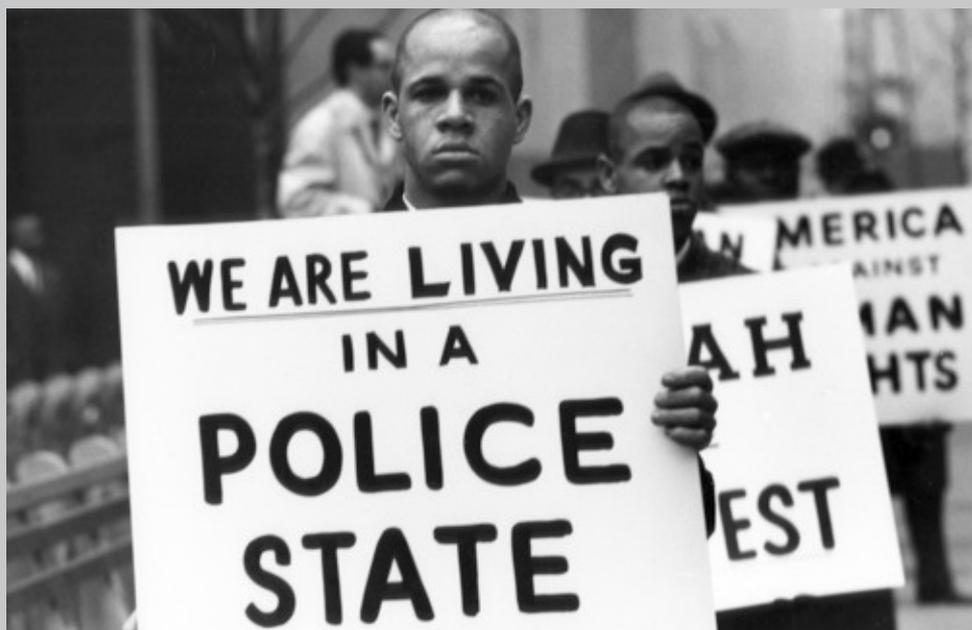


An (Abridged) History of

Resisting Police Violence in Harlem



Historical Moments of Policing & Violence Series
Volume 3

By Mariame Kaba

ABOUT THIS SERIES

In the last few months of 2011 into early 2012, the issue of police violence once again burst into the mainstream with the treatment of Occupy protesters.

While we were appalled at the violence directed at peaceful protesters by law enforcement, we were also dismayed that this phenomenon was treated as a novel one. The incidents were discussed in a way that was divorced from historical context. After all, the black and white images of police dogs being unleashed on peaceful protesters during the black freedom movement of the 1950s and 60s would not have been alien to the young people who were abused by law enforcement in New York and Oakland at the Occupy protests. Police violence is unfortunately not new.

In an attempt to inject some historical memory into the current considerations of police violence, Project NIA and the Chicago Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) Teaching Collective decided to develop a series of pamphlets to inform and educate the broader public about the longstanding tradition of oppressive policing toward marginalized populations (including some activists and organizers).

This series titled *Historical Moments of Policing: Violence & Resistance* features pamphlets on various topics including: Oscar Grant, the Mississippi Black Papers, Slave Patrols, the Young Lords, the 1968 Democratic Convention, the Danzinger Bridge Shootings, Black Student Protests on College Campuses, Timothy Thomas, Resistance to Police Violence in Harlem, and the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre, among others.

The pamphlets are available for free downloading at www.policeviolence.wordpress.com. Please spread the word about the availability of these publications.

Series Conceived and Published by Project NIA (www.project-nia.org) and Chicago Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) Teaching Collective (www.chicagopiccollective.com)

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Graphic Designers: Madeleine Arenivar, Micah Bazant, Antonia Clifford, Eric Kerl, Mauricio Pineda

About the Author

Mariame Kaba is an organizer, educator, and writer who lives in Chicago. Her work focuses on ending violence, dismantling the prison industrial complex, and supporting youth leadership development. She is the founder and director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a mission to end youth incarceration.

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IN FEBRUARY 2012, over thirty community-based organizations in New York City came together to form “*Communities United for Police Reform*”.¹ The coalition has launched a campaign to address the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) “Stop and Frisk” policies which disproportionately target innocent black and brown community residents. Police violence especially against black people in New York City is endemic and historical. As early as the 1920s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was filing complaints about police violence against the NYPD.

From the early 20th century through the 1960s, police violence was one of the most visible symbols of racial oppression in the North. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, in a survey of attitudes held by residents in cities where riots broke out, reported that police practices were the major grievance, followed by unemployment and inadequate housing.²

This pamphlet illustrates how police violence in fact engendered resistance from Blacks in cities like Harlem. Harlem became the epicenter of black New York and perhaps even black America at the turn of the 20th century. In Harlem, tensions with the police were a permanent part of life. In 1943, a riot was triggered by a police officer’s mistreatment of a young woman. In 1957, Malcolm X came to national prominence following an incident of police brutality. In 1964, Harlem once again went up in flames after another incident of police mistreatment of local residents.

This pamphlet will focus on these three episodes to provide some perspective about the history of police violence in New York City and particularly in Harlem in the mid-20th century. The topics are covered in an introductory manner and additional information is provided at the end for those who want to focus more in-depth.

1943 Harlem Riots

If Margie Polite
Had of been white
She might not've cussed
Out the cop that night...
She started the riots!
Harlemites say
August 1st is
MARGIE'S DAY.

—Langston Hughes³



"The Ballad of Margie Polite" by Jacob Lawrence

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We don't know for sure how or why Marjorie (Margie) Polite came to be at the Hotel Braddock on August 1, 1943. We only know for sure that she was there and that she was causing a fuss. The reasons for her ill temper are in dispute.

In some accounts, Margie Polite checked into the Hotel Braddock on West 126th street in Harlem. She complained about her assigned room and was moved to another one. She was still not satisfied with the amenities in her new room so she asked for a refund and checked out. Before she left the hotel though, she asked that the elevator operator return a dollar tip that she had given him. The man denied receiving a tip from her and Ms. Polite became incensed. She was belligerent.

In other versions of the story, Margie Polite was at the Hotel Braddock attending "a raucous drinking party in one of the hotel's rooms."⁴ She was drunk and loud.

A rookie patrolman named James Collins was stationed at the hotel and asked Ms. Polite to leave. She berated him and resisted. He put her under arrest for disorderly conduct. By this time, another woman, Mrs. Florine Roberts, approached the front desk where the commotion was taking place in order to pick up her checked bags. Mrs. Roberts had been staying at the hotel while visiting her 26 year old son, Robert Bandy, who was on leave from the Army. She and her son, Private Bandy, demanded that officer Collins release Ms. Polite who he had a tight hold on.

According to the official police report, Bandy and his mother Mrs. Roberts threatened patrolman Collins. They were accused of attacking him with Robert Bandy eventually grabbing hold of Collins's nightstick and hitting the officer over the head. Patrolman Collins fell to the ground and Bandy tried to run. Collins said that he asked Bandy to halt and when he did not, the police officer (who was still on the ground) fired his revolver, wounding Bandy in the left shoulder.

Domenic J. Capeci Jr. (1977) offers an account of the incident from the perspective of Robert Bandy: "Bandy contended [sic] that he protested when Collins pushed Miss Polite, and the police officer reacted by throwing his nightstick, which Bandy caught; when the soldier hesitated to return the weapon, Collins shot him."⁵

Private Robert Bandy was transported to the hospital with only superficial wounds. Within minutes of the incident however, rumors swirled across the community that a black soldier had been shot and killed by a police officer while he was protecting his mother from harassment. In response, crowds of people gathered in three locations: the Hotel Braddock, Sydenham Hospital, and at the 28th



precinct stationhouse. Some in the angry crowds began to throw stones and break windows; this set off a significant riot throughout Harlem. Capeci (1977) describes the scene once the riot ended on the morning of August 2nd:

Harlem's main thoroughfares, especially West 125th Street and parts of Seventh and Eighth Avenues, 'looked as if they had been swept by a hurricane or an invading army.' The scene was one of smashed windows, wrecked stores, and cluttered sidewalks, with broken glass, food-stuffs, clothing, and assorted debris everywhere.⁶

It took 6,600 city, military, and civil police officers; 8,000 state guardsmen; and 1,500 civilian volunteers to finally end the riot after nearly two days. At the end of the 1943 Harlem Riot, according to the NYPD, six black people were dead (five were shot by police) and 185 were injured. However some media reports suggested that there were as many as 1,000 people hurt during the riot (including 40 police officers). More than 550 black people were arrested and a total of 1,485 stores were damaged and looted. Estimates of the damage ranged from \$250,000 to \$5 million dollars.

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This riot didn't emerge from out of the blue. Once the U.S. entered World War II after the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack, blacks across the country were hopeful that their economic prospects might improve. However, many, including those living in Harlem, found that the war effort failed to improve their economic and social fortunes. In fact, as was the case during World War I, black soldiers continued to face racism and discrimination within the armed forces as well as when they returned home after having fought for the U.S. abroad. Additionally, relations with law enforcement continued to be fraught with conflict and consistent harassment. In the aftermath of the 1943 riot, Adam Clayton Powell, Sr reflected on what provoked Private Bandy to stand up to Patrolman Collins: "When Bandy hit Collins over the head with that club, he was not mad with him only for arresting a colored woman, but he was mad with every White policeman throughout the United States who had constantly beaten, wounded, and often killed colored men and women without provocation."⁷ Harlemite & renowned poet Langston Hughes also captured the realities facing Blacks of that period in his poem titled "*Beaumont to Detroit: 1943.*"

Looky here, America

What you done done -

Let things drift

Until the riots come.

Now your policemen

Let your mobs run free.

I reckon you don't care

Nothing about me.

You tell me that hitler

Is a mighty bad man.

I guess he took lessons

from the ku klux klan.

You tell me mussolini's

Got an evil heart.

Well, it mus-a been in Beaumont

That he had his start -

Cause everything that hitler
 And mussolini do,
 Negroes get the same
 Treatment from you.

You jim crowed me
 Before hitler rose to power –
 And you're still jim crowing me
 Right now, this very hour.

Yet you say we're fighting
 For democracy.
 Then why don't democracy
 Include me?

I ask you this question
 Cause I want to know
 How long I got to fight
 BOTH HITLER—AND JIM CROW.

After the 1943 riot, there wouldn't be another major rebellion in Harlem until 1964. However, in the interim, police and community relationships remained conflict-ridden and untrusting. A 1957 incident would set the stage for community residents' more assertive and violent confrontations with law enforcement during the civil rights era.

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1957 Johnson X Hinton Incident

THERE ARE many versions of the story of Johnson Hinton. Even his name is contested; in some accounts he is called Hinton Johnson and in others he is Johnson Hinton. There are a few details of the story, however, that seem to be settled history.

In April 1957, Johnson Hinton came upon a couple of police officers who were clubbing a man named Reese V. Poe⁸ on the corner of 125th street and 7th Avenue in Harlem. Hinton called out to the officers: “You’re not in Alabama – this is New York!”⁹ The police then turned their nightsticks on Hinton clubbing him and cracking his skull. The officers subsequently handcuffed Hinton and took him to the 28th precinct stationhouse. By the time the evening arrived, there were over 2,000 people surrounding the precinct demanding that Hinton be provided with adequate medical attention.

Johnson X Hinton, it turns out, was a black Muslim who belonged to Mosque Number Seven, the largest mosque in the country – led by a 31 year old preacher named Malcolm X.

At this point, the accounts begin to diverge. In some recollections, a woman who had observed the altercation ran over to the Nation of Islam’s (NOI) restaurant to report the news. Several phone calls later, Malcolm X, accompanied by a small group of Muslims, was at the precinct insisting to see Johnson X. At first they were denied by police but as the crowd outside grew to hundreds of people, they were finally allowed to see Johnson X who was in great pain and distress. The police allowed Johnson X to be transported by ambulance for treatment at Harlem Hospital. Remarkably, once he was treated, the hospital released Johnson X back to the police. By the time Johnson was back in police custody, the crowd outside of the 28th precinct had swelled to over 4,000 people.

When Malcolm X returned to the precinct from Harlem Hospital, it was past midnight. He tried to post bail for Johnson X, but police refused to release him and said that he had to remain incarcerated overnight until he could appear in court the next day. By 2:30 am, Malcolm decided that negotiations for Johnson’s

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release were at a stalemate. With thousands still assembled outside the police precinct, Malcolm X gave a hand signal to his lieutenants in the Fruit of Islam (FOI) and within seconds the crowd silently began to disperse. The next morning, Hinton was dumped in front of NYC's felony courthouse after a bail of \$2,500 was paid by the Nation of Islam. He was promptly picked up and driven to Sydenham Hospital in Harlem to be treated for his injuries.¹⁰

James Hicks, the managing editor of the *New York Amsterdam News*, offered his own account of the episode. He reached out to Malcolm X, asking him to act as a mediator between the police and community members. Peter Goldman, in his book *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, remembers Hicks telling the story this way:

I was chairman of the 28th Precinct Community Council at the time, and at two in the morning I got a call from the 28th to come over to my office. I went there and I met Inspector McGowen, Deputy Commissioner Walter Arm and Deputy Inspector Robert J. Mangum, who's black. McGowen said, 'I had a normal arrest, he was resisting, he got beat up and he's over there in the 28th Precinct now.' He said, 'They've got two thousand people out there,' He said, 'You know Malcolm X?' I said, 'Yeah, I know him' - we were pretty good friends by that time. Got to be lunch buddies at the Chock Full O' Nuts at 125th and Seventh. McGowen said, 'You think you can get him up here?' I said, 'Yeah, give me a little time. Where is he?' He said, 'Over at the 28th.'

So I got over, and there he is with his people - with them and the bystanders they must have had 2,600 people lining the sidewalks between Seventh and Eighth avenues on 123rd Street. I said, 'Hey, Malcolm, Jesus. What's going on?' He told me one of their people was inside, he'd been beaten and needed medical attention. He said, 'We're going to stay right here, Brother Hicks.' I asked him if he'd come back to my office and talk to the police people. He said, 'If you think anything can be accomplished, I'll go. But only on your word.' So we went back and walked up to my office at the *Amsterdam News* - it was on the fourth floor.

When we got there, Walter Arm started talking. He was in charge of public relations: he'd been a police reporter, and a good one, but he was white. He said, 'My presence here, and Inspector McGowen's, and Deputy Inspector Mangum's, indicates how much concern the police department has for this situation. However, I'd like to say that the police of the city of New York can handle any situation that arises in Harlem, and we're not here to ask anybody's help.'

Well, Malcolm sat there and listened, and then he got up and put

on that camel's hair coat of his – he'd been a hustler and he always dressed sharp – and he told them, "There's nothing more to be said. Just like that. And suddenly he was striding out the door of my office. I can still hear his steps – clump-clump-clump – going into that gloomy city room. All the lights were out; my office was in the back at the end of the corridor, and he walked out into the darkness. Someone said, 'Where's he going?' And I said, 'He's leaving.'

I followed him out. I said, 'Wait a minute, Mr. X.' He stopped out in the darkness there. He said, 'Brother Hicks, I'm only here 'cause you said something could be accomplished.' He said, 'They don't need me. They say they can handle it. Well, let them handle it.'

I said, 'Wait a minute.'

I went back to the room. Mangum said, 'Tell him there must be *some* level we can get together on if he'll only come back.' I went back and told it to Malcolm, and he came back. He said, 'I only came back because I respect Brother Hicks.' And I said, 'Have a seat.'

This time, Arm shut up. Malcolm said, "I have no respect for you" – Arm – 'or the police department.' He may have said something to Mangum, too. [What he told Mangum, according to a police source, was: "I don't talk with white man's niggers." Mangum, this source said, was "very hurt."] Malcolm said, "One of our brothers has been beaten, and all we are asking is that we be allowed to go in there and see him and determine if he is in need of hospitalization. The evidence we have now is that he should be in the hospital. If we find that he doesn't need hospitalization, you can go on with your case. If he does, we want him hospitalized.' So Mangum and Arm agreed. They hadn't even seen the man themselves. They said, 'All right, let's take a look. If he does need hospitalization, we'll give it to him. Would that be satisfactory to you?' Malcolm said yes. They said, 'Will you then get your people out of the block?' Malcolm said, 'this is all we asked for and this is all we want.'

In effect, the police were saying, 'We *can't* handle it without you.' Nobody got down on his knees. But they bowed.

So, we walked the three blocks back to the station, and Malcolm's people were still there. The men were standing in the gutter with their arms folded. Immobile. The women were on the sidewalk behind them with white kerchiefs on their heads. And nobody said a word. The light in the stationhouse was the only light in the block. I remember thinking, 'Where did they all *come* from? – a movement like that growing up right under your nose. When we got to the station, there was a black sergeant on the door. I heard him saying, "Goddamn Muslims – who the hell are they anyway? Turn me loose with this club and I'll clear this block.' John

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X, who was with Malcolm, turned and just stared at him, and I said to McGowen, 'You better get that sergeant off the door.'

We went on in and saw the man, and they had torn his head off – [sic]. One look and McGowen said, "Get him to the hospital." He said, 'Mr. X, he's going to be sent to Harlem Hospital – is that all right? Malcolm said, 'That's all we asked.' McGowen said, 'Would you take the responsibility of sending your people home? Malcolm said, 'I'll do that.'

And then, in that dim light, Malcolm stood up and waved his hand, and all those people just disappeared. *Disappeared*. One of the police people said to me, 'Did you see what I just saw?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, "This is too much power for one man to have.' He meant one black man. I'll never forget that.

Johnson X survived his assault but had to have multiple brain surgeries and live with a metal plate in his head. Johnson X filed a lawsuit against the NYPD. An all-white jury awarded \$70,000 to him; this was (at the time) the largest police brutality settlement in New York City.¹¹

In his book "The Savage City," T. J. English writes of the Johnson X incident: "It was the beginning of a new kind of relationship between blacks and the police in the city of New York."¹² Malcolm X had stood up to the NYPD and won. No one in Harlem would soon forget that.

1964 Harlem Riot

ON JULY 16th 1964 at around 9:20 am, 15 year old James Powell and his friends were sitting on a stoop near the Robert E. Wagner, Sr. Junior High School on East 76th street in the Yorkville community waiting for their remedial reading summer class to begin. James and his friends got into a verbal altercation with Patrick Lynch who was the superintendent of three apartment buildings across from the school. Lynch had been watering either some flowers in front of a building or the sidewalk. The man decided to aim his water hose at the young people and allegedly said, “Dirty niggers, I’ll wash you clean.”¹³ Lynch was white; James and his friends were black. He continued to drench the young people with water as they scattered and tried to retaliate by throwing a bottle and a soda can in his direction. James Powell had had enough and decided to go after the man, who ran toward a nearby building.

An off-duty police officer, Lieutenant Thomas Gilligan, came upon the scene as he was leaving a repair shop across the street. He saw James Powell chasing Lynch and ran over to assist. Gilligan was not wearing his uniform and without apparently indicating that he was a cop pulled out his gun.

James Powell saw that Patrick Lynch had disappeared into a building and decided to stop his pursuit. When he turned around, he came face to face with Thomas Gilligan, who fired three shots. Powell hit the ground, blood pouring from his mouth. There are conflicting accounts about what happened during the shooting and immediately afterwards.

A friend of Powell’s remembered rushing over to James immediately after he had been shot. He turned to Lieutenant Gilligan and asked: “Why did you shoot him?” According to author, T.J. English: “Gilligan answered, ‘This is why.’ He took a police badge from his pocket and pinned it to his shirt. Then according to the student, Gilligan said, ‘This black bastard is my prisoner. Somebody call an ambulance.’”¹⁴

When an ambulance did arrive, it was too late. James Powell was dead. Students began pouring out of Wagner Junior High School and running to see the body of their classmate. By the time 75 other police officers had gathered on the scene,

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over 300 students started throwing garbage cans, bottles, and rocks in anger. The situation was quickly subdued and no arrests were made.

Here's how the New York Times reported on the incident in an article under the headline "Negro Boy Killed; 300 Harass Police:"

An off-duty police lieutenant shot and killed a 15-year old Negro boy in Yorkville yesterday when the youngster allegedly threatened him with a knife. After the shooting, about 300 teen-agers, mostly Negroes, pelted policemen with bottles and cans. Before order had been restored by 75 steel-helmeted police reinforcements, a Negro patrolman attempting to disperse the screaming youths was hit on the head by a can of soda. He was taken to Lenox Hill Hospital, where his condition was later reported as good. The shooting occurred at 9:20 a.m. outside a six-story white brick apartment house at 215 East Seventy-sixth Street, opposite Robert F. Wagner Junior High School, where summer school classes were in progress. The dead boy was James Powell, a student at the school, who lives at 1686 Randall Avenue, the Bronx. The police said that youth had been shot twice, in the right hand and in the abdomen, by Lieutenant Thomas Gilligan of Brooklyn's 14th Division.¹⁵

Gilligan "claimed that he showed his badge and fired the first time as a warning shot, firing the next two only after Powell lunged toward him with a knife."¹⁶ Students disagreed that Powell had a knife but some eyewitnesses thought that he may have lunged towards Lieutenant Gilligan. A knife was later found at the scene (eight feet away from where James Powell was shot with its blade closed).

Black people across New York City viewed this killing as unjustified and as one more in the long line of racist incidents of brutality by the NYPD. The next day a number of protests were organized; in particular, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) assembled a multi-racial group of about 75 people to picket the school and then march to the 19th precinct stationhouse on East 67th street. They were met by about 50 police officers and the rally quickly fizzled.

Saturday July 18th was a sweltering day in New York City. A protest was organized in Harlem. By the early evening, there were about 500 people assembled. Among the protesters on that day was William (Bill) Epton. Epton had been a veteran who fought with honor in the Korean War. He returned and became the chairperson of the Harlem branch of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), a communist organization.

Once the PLP's Harlem branch, which had been agitating in street rallies against police brutality for months, got word of the July 16th killing of James Powell, it began distributing thousands of posters proclaiming, "Wanted for Murder, Gilligan the Cop."



At the rally on July 18th, Bill Epton¹⁷ delivered a soapbox speech in which he declared, “We’re going to have to kill a lot of cops, a lot of the judges, and we’ll have to go against their army.” Here are Epton’s own words recounting what he said at the rally:

What I said was that we must fight back when the cops attack us. I said that the police have declared war on Harlem and Harlem must declare war back on them. They – the judges, the cops, the slumlords, the bosses – are the ones who institute violence and murder against the people. I called – openly and publicly – for revolutionary struggle by the people to defeat that reign of terror.

After the speeches, some protesters decided to march toward the 28th precinct stationhouse. Janet Abu-Lughod (2007) offers this description of what happened next:

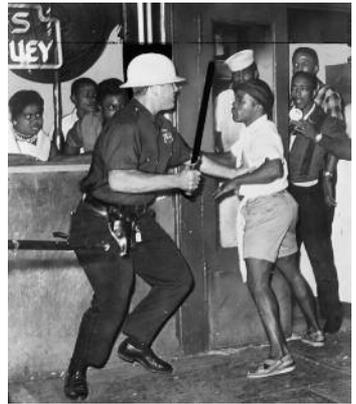
At the door of the precinct, however, police barred entry, and the crowd was forced to the opposite sidewalk. A committee of five was eventually admitted and demanded the immediate suspension of Gilligan. When the police tried to disperse the crowd, a fight broke out, and a few bot-

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tles were thrown from the roofs of tenements nearby. 'Policemen donned steel...helmets and moved into the tenements, went up the stairs, and took over the roofs, ending the aerial bombardment. Barricades were called for, and...a scuffle broke out, and about twenty-five people, including some policemen, fell to the pavement.' Some 14 persons were arrested, but this only increased the anger of the gathering and the descent of bottles from the rooftops. And when word of the battle at precinct headquarters reached the rally that was still continuing on 125th Street, it further inflamed emotions. By 10 p.m., the crowd had swelled to an estimated 1,000, and things were getting out of control.¹⁸

The police were brutal in their response to the rebellion. It took three days to get things back under control in Harlem. By Tuesday night July 21st, the riots had moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. One person died, over 500 were injured and estimates of damages ranged from \$500,000 to \$1 million dollars.

Ultimately, Lieutenant Gilligan was cleared of all charges by a grand jury and went unpunished for his killing of James Powell. It was left to James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, to comment to the New York



Times about this outcome: "CORE is astonished that the grand jury, with the compliance of the District Attorney's office, has seen fit to exonerate a 200-pound police lieutenant in the slaying of a 122-pound Negro Youngster.¹⁹" Perhaps the sentiments of the Harlem community were best captured by the words of a leaflet that was distributed at a rally after Gilligan had been exonerated: "Harlem knows that this grand jury decision means that any white policeman who wants to kill a Negro will not have to worry about being tried for murder."²⁰

Once again, police brutality had instigated a rebellion in Harlem. It wouldn't be the last time.

For Thought and Discussion

- What are the similarities that you see in the three incidents?
- What were the underlying conditions that sparked the protests?
- The following is a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr:

“A riot is at bottom the language of the unheard. It is the desperate, suicidal cry of one who is fed up with the powerlessness of his cave existence that he asserts that he would rather be dead than ignored.”²²

Do you agree with Dr. King’s assessment about why riots happen?
Why or why not? [See also this endnote for further context]

- In your opinion, who are the police set up to protect?
Who benefits? Who suffers?
- How are these historical incidents still relevant to our current era?
Can you think of any similar incidents that have taken place in the past five years?
- What are your ideas about how we can transform oppressive policing and create a more just system?
Can you think of any alternatives to the police to address some of the problems that we face as a society (like violence or crime)?

Resource

An excerpt of the following poem is cited earlier in this publication. We wanted to share the entire poem here.

The Ballad of Margie Polite

If Margie Polite
Had of been white
She might not've cussed
Out the cop that night.

In the lobby
Of the Braddock Hotel
She might not've felt
The urge to raise hell.

A soldier took her part
He got shot in the back
By a white cop -
The soldier were black.

They killed a colored soldier!
Folks started to cry it -
The cry spread over Harlem
And turned into riot.

They taken Margie to jail
And kept her there.

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

The charges swear.

Margie warn't nobody
Important before –
But she ain't just nobody
Now no more.

She started the riots!
Harlemites say
August 1st is
MARGIE'S DAY.

Mark August 1st
As decreed by fate
For Margie and History
To have a date.

Mayor La Guardia
Riding up and down.
Somebody yelled,
What about
Styvesant Town?

Colored leaders
In sound trucks.
Somebody yelled,
Go home, you hucks!

They didn't kill the soldier,
A race leader cried.
Somebody hollered,
Naw! But they tried!

Margie Polite!
Margie Polite!
Kept the Mayor -
And Walter White -
And everybody
Up all night!

When the PD car
Taken Margie away -
It wasn't Mother's
Not Father's -
It were
MARGIE'S DAY!

—Langston Hughes

Further Study

Interested in Learning More?

July '64—This is a documentary that tells the story of a historic three-day race riot that erupted in two African American neighborhoods in the northern, mid-sized city of Rochester, New York. On the night of July 24, 1964, frustration and resentment brought on by institutional racism, overcrowding, lack of job opportunity and police dog attacks exploded in racial violence that brought Rochester to its knees. Directed by Carvin Eison and produced by Chris Christopher, *July '64* combines historic archival footage, news reports and interviews with witnesses and participants to dig deeply into the causes and effects of the historic disturbance. This film is not specifically about the Harlem Riots but provides some good context about the origins of urban rebellions in the 1960s.

www.pbs.org/independentlens/july64/

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14. English, p.71.
15. *New York Times* (July 17, 1964) “Negro Boy Killed; 300 Harass Police.”
16. Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007. p. 172.
17. Epton and attorney Conrad Lynn of the Freedom Now Party would be arrested on July 25th as they attempted to lead another march in Harlem. He was charged with “criminal anarchy,” “seeking to overthrow the government of the State of New York,” and “advocating the assassination of public officials.”
18. Abu-Lughod, p.174.
19. Halberstam, Davis. “Jury’s Exoneration of Gilligan Scored by Negro Leaders.” *New York Times* (September 2, 1964)
20. Ibid
21. King, Martin Luther. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1967.
22. A few weeks before he was assassinated, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the conditions that can lead to civil unrest and disorder:

“Now I wanted to say something about the fact that we have lived over these last two or three summers with agony and we have seen our cities going up in flames. And I would be the first to say that I am still committed to militant, powerful, massive, non-violence as the most potent weapon in grappling with the problem from a direct action point of view. I’m absolutely convinced that a riot merely intensifies the fears of the white community while relieving the guilt. And I feel that we must always work with an effective, powerful weapon and method that brings about tangible results. But it is not enough for me to stand be-

fore you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the negro poor has worsened over the last twelve or fifteen years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity.”ⁱⁱ

