

Excerpt from Edina, MN talk page (old revision)

Sundown Towns

I removed the following passage: "Historically Edina was a completely white "Sundown Town," as was recently revealed by the historian James W. Loewen in *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, pages 7 and 23. In such towns Black people were not allowed to spend the night for fear of being run out of town or suffering violence,"

Those sentences are based on a careless reading of Loewen's book. Loewen does call Edina a "Sundown Town" on page 7 and 23 of his book, but in the book, the term Sundown Town is used somewhat broadly. There is no specific indication in the book that violence generally threatened black people after dark at any time in Edina. (If black people were in fact not allowed in Edina after dark, I would be interested to see a historical reference; Loewen does not provide one.) The specific information on Edina in Loewen's book is about racist covenants for residents of the Country Club neighborhood (in which home-buyers in the new (early 20th cent.) development promised not to rent, lease, or sell to non-whites or to allow non-white residents other than servants), and about Edina's pioneering use of zoning ordinances to keep out low income housing. These might be interesting topics for article inclusion, but I would suggest that someone do more careful research than can be done with Loewen's book alone. (Loewen's book is large, but with few exceptions, the information in it on any one given town such as Edina is pretty sketchy.)

Also, Loewen's book is not a good source for the claim that Edina was at any time "all white". From page 417: "...it seems as though there had always been a few African Americans in Grosse Pointe, Edina, or Beverly Hills."

Finally, I'm not sure it's correct to call [James Loewen](#) a historian. He's a sociologist. [Aitch-a-elel \(talk\)](#) 03:45, 14 July 2009 (UTC)

The Sundown discussion is at best silly, perhaps by persons too young to know that Edina did, in fact, have and other residents welcomed African Americans, albeit most, like all Edina residents, were from professional, executive, or other above average income families. For example one, Effie McKerson, was not only prominent and active in the then Edina Republican Party (later the Republicans organized the state by senate districts instead of cities) but she was a 1972 delegate to the Republican National Convention and the first black woman admitted into the exclusive Minneapolis Women's Club in 1975. [Assignor \(talk\)](#) 15:11, 3 April 2011 (UTC)

I believe that any deed that once had a race exclusion continues to have the same language simply with a line through that phrase. If the person who is having difficulty including information of that exclusion wishes, she can photocopy the relevant portion of a relevant lease and upload it as one of the photos for the article. I assume that a present resident would be willing to offer such documentation - limiting it to a non identifying portion of the deed.— Preceding [unsigned](#) comment added by [50.174.213.233 \(talk\)](#) 23:20, 7 February 2015 (UTC)

Places of Worship

Apparently there are only Christians in Edina. Someone care to add some non-christian places of worship to the new section? [Kirkmona \(talk\)](#) 03:29, 7 January 2009 (UTC)

Wikipedia is not a directory and should not attempt to list every single place of worship in the city. If there are some that are notable enough to merit an article on their own, list them here. Otherwise, this should be trimmed. [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 23:49, 5 February 2015 (UTC)

Edina as Sundown Town, StarTribune piece about this article

This [article](#) in the StarTribune was published yesterday. The gist: [James Loewen](#) tasked his students (at least on of them) "to add information on racial exclusion to the Wikipedia page of one of the cities mentioned in Loewen's book." The student in the StarTribune article chose Edina. The rest of the piece tells the story visible in [the article history](#).

Since edit warring has already resumed with the publication of this article, and because the original dispute involves some inexperienced editors, I'm going to give an overview here of the issues and weigh in with my own opinion on what to do next. Bear with me.

Material on Edina being a [sundown town](#) was added in October 2013, removed in May 2014, then edit warred over in August and September 2014. The edit summaries and the StarTribune article make a few problems very clear: (1) There is a big [WP:COI](#) issue as the vast majority of citations included are indeed to Loewen's work. (2) Edit warring without using the talk page is never a good way to go. (3) Some of the sources used were very unreliable. An email, for example, is never a reliable source unless maybe it's published somewhere. Nor is an unpublished interview with a resident. See [WP:RS](#) for more on reliable sources. (4) Wikipedia's policy of [no original research](#) means any statements that are not [verifiable](#) in reliable sources shouldn't be included. This applies to unpublished emails and interviews, but also to arguments and opinions expressed here on the talk page. A statement that "I live there and I can tell you this is [true/false]" is meaningless on Wikipedia. People claim all sorts of things -- all that matters is what reliable sources say.

All that said, Loewen is a [reliable source](#) and that at least *part* of Edina could be called a [sundown town](#) does not appear to be in dispute. In fact there's a page on [the Edina official .gov website](#) which talks about this aspect of the Country Club area of Edina. The question is how best to handle it in the article.

What we need are additional secondary sources to help determine [due weight](#). In other words, the extent to which an aspect of a subject is covered in the article depends on the presence of that aspect within the whole body of reliable sources on the subject. Primary sources aren't enough. Primary sources can *verify* something, but not add to the *weight* of it. Another way of saying that is that it's not about what is simply *true* but what's both true

and *important* -- and what editors think is important is not relevant because importance is determined by reliable sources.

So some possible scenarios: (A) If it's only Loewen writing about this, it probably isn't worth mentioning even though he's a reliable source, even though aspects -- if not all -- of the claims are true, and even though racism is a really important issue. (B) If Loewen is the primary figure writing about this aspect of Edina but other people are talking about it in relation to his work (reviews, interviews, commentary, etc.) then it's probably worth mentioning, citing the best of those secondary sources, but it probably doesn't merit multiple paragraphs. I should say that this measure of "multiple paragraphs" is somewhat arbitrary and intended to make a point about weight rather than to act as an actual measurement. After all, there could be hundreds of reviews and commentary about Loewen's work in really great sources or there could be a handful of book reviews in minor publications -- those would affect the extent to which it's covered. (C) If it's a subject multiple reliable secondary sources talk about, then more space might be appropriate.

So far I can only find evidence of (B), which means that, to me, the **current amount of coverage dedicated to this topic** is more or less appropriate in length but could still use some additional secondary sources other than Loewen.

The existing text does look like it should be modified to show that the quote in question comes not from some *town* ordinance, however, but the specific deed restrictions for a *subdivision* in the Country Club District. Aside from that, I don't see any glaring problems. The context of this material's addition is troubling, but enough other people have become involved to defend the material that I do not think **WP:COI** and past edit wars merit any content-based remedy here. --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 23:50, 5 February 2015 (UTC)

- Pinging some editors who look to have made relevant edits recently in the hope of generating discussion: [@Jonathunder](#), [70.197.224.80](#), [Elwucko](#), [12.111.217.25](#), [Juno](#), [Mets501](#), and [76.191.26.60](#): --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 23:54, 5 February 2015 (UTC)

James Loewen is hardly the first or only person to talk about Edina and racial exclusion. There are plenty of sources closer to home. It's just a matter of adding them. [Jonathunder](#) (talk) 00:15, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

I recommend a change from "Former Exclusion" to "Exclusion" because the section appears under history. Thoughts? [Dw31415](#) (talk) 02:53, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

I don't think either is ideal. History sections often lead up to the present, but "former" is awkward. It also does not appear limited to African Americans, necessarily. We could just call it "Sundown town era" or come up with something less precise like "Racial exclusion" or even "Race issues". ---[Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 03:24, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

This [overview of a documentary](#) links the the use of the term "sundown town" closer to towns where the safety of non-whites was at risk. Mr. Loewen seems to be applying the term more broadly. The inclusion of Edina in Mr. Loewen's database seems to be based on a single email testimonial. I'm still forming my opinion but it seems the

section should use the term [Housing Segregation](#) with focus on the explicit deed restrictions already cited. I expect references could also be found to Jewish history in Edina. [Dw31415 \(talk\)](#) 03:35, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

Renaming the section "Housing Segregation" seems reasonable to me, since ultimately that's what the article is about. I took out references to Jews in that section since I couldn't find any reliable sources, but we can add it back if there are any. More secondary sources would be good. The Star Tribune may be the best bet for finding them. —[METS501 \(talk\)](#) 04:54, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

To be fair, the article needs to indicate in the past tense that Edina as a sundown town or having Housing Segregation unless there is ample evidence of continuing housing segregation. "Past Housing Segregation" I hope can be considered a fair, NPOV, suggested title.[2601:2:4E00:C662:6D44:DF73:EAAE:55E0 \(talk\)](#) 05:31, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

Here is my proposal for the section: **History of Segregation** There is evidence of a history of discrimination in Edina. When the Country Club neighborhood was developed the lots include restrictions on selling to non-whites (insert quote, cite city of Edina web site). James Loewen, a professor of ___ at ___ included Edina in a list of Sundown Towns (cite database) but other uses of that term (cite documentary) imply a history of violence to African Americans. Professor Loewen's classification of and focus on Edina generated controversy (quote Star Tribune). Edina remains more white (x%) and Christian(x%) than Minneapolis (65% white) and St. Louis Park (X% Christian) (cite census). [Dw31415 \(talk\)](#) 14:26, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

That's a good start. [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 14:51, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

Are there stats for religious affiliation? Maybe the number of synagogues is a good proxy [Dw31415 \(talk\)](#) 18:47, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

What level of talk/consensus is recommended before editing? [Dw31415 \(talk\)](#) 18:47, 6 February 2015 (UTC)

If adding good information, especially references, **be bold**. If you are reverted, discuss it here. [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 01:03, 7 February 2015 (UTC)

[WP:BRD](#) is an oft-cited model for editing and building consensus. It's hairy business working on part of an article that's been the subject of edit wars spanning years which recently got some press, but the talk page didn't attract the kind of polarized views I thought it might. Seems pretty reasonable so far, even if I have concerns (below) with the proposed wording. — [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} 01:51, 7 February 2015 (UTC)

Some points concerning the proposal above:

- minor: [There is evidence of a history](#) - "There is evidence" doesn't seem necessary.
- There looks to be [synthesis](#) there. You're taking source A (Loewen) and challenging it yourself by finding source B, which isn't about Loewen or Edina, but about a term Loewen uses. If Loewen uses the term in a way inconsistent with typical use (which doesn't seem implausible given the concept from which he draws the term) and we can't find any other

sources that specifically support or contend it, then we can cite him but we don't have to reproduce his term. He's still a credible source for saying Edina has a history of discrimination.

- A single local news article is not, to me anyway, enough to say that it caused controversy. Even less so since the controversy looks to concern Wikipedia more than Edina.
- Another idea for a relatively neutral section heading pending more sources: a demographics section, which then contextualizes inclusion of the census stats, too. --- [Rhododendrites](#)^{talk} \\ 01:48, 7 February 2015 (UTC)

Total rewrite of the discrimination section

It's a controversial section, so I've tried to be careful, taking concerns and ideas above into consideration. I also found a few additional reliable sources so that this was less about Loewen's book. Some bulletpoints:

- Removed "sundown town". I agree with [Dw31415](#) above that Loewen uses the term in a way that may be broader than others. Even if not, one thing is clear: the only time the term is used in relation to Edina is when talking about Loewen or his work. I cited Loewen's work (a few times), but left out that term.
- Renamed the section. "Former exclusion of African Americans" → "Historical racial discrimination". "Former exclusion" is, to me, a little awkward. There's also no reason to limit it to African Americans, based on the sources (the impact on the African American population is central, but the policies were broader).
- Moved the section under Demographics. We were already talking about census figures and minority populations, so maybe it makes the most sense for it to be under demographics. (Also, since racial makeup of the town was already covered, I removed the redundant text, moved the citation up, and updated the link).
- Added ref to a book on the history of Edina that Loewen draws from. Talks very specifically about the policies and their impact over the course of the early decades of the 20th century.
- Placed more emphasis on Thorpe's Country Club development, since it gets so much attention in *all* of the sources.
- I found a source about another development nearby with similar practices which seemed worth mentioning, too. Most of the sources talk about this in a way that makes clear the problem wasn't limited to a single development, so having another example seems like a good idea.
- Added a brief summary of an account of the first black family moving into Morningside in 1960 and the challenges they faced. It seems particularly important in the way land use policies were yet again used for discriminatory purposes. It also gives us a way to make clear that we have no reason to believe these policies are still an issue (via the mayor and the Golden Rule -- which is a little on the nose in terms of ending on an up note but is nonetheless supported by the sources and shows a historical progression).
- Finally, I think these revisions address any concerns we might have had about conflict of interest editing and/or promotion (unintentional and/or incidental as it may have been) by diversifying the authors of the sources we draw from rather than make it a paragraph more or less just about Loewen's work. --- [Rhododendrites](#)^{talk} \\ 04:06, 7 February 2015 (UTC)

Thank you Rhododendrites. I've added some context provided by Morse-Kahn for historical African American families who lived in Edina when it was a Quaker village. I see you've already reverted me, but

I think we should restore the term sundown town (it seems that it ought to be at least mentioned since some sources use the term) and the term refers to the broader practice that was going on here, even if only in a neighborhood or subdivision. I think the subsection should also be restored to the history section, so we're not separating these into white and black histories.gobonobo ⁺ [Ⓒ] 14:25, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

[@Gobonobo](#): Oh, I didn't revert you. The content you added is still there. I just replaced the source you cited with Morse-Kahn directly since it seemed to only draw from her work by proxy. I also removed mention of the term "sundown town" which has come up a couple times here as disputed. Indeed it seems only Loewen applies that term in particular and his definition looks to be a little broader than others'. I think we should exclude as undue and perhaps misleading (connoting violence, per a comment in the above section) unless we can find additional sources (which are not, in turn, talking about Loewen). --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 14:38, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

BTW no objection to moving it to the history section. When I first came across the section it had a bunch of demographic information and the plan was to keep it brief given the limited sourcing at the time. Now that it has more sources and the demographics is moved out it makes less sense to keep it there. --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 14:44, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

I don't know if you saw the compromised wording that I introduced. I suppose the language could be watered down even more, but I strongly oppose removing any mention of the term 'sundown town'. We're already using Loewen's book as a source, and in it he specifically identifies (parts of) Edina as such. I'm not seeing any evidence that his definition is overly broad. Communities with restrictive deed covenants in place are by definition sundown towns. If there is a sense that this source is somehow unreliable, the [reliable sources noticeboard](#) would be the appropriate venue. gobonobo ⁺ [Ⓒ] 15:07, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

His definition. He adopted/expanded the term for a town where African Americans are not welcome after sundown. That's literal, and often associated with intimidating signs to that effect. That wasn't the case in Edina. It also, looking at any source about the term that isn't connected to him, connotes violence. There's no evidence of that here. If only one source uses the term but lots of sources talk about the subject that term is used to describe, we shouldn't use the term. There's a difference between racist housing policies and threats/rules regarding being in the town after sundown. --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 15:31, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

One reasonable way to handle a situation in which one expert applies a term more broadly than others is to explicitly attribute this labeling to him, rather than putting it in Wikipedia's voice. --JBL (talk) 16:20, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

I would support that over continuing to disregard a leading authority on the matter. Besides the book Loewen's written on the subject, he also wrote entries for *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia* and *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* that specifically mention Edina. The article "Sundown towns and counties: racial exclusion in the South" from the journal *Southern Cultures* offers this definition:

"A town or county with very few African American households decade after decade, or with a sharp drop in African American populations between two censuses, is a sundown town if their absence is intentional. Credible sources must confirm that whites expelled African Americans, or took steps to keep them from moving in."

Edina meets these criteria. I've yet to see a source that narrowly defines sundown towns as exclusively those that have violent incidents. Concluding that Edina isn't a sundown town because it lacks such incidents is **synth** and ignores the reliable sources that state the opposite. gobonobo ⁺ ^o 16:29, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Nobody's "disregarding a leading authority". He's cited. **I've yet to see a source that narrowly defines sundown towns as exclusively those that have violent incidents** - All of the citations you're providing here are his and your generalization about synth because of "ignoring reliable sources" is based on an understanding of reliable sources being limited to Loewen. Look at those reliable sources that have nothing to do with him and you'll find his is broader than most if not all others. **Joel B. Lewis's** suggestion of attribution is better, but I maintain it's misleading to apply a term to a town when that term only applies in one person's work, no matter how respectable and reliable that one person is. Given how contentious the subject is, I also object to repeatedly inserting it without coming to a consensus to do so on the talk page (in fact there have

been multiple objections). --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 17:15, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Follow-up: I started to compile sources from just a brief look through a gsearch/gbooks. Among those which don't mention Loewen, the definition is closer to that which Loewen says he takes the term: towns which in some way make it clear to African Americans and/or other minorities -- usually by way of a sign -- that they are not welcome after sundown (in a literal sense, not just in a deed restriction sense). I have about 15 reliable sources from just the past few minutes. ...But I'll save them for the sundown town article rather than post them here because while Loewen and sources which cite him are the only ones defining it so broadly, that "only" accounts for at least half -- if not more -- of the sources available. Methinks this is because Loewen popularized the *term* "sundown town", and is using it to mean something broader than the towns which would have historically had that label. So I'm changing my tune. I support including the term with attribution. --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 17:41, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Are we facing a significant Conflict of Interest with the Loewen editors?

(I consider this discussion to be outside of the above discussions of other sources and proposed texts, I wanted to feel this out here)

It sounds like Loewen is giving his students credit to alter Wikipedia articles to:

A - conform to his theories of history (some of which, seem sketchy)

B - use his book(s) as reference material

C - mention him

- Did this author just turn U of I into a massive meatpuppet farm?
- How long has this been going on? It seems like this has been a problem on this page since 2009.
- Should this page be protected? [Juno](#) (talk) 08:48, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

The answer to the question in the section title is "no, obviously not." Ditto the three questions in the body.

In fact to ask them suggests you haven't bothered to read this discussion above, which is a clear example of the collaborative editing process working very well. --[JBL](#) (talk) 13:40, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

If the question is: "Is there a conflict of interest in having one's students edit Wikipedia articles to add specific things that you teach about?" The answer is murky. Any Wikipedia-based assignment will have teachers guiding students to the kinds of materials and subjects they could or should cover. However, if we're asking "Is there a conflict of interest in having students cite their professor or his work?" then the answer is definitely yes, as is made clear by [WP:COI](#). That said, I don't get a [WP:NOTHERE](#) impression from the class but rather one of many cases where an expert in a given field has done a lot of research and wants to "set the record straight" on Wikipedia. Unfortunately, that doesn't usually go so well.

On the other hand, if the question is more practical concerning the present article, I would point to the sections above. In noting the conflict of interest and issues surrounding this article visible in the edit history and in the StarTribune piece, I did a bunch of additional research and completely rewrote the section. It now doesn't call Edina a "sundown town" and while it cites Loewen (because he *is* a very reliable source on the subject), it would be very hard to see that section as all about his work. In particular it didn't make sense to include him prominently *for this article* because from what I can tell, most of his coverage of Edina in the *Sundown Towns* book in turn relies heavily on Deborah Morse-Kahn (and the relevant parts of her book are available via Google Books). ---

[Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 14:34, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

I once attended a public lecture by Loewen and bought a copy of his book, which, I must confess, I haven't gotten around to reading. He is a source of knowledge about the topic and his students are always welcome to edit here. If they make mistakes, as students will, engage with them and correct them. If you are concerned about over-using Loewen as a source, please find others. [Jonathunder](#) (talk) 15:30, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

No. (And no, no, and no.) It's quite routine here on Wikipedia these days for faculty to supervise students in updating Wikipedia articles. Most of the 4,966,807 articles on Wikipedia badly need this kind of loving care, and we should be grateful when people familiar with the norms of the scholarly community join in the scrum of Wikipedia editing culture. It would plainly be a conflict of interest if the article about Professor Loewen himself was what we are discussing here, but we are not. We are discussing an article about a city in Minnesota, a city about which there are many [reliable sources](#), and we should be able to resolve all the content disputes here by referring to reliable sources. By the way, do you have any reliable sources on the topic of this article to suggest to us to use? -- [WeijiBaikeBianji](#) (talk, how I edit) 15:37, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

First I'll sort of disagree on the level of principle and policy and then sort of agree on the practical implications for this case:

It would plainly be a conflict of interest if the article about Professor Loewen himself was what we are discussing here that's a narrower definition of COI than is supported by WP:COI. We are discussing an article about a city in Minnesota, a city about which there are many reliable sources - Exactly, and yet here we have students who only cite one secondary source: their teacher, whose name also appears prominently in the article text of their contribution (they cite others, but they're either primary or still entirely about Loewen). That doesn't mean he told his students to do any of that, necessarily, but *because they are his students they're not going to be able to carry out this assignment in a neutral way*. That's what COI means. It's not limited to articles about the people it concerns. Imagine if this were a higher-profile article a psychological concept, and imagine if the professor were a grad student with one publication to his name about that concept. Still not a COI, even engaging the the same practice? What about a CEO teaching a university class about business in which she has students write about her company. What if I take out an elance ad telling people to add content from my book to some article? COI is about the external conditions of an edit/editor and isn't tied to the subjective value of the contribution.

Now then, to be clear, I'm not under the impression James Loewen, a well known, respected, and successful writer/scholar, was looking to promote himself or his book in an article about a small town in America's midwest. This doesn't at all seem like a case of bad intentions. But that's not the point. By having one's students write about a subject using your sources, a COI is inherent. But here's where I sort of agree:

While I'm calling it COI, I also supported restoring the material and worked on it/expanded it myself. That's because COI doesn't automatically mean a contribution is a detriment to the article or to Wikipedia and doesn't necessarily mean it should be removed. COI is, in general, best avoided, but yes, sometimes it contributes to a better article. He is a source of knowledge and in the long-run his students editing Wikipedia benefited this article. If we, as Wikipedians, decide that it's valuable content (as I and others did in this case), we should work with the material and correct any issues that arise. We should also try to work with him or with the students (to whatever extent possible) to figure out how to minimize COI. One example is to make sure to use a variety of sources. Another way is to make more use of the talk page, even having the assignment end at proposing additions here. There's no way for him to have thought to do that,

of course, but it's an example of how we can work with this kind of thing. ---- [Rhododendrites](#)^{talk} \\ 16:38, 10 February 2015 (UTC)

To be clear: some of Loewen's claims about Edina are demonstrably false. Loewen has been criticized for sloppy research, the book referenced has been particularly criticized for inaccuracies (see the Washington Post write-up, among others) After facing critical reviews his work Loewen assigns a student, for academic credit, to edit Wikipedia articles to reflect the claims made in his book (which again, at least in the case of Edina, are demonstrably false) and to cite him. He may have been doing this for more than 6 years. Were other students tasked (again, for academic credit) by Loewen to edit other Wikipedia articles? They most likely were. Are Loewen's writings about those other cities similarly flawed? [Juno](#) ([talk](#)) 06:59, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Lots of historians/sociologists/critics receive criticism. He's still a reliable source, though, and he's received an awful lot of positive attention for his work in this area, too. But I agree that if his claims are false (and that they're false is addressed in reliable sources), we certainly should not be including them here. Did any of his false claims make it into the current version of the article? Could you be more specific as to which were false? Again, I'm not disputing COI; just looking for the best way forward. ---- [Rhododendrites](#)^{talk} \\ 14:41, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

I'm troubled by the use of the term Sundown Town in this article, and that leads me to be troubled with Loewen. A Sundown Town has been understood by generations over decades to be a town where black people were threatened with physical violence if caught after sundown. It doesn't just mean a town where there's a clause in a real estate covenant. But in trying to substantiate that definition, I find that Google returns Dr. Loewen first, second, third, and fourth. He's turned this thing into a cottage industry, and by virtue of his self-promotion he is changing the meaning of the term. I don't know Juno, but I agree there is a conflict of interest here. [Brain Rodeo](#) ([talk](#)) 15:39, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

We have an article on [Sundown town](#) which uses the term somewhat broadly. If you disagree, please participate there. We also have a policy on [conflict of interest](#) which you should read to understand how we use the term. [Jonathunder](#) ([talk](#)) 15:54, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Obviously the COI charges are spurious; it would be nice if the people making them would instead engage in the constructive discussion above where people are actually trying to improve the article. --[JBL](#) ([talk](#)) 16:17, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Thank you, JBL. That's a really first class example of assuming bad faith.[Brain Rodeo](#) ([talk](#)) 16:51, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Let's focus on the article, please, not on other editors. [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 17:08, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

[@Jonathunder](#): The only sources at [sundown town](#) which define it broadly are again Loewen's. That article needs work, clearly, but changing that article is not a prerequisite for addressing the subject here. In both cases only one person (yes a widely respected and cited one) is defining the term so broadly. See comments in section above. No need to have parallel threads. --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \\ 17:23, 12 February 2015 (UTC)

Loewen's claim that Edina was a "sundown town" is demonstrably false. Loewen's book was so shoddily researched that it was written up in the Washington Post, not just the usual academic criticism. I don't think that it can be counted as a Reliable Source and I am now suspicious of any other Wikipedia article that quotes him. He himself appears to have edited Wikipedia to conform with his opinions (citing himself, naturally) and no has student, for academic credit, editing articles to advance his suspect claims. [Juno \(talk\)](#) 23:57, 13 February 2015 (UTC)

Just for the moment, let's forget Loewen and all his works. Are you saying, Juno, that Edina does not have a racist past? Because the city, on its own website, documents its history of exactly that. [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 00:13, 14 February 2015 (UTC)

I'm saying that Edina wasn't a "sundown town". [Juno \(talk\)](#) 00:55, 14 February 2015 (UTC)

The article currently says "[James W. Loewen](#) described the suburb as a sundown town." You do not describe it that way. Anything else in that section you object to? [Jonathunder \(talk\)](#) 01:08, 14 February 2015 (UTC)

Jonathunder, you seem to be taking this criticism personally, and that is out of character, from what I've seen. Juno's criticisms aren't off base. What do you do when someone tells you that blue is red? Loewen is redefining what a Sundown Town is and he's doing it by having his students do it, and they have to cite him because no one else defines the term his way. [Brain Rodeo \(talk\)](#) 16:10, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

Comment on the content, not the contributor. If you have a published, reliable source for your opinion that Edina is not a sundown town, I'm sure it could find a place in the article. --[JBL \(talk\)](#) 16:46, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

Brain, you misunderstand the purpose of my questions. I am trying to find out what, specifically, is wrong with the article. I get that Juno doesn't call this a Sundown town and Loewen does. What else needs attention, or is the rest of the section fine?

[Jonathunder](#)(talk) 17:53, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

Do you have a published, reliable source to cite that tells the world that? I am clear about what your opinion on this issue is, but not yet clear what you suggest I could do to **look up** the issue to check what reliable sources say about it. Do you have any sources to suggest? --[WeijiBaikeBianji](#) (talk, how I edit) 16:34, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

If you have a published, reliable source for your opinion that Edina is not a sundown town, I'm sure it could find a place in the article You're asking him to **prove a negative**. The [WP:BURDEN](#) is one the one who wants to include a statement like this. There are no sources saying that most towns are *not* sundown towns. My conclusion, after doing quite a bit of research, is that Loewen is indeed alone in defining sundown towns this way and thus his work alone is not sufficient to include it. *However*, his book and essays are widely discussed in other reliable sources, which to me, as I explained above, means it makes sense to include the term as long as it's attributed to him. —[Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 18:32, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

[@Rhododendrites](#): You seem to think you are quoting me, when you are quoting someone else who has commented in this section. I have lived in the same county as Edina most of my life, and have spend a lot of time in Edina, and am old enough that I remember when inner-ring suburbs of Minneapolis were most definitely sundown towns for black inhabitants of Minnesota. The article statement currently under dispute has face-value plausibility for anyone with relevant life experience on the issue, so I am **genuinely** asking if there is a reliable source that **demonstrates** that a contrary statement is more true, that in the period discussed any inhabitant of Minnesota of any "race" could freely travel to Edina for entertainment or recreation without undue police contact? There has been enough civil rights activism and journalistic reports on these issues for long enough here in Minnesota that I have little doubt that there are multiple reliable, published sources on the issue, and all I ask is that editors who have a strong opinion on the issue cite as many of those sources as they can identify, so that each of us can **look them up**. Once we have a **sourced** statement that is by no means incredible on the relevant issue, as we do here, let's look for additional

sources to clarify what [due weight](#) and the historical context might be. -- [WeijiBaikeBianji](#) ([talk](#), [how I edit](#)) 18:49, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

[\(edit conflict\)](#) I quoted in order to respond to that text in particular. If you feel it was confusing because of my indenting, I apologize. [Joel B. Lewis](#) is the person I was quoting.

The issue is not whether there is a history of racism -- that's well documented. The issue being disputed is only the application of the term "sundown town". It is a term defined in different ways, and although Loewen looks to be the only one defining it as he does, his work is widely cited and quoted such than use of the term with attribution makes sense. It doesn't make sense to simply say "Edina was a sundown town" because, again, we're applying one person's definition. If we find other sources which call Edina a "sundown town" independent of Loewen that would be another story, but until then I don't think it makes sense to include without in-text attribution (i.e. it looks ok the way it is). ---
[Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 19:15, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

As far a balancing the view of a single source, let's address that in the section below. This thread is getting a bit too long. [Jonathunder](#) ([talk](#)) 19:01, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

- So I am pretty happy with the Edina article as it stands (huge thanks to the community of users, particularly [Rhododendrites](#) who did the Lords' Good Work in plowing through fresh primary and secondary sources) we were faced with strange claims about the history of Edina, did some digging, dismissed them and did a good job covering what actually happened.
- What I am very much concerned about is other towns. Perhaps places with smaller, older, or less-technologically of civically-minded populations. How many other town's out there has Loewen tasked his students (again, for academic credit) to edits their pages with this historically-fictional smear? [Juno](#) ([talk](#)) 18:35, 17 February 2015 (UTC)
 - You have characterized a living person's writings as a "smear". Do you have sources to back that up? -- [WeijiBaikeBianji](#) ([talk](#), [how I edit](#)) 19:09, 17 February 2015 (UTC)

This man wrote a very ugly thing about a town that I love. And it was a lie. [Juno](#) ([talk](#)) 06:31, 21 February 2015 (UTC)

Objections to the article

Sundown town

Loewen has called this a [sundown town](#). The article currently says that and cites his use of the term.

Others do not call it that, and some editors object to calling it that. The views of other writers should be added and cited, for balance. [Jonathunder](#) (talk) 18:33, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

Including the term with attribution, as is done currently, seems to me like a good compromise -- for now at very least -- given the discussions above. For my part, I would prefer to wait to see what the edit-a-thon turns up rather than continue to debate an issue that will be specifically addressed there in just a couple weeks. (Unfortunately I am quite far away so cannot attend). --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 19:24, 16 February 2015 (UTC)

Could we get something like "Controversial author" or "Controversial professor". The man was written up in news papers for how emotional/poorly researched his writing are. [Juno](#) (talk) 18:54, 17 February 2015 (UTC)

What newspapers? What citations do you have at hand? How do I know that his critics were not farther off base than he is? I suppose anyone who is subject to controversy is "controversial", but that's just a weasel word for article text unless we can better source what the controversy is about. -- [WeijiBaikeBianji](#) (talk, how I edit) 19:07, 17 February 2015 (UTC)

If you're talking about the Washington Post piece, a newspaper book review is generally not considered a reliable source. [Jonathunder](#) (talk) 20:39, 17 February 2015 (UTC)

[@Juno](#): I agree that providing some of the sources that characterize him this way would be helpful in figuring out what the best wording is. When I was researching, I found many sources citing, talking about, and even interviewing him, but I didn't notice any that were particularly critical let alone a trend indicating as much. That said, it wasn't something I was really looking for. If his work is widely disputed, we should say so, but if we're talking about a few critical reviews amid many that are neutral-to-positive then his name doesn't need to be qualified. The critical sources may be worth using at the article about the book or about him, but unless they're specifically critical of the way he talks about Edina, I don't see them being relevant enough here (unless, again, the criticism runs through a serious portion of the available sources). --- [Rhododendrites](#) ^{talk} \ 22:39, 17 February 2015 (UTC)

There are a lot of reviews that bring up the shoddy nature of his research, but as a representative sample of the effect of that criticism has been that when Universities invite him to speak, they describe him as "controversial author James Loewen";http://www4.wittenberg.edu/news/2005/02_16.html 1], 2. On the second one, Loewen even shared the "controversial author" description of himself on his own facebook page. [Juno \(talk\)](#) 06:56, 21 February 2015 (UTC)

Since he seems to be onboard with describing himself as "controversial", I'd like to add that descriptor. [Juno \(talk\)](#) 22:14, 2 March 2015 (UTC)