In the aftermath of the 1967 urban ‘riots’, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission after its chair, Governor Otto Kerner, Jr. of Illinois. The 11-member commission examined the conditions of the cities that led to the turmoil and made recommendations addressing the underlying causes. The Commission’s report, released on February 29, 1968, marks a pivotal moment in the changing dynamics of U.S. cities and of critical analysis of the role of race as a division in America.

Special guest speaker Dr. Fred Harris is an original member of the Kerner Commission – and the last surviving member. Elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Oklahoma in 1964, Senator Harris quickly became one of the most active members of the senate and was deeply concerned about the plight of economically deprived inner-city African Americans, recognizing that unequal treatment of urban neighborhoods was one of the determining factors in the urban unrests of the 1960s.

Detroit, July 1967
Source: Lee Balterman