

# DETROIT HISTORY PRIMER

THE HISTORICAL INFORMATION BELOW WAS ASSEMBLED IN THE YEAR 2000 BY STAFF OF THE ARTS OF CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN TO ASSIST THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF DETROIT'S MOSAIC YOUTH THEATER WITH GATHERING MATERIAL FOR THEIR MUSICAL "2001 HASTINGS STREET," SET IN 1940S DETROIT. THIS DETROIT HISTORY PRIMER WAS INTENDED AS A BASIC BACKGROUND RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITY ARTS USE, NOT A COMPLETE TEXT ON DETROIT IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. WE HOPE THIS PRIMER MAY SERVE AS A MODEL OF THE KIND OF MATERIAL THAT CAN AID ACADEMIC/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION.

## WHAT WAS HASTINGS STREET? PARADISE VALLEY? BLACK BOTTOM?

People who lived in Detroit in the 1940s may give you several different answers to these questions. The differences in their definitions and their emphasis on "Hastings Street" versus "Paradise Valley" versus "Black Bottom" can give you clues to all kinds of things: about whether they lived in the area themselves and *when* they lived there; and about whether they focused on the entertainment and glamour of the neighborhood or on the restrictions facing black Detroiters in the 1940s about where they could live and work and have fun in the city.

**Black Bottom** is the name given to the entire near east side neighborhood where most African Americans in Detroit lived through the 1940s. Many people think that the area was named for the poor, black migrants who settled there—and this belief is important if only because so many people share it. Actually, well-irrigated, good farming land near a river has long been called "bottom land" and "black bottom" because of its low elevation and rich black soil. In Detroit, before any African Americans settled here, the French farmers in the area down by the river called it "Black Bottom." In the twentieth century as Detroit became a big industrial city, there was certainly no farming by the river near the center of town. The name stuck, however, and as thousands of African Americans migrated to the area, their racial identity became associated with the name "Black Bottom" in many people's minds.

Starting around 1916 and in the 1920s, *many* African Americans began to migrate North to Detroit. The majority were working-class people seeking jobs in the city's factories, although some were middle-class seeking professional opportunities. All hoped to escape the racism they encountered in the South, but that goal could prove elusive.

Historically, blacks lived in the area bounded by Leland, Macomb, Brush, and Hastings. After 1915, the area expanded east and north. Not only African Americans lived on Detroit's near east side; some eastern and southern European immigrants and their families also lived or worked there. By 1925, the area's boundaries were Brush and Mt. Elliott on the West and East, the river on the South, and Harper, Chene, and Mack to the North. Arriving in Detroit, African Americans gravitated towards that neighborhood for the companionship and aid of black networks and institutions (such as churches, the Detroit Urban League, and the black branches of the YWCA and YMCA when they formed). It is important to remember, however, that although 84 percent of African American Detroiters lived in Black Bottom in the period between 1870 and 1910, it was not a majority-black area at that time. In fact, only 5 percent of all the people living there were black.

As the twentieth century progressed, the neighborhood's residents were increasingly likely to be African Americans—by 1945, 90 percent of the neighborhood population was black. Many whites moved into residential areas farther away from the downtown area after World War I, while only some black families and individuals were able to move away from the East Side (to other smaller but developing black communities). Reasons people couldn't move out of the East Side area included restrictions by homeowners who would only sell to whites and violence against and harassment of blacks who tried to move. Also, employment discrimination against black men and women meant they had smaller incomes, limiting their abilities to buy property.

The black working-class people who lived in Black Bottom had few options but to live in some of the poorest quality housing in the city. Neighborhood landlords charged some of the highest rents in the city, and neglected to repair or maintain decent living environments for their tenants. People had to make their family life in houses that had unsanitary bathroom facilities, fire hazards, infrequent garbage pick up, and leaky roofs. Making matters worse, to pay the high rents many people had to take in lodgers, which meant severe overcrowding.

Yet, the concentration of so many people in the area also created great opportunities for forming economic institutions, community political networks, and social and cultural groups. Black entrepreneurs and professionals were able to launch careers in the area because of the concentration of so many clients. Black middle-class professionals and businesspeople who migrated to Detroit after World War I were able to open successful drugstores, medical practices, nightclubs, restaurants, law offices, and beauty parlors. Black Bottom was simultaneously home to many poor and working-class people *and* to lots of black-owned businesses because black workers and professionals were *interdependent*, creating opportunities for each other.

Black Bottom was definitely a neighborhood with strengths generated from its own institutions and community ties. It was home to vibrant music scenes and black economic development. However, it was also a ghetto in the oldest sense of the term: a quarter of a city to which people were restricted. The paradox of Black Bottom, Paradise Valley, and Hastings Street was that once the racist boundaries were broken (in housing, employment, civil rights, and education) and African Americans had more options in Detroit, the cultural resources of Paradise Valley and Hastings Street petered out, as people moved away in the 1950s.

**Hastings Street** was an actual street running parallel to Woodward Avenue, one block east of St. Antoine. It was home to Black Bottom's "red light district" from the 1920s through the 1940s. Back in the nineteenth century, it had been the neighborhood's central street for trade and business. In the late 1800s, Jewish peddlers as well as shopkeepers made their living on Hastings Street selling meat, groceries, milk, and cigars. By the twentieth century, black-owned businesses started to open on Hastings and on the surrounding streets in the neighborhood, coexisting with Jewish-owned stores.

As Detroit's black population grew, the neighborhood around Hastings Street grew, providing more clients for African-American professionals and entrepreneurs. By the 1920s, Hastings Street had a thriving blues scene, with musicians playing in bars, blues clubs, blind pigs, and private house parties. The street was also host to many pool halls and gambling clubs. Parents certainly did not want their kids going down to Hastings Street, yet adventurous underage teens might try to sneak into the less expensive clubs, avoiding the notice of neighborhood police and other adults.

Hastings Street and the surrounding streets and alleys became more and more crowded through the 1930s, and during World War II, when many more black migrants came to Detroit for wartime jobs and settled in the area. Filled with dives and strip clubs, populated by female impersonators and prostitutes, it was a gritty rather than glamorous entertainment district. Also, by this point, it was primarily the older adults in the area who were interested in the musical offerings of Hastings Street; most teens found the blues “passé” and were more interested in swing and the emerging R&B scene in the 1940s. Yet the Hastings Street blues scene was vibrant and nationally important, with John Lee Hooker its most famous musician.

**Paradise Valley** was Hastings Street’s flip side: A fancy entertainment district with clubs, theaters, and dance halls catering to people looking for glitz and glamour rather than the more folksy style of the blues. These clubs advertised elaborate shows with dancers, jazz singers, and cabaret bands. Some black-and-tan clubs (clubs that catered to a mixed-race audience with a lot of money to spend), such as the Plantation and the Chocolate Bar were owned by black businessmen, while a few (like the Club Harlem) were owned by whites. Most Paradise Valley clubs were around the intersection of Adams and St. Antoine, although there were other spots that were further away geographically, but still considered part of the area.

The name “Paradise Valley” originated in the early 1930s when Rollo Vest, ran a contest in the *Detroit Tribune* (a newspaper run by and for the African-American community) to promote the black community by finding a catchy name for its entertainment district. The winning idea took the name of the Paradise Theater (a central cultural institution in downtown Detroit, which still remains standing; it is now Orchestra Hall). The name was intended to promote all the black-owned and -run businesses, hotels, and clubs in the area. Every year from 1933 to 1940, the *Tribune* polled readers to elect a new “Mayor of Paradise Valley” who was installed at a fancy inaugural ball at the Graystone Ballroom. The Mayor was expected to be master of ceremonies at big events and a promoter of Paradise Valley’s image and was also responsible for coordinating charity drives and finding jobs for people.

# The Detroit 1943 Riot

There were several violent race riots in American cities during the early twentieth century. Most involved attacks by white mobs on African Americans and their homes and property. The Detroit Riot of 1943 was different. Frustrations on the part of both white and black Detroiters fueled the outbreak of violence on June 20, 1943, and there had been several significant clashes between white and black youth and adults in the months and years before the 1943 riot. White and black rioters clashed with each other, attacked lone individuals, and looted or destroyed property. Motivations for the violence were complex, rooted in economics, changing race relations, and persistent racial discrimination and fears.

The economic prosperity created by the World War II boom—brought a new, large influx of people to Detroit. Even though jobs were plentiful in comparison to the Depression of the 1930s, competition emerged over who got which jobs. Also, with so many people coming to the city for work, housing was scarce. One particularly difficult conflict occurred in 1942 over whether the Sojourner Truth housing project would be for white or black residents. Clashes over the use of recreational space occurred too, as black youth became increasingly angered by segregation at movie theaters, dance halls, amusement parks, and school social events.

Within this context, the riot began on the Sunday evening of June 20, 1943 at Belle Isle. It is hard to reconstruct the precise events that triggered the violence, but here are some general outlines. You may hear many different stories from people you interview. 100,000 or more people were escaping the heat by using the picnic and swimming facilities on Belle Isle that day. Roughly 85 percent of the people using the park were black, since blacks were excluded from many other public and private beaches and parks. After a conflict between black and white youth that day, some black teenagers (who had been attacked by white teens at Eastwood Park amusement park only six days earlier), began harassing white picnickers out of frustration. White soldiers stationed in an armory on Jefferson Avenue right near the Belle Isle Bridge came to join the fighting and soon large brawls were in progress around the bridge and on Jefferson Avenue.

False rumors spread around the city—that blacks had killed a white sailor and raped his girlfriend or that whites had killed a black woman and thrown her and her baby into the river. As myths circulated, people who were angry because of other grievances began gathering on streets, ready to fight. When a man took the stage at the Forest Club in Paradise Valley and told the crowd that white sailors had killed a black woman and her baby, people charged out of the club ready to avenge this horrible crime, which they believed had occurred. On Forest and Hastings Streets, black patrons of the Forest Club began fighting with whites in the area. As news of the riot spread around the city, whites (and especially young white male teenagers) went downtown to join the fray. White teens began to throw stones at cars driven by blacks and attack black patrons at movie theaters on Woodward Avenue. Some black rioters left Paradise Valley to go north and attack white factory workers on streetcars.

Since high schools were on a split schedule to deal with overcrowding, half of all high school students were routinely dismissed at 1:30. So on Monday, “thousands of adolescent white adventurers swarmed into the downtown area.” By 4:00 p.m. on Monday, June 21, 10,000 people had gathered at corner of Woodward and Davenport. Gangs of whites got together on Woodward and went east to John R. Gangs of blacks were on Brush waiting for attack. In addition to group attacks on lone individuals and gang fighting, people began to loot stores. Black residents of the near east side began to loot stores and destroy what they thought was white-owned property on Hastings Street. Store-owners frantically painted “colored” on their windows to keep people from destroying or taking their property.

Since Mayor Jeffries did not want to call in State troops or the National Guard, he relied at first on the city’s police force, which was way too small to stop the thousands of fighters and looters in the streets. Black ministers and other community leaders were given Office of Civilian Defense hats to go around and try and calm people down in an attempt to supplement the police action. (Police were more likely to focus on black rioters, shooting rather than persuading them to stop their actions. No white deaths occurred at the hands of police officers.) Finally, Governor Kelly declared a state of “modified martial law” on Monday evening. This meant that the sale of alcohol was banned and amusement places were closed at 9:00 p.m. A 10:00 p.m. curfew was instituted, and people who were not in the military or on the police force were forbidden to carry weapons. Finally, on Monday evening, supplementary troops came into the city to try to stop the violence. By Tuesday, June 22, 6,000 federal troops were stationed in the city (camping in front of libraries and on school playing fields). Some violence still persisted on Wednesday, June 23. For example, at the Northeastern High School graduation, as graduates emerged from school, a crowd of hundreds of white youths in a park across street tried to attack the 29 black graduates. Only the arrival of four truckloads of soldiers with bayoneted rifles stopped that attack.

At the end of the riot, 34 people had been killed (25 of whom were black), and 1,000 people wounded. Two million dollars worth of property damage occurred in Paradise Valley to black- and white-owned businesses. In the aftermath of the riot, there was a food shortage in the black neighborhood of the near east side, as many store owners were scared to reopen stores. Many residents stayed in the neighborhood for fear of being attacked elsewhere in the city. After the riot people had different theories. Some blamed it on “racist white hillbillies” who had recently migrated from southern states. Others blamed it on black migrants who wanted “too much” now that they were in northern states. Some even claimed the KKK or other right-wing groups were in league with Hitler and were trying to undermine the United States by instigating the riot. Many people cited juvenile delinquency as the underlying cause. None of these explanations were very plausible. Most of the rioters were relatively long-term Detroit residents—not recent migrants. Although many of the rioters were young, adults participated too. In fact, black rioters were more likely to be married, employed, and in their late 20s and 30s: people who did not fit the stereotype of teenagers fighting out of a lack of adult perspective and discipline. In fact, white rioters were more likely to be teenagers—coming down to the near east side to participate in the fighting. In the final analysis, real grievances and serious anger over job and housing shortages and patterns of segregation in recreational spots, stores, and schools provide a more accurate sense of the causes of the riot.

## **YOUTH EXPERIENCE IN THE 1940s**

**WORK VERSUS SCHOOL:** By 1940, teenagers were much more likely to go to high school than adolescents in earlier decades. Many teenagers from working-class families used to go to work after eighth grade, but during the depression of the 1930s, things happened to make all American teenagers more likely to attend high school for at least a few years. Since jobs were scarce during the 1930s, adults took many jobs that teens used to get. Also, attendance in high school was made mandatory by law for 14 and 15 year olds.

By the 1940s, however, the job market for youth was growing again, especially as World War II got underway. Kids were needed in jobs abandoned by adults who either served in the military or took jobs in war production industries. High school attendance was still mandatory, but many kids had part-time jobs after school and on weekends, and many dropped out before graduation. Even the stuff people learned in school was geared towards wartime production. Driving classes originated in schools the 1940s so that teens would know how to drive when they entered the military, and physical education was stressed as preparation for war. Vocational classes in industrial education trained girls and boys for factory jobs.

Even school social life was affected by the labor needs of wartime. Because many boys were drafted and had to leave for military training in their last semester of high school, many dances and proms were cancelled. Also, there was less money budgeted for extra-curricular activities, and fewer advisors available to work with youth because of wartime priorities. After the 1943 riot, people became concerned that youth recreation was being neglected and that consequently kids were being drawn into “delinquent” social activities. City officials, teachers, social workers, and parents worked together to create spaces where kids could hang out and plan their own dances—called “canteens” after the eating and recreation centers set up for soldiers.

Race relations impacted high school experience as well—proms and school trips were often held at places that refused to serve black students. Rather than switch locations or protest the exclusion of students, schools went ahead and held events that were in effect not open to black students. Also, many school clubs and sports teams were not open to black students in the early 1940s. Administrators and teachers tracked black and white students into different extracurricular activities and academic programs. After a 1937 directive that school-sponsored activities be integrated, schools began to try to do so, but not without resistance from some faculty and students. In terms of faculty, there were no black teachers of academic subjects in Detroit high schools until Alvin Loving was hired in 1935 to teach English and Drama at Miller High School.

**HIGH SCHOOLS SERVING NEAR EAST SIDE YOUTH/MILLER HIGH SCHOOL:** Kids in the near east side neighborhood went to Miller, Eastern, Northeastern, Cass Technical, and Northwestern High Schools. Kids who gained entrance to Cass Tech because of their talents in the arts or academics had the experience of going to high school with teens from different neighborhood, racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. Teens from the Hastings Street neighborhood who went to Miller had a more segregated high school experience than their peers at other schools. Many parents of many white teens in the area transferred their children Eastern High School, leaving Miller High School the city’s first majority-black high school in the city. Some white students remained, however, and it was reported that they got along better than the black and white students at more integrated schools such as Northwestern. All the kids, white and black, were from the same economic background on the east side. Miller High

School was on Dubois Street, and it had 1,997 students in 1940. The school had very little funding and therefore lacked many of the modern facilities of other high schools. However, the school had dedicated staff and students who did good, creative work despite the school's lack of money. In fact, in 1947, 20 percent of Miller graduates went to college.

**Hastings Street Youth:** An important fact about the Hastings Street area was that the neighborhood population had a lower percentage of young people than other neighborhoods in Detroit. The kids who lived there generally came from families with less money. This meant that they had less money for recreational activities too. One question to ask people you interview is how much spending money they had and how that shaped the choices they made about what they did for fun.

Another factor to remember when thinking about the experience of "Hastings Street Youth" is that the area drew youth from all over the city. African-American youth especially came to the area to make use of the recreational activities available at St. Antoine YMCA, the Lucy Thurman YWCA, and the Brewster Recreation Center. Although the programming and the environment created at these centers was vibrant and attractive to teens, black teens also had to use these facilities because of the segregation at other YM and YWCA branches and even in public recreation centers; black students who attended Northwestern could not attend the Fisher YMCA branch, even though it was right across the street from their high school.

So did kids who lived around Hastings Street socialize with kids who came to the area from the west side or from other neighborhoods? Sometimes yes, but often not. This is another important question to ask when you conduct oral history interviews.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF FUN:

**Nightclubs:** Despite age limits, kids would sneak into places like the Club Three Sixes to hear music and drink. At that time, the Police Department had a “Women’s Division” that consisted of female police officers charged with looking out for women and children. Officers would patrol neighborhood bars, dancehalls, and pleasure cruise boats looking for people who were under age—especially girls. When teens saw a particular officer coming (and they knew the regular neighborhood officers), they would scatter.

**Dancehalls:** People took any opportunity to go dancing—at high school dances, in a drug store with a juke box, at private parties, and at commercial dance halls. When boys weren’t around, girls would practice their steps with each other. Sometimes boys would dance with each other too, to teach each other in order not to look lame on the dance floor. Teens all over the city went to commercial dancehalls. The Graystone was the fanciest and most expensive—you went there on a date, when you were prepared to really dress up and spend money. Eastsiders loved the Vanity, westsiders the Grande, and Jefferson Beach, Eastwood Park, Westwood Park, and the Bob-Lo Pavilion all combined amusement park rides and dancing facilities. However, racial segregation played a roll in where and when people could dance, too. African Americans were excluded from the Graystone except late on Monday nights. Mexican Americans with dark complexions were also turned away from dancehalls occasionally, if ticket sellers thought they “looked African American.” There were also teen dances during the daytime on weekends, which provided some other dancing opportunities for black kids who were excluded other times.

**Confectioneries:** Teens used to hang out in “confectioneries” (candy stores) or drug stores with soda fountains. Someone would buy something, and a group would sit for a long time scoping out who walked by outside or came in. It was a place to see and be seen. Of course, you needed some money to do this.

**Churches:** Churches had very strong youth programs that consisted of Sunday School and much more. During the 1940s, many teens in the near east side neighborhood used their churches as social outlets for clubs, music, drama, dancing, sports, parties, and picnics. Black Protestant churches organized a citywide Older Boys and Girls Conference that brought hundreds of youth from around the city in contact with each other for meetings and lectures at the St. Antoine YMCA and Lucy Thurman YWCA.

**Public libraries** were also an important hang-out for many kids. They were free, and your parents did not object to you going there. Also, you felt safe. Librarians were constantly annoyed with how much loud socializing was going on (although they were glad kids were in the libraries).

**Walking:** Kids would walk all over the downtown area, up to the main library, and over to Belle Isle. Many teens from the 1940s report “walking” as an important fun, social activity they did with friends. People explored the city on foot—and out of necessity if they didn’t have the money to spend on a bus or streetcar ride.

**Politics:** Some teens were attracted to groups that worked on union organizing, fighting racial discrimination, and other issues. The NAACP had a vibrant youth group that was even more active than the adults. There were chapters around the city, and one downtown at the Brewster Housing Project. Socially, being part of the youth group was a way of meeting teens from all over the city, connecting with older mentors, and having a lot of fun in conferences, dances, social meetings, etc. Serious political work was also part of it. Mixed-race groups of teens (and adults) would go into restaurants that didn’t serve black customers and try to change that discriminatory pattern by asking to be served—this more than 20 years before the sit-ins of the 1960s that we are more familiar with.

## LABOR/POLITICS

Of course, teenagers didn't just exist in a world cut off from adults and their political institutions and work struggles. Young people watched and listened as their parents talked about their experiences on the job, their support for (or distrust of) unions or political groups or parties. And their parents' fortunes affected where the kids themselves lived and went to school, how much work they had to do around the house, and whether they had to leave school to get a job to help the family. Aside from seeing how tired their parents looked at the end of the day or overhearing stories of individual grievances, young people in the 1940s could look at the political landscape of the day by reading the *Michigan Chronicle* or the *Detroit Tribune* and by witnessing the demonstrations happening around the city.

**Work:** Discrimination in hiring was an enormous obstacle that African American Detroiters had to deal with. Although black workers were actively recruited to come to Detroit during World War I, the jobs that awaited them were almost always the hardest, dirtiest, most dangerous ones—and they paid the least. Ford Motor Company was one of the biggest employers of African American workers, and yet even at Ford black workers were more likely to be placed in the foundry or assigned to janitorial work. Many places refused to hire blacks altogether. Black women had an even harder time than black men in finding jobs in industry. Most African American women who needed to work were channeled into domestic work, no matter what their education or training. Moreover, it wasn't only the employers who made things difficult for black job-seekers; white coworkers could also be blatantly hostile. Unions in Detroit in the early 1900s were mostly all-white. They focused on organizing people in the most well-paid, skilled jobs and ignored blacks and women. On a daily level, "hate strikes" were sometimes staged by white male and female workers, in which they refused to work with black coworkers.

**UAW:** Because of this history of bad treatment by employers and white co-workers, black workers had good reason to be suspicious of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) when they started to organize workers in unskilled positions (that earlier unions had ignored altogether). Yet, during the 1930s, when the jobless rate for blacks in Detroit reached 80 percent at times and when employers stopped spending money on community improvements, workers (black and white) began to reassess depending on employers for favors. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the UAW worked hard to convince black workers at Ford and other auto plants that *this* union would be different regarding race relations, and that it was the best chance for job security, advancement at work, and improved working conditions. By 1941, enough black workers at Ford were convinced so that all the workers there were able to finally unionize.

**Politics:** Along with shifting their allegiance from employers to unions, during the 1930s, many African-American Detroiters shifted their political party allegiance from the Republican to the Democratic Party. Major party politics was not the only political arena. The 1930s were years of boycotts of stores that didn't hire black employees. Young people "tested" restaurants that were reported not to serve black customers (see the NAACP youth council above). Anti-lynching demonstrations were held regularly as part of the NAACP's national campaign. By the 1940s, black Detroiters had become a visible, important force in the city's political landscape. Unions and political parties could no longer ignore black workers and voters.

**DETROIT POPULATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION RELATING TO  
AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES**

<b>POPULATION OF DETROIT</b>			
Year	Total City Population	Black Population	% Black
1900	285,704	4,111	1.44
1910	465,766	5,741	1.23
1920	993,675	40,838	4.11
1930	1,568,662	120,066	7.7
1940	1,623,452	149,119	9.2
1950	1,849,568	300,506	16.2

Black Neighborhoods:

Near East Side/“Black Bottom”

In the early 1940s, 75 percent of black Detroiters in this area. Only 10 percent of residents owned their homes in this area.

West Side

There were approximately 30,000 residents of this black community in early 1940s, around Warren and Tireman. Thirty-three percent of residents owned their own homes.

Eight Mile-Wyoming Area

Smaller black community of working-class home owners who bought lots and made due in temporary housing until they had saved enough to build. Seventy percent owned their own homes.

African Americans also lived in Highland Park, in Delray, in Conant Gardens (a middle-class enclave on the Northeast side near where the Sojourner Truth Homes were built), and north of Hamtramck.

## Research Questions for Small Groups:

These are not simple tasks, but they will provide important background for creating the show. People should try to do them together in small groups and be encouraged to enlist the aid of reference librarians. It may be that groups should combine Mosaic members and University of Michigan students to go to libraries and archives together.

[Many of these tasks are most easily answered using materials from the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library Main Branch (closed until December 5, 2000), which has many small local newspapers and the old City Directories. In the meantime, using the regular library holdings, old *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* issues, as well as national magazines will work for many of the questions. Census data should be available in the main library. If not, it is in the University of Michigan Library and probably in Wayne State, too.]

### (1) Popular Culture:

What were the most popular songs in 1943, 1944, 1945? What did young people's clothing look like? Hair styles? What styles of dance were popular?

Try and see if you can answer these on both the national and the local (Detroit) level. Think about finding images from magazines and newspapers and music recordings.

### (2) Detroit Night Spots:

Look at advertisements from different newspapers from the 1940s. What is the difference between them? What kinds of activities are advertised? (What kinds are not advertised?)

See if the librarian can direct you to some papers that catered more to a partying crowd and some to a respectable crowd, to the whole city, to specific groups, etc.

Look for music, dancing, theater, roller skating, bowling, boat tours, movies, and more.

### (3) Organized Youth Leisure:

The *Tribune* had a weekly column devoted to announcements about and coverage of youth activities. Look at several weeks' issues and see what you learn.

What kinds of activities are deemed important by the paper? Which are not reported on?

Do girls and boys have separate activities or are they together?

How often are kids from the Hastings Street area (versus other neighborhoods) mentioned?

### (4) Detroit 1943 Riot Coverage:

What are the differences between newspapers in their coverage of the 1943 riot? Note that the two black papers—The *Michigan Chronicle* and the *Detroit Tribune* may not necessarily have the same opinions. What are the images of youth that come up in the stories?

### (5) Miller High School (or other schools):

Look for old yearbooks, programs, etc.

What can these documents tell you about the lives of the students who went there?

[For this question, when you interview people who were teens in the 1940s, you might ask them to let you see school yearbooks and other materials they've saved.]

(6) School Population:

How many 14-17 year olds were in Detroit in the 1940s? How many were in school? Were there differences between girls and boys? Between racial or ethnic groups?

[This is a question you can answer by looking at Census data.]

(7) Youth at Work:

How many 14-17 year olds in Detroit worked in the 1940s? At what kinds of jobs?

[You can look at both Census charts and at want-ads in the papers that advertised jobs for boys or girls.]

(8) Adults at Work:

Get more specific information on what kinds of jobs black men and women held in Detroit in the 1940s from Census information and from the books in the bibliography.

(9) Mini-maps:

(a) Pick a block from the Hastings Street area and use a City Directory from the 1940s to reconstruct what businesses and residences were there.

(B) After you make a map of the block, see if you can follow up on any of the people who lived and worked there. Can you find any advertisements in the local papers from the time period? Can you find any articles on the individuals from the Burton Historical Collection's biographical files? (Ask a librarian for help on this.) Can you find anyone who is still alive today, or their children, to interview?

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### **Websites:**

<http://www.bhere.com/ruins/home.htm> is Lowell Boileau's "The Fabulous Ruins of Detroit" contains current photographs of many important historic buildings relevant to this project—most notably Orchestra Hall (previously the Paradise Theater).

<http://www.ipl.org/exhibit/jetjazz/> is a site with articles on Detroit's musical history, as well as information on the Graystone Ballroom (including pictures).