An Analysis of The Hartford Times and the Hartford Courant’s Coverage of the 1969 Riots in Hartford

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The 1969 Labor Day riots in the North End were by most accounts the most violent events ever in the history of Hartford. The events were the culmination of the most tumultuous decade in American history. The country was fighting two wars; the one in distant Vietnam most Americans only witnessed on television and the one against itself fought in the streets of its cities sometimes less than a mile from the insulated suburbs.

It is no secret that the media coverage of the Vietnam war affected the outcome of that conflict dramatically. Could the same be said of the newspaper coverage of the Hartford riots of 1969? When asked how fair the newspaper coverage of the riots was, all of the reporters interviewed for this paper who personally witnessed and wrote about the events reply that it was extremely fair; they reported what they saw. Reporters did not fabricate stories in 1969. Some doubt, however, remains as to what was not reported.

However, it must be taken into consideration that newspapers were businesses then as now. Their readers and the companies whose advertisements filled the pages of the product were also their customers and without customers, businesses go out of business. The task for any business is to provide a product their customers want to buy. But do newspapers have an obligation to provide news to their community in a way that
affects change? Newspapers, even more in 1969 than today, had/have incredible power in their ability to provide Americans with substantive articles that politicians and businesses pay close attention to.

When studying any discourse on a particular subject, especially on as heated as the 1969 riots, it is important to consider the audience. Who was reading the newspaper in 1969? What connection can be made between the rioters and the society they affected? It is important to convey the truth to one’s readers, but from what angle? The audience of Hartford’s two main papers in 1969 is obvious, based on the total lack of black or Hispanic brides in the “woman’s” section. Non-white brides were not going to send their picture to a paper they didn’t read.

It seems obvious that the individuals who read the papers on a daily basis in the 1960s (the comics and the sports pages aside) were overwhelmingly white and in the middle or upper class economic bracket. Further, Spanish speakers were left entirely out. Even a quick glance through the Times or the Courant and the advertisements tell the whole story. The 1969 papers, the object of this study, are full of advertisements for Sage Allen, G. Fox, and a wide assortment of new car dealers. Were the rioters clients of these establishments?

Ann K Johnson wrote an interesting and informative book on Soviet and American Press coverage of the largest of the 1960s riots. At a glance it seems ludicrous to compare press coverage here in free America to the coverage deep behind the iron curtain at the height of Soviet power. However, Johnson makes many interesting correlations between the two countries.
Johnson argues that the Soviet propaganda machine, operated by the state, created news coverage that was no more biased than coverage in American papers. But in the U.S. it is not the state that finances the newspaper industry; it is business. She quotes J. David Kennamer who states, “Advertising may be the most visible form of ‘propaganda’ in the United States since most mass media are wholly or in major part supported by advertising revenues, and many would argue that advertising is the engine that drives the most powerful and most consumer-centered economy in the world.”

The newspaper coverage of the 1969 riots in Hartford was written by middle-class whites, for middle/upper-class whites. This phenomenon, to a large extent, exacerbated the volatile situation in Hartford that summer. Hartford’s poor rioted because by doing so, suburban readers would be forced to listen.

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*The Hartford Times* and the *Hartford Courant* dominated the greater Hartford area in 1969. Each had its own style and agenda. *The Times* generally supported the Democratic party while *the Courant* supported the Republican party. According to Don Noel, then editor of *the Times*, his paper did cover some Republican candidates and issues, but *the Courant* ran no coverage of Democrats.2

Each paper also had its own style of writing. *The Times* read more like a narrative while *the Courant* was more dry. Irving Kravsow stated that the *Courant’s* style was

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2 Don Noel, interview by author, 20 April 2003.
much like that of the Associated Press. When he was city editor, he told his writers to make their points in a short paragraph and “get out.”

A 1973 newspaper survey said of the *Times*, “It is all very attractive and immensely readable and enjoyable—and, one is tempted to speculate, irrelevant. Reading *the Times* is like filling up with snack food: when you’re finished you’re still hungry.”

*The same* survey calls the *Courant* “a triumph of content over form.”

One glaring anomaly at *the Courant* however was Thomas ‘Dennie’ Williams. A leading figure in the *Cow-ant’s* play by play coverage of the riots, Williams got right into the melee and produced interesting articles with colorful titles like “I Had a Gun, They Knew It; That’s Why I Wasn’t Hit”. Mr. Williams rode in a police car at one point during the riots, but said it failed to give him the correct angle from which to report. Mr. Williams also told me a story about how he went to the Mayor’s residence after it had been fire-bombed and the Mayor asked him why he was there.

During the 1950s larger newspapers began to cover suburban news, and the *Times* and the *Courant* were no different. However, suburban news often happened at night which meant that *the Courant*, an AM paper, got the story in print before the *Times*. The result, according to then *Courant* reporter Henry McNulty, was that *Times* reporters were sometimes forced to create a different angle to the same story and lost part of the story in the process.

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3 Irving Kravsow, interview by author, 24 April 2003.
5 Thomas D. Williams, interview by author, 23 March 2003.
6 Henry McNulty, interview by author, 2 May 2003.
Another problem for the *Times* that began in the late 1950s was the traffic situation in the Hartford area. The freeways that created the suburbs also created gridlock as people lived farther away from their jobs. By the 1960s the *Times* had pushed its deadline back into the morning hours in order to get their paper to their customers on time. As a PM publication, the *Times* was the paper ‘Dad’ read when he got home from work. It seems logical to assume that the *Times* lost relevance as television news became popular.

When looking at any event and especially one as important as a riot, it is important to consider the media attention that event gets. How was it reported? Is the reporter taking a side? Everyone interviewed for this paper from the *Times* implied or stated that their paper was more sensitive to minority issues. Everyone at the *Courant* felt that the coverage was about the same.

In the pressure cooker that was the North End of Hartford during the summer of 1969, it didn’t take much to incite people to riot. These North End residents had watched their city boil over numerous times in the preceding two years. They watched as American cities split apart at the seams in violence. Destruction, looting, arson, death was in their newspapers and on their television sets almost every day. People, under-privileged people, were asserting themselves with violence and it was working. Riots, after all, were front page news. They gave attention if not a voice to groups who might otherwise have none. How much of a part did the media have in creating this angry

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8 McNulty interview, 2 May 2003.
lower-class and in creating the indifferent, ignorant middle and upper-classes? How did newspaper coverage affect opinion?

In late August, 1969 Hartford Times columnist Bill Ryan wrote three articles on the Puerto Rican community in the North End. His intent was to open up a discussion between the Puerto Rican community and the indigenous white community. What Ryan did instead was start the most destructive riot in the city's history. Before it was over, a policeman had been shot, a branch of the Hartford Public Library had been partially burned, and businesses had been destroyed.

Ryan's first of three articles was entitled “Puerto Rican Trek to Hartford Began in 1945 with Farm Jobs”. It was a page 1A article complete with a drawing of a street scene that included various Puerto Ricans on the sidewalk in front of a North End Hispanic movie theater. The sub-heading was as follows; “This is the first in a series of articles on the Puerto Ricans in Hartford. This report and subsequent articles will deal with their tropical background, their aspirations in coming here, their problems, their leaders, and their relationship to others in the community.”

It was their relationship to others in the community or perhaps the community’s relationship to them that was the problem.

Ryan began by describing the island of Puerto Rico and its people. His tone was typical of pre-1980’s journalism; honest, not politically correct. He wrote, “they [the Puerto Ricans] were volatile and loved fiestas and could be prone to violence if insulted.” He continued with immigration statistics and the when and where of their coming. Ryan gave vivid descriptions of the Puerto Rican scene at South Green. He wrote, “Here are

‘Bill Ryan, “Puerto Rican Trek to Hartford Began in 1945 with Farm Jobs,” The Hartford Times, Al.
the people leaning out windows and chattering in a foreign language. Here are the strange smells of foods... Here are the bright colors in dress of a people who haven’t learned to be drab.”

While these passages can be interpreted either way, a quote under the sub-heading “Violence” could not. Ryan interviews a firefighter who said, “They’re pigs, that’s all, pigs... They dump garbage out of their windows. They live like pigs.” Ryan also interviewed a middle-aged South End resident who drove by a Puerto Rican section of the city called the South Green every day on his way to work. He stated, “They throw stones at my car. They throw stones at my wife’s car. They insult women on the street. They ought to go back to Hell where they came from.”

In retrospect, it seems obvious to a present day reader that such comments printed verbatim would only exacerbate an already volatile situation. In fact, even Bill Ryan recognized this in the following column entitled “Antagonism.” He writes that “the antagonism lies there like a huge fog bank.” Just three weeks earlier the Puerto Rican community had rioted when a white motorcycle gang calling themselves the Comancheros had allegedly assaulted an elderly Puerto Rican man. Did Ryan and/or his editor Don Noel intend to fuel the fire with the article?

By 1969, Bill Ryan had been with the Hartford Times for 19 years and remained at the paper until its demise in 1976. Born in Hartford, he was no stranger to its politics and its racial tensions. Ryan’s true intentions were quite admirable. He wrote the article

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10 Ryan, “Puerto Rican Trek to Hartford Began in 1945 with Farm Jobs,” Al.
11 Ryan, “Puerto Rican Trek to Hartford Began in 1945 with Farm Jobs,” Al.
in response to the 10 August riots. Recognizing the whites’ misunderstanding of the Puerto Rican community, he wrote the article to enlighten and portray the Puerto Ricans as people with a distinct and colorful culture who came to the mainland to work and thrive. His message, he says, was peace through knowledge. 12

Of course as history tells, peace was what he did not achieve. The following day, Labor Day, riots broke out in the Clay and Arsenal areas. Times management immediately canceled the second and third articles, a decision Bill Ryan disagreed with but understood. The firemen’s union brought suit against the paper and an executive (whom Ryan declined to name) asked Ryan for the name of the firefighter quoted in the article. Ryan, of course, refused and the executive did not push the issue further.

An obvious problem with Ryan’s article is its lack of direct input from the Puerto Rican community. No Puerto Ricans were interviewed. No pictures of Puerto Ricans were presented. According to Ryan, the second and third articles in the series were all interviews and photos of the family of Maria Sanchez who was probably the foremost advocate of the Puerto Rican community at the time. He went to their homes, talked to their kids, and got great shots of kids playing in yards. Ryan said that the first article was simply an introduction and the following articles would have given his readers the necessary depth. Thomas ‘Dennie’ Williams, who was at the time a reporter covering the riots for the Courant, said the Bill Ryan gave the Times depth.13

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12 Bill Ryan, interview by author, 13 March 2003.
13 Thomas D. Williams, interview by author, 23 March 2003.
Labor Day Riots

The first articles concerning the riots were printed in the Tuesday, 2 September papers the first day after the first night of rioting. The Times headline was "Curfew Tonight for Hartford" directly above a dismal picture of a destroyed Main Street. In the pages of that day's paper were seven articles addressing the riots. Four described the riots, which stores were looted, how the police were handling the situation, and how long the curfew would last. One was about how the riot was the worst yet (as told by witnesses), and one other was about how the Ropkins Branch Library was partially burned.

The only article even attempting to get to the root of the problem at all was one entitled, "Looting and Destruction Deplored by the NAACP". This article highlighted the NAACP cry to whites not to label all minorities as rioters. What was not included was an article addressing the Puerto Rican problem. Specifically, no Puerto Rican leaders were interviewed. This is surprising because these riots were started by Puerto Rican reaction to Ryan's article, and the same group had rioted three weeks earlier.

The lack of Puerto Rican interviews following the riots was not for lack of organizations within the Puerto Rican community. Several Puerto Rican groups existed in Hartford at the time including the Puerto Rican Action for Progress and the Spanish Action Coalition. Why didn't the Courant or the Times print these organization's reactions to the riots?

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The *Courant*’s 2 September paper was headlined, “Lun Wins **GHO**”. Below that in smaller print was, “Shooting, Fires, Looting Erupt in North End”. Two other articles appeared as well. One was similar to the first and another was about police injuries. To me it seems obvious that riots should take precedence over a golf tournament, but at the time they were, at least to the editors of *the Hartford Courant*, just another set of riots in a summer full of rioting.

According to Mr. Kravsow, who was responsible for the content of the articles but not the headlines, riots in the North End were no surprise to the *Courant*’s readers. It’s not that they weren’t important however. *The Courant*, according to Kravsow, was just as sensitive to minority issues as the *Times*. However, it appears that while the *Times* interviewed members of the NAACP on Tuesday, 2 September, while *the Courant* did so the following day. He also saw little difference between the two papers’ coverage, but did hint that *the Courant*’s writing was more substantive.  

Buried on page 7 in the Wednesday 3 September issue of *the Courant* was a short article entitled, “Did Remark Cause Disorder?” under the subtitle “Legal Action Planned”. It concerned the firemen’s union’s legal action against *the Hartford Times* for printing the firefighter’s quote calling Puerto Ricans “pigs”.

The most informative article on the subject of the Labor Day riots was a New *York Times* article published on 4 September. It was titled, “Outbreak of Riots No Surprise to Puerto Ricans in Hartford - Long Smoldering Grievances Include Exorbitant Slum Rents - Relations with Police are Strained”. Columnist Paul L. Montgomery provided a lengthy

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15 Kravsow, interview, 24 April 2003.
and informative argument that the problems of the Puerto Rican community simply were not being addressed.\(^\text{16}\)

The two main issues, as outlined in the title, were housing and police relations. Montgomery told the disturbing tale of the Puerto Rican mother whose three children were slain in her slum apartment and upon her release from the hospital where she had been treated for hysteria, the landlord demanded $130 for cleaning up the blood. He also\(^\text{0}\) told of Mr. Donald Gore, the owner of the Radio City Cafe where the Puerto Rican man was beaten by the Comancheros. It appears that Mr. Gore was accused of charging Puerto Ricans more for drinks than other customers. However, because the assistant city\(^\text{9}\) prosecutor was also Mr. Gore’s lawyer, the charges were dropped. Where were the \textit{Tim}}\(^\text{28}\) and the \textit{Courant} on this issue? Why did a New York City paper write about this and Hartford’s local papers did not?

On 7 September \textit{The Courant} ran an article entitled, “Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?”. Columnist William Cockerham addressed the Puerto Rican problem by interviewing Puerto Ricans and getting their reactions to the riots. All of the\(^\text{3}\) responses were angry, questioning why the Puerto Ricans in Hartford were being treated so poorly. One individual said,

“I came here because I want to live better. I always work hard every day. I am no pig...no pig. I was arrested last night by police. The handcuffs were too tight...they cut my hands. They throw you onto a truck and boot you in the rear end. They don’t treat white Americans like that.”\(^\text{17}\)


10 August Riots

By late August 1969, the city of Hartford was no stranger to riots. Earlier in that month, on 10 August, riots broke out when a rumor spread that the Comancheros, a white motorcycle gang had assaulted an elderly Puerto Rican man at the Radio City Cafe. The Times’ article the following day was entitled, “Youths Hurl Rocks, Bottles at South Green; 10 Nabbed”. Four days later Bill Ryan wrote an article entitled “City’s Puerto Rican’s Ask: Who Speaks for Us, Senor?”. One man interviewed by Ryan stated, “The rumor was enough to knock the top off the steamkettle that had been simmering for years”.

The Times also ran three other articles of substance between 11 August and 15 August. Barry Wanger’s article, “More Help Pledged for PRs” highlighted the unfair treatment Puerto Ricans faced at the hands of the police. This was from Puerto Rican charges that the Comancheros were not arrested while Puerto Ricans were. On 14 August Maria Sanchez asked City manager Elisha Freedman for a meeting. The article, “Puerto Rican Leader, City Trying to Ease Tensions” highlighted Freedman’s reluctance to meet with Sanchez. The meeting was held on the night of the 14th, and the topics discussed therein were explained in the Times’ article the following day. The article was entitled “Success of Talks to Officials Pleases City Puerto Ricans.”

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21 “Puerto Rican Leader, City Trying to Ease Tensions,” The Hartford Times, 48.
22 Bill Williams, “Success of Talks to Officials Pleases City’s Puerto Ricans,” The Hartford Times, 15.
included police treatment of Puerto Ricans and the need for Spanish speaking police officers.

The Courant’s article on 11 August was front page material. “Rocks, Firebombs Fly in South Green” told essentially the same story as the Times article. The article gave the basics - who got arrested and what was destroyed. On 13 August the Courant reported 11 arrested in the South Green area for disorderly conduct.23

On the fourteenth columnist Rod MacDonald provided the Cow-ant’s readers with the Comancheros side of the story; they denied attacking any Puerto Rican man. MacDonald described the club members as adult males ages 25-40; many of which had wives, children, and homes. When they were not working, they were ‘hanging around’.” MacDonald described the Harley Davidson motorcycles the members rode and the club’s pay telephone that one member claimed was unregistered and therefore hard to trace. He also described the “woman” who routinely called the police to complain about members carrying rifles into the clubhouse and riding their motorcycles through the clubhouse. Curiously, the author ended his article with the members trying to “make them broads smile” when two women passed by the entrance to the clubhouse.24 It is unclear whether MacDonald was attempting to draw a correlation between the behavior of the Comancheros and the behavior of the Puerto Ricans as described in Bill Ryan’s article, but the correlation is there.

The Puerto Rican side of the story was highlighted in an 10 August article by Henry B. McNulty. Maria Sanchez and about 200 other Puerto Ricans met with Police Chief Thomas J. Vaughan, City Manager Freedman, and other city officials. This article, unlike the Times article, did not comment on Freedman’s lack of interest in meeting with community members. McNulty ended the article with Sanchez’s praise of the meeting, but she also said that it would be a “hot weekend” if officials took no action.\(^{25}\)

Incidentally, the Puerto Ricans only a few hours later started rioting again. The front page article the following day was “Police Loose Tear Gas.”\(^{26}\)

* June Riots

Prior to the August and Labor Day riots which were predominantly Puerto Rican uprisings, blacks in the North End rioted from 4 June to 10 June. The trouble began when police were called to the scene of a fight that began after a dance had let out on Barbour Street. Bottles and bricks were thrown at police and passing cars. The rioting lasted until 10 June. Both papers printed numerous articles about the disturbances which were both substantial and informative. Overall, both papers produced the most useful and enlightening articles for these particular riots.

The Times first article of importance highlighted the Black Panthers’ actions during the riots. Author Ashley James interviewed several North End residents who said the police were sometimes arresting innocent blacks but also that it was black youths who

\(^{26}\) “Police Loose Teargas,” The Hartford Courant, 16 August, Al.
causing the violence. James then interviewed Panther members who were brought in as liaisons between police and black youths.\(^\text{27}\)

On 9 June the Panthers were again the subject of a *Times* article. The Panthers said that “arbitrary wholesale arrests for curfew violations” and the tear gas used by the police only gave the community more reasons to riot in the future. Don Mounds, a Panther captain was quoted as saying, “Mayor Uccello comes down here and pats us on our heads - but we are not dogs.”\(^\text{28}\)

Also on 9 June, Don. O. Noel, Jr. wrote an editorial entitled “Hartford Tastes America’s Agony”. In it he blamed the state government for not adequately meeting the needs of its people. Not enough housing and poor schools were his examples. Noel also noted that black patrolmen were doing their jobs without malice, implying that white officers were doing their jobs with malice.\(^\text{29}\) Another editorial called for “Firm but Fair Justice” to stress the Times’ support both for the poor and the police.\(^\text{30}\)

On 11 June *The Times ran an* article about the work of researcher Dr. Sol Chaneles who was hired by the city to study Hartford’s crime problems. Chaneles concluded that whites committed much of the crime in the city. In his estimation, Hartford police were spending too much time on lesser offenses like drunkenness and illegal parking downtown. However, Chaneles also found that Hartford’s problems were not a result of corruption or mis-management. Instead, they were ‘structural’; Hartford

\(^{27}\) Ashley James, “They Took to the Streets to Avert Violence,” *The Hartford Times*, 8 June 1969.


had no plan for dealing with crime. The researcher also labeled the city ‘high’ for racial tensions.\textsuperscript{31}

*The Courant* also produced some interesting articles pertaining to the June riots. They even had a scalding “letter to the editor” accusing the paper of racist reporting.\textsuperscript{32} The letter was written in response to an article the *Courant* ran on 16 June highlighting the plight of an elderly Italian cobbler dealing with thieving black teenagers who looted his shop during and after the riots. The article was a lengthy description of a gentle North End businessman, Eugene Interlandi, trying to make a living. Nowhere in the article was the race of the teenagers stated although the author did comment that the neighborhood had slowly turned from a Jewish/Italian community to a Black community. The author was careful to point out that Interlandi had numerous black friends and never cared that the neighborhood had become a black neighborhood.\textsuperscript{33}

*The Courant* also printed three more articles on Interlandi. One on 18 June emphasized Interlandi’s desire to close up shop even though an anonymous donor had offered $1000 for him to stay.\textsuperscript{34} The second article explained Deputy Mayor George Kinsella’s “Interlandi Fund” set up to persuade the cobbler to stay in the North End. The third article, printed four days later, was a short article relating Interlandi’s wish for people to stop sending him money. The author stated that Interlandi and his wife were “embarrassed” by the donations.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Theodore Driscoll, “Cobbler Won’t Stay in N. End for $1000,” *The Hartford Courant*, 18 June 1969, 19.
\textsuperscript{35} “Sad Shoemaker Requests Donors to Call a Halt,” *The Hartford Courant*, 22 June 1969.
The letter to the editor was written by a Robert Ebenstein. His argument was that the Courant was spending too much column space on one, non-minority individual while ignoring “the far more serious and degrading plight” of large numbers of Puerto Ricans, blacks, and poor whites. Ebenstein continued his attack suggesting that Interlandi, as a white businessman, “...himself...had a large role in creating [the] danger” he was experiencing. The Courant’s response was simple: the paper did nothing but print the truth.

On 13 June the Courant printed an article in which blacks and Puerto Ricans accused the police of excessive force. Headed by Panthers, members of the group stood up one by one and told stories of police shooting teargas “blind”, wounding innocents. A black clergyman accused the police of being leaderless. Another resident told the assembled of a conversation between two white police officers in which one claimed his police dog to be “the best nigger chaser going”.

Also on the 13th, The New York Times assessed the situation. The article listed seven reasons why North End residents were unhappy. They included lax enforcement of housing codes, delayed school construction, school segregation, and the exorbitant prices paid by North End blacks for housing and food. Also highlighted was the argument between the NAACP and the Inner Cities Exchange as to how planned the riots were. The NAACP claimed the rioting was completely spontaneous while Rev. Herbert Smith, head of the Inner Cities Exchange, claimed that they were pre-planned. He cited evidence

that a truck pulled up to a liquor store just as the looting began and was quickly filled with goods.37

This article from the New York Times provided a breakdown of Hartford’s problems with its poor community, yet no similar list was found in the Hartford Times or the Hartford Courant. Can one conclude that the New York Times could look at the situation from afar, thus getting a clearer picture or was something lacking in Hartford’s papers? Perhaps the New York Times had more flexibility in that they were not reliant on Hartford area advertisers.

Author Jose E. Crux wrote that, “by journalistic standards . . . coverage was good even if the stories didn’t always report on issues of substance.”38 The stories “of substance” for Crux however, came entirely from the Hartford Times. Of the sixteen articles Cruz cites, not one is from the Hartford Courant.

Both papers’ did write almost exclusively for their white audiences, however the Times was a little more proactive in addressing the problems of Hartford’s poor community in the form of Bill Ryan. Ryan was the only columnist at the time found by this author who at least attempted to look at the Puerto Rican’s problems from their perspective. He gave his readers a history of how the community came to Hartford and how they might be understood. However, this “grass roots” approach was the work of

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one man and not necessarily his paper as a whole. Thomas ‘Dennie’ Williams questions why the Courant did not have a Bill Ryan on its staff in 1969.39

When the Courant did attempt to go into depth on some aspect of the riots, they made the mistake of focusing on one individual and not a group. Their choice, an Italian cobbler in the North End, obviously offended other groups, but the paper should not be faulted for this. However, it seems prudent that they would have given the same attention to any one of the black or Hispanic businessmen in the North End who suffered as a direct result of rioting. It appears that while the looters focused their thieving eyes first on non-minority owned businesses, they eventually looted indiscriminately.

Also to the Times’ credit, their article on the research of Dr. Chaneles was obviously a direct attempt to lessen the burden on Hartford’s minorities as being viewed as the leading criminal element in the city. Also noteworthy is the Times’ use of the word ‘riot’. The Courant apparently never used the word, choosing ‘disturbance’ instead. This was done to avoid any responsibility for the riots,40 but was less than truthful. However, it was the Courant who provided the Comanchero’s side of the 10 August riots. Ryan mentions them briefly in his 31 August article, but only as the enemy of the Puerto Ricans.41

There also seems to be a huge discrepancy between the coverage of the June riots and the August and Labor Day riots. Although the latter were far more destructive, the June riots appear to have received more attention. This is without doubt because of the

39 Williams, interview, 23 March 2003.
40 McNulty, interview, 2 May 2003.
political clout the black community had through organizations such as the NAACP and the Black Panthers.

Both papers’ choice of pictures were for the sheer effect. They were mostly of exhausted police officers shooting tear gas at faceless mobs in the far distance. Some depicted minorities getting their cars searched and being handcuffed. One even depicted several minority children standing around a white police officer laughing. These are important pictures that deserve space in the papers, but where are the pictures of the slums the rioters lived in? Where are the pictures of the rats and the roaches? Where are the pictures of the reasons people rioted?

White audiences probably did not want to see any more death and destruction in their papers. Next to almost every picture of a young man dressed in his military fatigues was a sad story describing how he had been killed in Vietnam. Perhaps without the war raging in Southeast Asia, Hartford area readers would have expected more riot stories on the front pages of their papers.

It is this author’s opinion that the riots of 1969 could have been lessened by more substantial coverage of minority issues following the June incidents or even incidents that occurred in 1967 and 1968. Had they been given a voice in the *Times* and the *Courant* they might not have sought one in the streets. At the time however, it may have been difficult for either paper to give minority issues the attention they deserved. This is because the papers’ suburban audience had little desire to address the problems of the city they had left. Suburbanites did not want their tax dollars going into the ghetto. They wanted their tax dollars to stay in suburbia.
The *Times* and *the Courant* were not the cause of the 1969 riots in Hartford. However, the editors at both papers failed to provide their readers with the whole story. Consequently, the problems of the North End residents, especially the Puerto Ricans, were not brought to light. Perhaps if *the Times* and *the Courant* had sought a better balance between their business interests and their social responsibility to the Hartford community, a clearer picture of the plight of North End residents could have been provided.
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