

How to prevent
A RACE RIOT
in your
home town...

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THE COMMITTEE ON RACE DISCRIMINATION
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
170 Fifth Avenue, New York (10) N. Y.
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Foreword

As the citizens of the United States become interested in the peoples of all the world they are soon made to realize that their concern about Africa, China, Russia, and India will not be honored unless they are equally concerned about New Mexico and Harlem.

Because in every war period the danger of race riots is great—there were nine such riots between 1916 and 1921—the Committee on Race Discrimination feels that it is important to get information about race riot prevention into the hands of responsible citizens at once.

This pamphlet serves this single, rather limited, very specific purpose. The program which it outlines is being applied in a number of communities, with local adaptations such as you will undoubtedly wish to make for your own community if you adopt its general recommendations. The Committee will welcome correspondence with local groups entering this crucial field of the war effort. In fact it will be most helpful if you write us what you have done, what success you have had and what you are planning to do, since the prompt clearing of experience among our members and correspondents is bound to be valuable.

**COMMITTEE ON RACE DISCRIMINATION
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION**

October 1, 1943



IN WORLD WAR I we had race riots; during World War II we still have them. But we also organize to prevent them.

Warned by the loss of life, property, man-hours, morale and pride which Detroit sustained after its bloody riot of thirty hours, seven American cities have organized citizen's committees whose purpose it is to prevent race riots during the war and during the even more dangerous period of tension which will occur when post-war adjustments have to be made. Nothing like this has ever happened before in American history.

Race riots can be prevented. New York's colored leaders, city officials and its white and colored citizens proved this up to the hilt on August 1 and 2, 1943, when they kept a Harlem riot in which four people were killed and two million dollars worth of property were destroyed from spilling over into a race riot. The fact is that potential race riots have been averted on an average of once a week ever since the Detroit riot of June 20, 1943.

Danger Areas

Although the methods of successful race riot prevention are understood in some localities, they are not understood in others. Competent students of race relations estimate that there are twenty-three communities in the United States where the racial tensions of World War II are acute. These communities are: Birmingham, Ala.; Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven, Conn.; Chicago, Ill.; Indianapolis and Gary, Ind.; Alexandria, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport, La.; Detroit, Mich.; Baltimore, Md.; Newark, N. J.; Columbus, O.; Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Chester, Pa.; Providence, R. I.; Houston and Dallas, Tex.; Memphis, Tenn. and Washington, D. C. In addition, there are scores of other war production centers and town located near army camps which face similar dangers.

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Every American city where a race riot may break out needs three programs. (1) It needs to plan what to do in case a race riot breaks out in order to minimize its violence and duration. (2) It needs an emergency program which will prevent minor racial clashes or rumors of clashes from developing into a race riot. (3) It needs to find some immediate, practicable solutions for the problems which are making it hard for the colored and white people in the community to live together peaceably.

A Riot in your Home Town?

Wartime race riots are likely to occur:

- (1) In overcrowded and underserved war production centers.
- (2) In towns, neighborhoods, or recreation places near army camps.
- (3) In northern cities where some southern whites have a traditional southern point of view about colored people which conflicts with northern attitudes and customs.
- (4) In southern towns where northern colored soldiers in army camps resent the South's Jim Crow restrictions.
- (5) In cities where many colored people have arrived since the war.
- (6) In cities where first and second generation immigrants from Europe resent the presence of the colored people.
- (7) In towns where the standard of living of the colored people is low, due to poor housing, inadequate education and lack of employment opportunities.
- (8) In cities where white organizations, including the Klan's innocent-front organizations are working hard to poison race relations.

If you live in such a community, you will want to know, as a citizen, precisely how much danger of a race riot exists. This is easy to determine. To take the temperature of race relations in your town, find out how many racial clashes between colored and white people there have been since the war began. A racial clash is any kind of a fight, quarrel, feud, or disagreement of serious proportions between colored and white people. *If the number and intensity of racial clashes has been increasing steadily in your home town, the situation is very serious.*

Take the case of Detroit. It had one serious

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racial clash in 1941, a minor race riot in 1942, and 12 racial clashes in 1943.

Act Quietly, But Act

If race riots are to be prevented, it is necessary to establish the essential facts about racial tension in your town. A Committee of Inquiry, consisting of three or four citizens of good reputation and sound judgment whose interest in civic affairs is well known should interview the Police Commissioner; the Board of Education; the city's recreation authorities, such as the Y.M.C.A. secretary, settlement heads and playground directors; colored leaders, such as secretaries of colored organizations, colored editors or clergymen; the city editors of local papers and local representatives of the FBI. You will want to find out the following facts: How many racial clashes have there been since Dec. 7, 1941? When and where did they occur? What appeared to be the cause? How many people were involved? Was there any violence?

This inquiry should be carried on quietly and confidentially. If the people whom you interview convince your Committee that racial clashes are increasing in frequency and intensity, you had better take action at once. Most Detroiters will tell you now that they knew that the race riot of June 1943 was coming for three years, but they *hoped* it would blow over.

Failure to act in time cost Detroit 34 lives, 319 injuries, 1,505 arrests, the loss of 1,000,000 man-hours, the loss of 30 to 50, and in some neighborhoods 90 per cent of retail sales, the life savings of over 200 shop keepers and the destruction of over \$2,000,000 worth of property.

A riot differs only in size from an ordinary quarrel or street fight in which physical violence, injury or death are involved. But because of its size, a riot is harder to control. In the Detroit riot, for instance, mobs ranged in size from 50 to 10,000 persons.

A race riot is a riot in which people recognizably

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different as to their skin color or features get into conflict with each other. Troubles between the native Chinese of pre-war Shanghai and the Sikh policemen imported by the English from India may be race riots.

The two fundamental causes of the race riots of World War II are the overcrowding and underservicing of wartime production centers and towns near army camps, and the too great disparity between our wartime professions of democracy and the actual facts of Negro life in the United States.

If your local Civilian Defense or War Council is so situated that it can take on the job of a race riot prevention, no new organization needs to be created.* If, however, your local Civilian Defense Council cannot undertake the project, then you should organize an emergency Citizen's Committee for the Prevention of Race Riots. In organizing such a Committee you should turn to such white and colored organizations in your town as already have a professional interest in race relations. The thirty national organizations represented in the Co-ordinating Conference on Racial Minorities, 170 Fifth Avenue, New York City, have over 500 branches in local communities. If you write the Conference, it will tell you what local organizations in your town you can contact. Even if there is an official committee, appointed by the governor or the mayor, it will be useful to have a representative Citizen's Committee, because the official and the unofficial Committees can stimulate and assist each other.

A program of riot prevention which such a Council or Committee can carry out in three weeks is here presented.

Step One

A Public Relations Committee consisting of influential people should check with your chief of police, your mayor, and your governor as to what arrangements have been worked out for bringing in extra police and militia in the event of a riot.

The Police Commissioner of Detroit said: "It had been the understanding of myself and Mayor Jeffries that we could obtain reinforcement assistance

*The Civilian Defense Council of the Bronx is developing a riot prevention program along the lines suggested in this pamphlet. The address is: Mr. Roderick Stevens, Bronx Civilian Defense Volunteer Office, Bronx County Court House, 850 Walton Avenue, Bronx, New York.

in 45 minutes." Actually it took 12 hours and 45 minutes for the troops to arrive. An hour after they arrived, the rioting stopped.

In wartime most city police forces are understaffed and many men are new and inexperienced. According to J. Edgar Hoover, the wartime turnover in police personnel frequently runs as high as 60 per cent. In Detroit, where riot arrests were made in all but one of the city's precincts, 3,800 extra men were needed to get the situation under control.

The extra forces on which a city can call are as follows:

- (1) LOCAL POLICE: Since policemen work in three shifts, the police who are off duty can be called in.
- (2) THE NATIONAL GUARD: Available only in peacetime.
- (3) THE STATE GUARD: Can be called out by the governor. It consists of older men, often veterans of World War I, whose discipline and caliber varies from state to state.
- (4) DEPUTIZED CITIZENS: For lack of colored policemen, 1,000 colored men and women were deputized to patrol the streets by New York's mayor in the Harlem riot of August, 1943.
- (5) MILITARY POLICE: In wartime, the Army Provost Marshal can be asked to supply military police. Several hundred battalions of Zone of the Interior Military Police are scattered around the country, many being located near war production centers. Army camps also have military police. These men are above the average on the basis of their I.Q. and Army classification tests. Although the M.P.'s have authority only in relation to soldiers, their presence had a salutary effect in the Harlem riot.
- (6) OCD WARDENS: Air raid wardens with OCD insignia were used in the Harlem riot.
- (7) MARTIAL LAW: In Detroit, the governor asked the President of the United States for assistance, the President issued a proclamation, and the U. S. troops stationed 45 minutes from Detroit's business center and drilled in advance for possible race riot duty, were mustered out.

In Detroit and in the Chicago riot of World War I, the troops were called in or arrived too late, at incalculable cost to lives, morale and property. One reason this is likely to happen is because under federal statutes U. S. troops can be called in to assist local authorities in the general maintenance of order only if local authorities formally state that the situation is beyond their control. Local authorities are understandably reluctant to make such a statement.

What needs to be clearly understood is that although Michigan asked for and received the assistance of the U. S. militia, Detroit was not placed under martial law. Martial law, in which military authority supersedes civil authority, is almost never invoked. In Detroit, an intermediate state between civil and military law prevailed, in which the two authorities co-

operated. Attorney General Biddle has recommended that the Secretary of War and the Department of Justice work out a manual for local officials which will expedite the securing of troops in the event of race riots.

Citizen's Committees need, in the event of a race riot, to persuade local authorities to ask for troops *before* the situation is out of control. Whenever it is in any way possible to secure them some of the troops should be colored.

Step Two

Have your Public Relations Committee check with the chief of police on the policing of colored and mixed neighborhoods.

Now that the Detroit riot is over, Councilman Edwards has asked for more colored police officers. The Hastings St. precinct, center of Detroit's principal colored section had in June, 1943 only seven colored policemen in a force of over 200. Many Detroiters believe that 100 colored policemen stationed along Hastings St. could have stopped the rioting in one hour. In the Harlem riot, deputized colored men and women with night sticks patrolled the streets, colored policemen made most of the arrests, and colored looters who sighted a detachment of colored M.P.'s stopped their looting to cheer.

The stationing of an adequate number of colored policemen in colored and mixed neighborhoods, not just during riots but permanently, is of primary importance in race riot prevention. It is essential because colored people will ordinarily trust and obey colored officers. Almost equally important is the immediate transfer from such neighborhoods to strictly white precincts of white policemen not friendly to colored people. This includes whites from the South who address northerners as "niggers". It should certainly include members of the Klan, the Klan's innocent-fronts and other fascist-minded organizations. Only highly experienced and professionally trained police officers should be stationed in neighborhoods where racial conflicts may occur. This fact was

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recognized by the Citizen's Committee of Los Angeles, which recommended after the Zoot Suit Riot of June 1943 that "law enforcement agencies should provide special training for officers dealing with minority groups."

Step Three

Ask citizens to report all rumors about racial trouble to a center designated by your Citizen's Committee.

Race riots are often started by rumors, which later turn out to be completely false. The Chicago riot of 1919 began because of the actual drowning of a 13 year old colored boy. But the Detroit riot broke out because of rumors: that whites had drowned a colored baby on Belle Isle Bridge, that a colored man had murdered or raped a white woman on Belle Isle Bridge, that two days before the riot broke out a colored man had raped a white woman on an elevator midway between floors in a Detroit factory. The police have investigated these rumors and found that none of them had any basis in fact.

Another type of rumor predicts that a race riot will take place at a particular time and place in the future. *Such rumors should always be reported promptly to the police.*

On May 7, 1943 white taxicab drivers in Washington, D. C. circulated the news that there would be a race riot that night. Pressure was brought to bear on Edward J. Kelly, the Superintendent of Police, to cancel a job discrimination protest and parade which the colored people were holding in Franklin Park that night. Superintendent Kelly not only refused to do this, but personally participated in the parade. There was no trouble.

The wisest newspaper and radio people in your town should be asked to serve on a Rumor Committee. The first and probably the most important task of the Rumor Committee will be to educate

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the public about the fallacy and danger of racial rumors. In Washington, D. C. when the predicted riot of May 7 did not come off, the Washington Post, the Washington Evening Star, and the Washington Daily News printed editorials titled respectively "Dangerous Rumors," "Don't Spread Rumors," and "These Rumors Are Lies."

In connection with this educational campaign, the press and radio should instruct citizens to report rumors of racial trouble to designated centers. If racial tension is high, it is important that the press and radio inform the public that a rumor is in circulation and that this rumor has been investigated and found false. For instance, if in Detroit, the elevator rape rumor which began to circulate Friday had been investigated and denied Saturday or Sunday, it would have done much to cool Detroit tempers.

Once a riot breaks, official riot instructions should be given at least every hour. This was done by some of the New York stations the second night of the Harlem riot. At the same time, the radio should give as much succinct news of the riot as possible and should contrast this authenticated news with the lurid stories which are circulating. *It must be remembered that rumors not only start a riot: they can keep it going.*

Step Four

Provide jobs and war work for young people, both white and colored, some of whom might otherwise become participants in race riots.

In the Detroit riot, seventy-five per cent of the rioters are believed to have been under twenty; in the Chicago riot, the average age of rioters ranged from seventeen to eighteen.

A major juvenile delinquency wave appeared in England during World War I. According to J. Edgar Hoover, juvenile delinquency among seven-

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teen year olds was in 1943 17 per cent higher than in peacetime.

The trouble with young people from the underprivileged areas of the city is that in wartime they are both neglected and unused: neglected because the trained social and recreation workers once stationed in their neighborhoods are in the armed forces, unused because no important civilian war work is assigned to them. Enrollment in the Junior Service Corps of the OCD is now open to boys and girls under the age of sixteen. There is also the High School Victory Corps. What is urgently needed is some similar organization which will include young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who are not in school.

The needs of wartime youth, according to those who know them best, are, in the order of their importance: (1) jobs, (2) important assignments in volunteer civilian war work and (3) better recreational facilities.

There are a great many jobs which young people could do in connection with your race riot prevention program. They could map the city's racial clashes and tension areas. They could find out the real story back of racial clashes and rumors, many of which originate in schools. Moreover your Committee might decide to have a Youth War Participation Committee consisting of carefully chosen individuals of college age take over the complete responsibility for dealing with white and colored young people.

Step Five

Set up an Information Committee which can be depended upon to provide reliable and authoritative information on local race relations.

Your Committee of Inquiry has determined whether racial clashes in your town are increasing in frequency and intensity. Your Information Committee will locate areas of racial tension and list

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the major causes of racial tension in your community. Prof. Charles S. Johnson, one of the country's most scholarly race relations authorities found five racial tension areas inside Detroit and two outside a year before the riot occurred. A racial tension area is a neighborhood with definite boundaries where racial clashes have a tendency to occur. These areas should be the immediate focus of any race riot prevention program.

The principal causes of racial tension are likely to be discrimination in respect to employment, housing, transportation, education and recreation. *The moment your Information Committee is ready to make a report on the fundamental causes of tension that are likely to precipitate race riots in your home town, an Action Committee should be created to work on these problems.*

Any time there is a new racial clash or disturbance, the Information Committee should supply the local press and radio as well as the Citizen's Committee with reliable facts and interpretations about what has occurred.

This Committee should be half colored, half white. It should include colored secretaries of national Negro organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League and the March on Washington Movement, editors, clergymen, local professors of sociology and political science, lawyers and judges.

Your Information Committee will find useful data on riots in the following publications:

(1) *Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America*. Monroe N. Work. H. W. Wilson Co., 1928. "The Negro and Riots." Pp. 560-562.

(2) *The Negro in Chicago*. Chicago Commission on Race Relations. University of Chicago press. Probably the most scholarly, impartial, complete account of a race riot in existence.

(3) *What Caused the Detroit Riot*. Walter White and Thurgood Marshall. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 69 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10 Cents.

(4) *Race Tensions*. University of Chicago Round Table. July 4, 1943. 10 Cents.

(5) *Public Affairs Pamphlet on race riots*. Earl Brown. 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Strategy for other cities based on the experience of Detroit. Fall publication. 10 Cents.

(6) *To Stem This Tide*. Dr. Charles S. Johnson. Pilgrim Press. Definitive work on racial tension areas. Fall publication.

Step Six

A final emergency measure is to call in the aid of the clergy and of church members.

None of our churches sanction race riots. The Catholic Church sponsors Interracial Councils. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America has had a race relations department for twenty-five years. The Central Conference of American Rabbis participated actively in the fight for the FEPC. On Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1943, six clergymen, three white and three colored, representing the three major American faiths participated in a joint ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C.

One of the immediate tasks which clergymen face is to educate their own congregations and especially their young people about racial understanding. But for race riot prevention in a community where racial tensions are taut much more than this is required. It is necessary to demonstrate to the non-church goers of the city that clergymen of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths stand united in their desire to extend the rights of citizenship and fellowship to the colored people in their community. Just what steps the churches working together can take prior to a race riot to prevent such an outbreak they themselves must determine; no one can do this for them. It should be precisely the province of the church to exorcise the powers of evil and hatred that have appeared like monsters among us.

Another extremely difficult and delicate task which the clergy should try to handle, and *which no one else can handle equally well*, is to educate the less enlightened members of their own professional group about race relations.

Once a riot breaks out, radio stations would be performing a patriotic act by making it possible for clergymen of all three faiths to pray continuously for its speedy termination. It would also be highly

proper for churches, white and colored, in all neighborhoods to remain continuously open so as to afford sanctuary to any persons white and colored who might need to take refuge there.

The work of your War Council or your Emergency Citizen's Committee To Prevent Race Riots need not take more than three weeks if well organized. The first meeting should be confidential, and should waste no time on speechmaking or problems of organization. Its function is to appoint three major committees. The Public Relations Committee is responsible for Steps 1, 2, 3 and 6; the Information Committee for Step 5; the Youth War Participation Committee for Step 4. A total of three Citizen's Committee meetings spaced a week apart should be sufficient. Naturally, both the nature and the names of these committees will vary from city to city.

A Permanent Committee

If you live in a city where wartime racial tensions are high and if your Citizen's Committee succeeds in averting a race riot during the war and post-war years, you will have made an important contribution to national morale.

Once it is established your interracial Citizen's Committee should become permanent. Not because it will at all times be needed to prevent race riots, but because it is a point of reference to which both white and colored people can appeal when race relations are not working out smoothly. If trouble relating to discrimination in respect to employment, housing, transportation, education or recreation comes up, your Committee will constitute a sophisticated group of citizens well equipped to deal with such problems.

For help in the solution of such problems, local communities are invited to turn to the Co-ordinating Conference on Racial Minorities, 170 Fifth Ave., New York City, which consists of national organizations working professionally in this field.

DO YOU WANT THE WAR TO END QUICKLY?

Then

Safeguard Racial Peace At Home

Within a few hours after the Detroit riot started, the Axis broadcasters both German and Japanese were triumphantly shrieking the news to their millions of colored listeners in Asia and Africa and it is reported that a year's work done by one section of the OWI in Africa was thereby wiped out. You can prevent this from happening again by acting immediately.

Will you aid in the work of the Committee locally?

Will you contribute and induce your friends to contribute funds for the support of this effort?

Will you aid in the distribution of this pamphlet?

Tear and mail to:

COMMITTEE ON RACE DISCRIMINATION
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION,
170 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

B. HUEBSCH: *Treasurer.*

1. Enclosed is \$..... as a contribution to your work against race discrimination.
2. Enclosed is \$..... for copies of the pamphlet "How To Prevent A Race Riot In Your Home Town." 100 for \$5; 50 for \$3.00; 25 for \$1.75; 1 copy 10 cents.

3. I suggest as others interested:

Name

Address

Name

Address

Name

Address

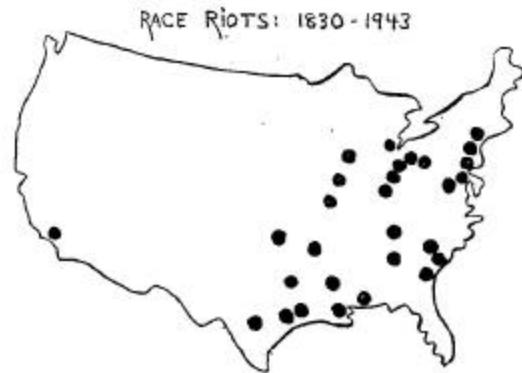
4. I will aid in the work of the Committee or Conference locally.

Signed

Address

City State

Date



1830-40	1831 Bristol
	1834 Charleston, S. C.
	1834 New York, N. Y.
	1835 Baltimore, Md.
1840-50	1841 Cincinnati, Ohio
	1844 Philadelphia, Pa.
	1848 Cincinnati, Ohio
1850-60	1854 Boston, Mass.
1860-70	1863 New York, N. Y.
1870-80	1874 Vicksburg, Miss.
	1874 New York, N. Y.
	1875 Clinton, Tenn.
1880-90	1889 South Carolina
1890-1900	
1900-10	1900 New Orleans, La.
	1900 Akron, Ohio
	1900 New York, N. Y.
	1906 Ohio
	1906 Atlanta, Ga.
	1907 Pacific Coast
	1908 Springfield, Ohio
1910-20	1911 Washington, D. C.
	1911 San Antonio, Tex.
	1917 East St. Louis, Ill.
	1917 Houston, Tex.
	1917 Illinois
	1918 Philadelphia, Pa.
	1919 Chicago, Ill.
	1919 Washington, D. C.
	1919 Longview, Tex.
1920-30	1921 Arkansas
	1921 Tulsa, Okla.
1930-40	1935 Harlem, New York, N. Y.
1940-50	1943 Mobile, Ala.
	1943 Newark, N. J.
	1943 Los Angeles, Calif.
	1943 Camp Stewart, Ga.
	1943 Beaumont, Tex.
	1943 Detroit, Mich.
	1943 Camp Shenango, Pa.
	1943 Harlem, New York, N. Y.

the year before milk
received in Sinsbury
the year of the establish-
ment of the Inter-Racial
Commission

This table, based mainly on Work's bibliography on "The Negro and Riots," listed on page 12 is not complete or definitive. Omitted from the map are: Bristol riot, 1831 and Pacific Coast riot, 1907.

from the book of "How to Prevent a Race Riot
in your Home Town." Raushenbush, Winifred.