

## DETROIT



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## Young tries to restore order to a city sliding out of control

By Salim Muwakkil

DETROIT

**M**AYOR COLEMAN ALEXANDER YOUNG rose to power in 1973 on a movement fueled by anger about police brutality. The deaths of 21 black men killed in shootouts with city police in the two years prior to Young's election that year infuriated a lot of people. And black Detroiters, whose civil liberties were routinely violated by a racist police department, had become fed up with the status quo. Young promised he would change the situation if elected, and he delivered.

But nearly 14 years after he first took office, the 69-year-old mayor is blithely planning to violate the civil liberties he once campaigned so ardently to protect. This is not a mere case of a former radical changing his spots, but a desperate attempt to restore order in a city sliding out of control. Coleman Young presides over a city whose youth are engaged in an orgy of self-destruction. Detroit's teenagers are shooting each other with such deadly frequency the mayor has been forced to propose increasingly draconian methods to stop the carnage. In 1986 more than 360 young people under 17 years of age were shot, and dozens were killed. The rate has accelerated in 1987; murders are up 12 percent. During the recent Labor Day weekend, 14 teenagers were shot. Two died.

Earlier in the year a series of shootings in

the city's schools—including the brazen murder of a popular football star—caused city officials to close the facilities for two days. Although unprecedented, that action was one of the milder steps city leaders were prepared to take. In recent speeches, Young has announced he will begin authorizing random weapons searches in some of the city's more troubled schools. That tack has been criticized bitterly by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as a dangerous abridgment of students' rights. But there are reports that Young is contemplating even more drastic action.

"Some [of his advisers] told the mayor that the situation was so serious he might have to pack off thousands of Detroit young people to detention camps before the city could break the cycle of deadly violence," said Remer Tyson, a political writer for the *Detroit Free Press*. Such police-state tactics don't come easily to a man whose entire adult life was spent fighting those tactics while demanding economic and social justice for African-Americans. However, Young's dilemma is typical of that faced by many black mayors who became the establishment by first opposing it. For Young, who was so fervently anti-establishment, the dilemma is particularly poignant.

**A home-grown folk hero:** Young was five, in 1923, when he and his family arrived in the city from Tuscaloosa, Ala. As the eldest child he shouldered a lot of responsibility

and encountered the general run of racist treatment. His father, William Coleman Young, was not one to suffer racism quietly, however, and the young Coleman was indelibly influenced by that spirit of resistance. By the time Young was elected to his first mayoral term in 1973 he long had been a folk hero in black Detroit. He became well-known as an outspoken and radical union leader, and was later elected to three terms in the state senate, where he served as majority floor leader.

Young initially gained fame in 1952, when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) came to Detroit to question him about Communist influence in the labor movement. He previously had been an organizer with the left-wing faction of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and, at the time of his HUAC appearance he was a force in the newly formed National Negro Labor Council. His defiant performance before the committee, in which he challenged HUAC's credibility and got in some verbal licks of his own, made him a hero not just in Detroit but in black communities across the country.

Young paid a steep price for that bravado. The FBI and the UAW both made sure that his unemployment was chronic. He was blacklisted effectively during most of the '50s and worked on a succession of low-paying odd jobs. The constant harassment and lack of resources left his personal life in shambles. His first wife eventually divorced him.

In the late '50s things began looking up. He was elected as a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention and became enamored with electoral politics. The first of his terms as a state senator began in 1964, and he never lost another election.

**Walking on water:** Millie Taylor, an elderly black woman, was fishing in the Detroit River just north of Hart Plaza on a recent afternoon when she reeled in a small silver bass. While unhooking her catch she explained that fish have only recently returned to the once-polluted waterway, and she inadvertently revealed why Young is considered politically invulnerable. "Fishing's not as good as it used to be way back when," Taylor said, "but it's a hell of a lot better than it was before Mayor Young came on the scene."

Of course, Young can claim little responsibility for the river's growing fish population—the environmental policies of Windsor, Ontario, the Canadian province that shares the river with Detroit, are primarily responsible—but Taylor credits the mayor's reign for her good luck. Most of the city's African-Americans share Taylor's high, and sometimes irrational, regard for their feisty mayor.

Detroit's population of nearly 1.1 million is about 65 percent black. The most recent poll places the mayor's overall approval rating at 64 percent; among blacks it's 74 percent. Although he's the longest serving mayor in the city's history, his popularity remains as high as it was during his earlier terms.

"Black people are extremely proud of Young," explained Velma Brown, a writer for the black-owned *Michigan Chronicle*, a city weekly. "They trust his intentions and his dedication to their interests, so he gets the benefit of doubt no matter what kind of action he takes." That sense of racial allegiance fits the pattern found in most large cities with black mayors. Thus, someone like

Philadelphia's W. Wilson Goode can authorize police to drop a bomb on a black neighborhood and still enjoy overwhelming support from his black constituents. Washington, D.C.'s Marion Barry can run on his scandal-plagued record and be returned to office with a resounding victory.

Of the mayors elected to big cities with predominantly black populations, only Gary's Richard Hatcher and Newark's Kenneth Gibson have been rejected by black voters. But even in those cases, it took a while. Hatcher had a 20-year tenure and Gibson hung on for 16 years. Young has the third-longest reign and most pundits contend he

## BLACK MAYORS

could be mayor for life if he so chooses. As far as most of Detroit's blacks are concerned, said William Beckam, Young's former deputy mayor, "the mayor is like Jesus Christ. He can damn near walk on water."

**Genuine accomplishments:** Patricia Edmonds, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, who's earned several awards for her reporting on Young, said whites take a more critical view of the mayor. The poll cited earlier places Young approval rating among whites at 45 percent. While Young is respected as a skilled politician with formidable clout, Edmonds noted, he's also the focus of criticism, most of which centers on his lack of administrative skills and his autocratic management style.

"Over the 13-plus years he has run the city, Young's personal political habits and opinions have been elevated to the status of gospel," Edmonds wrote in an exhaustive profile of the mayor published in April of this year. "That dominance lets Young operate smoothly and with little dissent. But some say it also threatens to turn one man's traits into pitfalls for an entire city." Many whites also express displeasure with Young's personal style; arrogant is the word frequently used to describe him.

Edmonds, who is bureau chief of the paper's city-county bureau—Detroit is the seat of Wayne County—said the mayor is a hard worker who's totally consumed by his job. "His strong sense of self-confidence sometimes comes across as arrogance, and to some extent he is a bit arrogant. But he is also absolutely single-minded in his dedi-

cation to Detroit," she said. "It's just that he's been a power for so long, his method of governing is no longer questioned."

She listed several accomplishments Young can claim:

- The renovation and revitalization of the downtown riverfront.

- The completion of Joe Louis Arena in time to host the 1980 Republican Convention and keep the Detroit Red Wings hockey team downtown, after the Lions and Pistons moved to Pontiac. The city also bought and renovated Tiger Stadium.

- The police department has been integrated to a proportion much closer to the city's racial composition, and police brutality is rarely charged.

- The mayor averted financial disaster during the recession of 1982 by raising the taxes of residents and commuters while gaining wage concessions from city employees.

- Young won legislative approval for higher liquor and hotel taxes to finance a \$180 million expansion of Cobo Hall that will make it the country's seventh largest convention center.

- The city completed the \$4 million renovation of the Washington Boulevard pedestrian mall.

- An ultramodern monorail system, called the People Mover, was completed last month.

- A badly needed trash-to-energy incinerator is under construction.

There are also less tangible benefits of Young's tenure. "The mayor has given black youths a very positive role model and instilled a tremendous amount of pride in Detroit's black communities," said Hasan Kareem, a long-time community organizer. "I see the effects of that every day when I talk to them."

**Random criticisms:** But those intangibles apparently have failed to deter black teenagers from wreaking civic havoc. "All this talk about black role models and black pride is coming from the adults," said Horace Golden, a black businessman located in the city's depressed downtown area. "Obviously, these kids don't feel any black pride, or they wouldn't be shooting and killing each other in record numbers."

Some blacks criticize the mayor for concentrating too much on downtown revitalization and ignoring inner-city neighborhoods. Such criticism illuminates another problem that inordinantly affects black mayors, who, though starved of resources, must create a sense of vitality and stability in the commercial community, while servicing the needs of a community that has been

under-served historically and with whom they share a special bond.

"That damn People Mover just goes around and around in a three-mile circle," said Teddy Brooks, a life-long Detroit resident. "All it does is keep people who are doing business with the downtown bigshots from having to step foot in the actual city of Detroit." Brooks certainly is not alone in that view. The People Mover has come under intense criticism from all segments of the population.

The system was constructed at a cost of \$200.3 million—about \$75 million over budget—80 percent of which was federal money. It was initially designed as part of a larger transportation plan, including a city-wide subway system, during the heady days of the Carter administration. But the budget-cutting Reaganites who followed would have no part of the subway, leaving the city with a 2.9-mile monorail and a transportation system that is grossly unbalanced.

Similar criticism greeted the construction of the Oz-like Renaissance Center complex, which was completed during the mayor's first term. Financed primarily by Henry Ford II, the \$337 million development was widely heralded as evidence that big money wasn't leaving Detroit. And some people also praised Young for his part in the deal.

"In an era when the city's steady decline has been apparent to anyone who could do simple arithmetic, Young said, 'Let there be hope'—and suddenly there was," wrote Kirk Cheyfitz in a January 1981 article in *Monthly Detroit*, a city magazine. "Part of the magic was Young's determination to keep the psychology of progress going..." and the underlying "perception of Young's tight political partnership with Jimmy Carter."

"Young and his aides, under the Carter administration, were insiders in the high-stakes game of writing national policy," he wrote. "They were able to mold policy from the outset to help Detroit and cities like Detroit." He quoted one member of Carter's staff as saying, "It's safe to say that Coleman has gotten every last drop of money that could be squeezed out of the government for Detroit."

But not everyone applauded the Renaissance Center. Its gleaming, cylindrical towers seemed so incongruous with the surrounding architecture, and its spirit so out of sync with the gloom of those recession years, that the complex was the butt of numerous jokes as well as an object of wonder. Similar buildings have since sprung up around the center, and the complex—which is essentially an urban shopping mall—looks less like a fairy castle amid the rubble of a dying city. Still, according to recent estimates, the center has failed to attract sufficient consumer traffic and dozens of retailers have exited. In a city still counting lost revenue from an event that occurred two decades earlier, however, any added commercial activity is listed as an improvement.

**The riot anniversary:** Sparked by charges of police brutality, Detroit exploded on July 23, 1967, into two weeks of civil anarchy. By the time the action was over, 43 people were killed and 2,000 injured, more than 5,000 Detroiters were homeless, 1,300 buildings were destroyed and nearly 3,000 businesses were looted. The city still has not recovered from that deadly paroxysm. Large areas remain gutted.

The 20th anniversary of the disturbances occasioned a look back by much of the media, and most accounts stressed the city's lack of progress since those dark days. The

Urban Affairs Programs at Michigan State University published a report titled *The State of Black Michigan: 1987* that focused on the condition of the state's black population in the years following the riot. In general the study found that the social and economic inequalities that existed between blacks and whites in 1967 remain today. The report's major findings include:

- Although blacks have made some small gains in white-collar occupations, black representation in management and on boards of Michigan-based corporations remains extremely low.

- The black unemployment rate continues to increase, widening the gap between blacks and whites.

- The health status of blacks has fallen, while for whites it has continued to rise.

- Black student enrollment in Michigan institutions of higher education has been declining since 1976.

- Black ownership of business franchises is limited.

The study further found that the economic status of blacks as measured by occupational representation improved between 1966 and 1975, but generally worsened between 1975 and 1984. The growth of jobs in the current recovery has been primarily in non-black areas of the state.

Despite those statistics, many of Detroit's blacks see 1987 as a giant step away from the days of 1967. "There's no comparison between then and now," said Calvin Simms, a 40-year-old hotel executive. "White police could attack black people at will. And I should know—they attacked me twice when I was a teenager. Black people couldn't get into any of the colleges around the state, we couldn't live in certain Detroit neighborhoods, jobs weren't available to blacks. I could go on and on about the differences."

Horace Sheffield, president of the Detroit Association of Black Organizations, said, "Detroit is a different city from the city in those days. Whites thought they would control everything forever and they acted like it. These days they realize that it has to be a cooperative process. I credit that to Mayor Young's fighting spirit."

One prominent black Detroiter said the riots were good for the interests of the black community. "We got what we wanted because we were willing to burn the place down," said Ed Vaughn, owner of Vaughn's Bookstore, reputed to be the oldest black bookstore in the country. "The riot, actually it should be called a rebellion, told the nation in no uncertain terms that we were not going to sit idly and watch our rights be eroded. We were willing to do whatever it took to maintain those rights."

Although Vaughn is now an executive assistant to the mayor, he still runs his bookstore. In the '60s it was nationally noted as a gathering place for black intellectuals and a center of activism. Vaughn said he believed that the civil disorders that erupted in black communities across the country in the middle and late '60s were more influential than the Civil Rights Act in expediting racial gains for blacks. "I'm sure that Coleman Young could not have become mayor had it not been for the 1967 rebellion," Vaughn said.

He added that the current explosion of youth violence is an internal version of the 1967 disorders. "Black youth are increasingly frustrated with this country's racism and lack of opportunities. But this time around, instead of destroying buildings, they're destroying each other." □

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# The auto industry's job insecurity

By David Moberg

**T**HE UNITED AUTO WORKERS (UAW) LEADERSHIP has made it abundantly clear to Ford and General Motors: The union wants greater job security for autoworkers. That's understandable. Nearly 200,000 UAW production jobs have vanished since 1978. If trends continue another 500,000 of the industry's nearly 1.9 million North American jobs will be gone three years from now at the same level of sales. But what—if anything—can the union do about it?

Union leaders decided last month first to seek a solution at Ford, where sales and profits have been up, then apply it to General Motors, which has been losing ground on all fronts. But the record suggests that the union may at best slow job erosion, especially if it must rely on collective bargaining alone.

Except in some periods of economic boom, job security has always been at the top of workers' concerns. Historically, unions have dealt with the issue in a variety of ways. They have helped members upgrade skills so workers could have more jobs open to them. Before unemployment compensation was available, union members shared work during downturns. More recently, unions have tried to guarantee laid-off workers rights to transfer within a corporation.

Most importantly, unions have fought for income security. For instance, the UAW has negotiated supplemental unemployment benefits and guaranteed income for high-seniority workers. Such income protection can indirectly encourage corporations to create jobs so that they can get production out of people whose wages it is paying anyway. Canadian Auto Workers, which split from the UAW in 1985, is emphasizing income protection this year. At the moment, auto employment in Canada is more secure than in the U.S.

But when jobs are declining over the long haul, the task is tough. Few unions fight technological change, which can yield higher pay yet costs jobs. But longshoremen and printers, for example, have negotiated lifetime job protection for existing workers in exchange for accepting radical technological changes. However, in addition to rapid technological change, the UAW today faces problems of outsourcing of union work, transfer of many operations overseas and increased competition. That competition comes not only from imports but also from new, foreign investments in the U.S.—the so-called "transplant" assembly and parts factories. Some unions have tried, with limited success, to negotiate restrictions on outsourcing, subcontracting or plant closings.

**Less hours, more jobs:** The classic labor response to job loss, now being pursued vigorously again in Europe, has been shorter work time. That can mean earlier retirement and more attractive pensions to shorten the work career, more holidays and vacations, or a shorter work week or day. The average annual work time for U.S. manufacturing workers is 1,912 hours, compared to around 1,700 in northern Europe and 2,166 in Japan. Of major industrial countries, only Japanese autoworkers work longer weeks than Americans. Despite the large number of autoworkers still unemployed, last year the average Big Three autoworker put in 348 hours of

overtime. Industrywide overtime is equivalent to the hours of 80,000 additional full-time workers. Despite a new 50-cents-an-hour overtime penalty imposed in 1984, it is still much cheaper for automakers to pay overtime than to hire new workers. This year union negotiators have talked of getting compensatory time off in addition to premium pay. The UAW started to reduce the work year in 1976 with nine special "paid personal holidays," but those were later given up. That effectively eliminated roughly 20,000 jobs created by the shorter work year.

Yet shorter work time does not deal with displacement by radical shifts in trade or investment. In Europe, managed trade and industrial policies provide some stability, and an extensive social safety net makes job loss less traumatic. But U.S. unions are left to find solutions through bargaining to problems that would best be dealt with politically. And bargaining for control over investment, while rarely tried directly, isn't easy.

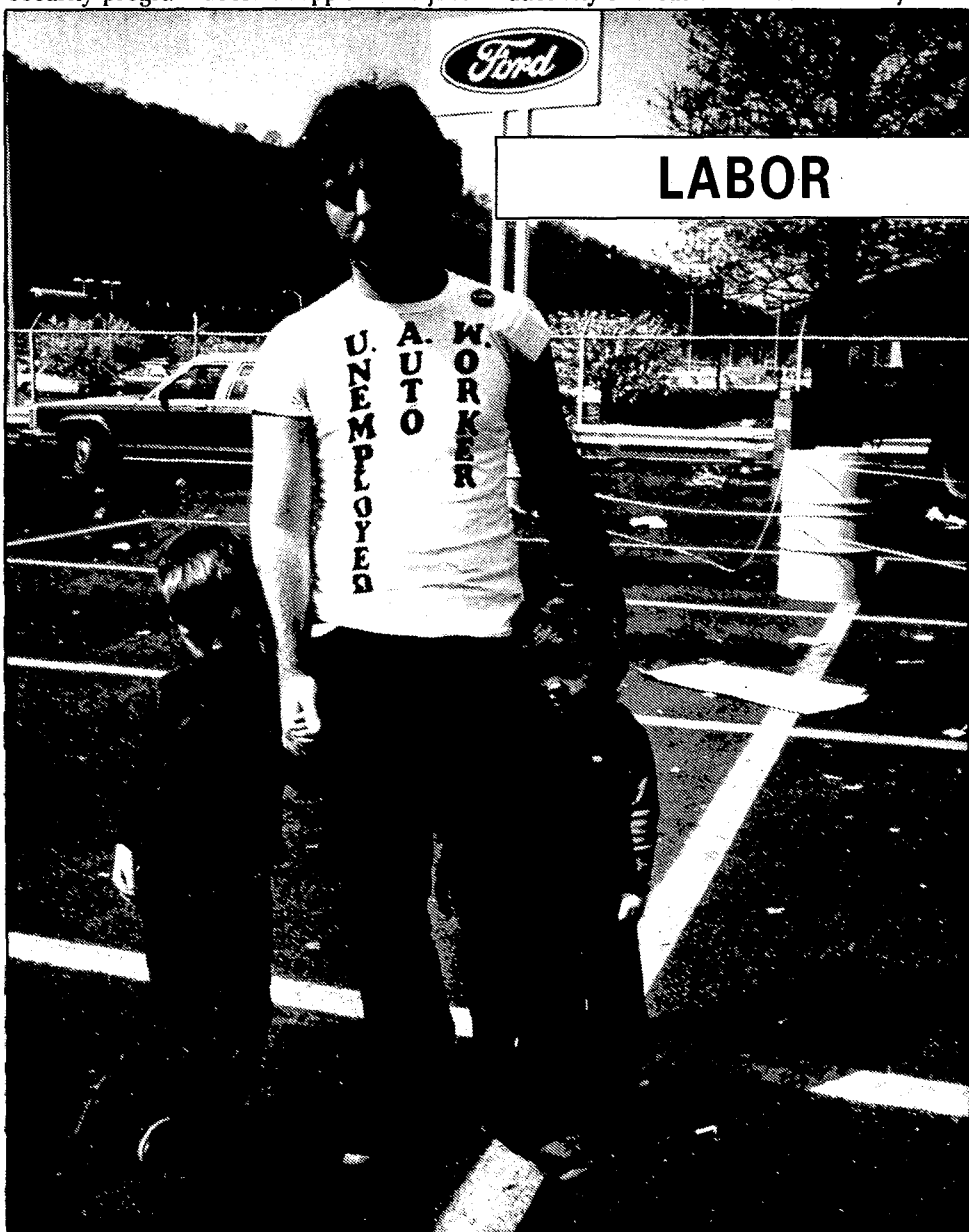
**Banking failure:** Three years ago both Ford and GM set up "job banks" that provided a "slot" for every job eliminated by outsourcing or new technology. Any unemployed auto worker could fill that slot, collecting full pay and benefits while getting training or filling in other jobs. But the number of job bank slots could be reduced by normal attrition, such as retirement, or by special company payments to "buy out" a worker. Although the program has provided temporary relief to a few workers—about 8,000 at GM and 700 at Ford, it has not proved very effective in guaranteeing job security. If another job security program doesn't supplant the jobs

bank, the union at least wants to tighten the program's operation.

The last contract also established jointly administered investment funds at both companies to create new jobs, but the companies and the union couldn't agree on a single investment project.

**Recent gains:** The UAW has recently negotiated agreements with agricultural and construction equipment companies that guarantee jobs for up to 100 percent of the workforce, minus attrition, for the life of the contract. But in those deeply depressed industries employment had fallen about as low as it could go without the companies vanishing, and the security agreement came with a high price in local work-rule concessions. In the auto industry itself, the UAW won several victories blocking outsourcing by the old-fashioned way: striking. Although those strikes were ostensibly over other issues, the UAW this year wants to add outsourcing as an issue about which local unions can legally strike.

The agricultural contract precedents figured prominently in union negotiators' minds in the final days before the Ford contract expired on September 14. But despite obvious appeals—guaranteeing a certain number of jobs, a percentage of the existing workforce or a proportion of UAW labor content in all future vehicles—the plan bears a distressing resemblance to a failed 1982 experiment. That Pilot Employment Guarantee was accepted at only one Ford plant, which made numerous agreements to increase productivity and cut costs but still lost jobs.



Another 500,000 of the auto industry's 1.9 million North American jobs may be gone in three years.

**The parts problem:** If the UAW wins a good contract at Ford, it will have a tougher time forcing the same contract on GM—although union President Owen Bieber has insisted GM will get no special deal. Chrysler and Ford had already greatly pared down their operations in the crunch of the late '70s and early '80s, but GM still makes far more parts in-house as well as final assembly. Typically GM is described as producing 70 percent of the value of its cars in-house, while Ford is 50 percent vertically integrated and Chrysler only 30 percent. But University of Michigan auto expert Dan Luria says the figures are closer to 50 percent at GM, 40 percent at Ford and 35 percent at Chrysler.

GM executives—and many industry stock analysts—are convinced that their recent poor profits are a result of excessive vertical integration. GM wants to sell off many of its plants, close some and reduce wages and benefits at the remainder—effectively splitting its parts industry apart from the master auto contract. Many independent parts plants, even those organized by the UAW, pay less than the Big Three contract calls for. But Luria's figures suggest GM overstates the issue. And auto analyst Dennis DesRosiers, who thinks GM should break off many of its parts plants, argues that the main problem is not labor costs but "bad management and lack of focus within operations. It's difficult [to make the parts operations successful] because of the nature of the beast [GM]. They just happen to be large and immobile in an industry that needs flexibility." Yet the UAW maintains that if GM improved management, vertical integration could be a boon, particularly in controlling quality.

The more serious problem may be what Luria identifies as a roughly 20 to 25 percent lower productivity than Ford or Chrysler across the board at GM (even though productivity has been increasing by nearly 7 percent annually in the '80s in the auto industry). But if GM improves its own management and reduces that disadvantage, jobs will be lost—unless it increases domestic investment.

Job security demands, Luria said, could influence the auto companies to invest more domestically. But the union can't risk impeding growth of productivity. Even if there are controls on imports, the growth of the transplant automakers in the U.S. will guarantee increasing competition, since those new plants—often built with huge state subsidies designed to lure the factory—are cheaper to operate. But by fighting for job security, the union can force GM to gain productivity first through better management and use of capital, not flight overseas or wage-cutting.

**Delaying tactic:** Skeptics like longtime UAW opposition leader Peter Kelly, president of Local 160, argue that negotiations to protect a certain number of jobs are a "delaying tactic" at best. It is necessary to "go for the long term" and fight for reduced working time, "the only historical answer to the question of rising unemployment created by new technology."

The UAW has an unenviable situation: if domestic productivity does not increase, its organized factories are threatened with competition. If it does increase, jobs are eliminated. Only reversing the accelerating flow of manufacturing overseas or out of union shops and reducing worktime while increasing productivity can provide the basis for the job guarantees it would like to enforce. That may take political action as much as negotiating skill or strikers' willpower. □