

2011

Strategic Victimization: News Photographs, the Birmingham Children's Crusade, and the Revisualization of America

Margaret Keeton Williams
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Williams, Margaret Keeton, "Strategic Victimization: News Photographs, the Birmingham Children's Crusade, and the Revisualization of America" (2011). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. Paper 1539626646.

<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-nmse-pz39>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

**Strategic Victimization: News Photographs, The Birmingham Children's
Crusade, and the Revisualization of America**

Margaret Keeton Williams

Dallas, Texas

Bachelor of Arts, Rhodes College, 2006

**A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

American Studies Program

**The College of William and Mary
January 2011**

APPROVAL PAGE

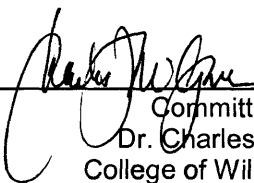
This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

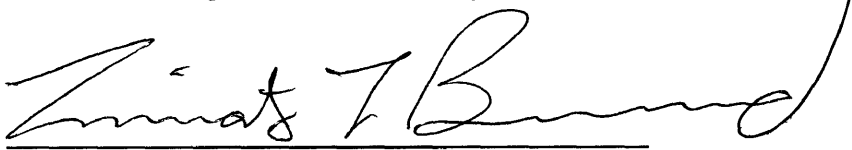


Margaret Keeton Williams

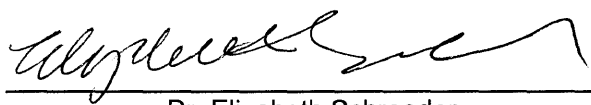
Approved by the Committee, December, 2010



Committee Chair
Dr. Charles McGovern
College of William and Mary



Dr. Tim Barnard
College of William and Mary



Dr. Elizabeth Schroeder
College of William and Mary

ABSTRACT PAGE

The American memory of the Civil Rights Movement is grounded in the iconic images that have come to represent the African American struggle for equality. Through the images created during the struggle for Civil Rights, the American public saw the reality of life for African Americans in the South, but more importantly the state of American democracy. Reflected in these images is an America divided between those who defined citizenship as a matter of exclusion and those who fought for inclusion among that number. This is particularly true of the photographs from the 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade. The images of dogs attacking and fire hoses cutting down groups of children clearly define the boundaries of citizenship within America. The violence depicted in these images is not forgotten but has been superseded by the remembrance of the movement's accomplishments. The modern audience reinterprets the horrific violence represented in these images to stand for the triumph of American democracy in the African American struggle. But the sentimental nationalism for which these images stand in today's context begs questions about how their meaning to contemporary 1960's audiences challenged the American social system. How did those 1960's audiences read these images? How did these images work to shift the public image of the Civil Rights Movement?

A close visual study of news photographs combined with an examination of the American public's reactions to news coverage of the movement allows for insights into how the Civil Rights Movement reshaped American democracy. The images, which appeared in national newspapers and magazines during the 1963 Birmingham protests, mark a major turning point within the movement and the American reaction to the Civil Rights Movement. As the primary purveyor of contemporary photographs, national news publications became the medium through which the struggle over African American agency and victimization played out. Without the self-conscious awareness of image making and the creation of events that forced confrontational, politically corrective images, the creation of a community of sympathizers and the reevaluation of the African American place in American society would not have been possible. The images of the violence in Birmingham published following the May 1963 protests were vital to the success of the movement. Thus, an examination of those images that appeared in the national press and the reaction to those images can give us greater insight into the ways in which the movement used the media to its advantage.

The use of children combined with the violent reaction of the civic authority worked to highlight the injustices and hypocrisy of the American social structure. The triangular relationship of producer, subject and audience in these images brings together all of the actors (newsmen, protestors, and mainstream public) in a way that forced a conversation about and rethinking of the American social landscape. While the reshaping of a national identity was not an immediate process, the images, which appear in the mainstream media during the Birmingham protests, mark a major turning point within the movement and the American reaction to the Civil Rights Movement. Without the self-conscious awareness of image making and the creation of events that forced confrontational, politically corrective images such as those discussed here, the creation of a community of sympathizers and the reevaluation of the African American place in American society would not have been possible. The images of the violence in Birmingham published in national newspapers and magazines following the May 1963 protests were vital to the success of the movement and a key in reshaping the American social landscape.

List of Figures

Figure 1: Charles Moore,

<http://www.viscom.ohiou.edu/oldsite/moore.site/Pages/birmingham8.html>

Figure 2:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/cartoons/watertoon.htm>

Figure 3: W.E.B Du Bois, *Negro Life in Georgia, U.S.A (1900)*, no. 354.

Figure 4: *Jet Magazine* 10 March, 1960: 15.

Figure 5: Charles Moore. Michael Durham, *Powerful Days: The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore* (New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 1991),

Figure 6: “Violence Explodes at Racial Protests in Alabama.” *New York Times* 4 May, 1963:1

Figure 7: “Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham.” *Life Magazine* 17 May, 1963: 26.

Figure 8: “Freedom Marcher, 6, Arrested.” *Jet Magazine* 16 May 1963: 33. Also appeared in *Birmingham News*, May 3, 1963.

Figure 9: “Violence Explodes at Racial Protests in Alabama.” *New York Times* 4 May, 1963:1. Also appeared in *Washington Post* and *LA Times*, May 4, 1963.

Figure 10: “Birmingham Jails 1,000 More Negroes.” *New York Times* 7 May, 1963: 1.

Strategic Victimization

Introduction

The American memory of the Civil Rights Movement is grounded in the iconic images that have come to represent the African American struggle for equality. Through the images created during the struggle for Civil Rights, the American public saw the reality of life for African Americans in the South, but more importantly the state of American democracy. Reflected in these images is an America divided between those who defined citizenship as a matter of exclusion and those who fought for inclusion among that number. This is particularly true of the photographs from the 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade.

Figure 1: Charles Moore, <http://www.viscom.ohiou.edu/oldsite/moore.site/Pages/birmingham8.html>



The images of dogs attacking and fire hoses cutting down groups of children clearly define the boundaries of citizenship within America. The iconic status that such images have achieved reflects both their significance for modern American society and their importance for understanding the movement's historical context. Images such as Figure 1 have become visual reminders of a movement that reshaped American social and political structure. The violence depicted in these images is not forgotten but has

been superseded by the remembrance of the movement's accomplishments. The modern audience reinterprets the horrific violence represented in these images to stand for the triumph of American democracy in the African American struggle.

But the sentimental nationalism for which these images stand in today's context begs questions about how their meaning to contemporary 1960's audiences challenged the American social system. The goal of this study is to recontextualize the images coming out of Birmingham in May of 1963. Unlike the fast moving barrage of images flashing across the television screen, the still photographs appearing in the newspaper captured a single moment, grounding the viewer in a concrete moment of action, allowing the viewers to exam the people and the action in depth. Through an examination of African Americans' and movement leaders' historical understanding of the importance of images and image making along with a study of how images can in fact do political work, we discover how audiences in the 1960's read these images. Thus also asking questions about how these images worked to shift the public image of the Civil Rights Movement and what those images tell Americans about the state of American society in the 1960's.

Gaining public awareness of their struggles against the injustices faced by African Americans had long been an obstacle for Civil Rights leaders. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the harsh realities of African American life received little attention from white mainstream media.¹ Local reporting rarely covered

¹ A number of scholars have worked specifically on the role race played in the media. See Sasha Torres, *Black White and in Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle and The Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006); Stephanie G. Larson, *Media and Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006); and Paul L. Fisher, *Race and the News Media* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

African American protests, thus hindering any national attention local Civil Rights activities may have attracted. Yet, by mid-century, protests began to intensify and incorporate a broader black community into local activism. Events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the desegregation of schools challenged white supremacy and Jim Crow, fostering white racial aggression and community upheaval. By the late 1950's, the national press could no longer ignore Civil Rights activities.² News reports and images permeated American newspapers and television, turning local conflicts into topics of national discussion.

The 1960's were record-breaking years for newspaper circulation. Every morning more than 59 million papers went out in the state of New York.³ In California newspapers reached over 24 million every morning.⁴ So even as television was gaining a wider audience, newspaper readership continued to climb. Taking these numbers along with magazines such as *Life* reaching 31.3 million each week, news photographs were still permeating the American visual sphere.⁵ Of the images in this study three were distributed by the Associated Press and appeared in both local and national publications across the U.S. Thus, the audience these images were reaching spanned across region, class, and presumably race. As we will discover there is a historical understanding among African Americans of the racial system dominated by violence and inequality, especially in the south. A major component to the success of the Civil Rights Movement involved forcing the rest of America to see the reality of the racialized American social system. By focusing on images that appeared in multiple national publications we can assume a

² For more reading on the progression of the press's handling of Civil Rights activities see Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*.

³ "Rockefeller Hails Rise in Newspaper Standards." *New York Times*, 7 October, 1963:7.

⁴ "Newspaper Circulation Sets Record." *Los Angeles Times*, 22 February, 1963:23.

⁵ James J. Dunn, "Memo" *Life*, 24 May, 1963:B1.

broader audience. Through the letters Americans wrote to their newspapers and magazines after seeing these images gives insight into how the American mainstream audience was interpreting and reacting to these images.

The images of the 1963 Birmingham protests shifted the nation's understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. During the first week of May, images of black children being knocked down by water hoses and police dogs ripping off their clothing filled national newspapers and nightly newscasts. The depiction of the racial violence on a national level elevated the Civil Rights struggle from a local issue to a national problem as all Americans were visually confronted with the oppression of African Americans in the south. For this reason I have chosen to focus my study on those images that appeared in the national press because producers of national publications assumed the multiple audiences that varying local contexts created. These images highlighted the white-controlled social and political system's victimization of African Americans in the battle over freedom and equality.

Race and the Visual

We cannot understand the perception in the American mainstream (which for the purposes of this study will refer to white lower and middle class communities) of African Americans, without the central role of the visual.⁶ Americans had long viewed race

⁶ During the Civil Rights struggle of mid twentieth century, both race and class divided the American public. While categories of race were what Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham refers to in her article "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 1251-1274, as the metalanguage of the socially constructed definitions of one's place within American society, within the overarching racial system lay a class structure that furthered divided the American public. Both white and black elites approached the African American freedom movement from a very different economic, social and political standpoint than their middle and lower class counterparts. For more information on the class struggles between both black and white elites and the lower classes see Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) and Lance Hall, *Deacons for Defense*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Because black and white elites constituted such a small percent of the American population and the class struggles within the black

through the visual marker of skin color. For mainstream America, a non-white skin hue defined not just black, but people of color as a community of virtually interchangeable individuals, “others” united by their exclusion from the white world. As Michael Harris states, “racial discourses, though they are discourses of power, ultimately rely on the visual in the sense that the visible body must be used by those in power to represent non-visual realities that differentiate insiders from outsiders.”⁷ Race served to mark the assignment of power; in turn a discourse of the “other” shaped the political structure in which white males held the power. The blackness of African Americans’ skin marked them as an “other” within the Eurocentric value system of American society. The introduction of photography in the 1850’s in turn proved a means to document race as



“SAY, SAMBO. DON'T YOU THINK THIS PIECE OF WATERMELON IS RATHER LARGE?”
 “GOLLY, BOSS! DAT AIN'T HALF BIG NUFF!”

“fact”, marking blackness against whiteness, through visual documentation of difference. Americans continued their justification of racial hierarchies as inherent truths through the visual characterizations displayed within the new medium of photography.⁸

Figure 2: 12/8/2010.

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/cartoons/watertoon.htm>.

and white communities between the elites and the much larger middle and lower class populations, the major Civil Rights movement activities were performed by and for the broader middle and lower class American population. With economic and political strength in their numbers, the middle and lower class populations represented a powerful force towards change if so moved. Thus, when discussing mainstream America I am referring to white, middle- and lower-class Americans.

⁷ Michael D. Harris, *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2.

⁸ For further reading on the history of photography and racial marking see: Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, eds., *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 2003); Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); and Brian Wallis, “Black Bodies, White Science” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 12 (Summer 1996): 102-106.

Harris argues these racialized discourses of power furthered the creation of stereotyped images of African Americans in the white mind. Through popular media such as cartoons, minstrel shows, and even advertisements, African Americans were visually marked with signs of ignorance, incivility, and servitude.⁹ The black servant of this cartoon is marked not only by his physical appearance, which exaggerates his ears, lips, and head to create a more bestial figure, but also by his overzealous appetite for watermelon. As the melon was an additional stereotype associated with black children, the cartoon reinforces the African American as childish, unable to control his desires. Often used to address black children, the name “Sambo” refers to the 1899 children’s story by Helen Bannerman, which concerned a hapless young black boy whose ignorance often gets him into trouble.¹⁰ The book’s wide popularity and the association of the main character with a generic image of black children led to the appropriation of the name “Sambo” to refer to black children. Through such stereotyped images American society defined the African American’s place within the country’s social and political structure. Such images also served as the basis for justifying the paternalistic attitude many Americans continued to feel towards African Americans after emancipation. Through the visual realm African Americans have historically been marked with the ignorance and incivility that justified their inequality in the white mind.

Mainstream America used photography to justify racial hierarchies through the continued recirculation of images that further reinforced and justified ideas of inferiority. Yet,

⁹ Aunt Jemima has become the predominant representation of the “mammy” figure, which represents the dull witted obedient house servant. For more reading on her image see M. M Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998). For more on minstrelsy see W.T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Helen Bannerman, *Little Black Sambo*. (London: Grant Richards, 1899).

African Americans used photography to challenge stereotypes and create their own community images and personal identities. Photography enabled the black community to create positive racial representations, but also to develop visual evidence contradictory to mainstream stereotypes. For example, at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, W.E.B Du Bois compiled three albums of photographs depicting African Americans for the “American Negro Exhibit.” Shawn Michelle Smith has dubbed these albums a “counter archive” that “aimed to dismantle the racial hierarchies that fundamentally informed legal and scientific knowledge.”¹¹ Du Bois’ visual evidence of black people depicted middle class African Americans as respectable citizens who embodied the fundamental ideals of civility. Distinguishing its subjects through the respectability of Victorian dress, family, and home ownership, this image from Du Bois’ collection claims a different framework of class and cultivation through which to view African Americans. The photograph is the visual testament to this family’s middle class values and thus it claims space for blacks in middle class America. Figure 3: W.E.B Du Bois, *Negro Life in Georgia, USA (1900)*, no. 354.



¹¹ Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: WEB Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 8.

To address an audience of white visitors, Du Bois favored in his photographs blacks who readily exemplified middle class status and family values. Leaving out poor African Americans, Du Bois restructured the visual conventions through which white people saw the black community. Portraying blacks as embodying American ideals in the European setting of the Paris exhibition highlighted the injustices of the American system. Evidence of African Americans as middle class, bourgeois, and family-oriented thus undercut justifications for white supremacy. Placing this assembly of images at the Paris exhibition encouraged a global community of sympathizers.¹² The photographs in Du Bois' collection are just one example of the historical effort by African Americans to create images that depict blacks as distinctly American, worthy of inclusion in mainstream American society, politics, and capitalism.¹³ By the national Civil Rights Movement, African Americans were acutely aware of photography's power to shape public perception. African Americans adopted the use of photography to combat their own image within mainstream white society.

Visual Intersections

If the goal of the Civil Rights Movement was the inclusion of African Americans as equal members in the American polity, then necessarily the movement sought to compel white America to *see* African Americans both as individuals and definitively American. I will argue that a distinct and conscious strategy of the Civil Rights Movement focused on the processes of visual representation that would force the

¹² Ibid., 11.

¹³ Deborah Willis and bell hooks have done extensive research into the implications of photography on African American identity, by collecting family photos and examining historical racial representations in an effort to understand how the visual impacted the creation of an African American identity, both individual and communal. See bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Deborah Willis, *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography* (New York: New Press, 1994).

mainstream public to re-visualize the African American community. Combining a conscious awareness of visual representation's power with the movement strategy of non-violent direct action, Civil Rights participants designed protests whose visual imagery highlighted the lack of freedom and democracy in America. By the mid 1950's activists created or reworked these images to include African Americans as citizens.

African Americans learned the power of imaging to re-visualize their place in society most forcefully in the photos of Emmett Till. While on a trip to Mississippi in 1955, the fourteen year-old Chicago boy was tortured and murdered by two white men who claimed he made inappropriate remarks to a white woman. Upon his body's return to Chicago, his mother Mamie Bradley demanded an open casket funeral, allowing photographs to be taken of her son's mutilated body. Their appearance in the national black publication *Jet Magazine* created, as Adam Green has argued, "a moment of simultaneity."¹⁴ For Green, such moments revealed a national African American community bound together by a "shared conscience, reminding them that what defined black people was not color, but instead what Du Bois called the 'long memory' of pain and outrage."¹⁵ Skin color defined the boundaries of the community while oppression and violence bound that community through a common history and memory. The battered body of the young boy told the African American story without words, the photos offering meanings of a great sense of sadness and loss while also offering a reminder that no African American was safe from racial violence. The photographs of Till's body became the visual markers that defined the truth of black life in mid-century America. Julian Bond, former Civil Rights activist, remembers thinking "that could have been

¹⁴Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago, 1940-1955* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

me.”¹⁶ While activist Joyce Ladner recalls how she and her sister, “cried for him as we would have cried for one of our four brothers...when we saw the picture of his bloated body...we asked each other: ‘how could they do that to him? He’s only a young boy!’”¹⁷ Emmett Till’s death was a tragedy, but it was also a galvanizing moment for the national African American community that spurred a generation to action against the systemic racism that generated such brutality.¹⁸ These photographs solidified within that generation an awareness of the motivating power an image can have in bringing a community together in a common effort for social justice.

Deborah Willis wrote that Civil Rights era “photographers, witnessing assaults both brutal and social, created a new visual consciousness for the American public, and established a visual language of “testifying” about their individual and collective experience.”¹⁹ This statement illuminates critical aspects of Civil Rights photography. First, it is not the photographers but the photographs themselves that acted as witness. The photographer, as physical witness of the action, becomes secondary as the visual evidence of witnessing was reproduced for the American public regardless of photographer biases. The movement drew countless photographers from free-lance to staff photographers, who took a plethora of images across the country for over a decade. Both black and white photographers created evidentiary images of the reality of African American life regardless of a photographer's personal belief. Willis assumes a sympathetic photographer, whereas the personal inclinations of the photographers were

¹⁶ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 202.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁸ For more on Emmett Till see Chris Crow, *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* (New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2003). Or Mamie Till-Mobley, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hat Crime that Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003).

¹⁹ Deborah Willis, “Exposure,” in *Only Skin Deep*, eds. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2003), 278.

overshadowed by the economics of image publication and distribution. Publication in magazines and newspapers was necessary in order for these images to influence visual consciousness. Although photographers had choices in which moments they captured, ultimately editors and publishers decided those images the American public would see. As Susan Sontag points out, the photographer's intentions often have little effect on the consequent meanings, even if they do highlight conflict, because of the context in which those images appear, in this case the context of the news image, which most often stands as evidentiary facts, rather than personal interpretation.²⁰ Thus highlighting the impact of images as witness over the photographer as witness.

Secondly, I would argue that these images did not create a *new* visual consciousness, but rather, *reshaped* the existing visual consciousness; these photos made African Americans "subjects" for white viewers. Such images' effectiveness relied on their legibility by the mainstream audience. If photographs violated normative visual conventions, they could potentially be misunderstood and given contradictory meanings. Thus, studying the Birmingham Children's Crusade should reveal how images in mainstream media contested and critiqued social and political inequality through familiar visual language. Ultimately, these images did not challenge the unequal foundations of the American social and political framework, but rather justified the full equal inclusion of African American with in that system.

Finally, Willis' term "testifying" assumes a personal subjectivity and emotional context relevant to a black audience. However, the majority of Americans in the 1960's encountered these images through the white-controlled news media, which constrained

²⁰ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2003), 38.

the meanings available to the mainstream viewer. As these images appeared generally as news, they were understood as evidence, representing facts and events endowed with objectivity and truth. While these images may be used today as testimonials, in their *contemporary* context they were viewed as factual evidence of the conflict, devoid of sentimentality. This perception of “truth” allowed for a national audience to view these images through a common lens that encouraged a consensus in reference to the injustices faced by African Americans. Because many of these images continue to hold meaning within the public memory of the Civil Rights Movement, we can assume they influenced the American visual consciousness in some way.

This begs the question: how did the visual language of movement photographs create newsworthy images that advocated change in mainstream beliefs about the African American’s proper place within society? By cultivating visual evidence of innocence and respectability, along with the strategy of nonviolence, movement leaders fostered images that defined African Americans as victims of an unjust system. This in turn ultimately highlighted their humanity and necessitated their equal inclusion within the social and political structure. In this essay I explore how these images did the social work needed to develop a community of movement sympathizers within mainstream America by analyzing them in the broader context of movement strategy.

Photographs and Political Work

Assessing photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, scholars have argued that these images did in fact do political work, forcing changes in the American political

system's approach to segregation and equality under the law.²¹ An image does its political work based on its context and its evidentiary power. Since images reflect how their viewers see themselves and their world, an image assumes meaning through a connection between the viewer and the subject of the image. The personal and community identity revealed in images can expand to represent national identity as well if it is seen to reflect the shared mores that connect personal identity with national identity.

In his work *Between the Eyes*, David Strauss argues that news images of misery and suffering elsewhere in the world “are used as reminders of what we are free from. They operate...to provide the necessary contrast.”²² Even as photographs make events “real” for some, the distance between viewer and subject makes it safe to acknowledge the conflict of others without action.²³ Suffering and deprivation contrast with normative standards and expectations of American prosperity; such photos identify what we are not in order to highlight what we are. Images hold meanings of identity and the state of the nation. But the contrasts work the other way as well. Strauss goes on to say, “politically effective images... work in the fissures, the wounds of the social,” arguing that photographs encourage viewers to face what is wrong within their own social structure by highlighting the contradictions within that structure.²⁴ Visual markers that directly contradict the mythic meanings of national identity force the viewer to question the

²¹ See Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*; John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Lili Beznar, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Elspeth Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884-1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).

²² David Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (New York: Aperture, 2003), 81.

²³ Sontag, 7.

²⁴ Strauss, 7.

community's social arrangements. Just as images are quick representations, a maxim or proverb of how we understand the nation, contradictory images for reinterpretation.²⁵ Highlighting emotional meanings of injustices ignored by mainstream society magnifies the pain and humanity of the subjects. Civil Rights images drew attention to the conflict between ideal and practice; as evidence news images encouraged the mainstream to question the social structure.

Such visual definitions of national identity that “work in the fissures” perform political work. A single image can join a social with a national problem, forcing a meaning that directs viewers' social understanding. Vicki Goldberg argues that with the “enormous capacity to contain, compress, and symbolize events or ideologies, photographs become the signs and signposts of modern society.”²⁶ The meaning associated with a photograph can shape responses to and understandings of society. This in turn requires close attention to the specific meanings these images assumed for their viewers.

In 1936 Walter Benjamin argued photography in the age of mechanical reproduction exemplifies the shift in the value placed on art. Benjamin argues that art is valued in two polar categories, cult value versus reproductive value. The meaning of a piece, whether seen or unseen, can be derived from its existence. For example, the gargoyle of the gothic cathedral maintains significance although unseen by the ground level viewer. Its value lies in the viewer's prior knowledge of its existence. The invention of photography, or more generally the use of machines to mass-produce works of art, bestows meaning in its viewing by a wide audience, what Benjamin called exhibition

²⁵ Sontag, 22.

²⁶ Goldberg, 135.

value. Further, a work of art's "fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between the two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature."²⁷ The work's aesthetic quality is now of lesser concern than its exhibition value, or reproducibility. How a work is seen makes its meaning. Benjamin places the origins of photography as evidence of "historical occurrences" with the 1900 Atget photographs of deserted Paris streets.²⁸ With this idea of photography as evidence comes political significance. The inclusion of photographs in newspapers and magazines makes captioning obligatory. "The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures...soon becomes even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single pictures appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones."²⁹ Context and meaning became inseparable.

In this vein Robert Levine argues, "photographs, then, are not messages with precise meaning; rather, they provide the raw material for many messages which viewers 'see.' And since viewers 'see' through the lens of personal cultural values and social expectations, 'seeing' and 'interpreting' photographs is learned. 'Truth,' then varies from eye to eye."³⁰ A viewer's cultural context determines the "truth" in his or her interpretation. Visual acuity is learned and shaped by social expectations and cultural environment. For example, the images of Emmett Till galvanized a national black community who had experienced and understood violence against black bodies. For African Americans the historical violence against blacks in America was the context in

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁰ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 17.

which the Emmitt Till images appeared; that was the social precondition needed to create the moment of simultaneity within that community. The images highlighted the truth of the continuation of racial violence within American society. The viewer attributes a past and future to the single moment captured by a photographer, a process that John Berger argues makes an image meaningful. “Meaning is discovered in what connects, and cannot exist without development. Without a story, without an unfolding, there is no meaning. Facts, information, do not in themselves constitute meaning.”³¹ With photographs as the raw material facts, the context into which images appear gives viewers the ability to assign to them a temporal narrative and thus social meanings.

Images become signposts for national meaning based on the historical moment in which that captured image appears. Viewers associate images with what is going on in the world around them at the time they see the image, relating it to other contemporary images. This creates meaning through a comparison of the image’s different visual codes. According to Goldberg, “a photograph is little more than a cultural and historical artifact that is constructed by its own time, reconstructed by each succeeding era, and altered by editing placement, and audience.”³² The viewing context depends on unconscious social definitions along with the conscious choices of editors and writers who insert images into the written text of newspapers. John Berger argues that words accompanying an image tell the viewer what the photograph means. The image becomes the raw material evidence of the article’s contentions. Therefore, the social and political value of a photograph cannot be determined by the image alone. The context where the image appeared lent appropriate meaning, and that in turn allowed the image to be a catalyst for

³¹ Berger, 89.

³² Goldberg, 17.

change. Thus, I would argue an image cannot do political or social work unless it appears in the appropriate context of a dissonance of social reality and political ideals, the delineation of a past and future that will dictate the necessity for change.

The primary context of photographs in a news story is use as evidence. Alan Trachtenberg argues photography brought a “great revolution in consciousness...the creation of a mechanical medium of vision which surpasses the human eye in accuracy and impartiality.”³³ Since its inception, photography has retained a perception of truth that enables and encourages images’ use as evidence. As Berger sees it, photographs capture the truth of a moment and witness that moment’s action.³⁴ Strauss furthers this line by contending that photographs are the primary evidence of an action or of identity construction; photographs not only tell us the truth about the subjects but are also the visual documentation of past action.³⁵ The social agreement to accept photographs as evidence of a past “truth” enables the viewer to find meaning within the photograph. The contextual framework of truth enables the viewer to respond to the social meanings of an image, reshaping visual consciousness. “Representing the past, photographs serve the present’s need to understand itself and measure its future.”³⁶ Photographs shape the history by which we measure our current and future frameworks of social definition.

Imaging the News

Since the mid-nineteenth century, images have accompanied the news in the United States. Publications such as *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, which was founded in 1852, introduced to the public the idea of seeing the news. By 1937 when the

³³ Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), xiv.

³⁴ Berger, 89.

³⁵ Strauss, 16.

³⁶ Trachtenberg, xvii.

Hindenburg exploded, photographs could be reproduced in the following day's newspaper, allowing a national audience to *see* the explosion. This immediate visualization of the news marked for historian Vicki Goldberg a turning point in the meaning of news images. Joshua Brown's *Beyond the Lines* describes how the news illustrations of the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century were *representations*: "the public wanted pictures...as an *adjunct* to the news they read in their newspapers."³⁷ (Emphasis added) Wood "cuts" not only took several days to create, but also up to forty engravers.³⁸ The images, when placed alongside the news, acted as interpretations of the events, supplementing the story with a visual representation for public consumption. Although, "accuracy was important to the illustrated papers...it seemed of less concern to *Frank Leslie's* and other pictorial papers than 'authenticity.'"³⁹ So while the news had been visualized since the 1850's, these early news woodcarving images were "shaped by the limitations of time and the chaos of circumstances," making them subjective representations of the news rather than the evidentiary material photographs became.⁴⁰

Even as photography became more widely used, the slow exposure and wet plate process of photographic reproduction limited display of photographs to public exhibition or printed cards. While more accurate than woodcarvings, photographs still represented a more distant past action. By 1917 with the establishment of the *New York Daily News* a primarily photographic newspaper, visual evidence was becoming an integral part of the news. The instantaneous action of the news, exemplified by the *Hindenburg* coverage,

³⁷ Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

marks a change Goldberg argues in the public's expectation to see the news not only immediately but also accurately. The "truth" of an image depicting newsworthy events enhanced both its immediacy and evidentiary "truth". The images were now a part of the news story, not mere representations.

Thus, by the 1960's photographs permeated the news media. The public's expectation to *see* the news led to the news "becoming not only whatever could be photographed, but...what could be photographed dramatically."⁴¹ The more powerful an image the more likely it was to be noticed. It is the drama in a photograph that makes it compelling and thus newsworthy.

As part of the news, photographs have the ability to take on political and social meaning. Newsworthiness does not rely solely on the drama of an image, but its ability to compel the public. A photograph's political meaning and ability to be politically and socially corrective for David Strauss lies in the images visual and conceptual compellingness, "or rather that these two things are not mutually exclusive, nor even separate. To be compelling, there must be tension in the work; if everything has been decided beforehand, there will be no tension and no compulsion to the work...the viewer's choice is reduced to acceptance or rejection of the message."⁴² This tension is created when the subject of the photo contradicts the traditional visual cues that define the social framework. The compelling nature of an image is found in the inability to read the image according to traditional visual cues or stereotyped images. Following this theory, an image then becomes political when it challenges these codes and forces the viewer to read an image with greater depth.

⁴¹ Goldberg, 194.

⁴² Strauss, 10.

Figure 4: *Jet Magazine* 10 March, 1960. 15.



For example, the image printed in *Jet Magazine* in 1960 of an African American woman being dragged by police derives its tension from the contradiction between the two visual codes represented within the image. First, physical force by law enforcement primarily dealt with violent criminality, yet the subject of police force in this image was a well-dressed African American woman who seems to be injured, creating the potential for the viewer's sympathy. Berger's analysis that links meaning to social definitions is

located here in the associating of police and criminal. However, the viewer is forced to read further as the injured female subject challenges the social implications of criminality.

Secondly, her middle class attire countered the association of this woman with stereotypical notion of African Americans as poor vagrants: her clothing marked her with middle class respectability, a standing that for African Americans was a key component in proving their full inclusion in American society. This photo thus echoes the aims of the Du Bois exhibition in Paris.⁴³ In contrast, an image of a shabbily dressed black man would have lost any tension or force by echoing the stereotypical association of black men and uncivilized criminality. This image instead presents female gentility and victimization by placing its subject within the frame of police force, which also visually undercuts her social markers. Placed in a national publication and challenging traditional notions of criminality and police enforcement, this image carried the potential to become politically corrective.

Stuart Hall argues that a photo's news value stems from an image's ability to elaborate a story in terms of themes and interpretations.⁴⁴ Images are not newsworthy unless they legibly elaborate on the story according to contemporary values while capturing the tension of the moment. The presence of the visual cues that fit within social definitions, for example the arrest of a black person by white police, makes an image initially readable. However, tensions between those cues, such as the arrest of a well-

⁴³ For more information on ideas of female respectability specifically in reference to the cult of respectability among African American women see Cheryl Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community*. (Mayknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2001), Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. (New York: New York University Press, 2001), and Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁴⁴ Stuart Hall, "The Determination of News Photographs," in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., *The Manufacture of News* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973), 179.

dressed black woman, demand the viewer's closer examination. According to Hall, "the same 'cues' which allow us to decode the expressive features of the photographed subject are also employed by almost everyone when they 'read' everyday subjects and occasions...the photograph therefore represents *a truncated version* of this cultural code."⁴⁵ Photos become the visual reference points of social norms and standards, legible through their display of definitions and shortcuts that help decode everyday social encounters. Images that perpetuate these definitions and visual cues in turn validate those social codes. The news thus reinforces preexisting social prescriptions and norms. The complete rejection of social definitions by the subject of a news image does not foster useful tension but rather illegibility or incoherence for viewers. The overarching subject of Figure 4 plays into the idea of the police as keepers of the peace, reinforcing their place of power, while the details of the action, specifically the manhandling of an injured woman, created the tension by demanding closer examination. The photograph shores up conventional values even as the tensions question those values. It becomes not a challenge of police as the law, but rather whom those laws affect.

The unique quality of the news media lies in that it is subject both to the economics of consumer culture and to social expectations of truthfulness in its presentation of facts.⁴⁶ This in turn requires news producers to be in a constant dialogue with the audience, the mainstream American public. Therefore, the news balances both fact and social ideology, intermingling the two to create an understanding of the world around us. Graham Murdock discusses how, "the evidence...suggests that the news

⁴⁵ Hall, 177.

⁴⁶ For further reading on the news media and consumer culture see Ben Compaine, *Who Owns the Media? Competition and Concentration in the Mass Media Industry* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2000); and Robert McChesney, *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003).

media do provide many people with the framework of definitions and explanations with which they approach situations. Further this process is self-perpetuating. Thus, the fact that particular images and definitions are known to have wide popular currency makes them more likely to be selected by news organizations as a framework within which to present novel or ambiguous situations.”⁴⁷ Ultimately the mainstream news media perpetuates the struggle over dominant notions of “truth.” The visual tension in an image embodies the struggle over social definitions while the assumed framework of conventional values remain dominant, reinforcing mainstream ideals. Viewers continue to rely on these representations of society as long as the news images reflect the visual cues of those social definitions. For the media in turn, usable images must combine legibility and tension.

Television

The same social and economic forces that dominated print media also dictated television programming. Discussing Jackson, Mississippi television stations WLBT and WJTV in the 1960’s, Steven Classen argues that broadcasters portrayed the black community as “essentially criminal and inferior to whites,” in the Civil Rights era.⁴⁸ Consistently, national network discussion of integration or African American affairs in a positive manner were interrupted, omitted, or blacked out by the local stations. Jackson broadcasters censored any challenging or otherwise dissenting reality from appearing on southern TV, and thus they perpetuated the stereotypical images of African Americans among white viewers. Television programming as a rule omitted any images that

⁴⁷ Graham Murdock, “Political Deviance: The Press Presentation of a Militant Mass Demonstration,” in *The Manufacture of News: A Reader*, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1973), 172.

⁴⁸ Steven Classen, *Watching Jim Crow: The Struggles Over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 118.

portrayed blacks as equal or deserving of recognition as full American citizens. Racial dissent did not easily surface on southern TV.

As with newspapers, television relied on corporate advertising for consumers. Classen found that “national and regional broadcast programs’ sponsors were often reluctant to support programming featuring African American hosts or with a focus on southern race relations for fear of offending southern advertisers and audiences.”⁴⁹ The mainstream audience was white and middle class, and advertisers could not afford to “alienate” themselves from mainstream sensibilities. Both the profit motive and the desire to maintain white (i.e. “natural”) prestige justified, in the white broadcasters mind, omitting African Americans from the television screen.

Moreover, just as local movie censors had done, local stations “blacked out” African Americans on national programming. Classen shows that NBC’s 1963 documentary on civil rights activities entitled *The American Revolution of 1963* was heavily censored. For viewers in Jackson, “parts of the documentary- specifically those providing vivid images of recent white-on-black violence in Jackson- had been ‘curiously’ interrupted and omitted by WLBT.”⁵⁰ The authorities’ censorship of local problems essentially denied local tensions over the necessity for change. In such southern locales, national news became the primary source for information on the real state of white- black relations for both the black and white communities. Only national broadcasts revealed for southern blacks and whites in communities dominated by segregationists a frank portrayal of the nation’s racial issues. While the local tensions

⁴⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 53.

were not aired on television, blacks could still find their lives placed in a national context of racial struggle.

The men who controlled television coverage privileged visual appeal in their programming. At the 1965 University of Missouri conference, “The Racial Crisis and the News Media,” CBS producer William Peters pointed out “because television is a visual medium, what cannot easily be made visual may remain unreported.”⁵¹ The bias toward the visual favored images of extreme action and even violence. Reporting of the Civil Rights Movement on television downplayed or excluded legal proceedings and meetings, instead highlighting the visually dynamic protests and violence that often occurred. A paradox emerged, as Stephanie Larson argues: when “the coverage focuses on the violence and arrests, [this] undermines the protesters’ legitimacy and clouds their message.”⁵² This was certainly a truth uncovered by the Civil Rights Movement. However, I would argue that so long as the scenes portrayed protestors as victims of white violence and arrests as unjust, the broadcasts created a sympathetic view of the protestors, thus legitimating the protest. As Rodger Streitmatter argues “by pushing those realities into the face of the American people, television news propelled the Civil Rights Movement into the American consciousness and onto the national agenda...when those images became imbedded into the nation’s consciousness, public opinion suddenly galvanized in support of the Civil Rights Movement.”⁵³ The images coming out of Birmingham of brutality against nonviolent protestors is a prime example. The images of victimization tipped the balance of favorable opinion

⁵¹ William Peters, “The Visible and Invisible Images,” in Paul Fisher and Ralph Lowenstein, eds., *Race and the News Media*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 82.

⁵² Stephanie Larson, *Media and Minorities* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 147.

⁵³ Larson, 153.

The nightly newscasts depicting the violent action of the day created a sense of urgency. Rather than documenting what *had* happened, television was immediate, showing what *was* happening. William Monroe of NBC argued at the 1965 conference that the television became a primary tool for the Civil Rights Movement, as Americans were able to *see* and *hear* the emotions of both sides.⁵⁴ He claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that “the media exist to be used,” as an active observer waiting for a subject to appear.⁵⁵ That subject in turn employed the media to enhance its appeal to viewers. For example, after noticing the arrival of television cameras, a group of demonstrators began praying louder so as the microphones could pick up their prayers.⁵⁶ Although perceived as dependents these children quickly adapted to the media’s presence becoming agents in the movement. The television screen and newspaper images became the stage on which the movement’s action took place. The television footage framed the visual context of violence in which the still images were then viewed. While television action flashed before viewers only for a few moments, the images of the morning paper froze the action. The viewer’s ability to gaze upon the humanity of the subjects rather than the violent action in a still image further instilled sympathy for the cause. News clips began and ended in the midst of the action, offering only unresolved glimpses of the action, allowing only for minimal personal interpretation. Television coverage of the Civil Rights movement set the stage for news photographs to do the political work necessary for change, each playing a specific role in the visualization of the movement.

The Power of the Gaze

⁵⁴William Monroe, “Television: the Chosen Instrument of Revolution,” in *Race and the News Media*, eds. Paul Fisher and Ralph Lowenstein (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 84.

⁵⁵ Monroe, 90.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

For the purposes of this study, I assert that the gaze originating in the white audience was central to the national reception of these images. As we have seen, the mainstream media dictated and perpetuated the visual codes and definitions that created the framework through which society read images. Civil Rights leaders targeted white American visual consciousness when framing protests, by seeking situations that would challenge Americans' visual codes. Leaders used the media's consumer-driven desire for action to further the movement. They did this by directing the audience's gaze.

Visual theorists Martita Sturkin and Lisa Cartwright define the gaze as the "viewing relationship characteristic of a particular set of social circumstances."⁵⁷ On the most basic level this is a relationship between viewer and subject. However, as Sturkin and Cartwright allude, this relationship is also shaped by the social circumstances in which the viewer encounters the image. Visual meanings are defined and perpetuated through a media that, along with history, create the context into which images appear. Thus, the socially constructed visual definitions that determine the meaning of images are also the lens through which viewers gaze. The gaze is tinted by a relationship between meaning and social definitions.

Power relations further complicate meanings of images. Laura Mulvey argues that the viewer's power lies in scopophilia, or "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze."⁵⁸ Mulvey identifies pleasure in the act of looking, pleasure in the power of looking and the curiosity of examination. That which made an image newsworthy or compelling also can make it pleasurable provided it stems from

⁵⁷ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

⁵⁸ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 835.

detachment. The viewer looks from a distance, which ensures the pleasure of looking without the shame of discovery or danger of connection. The viewer retains the power of ambiguity. However, the subject can also wield power by choosing to acknowledge his or her subjectivity. Knowing the social definitions that shape the gaze, a subject can manipulate them to force the viewer to attribute specific meanings to an image and relinquish others. A direct or indirect gaze of the subject thus directs the viewer's attention in a specific manner. This can work to create a humanized rather than fetishized subject, and an implicated rather than detached viewer.

Figure 5: Charles Moore. Michael, Durham, *Powerful Days: The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore* (New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 1991).



By acknowledging the viewer's gaze, Bull Connor, police commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama during the 1963 protests, takes control of this image. By directly meeting the viewer's eyes, Connor exerts his power, challenging the gaze of the viewer and the photographer. Connor's acknowledgement of the viewer pushes the viewer back from entry into the scene, setting the boundaries of the image, and thus the limits of the viewer to challenge Connor's police power. The image becomes an instrument of Connor's power and control over the situation rather than the viewer's power to delve into the scene. While activity clearly takes place in the background of the photograph, Connor dominates the image. Moving towards the camera he hinders the viewer's entry into the action. This image becomes an expression of his power.

This photograph also points to the split experienced by viewers, one "that results from being simultaneously the surveyor and the surveyed, in looking at oneself through the implied gaze of others. The split self of the viewer is connected to the idea that the gaze is omnipresent."⁵⁹ Recognition of the omnipresent gaze according to Michael Foucault creates a constant awareness of looking and being looked at.⁶⁰ This awareness ultimately affects our public selves. As WEB Du Bois famously argued, African Americans have historically existed with a split self. Both seeing oneself and knowing that one was seen in certain ways dominated African American public life. The struggle over the gaze defined the power struggle between white viewers and African American subjects.⁶¹ Civil Rights leaders used this power in acknowledging the white gaze, not

⁵⁹ Sturken, 81.

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 155.

⁶¹ WEB DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

necessarily by directing meeting the gaze, but using the social definitions that tint the mainstream gaze in order to alter the American visual consciousness.

Media and the Gaze

As Murdock has pointed out, the media are in constant dialogue with audiences.⁶² Commercial media are necessarily reliant on their audience to be avid consumers. Producers must use familiar narrative patterns in order to reach a wider audience/consumer base. Narrative patterns are dictated by the mainstream definitions of social normality. By continually playing into these definitions, the media perpetuate them.

To reiterate my earlier point, in those photographs that played a primary role in the Civil Rights Movement, the personal convictions of the photographers were largely irrelevant. John Berger points out that “the photographer only makes, in any one photograph, a single constitutive choice,” which compelling instant to capture.⁶³ Photographers sought images that would convey a story, sell newspapers or magazines, and fit within widely understood visual conventions. While photographers could make only a single choice, the publishers or editors had many decisions to make. Editors selected and used images that coincided with their publication’s editorial mission. For example, the *New York Times* claimed to be a paper “of record,” one whose primary goal was to report the “truth” of the news. Such a supposed “unbiased” reporting relied on images to stand as evidence of the event as narrated in the story. Robert Adams, a photographer for the *Birmingham News* during the 1960’s, worked with similar goals, creating with his photographs “an honest record. There were no attempts at bias. It was a

⁶² Murdock, 172.

⁶³ Berger and Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*, 89.

record of what happened while I was there.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, a publication such as *Life* had a different editorial stance distinct from objectivity. The stories in *Life* focused on scenes of American life for an American audience. Images that appear in the magazine are testimonials of the impact of events in American society. Charles Moore, creator of many of the iconic images of the movement, was also an outspoken supporter of the movement who attempted through his images to portray “a feeling of what it was like to be involved.”⁶⁵ This difference in evidence and testimony is highlighted by two very similar images whose impact was channeled by the different publications where they appeared. .

Figure 6: “Violence Explodes at Racial Protest in Alabama.” *New York Times* 4 May, 1963:1



⁶⁴ Robert Adams, interviewed by Barnett Wright, *The Birmingham News*, 26 February 2006.

⁶⁵ Michael Durham, *Powerful Days: The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore* (New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 1991), 27.

Printed in the *New York Times* on May 4, 1963 as the central image of three photos depicting scenes of official force against protestors, this photograph stands as evidence of the violence taking place. Capturing the entirety of the scene, the photo presents the viewer with all the actors and action. The aggressor/ victim relationship is clear. This image appears objective, depicting all aspects of the event both the action and its reception. The faceless actors separate the viewer from the humanity of the subjects forcing a focus on the action and thus the “truth” or evidence surrounding the protest.

Life Magazine chose a different photograph taken within seconds of the previous image on May 3, 1963. Here however, the protestors rather than the action becomes the subject. The fire fighter wielding the hose is absent, and the viewer is focused on the victims. The faces and force of the water against the victims intensifies their humanity. This image emphasizes not the action, but the humanity and victimization of the protestors. While the previous image displayed the “truth” of the news in accordance with the publication’s intentions, this image portrays the social aspects of the protests. It asks the viewer to examine the social power on display and determine its emotional meaning. It implicates the viewer in the action. Thus, two similar images represent different aspect of the media’s portrayal to the movement, while simultaneously working within traditional visual codes to create sympathy for the African American victims and a desire for social change.



Figure 7: "Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham." *Life Magazine* 17 May, 1963.

Although any photograph will reflect the bias of its photographer's choice. Civil Rights image-makers often had little control over their works' destinations, and thus they exercised little agency in shaping the contextual meanings of the work. Thus news photographers in general and Civil Rights photographers in particular experience a self-conscious awareness that their choices must create evidentiary materials that speak a visual language legible by a mainstream American public. The media itself assumes a primary role in determining the gaze and the meanings associated with the images that are reproduced.

Birmingham

Birmingham, Alabama became a flash point of the national Civil Rights movement in the 1960's and thus a source of some of the movement's most influential

photographs. We can best understand Birmingham, Alabama's, race relations and movement activities by examining the tensions in its political structures and physical spaces where the white and black communities intersected. As in most segregated states, the primary conflicts between the black and white communities revolved around the use of community space. Following World War II, the primary contact zones of contention became public transportation and the city's expanding neighborhoods.⁶⁶ Violence was synonymous with race relations as whites struggled to maintain the segregated status quo. These spatial and social points of intersection between the black and white communities became the battleground for the racial and class tensions that dominated city life in the decades leading up to the 1963 protests.

Long before the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, public transportation (buses and streetcars particularly) was an oppressive and contested space for lower class African Americans, who made up the primary ridership. Focusing on the Birmingham public bus system in the late 1940's, Robin Kelley pieces together a picture of the city's social hierarchy. As with many aspects of public life, blacks encountered discrimination and repression in public transit. Although they paid the same fare as whites, blacks were often pushed off the bus after paying, told to move, or passed by while waiting at the bus stop. Buses were a microcosm of African American social and economic exploitation, and they became a logical place for black resistance. Kelley equates Birmingham's buses with "moving theatres;" theatres in terms of the battle of resistance of white domination of public life and spaces for the performance of equality and civil rights.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 79.

⁶⁷ Kelley, 57.

However, acting out against segregation brought more than legal responses. “In almost every case [these] transgressive acts were met by violence.”⁶⁸ The white bus drivers, who “carried guns and blackjacks, and used them pretty regularly to maintain order” often proved to be a greater threat than arrest and police custody.⁶⁹ However, while transgressive acts may have begun with individuals, they quickly became moments of solidarity among black passengers. The collective memory of segregation both on and off the bus “drew other passengers into the fray, thus escalating [the resistance] into collective action, and always impressed itself on other passengers’ memories.”⁷⁰ Kelley points to a foundational understanding within the African American community: change would inevitably incite violent repercussions. Thus, there is awareness within the black community of Birmingham that changing the racialized systems of American society had been and would be a battle.

In Birmingham, this battle was not isolated to “moving theatres,” but also played out in zoning practices and housing. As a result of the city’s industrial economy and racial employment practices, the majority of Birmingham’s lower class citizenship was African American.⁷¹ The racial hierarchy within the city’s industrial sector left little opportunity for working class black upward mobility. In addition to the underemployment among working class blacks, the city council enforced racial zoning practices that nullified any opportunity to expand the severely insufficient low-income housing projects. This left poor Birmingham blacks living in over crowded slums.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁷¹ Ibid., 80.

Housing discrimination's effect on Birmingham's black population shaped the relationship between the black community and the city's social system, specifically the police. Over crowded slums, the dominant white image of the black vagrant, and the white desire to govern black bodies led to official discrimination by the police department. A prime example occurred to fifty-year-old Bessie Ammons, a janitor for Smithfield Court Housing Project:

On January 20, 1951, at about 5:45 AM, Mrs. Ammons was on her way to work when two police officers pulled up and one asked, "Gal, where are you going? Come here!" She not only refused to walk over to the car, but also would not get in the car when ordered to do so, despite the fact that one of the officers had drawn his gun. Taken aback by her open defiance of the law, the two officers continued to harass her. "I ought to put your black a—in jail for vagrancy," one of the officers declared. "Whenever any policeman tells you to get in the car, you had better do it. I mean what I say. I'm the law."⁷²

This incident highlighted the contentious relationship between African Americans and the police. Mrs. Ammons clearly did not acknowledge the officers as protectors or even upholders of the law. African Americans were wary of the police, whom they viewed as clearly working against and not for the black community. Such cases of civil resistance demonstrated the communities' perception of the police as protectors only of white citizens and racial hierarchy. The statement "I'm the law" demonstrates the white police belief that their power to control the black community had no limits. Black autonomy was limited within the public sphere; blacks could neither challenge nor participate in the mechanisms of law, except as suspects and criminals.

⁷² Ibid., 85.

Birmingham's middle-class African American residents also experienced police discrimination in housing. By the 1950's, the middle-class black population was growing and looking to expand. In an effort to obtain adequate housing, "they challenged the color line... [and] bought property on the edges of formerly white neighborhoods," places they believed to have been rezoned as "Negro" neighborhoods.⁷³ The racial intermingling of residents spurred white vigilante action against those African Americans.⁷⁴ Throughout the 1950's Birmingham saw a rash of white vigilante bombings in the newly black neighborhoods, so many in fact the city soon earned the nickname "Bombingham," as whites resorted to violence in controlling black community space.⁷⁵

However, the police's blatant failure to investigate these bombings not only sanctioned such violence, but also further diminished Birmingham's national reputation. As a young girl growing up in Birmingham, Angela Davis recalls how the Commissioner of Public Safety, Bull Connor, "would announce on the radio that a 'nigger family' had moved in on the white side of the street. His prediction 'there will be bloodshed tonight' would be followed by a bombing."⁷⁶ Such statements protected a regime where violent action against black bodies, was institutionally sanctioned. By encouraging racial violence, Birmingham's white political system validated the claim that attempts at desegregation were the cause of the violence. Thus pronouncements against

⁷³ Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 67.

⁷⁴ Resistance to mixed neighborhoods was not isolated to Birmingham or even the South. For example, Adam Green studies the African American experience in Chicago relaying the events surrounding the integration of Trumbull Park Homes in which racial backlash eventually forced the African American Howard family to relocate. For more on the Howard story see Adam Greens *Selling the Race*, or the fictionalized autobiography by Frank Brown, *Trumbull Park* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1959).

⁷⁵ The struggle over "zoning" from black and white neighborhoods was an issue for many southern cities during this period. See also Kruse, *White Flight* and Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁷⁶ Eskew, 83.

desegregation became self-fulfilling prophecies using white violence as an excuse to maintain social order.

While the entire black community experienced the full scope of the violent racial tensions of Birmingham society, there were also distinct class divisions within the black community. As Glenn Eskew describes it “the local black elite articulated a class consciousness comparable to that of the city’s white elite.”⁷⁷ Birmingham’s poorer African Americans were hindered by and bound to the discriminatory economic system that left them powerless within city politics. Small acts of resistance, such as the struggles over public transportation, were among the only retaliation available to lower class blacks. Due to their high economic standing, elite black men of Birmingham were granted access to the white power structure. These elite businessmen dealt with white leadership on behalf of the African American community as a whole. As Eskew describes it, this black leadership’s willingness “to negotiate and compromise with white leaders reflected their ability to broker agreements within the confines of segregation.”⁷⁸ These agreements within the “confines of segregation” marked a long-standing accommodationist ideology that focused on racial uplift through racial consciousness, social reform, and self-improvement from within the black community rather than Birmingham as a whole.⁷⁹ Essentially Birmingham’s black middle-class proved unwilling to challenge the status quo that allowed them economic opportunity within a racialized

⁷⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁹ In *A Sense of Place*, Lynn Feldman studies the history of Birmingham’s black middle class in an attempt to understand the origins of this accommodationist ideology. She finds that most middle class African Americans focused on the home and the church in order to nurture strong leadership and community involvement, essentially in an effort to eventually validate African American inclusion in the American social system.

system; most eager to accommodate existing conditions were businessmen who created niches such as hotels and banks specifically for a black clientele.⁸⁰

In 1953, Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth returned to Birmingham to lead a congregation, and he immediately stepped up as a leader for change. He became a harsh critic of “the inactivity of the city’s traditional Negro leadership class,” particularly after *Brown v. Board*, which he saw as an opening to the legal system through which African Americans could begin to demand their full rights as citizens.⁸¹ Shuttlesworth quickly developed a following that Eskew describes as being made up of the middle of the black community, neither elite nor the poorest. His influence grew when he became the president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, an organization based around religious conviction and nonviolent direct action. Shuttlesworth urgently promoted confrontation with whites on the issue of civil rights. He had seen the ineffectiveness of negotiation between black and white city leaders that left systematic segregation intact. In turn, traditional leadership viewed the ACMHR as “too militant for its own good.”⁸² And while its religious ferocity and direct action worked to unify the ACMHR membership it also “diminished the ACMHR’s attractiveness among some segments of the black community.”⁸³ Thus, on the stance of Civil Rights, the Birmingham black community entered the 1960’s divided, with divisions on racial equality that heightened tension between the classes. This disunity would eventually hinder the development of a local movement.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 139.

As racial violence continued to erupt, the race relations in Birmingham became national news. After visiting the city, *New York Times* reporter Harrison E. Salisbury's April, 1960 article "Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham," described the state-sanctioned racism that thrived in the city. In the article he described how "every channel of communication, every medium of mutual interest, every reasoned approach, every inch of middle ground has been fragmented by the emotional dynamite of racism, reinforced by the whip, the razor, the gun, the bomb, the torch, the club, the knife, the mob, the police and many branches of the state's apparatus."⁸⁴ For Salisbury, Birmingham was a city beyond negotiation and ruled by violence. The local mainstream publication, *The Birmingham News*, responded with accusations of slander, filing suit against Salisbury and the *Times*. While the case was dismissed in 1965, Birmingham's denial of Salisbury's charge and indignation furthered its national reputation as the capital of racism in the south.

White intransigence plus the recent national debate over Birmingham's racial issues made it clear to Shuttlesworth that the groundwork had been laid to gain national attention for the local movement, but first he needed to unify the divided black community. Thus, in the early 1960's, he began to earnestly persuade Martin Luther King Jr. to come to Birmingham. The SCLC, under the leadership of MLK Jr. had great success in galvanizing the local community of Montgomery, Alabama in order to desegregate the bus system in 1955. Shuttlesworth believed by bringing in a nationally recognizable face, he could bring together the local black community, incorporating King's nonviolent direct action strategy to bring national attention to the local movement

⁸⁴ Harrison Salisbury, "Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham," *New York Times*, 12 April, 1960, 1.

forcing change. He also knew that the SCLC was in need of a win after its own recent failure to desegregate Albany, Georgia in 1962.

The Montgomery boycott success in 1955 relied on the SCLC's strategy of coordinating direct action protests and nonviolent resistance to segregation.⁸⁵ Now in 1963 in Birmingham the SCLC would be a strategy advisor to local movements and leadership. While the Montgomery organizers had a clear goal and target for direct action, the SCLC had failed in Albany due to a lack of clear focus and goals. That city's white leadership had also refused to meet with national Civil Rights leaders and released King from jail on the pretense that city officials would meet with the local black leadership to negotiate changes that never occurred. The movement seemed stalled.

Reporter Diane McWhorter's argues that three key factors had undermined Albany. First, nonviolence did not work without segregationist violence.⁸⁶ The movement needed a violent response from white opponents. Albany's politicians instead allowed for peaceful demonstrations and only quietly arrested protestors. Most importantly, the city's police chief avoided major national attention by keeping major national figures such as King out of Albany's jails. This leads to McWhorter's second point; the movement needed white institutions of power to make a mistake and give the community a rallying point.⁸⁷ Since African Americans were divided over strategy, only a unifying injustice could bring the community together with a sense of immediacy. The Emmitt Till case had revealed a unifying injustice most commonly emerged in an act of violence that generated media attention. Finally, attention from the national press was a necessity for success. Albany had none of these conditions; after the loss there King's leadership had

⁸⁵ Eskew, 44.

⁸⁶ McWhorter, 308.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 315.

come into question. Birmingham was his chance to prove his abilities as a leader and unify a community once more.

Biographer Andrew Manis argues that Shuttlesworth had an acute awareness that media attention brought pressure to segregationists. Thus, he used the media as a means to his own end.⁸⁸ Shuttlesworth saw the SCLC as a tool to this aim because not only did the organization operate under coinciding principles with those of the ACMHR, but also the SCLC had a national reputation with nationally recognizable personalities who gathered the media. By combining the grassroots convictions and strategies with a national figure, King's presence would boost local black enthusiasm and thus win over support of the "undecideds." The increased national attention would compel the city to desegregate.

The SCLC plan upon entering Birmingham focused on contained, clear demonstrations in the business district. However, movement organizers soon discovered that King was not garnering the kind of local support needed to sustain successful economic pressure. Birmingham's black population was reluctant to go to jail, and the traditional black leadership actively resisted the campaign.⁸⁹ As the economic boycott continued to wane, King and Shuttlesworth were forced to rethink the strategy. King opted to join the protestors in jail.

There King wrote his now famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." He saw a growing need for volunteers willing to take actions to raise the tension that would provoke a response from the city's white power structure. King's letter was essentially a call to that end: "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a

⁸⁸ Andrew Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 231.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

tension that a community, which has constantly refused to negotiate, is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored...but I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension.' I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth.”⁹⁰ Non-violent tension rested on the spectacle of nonviolent protest and the hostile reaction to those actions. This captured the contradiction of racial oppression in American democracy. Behind the on the ground physical and emotional tension between protestors and the civil authority was the tension between the realities of American society and the idealized notions of America.

The media became the movement's primary tool for bringing this contrast into the public light, and King's opponents accordingly feared the media's focus on the movement. Chastising King, Alabama Senator James D. Martin said, "His love of publicity is above the sacredness of the laws of our land."⁹¹ Senator Martin himself ignored the fact that "laws of the land" in this case did not apply equally to blacks and whites. For him, Negroes were not worthy of being seen or heard, as they were not fully human or full citizens. Nonviolent direct action caused tension while maintaining the appearance of legality.⁹² Media coverage in turn allowed the mainstream public to see what was going on elsewhere in the nation. Without such publicity, the Birmingham protests would have remained isolated incidents, hidden from both the mainstream public and the black public as well. It is not that King "loved" publicity; the movement needed it

⁹⁰ Martin L. King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 16 April, 1963" David Garrow, ed. *Martin Luther King: Civil Rights Leader, Theologian, Orator*. (Brooklyn, Carlson Publishers, 1980).

⁹¹ Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 14.

⁹² The majority of movement protests, the Birmingham protests specifically, operated without parade permits and were thus illegal action. Because the parade permits were requested by African Americans they were denied. This worked to both deter protestors as well as place the law on the side of the civil authority, allowing for the arrest of protestors.

in order to survive. Thus, in his letter King called on black Birmingham to walk with him as full members of the American public who needed to put themselves in the public eye in order to receive equal treatment under the law.

The new commitment to gaining media exposure reformed the Birmingham movement. On April 7th, 1963, one of King's aids, Wyatt Walker, witnessed an officer and his canine partner attack a bystander at the Civil Rights march in Birmingham on Easter Sunday. Walker realized that the movement had to "generate creative tension that the newspapers and television cameras could record as police suppression."⁹³ He began to support the strategy of coercive nonviolence.⁹⁴ Gearing the protest towards the authorities' potential use of police dogs while emphasizing nonviolence reveals the clear shift in strategy towards the sensational. This in turn gained attention and served to recruit new participants. Eskew describes how, "the problem centered on how to sustain the demonstrations with so few black people involved - hence Walker's desperate need to generate some interest in the campaign and his excitement over... the use of the dogs."⁹⁵ The use of police dogs simultaneously created national attention and galvanized the black community; not least it re-enacted the use of dogs to hunt fugitive slaves and later black prisoners and runaways from would be lynching, tapping into the black community's historical memory. The campaign had found a unifying force. Using confrontation and the new population of protestors, the Birmingham movement was able to reinvigorate the community by giving the black community something to rally around, cause a problem for the city as protestors filled the jails, and giving the national press the visual

⁹³ Eskew, 227.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 227.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 228.

sensationalism needed to gain national attention. “King had committed the campaign to sensational protests staged to interest the media,” which represented white power.⁹⁶

The movement then made an even more important strategy shift. King’s assistant, James Bevel, suggested the use of children as protestors. Black adults within the community were not only divided by class, but the economics as well. African Americans who protested were often subject to economic repercussions from their employer. But as Bevel had discovered from his work with students, “they had a community they’d been in since elementary school, so they had bonded quite well.”⁹⁷ Not only were they a large group, but also they were also free from the economic vulnerabilities of adults. For these two reasons, students came to represent the most logical protestor choice. Children, even black children, represented innocence. As McWhorter notes, “white people had high affection for colored children even if the axiom that ‘pickaninnies are so cute’ contained the unspoken corollary, ‘Too bad they have to grow up.’”⁹⁸ She goes on to tell the story of an officer asking a young protestor, “What do you want?” Her response, “F’edom” challenged the idea of the black child’s place in society as unthreatening “cute pickaninnie” or powerless victim of social and political systems that punish the dependent for crimes yet committed. The girl in the photograph is not the half-dressed pickaninnie of cartoons, but a well-dressed young girl. The white officer towers above her as she stands against the fence, preventing her departure from the scene. While she bravely stares off into the distance, the young man next to her fearfully faces the camera. And yet both chose to confront the officer and the consequences of their actions. These young children do not appear as criminal, but as victims of the domineering officer

⁹⁶ Ibid., 255.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 263.

⁹⁸ McWhorter, 367.

cornering them. The use of children as a strategy highlights the reach of segregation reached, even into the supposed safety of childhood. These children are being treated as adults. The visualization of this injustice cuts at the nations moral compass as it denies these children their childhood.

Figure 8: "Freedom Marcher, 6, Arrested." *Jet Magazine* 16 May, 1963: 33.



Writing into *Time Magazine* following their coverage of the Birmingham protests, Mackenzie Dodson of California makes this link between morality and the denial of childhood reflecting on the Children's Crusade of 1212. "The very children put us to

shame,” Dodson quotes Innocent III then remarking, “Children are the worst casualties of segregation, as long as it continues. If they can shame southerners and the administration into more appropriate action, they will reap the benefits.”⁹⁹ For her the use of children not only highlights the moral implications of segregations but also the uncertainty of America’s future. Children are the causalities of America’s present structure, but if they can cause a change they will “reap the benefits” of a better America.

Although he was not an explicit target of the new strategy, Birmingham’s police commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor became an ideal figure for the confrontation Walker sought. Many have attributed the Birmingham movement’s success to Connor’s actions. Coming from a white lower class background, Connor saw himself as a man of the people. After being elected city commissioner of public safety in 1937, Connor promised not to change his bad grammar or the gruff attitude that had earned him his nickname.¹⁰⁰ He immediately set out to solidify racial barriers. Through the help of legislator Jim Simpson, Connor was able to take an ever -increasing amount of control over the police department.¹⁰¹ After several scandals Connor left office in 1953. However, police brutality continued as the city’s leadership continued to support the white lower middle class status quo.¹⁰² In 1957 Connor ran for chief again on the record of his racial extremism and hard-line segregationist ideology. His victory solidified in his mind his duty to uphold segregation.¹⁰³ His infamous short temper and violent opposition

⁹⁹ Mackenzie Dodson, “Letters to the Editor,” *Time Magazine* 81 (May 24, 1963): 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰² Eskew relays several examples of the type of police brutality that took place in the Birmingham jails in *But for Birmingham*.

¹⁰³ McWhorter, 118.

to desegregation made him an unexpected ally to the movement's goals. He seemed an ideal visual target.

King and the SCLC entered an environment of tension that pitted the white power structure against a divided black community in a city with a history of state sanctioned racial violence. The movement not only had to combine local grass roots movement activities with the national leadership styles, but also to unify a divided black populace to bring to light, both locally and nationally, the "sin" of segregation. The ultimate goal of the movement strategy being to create a large enough community of sympathizers in order to force policy and social changes in terms of the racial barriers in American society.

Media and the Movement

As we have seen, by the 1960's the nation's social understandings and value definitions were the province of the news media. Photographs were the evidence of these events and thus worked as visual codifiers of the national value definitions. In reference to the Civil Rights Movement, Richard Lentz argues in his study of Martin Luther King and news magazines, that King "did not challenge the existing social and political order; rather, his words reaffirmed it, as did his crusades against segregation."¹⁰⁴ King sought not to change the basic structure of the American social system, but rather to force Americans to recognize the need to accept blacks as full members of American society. Marisa Chappell and others argue that the protests in Montgomery were orchestrated to reflect white sensibilities of class and gender.¹⁰⁵ By the Birmingham protests, this

¹⁰⁴ Richard Lentz, *Symbols, the News Magazine and Martin Luther King* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 2.

¹⁰⁵ Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, "'Dress Modestly, Neatly...as if We're Going to Church': Respectability, Class, and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights

strategy had expanded into a visual framework that showed African American's alliance with American sensibilities. Visual respectability allowed the movement's purpose to be better understood by the mainstream.

The media storm surrounding the violence against the Freedom Riders gave movement leaders an understanding of the conflicts needed to create attention. The more confrontational or violent a Civil Rights event, the more newsworthy it proved to be. Yet, blacks also carried a clear historical memory of brutal retaliation to their efforts at desegregation whether or not the media was present. Violence was to be expected, but the movement now sought documentation of that violence. In one march, a photographer intervened when children were being beaten by the police, but, "King took him aside and said: 'Unless you record the injustice, the world won't know that the child got beaten...I'm not being cold blooded about it, but it is so much more important for you to take a picture of us getting beaten up than for you to be another person joining the fray.'"¹⁰⁶ Wyatt Walker reflects, "There was no greater manipulation of the media than in Birmingham."¹⁰⁷ A photograph showing a child being beaten by a police officer appearing in the news was more likely to stand as an act of injustice against the child than a justifiable reaction to protest.

This image of Walter Gadsden appeared in a series of photographs reproduced on the front page of the *New York Times* on May 4, 1963 as part of an article describing the Civil Rights struggles erupting in the south. Gadsden assumes the characteristics of youth

Movement," in Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, eds. *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 72.

¹⁰⁶ Goldberg, 210.

¹⁰⁷ Eskew, 221.

and innocence: he is still and passive, seemingly an innocent in the exchange. The officer and dog attack appears unprovoked and unjust.



Figure 9: "Violence Explodes at Racial Protests in Alabama." *New York Times* 4 May, 1963:1

The traditional roles of white versus dark; good versus bad are reversed in this image. As the black youth Gadsden could traditionally be associated with criminality, while the white officer the upholder of peace. But, in the context of nonviolent protests,

Gadsden represents peace and justice, while the officer is the aggressor, creating a contentious image demanding closer examination. Not only is Gadsden associated with non-violence, but he also one of many children shown in the day's news. The dependent were now drawn into social and political upheaval. The visual documentation of young people like Gadsden treated as criminal adults directly challenged American morality. The photograph stands as evidence of the brutality African Americans faced at the hands of white officers. The supposed upholders of the law became aggressors using outsized and unjust force. Reacting to these images Mrs. Joseph F. Boyd wrote into *Time Magazine*, "The 'real' police dogs in the illustrations are wearing dark glasses, a badge and a smirking grin."¹⁰⁸ Images of violence against the innocent easily did the political work of creating sympathy for the cause. These images of injustices re-framed how mainstream Americans *saw* the movement.

If confrontation was necessary to attract national media attention, then children sustained national attention on the movement. The photos of innocent children being attacked by police became the rallying point. The bravery exhibited by the children facing police dogs, water hoses and arrest galvanized Birmingham's black community. On a national level, the children represented the extremism of segregation. The innocence associated with children was a necessity for the movement's image. The photos of child protestors clearly shifted the moral ground of the civil rights debate. Where mainstream America could ignore continued injustices against independent adults, they could not so easily dismiss child victims of adult brutality. That the children, dressed in their school clothes, behaved in an orderly fashion furthered the image of innocence and

¹⁰⁸ Joseph F. Boyd, Mrs., "Letters to the Editor," *Time* 81 (May 17, 1963): 15.

victimization. Bull Connor aided the protests by arresting so many. Walker had hoped for the kind of brutality seen, but could not have relied on it. The minimal goal of filling the jails with students in order to garner broader community support was quickly surpassed by the visual spectacle created by Birmingham police and consumed by mainstream America.

Figure 10: "Birmingham Jails 1,000 More Negroes." *New York Times* 7 May, 1963:1



Faced with massive numbers of child protestors, city officials resorted to school buses to transport them to jail. Photos of children lining up for the buses showed children apparently off on a school venture, rather than to jail. Visually these children are dressed

and behaving just as any middle class American child would in preparation for a school field trip. Yet in the context of the protest these children were not only being denied their literal freedom, but their safety and innocence. The school bus, a symbol of education and an icon of childhood, was transformed into a vehicle of unjust denial of childhood. The visual meanings of this image are thus reframed to highlight the privileging of white power and control over even the most dependent members of American society.

Such images challenged national attitudes towards the movement. These images ensured that the news itself would become the new battleground where the movement would be played out.

Photographs

Through the news photographs, American viewers were faced with the tensions within American democracy. Trying to grapple with the tensions he is seeing *Life Magazine* reader Ronald Moschel writes in, “After reading your coverage of the Birmingham incident (May 17) and viewing the successful completion and recovery of Gordon Cooper’s multi-orbital flight in the same evening, I wonder- can these two events, one so magnificent, the other so despicable, both be American?”¹⁰⁹ Movement organizers conscious choice to put children at the forefront of the Birmingham protests created this tension between an ideal America and the now visualized reality. Photographs of children, even black children, being ripped of their innocence by the very public institutions meant to protect underscored not only the extremes of African American exclusion, but also the inherent contradictions of American democracy and

¹⁰⁹ Ronald W. Moschel, “Letters,” *Life* 54.23 (June 7, 1963), 25.

segregation. As Americans continued to be bombarded with images highlighting these tensions there came an increasing demand for resolution.

Figure 6 of the fireman hosing a group of children appeared in the context of the *New York Times* under the byline “Violence explodes at racial protest in Alabama,” immediately reinforcing the focus on violent action. With newspapers there is also a sense of immediacy as these are images from the previous day. This immediacy extends the violence. There is no resolution in this image or the context, and thus the violence seems on going. Change must be immediate in order to halt the violence. The perception is that the water will continue to flow; children will continue to be brutalized, until action is taken. Context and immediacy give the image the tension necessary to incite reaction.

The *Life* image (Figure 7) centers on the emotions. It was the cover page of a photo story using language such as “bitter,” “hatred,” “volcano of emotion.”¹¹⁰ Focusing on the emotions created a testimonial context for the image. Enlarged to cover a full page spilling onto the next, this photograph was chosen for its testimonial power. The action has seceded and the facts of the event are known. Printed two weeks following the protests, the *Life* story told the humanity of the violence. Contextually, these images asked the viewer to interpret them as either evidence or testimony changing the way the image was read and the resulting meaning associated.

The tension needed to make a photograph newsworthy was also found in the subject of the two images. In the *New York Times* image the action was the subject with a clear perpetrator and victim. The tension is in this perpetrator/ victim dichotomy. A uniformed officer acting violently against well-dressed young people deviates from the

¹¹⁰ “The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham,” *Life* 7 May, 1963, 26-35.

social definition of law enforcement. The perpetrator and victim are reversed. There is no law to protect these young people. These are faceless victims representing the day's victims as a whole. The angle of the image asks the viewer to stand back and watch. The viewer is not hindered from entering the scene, but the faceless subjects distance the viewer from personalizing the subject. This allows the subjects to become representative of their community, pinned in a corner unable to escape the force of the white official. Children are privileged subjects for these photographs because they highlight the dependence of the young that has been violated by the excessive brutality of public officials. The police and firemen's role as civil servants is reversed, as they appear to act in opposition to civility. The image was used as evidence of the news story, yet served the movement goals through its depiction of the contradictions in the American social landscape.

Life, however, focuses on the victims. The young faces stand out and soaked clothes clearly cling to the black bodies, highlighting their victimization. The story told is one of the people, not the action. The perpetrator is removed as if irrelevant, further humanizing and victimizing the children and compelling the viewer. The time between the events and the magazine's release allowed distance from the event, while the close focus allowed the viewer to connect with the people and their pain and fear, further encouraging a national community of sympathizers.

The audience read these images differently because of their context and subject. In both cases, the viewer gazes inward, in contrast to the photo where Bull Connor pushes the viewer out. The viewer is free to look without obstruction. Both images are part of a larger set, allowing the viewer to gaze on multiple images freely without

limitation. This distance from the reality of the situation gives the viewer a sense of power. The images were made possible by the protests and Connor's reaction to the protest, but the true power lies with the viewer and their reading of the image. The leaders of the Birmingham movement encouraged situations that would generate images that would stand as evidence or testimony of injustice and create a community of sympathizers needed to force social change.

Figure 10 documents the actors and the civilized nature of their protests. The child protestor in a nonviolent demonstration does not threaten the American power structure. And the viewer is invited into a scene in which a large white bus barrels in from the side and dominates the majority of the image seeming to swallow the black children as they approach. We do not see any of the children's faces. They are an anonymous group of African Americans being engulfed by the racial machine of American society. The children embody youth and hope for the future, but are visually hindered by the white power structure. In this reading the image highlights the injustice of the system through its blatant contradiction with American democratic ideals.

White domination of the white power structure is further reflected in Figure 8, where a young girl leans against a chain link fence as a white faceless officer stands above her. The caption reads "Freedom Marcher, 6, Arrested." While her status as a protestor is highlighted in the caption, her youth stands out prominently in the photograph. Ideally, law protects the innocent; however in this instance the law threatens and physically constrains the child, who is vulnerable and weak. The girl's victimization is further highlighted by her subjectification by both the viewer and officer's gaze. The attention of both the viewer and the officer are focused on her. However, she meets

neither gaze, instead staring off out of frame as if into a brighter future. Her victimization is matched by her agency in the scene. She stands against the officer as both the “cute picanninnie” in need of protection and a defiant protestor demanding equality. The gaze of the boy is also turned away, but only slightly. This makes him appear more fragile, unable to protect himself or the girl, victims not only of the white officer’s gaze but that of mainstream America as well.

This image depicts a strong visual contradiction of the traditional definitions of criminal vs. victim. The arresting of a child, even a black child, was an uncomfortable visual. “Freedom Marcher,” denotes justice and dignity that is opposed in the image by the officer’s attempted domination of the scene. An instant snap shot becomes a reflection of the dire state of the country’s future. The two children in the photo become a sympathetic pair both on the national scene and in the local community.

Coupled with this idea of innocence, violence was also a powerful visual tool. Perceived innocents, violence, subjectification, and agency are all exemplified in Figure 9 of Walter Gadsden. The viewer assumes Gadsden to be a nonviolent protestor because the image appeared in several national newspapers’ stories that covered the Birmingham events.

Although he was being attacked, Gadsden seems to refuse to be a victim. On closer examination, one can see Gadsden gripping the arm of the officer. Whether he is holding him close or pushing the officer away is not known. In reality he was a bystander of the protests drawn in when other bystanders began throwing rocks at the officers as they attacked the children protestors.¹¹¹ That Gadsden chose not to speak about the image even as it was continually reproduced in multiple national publications points both to the

¹¹¹ It is not clear if Gaston also participated in actions against the police or was simply watching.

galvanizing effect of these images as well as the solidarity of the black community.¹¹² Gadsden's silence has been as powerful as if he had in fact been a protester. By maintaining the perception of innocent victim, this image, which appeared on the front page of not only the *New York Times*, but also the *Chicago Defender*, *LA Times*, and *Washington Post*, fostered sympathy across the nation for the African American cause. In this image, Gadsden's rights as a citizen are clearly being violated whether he is black or white.

Children are privileged subjects of Civil Rights photography because of the dual image they embody, victims of oppression and agents in their quest for equality. Read through the lens of American ideology these images contradict understandings of mainstream American social structure and draw attention to if not demand a reframing of that system.

America Reacts

The outcry against the actions in Birmingham was almost immediate. As Attorney General Robert Kennedy reacted, "an injured, maimed or dead child is a price that none of us can afford to pay," immediately sending his chief of the civil rights division Burk Marshall to Birmingham.¹¹³ While an injured child may not have been a price the federal government could afford, in many ways they were powerless to act. As Sam Zitter, the assistant district attorney in New Jersey pressed President Kennedy, "what law can you pass to do anything about police power in the community of Birmingham? There is nothing we can do. There is no federal law that conforms, no federal statute...I think it's

¹¹² While researching her book *Carry Me Home*, McWhorter tracked down Gadsden and when she tried to ask him about the photograph "he told me that he didn't want to 'get involved' and hung up on me." McWhorter, 375.

¹¹³ Eskew, 266.

terrible.”¹¹⁴ The national power structure reacted with horror, but was unable to take action to give the American public a resolution.¹¹⁵

For the movement’s intended audience, mainstream Americans, these images provoked a variety of responses from Charles Jameson’s rhetorical question “how on earth we could possibly expect restraint 100 years after the Civil War is beyond me”, to the questions about the American democratic ideal, and even notions about black agency and black victimization.¹¹⁶ An examination of letter’s to the editors of national publications shows that even with the variety of responses Americans had to the violence in Birmingham, the prevalence of these images on the national stage forced Americans to reexamine the American social structure.

One reader of the *New York Times* asked Americans to remember the lessons of World War II. “When the curtain was raised on the bestiality of the Nazis, Americans wanted to know where the decent Germans were while their Jewish compatriots were being tortured and exterminated. They ask how it was that people who considered themselves civilized permitted this to happen in their midst without crying out in the name of humanity. What has happened to us since that time when we were capable of moral outrage?”¹¹⁷ Elizabeth French of Maryland wondered where the morality of America had gone. She felt the demand for justice and the rights of all citizens that Americans had claimed during the war had been forgotten. Her equation of the American public with the Nazis’ asked mainstream Americans to not only recall a horrific past but

¹¹⁴ Roberts, 320.

¹¹⁵ Some Americans also picked up on the Federal government’s inability to act. Gomer Williams wrote into *Time* in 1963 “The bloody riots over a negro’s admission to the University of Mississippi, the continued denial of minority voting rights, and the recent demonstrations in Birmingham (May 10) all demonstrate the need for federal policy on integration...The shotgun approach has not worked and will not work.” *Time Magazine* 81 (May 17, 1963) 15.

¹¹⁶ Charles H. Jameson, “Astonishing Indeed.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.

¹¹⁷ “Negro Cause Backed”, *New York Times*. 13 May, 1963, 23.

to remember the moral high ground the country claimed. She gave these images a historical context. For her these images worked within the “fissures of society,” forcing her to question American democracy. Further, her letter’s publication implied that she represented a larger group of Americans who also viewed these images in a historical context that demanded reevaluation of the American social system.

“No American schooled in respect for human dignity can read without shame of the barbarities committed by Alabama police.”¹¹⁸ Not only did these correspondents read the coverage, but more importantly they saw the brutality through the visual images that appeared on the TV screen and in the morning paper. The notions of African American barbarity that had remained such a prevalent mainstream image were now reversed. These images of white violence challenged the definitional framework through which mainstream Americans *saw* the social structure. The concept of two equal publics within the American landscape was clearly a segregationist myth. The images coming out of Birmingham caused many like Ms. French to reevaluate the place of African Americans within the American social landscape. The visual representations of the injustices inflicted upon the African American community defined an American social structure based not on justice but violence and inequality.

“Our pretensions to stand for democracy and individual worth are undermined by what is happening in Alabama,”¹¹⁹ The *New York Times* editorial goes on to question whether we can be America without democracy. If the privileges of democracy apply only to those in power, the Birmingham images revealed the hypocrisy of national claims of democracy. Writing into the African American *Chicago Daily Defender*, Russell

¹¹⁸ “Outrage in Alabama” *New York Times*. 5 May 1963, 200.

¹¹⁹ “Outrage in Alabama”, 200.

Meeks addressed white America: “The world looks at you and sees you setting savage beasts on people, just because they threw the tea overboard again!”¹²⁰ Simultaneously, Meeks condemned the mainstream power structure and compared the black community to the original American community. Founded through a revolution for civil rights, American democracy demands the call for equal rights in order to maintain its founding character. African Americans are continuing this tradition. By comparing the Civil Rights Movement to the American Revolution, Meeks bestows on the African American community not only the duty, but also the right to stand up for freedom as essentially American. Mark Gee continues this sentiment when he writes to the *Wall Street Journal*; “their [African American] actions are not only a reflection of their own self-respect but that of their country.”¹²¹ Both of these letters speak to an acknowledgement of an African American agency in taking possession of their American identity. The respect Gee refers to can be translated to a demand for America to live up to its democratic ideal, which in turn is a demand for African American inclusion. Thus, there is a growing sense that the black community stands as the public that more truly embodies the American spirit.

While some spoke out against the violence acted upon African Americans others condemned African Americans for provoking that violence. Paul Ramsey, in a letter to the *New York Times*, described the Children’s Crusade as “an aggression.”¹²² For Ramsey, the black demonstrators who protested without a permit were blatantly breaking the law. Echoing Ramsey, Theodore Humes writes to the *Wall Street Journal*, “The actions of those in the forefront of the demonstrations could have been hardly more

¹²⁰ Russell Meeks, “Man and Beast,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, 13 May 1963, 12.

¹²¹ Mark Watkins Gee, “Right Proportions.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.

¹²² Paul Ramsey, “Using Children in Alabama.” *New York Times*, 10 May 1963, 32.

calculated to provoke violence and disorder.”¹²³ In the eyes of these men the African American demonstrators consciously provoked the violence in Birmingham. Yet this conscious provocation denotes black agency in the struggle for equal rights, complicating notions of the protestors as victims. Both men acknowledge the merit of the movement’s goals. For Humes “nobody questions the intrinsic merit of the contentions of those who feel aggrieved by the shortcomings and frustrations arising from racial problems,” but even as the cause was just, Ramsey and Humes denounced the direct action approach to change.¹²⁴ These letters are examples of the contradictory feelings many Americans had towards the movement. On the one hand they acknowledge the validity of movement’s goals, but the increasing agency of African Americans in demanding equality posed a threat to the existing American social structure.

The threat is most clearly depicted in the responses coming out of Birmingham. Writing to *Life Magazine*, Birmingham resident Don Milton criticizes national coverage of the local event. “You report on the situation in Birmingham as if it is a mass martyrdom of the Negroes by ruthless policemen. You fail to mention that 50-odd officers who have been injured by bricks, razors, knives and similar articles. I will not deny that a degree of racial discrimination exists in Birmingham as well as many other cities...but there are two sides to every story.”¹²⁵ For Milton the victimization of African Americans is a falsity. As if injury to a white body is somehow more grievous, the truth victims were the injured officers and the white Birmingham community who were not being represented in the media coverage. G.B. Hollingsworth, also of Birmingham, reiterates Milton’s sentiment of national news coverage. “Get your boys out of Martin

¹²³ Theodore L. Humes, “Sorry Spectacle.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.

¹²⁴ Humes, 10.

¹²⁵ Don Milton, “Letters to the Editor,” *Life* 54.23 (June 7, 1963), 25.

Luther King's office and tell them to report the other side of the story."¹²⁶ This concern for a double sided story and equal inclusion of both the black and white story is an acknowledgment of the need to include all American citizens even as these men try to revivify the African American community. Even those in support of the Birmingham power structure are beginning to acknowledge the need for African American inclusion in American society.

While the Russell Meeks, Elizabeth Frenches, and Charles Jamesons of America connected with the humanity of the African American cause made visual through the images of children protestors and violence acted upon them, for others like Humes, Ramsey, Milton and Hollingsworth these images highlighted the conflict between the democratic ideology of America and reality of a social structure built on inequality. In all of these letters there is a sense of urgency to stop the violence and an acknowledgement of the need for change. So even though not all Americans drew the same meanings, the images coming out of Birmingham forced Americans to face the issue of racial inequality in one way or another.

Conclusion

Because black Americans in the middle of the twentieth century still did not have a solid voice in the public sphere, photographs became what Deborah Willis describes as a "visual language" through which African Americans spoke to the dominant white society, pointing out the injustices in an attempt to gain the nation's attention. Leaders of the Civil Rights movement developed strategies to manipulate images that would both

¹²⁶ G.B. Hollingsworth, "Letters to the Editor," *Time Magazine* 81 (May 24, 1963), 9.

reflect previous ideas of American society and also allow African Americans a place within that definitional framework.

The black community, especially children, took control of their own image as protestors. For example, during the protests, as the white police “herded them down the ramp to police headquarters in the basement, the children turned to the cameras and smiled their hearts out.”¹²⁷ These children claimed agency in their image and in their freedom. While to the national audience these children provoked feelings of sympathy and the realization of the extent of the injustices which segregation caused, they also create ambiguity in the meanings of the protest. As Sontag points out, photos can exploit but also criticize.¹²⁸ So even as these children are victims of the system, through their agency, they challenge that system.

The children are not innocent victims, but agents within the protest, they have chosen to be in harms way. So while they are privileged subjects for photography designed to elicit sympathy they are also agents in the struggle for equality. This contrast of agency and victimhood brings up another ambiguity within the movement. Are these sympathetic children asking for equal rights or are these agents of protest demanding equality? These children and their photographs simultaneously highlight the power of law enforcement while also undercutting its moral and judicial standing.

The shift in both movement strategy and mainstream perception of the movement these images created points to larger questions about agency within social change. What does agency, or more specifically the children as agents, tell us about the power of the movement to *demand* equality in the American social/political structure. Or does their

¹²⁷ McWhorter, 376.

¹²⁸ Sontag, 61.

image as victims prove more powerful, opening the way to the *granting* of equality by the American power structure?

These images created points of contact between the black and white publics. These contact points allowed mainstream society the opportunity to *see* the black community struggle. Thus, it is also these contact points that began to integrate the African American image into an *American* image within the mainstream American mindset. The images of the Birmingham Children's Crusade mark one of the most prominent contact points up to that historical moment. Birmingham marks a strategic shift to the visual by movement leaders in the struggle for equal rights.

The use of children combined with the violent reaction of the civic authority worked to highlight the injustices and hypocrisy of the American social structure. The triangular relationship of producer, subject and audience in these images brings together all of the actors (newsmen, protestors, and mainstream public) in a way that forced a conversation about and rethinking of the American social landscape. While the reshaping of a national identity was not an immediate process, the images, which appear in the mainstream media during the Birmingham protests, mark a major turning point within the movement and the American reaction to the Civil Rights Movement. Without the self-conscious awareness of image making and the creation of events that forced confrontational, politically corrective images such as those discussed here, the creation of a community of sympathizers and the reevaluation of the African American place in American society would not have been possible. The images of the violence in Birmingham published in national newspapers and magazines following the May 1963

protests were vital to the success of the movement and a key in reshaping the American social landscape.

Bibliography

Adams, Robert interviewed by Barnett Wright, *The Birmingham News*, 26 February 2006.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Berger, John & Jean Mohr. *Another Way of Telling*. New York: Pantheon, 1982.

Bezner, Lili. *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Braudy, Leo and Marshall Cohen eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Brooks-Higginbotham, Evelyn. "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 1251-1274.

Brown, Elsbeth. *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884-1929*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Brown, Joshua. *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Chappell, Marisa Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, "'Dress Modestly, Neatly...as if We're Going to Church': Respectability, Class, and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement." In *Gender and the Civil*

- Rights Movement*, ed. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith. New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
- Classen, Steven *Watching Jim Crow: the struggles over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Cohen, Stanley and Jock Young eds. *The Manufacture of News: A Reader*. Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1973.
- Compaine, Ben. *Who Owns the Media? Competition and Concentration in the Mass Media Industry*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2000.
- Crow, Chris. *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*. New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2003.
- DuBois, WEB *Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Durham, Michael. *Powerful Days: The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*. New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 1991.
- Eskew, Glenn T. *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in Civil Rights Struggle*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Fisher, Paul and Ralph Lowenstein eds. *Race and the News Media*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Fusco, Coco and Brian Wallis, eds. *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 2003.
- Gee, Mark Watkins. "Right Proportions." *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.

- Goldberg, Vicki. *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed our Lives*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1991.
- Green, Adam. *Selling the Race: culture, community, and Black Chicago, 1940-1955*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Harris, Michael D. *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Humes, Theodore L. "Sorry Spectacle." *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.
- Kasher, Steven. *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1996.
- Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- King, Martin L. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 16 April, 1963" David Garrow, ed. *Martin Luther King: Civil Rights Leader, Theologian, Orator*. Brooklyn, Carlson Publishers, 1980.
- Larson, Stephanie. *Media and Minorities*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006.
- Levine, Robert M. *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Lentz, Richard. *Symbols, the News Magazine and Martin Luther King*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
- Lhamon, W.T. *Raising Cain*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Manis, Andrew. *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

- McChesney, Robert. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003.
- Meeks, Russell. "Man and Beast," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 13 May 1963, 12.
- Ramsey, Paul. "Using Children in Alabama." *New York Times*, 10 May 1963, 32.
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Salisbury, Harrison. "Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham," *New York Times*, 12 April, 1960
- Smith, Shawn Michelle. *Photography on the Color Line*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- Strauss, David. *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*. New York: Aperture, 2003.
- Sturken, Marita and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Till-Mobley, Mamie. *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hat Crime that Changed America*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989.
- Wallis, Brian. "Black Bodies, White Science." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 12 (Summer 1996): 102-106.
- Willis, Deborah. "Exposure," in *Only Skin Deep*, eds. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2003.

“The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham,” *Life Magazine* 17 May, 1963, 26-35.

Jameson, Charles H. “Astonishing Indeed.” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 May 1963, 10.

“Negro Cause Backed”, *New York Times*. 13 May, 1963, 23.

“Outrage in Alabama” *New York Times*. 5 May 1963, 200