 to 1950 was also marked by the inception of Detroit unions. All of a sudden, the auto manufactures were not the strongest initiative in Detroit, they, suddenly, had to bend before the unions and obey their newly formed rules and regulations. These representatives of Detroit labor force were endlessly agitating for better working conditions; however, they failed to recognize possible impacts of their endeavors on the local manufactures. The impacts were initially not evident for a while, as Detroit businesses were transformed for the purpose of war efforts thus, being driven by exceptional demand. Some practices of the industrialists in this period are described as well, namely General Motors and its business network is introduced in this chapter.

What is more is that Detroit's relatively stable social environment was on the verge of collapse as the movement of Black Legion provoked intolerance and social unrests, which boiled over during the Detroit riot of 1943. All the social struggles that were piling up since 1929 erupted and the city was paralyzed for a couple of days. This could be recognized as one of the first signs that Detroit was on a path to decline.

This period of Detroit's history was full of struggle and difficulties. As the city crossed 1929 and entered the 1930s, the city's most prosperous years were gone. It was no longer thriving, but rather trying to survive. The following sections of this thesis will discuss these issues in more detail. For the purposes of this chapter and with respect to

chronology, the hostile environment originating at the turn of the 1930s in Detroit will be discussed first.

2.1 The Hateful Movement of Black Legion

Black legion evolved from its more infamous “brother in arms” Ku Klux Klan in the state of Ohio. A group of Klansmen dressed in black robes debuted in 1925 at a meeting of the Klan. According to the founder of this self-appointed top-ranking unit of the KKK, William Jacob Shepard, they intended to push ordinary sessions to a new level, which would contain a higher level of mystery and stardom. However, their plan did not meet understanding of other members, who shortly after their first appearance banished them.²

When the American nation crossed the year 1929 and entered the 1930s, many things changed for Detroit. The nation seemed desperate for jobs, with banks falling down towards bankruptcies and people finding themselves on the street literally overnight. With the changes of the surrounding socio-economical environment in Detroit – aforementioned loss of 150,000 jobs – the movement of Black Legion spread from Ohio and took roots in the Michigan area. This expansion was possible due to the current state of affairs when people were frustrated with the impacts of the Great Depression and did not feel a sense of social unity.

As the base of Black Legion grew, they deflected from the path that the second rising of KKK practiced and indulged in³. Black legion was more vigilant when applying its ideas into practice. They aimed to look after social and political standards by means of violent and criminal outbursts – murder being the basic tool. Their actions took place almost exclusively under the cover of night.

H. Effinger seized control of the movement in 1931 and subsequently brought significant changes to its operation patterns. The new leader was angry at the incompetence of politicians in Michigan area and also held strong anti-Semitic opinions. In the following years these notions grew through the whole Black Legion.

It is essential to mention that many members of the Black Legion were recruited by deceitful manners. The Black Legion, under Effinger’s lead, used to dispatch cards that

² Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), 128.

³ This was from the most part fraternity-like structure and behavior, based on systematical collection of financial means.

were masked as invitations to various sport events and card games. Unsuspecting men usually accepted such incentives. Little did they know that they would be forced to take a secrecy oath and join the movement under threats of violence. During the Legion's most active period, 1933–1936, the number of its members was nearing one hundred thousand.⁴ Supposing that almost one half of them were conscripted and brought to the activities of the movement reluctantly, forceful persuasion on a rather mass scale was possibly employed. In the light of this fact, it should be highlighted that the leadership of Black Legion did not necessarily care about its followers; they were only expanding their ranks in order to carry through their own agenda, which ordinary supporters were not aware of.

The Black Legion was not supported only by common men from the working and lower-middle class. Some of its members were high-ranking figures in Detroit, such as politicians and senior police officials. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Legion was a secret network to influence the political scene in Michigan area in order to shape it to their own image. The network operated in smaller groups that served more efficiently, because such groups were easy to control and relocate⁵.

On their death list were names of higher-ranking citizens from Detroit's both public and private sphere. Their possibly first interference into public affairs was the murder of George Marchuk who presided the association of United Automobile Workers in Detroit. Furthermore, they also caused death of several of their own supporters. It appears to be certain that the Black Legion created a fearsome environment in the Michigan area. Additionally, it could be assumed that they decelerated development of the whole area by their crimes, which were often publicly undisclosed, as the media paid little attention to their activities despite the movement's size.⁶

⁴ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 128-130.

⁵ The Black Legion did not intend to restrict to Michigan area only, their ultimate goals were far greater. The Legion planned to establish a new order in the United States, with Virgil Effinger in charge. They were aware that it would require gun power and a firm base of an immense number of followers, both were in sufficient quantity at their disposal. There even occurred intentions to waste lives of one million Jews. This would be achieved by unspecified devices installed in synagogues and detonated simultaneously. Such detonation would release poisonous gas during a main Jewish holiday.

⁶ "The Murder that Brought Down the Black Legion," *Detroit News*, 5 August 1997, <http://web.archive.org/web/20121011090154/http://apps.detnews.com/apps/history/index.php?id=151> (accessed 5 February 2016).

Eventually, the structure of Black Legion was exposed and this self-declared moral and social enforcing unit ceased to exist in 1936.⁷ Their interference in political scene implies that Detroit's politicians were not always acting in the city's best interest maybe due to the reason that some of them had been manipulated by hateful groups or had been forced to co-operate under threats of violence.

In conclusion, during this period Detroit was being greatly affected by the Black Legion, whose only goal was to push through their own political agenda by means of violence. Virtually, the activities of this movement were one of the first things that weakened the political and social situation in Detroit.

2.2 A Federal Housing Program

Detroit did not see many external attempts either from the federal government or private companies that would aim to reform the local living conditions. However, one such attempt did occur and it revealed much about the city's political background.

Eleanor Roosevelt took the leading role in a project that aimed to clean one of Detroit's quarters of slum. This plan to reshape local vicinity and rebuilt old shacks came in two forms, the Brewster Project and the Frederick Douglass Apartments, which were in motion between the years 1935–1955. Nearly ten thousand residents would find new housing opportunities there. Besides standing behind the project, Eleanor Roosevelt broke the ground for the construction of the first unit in 1935. Her presence provided a certain assurance for potential investors and ensured sufficient media interest. Additionally, it provided Detroit administration with new means of preventing local crime and controlling overall social situation, as they could choose who would be assigned with housing in the newly established houses.

Prior to the completion of the buildings, Detroit's authorities failed greatly to provide immediate help for the people whose homes were demolished after the groundbreaking ceremony. They were doomed to inhabit streets and secluded places of Detroit, as no alternative shelters that could provide them with accommodation until the completion of the houses were offered to them at that time. As a result, those families resorted to living in

⁷ Richard Bak, "The Dark Days of Black Legion," *Hour Detroit Magazine*, March 2009, <http://www.hourdetroit.com/core/pagetools.php?pageid=5073&url=%2FHour-Detroit%2FMarch-2009%2FThe-Dark-Days-of-the-BlackLegion%2Findex.php%3Fcparticle%3D2%26siarticle%3D1&mode=print> (accessed 23 April, 2016).

houses that were in as unsatisfactory conditions as the houses, which they had been moved out from. The city administration displayed minor efforts in the matter of relocating some of the families to proper accommodation. Ultimately, did very little facilitate the lives of those afflicted with eviction and subsequent demolition of their homes.

The housing plan originated as a federal program, thus it was forged in an external environment. Therefore, it can be interesting to examine how the central government in Detroit could help with integration of such project into the city's internal structures. In this instance it was mainly initiation of the first part, i.e. ensuring enough space by demolishing already existing houses, however, it failed to continue with the subsequent part, which meant that it was not making any progress with the constructions for several months, leaving some of Detroit's inhabitants in the streets.

Around the time of the inception of the project, the US government did not have established welfare legislation, therefore had seldom legal means of helping those in need. Surprisingly, the United States was possibly the only country with developed industries that underwent the Great Depression of 1929 without any insurance policies for its citizens.⁸ The welfare system had developed to a limited extent during the 1930s. The major contributor to the formation of the welfare state in the US was Lester Frank Ward.⁹

Ward did not observe social problems only from a federal point of view; he focused on private enterprises as well. The sociologist claimed that he was able to capture signals that indicated incompetence of such enterprises to properly look after themselves and their workers, who were often neglected by enterprises' self-centered deeds. This explains why Detroit's citizens, who were usually heavily dependent on their employers, had often no other choice than to resort to lamentable living conditions, in spite of industries in Detroit thriving on a mass scale.¹⁰

Therefore, Ward agitated for the establishment of the welfare system in the U.S. as he recognized the incapability of larger businesses to look after their labor force. This motion was a spot-on for Detroit's automobile industry. The federal government could hardly

⁸ Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 273-304.

⁹ Lester Ward Frank, *Lester Ward and the Welfare State*, ed. Henry Steele Commager (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1967), 377-380.

¹⁰ Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 310-336.

influence human resource policies of huge manufacturers; however, these manufacturers could implement their own social system. This later led to the establishment of unions in Detroit as they attempted to solve this issue themselves without waiting for either the government or their employers to take action.

The living conditions of unemployed citizens and those who were unsuccessful at the job market were even worse. In order to depict a more precise image, some details of their housing ought to be described. One house usually supplied up to thirteen people with a roof over their heads, most of them were young children. Houses were heavily damaged not only from the outside, but also from the inside. Wooden doorsteps at many houses were decayed with adjoining banisters shattered. This eventually started the trend of abandoned rotting buildings on the outskirts of Detroit. The interiors were soaked with rainwater, as no window gaskets were applied and roofs had countless leaks. Hygiene was an unknown word, as bathrooms were not usable, since most of them had no functioning bathtubs and toilets were often in a similar condition. Heating was not provided by landlords and if some inhabitants managed to secure stoves, they would quickly break or, in the worst-case scenario, get stolen.

Despite the living conditions the inhabitants of such houses were still obligated to pay rent. The amounts they had to pay ranged from three to twelve dollars per month. Taking into consideration almost zero wage-earning status of its residents (on some occasions small earnings did occur, however, quite inconsiderable ones), they were living in a vicious circle with no perceivable possibility for a better life, as they were struggling to find a job and the city administration did not provide any help to them. Furthermore, supposing families were living in one of the black slums, parents probably could not provide satisfactory education for all of their children, thus leaving them helpless in the streets.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt stated in her speech devoted to the housing project that such poor conditions, which the citizens of Detroit had been living in, are the result of poor social consciousness that allowed or directly helped such conditions. Subsequently, she drew attention to the Great Depression, stating that now it is possible to finally spot the areas that need attention most.¹¹ It ought to be mentioned that the First Lady did not utter

¹¹ "First Lady Starts a Housing Project," *New York Times*, 10 September 1935, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C05E7DA1E3DE53ABC4852DFBF66838E629EDE> (accessed 1 March 2016).

who exactly had been responsible for the unfavorable social consciousness in Detroit, whether it rested on the shoulders of the federal government or Detroit's political authorities.

The federal government seemed to have little political means that could financially support the lives of local minorities and those in material shortage, as the welfare system had not been established yet. On the other hand, what appears to be more important is the fact that the central governments, or at least some of its members, were aware of the poor living conditions in Detroit. Therefore, they prepared a housing program that was supposed to provide help, i.e. the Brewster Project and the Frederick Douglass Apartments. In essence, the central government did not provide money, but at least one of the absolute necessities for the city – housing.

Subsequently, it was primarily Detroit's responsibility to ensure that this effort would be utilized properly. According to the accepted definition of democracy, people are the source of political power.¹² Therefore, political representatives of Detroit's citizens were appointed to their office in order to look after the needs of their voters. However, as could be seen, they failed to supervise the housing project properly. Moreover, it seems that their lack of success have not been a one-off occurrence, as will be further discussed.

2.3 The Inception of Detroit Unions

Fertile ground for the birth of Detroit unions had indirectly been being prepared in the city for a couple of years before their emergence, which is dated to the 1935–1936 labor strikes. With the rise of unions, Detroit experienced substantial internal changes. Therefore, the impact of unions on Detroit is carefully examined in this chapter.

Transformation and changes of society in any sense are not likely to occur in a stiff and jammed environment, whose occupants are firmly accustomed to given standards and principles. Detroit's society was nothing like that during the 1930s, which was the period when local working unions first saw the light of day. On the contrary, working class falling into hopelessness due to poverty and political inaction in the city molded almost perfect conditions for the rise of unions.

¹² *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Democracy," <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/49755> (accessed May 5, 2016).

The United Automobile Workers (hereinafter referred to as UAW) is a labor union located in Detroit and founded in 1935. Its purpose is to stand behind the disadvantaged workers and to strive to improve their lives, battling the industrialists in order to do so.

Taking into consideration the unstable development of Detroit since 1929, it is not surprising that the UAW rather rapidly succeeded in gaining large support. Despite the UAW's popularity among workers, its voice was not being heard willingly from the city's manufacturers.

The ultimate victory of the unions against the industrialists was launched through a multiple strikes that paralyzed Detroit between 1935 and 1936.¹³ Seeing the power of the unions, the industrialists agreed upon negotiation, thus formally introducing a third party into the already existing working and political life in Detroit. Eventually, the recognition of the unions arranged more power for working class. This change of power allocation has been evident to this day.

It might be interesting to observe which of the three automobile giants in Detroit had tolerable relations with the UAW and which ones were struggling with them the most. General Motors appears to be the first company that recognized the importance of the unions and signed an agreement with them. The agreement stated that General Motors accept the UAW as their workers' official representative. The most difficult arrangements revolved around Ford Motor Company and its acknowledgement of the unions.

Ford had been rather open-minded about hiring black workers and trusting them with rather important tasks in the company. Moreover, the company had developed co-operating with local churches that were recommending suitable work adepts who would be loyal and skilled to perform a quality job at Ford. Therefore, it seems understandable that Ford did not appreciate the upcoming changes coming from the UAW and their rather strict laws, as the company had an already developed employee hiring and treatment system. The UAW policies would affect this whole internal structure. Furthermore, it seems that Ford did not intend to let the unions win, and such endeavor required ferocious determination, since the unions basically held control over the majority of labor force in Detroit at the time when they started to negotiate with Ford.¹⁴

¹³ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 133-138.

¹⁴ Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 40-70.

To fight the unions, Ford decided to lay off all employees that sympathized with them. Interestingly, this dismissal occurred in numerous waves, as more and more staffers were gradually finding comfort in the ideas of the UAW and decided to follow them. Moreover, union organizers that used to gather near Ford factories on a regular basis were being targeted by security guards, from whom they often suffered violent beatings.

One of such incidents took place on March 23, 1937 and probably changed the whole future of the city. On this day, four young union members accepted a request from a photographer affiliated with Detroit News, who had desired to take some pictures for his upcoming article about the union supporters. The photographs were being taken on an overpass between a Ford factory and its parking lot. Suddenly, a security team watching over the factory rushed on the overpass and assaulted the union members, leaving them with severe injuries. The whole incident was recorded by the photographer who did not involve himself in the brawl. Afterwards, the security team demanded the taken negatives; however, the photographer had managed to cleverly hide them and gave the guards blank glass-plates instead in order to ensure himself an undisturbed way out.¹⁵

The management of Ford Company issued a proclamation explaining that the incident was arranged by the unions to gain public sympathy. After the publication of the photos, the scales were suddenly tilted in favor of the unions and Ford lost its privileged position and its flawless reputation of a car making giant. What is more, Ford Company did not cease activities against the unions after the event, on the contrary, they continued with counter measures, one of which was a dismissal of four thousand employees who were suspected of a secret collaboration with the unions.¹⁶

The overall conflicted was brought to an end in 1941 by a massive protest counting up to fifty thousand workers who raised their voices in order to support the acceptance of the unions by their employer Ford. Following these events, Ford Motor Company was forced to recognize the UAW and invite them to negotiations.

The power of the unions did not freeze at that point; it carried on in gaining more influence over the course of several following years. The rise of its power helped to establish more self-conscious middle class, which had means through the unions to bargain

¹⁵ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 139-145.

¹⁶ Ibid.

with the major Detroit employers. Nevertheless, there are two sides to every coin and it was not different with the unions in Detroit.

The labor unions can regulate the number of workers in a company to deliberately raise wages of already employed workers. Essentially, they attempt to monopolize the supply of labor force, in this sense they function similarly to cartels and their actions produce almost the same effects on the economy, i.e. winning benefits for its sympathizers whose numbers will logically tend to grow, but at the same time deforming industrial environment as seen below.

In response, companies would need to compensate higher wages and the easiest way to do so is to increase prices of their final products. Their immediate profits would climb up since their costumers would have to take more money out of their wallets. However, it is not likely that every customer would be able to afford more expensive products – a part of costumers would buy the product, the other part would not. Such turn of events would cause the manufactures to produce and sell fewer cars. As to the next step, they would not need to have so many workers and significant dismissals would tend to follow. In conclusion, short term benefits that unions arrange can be appealing; however, in the long run it causes notable troubles for manufacturers and workers alike.¹⁷

Through economic research it has been discovered that unions' financial demands on employers harm also end consumers and those who are denied employment. As to denying employment, researchers have found out that extensive presence of unions can reduce number of job opportunities, which results in higher unemployment rate. Supposing the number of union members is growing constantly and their policies are applied without alterations, companies would have progressively weaker chance to compensate higher wages by increasing the price of their products.¹⁸ What this means is that at a certain point they would have to relocate or go bankrupt.

It can be clearly seen that unions affected Detroit immensely. As to the UAW, they frequently organized sit-down strikes that could paralyze Detroit even for a couple of days and they would not cease their endeavors until they have reached victory. Furthermore,

¹⁷ James Sherk, "What Unions Do: How Labor Unions Affect Jobs and the Economy," *The Heritage Foundation*, 21 May 2009, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/05/what-unions-do-how-labor-unions-affect-jobs-and-the-economy> (accessed 2 March, 2016).

¹⁸ Ibid.

employees were prohibited from negotiating their working conditions without the unions' presence. Simultaneously, employers could not change any aspects of their working process unless they put forward a request to the unions. Eventually, the unions became an inseparable component of Detroit's working life.

The initial impulse standing behind the birth of the UAW unions seems to be selfless and genuine. Nevertheless, as they gradually grew, the union officials were harming the city by making the economic life in the city more complicating.

What seems captivating is the clash of two positive forces: the unions were founded in order to provide aid to every worker, and the company they were fighting against most ferociously was Ford – company established, named and directed by a man who is the groundbreaker of welfare capitalism¹⁹, the man who amazed the business world by his innovative employee treatment.²⁰

In essence, this dissension between the unions and Ford Company marked the beginning of a new era for Detroit – era in which different interest groups fight against each other and they harm the city in the process of doing so. In this sense, Detroit might be viewed upon as a battleground.

2.4 “Arsenal of Democracy”

The slogan uttered through a radio show in 1940 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which promised military supplies for the United Kingdom in their fight against Germany, changed the future of Detroit for upcoming war years.²¹ It should be noted that the presidential promise did not just change Detroit's manufacturing role, but also shaped the city's future. By the time Japanese planes launched an attack upon Pearl Harbor, Detroit's economy had already been recovering from losses caused in the first half of the 1930s by the Great Depression, which, as seen in the previous section of this thesis, struck the automobile industry with its centre in Detroit quite notably.

¹⁹ Welfare capitalism is the policy of businesses focused on providing social services to their workers, such as higher wages and shorter working week.

²⁰ Allan Nevis and Frank Ernest Hill, *Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 508–540.

²¹ Gregory Hooks, “The Legacy of World War II for Regional Growth and Decline: The Cumulative Effects of Wartime Investments on U.S. Manufacturing, 1947-1972,” *Social Forces* 71, no. 2 (1992): 303-337, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2580013> (accessed 11 February, 2016).

Prior to the Depression, Detroit's "Big Three" was able to produce and successfully dispatch around 5 million vehicles per year, with its peak of 5.4 million in 1929. Subsequently, being already hit the world-wide economic downfall, the automobile giants manufactured 1.4 million motor cars during 1931, which proved to be an ultimate low in production. The ensuing years went through a slight increase in outputs. The improvement occurred mainly between the years 1935 and 1939, which were marked by rising industrial activities in the whole city. The industry moved closer to its peak in 1941, which was the era of war production, with approximately 4.8 million automobiles.

Detroit was built upon car making foundations and only owing to these headstones it was enabled to grow. The city was dependent on the demand for one single product – cars and when that demand fell alongside the economic recession, Detroit could not do much to revive on its own. As the local car production was decreasing in the years following the Great Depression, the city was bound to contract due to its lack of other income sources that would compensate for the declining auto manufactures – the demand for cars decreased as did demand for various products in the U.S.

The aforementioned manufacturing increase in 1941 is based upon Detroit's ability to adjust. Once Detroit adapted to the war demand, the city was not just surviving the Depression, instead it was thriving on the war efforts and driving its production to record numbers.

Only 12 percent of the auto making machines in the city could be used to produce war machinery. Therefore, the whole industry in Detroit had to be converted in order to be able to produce vehicles such as planes and tanks. However, it was not just a matter of available machines, but also a matter of labor force that would build the war vehicles. Employees that were experienced in handling tasks related only to cars had to be retrained for the purposes of war industry. Manufacturers of smaller parts had to remake their business to a certain degree as well.²²

It could be interesting to notice how businesses of various specializations developed a close cooperation. One of the US Army's bombers was disintegrated into pieces in an abandoned auto factory where manufactures residing in Detroit gathered and pondered

²² Thomas Klier, "From Tail Fins to Hybrid: How Detroit Lost its Dominance of the U.S. Auto Market," *Economic Perspectives* 33 (2009): 2-17, <https://www.chicagofed.org/publications/economic-perspectives/2009/2qtr-klier> (accessed May 2, 2016).

their contingency to produce some of its parts. To show that there a potential for flexibility, several business rearranged their production to fit the overall plan: a local maker of vacuum-cleaners decided to deliver small components made from aluminium, parts essential for breaks were made by a producer of shovels, who transformed nearly his whole working process in order to do so, Henry Ford and his company contributed by constructing a factory where planes were supposed to be built by means of a highly-developed assembly line system. Their subsequent production was almost sky-high, since one B-24 bomber could be produced every hour. Ultimately, nearly all businesses in Detroit brought their own set of skills and expertise to make Detroit thrive during these times.

The rise of Detroit's new industry required a great number of workers and since about five hundred thousand men from Michigan area departed to serve, demand for employees was towering. The increasing demand was drawing African American migrants from the South, who saw an opportunity to find a job for themselves. With new employment they would be able to support their families, whom they often brought along to Detroit and its surrounding areas.

In total, nearly five thousand incoming job seekers swamped Detroit over the course of the war years. They moved to Detroit either on their own impulse, as they overheard news of possible job opportunities, or they were convinced by recruitment officers who were sent out by Detroit's "Big Three".²³

Many journalists in the city had observed these events carefully and they noticed that Detroit was slowly but surely getting into its element anew. Suddenly, torrents of white smoke from Detroit's smokestacks heralded a hard-working era, parking lots nearby factories were non-passable, public transportation was overcrowded with passengers on every line. After periods of poverty and desperation the city seemed magnificent again. However, in reality the situation was not that marvelous.

Even though a couple of new rooming houses for incoming workers were being built, the actual demand for accommodation would exceed the upcoming supply substantially very soon. It was mainly black workers who were in disadvantage regarding housing possibilities at their disposal, since they lacked funds to purchase a fully furnished house

²³ Thomas J Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 110–125.

and black neighborhoods had already been nearly fully occupied. As Detroit was not able to provide sufficient housing for the migrants, infrastructure of the city was slowly collapsing.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the federal government invested into fifteen hundred units of public housing for blacks during the Depression. The homes were located near Black Bottom, which is a nickname for the area of Brewster Homes, construction of which was launched by the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. With the growing number of incomers these homes were fully occupied almost immediately, leaving the rest with no other opportunities and exiling them to public spaces. It was not uncommon to find black families residing in parks, which was also a favorite space for squatters. Storefronts provided a sufficient protection from rain and other natural elements that drive people from outside spaces.²⁴

Despite the massive war production, the overall situation in the city was rather dismal and the local political scene did not seem to be working on any solutions. However, Detroit was not left stranded, since the federal government did make an effort to improve the housing and by doing so even the general situation in the city. Thus, the project of Brewster and Frederick Douglas Apartments has not been the sole attempt from the country's government to give Detroit a helping hand.

Another bad news for housing situation in the city appeared in August 1942 when war restrictions placed upon building supplies thwarted any constructions in Detroit²⁵. Afterwards, Charles F. Edgecomb, a member of the Detroit Housing Commission, gave a speech about the insoluble state of affairs, emphasizing that money and price of accommodation are of no importance, since there is absolutely no possible place where they could be spent. This meant that there was neither available housing nor anyone who would build it²⁶.

²⁴ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 160-170.

²⁵ A rationing system was implemented in 1942 in order to prevent important commodities from being wasted. The system was supposed to provide a certain amount of necessities to all citizens across the United States. One of the areas affected by restrictions was housing sphere. As a result, Detroit was heavily limited in terms of housing supplies.

²⁶ The help provided by the federal government might have given Detroit a helping hand, but it did not resolve the problem at all. In conclusion, it was insufficient.

Eventually, finding a solution which would resolve the pressing problem of new incomers and the explicit deficiency of residential areas was ranked as one of the biggest problems in the city. The failure of the city's officials to engage and come up with any means which could be applied to improve the overall situation in the city points toward their incompetence. The problem with accommodation and burdensome state of affairs in general projected into other spheres of everyday life, one of which was for example worsened racial animosity, which will be dealt with in the chapter named Detroit Riot of 1943.²⁷

After the Great Depression Detroit was in decline both in terms of industrial and political matters. As to industrial production, Detroit was revived thanks to the country's war efforts. As a matter of fact, it could be said that the city was being driven, not in the terms of its production capacity, but in terms of its administrative possibilities. New job openings attracted unemployed workers from the Midwest and the South of the United States, who subsequently swamped unprepared Detroit. The "Big Three" was scouting huge numbers of workers, but failed to consult the city hall regarding the matter of housing that would be offered to them in time. This failure to co-operate created unnecessary problems for Detroit. These struggles might have been avoided under the condition that the economic and political representatives of the city had united.

2.5 General Motors' Network

The Detroit mayoral elections of 1939 were a confrontation of Richard Reading and Edward Jefferies. Reading was steamrolled, mostly due to published scandals involving bribes he was involved in. Subsequently, Jefferies assumed office in 1940 and chose a member of the UAW union, George Edwards Jr., to be his housing commissioner.

A couple of years before the mayoral election and his appointment as a housing commissioner, Edwards moved to Detroit in hopes of establishing a meaningful existence for himself. Detroit and its blossoming union movement seemed fitting for such purpose. Due to the lack of money, he resorted to living in a park where he met the Reuther

²⁷ Frank B. Woodford, "Detroit's Housing Shortage Acute," *New York Times*, 9 August 1942, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9F00EEDA113CE33BBC4153DFBE668389659EDE> (accessed January 11, 2016).

brothers, who not only supported the rising union movement, but also engaged and later even organized its actions.²⁸

The Reuther brothers achieved several victories at smaller companies in Detroit, winning higher wages for workers by forcing the companies to sign an agreement with the unions. Subsequently, this rather radical group decided to focus on the city's "Big Three", especially on General Motors. Among the biggest automobile manufactures in Detroit, it was General Motors that was intervening into the local public affairs. Some of the UAW's followers were aware of the interconnection between GM and the public sphere and they desired to put a stop to these practices. In doing so, the UAW strived to improve the living conditions of workers, who would be then able to secure proper housing for themselves and also other living necessities.

To explain the link between the private and public sphere, it is important to mention that executives working at General Motors held seats at city commission, to be exact six of nine seats. The commission was responsible for the city legislation, thus holding power over the city's general policies. Furthermore, the mayor had a paid position at GM as a controller. The far-reaching network created by GM also directed the city police and developed a net of spies that operated internationally.²⁹ A conflict of interest between the private and the public sphere is quite apparent, forming a question what side were the politicians employed at GM supporting, because, as already seen in this thesis, Detroit's interests and the interests of the auto industry were not always the same.

The attitude of GM toward the unions was not warm. According to reports, GM paid over eight hundred thousand dollars to ensure that union organizers would overlook their factories. Another way which helped GM stay away from the influence of the unions was the fact that they systematically dismissed workers who were allegedly supporting the unions.

Union supporters employed at GM were not overawed by their employer's anti-union policies; quite on the contrary, they decided to voice their support of the unions and organize a sit-down strike in one of General Motors' factories in Detroit on December 28,

²⁸ John Barnard, *American Vanguard: The United Auto Workers During the Reuther Years, 1935-1970* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 20-57.

²⁹ Marilyn Kleinberg Neimark, *The Hidden Dimensions of Annual Reports: Sixty Years of Social Conflict at General Motors* (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1992), 67-82.

1936. This strike is nowadays referred to as Flint sit-down strike. Inspired by their colleagues, workers at another GM factory did exactly the same. Both of these groups refused to work and even to leave the premises when asked to do so. Subsequently, police department controlled by GM swamped the buildings and forced the workers to leave.³⁰

This course of events clearly shows how the UAW, a benefactor of the working class, was determined in their endeavors. However, by advancing their plans the unions created a negative atmosphere between the factories management and workers – atmosphere that lasted for many years and left minimal mutual sympathies between them.³¹

In 1937 General Motors signed a one-page agreement with the unions recognizing the UAW as a legitimate representative of their workers. The unions learnt that by pushing hard enough, they could enforce their agenda on most private businesses in Detroit, even the ones as big as the car manufacturers. The victory against General Motors encouraged the unions tremendously. Seeing the success of their strategy, they decided to implement it when dealing with other businesses in Detroit. Eventually, the UAW was able to sign contracts with all the major manufacturers in Detroit which meant that they became one of the major forces that influenced the economic and political sphere in Detroit.

Building upon their success, the unions did not rest, instead they were negotiating hardly for higher wages and better employee benefits, and this is why the Detroit's "Big Three" lost its competitive advantage in terms of low production costs. Even though Henry Ford raised wages of his workers in the first two decades of the 20th century on several occasions, the cost of labor in Detroit was still relatively low until the inception of local unions. The future standards of collective bargaining in Detroit were being formed during this period. These standards helped workers in the short term, but caused troubles for the city in the long term.

2.6 Detroit Riot of 1943

In the early summer of 1943 Detroit's civil hostility caused by the reluctance of whites to comply with blacks and their demands for housing and job opportunities, resulted in a three-day-long riot that paralyzed Detroit. Representatives of both public sector and

³⁰ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 139-145.

³¹ Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 66–73.

private sphere stated afterwards that such outburst was almost inevitable. The tension leading to this riot manifested itself in numerous previous occasions, albeit, on a much smaller scale. Therefore, following these trails should prove useful while seeking to understand the core essence of the tension between two races and to provide yet another piece of context for Detroit's fall.

As the number of incomers before and during Detroit's adaptation to the requirements of the American war efforts was rising, new issues concerning housing and placement into working positions emerged.³² Such unstable background was becoming fairly attractive for political movements, even the more radical ones, such as Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and Black Legion.

Detroit was unique not only for its number of southern immigrants of African American origin, but at the same time also for its number of racial dissensions. One of the first noticeable events related to the social changes took place around a local high school where the police arrested protestors who attempted to distribute pamphlets promoting peace and acceptance as in a response to an argument between real estate agents and African American political leaders. Interestingly, the police engaged in this matter only since they believed those protestants to be of communist inclination, not because they intended to put an end to racial unrest.

Another element that was causing tension was the city hall. After Detroit's turn-over into America's "Arsenal of Democracy" a body of public administration in charge of assigning housing for defence workers was able to prepare 332 units for white claimants, however, not a single one for over 80 black workers. The first attempt to arrange housing for blacks was prepared by US Housing Authority (UHSA) which intended to build a little more over two hundred homes of public housing character.³³

Nevertheless, the project encountered disapproval from the real estate sector which did not view these government efforts as entitled since housing domain was under private sector dominance.³⁴ More importantly, the disagreement between these two sides did not revolve around whether to implement this new housing plan or not, but rather who would

³² Kevin Boyle, "The Ruins of Detroit Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City," *Michigan Historical Review* 27 (2001): 109-127. doi: 10.2307/20173897 (accessed May 1, 2016).

³³ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 147-158.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

profit from it. The realtors wanted to build these houses on their own so they could take all the profit. Nonetheless, the realtors did not have any means at their disposal that could stall the housing plan.

The new houses for black workers in need of accommodation were supposed to be built in a black neighbourhood, so as not to press sensitive spots in mostly white areas. Surprisingly, the ground plan provoked local Polish residents who formed the Seven Mile-Fenelon Improvement Association³⁵ and waged a political fight against the plan. As to the reason of their disapproval, they feared that changing housing conditions would negatively affect their lives and brought disorders to their streets. As a result, the Polish residents swamped every council meeting and heavily urged political authorities to reconsider their intentions of building the houses.

It appears that the representatives of the city hall recoiled and swiftly altered the designation of the project to white residents only. However, such decision did not bring peace and acceptance; ultimately, it only provoked political leaders of black minority who made certain that their voices would be heard among the city hall representatives.

The subsequent efforts of the black minority were successful and the city hall subdued to the external pressure once again. Thus, the residences were meant for black works anew. After the completion of the houses, a police guard had to protect the first families who were prepared to settle down in there. The presence of the police was necessary, since more than 150 Polish demonstrators were trying to prevent the inhabitants from moving in. Moreover, it seems that the Polish residents were not the only group trying to prevent the blacks from moving, since a burning cross appeared on the nearby field, which was a way how Black Legion typically announced its presence. In spite of a mob of whites clashing with blacks and causing conflicts, six families were eventually able to move in.³⁶ All these incidents did not vanish into thin air in the eyes of Detroit's citizens who were getting angrier with every upcoming political event and their defiance slowly graduated.

What is striking is that Mayor Jefferies, who had presided the city hall since 1940, imparted after the riot that he was well aware of the oppressive climate and racial

³⁵ This was supposed to be an institutional co-ordination of their common efforts.

³⁶ Robert Shogan and Tom Craig, *The Detroit Race Riot: A Study in Violence* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1964), 32-78.

disturbances in Detroit. Surprisingly, Mayor Jeffries's office did not seem to undertake essential steps to pacify the rising tension nor offer a solution to it, temporary or long-term. It was at that time when speculations concerning the mayor and his office's intentions of letting the disorders escalate emerge. The tension in Detroit was visible in every aspect of every-day life to a point where a larger conflict was bound to happen.³⁷

The escalating situation was thrown over the edge on June 29 in an amusement park when two black men were beaten up by an angry group of whites for an unknown reason. This event ignited a fuse which ultimately caused an explosion, otherwise known as Detroit Riot of 1943. The two young black men sought revenge for their degradation and therefore launched a series of smaller fist fights that later escalated into a massive skirmish counting a few hundred whites and blacks. The melee spread into several different areas and resulted into looting, targeting other inhabitants of both ethnicities and damage caused to property.

The 3-day-lasting riot claimed the lives 34 people, 433 others were injured. Total property damage climbed up to \$2 million. Economically speaking, the riot resulted in the waste of 1 million work hours which affected not only war production of larger factories, but also small family-owned business, as the whole city essentially shut down during the riot. Finally, the US Army had to arrive in order to calm the situation and restore order.³⁸ As shown on these statistics, the Detroit Riot of 1943 affected the city both economically and socially.

The local police did in fact intervene before the arrival of the US Army. However, pattern of the police behaviour towards the crowd was quite different. The police was passive and used exclusively verbal means while urging white mobs to disperse, while on the other hand, black mobs were being "persuaded" by guns and truncheons of the Detroit's police officers. This reflects in the statistics, showing that more than 70 % of the total numbers of killed were black citizens. In the aftermath of the 1943 riot, both sides came up with explanations, which, for the most part, included blaming the other side and renouncing any responsibility. The city officials found black young outlaws guilty; in this

³⁷ Marylenn S. Johnson, "Gender, Race, and Rumours: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots," *Gender & History* 10 (1998): 252-277, doi: 10.1111/1468-0424.00099 (accessed May 1, 2016).

³⁸ Ann V. Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 100-135.

assign of guilt they also included black citizens who were without employment and those who lived on the margins of the society.

Ultimately, Fact Finding Commission was summoned and they were tasked with a proper investigation. Their conclusion stated that young black misfits were the initiators of the riot. Moreover, they labelled the whole incident as an unfortunate accident, which could not have been prevented, since the behaviour of the participants was illogical and without purpose. This statement is in direct opposition to the Mayor Jefferies' pronouncement which clearly stated that he, himself, was expecting the riot well of a year before its actual outbreak. What seems striking is that while looking for evidence and evaluating available materials, the commission did not question a single witness or participant of the riot. Instead they decided to base their final resolution only on the police reports and police statements which were not sufficient in terms of quantity.³⁹

The Fact Finding Commission was not the only investigator of this violent event. Dr. Lowell Selling, a psychologist from the University of Michigan, and a team of researchers from the State Prison of South Michigan carried out their own investigations. The results of these inquiries pointed towards blacks and their mental predispositions for violent behaviour which further supported the conclusion of the Fact Finding Commission. On the other side, black leaders were able to highlight numerous different reasons, primarily ongoing racial discrimination in housing sphere and also hostility from the white population.⁴⁰

The aforementioned explanations point toward racial inequality. However, the racial inequality itself did not stand behind the riot. Detroit's leaders probably could not end racial inequality, fairly common in American society at the time, just by making a statement or passing a new law. It would most likely require gradual efforts over the course of several years. To summarize, it was mostly the inactivity and incompetence of the political sphere to solve the rising tension in time or at least to attempt to, especially when they were clearly aware of the unstable conditions in the city.

The statement of Walter White, who chaired National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the time, can be mentioned. He proclaimed

³⁹ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 147-158.

⁴⁰ Dominic Capeci and Marta Wilkerson, "The Detroit Rioters of 1943: A Reinterpretation," *Michigan Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (1990): 49–72, doi: 10.2307/20173210 (accessed 26 April, 2016).

that very little rioting occurred within the areas of the City of Detroit where United Automobile Workers (UAW) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had been supporting the idea of including blacks into their organizational structures and providing them with sufficient accommodation. Therefore, blacks had no apparent reason to revolt in these areas, since they were given the opportunity to create a meaningful live for themselves and they were not being deliberately overlooked.⁴¹

In the light of Walter White's argument it thus seems that the Detroit Riot of 1943 was not a case of both black and white residents of local areas rising up and manifesting their rage in the form of damaging their own neighbourhoods. Rather it seems to be an immense racial clash. Detroit race riot of 1943 proved to be an escalation of an inner struggle within the city's racial lines that had been in the motion many years prior to the years. The struggle mostly revolved around segregation that manifested itself primarily in housing difficulties and also exclusion of blacks from jobs.

The primal core of responsibility for the riot probably lies in Detroit's political scene. Although they showed some efforts to improve the housing sphere, they were not able to follow them through properly. On the other side of the city, independent organizations NAACP and UAW took initiative and, mostly in working sphere, demonstrated that providing blacks with equal opportunities could be the successful approach in preventing civil struggles, not only for the sake of the city, but also for its citizens.

2.7 Housing Deed Restrictions

The late months of 1944 were marked by a housing controversy, when a black married couple made a decision to relocate from a black ghetto into a neighborhood inhabited solely by whites. After a month of peaceful living, a messenger of the Northwest Neighborhood Association, a local community-based organization focused on housing conditions, knocked upon the front door of the black couple and urged them to move out of their house. The Neighborhood Association did so due to a regulation forbidding black buyers to purchase the house, which was the so called housing deed restriction. The couple

⁴¹ Paul Finkelman, "Detroit Riots of 1943," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, 1st ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 59-60.

refused to even consider such though and did not pay any attention to subsequent formal letters sent to them by the organization. Seeing no other solution, the association decided to sue the couple.⁴² Thus, another battle on the field of housing emerged, plunging Detroit into another struggle.

The court dealing with this case decided in favor of the association, since the law was basically on their side. Despite the court's decision, the situation did not change and the couple was still living in their home. Eventually, this case was brought to the US Supreme Court.

It was mainly thanks to the couple's lawyer and his excellent argumentation that the Supreme Court ruled for the defendants, i.e. the couple, and also abolished the restrictions placed upon housing deeds. As to their reasoning:

“The historical context in which the Fourteenth Amendment became a part of the Constitution should not be forgotten. Whatever else the frames sought to achieve, it is clear that the matter of primary concern was the establishment of equality in the enjoyment of basic civil and political rights and the preservation of those rights from discriminatory action on the part of the States based on considerations of race or color.”⁴³

The result of this dispute changed the state of affairs on the real estate market in Detroit crucially. As a matter of fact, it affected the whole demographic situation in the city and gave rise to the internal migration, i.e. migration between individual city quarters.

Between the years 1943 and 1965 almost two hundred neighborhood associations and clusters of real estate owners, both of which were comprised by whites, were established in Detroit as a result of black citizens' mobility. Almost all of these groupings aimed to prevent or at least stall the integration of blacks into their streets and housing complexes. Since the United Automobile Workers union was at the same time agitating for higher wages and better employee benefits almost ceaselessly, and the once poor black migrants from the South could suddenly afford the same housing as whites.

⁴² Raoul Berger, *Government by Judiciary: The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1997), 100-120, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/berger-government-by-judiciary-the-transformation-of-the-fourteenth-amendment> (accessed 2 May, 2016).

⁴³ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 189.

It could be said that the inhabitants of Detroit were seeking balance in their housing lifestyles. While blacks saw justice in relocating to predominantly white areas, whites deemed that a violation of their rights and began to flee from their homes. These demographic shifts were accompanied by occasional cases of incendiaries, verbal attacks, vandalism and also a few skirmishes. It is clear that Detroit was in a process of a major change and some of the local residents did not view this change positively.

What is interesting to notice is that one part of Detroit's economy was actually thriving on these shifts. This part consisted of real estate agents and brokers who made profits on every house sold due to their commissions. Furthermore, it was revealed that brokers operating in the suburbs of Detroit had a special system of assigning value to new customers based upon their ethnicity, religion and various other identity traits. They used this system to categorize the neighborhoods and their inhabitants, preventing some of the bidders from actual purchase.⁴⁴

To summarize, the city administration did not try to co-ordinate the migration within the city, thus leaving Detroit to its fate. Moreover, the social situation in the city might have suffered from the real estate brokers and their unfair deeds as well.

It seems that the housing situation in Detroit benefited from the cancellation of housing restriction deeds tremendously, since after their abolishment, the houses in Detroit were not under any federal regulation and the citizens of Detroit could move freely to various neighborhoods. The abolishment of housing deeds was one of the very few positive changes on the field of Detroit housing, and it was made possible thanks to the Supreme Court's decision.

⁴⁴ Lloyd D. Buss, "The Church and the City: Detroit's Open Housing Movement," PhD diss, University of Michigan, 2008.

3 FROM 1950 TO THE BANKRUPTCY

The period from the beginning of 1950s to the Detroit Bankruptcy in 2013 was marked by slowly unfolding city decay. The decline was accelerated mainly during the 1950s, as Detroit's city hall decided not to support any public housing projects and left this sphere exclusively in the hands of private constructors.

Around the same time, migration within the city quarters began. Blacks started to move into predominantly white neighborhoods, since they had enough money due to the UAW's endless fight against industrialists which ensured higher wages for employees. Seeing the changing conditions in the city, whites decided to flee Detroit with nothing keeping them in the city anymore. Their exodus has been continuing ever since.

However, the city's long-standing problems did not disappear with people leaving. On the contrary, they were becoming more apparent. The growing tension escalated in 1967 when civilians expressed their frustration in a massive five-day-long riot. The rebellion could be described as a cleansing. It seemed that the city was attempting to purge itself of the problems by fire, since more than two thousand buildings went up in flames during those five days. After the dust settled, little was done in order to repair the city or pass any countermeasures that would prevent such a large scale disaster from happening in Detroit again.

Detroit's last hope came in 1974 as Coleman Young took charge of the city. He was a man of action with sharp tongue and almost fearless determination. For the first time since 1929, Detroit was seemingly embarking on the right path, trying to tackle social and economic issues at once. Yet, the city needed such political figure much sooner and preferably in more quantity. The help in the form of Coleman Young arrived too late and was not sufficient.

Although Detroit went officially bankrupt in 2013, the city crushed much sooner. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s Detroit was beyond recognition in comparison with its prime years in the 1910s and 1920s. It was a jobless city with crime, violence and drug abuse in its streets, and this trend seemed to continue up until the 2013 bankruptcy. However, hopes for better future might not be lost entirely, as tiny sparkles of light seem to surface in the city streets. All of these events will now be discussed further.

3.1 Detroit in the 1950s

The 1950s in Detroit were marked by the beginning of slowly unfolding demographic changes that continued to shape the city for the rest of the 20th century. The

origins of these population shifts, nowadays widely known as white flight, might be traced back to the mayoral elections of 1950 when Albert Cobo successfully assumed the office and began to reshape several policy areas of Detroit to his own image. One such area was public housing.

The new leader of Detroit's city hall did not restrain in his office; on the contrary, he commenced his public service by vetoing a number of already prepared housing proposals. It should be noted that Cobo did not confer this course of actions with the Housing Commission, since its chairman resorted to resigning in order to send a loud message of disagreement with the new mayor's practices. Subsequently, Mayor Cobo appointed developers and contractors from private development industry as members of the commission thus, leaving the matters of housing exclusively in private hands. Furthermore, Cobo and his administration declined vast majority of funds, which were provided by the federal government for public housing by the legal means of Federal Housing Act⁴⁵. Overall, at the beginning of the 1950s Detroit's political scene underwent a shift of focus and decided not to keep providing help on a larger scale for those lacking proper housing.

This shift is also confirmed by the statics, which point out that Norfolk, a city in the state of Virginia, built more units of public housing in the 1950s than Detroit. It is necessary to add that Detroit was fifth and Norfolk forty-eight in terms of population ranking. New mayor and his administration as of 1950 embarked on a path of political changes, which resulted in gradual white flight.⁴⁶

A team of researchers conducted a survey in the streets of Detroit that was supposed to capture attitudes of citizens towards their city and their neighbors. Most of the participants from working class weighted in favor of Detroit, while upper middle class was not so enthusiastic about the city.

The favorable attributes regarding the city that were listed most frequently consisted of sufficient working opportunities, decent quality of local schools, adequate space for pastime activities and the fact that the respondents' families could settle down in Detroit and find a home for themselves. The unfavorable city features that the respondents

⁴⁵ The National Housing Act of 1934 was supposed to ensure that housing and particularly mortgages would be more affordable. It was enacted after the Great Depression as a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

⁴⁶ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 170-180.

mentioned lied mostly in poor race relations. One participant stated that before he was able to pay off a mortgage for his house, blacks had moved to his vicinity and he was forced to relocate to a different quarter and start over. This approach seemed to gradually spread among vast majority of Detroit's white citizens during the second part of the 20th century.

Such responses indicated lasting hostile feelings towards black citizens. The number of whites who had an understanding and accepted blacks was substantially smaller. In general, it was mostly blacks who preferred the current situation in Detroit, since the environment in the South where they migrated from was still much worse. This social exploration provided a more detailed look at Detroit during its peak population period and also suggested that a substantial social decline was probably forthcoming.

It should be noted that this survey also displayed that whites with proper education and higher-income were generally more inclined and opened to the thought of housing equality for blacks. Racism was primarily spread among whites belonging to the working class. This difference suggests that race did not represent the only line Detroit was divided by. It now appears that class was splitting the city as well.

In 1950 the city of Detroit held population of 1,85 million, 16 percent of this number were black citizens. The outskirts of Detroit were slightly more populated with about 3 million inhabitants. As a consequence of white flight, the proportion of inhabitants in the next decade shifted and the population of metropolitan area around Detroit moved upwards by 25 percent, to around 3,8 million people. This increase reflected on the population of Detroit, which decreased by 10 percent, now holding 1,67 million citizens. Moreover, these demographic changes appear to have a racial overtone, as in the 1950's approximately 360,000 white inhabitants left the city, whereas 180,000 black migrants arrived. In the metropolitan area only 2 percent of new incomers were black. As whites were departing, blacks were arriving, since they still saw Detroit as auspicious.

Besides political and demographic changes, Detroit was in the 1950s affected by economical and working changeover. The "Big Three" of automobile industry followed by other leading contractors in the city made a strategic decision of planned decentralization. This plan aimed to develop factories that would be located close enough to customers across the U.S and to reduce the cost of labor, which was pressing the automobile industry in Detroit heavily.

The UAW and its success in fight for better wages pushed the city's automobile giants in the corner and therefore compromised their ability to battle their competition on the field of costs. As a result, the "Big Three" was seeking other ways to regain advantage

over their opponents in auto industry. Eventually, Detroit's auto manufacturers adopted a strategy of business integration, which meant creating their own components for final automobile assembly, and began to decentralize. To state a couple of examples, new factories of General Motors were gradually built in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Jersey and even Kansas City. Now it was not only white citizens leaving Detroit, but also the industrial giants, even though they did not leave completely.

The decision to relocate was not made easily, as business managers often praised the quality of work in Detroit and described it as one of the perks of having factories there. On the other hand, what they disliked about Detroit was the cost of the labor and high income tax rates.

What seems to be interesting is the fact that directors of approximately 50 percent of factories that had adopted the decentralization plan stated that their plants located in Detroit and surrounding Michigan area were built mostly by accident. To be more precise, it would be better to call it a convenience rather than accident. Since some entrepreneurs started their business endeavors in the area either because they were born here or they were fond of the place. Whereas for others, such as Ford, Detroit possessed a convenient lot to offer.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Detroit had abundance of iron (available from Minnesota) and timber (available from Michigan itself). Considering that early car frames were wooden, Detroit was located perfectly. Moreover, water transportation and rail routes seemed ideal for car shipment to the biggest cities across the country.

Nonetheless, these geographic predispositions were not the only thing that stood behind Detroit's successful years. Managerial behavior of Detroit automobile executives should be mentioned. Compared to current Silicon Valley's executives, Detroit's industrialists behaved very similarly in terms of research and innovation, which various competitors across the country failed to keep up with. To state an example, Henry Ford, being one of the innovative industrialists, established a new company when his first one failed. This behavior is quite similar to start-up business methods which are frequently associated with the Silicon Valley companies. In conclusion, Detroit's geographic predispositions along with innovative entrepreneurship practically launched Detroit's most prosperous years, which lasted until the beginning of the 1930s.

Due to these facts, it could be uttered that the development of Detroit as a great industrial city in the U.S. during the first half of the 20th century does not seem to be built on purposeful actions, instead Detroit rather benefited from its Midwest location.

Therefore, it might evoke an idea that the growth of the city, which the most selling musical artist of the 21st century described as “the best manufacturing city in the world”, was enabled by an advantageous location in the Midwest area.⁴⁷

Subsequently, this enabled the “Motor City” to grow. However, when focus of local inhabitants altered, due to whatever reasons, Detroit began to lose the advantage of prosperous location and commenced to slowly decline, while losing its industrial momentum. After all, it seems that Detroit was a city of several decades lasting convenience.

3.2 Detroit in the 1960s

Prior to the 1960s the City of Detroit experienced instability and struggle in almost every decade since the 1930s, and the 1960s proved to be no different. In this chapter, Detroit’s development in this period will be examined.

The overall situation in the United States during this decade was marked by violence, as almost thirty riots occurred between the years 1964 and 1967. Severity of these outbursts differed substantially; some of them were quite non-violent, whereas others left a bloody stain. It is crucial to notice that nearly all of these eruptions arised upon foundations of futility and frustration in black neighborhoods over housing matters, job discrimination and racist methods of police departments. The Detroit riot of 1967 was incomparable with the other ones, both as to damages and injuries, since its impacts were substantially more far-reaching.⁴⁸

The Detroit riot erupted after a police raid on a welcoming party thrown for two black soldiers returning from Vietnam. Having received anonymous information about a potential public danger, the police searched the house where the party was taking place and found eighty patrons inside. Not being aware of the party context, the police decided to arrest all participants. While waiting for reinforcements and vehicles for the transportation of the arrested, a group of annoyed people formed outside and protested against the police practices. When the police left, the mob did not disperse; quite on the contrary, the frustration intensified and some of the participants even broke inside a local store. After a

⁴⁷ EminemVEVO, “Eminem - Beautiful,” *YouTube* video, 0:09, 25 November 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgT1AidzRWM> (accessed 2 May 2016).

⁴⁸ Robyn Meredith, “5Days in 1967 Still Shake Detroit,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/23/us/5-days-in-1967-still-shake-detroit.html> (accessed May 1, 2016).

couple of hours, the looting spread and vandalism permeated through the city, which was soon consumed in flames.

The riot claimed forty-three lives over five days. Most of the victims were young blacks, who were shot by law enforcing units. Additionally, over one thousand people were injured and almost seven thousand were put behind bars. Over the course of the riot some two thousand buildings were set aflame. Overall, the riot caused historic damages and it is remembered as one of the most violent outbursts in the history of the Midwestern area.

Unlike the riot of 1943, this civilian surge was not a result of intolerance between blacks and whites; rather it was a loud expression of frustration from the black citizens. It could be described as a revolt against the state of affairs in Detroit and the inability of the local political scene to facilitate lives of common residents.

In the aftermath, establishment of various commissions was supposed to provide explanations why such event had occurred. The Kerner Commission carried out an investigation and their results indicated that it was a response of blacks to racism that stood behind the riot. The commission concluded that Detroit was becoming a city of two societies: black and white.

Critics of these explanations stated that they are mere simplifications which do not convey the whole story. The critics argued that despite the fact that racism in the South was even worse than in the Midwest or North, cities such as Alabama or Birmingham had not fallen for civil acts of violence. Therefore, it appears to be unlikely that racism triggered the Detroit riot, instead it seems that it was the dormant political background in the city which stood behind the outburst, more specifically, it was the housing policies that failed to help blacks with integration into Detroit's civil life.

As the critics continue, the difference between blacks in the South and the blacks in the North lied in their life views and expectations. In the south they were forced to live according to the Jim Crow laws, while in the North they desired to make a life for themselves freely. What is more, other analyses conducted after the riot indicated that majority of blacks involved in the riot were born in the North, therefore, it can be assumed that they held similar life views and opinions.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Sidney Fine, *Expanding the Frontier of Civil Rights: Michigan, 1948-1968* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 320-326.

Carl S. Taylor, a sociologist at Michigan State University, stated that the riot had a tremendous impact on Detroit and influenced every aspect of its life. He believed that this violent outburst changed the whole area, which was relatively stable and possessed functional social institutions until the riot, into the “third city”. This new term was used to describe a new Detroit – a city infested with criminal activities, violence and hateful attitude towards the police, which was seen as a public enemy.

The civil rebellion of 1967 proved to be crucial for the further development of Detroit. Even nowadays the areas that were destroyed during the riot are not inhabited nor repaired for that matter. The damaged property is not the only thing serving as a reminder of this violent clash, as frustration of black citizens with the political and social sphere in Detroit is still apparent to this day. All the political failures of Detroit’s representatives to facilitate the lives of black community over the course of the 20th century and overall industrial instability manifested in one immense civil riot, which showed what had arguably been was apparent a long time before: Detroit was on its way to the bottom.

3.3 Coleman Young’s Takeover of Detroit

Coleman Young is probably one of the most well-known Detroit politicians. Although he was the longest-serving mayor of Detroit and the first African-American in this function, he has not become known for these facts, but rather for his actual contribution to Detroit’s development.

Young appeared on the Detroit’s political scene just a year before the local automobile manufactures were hit by the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) regulations in 1975. These standards which limited energy consumption of cars and light trucks by improving their fuel economy were enacted in response to the 1967 Oil Embargo⁵⁰.

Detroit’s “Big Three” was not prepared for this law change, and as they were struggling to comply with the CAFE regulations, Japanese automakers were given a unique opportunity to expand their market shares and claim the overall automobile market domination. The Japanese manufacturers were producing smaller and more economical

⁵⁰ The 1967 Oil Embargo was a response from the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries to the American delivery of weapons to Israel between 1967 and 1968.

cars, which American vehicles could not compete with in terms of fuel efficiency, since American cars tended to be much larger, ergo having higher fuel consumption.⁵¹

Moreover, the United States entered a financial recession in the same year and the City of Detroit was suddenly one step closer to its grave. In 1973 the manufacturers across the USA produced 12,637,000 trucks and passenger cars. In 1975 it was only 8,985,000, which is almost a 30 percent fall in production. The decreasing car production meant lower revenues for the companies, which all of a sudden did not need so many employees. This meant bad news for the “Motor City” where car production is the biggest source of employments and income for both the city and their citizens.

At first, it seemed that the 1970s would be in many regards similar to the 1960s or at least as challenging. Undoubtedly, Detroit was going through another difficult period, however, the citizens themselves attempted to improve their situation this time. In 1974 the city responded to the worsening situation by electing Coleman Young, who seemed to be a promising public figure, a mayor.

Growing up in Black Bottom, one of the city’s immigrant ghettos, new mayor obtained first-hand experience of Detroit’s housing troubles. He also became familiar with job exclusion, as he had applied for an electrician’s training program and despite him having the top grade from admission exams, his spot in the program was given to a white young man instead.⁵² Coleman Young seemed to be a man of the people, having experience with nearly all the difficulties that most of the blacks in Detroit had to deal with on daily basis.

The city that Young took over was not Detroit in its prime, as he would probably have wished; it was Detroit on the brink of collapse. To prevent the city’s further decline, the new mayor immediately turned his sight to social policies where he implemented new hiring system which was supposed to divide the jobs in the city hall equally between whites and blacks. Workers of African-American origin were about to receive equal working opportunities as well as housing for that matter.⁵³ It is important to note that in

⁵¹ William D. Smith, “Price Quadruples at for Iranian Crude Oil at Auction,” New York Times, December 12, 1973, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9407E4DE1339E73ABC4A52DFB4678388669EDE> (accessed May 1, 2016).

⁵² Wilbur C. Rich, *Coleman Young and Detroit Politics: From Social Activist to Power Broker* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 100-115.

⁵³ Ibid.

some parts of the city, in both the manufacturing and the housing sphere, blacks might already have already been treated as equals, however, it was not legally binding or politically supported.

Furthermore, he planned to encourage implementation of this hiring strategy to the private sector and also to focus on the rising number of criminal activities in the city, for which purpose he declared the following:

“I issue a warning to all those pushers, to all rip-off artists, to all muggers: It’s time to leave Detroit; hit Eight Mile Road! And I don’t give a damn if they are black or white, or if they wear Superfly suits or blue uniforms with silver badges. Hit the road.”⁵⁴

The statement above was a direct proclamation of war against illegal practices and all criminal elements in the city. Improvement of the Detroit’s economic background was one of the principal focuses of his five terms in Detroit’s city hall, but despite his almost iconic character, he found himself with very little means that could be used to help the local manufactures, actions that could uplift the whole Detroit. The victories he achieved, some of which are particularized below, were insufficient for the Detroit’s imminent resurrection, which would still be probably an impossible mission.

The overall economic situation did not play into the mayor’s hands either. With the American nation failing to perform a quick recovery after the recession of 1975, the City of Detroit practically entered the final stage of its decline. At this point, even Coleman Young, a determined man of action, could not stop Detroit from falling all the way to the bottom.

Nevertheless, it seems that he did not cease trying, since he planned the construction of the Joe Luis Arena in order to keep the hockey team of Detroit Red Wings from relocating. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1990s Young tore down two neighborhoods that were in a very poor state to make space for two new factories in order to boost Detroit’s economy. One of the factories was associated with General Motors and the other one with Chrysler. Even though the new General Motors factory, which was created by a merger of two outmoded plants, was employing about seven thousand workers less than

⁵⁴ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 2010.

the old ones combined, the mayor still saw the successful completion of this project as at least a small victory.

What seems striking is that his supporters referred to him only in superlatives, whereas his opponents could not stand his political practices. Coleman Young, a mayor who was not afraid to raise his voice and take action, was a strong political leader, exactly the kind that Detroit had needed for so long. Unfortunately, the city waited for him maybe too long. Young inherited Detroit on the verge of collapse and despite his vehement efforts in mostly social and economic sphere, he did not stop the Detroit's decline. Nonetheless, it would not be too courageous to claim that he in fact reduced the fall and perhaps even prepared ground for the possible resurrection of the city.

3.4 The City without Future

Over the course of the 20th century Detroit had many different nicknames, some of which have already been mentioned in this thesis. Each of the nicknames reflected a particular state of affairs in the city. During the 1910s and 1920s many would refer to Detroit as the City of Tomorrow; these were its prime years. World War II brought a new name; as the city transformed for the purpose of war efforts, it became the Arsenal of Democracy. In the 1960s Detroit was Motown, still the car making bastion in the eyes of most Americans. The 1970s and 1980s created an unflattering alias for Detroit – Murder City.⁵⁵ The affairs that led to this nickname will be looked upon in the following paragraphs.

In the decades of 1970s and 1980s Detroit began to resemble a broken society. A society in capitalistic economy is built upon employment, and as jobs in Detroit were scarce and those who had had a chance to follow them left, the city had no solid foundations to stand upon. The people who stayed were in a dead end: poor, unemployed, uneducated and addicted. These were the general characteristics that would be used for description of the remaining residents who usually belonged to at least one of the previously mentioned categories.

Without employment and education, crime began to spread rapidly. In 1987 the murder rate reached its all time peak – 686 homicides, which is a rate over 60 per 100,000

⁵⁵ Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 50-80.

citizens. To draw a comparison, the same rate was 30 for New York City in 1990, which was the year of its highest criminal activity. New York City, the place where many Americans feared to walk in, would be still considered quite safe according to these numbers or at least in comparison with Detroit where the streets were much more dangerous. Moreover, the statistics state that towards the end of the 1980's there was nearly 1,500 rapes and 14,400 armed robberies in Detroit. It seems that Detroit had fallen not only economically, but also morally.⁵⁶

As to current housing situation, Detroit registered over one hundred thousand empty housing units, which is a striking contrast to the 1930s and 1940s when people were almost fighting for accommodation. As seen earlier in this thesis, the housing situation changed in the 1950s, which were marked by gradual emptying of the city. This trend continued to the city's bankruptcy in 2013, and probably still continues to this day. It is estimated that proximately 300,000 people left Detroit from 2000 to 2010, and their abandoned houses are still left unturned at display.⁵⁷

Despite the horrifying statistics, it seems that all hope might not be lost. Many artists relocated to Detroit, as they had been drawn by its cheap living and rich history. Some of them even launched artistic campaigns in order to help the city, e.g. in the 1980s an artist named Tyree Guyton began to turn abandoned houses in his neighborhood into public art – the Heidelberg Project.

It seems that it has been mainly culture and its successful representatives that keep Detroit alive, names such as Eminem, the White Stripes and the MC5. Moreover, many television documentaries have been filmed around Detroit, several art photography books dedicated to the city have been published and *Time* magazine carried out one-year-long project to gather enough quantitative information about Detroit's collapse. To conclude, the media and artists have not forgotten Detroit. However, the related question is whether they can help the city in any sense.

Despite these efforts, the main economic, political and social problems remain merely untackled and it seems that there is currently no visible entity that could embark on the path aiming towards the rescue of Detroit. It has proven to be a city of enormous contrasts:

⁵⁶ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 225-236.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

a city of hope and despair, a city of success and a crushing defeat. A city of tomorrow that failed to have a future.

3.5 Pittsburgh: A Close Neighbor

When talking about Detroit's decline, Pittsburg is often referred to as a fitting comparison. The most frequently posed question asks what Pittsburg did differently so that it was able to overcome its internal struggle and escape its falling trajectory. The following chapter attempts to provide the necessary answers.

Initially, it should be emphasized that Pittsburg was not identical to Detroit; they were not similar cities, even though they are basically located in the same Midwest area. Nevertheless, these cities did share comparable characteristics that enable this analysis.

The closest resemblance with Detroit lies in Pittsburgh's steel industrial background and it being nearly crushed by foreign competitors. The 1970s and 1980s were rather tough on Pittsburg and its economy, as massive unemployment hit the region.⁵⁸ The substantial loss of jobs occurred after the steel industry collapsed and several business mergers drew many administrative workers away.

As the city officials were looking for a way to revive the economy, they implemented a plan that Detroit probably never contemplated. They searched for solutions beyond the frame of steel industry and came up with a new policy that was focused on three segments: finance, health care and higher education. The statistics from 2010 suggest that this plan was a success, as one fifth of the jobs in the Pittsburgh area was provided by services connected to health care and education.⁵⁹ It could be stated that these working placements were secure and viable, since not even the Great Recession in 2008 jeopardized them.

The City of Detroit never provided its citizens with major job opportunities; this was exclusively under the domain of private sector and when the sector failed, the jobs disappeared irretrievably. Comparing the working possibilities in both cities may be tricky, considered that Detroit's current population rather substantially exceeds Pittsburgh in its most populated era. Nonetheless, it does not change the fact that Detroit did almost nothing to change its gradually rising unemployment rates.

⁵⁸ Thomas Klier, "From Tail Fins to Hybrids: How Detroit Lost its Dominance of the U.S. Auto Market," *Economic Perspectives* 33 (2009): 2–17, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1406550 (accessed January 5, 2016).

⁵⁹ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 225-235.

Speaking about employment, one of the most sustainable job providers in Pittsburgh are institutions of higher education, to be more precise, twelve universities and colleges. They were allowed to flourish thanks to funds provided by Andrew Carnegie, a Pittsburgh's equivalent of Henry Ford. When looking at Henry Ford and other industrial giants in Detroit, they did not support education in the City of Detroit, which has only one larger public university. The "Big Three" of Detroit was seemingly trying to gain from the city, rather than to contribute to it.

The fact that the auto giants did not contribute to the purposeful development of city indicates much about their own entrepreneurial goals and visions. Nowadays many companies commit to consistent improvement of such areas as their employees' lives and their surrounding environment – social areas that industrial giants in Detroit did very little to improve.

Although Pittsburgh seems to be built on the similar industrial foundations as Detroit, its history, social and political background are substantially different. To briefly compare their differences in the 20th century, Pittsburgh was affected by the Great Migration as well as Detroit, however, on a much smaller scale. Whereas Detroit was completely swamped by the influx, Pittsburgh's black population grew coordinately and not in such numbers.⁶⁰

It is of immense importance to mention that Pittsburgh has never dealt with "neighborhood-shifting violence" that Detroit was failing to cope with for the larger part of the 20th century.⁶¹ Essentially, Steel City, which is a popular nickname for Pittsburgh, has never suffered any housing difficulties. Moreover, there was no massive-scale flight of citizens, as in the case of Detroit's white flight.

According to statistics from 2009, it was about 15 percent of Pittsburgh households that were living below the federal poverty line. As to the same statistic from Detroit, it was 28 percent. Regarding median household income, it was 36,000 dollars for Pittsburgh, and 30,000 dollars for Detroit. However, both of them are still below 50,000 dollars, which is the national median. In general, these statistics reflect how both cities performed economically in the 20th history. To draw a conclusion, Detroit had to accommodate more residents, who were statistically less educated and much poorer.

⁶⁰ Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 240.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, it could be said that Pittsburgh seems to be different from Detroit in its ability to unite and co-operate in tough times. Moreover, Steel City has learned how to differentiate its city income, while Detroit has never done that. Both cities were built on one industry foundations; however, Pittsburgh has manifested the ability of creative and out-of-the-box thinking, which enabled the city to overcome the collapse of its steel industry and revive with the help of different sectors of economy. In essence, Detroit allowed its automobile industry to run the city and even to exploit it in a sense. While carrying Detroit to the skies in its prime years, the automobile industry slowly depreciate the city's prospects for a promising future.

CONCLUSION

Detroit's complex history containing stories of both glorious achievements and crushing defeats suggests that it is a truly exceptional city. According to many contemporary analyses, Detroit fell for a victim of racial inequality. However, careful examination carried out in this thesis suggests that it was not racism that plunged Detroit into bankruptcy. Instead it was disunity rooted in all three aspects of Detroit's life that are described in this work: political, economic and social.

The first probably noticeable political figure in Detroit was Coleman Young who assumed the mayor officer in 1974. At the time of his election, Detroit had already been irretrievably heading to the bottom and despite the Mayor's immense efforts, he was not able save the city and compensate for his predecessors' failures. After the Great Depression Detroit needed its political representatives to step forward and briskly take action, however, they shunned the administrative responsibilities and let Detroit – a manufacturing giant – stumble over newly surfacing problems in a rather clumsy way.

With three giant manufactures the city seemed to be secured, nonetheless, its representatives failed to recognize the danger of being established on only one-industry foundations. The success that the automobile industry brought to Detroit in the 1910s and 1920s camouflaged substantial underlying problems which were slowly unfolding during the century.

The overall social situation reflected the aforementioned political and economic state of affairs. As proper housing was rare to find during the first half of the 20th century, nowadays abandoned and dilapidated homes circle Detroit, leaving memories of the city's prime years in the minds of veterans and in the history textbooks.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAFE	Corporate Average Fuel Economy.
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations.
GM	General Motors.
KKK	Ku Klux Klan.
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
UAW	United Automobile Workers.
USA	United States of America.
US Army	United States Army
USHA	United States Housing Authority.