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We Return Fighting: A Comparative Analysis of Three American Riot Cities between 1917-1921

Theresa M. Lillegard 

Rogers State University
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, USA

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Abstract

Racial violence in the United States has been well-documented by scholars but many questions remain unanswered. The rash of race riots that occurred during and immediately after WWI is a violent and destructive part of America's history. These riots demonstrate a turning point in American race relations because they were characterized by large numbers of blacks who fought their subordination collectively for the first time. Using secondary literature and primary resources, I provide a description of three WWI period riots: the East St. Louis, Illinois riot of 1917, the Chicago, Illinois riot during the Red Summer of 1919, and the Tulsa, Oklahoma riot of 1921 and I point out similarities and differences between the cities in which they occurred. I find that structural characteristics and social conditions of cities are not sufficient indicators of whether or not a riot is likely to occur.

Although progress has been made in racial relations, events in recent years such as the Rodney King riots and the Jena Six controversy illustrate that racial violence is a subject which demands the continued attention of scholars. Violence committed against blacks in the United States has been well documented by scholars but many questions remain unanswered. The rash of race riots that occurred during and immediately after WWI is a violent and destructive part of America's history, and because they affected so many people, it is essential for Americans to gain knowledge of them. Fundamentally, these events in our history illustrate the importance of race relations and how hatred and fear can affect the psychological and economic well-being of people. These riots demonstrate a turning point in American race relations because they were characterized by large numbers of blacks who fought their subordination collectively for the first time. ¹

Some scholars have analyzed riots by studying the individual and what makes them more prone to riot, while others have examined riots with a focus on the structural characteristics and social conditions present in riot cities. My research draws primarily from the latter approach. The purpose of this research is to examine the social environment that was present during these riots and to identify the common precipitants, conditions, and characteristics common to cities where race riots occurred during WWI and immediately after. Some questions I answer are: Has this happened to other nonwhite groups in the United States? Why was there a surge of white-on-black violence during this time? Which characteristics or combination of characteristics was critical in the formation of a riot atmosphere? I am particularly interested in why riots happened in some cities but not others. I begin with a brief discussion of racism and the social environment that was present during the WWI years. Next, I present the research that has been directed at studying the characteristics and conditions of WWI riot cities. Additionally, I provide a description of three WWI period riots: the East St. Louis, Illinois riot of 1917, the Chicago, Illinois riot during the Red Summer of 1919, and the Tulsa, Oklahoma riot of 1921 and I point out similarities and differences between them. I find that structural characteristics and social conditions of cities are not sufficient indicators of whether a riot is likely to occur. Finally, I suggest directions for further research.

Following Arthur Waskow's example, I rely on Gunnar Myrdal's definition of a race riot for the purposes of this study. Myrdal defines a pogrom as being a "massacre" or a "mass lynching" when a large group of whites attack a large group of blacks, with no substantial interference by the state. In a riot, blacks "may be hopelessly outnumbered and beaten, but they fight back. There is danger to the white man participating in the riot as there usually is not when he engages in other forms of violence against Negroes" (Gunnar Myrdal, 1944. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 1 vol. edition. NY: Harper. pp. 558-66) [as reprinted in Arthur Waskow, 1966. *From Race Riot to Sit-In: 1919 and the 1960s*, p.9]. Waskow points out that all instances of mob racial violence can not be easily categorized as either a pogrom

or a riot; he simply suggests the distinction as a way to characterize “ideal types”² that are effective when studying racially motivated mob violence. I use the term “racial violence” to refer to racially-motivated violence that develops around the readiness of one racial group to challenge the claims of another racial group. For blacks it involves challenge to the white power structure, and for whites it involves the fear of black encroachment upon racially defined territorial and symbolic boundaries. The term includes pogroms, riots, and lynchings.

African-Americans are not the only group to experience intolerance and racial violence in America. The first English colonists saw Native Americans as heathens to be converted to Christianity and assimilated into white society. While some Native Americans were open to conversion, others resented and fought it, and after numerous bloody battles, many whites came to believe that Native Americans were savages that would have to be conquered.³ Violence not only characterized relations between early English colonists and natives, but also between whites and Chinese immigrants who came to California to escape poverty during the Gold Rush of the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Japanese and Mexican Americans have been targets of racial violence in America during WWII.⁵ Examples of violence directed at nonwhite groups in America abound; it is clear that African-Americans are just one of many groups that have been targeted.

Racism is almost always present when interracial fighting occurs and concepts of race in America are particularly important to the examination of racial violence. The supposed superiority of whites was not a new notion. The idea had been perpetuated since the first colonists discovered Native Americans and labeled them as savages.⁶ Racist ideas have been promoted by both the impoverished and uneducated, the wealthy and intellectual alike; politicians, doctors, and scientists helped to perpetuate and justify the widespread opinion held by American whites that blacks were an inferior race.⁷ Early ideas about race worldwide ranged from the color of one’s skin being attributable to the region he or she lived in to skin color denoting different species of man to the elimination of dark-skinned peoples being divine providence.⁸ Stereotypes of African-Americans helped whites to justify violence against blacks and were used to “teach blacks their place” in the social hierarchy.⁹ The image of the black man as a rapist of white women provided white men with an excuse to affirm their masculinity by protecting their white women.¹⁰ Likewise, the stereotype of the black female as a tempting seductress provided an excuse for slaveholding white men to have sex with their female slaves; by making the white men victims, they were absolved of responsibility.¹¹

In the antebellum period, draft legislation sparked a fierce resentment among working class whites who could not afford to send a substitute to fight in the war for them. Forced to fight in a war that was of no interest to them, some felt they were risking their lives to free the very people they viewed as a threat to their economic stability. After the Civil War, blacks were enfranchised, which led to further resentment. The North eventually withdrew troops from the South and southern states began to enact Jim Crow laws (which were supported by the Supreme Court) to teach blacks “their place”.¹² This campaign of repression was accompanied by violence directed at African-Americans. Anti-black violence has taken many forms in America such as vigilantism, lynching, rioting, and racial cleansings. In the years between 1884 and 1930, more than 2,500 blacks were lynched in the American South.¹³ In both northern and southern states, whites drove out entire black communities by imposing threats, burning property, and killing.¹⁴ In the face of white repression, blacks had always attempted to alter the power structure of American society, but with limited success. There were numerous rumors of slave uprisings, although only a few were successful, and black freedmen were active in abolitionist societies in antebellum America.¹⁵

The irony of being expected to fight and die for democracy abroad while not being able to enjoy it at home helped contribute to African-Americans’ willingness to fight back against white aggression. Black workers in the South demanded full citizenship rights¹⁶ and fought in the courts and elections, not to mention day-to-day interactions. Du Bois summed it up in the May 1919 issue of *The Crisis*, “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.”¹⁷ WWI provided African-Americans at home with opportunities to obtain previously unavailable jobs because of the need for wartime production and the jobs that were left vacant by white soldiers. This served to cause resentment among whites; whites perceived aspirations by blacks as “uppity” and often thought they needed to be taught “their place”.¹⁸ Many southern blacks, tired of the rules of the south, began to migrate to the north for industrial jobs. Some employers began to use them as strikebreakers to hold over the heads of white workers, yet another source of resentment.¹⁹ Scholars often attribute the increased visibility and expectations of blacks, along with white fears of job competition in the north, as having contributed to the rise in violence during WWI.²⁰

On July 17, 1917, Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, a man who described himself as “an old slaveholder”, warned of the effects of black migration to the north, particularly the anger of whites that was building. “The North is now beginning to understand the South, and to understand the race problem, too,” he said in a speech to the Senate, “...the more the Northern people know of the negro the less they like him...the further off he is the better they like him.”²¹ About ten days after Senator Tillman addressed the Senate, a race riot broke out in East St. Louis. By 1919, there was a significant increase in the rate of racial violence; so much so, in fact, that a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People termed the months from May to September of that year the “Red Summer”. These riots were not confined to a particular region of the United States; they occurred in both the North and the South. Though there were many instances of racial violence, there were seven race riots that characterized these months in 1919 because of the national response they evoked: Charleston, South Carolina; Longview, Texas; Washington D.C.; Chicago, Illinois; Knoxville, Tennessee; Omaha, Nebraska; and Elaine Arkansas. Although some blacks physically fought back against whites who attacked their communities in the years leading up to WWI, most pre-war race riots resulted in far fewer white deaths and injuries than black casualties. During and after WWI, there were still race riots that were one-sided attacks, but there were also instances of armed black defense and equal casualties on both sides. 1919 is significant because blacks began to openly challenge their assumed places in society²² and started fighting back collectively across the United States.²³

The race riot at East St. Louis, Illinois on July 2, 1917, was preceded by a smaller riot the month before. No one was killed during this smaller riot, though there were injuries and property damage. This initial attack was one-sided, with whites indiscriminately beating blacks wherever they found them, and probably contributed to white fears and rumors that blacks were arming themselves after the riot.²⁴ Isolated attacks on blacks continued until July 1, when shots came from a Ford car driven by whites aimed into black homes along Market Street. When detectives, officers, and a reporter in a Ford squad car were sent to investigate the incident, blacks shot at the car and killed the two detectives.²⁵ The car was left in

front of the police station in downtown East St. Louis and a crowd gathered around, looking at the bullet holes and bloodstains.²⁶

Anticipating trouble, the mayor of East St. Louis called for federal troops but did nothing to organize the local police force. Meanwhile, whites organized and armed themselves. Streetcars were stopped and blacks dragged off, beaten, and kicked. There were several mobs, most not numbering more than twenty-five or so, but there were thousands of spectators watching and yelling their support. White men shot black men in cold blood. Neither black women nor black children were afforded any sympathy; white women beat and pulled the hair of black women trying to flee and black children were shot in the head. The few who tried to intervene were quickly silenced with threats. Mobs set fire to African American homes and shot the blacks who tried to run out of the burning structures. Severely injured and dying blacks on the streets were either carelessly shot or they were kicked and clubbed as they lay there, and ambulance drivers were threatened when they tried to tend to the injured.²⁷ Nine whites and thirty-nine blacks lost their lives that night.²⁸

On July 27, 1919, five African American youths decided to go swimming at the 25th Street beach in Chicago. A white man began throwing rocks at the boys in the water and hit Eugene Williams in the head. Williams went under and blood surfaced, and the man who had been hurling the rocks ran off. The other boys were not able to pull him up out of the water and ran to get a lifeguard, but it was too late. Williams had drowned and divers recovered his body about thirty minutes later. Williams' companions found a police officer and pointed out the white man they believed to be responsible for Williams' death, but the officer refused to make an arrest after preventing another policeman from arresting him, the officer arrested a black man on the complaint of a white. A distorted version of the story began to spread. Whites believed the swimmer in the story was white, while blacks got a version that the officer had prevented divers from rescuing Williams and then held a gun to a crowd of blacks while whites were permitted to stone the boy. An angry crowd of both blacks and whites gathered at the beach. A shot was fired and wounded a police officer, and other shots rang out. The race riot was on.²⁹

The next morning, white crowds waited outside the stockyards where some blacks worked and attacked them with pipes, hammers, and clubs when they came out at the end of the day. Blacks were pulled from streetcars, beaten, and sometimes killed while crowds of whites watched, clapped, and cheered. Whites who happened upon crowds of blacks were killed and beaten as well. Speeding cars full of whites shot at blacks and sniper fire was returned; just about any car or carriage that came through the "Black Belt" was shot at. The violence did not remain contained in any one part of town and local police did not attempt to stop assaults on African Americans; sometimes they participated in it.³⁰ The mayor and the governor of Chicago made no attempt to call in federal troops until three days after the rioting began.³¹ The death toll was close to sharing equal casualties on both sides: twenty-three blacks and fifteen whites. The Chicago riot is a key example of the black intention to start physically fighting back against white aggression.³²

The Tulsa, Oklahoma race riot on June 1, 1921 was preceded by two lynchings about a year before, one in Tulsa and one in Oklahoma City which local officials did not attempt to stop. An incident involving a teenage white girl and black boy was the spark that set off the Tulsa riot. On May 30, the boy, Dick Rowland, entered the elevator in the Drexel Building downtown to go up and use the bathroom. He worked shining shoes on the bottom floor. After he used the bathroom, he entered the elevator again to go downstairs. The elevator operator was a white girl named Sarah Page, and when Rowland exited the elevator, Page screamed. An article appeared in the *Tulsa Tribune* the next day that claimed Rowland had attacked Page and implied rape.³³ Rowland was taken to the city jail and rumors began to circulate. It wasn't too long before the black district of Greenwood found out what had happened and that a crowd of whites had gathered at the courthouse. Fearing for Rowland's life, a group of armed black men showed up at the courthouse and offered to protect Rowland. They were talked into leaving but three carloads of black men showed up shortly after. Whites and blacks continued to arrive at the courthouse until there were thousands of men outside. The riot began when a gun went off after a struggle between two men.³⁴

Rumors of a black uprising spread throughout white Tulsa and rumors of an invasion on Greenwood traveled to black residents. Both blacks and whites began arming themselves and the Greenwood district was surrounded by cars full of white men. National troops were called in and they, along with local police and white mobs, went into Greenwood to disarm and arrest any black man with a weapon. Local police and members of the mobs looted and burned property.³⁵ Some black residents shot at whites from inside buildings and were slowly pushed further and further into Greenwood as they defended property and then retreated. It is generally agreed upon by scholars that airplanes were flown over the city of Tulsa during the riot;³⁶ however, there is debate regarding whether airplanes that were overhead actually dropped bombs on and shot at the black community or whether the planes were used solely for surveillance. Like the East St. Louis and Chicago riots, the Tulsa riot had its share of barbaric stories, including one that was printed in the *Tulsa World* on June 1, 1921... "One negro was dragged behind an automobile with a rope about his neck, through the business district".³⁷ Thirty-five square blocks of the Greenwood district was destroyed during the riot and many were killed; estimates of the number of dead are varied and range from twenty-seven to over two hundred fifty.³⁸

Although it is true that heavy black migration occurred in cities that experienced riots, it was not a common factor to all riot cities. There was a heavy migration of blacks into East St. Louis before the 1917 riot,³⁹ into Chicago and Washington, D.C. before the 1919 riots there and there was also a heavy migration of blacks into Tulsa prior to the 1921 riot; however, heavy black migration did not take place in Elaine, Arkansas or Longview, Texas preceding the 1919 riots there.⁴⁰ There was also migration into cities that did not experience a riot. Using data on 76 paired comparisons of riot cities and non-riot cities of similar size, Lieberman and Silverman's results refuted the contention that migration was a determining factor in whether or not a riot took place. Their results showed no correlation between either rapid population change or an expanding black population size and the occurrence of riots in the cities they examined between 1913 and 1963.⁴¹ Interestingly, Bloombaum conducted a reanalysis of Lieberman and Silverman's data and showed that in 67% of comparisons, the proportion of African-Americans was higher in the riot cities than in non-riot cities.⁴² However, the results are not conclusive because Bloombaum utilized a method which only allowed him to study 24 out of Lieberman and Silverman's 76 comparisons due to missing data.⁴³ Data on migration rates reveal that the highest migration occurred in years that did not coincide with racial violence, lending more support to the idea that migration was not a determining factor in whether violence happened.⁴⁴

Two other factors related to migration that are cited by some scholars as having contributed to the outbreak of racial violence are housing and job competition. In Chicago, there was an over-crowding of segregated black communities which forced them to encroach upon white neighborhoods; however, Elaine, Tulsa, Washington, and Longview did not have black populations so large that they were expanding out of their communities.⁴⁵ There were troubled relations between black and white workers in pre-riot East St. Louis⁴⁶ and Chicago⁴⁷, but there was not labor conflict in Elaine, Longview, or Washington before these riots.⁴⁸ Another interesting finding from Lieberman and Silverman's research showed that riots often happened in areas where fewer blacks were doing unskilled labor and there were better housing conditions for blacks.⁴⁹

Most literature on the subject of race riots shares a general consensus that the action or inaction on the part of local police and national troops plays a critical role in the suppression of racial violence.⁵⁰ The East St. Louis riot would likely have resulted in less deaths and injuries if national troops had not allowed white rioters to take their weapons away from them. The Chicago riot of 1919 might have been prevented had the local police arrested and detained the white man accused of drowning a black boy; additionally, if the Chicago police had been neutral during the riot instead of participating in it, whites would not have gotten the impression that violence against black members of the community was permissible. In spite of these instances, actions of authorities have not always been discriminatory during riots; both black and white residents of Chicago and Omaha agreed that the actions of federal troops in their cities were neutral and helped to quell the riots.⁵¹ Diversity in the police force also seems to play a role in preventing the occurrence of riots; non-riot cities had a force with more black police officers than riot cities did.⁵²

Not surprisingly, federal racial legislation enacted between 1869 and 1924 has coincided with the occurrence or absence of racial violence, depending upon whether the policies either reinforced or dismantled racial boundaries. When exclusionary legislation against African Americans was passed, violence against them declined; this was the case with *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, a ruling that was an unequivocal challenge to the civil rights legislation of 1875.⁵³ However, when civil rights legislation was ratified that broke down segregation barriers, the rate of violence against blacks rose by two-thirds.⁵⁴ For example, the Naturalization Act of 1870, which granted citizenship to African Americans, coincided with more violence against blacks. The Civil Rights Act of 1871, which gave blacks the right to vote, and the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which granted equal access to public facilities, also corresponded with increased attacks on blacks.⁵⁵ When legislation passed that eroded racial boundaries, whites reacted with violence. When legislation was enacted that further oppressed blacks, there was not a violent response.

Precipitating events of race riots in the early twentieth century were usually wrongs or perceived wrongs committed by a representative of either group. These could include murder, rape, assault, manslaughter, or theft. Some also involved accusations of blacks violating physical racial boundaries or unfair police practices against blacks by white police. Rumors of impending violence also occasionally precipitated riots.⁵⁶ The East St. Louis riot of 1917 was preceded by a smaller riot and accusations of black men fraternizing with white women at a labor meeting; the Charleston, South Carolina riot of 1919 was precipitated by the killing of a black man by a white sailor;⁵⁷ the Longview, Texas riot of 1919 was preceded by a newspaper article stating that a white girl was in love with a black man who had raped her;⁵⁸ both the Washington, D.C. riot of 1919 and the Tulsa, Oklahoma riot of 1921 were preceded by a rumor of an attack on a white girl by a black man;⁵⁹ the Chicago, Illinois riot of 1919 was precipitated by the stoning of a swimming black boy and the refusal of white police to arrest the man thought to be responsible for killing the boy;⁶⁰ the Knoxville, Tennessee riot of 1919 was preceded by accusations of a black man murdering a white woman;⁶¹ and the Omaha, Nebraska riot of 1919 happened after a black man was accused of raping a white girl.⁶² In Knoxville, Omaha, and Tulsa, the riots happened after mobs of whites showed up at jails where the accused were being held and threatened violence against them.⁶³

Efforts to pinpoint the causes of race riots that have focused on the social conditions and structural characteristics present in riot cities do not prove to be adequate explanations. These factors were found to be present in many early twentieth century cities where riots erupted. These factors do not, however, conclusively explain the occurrence of riots; while common in many cities, they were neither common in all riot cities, nor did all cities experiencing these conditions erupt into violence. Although identification of these common conditions have provided a valuable starting point to exploring the reasons a race riot occurs, it is clear that more research should be directed towards determining whether or not the degree to which these characteristics existed played a role. Prospective studies should also try to determine whether or not state and local racial legislation shared a link with outbreaks of racial violence, and future work is needed in the examination of city politics since they played a role in pre-riot East St. Louis and Chicago. Finally, since the social conditions and city characteristics have proven to be inadequate indicators of whether or not a riot occurred, more research needs to be done on the participants in a riot, with a focus on what causes them to feel they must take part in a riot.

Bibliographic Essay

Racism is almost always present when interracial fighting occurs and concepts of race in America are particularly important to the examination of racial violence. A remarkably useful resource for studying racism and its origins is Thomas Gossett's *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. Gossett used both primary and secondary sources to examine the history of racism, including literature written by prominent scientists and race theorists over the centuries, and more recent articles and books. For an examination of the history of racial stereotypes and how they have affected American treatment of blacks, Anne Helg's *Black Men, Racial Stereotyping, and Violence in the U.S. South and Cuba at the Turn of the Century* was extremely helpful. Using primary sources, such as periodicals and diaries, along with secondary sources, such as literature on racial violence and racism, she explored the reasons behind why and how blacks were stereotyped and the effects that stereotypes had on racial relations, gender hierarchies, and interracial sex. Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad* was also a valuable resource for this project. Jacobson used a variety of sources, including political documents, literature, travelogues, academic treatises, and art from the period to illustrate the link between immigration, imperialism, and attitudes towards different races in America.

Jaspin has published an important study about an all too common, yet little known, phenomenon in American racial history. In *Buried in the Bitter Waters: The Hidden History of Racial Cleansing in America*, Jaspin gives accounts of an all too common, yet little known, phenomenon in American racial history. He uses the term "racial cleansing" to describe

instances in which whites drove out entire black communities by imposing threats, burning property, and killing.⁶⁴ Jaspin reveals similarities between racial cleansings and other racial violence, e.g., local newspapers often either concealed it or reported these incidents in a biased fashion.⁶⁵ The author conducted interviews and used census data, periodicals, and secondary literature for his research.

1919 is significant because interracial violence was no longer primarily confined to one-way attacks by whites on African-Americans; blacks began to fight back.⁶⁶ A classic work in riot study is *From Race Riot to Sit-In; 1919 and the 1960s*, in which Arthur Waskow completed case studies of riots during the 1919 "Red Summer" and explored the characteristics in them. This provided one of the most informative sources for this research. Black soldiers had begun coming home from the war and many felt that since they were expected to fight for democracy overseas, they ought to reap the benefits of democracy at home.⁶⁷ Local and federal authorities' actions during disturbances played an important part in the outcome of interracial violence.⁶⁸ According to Waskow, all these factors, along with others, helped to ignite the underlying explosive atmosphere in some cities. He used both primary and secondary sources, including previous studies on the subject by sociologists and historians, newspapers, government census reports, and state, federal, and private reports.

Joseph Boskin's work, *Urban Racial Violence in the Twentieth Century*, is a compilation of accounts of all twentieth century riots in the United States. He examined the common conditions present in many early twentieth century riot cities⁶⁹ and pointed out the riots which did not follow the typical pattern of earlier riots, e.g., the Harlem riot of 1935 and the Detroit riot of 1943, which were started by black aggression. Boskin utilized primary sources in his research, such as newspaper articles, commission reports on violence, and testimony given by witnesses in court; in addition, he used secondary sources based on race and racial conflict in America. Joe Feagin and Harlan Hahn studied the riots of the 1960s and evaluated the sociological theories that emerged to explain the riots' occurrence. Explanations of city leaders were also examined,⁷⁰ along with a brief history of collective action by African-Americans.⁷¹ *Ghetto Revolts: The Politics of Violence in American Cities* gives an overview of white violence against nonwhite groups in America⁷² and it explores the history of political tactics used by black Americans.⁷³ The authors used both primary and secondary sources, including newspaper articles, interviews of black community members, state and national reports on the riots, and previous literature published about race and society in America.

The Sociology of Race Riots by Bernard Robinson notes many of the characteristics that riot cities shared; it also notes the cities that did not fit the mold. Factors such as migration, competition for jobs and housing, and unfair police practices are often pointed to as the reason race riots occur;⁷⁴ however, Robinson pointed out that heavy black migration did not take place in Elaine, Arkansas, or in Longview, Texas, prior to 1919,⁷⁵ and gave other examples of cities where the typically identified factors were not present. He utilized secondary sources, e.g., books and journal articles, for his research.

In Allen Grimshaw's informative work, *Actions of Police and Military in American Race Riots*, he explored the approaches used by local police and military in the early twentieth century riots and pointed out common tactics and other similarities, including the results that authoritative action (or lack thereof) incurred.⁷⁶ The author used secondary sources for his

research, such as books and articles, and also utilized primary sources, such as newspaper articles and reports on the violence by state officials and a private commission.

In *Racial Policy and Racial Conflict in the Urban United States, 1869-1924*, Suzanne Olzak and Susan Shanahan compared incidents of racial violence with the timing of federal racial legislation and court cases in the US between 1869-1924. Their findings led them to conclude that when legislative measures are successful at minimizing the competition from a specific group, violence against the group is reduced.⁷⁷ The authors used articles from the *New York Times* to compile their list of racially motivated violence in the 76 largest US cities.⁷⁸ More research of this type should be directed towards state and local racial policies.

Results from a study conducted by Stanley Lieberson and Arnold Silverman showed that many riots occurred in cities where blacks were becoming economically closer to whites. Their findings in *The Precipitants and Underlying Conditions of Race Riots* also underscored the important part played by diversity in the police force; non-riot cities had a force with more black police officers than riot cities did. Additionally, this study refuted the idea that migration was a determining factor in whether a riot took place.⁷⁹ The study was subject to flaws, primarily due to the use of journalistic accounts which may be exaggerated, and the riots which possibly were not reported.

In *A Relationship Between Collective Racial Violence and War*, an analysis of data gathered on racial violence which occurred during the twentieth century, Warren Schiach revealed that the frequency of violence was higher during the war years: 1915-1919, 1940-1944, and 1965-1969.⁸⁰ He also notes that the highest migration rates occurred in years that did not coincide with racial violence and concluded that migration was not a determining factor in whether violence happened,⁸¹ supporting Lieberson's findings. Secondary sources, mostly books and journal articles, were used to gather information for this article.

In the 1970s many quantitative studies were conducted on riot city conditions in the 60s, and three are especially worth noting. Although the 60s era of riots differed from those in the WWI period in that the former were mostly instances of black aggression, Seymour Spilerman's research is interesting because it provides another potential area for research on earlier riots. Unlike Lieberson, Spilerman intentionally grouped sets of variables to test separate sociological explanations of rioting. In his first experiment, Spilerman tested 341 disorders⁸² and found that black population size was the single determining factor of whether or not a city in the 1960s experienced a race riot.⁸³ Interestingly, his second experiment showed that while a larger black population size correlated with increased disorders in the northern US, it did not do so in the South.⁸⁴ His third experiment resulted in information regarding structural conditions and the severity of disorders, namely that housing conditions and the socioeconomic status of blacks did not affect the severity of a riot.⁸⁵

I found the East St. Louis riot of 1917 to be the most difficult one to research due to the lack of accessibility of primary evidence and the absence of secondary literature on the subject. There is one resource I will use exclusively to tell the story of the riot; fortunately, *Race Riot in East St. Louis* by Elliot Rudwick is thorough and comprehensive. He shows how politics

and job competition were key factors in the buildup to the riot⁸⁶ and re-created the East St. Louis riot and the social conditions surrounding it by studying court cases, investigations, US government documents, and periodicals about the city and the riot. The secondary literature he consulted was varied; topics ranged from the effects of race relations and migration on northern cities to social violence to the formation of the N.A.A.C.P. I also consulted *Ghetto Formation and Armed Resistance in East St. Louis, Illinois*, an interesting perspective by Malcolm McLaughlin in which he argues that Rudwick's desire to place responsibility for the riot on the whites of the community caused him to underestimate the extent to which there was organized, armed resistance by blacks during the East St. Louis riot.⁸⁷ He also gives examples of organized self-defense in other riots of the period.⁸⁸

The Chicago race riot was one of the first amid a rash of other riots in 1919. It is well-documented in *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*. William Tuttle explored the people and the events in the city leading up to the riot. Tuttle reveals the labor conflicts that were present⁸⁹ and the extensive bombing campaign perpetrated against blacks who moved in to and realtors who sold to blacks in disputed neighborhoods.⁹⁰ Tuttle interviewed survivors of the riot and consulted periodicals and government reports. He also used numerous secondary sources on race relations, racial violence, housing and jobs in Chicago. I also consulted newspaper articles from 1919 for information on the Chicago riot; I used the *Chicago Defender* for an African-American perspective of the riot, and the *Chicago Daily Journal* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* for a white point of view. The Chicago Commission's report, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot*, was also an important primary resource for this work.

The Tulsa race riot of 1921 enjoys a rich historiography. Despite efforts of city leaders and newspapers to cover up the riot when it happened and a subsequent silence about it on the part of both whites and blacks,⁹¹ it turned out to be the riot I was able to obtain the most information on. There are several well-written scholarly works on the subject; one of the better ones is by Alfred Brophy. His account of the riot, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, was based on research of both primary and secondary documents, and he does an especially superb job of reconstructing both the social atmosphere before the conflict and the actions of police and military during the riot.⁹² In *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and its Legacy*, James Hirsch thoroughly explored the massive amount of primary documents available on the riot and Tulsa's history at Tulsa University and the Oklahoma Historical Society. He also used court records, witness interviews, trial testimonies, newspaper articles, and various other primary and secondary sources to construct both the black and white versions of the riot and to illustrate how and why it was concealed for so long. Another valuable tool in telling the story of the Tulsa riot is Scott Ellsworth's *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*.

A state commission was put together to study the Tulsa race riot in 2001; it was composed of various experts and scholars, such as an archaeologist, a state medical examiner, and historians. Rumors of mass graves were investigated and the Commission conducted survivor interviews in the African-American and the white community. State reports, newspaper articles, and photographs taken during the riot were examined, and their findings were released in a 150+ page report titled *Tulsa Race Riot*.⁹³ This is a source that I consulted but do not rely on to tell the story of the Tulsa riot; while it is a well-researched report, the possibility of flaws due to politics is present. The report was put together by individuals who wanted a win in the courts for riot victim reparations, and the possibility of bias by these individuals must be considered.

Bob Hower's book, *1921 Tulsa Race Riot: American Red Cross-"Angels of Mercy"* is a treasure trove of primary documents which he compiled from his grandmother's collection of documents and pictures. His grandmother was the Director of Red Cross Relief during the aftermath of the Tulsa riot; the book includes newspaper articles, statements by citizens made immediately after the riot, Red Cross records, and the like.⁹⁴ Mary E. Jones Parrish was an African-American woman who had moved to Tulsa just before the riot and her nephew, Clarence Love, had her account of the events published in *Race Riot 1921: Events of the Tulsa Disaster*. Other survivor accounts were also included in this book,⁹⁵ and I consider these when telling the story of the riot.

Some of the past efforts by scholars to find the causes of race riots have focused on the social conditions and structural characteristics present in riot cities, such as black migration or labor conflicts, in an attempt to explain why the riots happened. These factors were found to be present in many early twentieth century cities where riots erupted. These factors do not, however, conclusively explain the occurrence of riots; while common in many cities, they were neither common in all riot cities, nor did all cities experiencing these conditions erupt into violence. Although identification of these common conditions have provided a valuable starting point to exploring the reasons a race riot occurs, it is clear that more research should be directed towards determining whether or not the degree to which these characteristics existed played a role. Prospective studies should also try to determine whether or not state and local racial legislation shared a link with outbreaks of racial violence, and future work is needed in the examination of city politics since they played a role in pre-riot East St. Louis and Chicago. Finally, since the social conditions and city characteristics have proven to be inadequate indicators of whether or not a riot occurred, more research needs to be done on the participants in a riot, with a focus on what causes them to feel they must take part in a riot.

About the Author

I am an undergraduate student at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma. I am currently a senior. The degree I am pursuing is a social and behavioral sciences degree, with a major in history and a minor in psychology. I am particularly interested in the African-American's experience in America. I would like to acknowledge two professors for the invaluable advice given to me during this project. Thank you to Dr. David Tait from the Department of History and Political Science and Dr. Sharon Fernlund from the Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma.

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4. Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*. (NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2007), xix.
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23. Warren Schiach, *A relationship between collective racial violence and war*. (*Journal of Black Studies*, 5: 374-394, 1975), 382.
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27. *Ibid.*, 41-48.
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31. *Ibid.*, 54.
32. *Ibid.*, 65.
33. Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 24-26.
34. *Ibid.*, 27-33.
35. *Ibid.*, 43.
36. *Ibid.*, 45-47. See also Mary E. Parrish, *Race Riot 1921: Events of the Tulsa Disaster* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Out on a Limb Publishing, 1998), 37, 45, 62; Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. (Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 63.
37. *Whites Advancing into Little Africa*, *Tulsa World* Second Edition, June 1, 1921.
38. Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, 66. See also Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland*, 60. The figures are still disputed. Eyewitnesses have described seeing bodies stacked like cordwood on the backs of trucks.
39. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis*, 5-6.
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64. Jaspin, *Buried in the Bitter Waters*, 4-8.
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