Document Workshop Preparation for Monday, April 8 – Chapter 25, Teenagers in Postwar America

To prepare for the document workshop on Monday, take a look at the five documents at the back of Chapter 25. Use the textbook’s “Guide to Analyzing Primary Sources” (found at the front of the book) to examine them closely and prepare to use them to answer these questions:

How did teenagers shape postwar American society?

How do these documents compare with popular culture or stereotypical representations of 1950s American culture? (In other words: think about how historical memory about the 1950s gets constructed, and whether these documents line up with that or if they complicate / challenge prevailing ideas about 1950s America).

Document 24.5 Dick Clark, *Your Happiest Years,* 1959

Who was Dick Clark? (You might want to look at a few American Bandstand clips on YouTube). What kind of a source is a celebrity advice book? What can it tell us (and what can it NOT tell us) about teenagers in the 1950s?

Document 24.5 Charlotte Jones, Letter to the Milwaukee Sentinel, 1957

Who was Charlotte Jones and why did she write this letter? Who was her audience? What do you learn about teenagers of the 1950s from this source? How representative of her generation / gender do you think this letter should be taken?

Document 24.6 Photograph of Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, 1957.

Where, when, and why was this photograph taken? What can you see in it? What message does it send about the historical event it captures? What can it tell us (and what can it NOT tell us) about teenagers in the 1950s?

Document 24.7 Gloria Lopez-Stafford, memoir of her Mexican American childhood in El Paso, Texas, 1949

Lopez-Stafford remembers, years later, an episode from her social studies class. What happened? Why does this event stand out in her memory? How did it shape her identity as a Mexican American? What does her perspective add to this collection of documents about 1950s teenagers?

Document 25.9 Saturday Evening Post article, “Why No Chinese American Delinquents?” 1955

Who is this article written for? How does it use the trope of the “good immigrant” to comment on 1950s teenagers? What is the broader context around concerns of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s? Why were American cultural authorities (news, police, legislators) so concerned about the morals and behaviors of American youth in that decade?