

February 8, 2007

EC 137, Racial Inequality in the US  
Prof. Glenn C. Loury

### Writing Assignment #1

Please write a short essay of no more than 3 double-spaced pages in response to the following statement. The essay is due in the next class one, Tuesday, Feb. 13. I want you to know that I do not accept late papers, under any circumstances.

In his book “Origins of the Urban Crisis” Thomas Sugrue discusses many ways in which black Detroiters met with *discrimination* in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This included discrimination in employment and in housing, as well as discriminatory treatment by local and the federal governments. Sugrue also discusses how the confinement of blacks to particular residential districts in the city worked so as to reinforce what he calls (in his Introduction) a *self-perpetuating racial stigma* that disadvantaged blacks as well. More generally, Sugrue writes about the interplay between “structures” (like availability of jobs, or segregation of neighborhoods), on the one hand, and “belief systems” (like racial ideologies, stereotypes and prejudices, or notions of identity and solidarity) on the other hand.

Your assignment is to write a short essay in which you describe succinctly how these two mechanisms (*discrimination* and *racial stigma*) seemed to operate in the case of Detroit after WWII. Please be specific by citing examples from the actual historical experience of Detroit. I am particularly interested in whether or not you think these two mechanisms of black disadvantage interacted with and reinforced one another, and how you see that interaction as having played itself out in this particular city.