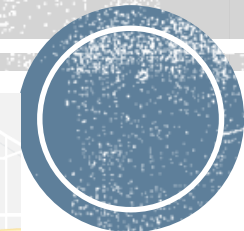


Compton, California:

How the City became Notorious for Gang Violence in the Late 1900's

Indiana University Southeast
Zack Saunders



Thesis Statement

- African American gangs began as a fraternal cause with a shared goal of defending their civil rights as American citizens. Later on, however, African American gangs would fight amongst each other.



Celebrities Came from Compton

- Eazy-E
- Ice Cube
- MC Ren
- Dr. Dre
- The Game
 - Jayceon “The Game” Taylor
 - “Sometimes, these thoughts [about tragedies I’ve participated in and friends that I’ve lost] just get stuck in my head and won’t leave, no matter what I do, and, um—that’s just the power of the city I come from.”



Housing Discrimination

- 1940s - peaceful suburb in Los Angeles
- Ideal area to raise a family
- George W. Bush's childhood hometown
- African Americans excluded from owning property here
- Excluding African Americans from housing privileges = high real estate values
- European Americans physically assaulted members of a varying ethnic group when seen in eastern Compton at night
- African Americans allowed to work a select few occupations in the city
- Housing authorities discriminated against minority groups
 - E.g., Mexican Americans required to live in a small area of Compton



1948 Supreme Court Decision

- Supreme Court objected the use of housing covenants according to ethnicity
- Compton - one of the 1st areas to let varying races move into its homes



1950's – White Flight & African American Defense

- African Americans hopefully moved into Compton houses
- Many European Americans left Compton
- Segregated education → increasing racial hostility
 - African Americans rejected from European American-majority school dances
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 - Fought for fair employment procedures
- Spook Hunters vs. Brass Knuckle Boys
 - African American gangs formed as a fraternal cause
 - Later, African American gangs would rival each other



Early 1960's – Corrupt Hiring Processes

- Housing and schooling authorities kept African and European Americans segregated
- 1968 Kerner Commission
 - Addressed racial segregation in America
 - “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”
- Contradictions to Kerner Report
 - Neither rich citizens nor European Americans made up the totality of Compton's population
 - European and African Americans resided in the *same area* at this time, quarreling over resources
 - Ex: Public education districts' hiring policies
 - Schools in Compton hired the most people compared to other occupations within the city; European Americans held tightly to their sovereignty over the hiring process



1965-1969 – Loss of Tax Base

- White flight increased
 - As European Americans left → less businesses
 - Less businesses → significantly minimized sales tax base
 - Diminished tax base → insufficient funding for teachers' salaries and school textbooks
 - Insufficient educational funding → lower quality education



Compton as Beacon of “Black Power”

- 1970
 - Compton impoverished due to lack of community funding
 - Majority population - African American (70%)
- Black Panther Party established office in Compton (1970)
- Douglas Dollarhide (1969-1973)
 - First African American mayor in Compton



Federal Response

- 1970-1972: American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sought to snuff out the Black Panther Party
 - Panther home invasions
 - Imprisoning leading members



Rivalry

- Centennial High School (red) vs. Compton High School (blue)
- Centennial defeated Compton, approximately 50-0 pts.
- Compton students hurled bottles, threw bricks, and swung baseball bats at Centennial players in the parking lot
 - A few Centennial basketball players were injured
 - Violent, murderous rivalry had begun



Gangs

- Crips
 - Formed by African Americans in South Central Los Angeles (1969)
 - Attracted African Americans to battle neighboring gangs
 - Promised a sense of respect, fraternity, and wealth
- Pirus
 - Formed by African Americans on Piru Street in Compton, CA (1972)
 - Attracted African Americans to combat European American physical assaults
 - Promised a sense of protection and justice



Synopsis

- Gang warfare initiated in mid-1970s
- Factions developed after a basketball game between Centennial and Compton high school
- Members of one faction would murder a member of the opposing faction
- Members of the opposing faction then retaliated
 - Murder member of opposing faction, or their family member
- Member of the first attacking faction would retaliate to recompense their hurt
- Back-and-forth
- Therefore, African Americans in Compton, CA have warred against one another since the mid-1970s
- Media magnified gang culture (e.g., *Straight Outta Compton* album by N.W.A., and *Boyz n the Hood* movie directed by John Singleton)
- Americans associate Compton with gangs and daily shootings



Significance

- Awareness
- Intervention
- Understand suffering of our fellow American citizens
- Counteract repetition of racism's history



Bibliography

- Boyz N the Hood. Directed by John Singleton. United States: Columbia/Tristar Studios, 1991. Film.
- Bradley, Omar. The King of Compton!: The Assassination of a Dream. Los Angeles, CA: Milligan Books, 2007.
- "Compton Is Third in Major Crimes." Compton Herald American, December 12, 1965.
- Compton, Streets Of. "Streets of Compton - Part 1." YouTube. June 14, 2016. Accessed January 21, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyrg8BceJgk&has_verified=1.
- "Definition of 'the FBI' - English Dictionary." Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fbi>.
- Duncan, Garrett Albert. "Black Panther Party." Encyclopædia Britannica. December 27, 2018. Accessed February 05, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party>.
- "Fourteen More Arrested in High School Violence." Compton Herald American, February 15, 1962.
- "'Gang War' Erupts in Compton!" Compton Herald American, December 9, 1965.
- Lassiter, Matthew D., and Christopher Niedt. "Suburban Diversity in Postwar America." Journal of Urban History 39, no. 1 (2013): 3-14.
- Miller, Gary J. Cities by Contract. The Politics of Municipal Incorporation. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Mass - London MIT P VIII, 1981.
- National Advisory Commission of Civil Disorders. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. 2 vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968.
- NWA. Straight Outta Compton. NWA. Priority Records, 1988, CD.
- Odessa Ausbrooks to Anonymous Field Secretary of the NAACP. 1955-1981. NAACP Folder 37, Box 78, Compton, California.
- Pye, Brad, Jr. "Centennial Librarian Stays." LAS (Los Angeles), May 14, 1959, A1, A2 sec.
- Pye, Brad, Jr. "Librarian Case Held "Explosive"." LAS (Los Angeles), April 30, 1959, A1 sec.
- Pye, Brad, Jr. "Will Centennial High Become another Little Rock?" LAS (Los Angeles), April 166, 1959, C1 sec.
- Sides, Josh. L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003.
- Straus, Emily E. Death of a Suburban Dream: Race and Schools in Compton, California. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- "Teen Violence Plagues Police at High School." Compton Herald American, February 9, 1962.

