It's a Mystery: Clues

1. In 1910 the Black population of Midwest City was 1,800.
2. In 1920 the Black population of Midwest City was 9,000.
3. Most of the Black people who came to Midwest City between 1910 and 1920 had no previous experience or skills in factory work.
4. With the production boom of World War I, there was a shortage of workers in Midwest City.
5. U.S. involvement in World War I ended in November 1918.
6. There was a severe housing shortage in Midwest City in 1917 and 1918.
7. When there is competition for scarce housing, rents and prices rise.
8. Fearing competition for their jobs, most unions in Midwest City did not allow unskilled workers to be members.
9. Before World War I, the Black neighborhoods in Midwest City had been quite small.
10. During World War I, Black people began moving into Midwest City neighborhoods that for some years had housed poor whites.
11. In several well-known strikes around the country, Black people, unable to get other factory jobs, had been hired by employers as strikebreakers, or "scabs."
12. Union members feel strongly that when they are out on strike, other workers should not take their jobs.
13. To get most of the higher paying skilled factory jobs in Midwest City, a worker had to be in a union.
14. Between 1915 and 1916, industrial production in Midwest City increased by more than two-thirds.
15. World War I started in Europe in 1914, but the United States didn't join the war until 1917.
16. Many of the new Black residents in Midwest City seemed different to long-time residents because they came from the South and weren't used to city ways.
17. During times of high unemployment, people are often afraid of losing their jobs.
18. Companies often fired workers when they could find other people willing to work for lower wages.
19. Because of the low pay they were used to in the South, Black people in the North were often willing to work for lower wages than other workers.
20. When Black people were hired in Midwest City factories, employers usually gave them jobs that kept them separate from whites.
21. At the end of World War I, war production in Midwest City stopped and many people, Black and white, were thrown out of work.
22. Police in Midwest City reported an increase in crime in 1919.
23. Many white Midwest City residents returned from World War I, looking for jobs and housing.

24. Many companies sent representatives to the South during World War I, to recruit people to come to Midwest City to work in their factories.
25. Most of the new Black people in Midwest City came from the South.
26. During World War I, many of Midwest City's factories produced war materiel — guns, bullets, even airplanes.
27. Unemployment was high for all races after the war, but especially for Black people. In all, a total of 15,000 people — as much as a third of the Midwest City workforce — were looking for jobs.
28. To attempt to keep profits high, a number of Midwest City companies lowered wages after World War I.
29. There were numerous strikes in Midwest City during and after World War I.
30. After World War I, some companies in Midwest City advertised specifically for "colored laborers."

It's a Mystery: Questions

Every good detective needs to use deduction — making general observations from specific facts.

Answer the following questions as a group using the clues that you have. All clues must be used at least once in your answers. Remember — you may say your clue aloud but you may not show it to anyone else.

Questions that are starred are opinion questions. You won't need the clues to answer these.

1. What major changes took place in Midwest City from the period before World War I to after?

2. After World War I, what problems faced Midwest City residents for which whites may have blamed Black people?

3. Are there better explanations for each problem?

4. (a) Why did some white people single out Black people as scapegoats for many of these problems?
(b) Do you think this was fair? Explain.*

5. Did unions benefit or suffer from going along with the discrimination?*