



*The Origins of the  
Urban Crisis: Race  
and Inequality in  
Postwar Detroit*

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Thomas J. Sugrue

Winner of numerous awards, including the prestigious Bancroft Prize for American history, Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* offered a bold new way of thinking about the causes of urban poverty in the United States.

Using Detroit as a symbol of America's troubled cities and as a lens through which to examine this crisis, Sugrue asked why this and other industrial cities had become sites of persistent racialized poverty. He challenged the conventional wisdom that urban decline was the result of failed social programs and racial fissures of the 1960s. Instead, by weaving together the history of workplaces, unions, civil rights groups, political organizations, and real estate agencies, Sugrue found the roots of urban poverty in a hidden history of racial violence, discrimination, and deindustrialization that reshaped the urban landscape following the Second World War.

The *Detroit Free Press* called this work the "most interesting, informative, and provocative book on modern Detroit," but what made Sugrue's book so important was that its findings were not unique to Detroit. Sugrue argued that the racial tensions, segregation, and economic inequality that plagued Detroit were prevalent in other urban centers as well. The book served not only as a reinterpretation of historical facts but also as a reference point for those looking to improve urban conditions throughout the country. As one reviewer said, "By offering a clearer picture of how the urban crisis began, Sugrue brings us a little bit closer to finding a way to end it."