SEEING THROUGH RACE

A REINTERPRETATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHY

MARTIN A. BERGER

FOREWORD BY DAVID J. GARROW

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4 THE LOST IMAGES OF CIVIL RIGHTS

I wonder, God knows I wonder, what you [white people] think when you look at your papers and see the pictures of police dogs tearing at the vitals of Negroes (children included). You call this the land of the free? . . . Tell that to the children brutalized by the dogs and the Ala. Gestapo; tell it to the Negro woman with the Birmingham Storm Trooper's knee on her neck.

RUSSELL MEEK, LETTER TO THE EDITOR, *CHICAGO DAILY DEFENDER*, MAY 13, 1963

A survey of newspaper and magazine photographs taken in the 1960s reveals several narratives of the civil rights movement. Before the codification of the visual canon with which we are now familiar, the media depicted the civil rights struggle in distinctive ways for different readerships.

The journalist and historian Diane McWhorter recounts that when photographers for the *Birmingham News* brought back dramatic photographs of Connor's dogs and fire hoses in action in early May, the editor buried them in his desk. In contrast to northern newspapers, which featured such scenes on their front pages, the *News* ran its story inside the paper with none of the dramatic pictures.[1] This decision was hardly surprising. In the early 1960s, southern white papers enforced strict codes in their reporting on black life. Blacks received prominent coverage only in articles on crime, which consistently noted the race of nonwhite perpetrators. Virtually all other news reports on blacks were segregated in weekly or monthly "Negro news" pages that reported solely on community social events and familial milestones.

Northern white papers reproduced the dogs and fire hoses on their front pages once children were involved, but as we have seen, the photographs hewed closely to a narrow visual and ideological range deemed acceptable by liberal whites. Photographs and news reports that reinforced black passivity, white control, ideological divisions among whites, and the supposed social and cultural distance between blacks and whites crowded our images and articles that promoted competing narratives. In their efforts to create imagery of blacks that diffused

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nonwhite challenges to the racial status quo, white media outlets in both the South and the North ignored many alternative accounts of the struggle for civil rights. The white southern impulse to boycott most scenes of black protest differed only in degree from the northern white inclination to marginalize images depicting black agency. Partly because of an altruistic desire to bring positive social change, liberal media outlets in the North censored "unappealing" narratives of black life.

Whereas the first three chapters use iconic civil rights scenes to explore the racial investment of whites, this chapter explores what the many visual absences in civil rights reporting reveal about whiteness. It considers the social contexts militating against the inclusion of particular photographs and narratives in canonical accounts of the struggle; why newspapers and magazines serving northern white readers omitted some of the most graphic scenes of white-on-black violence; and why certain photographs depicting peaceful black protest were presented in ways that excluded them from the civil rights canon. A review of the missing images, which could have expanded the picture of the black freedom struggle, is ultimately as revealing of white values as the endlessly circulating iconic scenes of civil rights.

In the spring of 1963, the country's largest-circulation black newspapers—the *Afro-American (Baltimore, MD), Chicago Daily Defender, Los Angeles Sentinel, New York Amsterdam News,* and *Pittsburg Courier*—and the national black magazines *Ebony* and *Jet* each published a dramatic United Press International (UPI) photograph of three white policemen arresting a black woman during the Children's Crusade in Birmingham (figure 45).The photograph is a closeup of Ethel Witherspoon lying supine on a sidewalk as two officers work to restrain her arms and a third kneels on her throat.[2] The *Amsterdam News, Chicago Daily Defender,* and *Sentinel* all published the photograph on the front page to illustrate their stories on Connor's violent assault on Birmingham protestors.

The *Amsterdam News* caption said, a "Negro woman is forcibly subdued by police officers recently after she refused to be taken into custody peacefully." The *Sentinel*'s reporter provided a more expansive explanation of the violent scene: "It was taken in Birmingham, Ala., in 'South' America, currently the foremost civil rights battle-ground. In the photo, you see one, lone Negro woman. She lies flat on her back. Three white Americans, wearing police guns and uniforms, are holding her down, flattening her body to the earth. One cop is kneeling in her chest and shoulder. This is first-division, championship degradation. This is segregation gone stark-raving mad. This is manliness and chivalry stabbed in the back by the most cowardly human beings alive. I have not seen such a revolting photograph, nor heard of a more revolting incident, since 19 Fort Worth cops went into action with guns to subdue one mentally-deranged Negro man."[3] Writing in 1964, the black reporter Simeon Booker credited the photograph of Witherspoon with being one of two images (the second being Hudson's photograph

45 Unknown photographer, *Arrest of Ethel Witherspoon, Birmingham, Alabama,* May 6, 1963. UPI Telephoto, © Bettmann/CORBIS, Seattle, Washington.

of Gadsden) that "turned the tide" in the Birmingham struggle. *Ebony* informed readers that this powerful "picture appeared on [the] front page of many American newspapers."[4]

Although the photograph appeared on the front pages of many black American newspapers, I have been unable to locate a single white newspaper that printed the photograph on its front page. It was not published—on the front page or elsewhere—in the *Boston Globe, Brooklyn Eagle, Chicago Tribune, New York Post, New York Times, New York World-Telegram and Sun, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, Washington Post,* or in the mainstream newsmagazines that covered the era's racial debates, such as *Life, Look, Newsweek,* or *U.S. News & World Report.* A different phorograph of rhe arrest appeared on the inside pages of a handful of lesser-known white dailies, but the only large-circulation periodical that depicted Witherspoon's struggle on the ground was *Time.*[5]

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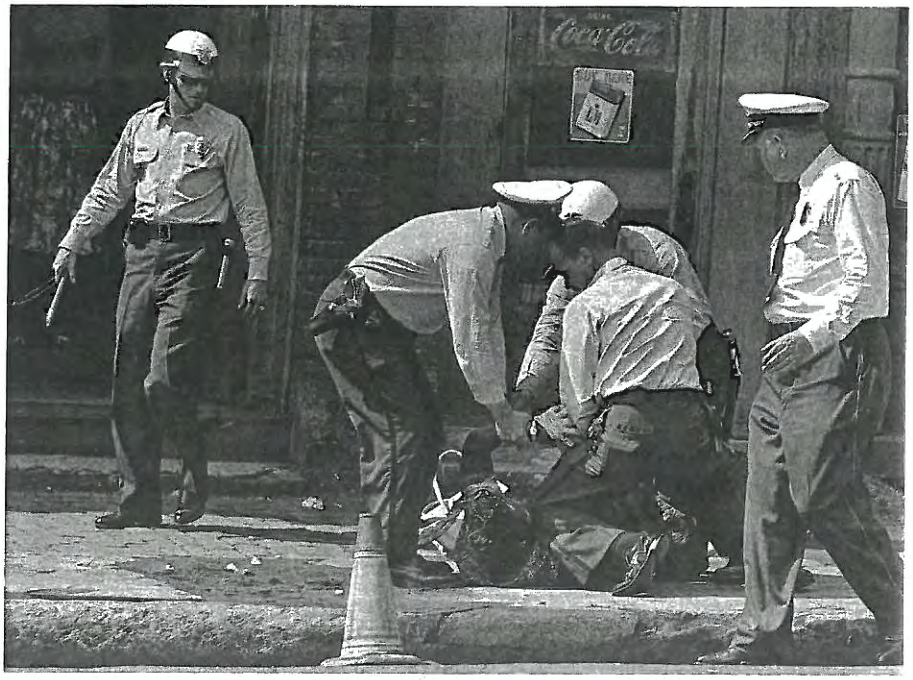

46 Unknown photographer, *Police Use Force: Three Policemen Restrain a Negro Woman on the Ground after She Failed to Move On as Ordered, Birmingham, Alabama,* May 6, 1963. AP/Wide World Photos, New York.

Time used an Associated Press photograph showing nearly the same moment of the arrest from a more distant vantage point than the photograph reproduced in the black press (figure 46). The accompanying article made passing reference to the photograph, noting, "There was the Negro woman pinned to the ground by cops, one of them with his knee dug into her throat." The caption states simply, "Birmingham Cops Manhandling Negro Woman."[6] The distinctive framing of *Time*'s photograph of Witherspoon's arrest provided both more and less context than did the version in black periodicals. More of the street scene is visible in *Time*. We see standing policemen on the right and left bracketing the huddle of arresting officers who squat and kneel in front of the door of a redbrick storefront. Cigarette and soft drink advertisements are legible above the central figures in the background, as are the legs and torso of a black woman in a doorway on the left.

While *Time*'s photograph provides more details on the setting of the confrontation, it also distances viewers from the violence of the arrest and the social dynamics of the scene. The

viewer cannot determine the sex and class standing of the figure flattened against the sidewalk or decipher the tangle of arms and legs at the center of the photographic frame. In providing additional visual details of the street, the *Time* photograph abstracts and depersonalizes the violence of the arrest. The textual and visual details "missing" from *Time* were of keen interest to black publicarions. Nor only did *Jet* reproduce the same closeup UPI photograph found in other black periodicals, but it framed it within a sequence of shots documenting events before and after the struggle on the ground. As the captions in *Jet* explained, the first image illustrates "a neatly dressed Birmingham woman" who was "wrenched from a front porch and dragged into the street." The second shows her "hurled to the ground by force and pinned by a knee on her neck," while the third captures her as she is "pulled away in handcuffs . . . by one of three policemen."[7] Hudson's photograph of rhe young Gadsden was the most frequently reproduced photograph of the Birmingham campaign in the white press but appeared in just a few black publications; in turn, the UPI photograph of the three cops manhandling Witherspoon was the most reproduced photograph of the Birmingham campaign in the black press yet was essentially absent from white accounts of the conflict.[8] The most "tevolting photograph" that the *Sentinel* reporter could imagine was not deemed newsworthy by whites.

Determining more than forty years after the fact why whites were reluctant to reptoduce a particular image presents obvious challenges. Images absent from the photographic record tend not to leave the documentary trail produced by widely circulating photographs. Yet textual clues in the black press hint at the "problem" the photograph posed to whites. White reporters almost certainly created both the AP and UPI photographs and their descriptions, given the unlikelihood that a black reporter could have moved freely through the streets of Birmingham during the confrontations of early May and considering that the overwhelmingly white pool of photographers working for photographic services in the early 1960s were usually expected to submir captions with their work.[9] The *Amsterdam News* reprinted what it termed the photograph's "published caption," which described that the woman "refused to obey [police] orders" and be taken "peacefully" inro custody. The caption for the photograph in rhe *Pittsburgh Courier* also claimed that Witherspoon "refused" police orders. Echoing this theme, *Ebony*'s caption printed the police claim that she "resisted arrest."[10]

The text describing the woman's spirited resistance is reinforced by the visual evidence that three police officers were needed to subdue her. The white photographer's characterization of Witherspoon as someone who resists authority clearly resonated with black editors, for not only did they reproduce the photograph and caption bur rhey consistently highlighted the struggles of women against the police. Three weeks before the events in Birmingham became national news, *Jet* documented the arrest of other female protesrors in the city. Two pendant photographs taken in April show a woman marching in handcuffs and high heels under a

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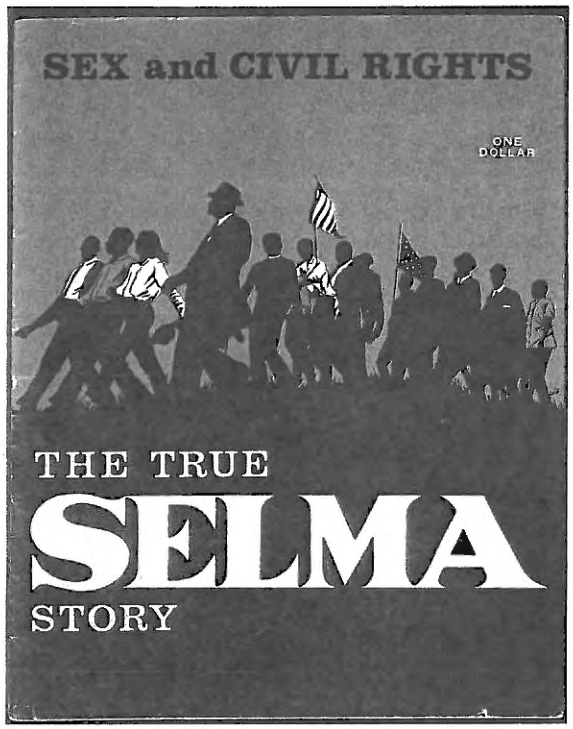
47 Unknown photographer, *Woman Resisting Arrest,* Birmingham, Alabama, April 14, 1963. Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images, Los Angeles, California.

police escort and a second woman vigorously resisting arrest (figure 47). The caption for the pair of photographs explains, "Though women were rargets of much rough handling by police, one wenr down swinging, with five cops needed to subdue her."[11]

Interestingly, while white publications in the North shunned such complicating photographs, and mainstream white periodicals in the South were loath to devote space to scenes of black political protest, reactionary segments of white southern sociery seized on incidenrs of black women resisting arrest as evidence of all that was wrong with the civil rights movement.



48 Unknown artist, cover of *The True Selma Story: Sex and Civil Rights,* 1965. Esco Publishers, Inc. Collection of the author.

Albert "Buck" Persons, a journalist and former *Life* stringer, wrote *The True Selma Story: Sex and Civil Rights* in 1965 (figure 48). He researched and wrote the single-issue magazine while he worked for Alabama's segregationist Congressman William Dickinson, and the publication was distributed by the white supremacist National States Rights Party. With high production values and well-written text, the magazine enjoyed strong sales among southern whites, who appreciated its forceful attacks on King for his Communist sympathies and philandering; on Bayard Rustin, for his homosexuality; and on the Selma marchers, for their debauchery. According to a 1965 article in the *New York Herald Tribune, The True Selma Story* was the best-selling publication in Alabama that year.[12]

The True Selma Story included a sophisticated critique of the subjective use to which reporters and their editors at *Life* and *Time* put images of the Birmingham campaign. In the essay "How 'Images' Are Created," Persons analyzed various photographs from Birmingham—some that appeared in *Life* and *Time* and others that the magazines excluded—to show how liberal white publications constructed a false picture of "vicious police dogs" and "thug cops" arrayed against

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"bleeding Negro children."[13] The essay features a photograph that the author took of Witherspoon struggling with police. After noting that his photograph of the scene is "almost identical" to the version in *Time,* Persons provides context not reported in the mainstream press. According to his eyewitness account, the woman depicted in *Time* "came out of the doorway in the background . . . spat in [a policeman's] face and struck at him. She is a very large woman. She fought and fell to the ground. She also took a large bite out of the leg of the squatting policeman. Several other officers came to his assistance. It took four to subdue her—without hurting her."[14]

On the opposite page, Persons reproduced a photograph of a second disturbance caused by a black woman in Birmingham. This image shows a different moment in the struggle of the unnamed woman seen in *Jet* (see figure 47). In Person's version, a cluster of police officers surrounds a solid woman who walks down the center of a street as she struggles to break free from the grip of five officers. The woman wears a dark form-fitting dress, which the tussle has evidently forced up above her knee, exposing a band of lacy white girdle. The caption informs readers, "The woman in the picture above was drunk on Easter Sunday afternoon in Birmingham in 1963." We learn that during an "explosive" situation in which the police were surrounded by "more than a thousand" protesting blacks, "the woman in the picture struck out of the crowd at a police officer. He went after her. She fought. It took the five policemen pictured here to get her into a wagon and off to jail—without hurting her."[15]

We need not settle the debate about whether Witherspoon or the women in *Jet* and *The True Selma Story* were victims of police brutality who engaged in self-defense or violent aggressors who sought to harm and provoke restrained southern officers. We can simply acknowledge two points: to black publishers and readers, the understanding that black agency was both the ultimate goal of the movement and the means by which it would be achieved made scenes of black resistance to capricious white power worthy of circulation; and to white liberals and conservatives, the key point was that the women had acted in ways incommensurate with the "appropriate" passivity of well-behaved blacks. This belief encouraged liberal publications to avoid such images and conservative ones to reproduce them. Whereas the inactive-active opposition structured the emotional and intellectual response of whites to photographs of dogs and fire hoses, it effectively prevented the white public in the North from confronting disturbing photographs of women resisting arrest. In their efforts to promote "aesthetic" and "sympathetic" portrayals of black protestors for readers, white reporters and editors either excluded or marginalized images that showed blacks exerting power. As a result, the burden of building white support for a more equal distribution of power ironically rested disproportionately on images that downplayed signs of blacks actually exercising such power.

Debates about the propriety of female protestors' actions were animated primarily by competing ideals of gender. Dominant standards in early 1960s America expected middle-class

white and black women to dedicate themselves to the cult of motherhood, subordinate personal needs to those of their families, distance themselves from political struggles, and support patriarchal power. They were to be demure, chaste, apolitical, and passive. Betty Friedan famously documented the limited range of options available to women in America of the late 1950s and early 1960s in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Her wide-ranging study marked the distance between the desire of women for personal, intellectual, and professional fulfillment and the acceptable roles available to them in mainstream society. In documenting the disenfranchisement of women from the political sphere, Friedan specifically noted the degree to which reporters and editors then deemed the "woman's world" incompatible with the politics of civil rights activism. For female activists who were black, the societal pressures to conform to dominant norms were even more pronounced than those outlined in *The Feminine Mystique*. In addition to grappling with the general societal expectations of passivity and political disengagement, black women had to navigate powerful racial stereotypes that imagined their sexually provocative and emasculating natures.[16]

In the 1950s and early 1960s, unsympathetic observers seized on activists' deviations from norms of gender (and of race, sexuality, class, and free-market capitalism) to discredit claims for civil rights. In response, movement leaders encouraged protestors to conform to most dominant ideals of identity. In early sit-ins, protest marches, freedom rides, and acts of civil disobedience, they urged the activists to display "Sunday best" dress and comportment. Rosa Parks was actually the third Montgomery woman to refuse to give up her seat on a public bus in 1955, but historians note that E. D. Nixon, the former president of the local NAACP chapter, deemed the first two insufficiently conventional in their class and gender standing to provide good test cases for civil rights court challenges. The first woman reportedly had resisted arrest and was an unmarried pregnant fifteen-year-old; the second lived in an unkempt shack with an alcoholic father. The NAACP judged Parks an excellent plaintiff because her appearance of propriety ensured that her legal and ethical claims would not be lost in debates about her moral character.[17] Protestors who appeared to uphold the gendered status quo were much more likely to move whites. By adhering to many of the key markers of dominant American identity while challenging the racial hierarchy, protestors presented less of a threat to mainstream society.[18]

In describing the photographs of women resisting arrest, *Jet* noted that the women were "neatly dressed" and "wrenched from a front porch." The "neatness" of dress signaled the dignity and decorum of the protestor, just as mention of a "front porch" conjured images of a mother or daughter violently pulled from the domestic sphere and cast into the public street. The *Sentinel* pointed out that such women were not criminals with intent "to kill, maim, or steal" but honest people "seeking . . . constitutional rights."[19] Reversing the tables on whites, who reporters knew would question the femininity of women who resist, many in the black press noted the ways in which white officers departed from norms of masculinity. The *Sentinel* reporter commented that

"this is manliness and chivalry stabbed in the back by the most cowardly human beings." An article in the black newspaper the *Tri-State Defender (Memphis, TN)* mocked Birmingham's police officers as "Brave men, armed with billies and guns. Brave men mounted on horses. Brave men sitting in cars. Brave men holding great hungry, child-eating dogs, straining at their leashes."[20] *Jet* questioned the officers' masculinity both by drawing attention to their "rough handling" of women and by emphasizing that it took "five cops . . . to subdue" one of the female protestors. In a similar vein, the caption for Witherspoon's arrest photograph in the *Pittsburgh Courier* read, "STRONG WOMAN—A powerful police officer thrusts his knee into the chest of a negro woman as two other Birmingham policemen wrest her to the ground."[21]

Persons's account predictably focused on the aberrance of women engaged in protest. In his telling, the women strike out at policemen without provocation and struggle against male authorities. Before we learn anything else about the black woman under arrest in the second Persons photograph, we are informed that she was "drunk on Easter Sunday."[22] On the most solemn day in the Christian calendar, and the Sunday on which King was arrested for ignoring a State Circuit Court injunction barring marches and protests in the city, the pictured woman chose to drink. The stereotypical black woman of the conservative white imagination is violently aggressive, intemperate, and unresponsive to white patriarchal authority, and she at times displays hints of unrestrained sexuality. Her failure to display traits of middle-class femininity made it easier to dismiss claims for her constitutional rights.

The degree to which determinations of Witherspoon's "propriety" drove white media decisions about how or whether to represent her arrest is suggested by the publication history of a much more famous photograph of a black woman struggling against the police. During a voting rights drive a year and a half after Witherspoon's arrest, Annie Lee Cooper was wrestled to the ground by deputy sheriffs in Selma, Alabama, and struck repeatedly on the head with a billy club by Sheriff Jim Clark. Most illustrated articles on the attack used a detail of a photograph taken by Horace Cort for the Associated Press (AP; figure 49). The published image of Cooper's fight shows an uncanny formal resemblance to the photographs of Witherspoon's struggle. In both instances, a black woman lying on her back resists a cluster of officers intent on making an arrest; while several officers work to restrain the woman's arms, one is glimpsed in the midst of a violent attack. Yet, despite the visual similarities of the two photographs, their publication histories present a study in contrasts. While the image of Witherspoon was nearly absent from the northern white press, the photograph of Cooper was front-page news in virtually every white daily in the North.

Mainstream descriptions of the two arrests correspond on most key points: the media consistently described the events as the manhandling of a black woman participant in a civil rights demonstration by a group of white policemen. The one significant variable in media coverage was the reported conduct of the women. Whereas Witherspoon was an assertive

woman who "resisted" police orders, Cooper was an aggressor who instigated the "attack."[23] The headline in the *Washington Post* read "Woman Slugs Sheriff," and the article reported, "Negroes seeking to register as voters lined up today [at the county courthouse in Selma] without interference from Sheriff's deputies, but one woman was jailed for slugging Sheriff James G. Clark." The *Los Angeles Times* explained to readers that Clark was "attacked" by "a 226-pound Negro woman [who] smashed him twice in the face." In the *San Francisco Chronicle,* Cooper "stepped out of the voter registration line" to hit Clark; in the *Baltimore Sun,* she "jumps out of long [registration] line, hits sheriff"; and in the *Hartford Courant,* "without warning" she "stepped out of the line and struck Clark in the left eye." Most white accounts stressed Cooper's large size and her decision to abandon her place in line in order to strike at Clark without cause. Notwithstanding the visual evidence of the photograph, its captions challenged any easy determination of the scene's depicted victim, noting that Cooper "bites and fights" and that Clark "tries to take back his billy club from Mrs. Annie Lee Cooper as she grapples with policemen."[24]

For white Americans, neither the photograph of Witherspoon nor the one of Cooper fit neatly into one of the dominant narratives of civil rights. Witherspoon's resistance to authority prevented the photograph from generating the level of white sympathy famously produced by the published images of Moore and Hudson. While whites would have recognized the image as a scene of civil rights protest, it did not read as a typical or useful image of the struggle. Given the many photographs then pouring out of Birmingham that more perfectly depicted the preferred white-black dynamic, whites had little need to see Witherspoon's arrest reproduced. Northern whites deemed the image of Cooper to be even more out of synch with the civil rights ideal, but this distance, paradoxically, made the image more appealing to reproduce. The photographs and captions of Cooper's struggle depicted a violent and aggressive black woman, who preferred striking the sheriff to registering to vote. Seeing the incident as more amusing than threatening, *Newsweek* quipped, "Mrs. Cooper wheeled on Sheriff Clark . . . and landed a solid, non-violent overhand right to his left eye," and *Time* joked that she "twice walloped Clark solidly and appeared to be outpointing him until three burly deputies came to his aid."[25] Because Cooper's photograph diffused the gravity of denying a citizen's voting rights, reinforced a timeworn stereotype of the explosive and unpredictable black female, and made the scene's white-on-black violence appear understandable, its reproduction posed no symbolic or practical threat to whites in the North.

Determinations of black decorum help explain both the reticence and eagerness of white media outlets to circulate particular images of black women manhandled by law enforcement officers; but explanations that focus exclusively on the actions of black protagonists cannot account for all the "missing" scenes of civil rights. We have seen the central role black children

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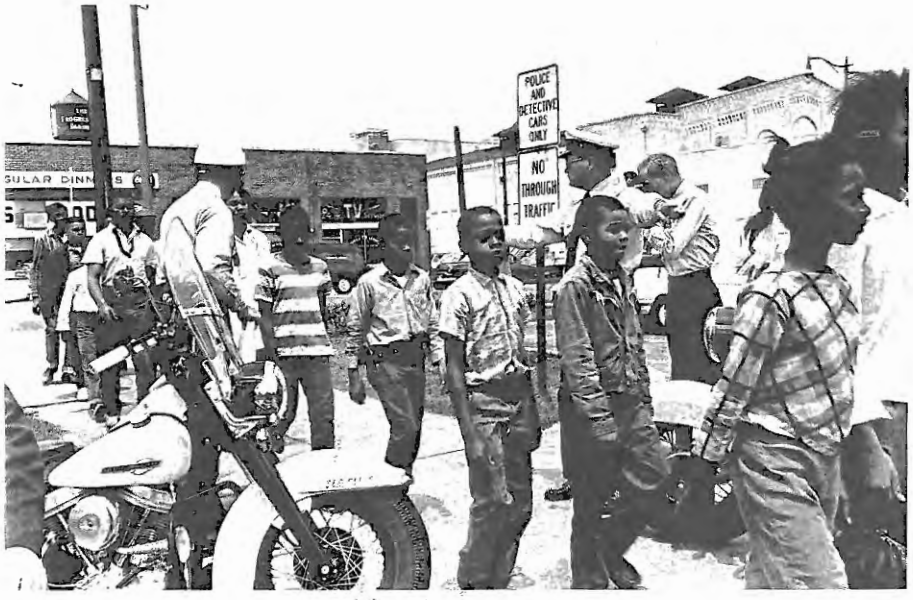
49 Horace Cort, *Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark Uses His Billy Club on Black Woman,* Selma, Alabama, January 25, 1965. AP/Wide World Photos and Horace Cort, New York.

played in the Birmingham campaign, through prompting white interest in the black freedom struggle and inviting perceptions of their innocence and vulnerability. Yet though virtually every white periodical in the North wrote about the harm suffered by the young marchers of the Children's Crusade, printing many accounts of attacks by dogs and fire hoses, virtually none published photographs that visualized the violence described in the text. The few pictures of young Birmingham marchers that were reproduced in the white media showed kids being detained in police holding cells, marching under guard to chartered buses for transport to jail (figure 50), or occasionally, taunting police. I can locate no photographs in the mainstream press of a child battered by a water hose and have found just one image showing a child bitten by a dog. The lone dog attack is, of course, the previously discussed photograph of Gadsden; yet with its depiction of a male victim who weighs 168 pounds and stands six feet tall, it is an exception that proves the rule.[26] White newspapers did not photographically document the arrest of fourteen-year-old Dorothy Yarborough, who was thrown naked into jail after fire hoses ripped off her clothing, or show seven-year-old Jennifer Denise Fancher being bitten by



50 Bill Hudson, *Policemen Lead a Group of Black School Children to Jail,* Birmingham, Alabama, May 4, 1963. AP/Wide World Photos and Bill Hudson, New York.

a police dog and rushed to medical care.[27] While photographs of southern policemen's most violent assaults on black youths survive in the archive (figure 51), they cannot be found in white media accounts of civil rights.

The absence of images depicting brutalized black children is not an anomaly of the Birmingham campaign; it is a general feature of the photographic canon of the civil rights movement. In theory, the appeal of juxtaposing the inactive and active should have ensured that depictions of the weakest and most submissive victims facing the most brutal and active aggressors would be the most effective images to catalyze white interest. Yet the innocence and vulnerability that whites ascribed to black children was insufficient to ensure the preservation of images of their physical abuse in the visual record of mid-twentieth-century America, never mind to secure the iconicity of such scenes. The idea of child victims both attracted and repelled white Americans: as we have seen, such scenes generated immediate interest, given the extent to which kids resonated as the "perfect" victims, but they also produced profound discomfort, given the racial identification that whites felt with the perpetrators of violence. Alongside the altruistic desire of liberal white editors to reproduce only those images best suited to (safely)

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51 Unknown photographer, *Police Breaking Up Civil Rights Demonstration*, c. 1963. Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

advance the cause of black rights was a more selfish need to quash those photographs that reflected poorly on their race. Liberal whites were ultimately as invested in the "appropriate" depiction of white roles as in that of black roles within the canon of civil rights.

The paradox is not simply that the idea of suffering black children was of greater interest to whites than visual evidence of their plight but that the modern civil rights movement was grounded on the *un*represented body of a black child. Reporters and scholars have routinely credited outrage about the 1955 kidnapping, torture, and murder of the fourteen-year-old Chicago boy Emmett Till, near Money, Mississippi, with sparking the modern civil rights movement. Amzie Moore, a pioneering civil rights activist, deemed Till's murder the "best advertised lynching" he had ever heard of and credited it with "beginning . . . the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi."[28] David Halberstam deemed the killing an "event that . . . galvanized the national press corps, and eventually the nation" and asserted, "The murder of Emmett Till and the trial of the two men accused of murdering him became the first great media event of the

52 Unknown photographer, *Mamie Bradley and Her Son Emmett Till,* Chicago, Illinois, 1955. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Prints and Photographs Division.

civil rights movement."[29] Given the importance of the Till murder to the history of civil rights and the absence of visual representations of the boy's suffering in the white press, analysis of the coverage of his death provides insights into the complex symbolic work that black children performed in the white imagination.

Till was killed during a summer visit to his great-uncle, Mose Wright, in rural Mississippi. The boy's mother, Mamie Bradley sent him south from Chicago (figure 52) after consenting to Till's request to spend two weeks visiting his relatives in her native state. The murder was precipitated by a verbal exchange between Till and Carolyn Bryant, a white woman working the counter at a local general store. While the precise nature of the interaction has long been in dispute, the most plausible reports have the boy showing off to his black friends by saying "bye, baby" to Bryant as he exited the store. Whatever his words, he clearly acted in a way that upset the rigid racial etiquette then enforced by whites in the deep South. Several days after the incident at the store, Till was abducted late at night from his great-uncle's home by the woman's husband, Roy Bryant, and her brother-in-law, J. W. Milam, who sought "the nigger who did the talking."[30] The men then tortured Till for hours in a nearby barn, shot him in the head, stripped him of his clothing, and dumped his body into the Tallahatchie River, weighted down with a massive cotton-gin fan secured with barbed wire to his neck. His partially submerged and decaying corpse was found three days later with an eye hanging out of its socket, dramatic skull fractures, and a broken femur and wrists.[31]

The Till story was front-page news in black newspapers within days of the boy's abduction and grew into the most important news story of the 1950s. After the discovery of the body on

53 Unknown photographer, *Mississippi Shame,* Chicago, Illinois, September 1955. Used with the permission of the *Chicago Defender*, Chicago, Illinois.

August 31, the *Chicago Defender* ran thirty-two stories on Till during September alone. While white coverage was not nearly as extensive, northern white newspapers covered the story as soon as news of Till's abduction became known and increased their coverage when his mutilated and decomposing body was found and his funeral was held. White interest peaked with the trial and subsequent acquittal of Milam and Bryant by an all-white, all-male jury. White newspaper and magazine coverage of the Till murder was then unprecedented for the murder of an American black.

As is famously recounted, Till's mother insisted on an open-casket funeral in Chicago, against the demands of Mississippi authorities and the advice of her South Side funeral director. Bradley was determined that the world "see what they did to my boy." As she explained to a rapt audience in October 1955, "As long as we cover these things up, they're going to keep on happening. . . . The more people that walk by Emmett and look at what happened to this 14-year-old boy, the more people will be interested in what happens to their children."[32] Emmett's severely swollen and mutilated head was viewed by tens of thousands of mourners during the five days Bradley allowed for viewing and by millions more through circulating photographs taken by members of the black public and press.

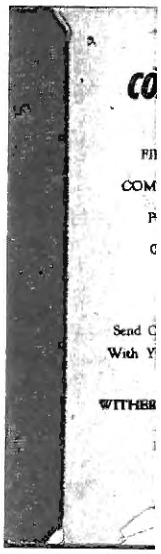
Depictions of Till's corpse and/or open casket appeared in the following black newspapers and periodicals in either September or October of 1955: *Afro-American (Baltimore, MD), American Negro, Chicago Defender* (figure 53), *Crisis, New York Amsterdam News, Michigan Chronicle, Pittsburgh Courier, Philadelphia Tribune,* and, most famously, in back-to-back issues

54 David Jackson, *Closeup of Lynch Victim, Emmett Till,* Chicago, Illinois, September 1955. Johnson Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois. Collection of the author.

Close-up of lynch victim bares mute evidence of horrible slaying. Chicago undertaker A. A. Raynor said youth had not been castrated as was rumored. Mutilated face of victim was left unretouched by mortician at mother's request. She said she wanted "all the world" to witness the atrocity.

of *Jet* magazine (figure 54). Shortly after the funeral, additional photographs of Till's murder trial and corpse appeared in a self-published booklet by the pioneering black civil rights photographer Ernest C. Withers, who marketed it through the mail to black households (figure 55).[33] As is well documented by historians, photographs of Till aroused an outpouring of anguish and activism from blacks, particularly from young people in their teens or twenties. We have poignant testimonies on the depth of emotion generated by the images in the young Cassius Clay, Lew Alcindor (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), John Edgar Wideman, Eldridge Cleaver, Anne Moody, and scores of others.[34] So important was Till's death for galvanizing black activism that a number of observers and scholars have labeled the youths radicalized by the photographs the "Emmett Till Generation."[35]

Whites experienced the murder in different ways. The killing was emotional for sympathetic whites, making them feel, variously, disgust, anger, guilt, and shame. But whereas virtually every



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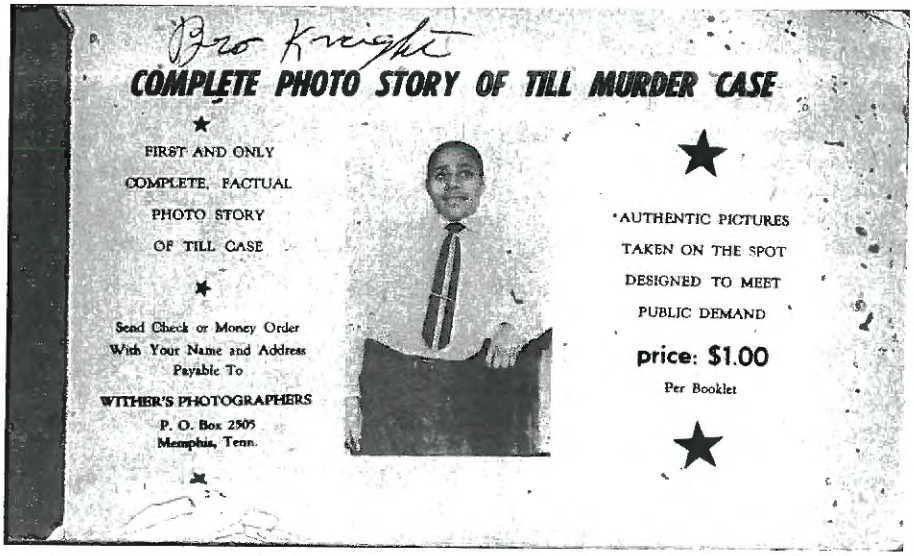

55 Ernest C. Withers, *Complete Photo Story of Till Murder Case*, 1955. Booklet. Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries, Oxford, Mississippi. © Ernest C. Withers Estate, Panopticon Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts.

black American took the murder as a personal threat, understanding the race-based killing as an example of the dangers all blacks faced, whites experienced it as a sad, impersonal event. Much as with the white reaction to the use of attack dogs and hoses on black children, the Till murder elicited little fear in white Americans. Their response was conditioned by their racial identification as white but also by the absence of visual evidence of the crime. The corpse photographs that exerted a powerful effect on blacks were absent from national television reports and from white newspapers and magazines. According to one photographic historian, not until the 1987 airing of the first episode of the civil rights television documentary *Eyes on the Prize* did significant numbers of white Americans see a photograph of Till's mutilated corpse.[36]

To the extent that historians deal wirh the absence of Till's body in the white press, they attribute it to choices made by blacks. In their Pulirzer Prize–winning book, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (2007), reporters Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff draw on the work of the photographic historian Vicki Goldberg and the recollections of the photographer Ernest Withers to conclude, "Few whites saw the photo [of Till's corpse], and Negroes had to buy *Jet* to see it. Johnson Publications held and exercised exclusive rights to the photograph, taken by one of its staffers, David Jackson, thus

THIS IS THE AFRO artist's conception of how young Till, his face battered and bruised, a bullet hole in his head, one eye gouged out, and his features swollen by three days in a river, looked as his body was viewed by thousands of Chicagoans as it lay in state at a funeral parlor prior to final rites. Till's mother had the casket opened so people "Can see what they did to my boy."

56 Unknown artist, *Emmett Till in His Casket, Afro-American (Baltimore, MD),* September 24, 1955. Courtesy of the AFRO-American Newspapers Archives and Research Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

keeping it out of the hands of white newspapers, television, and all but a few Negro papers that disregarded the restrictions and ran grainy reprints of the *Jet* photograph." The most recent accounts of the photographs' publication history continue to promote this interpretation, despite considerable evidence that white periodicals had every opportunity to publish Till's picture had this been their desire.[37]

First, several photographers covered the Till funeral, and more than one image of his disfigured head was produced, so both black and white newspapers were less reliant on Johnson Publications than is generally assumed.[38] Second, newspapers and magazines did not need photographs to display Till's corpse. The Baltimore *Afro-American* provided an artist's sketch of Till in his casket on its front page in lieu of a photographic reproduction (figure 56). Lack of a photographer on assignment, insufficient funds to pay for reproduction rights, refusal of the copyright holder to grant license, or even concern about upsetting subscribers need not have deprived readers of visuals if a newspaper had considered the issue of sufficient importance. Third, Till funeral photographs preserved in the archives of the white-owned *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* prove that both newspapers had photographers covering the event. An unpublished *Chicago Tribune* photograph of Till's viewing (figure 57) shows lines of well-

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57 Unknown photographer, *Mourners Pass Emmett Till's Casket,* Chicago, Illinois, September 3, 1955. *Chicago Tribune* Staff Photo, Chicago, Illinois. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

dressed mourners passing Till's open casket—with the boy's mutilated head clearly visible. Chicago papers interested in reproducing photographs of Till in his casket were clearly not constrained by licensing difficulties with Johnson Publications. White media outlets from outside the city or state that wished to illustrate articles on Till with funeral photographs would have found them readily available from Chicago's leading white papers.

Even if white editors had wished to print photographs of Till's ravaged body, perhaps the graphic nature of the images would have given pause. White readers would surely have voiced objections to such disturbing images in their morning newspapers. But evidence suggesrs the willingness of mainstream newspapers at midcentury to display upsetting pictures of death if they believed that engendering readers' discomfort could advance a worthy cause. According to the historian George Roeder, by 1943 President Roosevelt's advisors were increasingly concerned about losing home-front acceptance of the domestic privations resulting from the huge expenditures needed to fight the Second World War. They worried that the recent string of Allied military victories in Europe and the Pacific theaters would raise the public's expectation

58 George Strock, *Buna Campaign American Casualties, Papua New Guinea, Life,* February 1, 1943. Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images, Los Angeles, California.

that the war would end soon and significantly lessen acceptance of sacrifices at home. They urged Roosevelt to change the government censorship policy and release graphic depictions of American war dead, of a type previously withheld from public view, to help tamp down domestic labor unrest and absenteeism and prepare Americans for increased casualties as U.S. forces drove toward the Japanese mainland.

As Roeder explains, shortly after Roosevelt agreed to the policy change, *Life* reproduced an unprecedented George Strock photograph showing three dead U.S. soldiers collapsed across Buna Beach in New Guinea (figure 58). Concerned that these first images of American corpses published in the U.S. media since the war began would stir up readers, *Life* paired the photograph with an editorial that explained, "The reason we print [the photograph] now is that last week President Roosevelt and Elmer Davis and the war department decided that the American people ought to be able to see their own boys as they fall in battle: to come directly and without words into the presence of their own dead."[39] Clearly, white-controlled newspapers did not in 1955 have a similar desire to expose their readers to pictures of "their own" fallen black boys at home.

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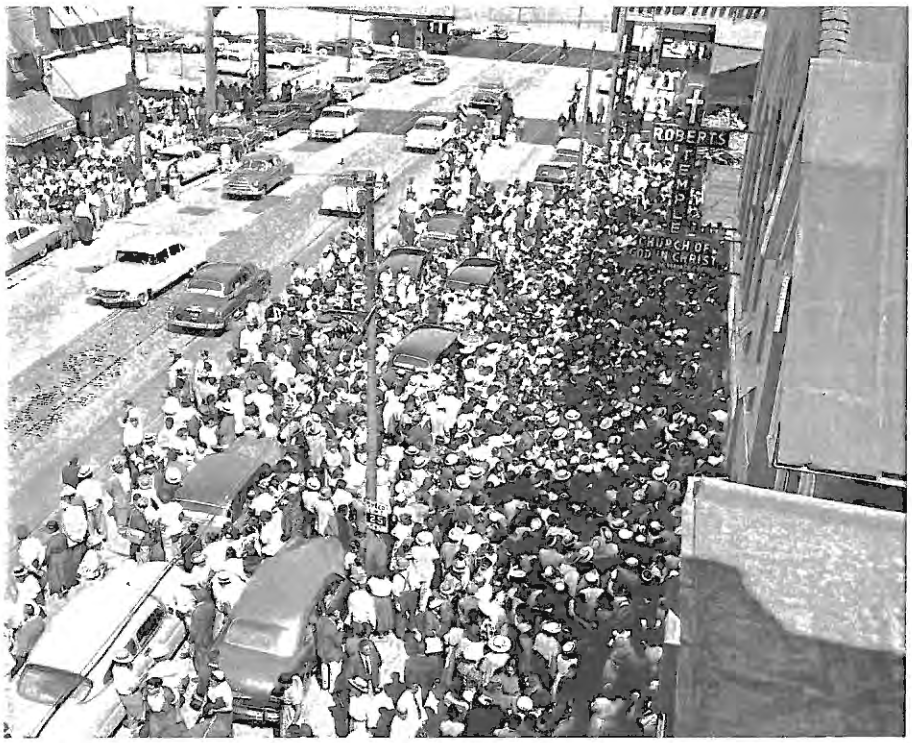
Implicit in my criticism of the white media's reticence to use the Till photographs is my unstated belief that their reproduction was linked to a progressive racial politics. Failure to publish signified a failure to grapple with the race-based killing of blacks. Given the singularly gruesome nature of the photographs, and my argument that violent imagery performs both constructive and damaging social work, my claims for the photographs' progressive social function may appear misplaced. If, as I have argued, the much milder photographs of violence in Birmingham helped maintain racial beliefs that supported white power, how could the vastly more disturbing images of Till not perform similarly reactionary work? Without discounting how violent imagery must cut both ways, I maintain that only through a case-by-case examination of images in context can we assess the *dominant* political work of a photograph. Because context determines the social significance of images, photographs of white-on-black violence routinely possess varied social effects.

Photographs of the Birmingham campaign united progressive whites, such as Moore and the editors of *Time* and *Life,* with conservative whites, such as Connor and Persons, in the wish to make violence against blacks visible for white audiences. Given the disparate interest of these two groups, and their shared take on the virtues of publication, the fact that the images supported contradictory racial politics is not surprising. The potential of the Till photographs to positively influence white society is signaled by the consistent white *disinclination* to see them reproduced; since whites from across the political spectrum were united in their desire to see publication suppressed, circulation of the images clearly posed a threat to the status quo of whites. I believe that the singularly unified white resistance to publication offers evidence that dissemination of the Till photographs would have produced more unambiguously progressive results than the circulation of any other period photograph of white-on-black violence.[40]

Further evidence exists in the stark degree to which reaction to the Till photographs fell along racial lines. Blacks across the political spectrum desired to see what the white killers had done to a black boy: tens of thousands flocked to the South Side funeral home for the viewing (figure 59); millions read the daily diet of articles on Till in the black press; millions more saw the images in *Jet,* leading to the first sold-out issue in the magazine's history; and Langston Hughes was so moved by the crime that he wrote, "Showing just one lynched body on TV . . . seems to me long overdue."[41] Blacks consistently credited the act of looking, specifically, looking at photographs of Till, with the power to heal American race relations. In defending her decision to put the body on display, Bradley wrote that it was "important for people to look at what happened on a late Mississippi night when nobody was looking, to consider what might happen again if we didn't look out." She was convinced that the public "would not be able to visualize what had happened, unless they were allowed to see the results of what had happened. They had to see what I had seen. The whole nation had to bear witness." Ernest Withers ex-



59 Unknown photographer, *Mourners at Emmett Till Funeral,* Chicago, Illinois, September 3–6, 1955. © Bettmann/CORBIS, Seattle, Washington.

plained that his published photographs of Till's corpse would "serve to help our nation dedicate itself to seeing that such incidents need not occur again."[42]

Recounting as fact a surely apocryphal story, the *Chicago Defender* reported that one distraught black woman, reading of the Till murder on a Chicago trolley, struck a white female passenger out of anger. According to the account, neither the injured passenger nor her fellow whites said a word. They stood transfixed by a photograph of Till's corpse in a newspaper that had dropped to the ground in the scuffle. As the *Defender* described the scene, "The careful whites simply looked at the picture of the dead boy lying face up on the floor and bowed their heads in humiliation." The article concluded, "The decision of Mrs. Mamie Bradley, mother of the slain child, to put the body on public view was more effective than the millions of words of copy written about the crime."[43] In the estimation of blacks, seeing Till's corpse was the first step to initiating racial change.

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The white response was as internally consistent as the black one, but whereas blacks could not look enough, whites preferred to look away. Scores of articles in the white press noted that "the Till case haunts the national conscience" (*New York Post*) or that "the killing aroused the country" (*Newsweek*) or generated great "feeling" in the country (*Time*), and others deemed the murder trial "a national *cause célèbre*" (*Life*).[44] But white interest consistently centered on the novelty of placing southern whites on trial for the murder of a black boy, and later on the injustice of the acquittal, rather than on the death itself. In September, the *New York Times* ran more than three times as many articles on the trial as on the murder and the racial context in which it occurred; during this same period, the ratio in the *Washington Post* was five to one. In contrast, the *Chicago Defender* printed twice as many articles on the murder and on the conditions of black life in the Mississippi delta as on the trial.[45]

The murder generated just a handful of speeches in Congress and no comment from President Eisenhower. Despite enormous pressure by the black community, through petitions and many thousands of personal letters sent to the White House, the president declined to support antilynching legislation, speak out against the killing, or even issue a statement of condolence or regret. Bradley's letter to Eisenhower pleading for federal intervention went unanswered, her request for a meeting with the president's aide for minority affairs was declined, and her offer to the chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Civil Rights to testify before Congress was rebuffed.[46] By the fall of 1955, with the funeral and trial over, a white reporter noted of Till, "He's buried now, just as all news of him has been buried in the back columns of the [white] newspapers."[47]

Perhaps more remarkable than the limited and narrow nature of whites' interest in the murder is the consistency with which they suppressed its visual evidence. In a perverse twist, the Till murder brought together the editors of the most liberal northern newspapers and magazines with the killers, for all sought to prevent visual traces of the crime from circulating among whites. The killers' clumsy efforts to ensure that the corpse would never be seen were more skillfully carried out by a white media that withheld photographic evidence of the crime. As a number of historians have pointed out, the precautions taken by Milam and Bryant to commit their crimes in private (the bearing and murder took place inside a barn) and to hide all evidence (they burned Till's clothing, washed out the pickup truck in which he was transported, and went to great lengths to hide the corpse) departed from the manner in which American blacks were traditionally killed by mobs.[48] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lynchings brought together groups of people to kill victims in public—for public effect. Participants and observers typically made no effort to shield their identities, even from the photographers who were at times present, and they commonly left the victim's body hanging from a tree, telephone pole, or bridge or laid it on a courthouse lawn as a warning to other blacks. Till's killers doubtlessly hoped to make a point about the place of blacks in Mississippi

society, much as did the editors of northern periodicals, but neither group sought to communicate their respective points by making a spectacle of the black boy's body.

Till's murderers did not hide his corpse simply because they feared arrest. Two weeks before Till's abduction and murder, Lamar Smith, a sixty-three-year-old voter registration activist became the second black civil rights worker publicly murdered by Mississippi whites since May.[49] Smith was gunned down in broad daylight on the lawn of the Brookhaven courthouse in Lincoln County, Mississippi, for his civil rights work. Despite the fact that the murder took place in front of several dozen white witnesses, not one would testify against the killers; a grand jury subsequently failed to indict any of the men charged, and no one was ever tried for the crime. Notwithstanding the decline in public killings of blacks by midcentury, the execution of Smith points to the impunity with which whites in many parts of the South continued to take black lives up into the 1950s.

The killers themselves also offer intriguing evidence that they did not fear being held accountable for their crimes. After the men were acquitted of murder and grand juries repeatedly failed to indict them for kidnapping, an intrepid southern journalist, William Bradford Huie, paid for the rights to their murder story for a feature film (which, tellingly, was never made).[50] In his interviews with Huie, Milam explained that with Till in the back of the pickup, he and Bryant drove in search of a weight heavy enough to keep the body submerged in a river. Knowing where an unused fan for a cotton gin was stored, the men went to retrieve it for a weight. As Milam explained: "When we got to that [cotton] gin, it was daylight, and I was worried for the first time. Somebody might see us and accuse us of stealing the fan."[51] Whether Till was still alive at this point is unclear, but what is certain is that the men drove with either a corpse in the back of their pickup truck or a severely beaten and bleeding black boy. Milam "worried for the first time" not about getting caught with Till in his truck but about being accused of "stealing the fan." Community approval of Smith's execution along with the fact that Milam was more concerned about being labeled a thief than a murderer strongly suggests that the men did not hide the body out of fear.

We may be fairly certain that Milam and Bryant concealed the body because it was the body of a boy. The popular rationale for the killing was that Till posed a sexual threat to Bryant's wife. The validity of the threat rested on acceptance of Till as a predatory and sexually mature black man, which meant that any evidence of his status as a child undermined the logic of the crime. To a remarkable degree, the defense attorneys' arguments at Milam and Bryant's trial, as well as the men's own comments after their acquittal and analyses by media outlets, pivoted on whether Till was a boy or a man. The "guilt" or "innocence" of the accused in the minds of many whites hinged less on whether or not they killed someone than on who died. The publisher of the Greenville, Mississippi, *Morning Star* summarized the debate succinctly

and crudely when he explained to a visiting reporter that too much was made of Till's youth. "He may have been only 14 but I'm told he had a dong on him like this," the publisher explained, raising his arm to suggest the improbable size of Till's penis.[52]

In a manner more subtle but no less clear to Mississippi whites, the defense attorneys for Milam and Bryant took every opportunity to picture Till as a sexually dangerous man. During their cross-examination of a state witness who oversaw the removal of Till's naked body from the river, a defense attorney asked if Till had "well-developed privates" and whether or not they were "swelled or stiff" as he was dragged from the river. Defense lawyers asked both Till's great-uncle, Mose Wright, and Carolyn Bryant to describe the boy's height and weight, which they wanted the jury to appreciate were considerable for someone of his years. When Carolyn Bryant took the stand, she not only claimed that Till had physically restrained and crudely propositioned her in the store but referred to Till as "this nigger man." When one of the defense lawyers questioning Carolyn Bryant caught himself asking of Till, "where was this boy then?" he quickly corrected himself: "or I should say, where was this man?" Black reporters and spectators at the trial could not have missed that Till was accorded the status of a "man" in death by the same whites who addressed every living black man as "boy."[53]

By the time Milam and Bryant granted a posttrial interview to explain their actions, their defense had broadened out from an effort to protect a female relative to one aimed at saving all white women. In Milam's improbable and self-serving narrative of events, he claimed that after he and Bryant repeatedly pistol-whipped Till, the boy spat back, "You bastards, I'm not afraid of you. . . . I've 'had' white women. My grandmother was a white woman." As Milam recalled, "Then you know what happened? That niggah pulled out his pocketbook and he had pictures of three white girls in it . . . Chicago sluts, I guess, but there they were. . . . Well, what else could I do?"[54] In order to sell their murder of a boy, Milam and Bryant worked to recast Till as an adult "race mixer" at best or a rapist of white women at worst and to present themselves as defenders of white purity in both the South and the North. For all those who feared miscegenation and the fall of segregation, the answer to Milam's rhetorical question "what else could I do?" was clear.

In southern white papers, reporters showed a surprising degree of sympathy for Till in the first days after his corpse was found, but their tone changed dramatically when the NAACP, Bradley, and northern newspapers became vocal in their criticism of Mississippi society. As Davis Houck and Matthew Grindy have thoroughly documented, the Mississippi press closed ranks once it perceived that "outsiders" sought to cast the Till murder as a narrative of race and civil rights. Whites found particularly galling the caustic press release issued by the executive secretary of the NAACP, Roy Wilkins, which read in part, "It would appear from this lynching that the state of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering

children." Houck and Grindy note that many Mississippi papers never printed a word about the abduction or murder of Till and that those that did came increasingly to define the boy in threatening terms. In the southern white press, he was transformed into a "husky Negro lad," "stuttering husky Negro lad," or "northern Negro rapist."[55]

Intimations of Till's sexual nature even showed up in northern press reports. Huie published as fact Milam's description of how Till provoked the killers with his boasts about white women in a sensationalistic *Look* magazine article in 1956. The investigative reporter expanded his story in *Wolf Whistle* (1959; figure 60), a popular paperback whose cover promised that the contenrs were "more shocking than fiction . . . three true stories of desire, greed and deception by a fearless reporrer." In *Wolf Whistle,* Huie details that Emmett's father, a private in the U.S. Army during World War II, was hanged in Italy "for a series of rape-murders" and notes that eighty-seven of the ninety-five American soldiers so hanged were black. While he acknowledges that Emmett never knew his father and that the rapes were "immarerial at the trial of Milam and Bryant," his addition of the story to his narrative appears to serve no other purpose than to suggesr that there was a genetic or familial component to the younger Till's advance on Carolyn Bryant.[56]

Most northern white papers were sympathetic to Till and in synch with more progressive racial politics, despite the prominence of Huie's narratives in the North. Unsurprisingly, most accounts stressed Till's identity as an innocent boy. *Life* opened its eulogy with the direct assertion "Emmett Till was a child." Portraying him as an innocent Christlike martyr, *Life* wrote, "In the dark of the night of this deed his childish cries for mercy fell on deaf ears." In rhe *Nation,* Till was "a visiting Negro boy"; in *Commonweal,* he was "the boy from Chicago"; and in *Newsweek,* he was "a polite and mild-mannered" boy who enjoyed "Little League ball" and had "near-perfect attendance at Sunday School," according to those who knew him best.[57] So, too, in such papers as rhe *New York Times, Chicago Tribune,* and *Washington Post,* Till was consistently described as an unthreatening "boy."[58]

That progressive white editors and reporters felt compelled to generate support for Till, and disgust at the crime, by assuring readers of the harmlessness of the boy is noteworthy but hardly remarkable. Appreciating the power of the "Negro rapist" to stir white fears in the North and the South, progressive papers reflexively cast Till as a boy, which neatly sidestepped questions of intent. By describing Till as a fourteen-year-old Little League–playing Sunday school–attending boy, they placed him safely in a world that was popularly understood as without sex. Although some of the reporters who stressed Till's youth may have bought into the myth of the Negro rapist and so could vilify the crime only if they cast its victim as a boy, just as likely a sizable percentage of whites emphasized age as a pragmatic means of defusing a potent symbolic threat. That reporters perpetuated the mythology—in arguing that Till was

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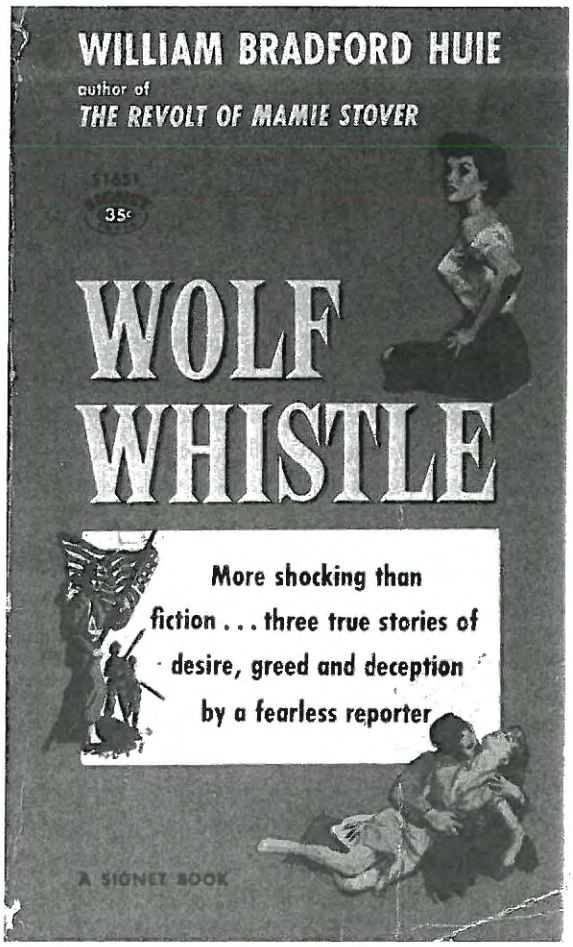


60 Unknown artist, cover of *Wolf Whistle,* 1959. Signet Books. Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries, Oxford, Mississippi.

no threat instead of refuting the stereotype itself—simply reveals the power of the myth to shape white public perceptions at midcentury.

What is remarkable, however, is the press's fixation on the murder of children. It is one thing for newspapers to make a tactical decision to desexualize Till by stressing his age and propriety, but it is quite another for northern reporters to make the involvement of children (or adults possessing childlike qualities) a near requirement for the sympathetic coverage of white-on-black violence. When a focus on the innocent and helpless precludes attention to and sympathy for the politically active and strong, then sympathy for kids becomes part of the

racial problem. The compassion and concern that northern whites showed for a black child victimized by southern whites were admirable, but their feelings were for a nonthreatening individual rather than for blacks per se. In many ways, whites were concerned for black children *despite* their race. In highlighting white concern for Till or the children of the Birmingham campaign, we risk overlooking the significant limitations of white empathy. If Emmett Till had been fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen years old in 1955, how many whites today would know his name?

By the time of the Birmingham campaign—eight years after Emmett Till's murder—the dynamics of feeling that drove the white response to the murder remained largely intact, despite the significant expansion of economic and social opportunities available to nonwhites. We have seen many documented episodes of violence against black adults that elicited little or no mention in the white press and generated no national outrage. Examples cited in this book alone include incidents in Belzoni, Brookhaven, Greenwood, and Jackson, Mississippi, in Nashville, Tennessee, and in Albany, Birmingham, and Marion, Alabama. But the same was true for much of the violence against black children, as the historian Renee C. Romano points out. Her study of how Americans remember the civil rights struggle highlights the disparate coverage accorded to female and male black youths killed in Birmingham in 1963.

Just as the accord reached by black negotiators and the white city establishment to end the Birmingham protests began to show its first tentative results, whites killed six black children in the city. On September 15, 1963, members of a local offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan killed eleven-year-old Denise McNair and fourteen-year-olds Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Wesley in a Sunday morning bombing that targeted worshipers in Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. The Klansmen aimed to provoke a black backlash against whites, hoping to create sufficient fear in moderate whites to scuttle the accord. The same day, thirteen-year-old Virgil Ware was shot to death as he rode on the handlebars of his brother's bicycle, gunned down by a white Eagle Scout returning from a segregationist rally; and sixteen-year-old Johnnie Robinson was shot in the back by police after he threw rocks at a car in the chaos that followed the bombing.

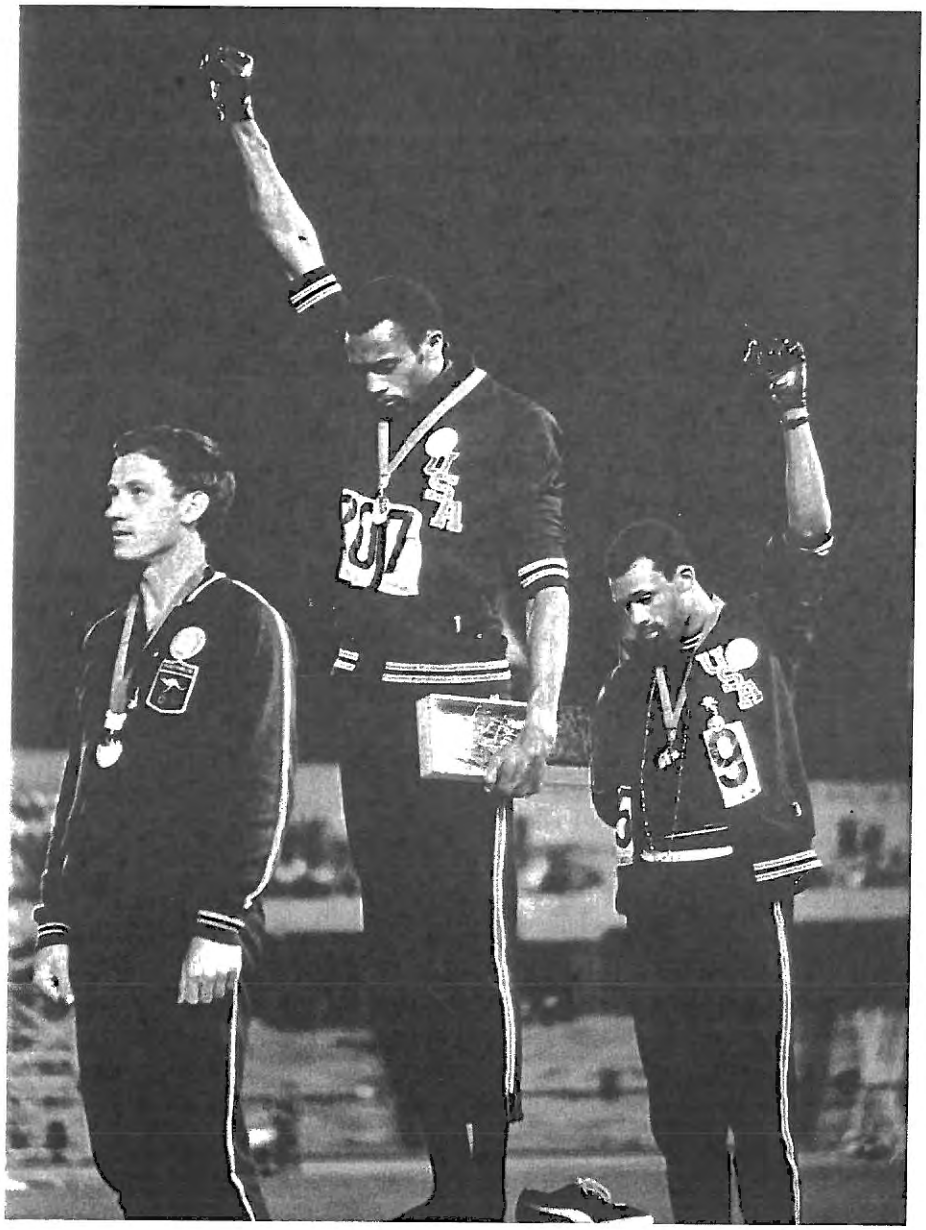
Romano points out that the deaths of the "four little girls," as the bombing victims were consistently labeled in the press, were national news while the murders of the boys were little reported. And she notes that sympathy for the female victims was encouraged by press accounts that consistently depicted them as helpless and angelic "little girls" who were in Sunday School, not protesting in the streets.[59] The point is not simply that the white media showed greater interest in and sympathy for black victims who were female (and presumably less politically active and physically threatening) but that the coverage managed to generate white emotion by downplaying the motivations for the crime. Whites were pained by the murders of McNair,

Robertson, Collins, and Wesley because the victims were "little girls," even though the Ku Klux Klan members who bombed their church selected it because its congregants were black. The often-repeated "four little girl" mantra effectively erased the part of the victims' identity that made them targets in the first place. In 1955, as in 1963, the media coverage of and white reactions to the deaths of blacks strongly suggest that white sympathy for victimized children masked a disinterest in the suffering of blacks.

One may begin to understand the ease with which white Americans accomplished their visual boycott of Witherspoon on the ground and Till in his casket by recalling their propensity to circulate only those images readily framed within mainstream accounts of the civil rights movement. Because a large pool of less controversial images was available for narrating their preferred account of the struggle, whites felt little pressure to grapple with the social and political implications of contentious photographs of black protest. The efforts of white publications to define and guide the national conversation on civil rights were complicated, however, when nonstandard photographs of blacks fighting for legal or economic rights leaked into the public sphere. From time to time, atypical photographs dealing with civil rights themes were widely reproduced because they addressed topics of undeniable interest to whites. Published in spite of their connections to civil rights, such photographs opened the door to alternative accounts of the struggle. Nowhere is this potential more in evidence than in the John Dominis photograph of Tommie Smith and John Carlos's 1968 Olympic medal protest in Mexico City (figure 61).

Readers will appreciate that the photograph of Smith and Carlos is not an obvious image for inclusion in a book on civil rights. The men look nothing like the stoic black protestors mauled by police dogs or taunted by mobs. If the photographs of Birmingham depicted safe images of respectful and inactive "Negroes," those of Mexico City show threatening scenes of resentful and aggressive blacks. For white audiences in the 1960s, the athletes' protest had associations with menacing and widely disseminated images of black power. From the late 1960s to the present, the image has been grouped with such infamous photographs as the 1967 portrait of Huey P. Newton, cofounder of Oakland's Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, seated in his thronelike chair armed with rifle and spear (figure 62); the Black Panthers roaming the corridors of the California Capitol in Sacramento with their rifles and shotguns in 1967; or the Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of black students marching confidently with shotguns, rifles, and ammunition belts after their occupation of Willard Straight Hall at Cornell University in 1969 (figure 63).

The ubiquitous Newton portrait was staged by Eldridge Cleaver, shot by a professional (white) photographer hired by the Panthers, and subsequently turned into a popular fund-raising poster that circulated widely in both radical circles and the mainstream press. As Bobby



61 John Dominis, *Black Power Salute at Olympic Games,* Mexico City, Mexico, October 16, 1968. Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images, Los Angeles, California.

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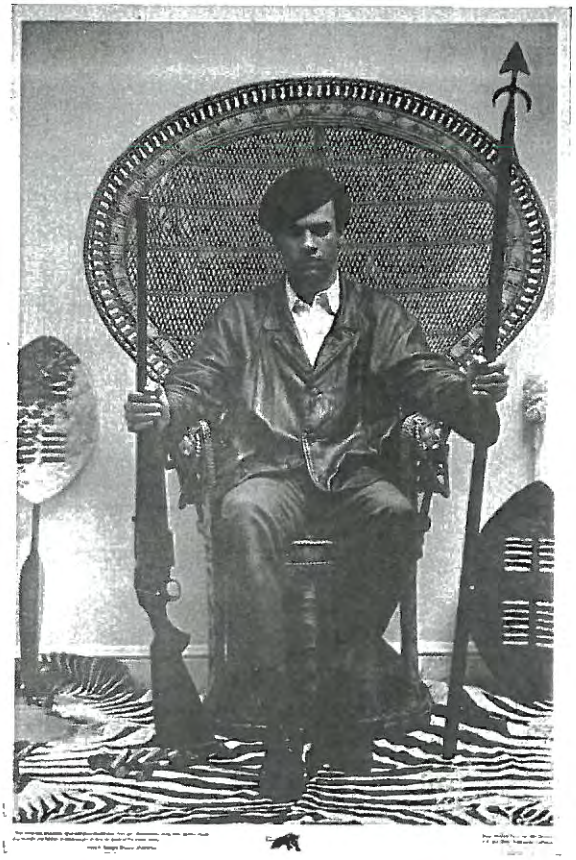

62 Unknown photographer, *Huey P. Newton,* 1967. Offset print on paper, 58.4 × 88.9 cm. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Prints and Photographs Division.

Seale explained in his history of the Black Panther Party, by showing Newton armed with Zulu shields, rifle, and spear, the portrait sought to offer the black community of Oakland a strong affirmative symbol around which to rally.[60] If the canonical images of civil rights scripted the identity of black activists as the product of violent whites, the photograph of Smith and Carlos with their medals and Newton with his weapons illustrate black men as self-fashioned and powerful agents whose identities are not contingent on the actions of whites.

But while the photograph of Smith and Carlos has the look of images of black power, its underlying strategies come straight from the civil rights movement. The athletes' tactic of pinning political buttons to their track jackets and displaying shoeless feet and black socks to visualize their political commitments and the poverty and racism that oppressed them at home

63 Steve Starr, *Heavily Armed Black Students Leave Straight Hall at Cornell University,* Ithaca, New York, April 20, 1969. AP/Wide World Photos and Steve Starr, New York.

was in keeping with the approaches of civil rights organizations in the first half of the 1960s. King and the SCLC in Birmingham, John Lewis and the SNCC in Selma, and James L. Farmer and CORE in Chicago all worked to create narratives that underscored their beliefs and the many impediments faced by American blacks. In contrast to Smith and Carlos's protest, the famous scenes of "black power" rarely highlighted the social, economic, or legal obsracles facing blacks; instead, they resolutely expressed black strength. The photograph of the Olympic athletes, with its evident links to both iconic civil rights and black power imagery, can thus be read as a transitional image that charts the decade's shifting emphasis from civil rights to black power. But considering its forceful articulation of black agency *and* the social and economic barriers nonwhites face, the image is best seen as a noncanonical expression of civil rights activism that equates black action with reform. As a well-known image that portrays assertive blacks peacefully articulating the inequalities of American society, the photograph is one of the 1960s' most progressive images of the civil rights movement.

Because mainstream media saw the agency of the athletes as incompatible with the tactics and agenda of the civil rights movement, their response to the photograph was overwhelmingly negative. With a few notable exceptions, whites issued scathing attacks. National newspapers

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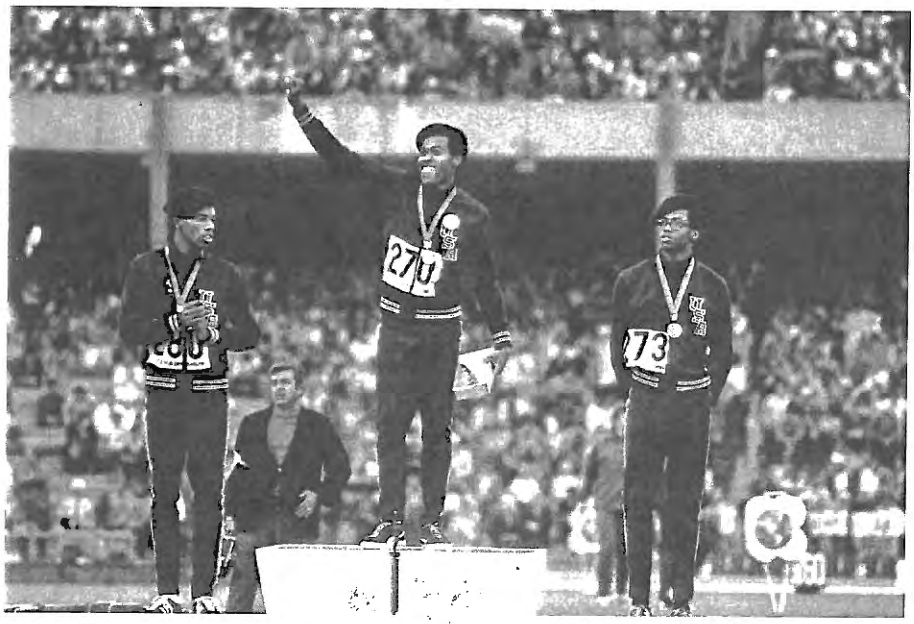
and magazines deemed the display "juvenile," "immature," "disgraceful, insulting and embarrassing." They accused the athletes of doing "irreparable damage" to American race relations and of "politicizing" the Olympics. Reporters frequently compared the men to storm troopers, Nazis, and, amazingly, to Hitler himself.[61] The *New York Times* summed up the sentiments of many whites: "Smith and Carlos brought their [politics] smack into the Olympic Games, where it did not belong, and created a shattering situation that shook this international sports carnival to its very core."[62] In the aftermath of the protest, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) at first simply admonished the athletes for their actions, but after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) weighed in, it stripped the two sprinters of their team credentials and expelled them from the Olympic village. Avery Brundage, the deeply conservative American president of the IOC, pressured the USOC to take this harsh line in order to send a message to other athletes who might be considering protests.

As news of the expulsions spread, many in the press speculated about whether the accomplished black American sprinter Lee Evans would run his upcoming race in the 400 meters, and if so, whether he would stage a demonstration should he win a medal. Evans was known to be close to Smith, sympathetic to the aims of the protesrors, and deeply troubled by the USOC's willingness to expel his teammates. Once Evans announced his intention to run, Americans anxiously awaited the competition and the medal ceremony to follow.[63] Evans won the 400-meter race in world-record time and shared the award podium with two fellow black Americans, Larry James and Ron Freeman. The three emerged for the ceremony wearing black berets and as they mounted the podium acknowledged the applause of the crowd with black power salutes (figure 64). After each runner received his medal, he stretched his arm upward in a stiff, closed-hand salute. With the raising of the flags, however, the athletes removed their berets, turned toward the U.S. flags, and stood at attention during the playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The differences in the protesrs staged by the winners of the 200-meter and 400-meter races struck virtually all American observers as significant. In the opening to a lengthy article on Evans's victory for the *San Jose Mercury News*, "Evans Scores 'Double' Via Record, Humility," a sports reporter wrote, "San Jose's Lee Evans struck a double victory for the United States here Friday afternoon as he ran the fastest 400 meters in history (43.8) to win an Olympic Games gold medal. Later on the victory stand where he was crowned the supreme 400-meter in the world Lee accepted his honors with grace along with his teammates Larry James and Ron Freeman." As the article made clear, the "double" of its headline referred to the combination of a world record with good behavior. While the reporter mentioned the athletes' berets later in the article, he did so only to note that the caps were "doffed" during the flag raising and the national anthem.[64]

The *Los Angeles Times* provided a more complete description of the men's actions but was



64 Bill Eppridge, *Lee Evans, Larry James, and Ronald Freeman on the Victory Stand for the 400-Meter Race at the Summer Olympics,* Mexico City, Mexico, October 18, 1968. Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images, Los Angeles, California.

just as sanguine about the scene. The reporter noted that the athletes "were wearing black berets when they appeared for the victory ceremony. Upon mounting the stand, they acknowledged the crowd's applause by raising clenched hands. But they stood at attention, with their hats off and their arms at their side, during the playing of the National Anthem. [The President of the USOC] Roby said later that their conduct during the ceremony was 'perfectly all right.'"[65] The acting director of the USOC went further, claiming, "Everything worked out fine. Lee Evans accepted his medal in fine style."[66] In its coverage of the 400-meter race, the *New York Times* maintained that the expulsion of Smith and Carlos "obviously tempered the behavior of Negro American athletes who were involved in victory ceremonies today. In accepting their medals for their one, two, three sweep of the 400-meter run, Lee Evans, Larry James and Ron Freeman wore black berets, but in no way conducted themselves in a manner to incur official wrath." Bending over backward to differentiate the protests from one another, the reporter commented, "On arriving at the victory platform and on leaving it, they did raise clenched fists, but they were smiling and apparently not defiant as they did so."[67]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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1968

Some Negro Athletes Threaten to 'Go Home' Along With Smith and Carlos

'WHITE ONES, TOO,' CONNOLLY STATES

But Boxers Will Carry On —Gursmen Sympathetic, but They Will Continue

BLACK POWER GESTURE: Tommie Smith, at center, and John Carlos after receiving medals for their performances in the 200-meter dash on Wednesday. Also on platform, at left, is Peter Norman of Australia, who finished second.

NOT QUITE THE SAME THING: Larry James, left, Lee Evans, center, and Ron Freeman, at the three U.S. runners who swept the Olympic 400-meter run, raise their arms in a black power gesture during the presentation of their medals, one of their teammates, Smith and Carlos, had been suspended from the Olympic squad for raising the same gesture, but that incident had taken place while the National Anthem was being played.

U.S. FIVE DEFEATS PANAMA, 95 TO 60

Haywood Gets 23 Points as Team Wins Fifth in Row

Sports Today

U.S. Team Suspends Smith and Carlos

U.S. CYCLISTS FAIL

Today's Olympic Schedule

65 From the *New York Times,* © October 19, 1968. The New York Times. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of the material without express written permission is prohibited. Page reprint courtesy of PARS International Corporation, New York.

Two days later, the *New York Times* provided an even more circumspect report. After reminding readers of the political nature of Smith and Carlos's protest, the reporter suggested that their action left Evans "on the spot." Still, the reporter expressed pleasure with Evans's postrace performance, noting that the athlete "stood with chin held high during the flag-raising ceremonies a half-smile on his proud face." While dealing extensively with the issue of black power at the Olympics, the reporter made no mention of berers or salutes in describing the 400-meter medals ceremony.[68] For many Americans, the distinctions between the two protests were summed up succinctly by a third report in the *New York Times.* The article juxtaposed photographs of the two presentation ceremonies (figure 65), but whereas the caption for the

photograph of Smith and Carlos's protest began with "Black Power Gesture," that of Evans and his comrades started with "Not Quite the Same Thing."[69]

Certainly, Smith and Carlos, on the one hand, and Evans, James, and Freeman, on the other, staged distinctive protests, but the tendency of white observers in 1968 to see the latter protest as "graceful," "in fine style," even "exemplary," given its obvious formal similarities to the more disparaged display, is noteworthy.[70] Perhaps Americans were simply relieved that the 400-meter medalists had declined to ratchet up the protest. Whatever statement the second group's protest made about "black power," the athletes' decision to stand at attention during the playing of the national anthem likely struck Americans as a pulling back from the display of Smith and Carlos, who chose that moment to lower their heads and salute. In other words, the more positive reception accorded Evans and his fellow medalists stemmed from interpretations of their protest as more moderate, regardless of the statement it made. White Americans interpreted the latter ceremony as a turning point in their fears about a protest-filled Olympics; as a reporter noted with relief after the 400-meter medal ceremony, "the worst seems over."[71]

The historian Douglas Hartmann argues in his detailed study of the racial politics of athletic protest in 1968 that Smith and Carlos's demonstration unsettled white America by injecting blackness into a forum that was traditionally coded as white (and, incidentally for my argument, as middle class, Christian, and male). Hartmann claims that the protest made black bodies visible at a moment when white Americans did not expect to register their blackness.[72] Of course, whites never "forgot" what race the well-behaved black champions were; they simply allowed black athletes to stand in for an implicitly white America at their moment of Olympic triumph. Once such athletes returned home, their blackness was sufficiently visible—regardless of their behavior—for whites to refuse them service, employment, and equality of opportunity. Hartmann is correct to root the controversy in Smith and Carlos's insistence that they be seen as black, but his observations complicate efforts to explain the apparent acceptability of the protest by Evans, James, and Freeman. Even if the actions of the 400-meter victors were more palatable than those of the black 200-meter medalists, no one in the United States in the late 1960s saw the dark-skinned, black-beret-wearing men with fists raised on an Olympic medal podium as anything but black.

The historian Mike Marqusee has argued that whites saw Smith and Carlos's protest as a rejection of "the rhetoric of individual victory and national glory" and, ultimately, as a "repudiation of the United States."[73] He suggests that whites perceived the athletes to be placing their racial identities ahead of their national affiliations with the United States. Whereas whites could see the medal performance of Evans and his teammates as a sign that the athletes considered their blackness to be of secondary importance to their Americanness (given that berets and fists disappeared with the playing of the national anthem), they purportedly read the op-

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posite message in Smith and Carlos's display. After all, the 200-meter medalists made their strongest assertion of blackness during the playing of their national anthem. While both protests took liberties with the traditional medal ceremony, Evans's remained within its governing logic by signaling that blackness was ultimately subordinate to his identification as American.

Smith and Carlos surely stirred emotion by seeming to elevare their race over their nation. But I am confident that this was nor the protest's most controversial aspect for audiences in the 1960s. More unnerving for white Americans was rhe demonstration's presentation of a heterogeneous identity that undermined rhe racial and national identities of many whites. The problem was not simply that the arhletes signaled rheir blackness at a moment when white audiences wished to acknowledge only the "American" aspect of their identity but that they demonstrated rhe possibility of being black *and* American simultaneously. In other words, the raising of clenched fists by athletes electing to wear jackets emblazoned with "USA" during the playing of their national anthem just as readily signaled blackness *and* Americanness as blackness *over* Americanness.

As the black power separatists caricarured in the press, Smith and Carlos generated unease among whites, but as the triumphant athletes of the medal ceremony, who were emphatically both black and American, they were much more destabilizing. By making blackness unmistakable during a ceremony that was popularly understood as a celebration of American accomplishment, the athletes complicated white Americans' easy conflation of "American" with "white." In the symbolism of Smith and Carlos's protest, blackness was not subordinated to Americanness but, more powerfully, was staged as Americanness. Blacks have historically faced greater danger when they have distupted the boundaries of race than when they have matked their separation from white America. As the violenr response to Till's comparatively tame interaction with Carolyn Bryant illustrates, perceived attacks on the boundaries of whiteness have long been vigorously rebuffed. This observation helps explain why a silent, peaceful protest that lasted less rhan two minutes generated a fever of white emotion that would follow Smith and Carlos for decades, ensuring that they paid a heavy economic, familial, and psychological ptice for their statement in Mexico City.[74]

Since most whites who bought into the idea of America as white did not consciously apprehend their investment or perceive how the protest complicated their belief, it is unsurprising that they failed to publicly express the root of their unease. Despite claiming that their primary concern was with the inappropriate nature of a protest they deemed "juvenile," "disgraceful," or "political," critics expended considerable energy reframing the racial identities of the athletes. Notwithstanding their assertions, detractors proceeded as if the legitimacy of the protest hinged on racial definitions.

Mainstream reporters made selective use of Smith and Carlos's words to cast the athletes into more reassuring—one-dimensional—identities. Nervous white Americans in the 1960s tended to fixate on Smith and Carlos's postrace press conference assertions of "black pride," which neatly fit with narratives then circulating about the dangers of black separatists and the black power movement. For example, in its lengthy discussion of the Olympic protest, *Time* magazine quoted only the most sensationalist snippets from the press conference. Its first direct quote from either man was Smith's comment "We are black and proud to be black."[75] The *San Francisco Chronicle* compressed Smith's explanation for the protest to the point that his argument became impossible to follow. According to the *Chronicle,* Smith said, "We are black and proud to be black. White Americans will only give us credit for being Olympic Champions, but black Americans will understand."[76] While these white reporters would have found the comparison unsettling, their presentation of Smith and Carlos showed remarkable affinity with the athletes' characterizations in the Oakland-based *Black Panther* newspaper. In a front-page tribute to the athletes, the paper acknowledged that a mere salute was hardly the kind of action that the Panthers traditionally advocated, yet it lauded Smith and Carlos for their bravery, noting that they "proved not only that they are outstanding athletes, but first and foremost—that they are black men."[77]

Negro and *black* were not interchangeable terms in 1968: the latter label carried a decidedly political charge. By the second half of the 1960s, *black* was closely associated with the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers, and as the social scientist Tom W. Smith points out, those who embraced the label tended to hold more radical views on racial politics.[78] It was no coincidence that the most conservative white reporters used the term to describe the athletes or that they isolated the athletes' assertions of "blackness" from their larger arguments. Rather than making emergent notions of black identity intelligible to their readers, white reporters chose to discredit the athletes' complaints by linking the men to the politics of black extremists. In tying the sprinters to groups that frightened whites, and that were thoroughly demonized in mainstream culture, the press helped discredit both the athletes and the issues they risked so much to raise.

Foreign reporters, who had less at stake in the protest and greater interest in allowing the athletes to speak for themselves, provided better context. In contrast to the coverage in *Time,* the *San Francisco Chronicle,* and even the *Black Panther,* the *London Times* quoted Smith's black pride comment in the context of his larger point: "If I win I am an American, not a black American. But if I did something bad then they would say 'a Negro.' We are black and we are proud of being black. Black America will understand what we did tonight."[79] When asked the next day by the ABC sports reporter Howard Cosell if he was "proud to be an American," Smith showed consistency in his response: "I'm proud to be a black American."[80] Thus, he did

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not reject the appellarion of "American"; he rejected being labeled "an American" when he won and "a Negro" when he lost. He rejected the white gesture of linking him to an implicitly white America in the moment of his triumph, knowing that he'd be a Negro again (or worse) after returning to the United States. Significantly, he embraced the identity of "black American" instead.

In contrast to his portrayal in both the mainstream white press and the radical black media, Smith did not style himself solely as "black." While the loaded label of "black" allowed significant numbers of whites, and some blacks, to interpret the protest as the athletes' rejection of their nationality, the "black American" label that Smith embraced presented a more complex and emotionally fraught picture. This picture is borne out by the work of contemporary social scientists on racial identification, which notes the paucity of evidence indicating that blacks link their racial identity to opposition to whites. The white commonplace that "black" is the racial pole of "white" oversimplifies and does not do justice to the lived experience of identity for black Americans.[81]

Some sympathetic Americans saw the protest in the terms articulated by Smith. A reporter in Mexico City quoted a comment by the black American Olympic long sprinter Vincent Mathews that the protest "was in no way intended to be an insult to the American flag." His teammate the high jumper Ed Caruthers concurred, explaining that "the action of Smith and Carlos was not against the American flag, bur 'a sign of black power.'"[82] While many whites in 1968 had difficulty appreciating how black power could be anything but disrespect for the flag, Mathews and Caruthers clearly saw the two as compatible. A supportive letter writer to the *New York Times* made the idea more explicit: "The arrogant attitude of the United States Olympic Committee in evicting the two black athletes from the Olympic Games in Mexico City for their gesture of black unity during an awards ceremony in which they had won medals for the U.S.A. is unforgivable. In an interview, I heard one of these athletes affirm that he was a black American. He was not disavowing the U.S.A."[83] This letter writer, at least, saw no inherent problem with "black Americans" identifying with the United States.

Years after his protest in Mexico City, Smith summed up for a reporter the complex emotional relationship that blacks in the 1960s had with their American national identity. Of his moment atop the Olympic medal podium, he said, "I never felt such a rush of pride. Even hearing 'The Star-Spangled Banner' was pride, even though it didn't totally represent the country I represented, can you see that? They say we demeaned the flag. Hey, no way man. That's my flag. . . . But I couldn't salute it in the accepted manner, because it didn't represent me fully; only to the extent of asking me to be great on the tunning track, then obliging me ro come home and be just another nigger."[84] A sympathetic letter writer ro *Newsweek* in 1968 seems to have understood this point years before Smith publicly articulated his ambivalence:

"Do we expect black athletes to bring just their talents and not themselves to the Olympics? . . . . The black protest was fitting because it pointed up the fact that Negroes were asked to represent a nation that does not fully represent them."[85]

A number of contemporary observers went further, noting that the protest effectively visualized the duality of black identity. After expressing distress with the U.S. Olympic Committee's decision to expel Smith and Carlos, a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* defended the "symbolic" gesture of the athletes, which "beautifully . . . expressed the duality of their national allegiance." The letter writer noted the irony that the "duality" that white Americans found so upsetting in the protest "was not created by so-called black Americans; it has been ruthlessly insisted upon by the overwhelming majority of their so-called white fellow countrymen over 300 years of repression and disdain."[86] A white columnist for the black *New York Amsterdam News* labeled the men "champions of the best of the best" and praised their efforts to "symbolize their problems for the world to see . . . and proclaim by these small symbols that they were black Americans bringing honor to their country." Their gesture did nothing more, she argued, than declare "to the world, 'We are Americans who are brown skinned.'"[87]

Had a majority of white Americans viewed Smith and Carlos's protest as a simple assertion of black pride or black separatism or even as a condemnation of the United States, they would not likely have reacted with such ferocity. While whites would certainly have interpreted each of these expressions as an assault on their sense of self, such external assaults were not the most potent threats. However, the effort to redefine "Americanness" to include blackness was an internal attack on identity that was vastly more destabilizing. As supportive blacks and whites and many hostile whites believed, the photograph encouraged viewers to see black Americans as not "fully represented" by their nation as it expanded the meaning of national belonging. For many Americans, the most radical aspect of the protest was its racial inclusiveness—its call to imagine a flag that stood for the athletes, their black teammates, and their fellow nonwhite citizens at home. Some fifteen years before the Reverend Jesse Jackson would popularize the term *African-American* as the new *black,* Smith and Carlos performed their hyphenated identities before millions of their fellow citizens.[88] That few whites then embraced this more nuanced understanding of black identity has at least as much to do with their investment in an implicitly white nationalism as with their subjective complaints about the inappropriateness of the protest. The athletes' assertion of power was sufficient to exclude the image from the canon of civil rights photographs, but as the complex reactions of the public suggest, this was by no means the most contentious feature of the protest.

During the 1960s, few whites could differentiate among the diverse tactics used by black activists in support of civil rights goals. White viewers flattened out the variety and nuance of

black protest by rigidly enforcing restrictive criteria for defining an action or image as one of "civil rights." The altruistic desire of whites to promote "appealing" or "productive" images—their predisposition to connect with certain narratives and their psychological need to avoid scenes that cast too harsh a light on their race—excluded many scenes of black activism from the canon. Once an image was ghettoized as a scene of "black power," it was much less likely to alter the racial attitudes of whites, never mind help to catalyze structural change. Thus, the power of such images rested mainly in their effect on blacks.

In reflecting on the legacy of the 1960s, the literary scholar Jerry Watts has noted the tendency of left-leaning academics to fixate on the "success" or "failure" of various reform movements to promote structural change—the gold standard of those in the academy. Watts counters that such judgments fail to account for the significant changes that the 1960s brought to the lived experience of blacks. Without glossing over the limitations of period reforms, he urges us to consider the transformations experienced by the poor black residents of Greene County, Alabama; Farmville, Virginia; or Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He asks us to consider what the civil rights movement meant to those at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in 1960s America. In Watts's estimation, the movement allowed the most powerless and victimized people in American society "to *act*": "The act of becoming politicized, of claiming a space and identity, where there had previously been only silence, was, given the historical and social circumstances of southern blacks, as radical an act as occurred in the 1960s."[89] Smith and Carlos not only acted but, by their example, showed millions of black Americans that action was a viable option for blacks. While the white media could alter or obscure many aspects of the protest, it could not hide the power of the athletes to act. It is surely this public exercise of power, more than a straightforward iconographic understanding of the men's shoeless feet, salutes, and gloves, that Smith alluded to when he said, "Black America will understand what we did tonight."

In the 1960s, Americans of all political stripes saw powerful black actors in Dominis's widely circulated photograph, yet no one credited the image with promoting white sympathy for blacks or helping to alter the underlying conditions of American society. Given this "failure," readers may question my assertion in this book that photographs of black agency hold promise for catalyzing meaningful change. Yet real-world reform requires more than upping the number of images portraying "active" blacks. Given that audiences tend to read images through their racial values, additional photographs of active blacks offer no guarantee of more productive social narratives. For Dominis's photograph to realize its transformative potential, it also required a new kind of white viewer—one who would approach the photograph with an expansive model of identity, or who would sympathetically frame the image in the public sphere.

In chapter 3, I suggest that white identification with blacks could have transformed the meanings of the Birmingham photographs. Had whites seen *their* people menaced by dogs and high-pressure water jets, the canonical images of the struggle would have performed more progressive racial work. Blacks' and whites' disparate understandings of the image of Gadsden's confrontation with the dog, deeming him an example of either activity or passivity, suggest that a more inclusive white understanding of Americanness might have reversed the social significance of the photograph for whites. Just as images of poor white farmers during the Depression or dead white soldiers during the Second World War touched American audiences by speaking to them of the plight of *their own boys,* so identification with *American* protestors in Birmingham or Mexico City could have pushed whites either to work for or to accept social and political changes for the national good.

In the mid-1960s, a handful of radical thinkers such as Bayard Rustin and Tom Kahn outlined a plan for increasing the percentage of whites who identified with the civil rights cause. Neither activist believed that whites needed to identify racially or even nationally with blacks; rather, each saw the potential of the civil rights movement to unify blacks and working-class whites by shifting the emphasis to economic equality. Rustin and Kahn argued that disempowered whites and blacks could be made to see that the economic interests they shared were more significant than the racial differences that had historically kept them apart. Noting that a broad coalition of whites and blacks worked effectively together to stage the March on Washington, pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and lay the basis for President Johnson's "landslide" election victory, Rustin optimistically proclaimed in 1964 that "Negroes, trade unionists, liberals and religious groups" could form "a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the *effective* political majority in the United States."[90]

Echoing Rustin's views, Kahn argued that an attack on economic barriers to equality was "in the Negro's own interest," and "open[ed] new possibilities for alliances and for social action by whites in *their* own interests." He explained, "The sympathy of whites need not be purchased by a cooling off of Negro militancy—which the objective circumstances of Negro life make impossible anyway. . . . The support of whites will finally be won and secured by militant action that tears down the structural obstacles to Negro freedom, and, in so doing, frees whites from institutional arrangements that bind them to the old order" of inequality.[91] Implicit in Kahn's assessment is the belief that the "militancy" of a protest such as Smith and Carlos's need not drive away working-class whites, provided it communicates an economic call for social justice that resonates with other disadvantaged groups.

Even for whites unable to join blacks in embracing larger, more inclusive identities, the possibility existed to diminish their fear of active blacks. Certainly, mass media outlets in the 1960s presented images of powerful blacks that reinforced white fantasies of black hypervio-

lence. Examples include the white press's presentation of Cooper struggling with police, the image of Newton armed in his chair, and the depiction of Smith and Carlos frozen in salute. In each case, popular narratives associated with strong and forceful blacks served the psychological needs of whites—rallying them together in fear of an external threat and occluding the need for meaningful reform. For such photographs to promote progressive racial reforms, they required framing—with captions, text, and companion imagery—that disrupted the predisposition of whites to see expressions of black power as aberrant and threatening. Whites needed ro understand the black struggle in the terms of the activists themselves. Such an understanding could not come through liberals' speculations about black thoughts, for such fanciful leaps only confirm what the imaginer believes, but through whites' listening to black voices so that they could view the struggle from a racial perspective far from their own. As we have seen in example after example, the absence of black perspectives left both liberal and conservative whites to filter the struggle through their shared racial lens, which had nothing to do with black life.

Listening to the voices of others does not necessarily cause one to accept their views, though it remains the minimum requirement for judging the legitimacy of their claims. Nonetheless, efforts to place black actions and demands in context can pay significant dividends, compelling whites ro see the complexity of black belief, enabling them ro appreciate that nonwhites are driven by many of the same values all Americans share, and, ultimately, humanizing blacks in the white imagination. Since political change is frequently driven by small groups of organized, passionate, and vocal citizens, photographs of powerful blacks need not appeal to a majority of whites to prove effective. After all, iconic civil rights photographs are credited with catalyzing reforms despite the lack of sympathy many whites in the North and the South felt for the protestors' cause.

Reframing would have been the easiesr way to begin rewriting the meaning of black protest, given rhat it did not require the invention of new contexts for seeing the virtues of black agency. Because a tiny minority of whites in 1968 read Smith and Carlos's protest as a strong and peaceful statement that visualized valid racial complaints, editors and reporters needed only to present this preexisting view with sensitivity to a broader audience. In the wake of the protest, the editors of *Life* noted that Smith and Carlos "are not separatists. They do not believe in violence. They are dedicated to . . . gaining digniry and equality for all black people"; a white reporter for rhe *New York Amsterdam News* saw them as "champions of the best of the best [who] srood above the crowds . . . and proclaimed by these small symbols that they were black Americans bringing honor to their country"; and a white reporter covering the Olympics for the *Christian Science Monitor* even described the photograph as "a silent but unmistakable civil rights protest."[92] The sentiments expressed by such outlier whites show that the context

then existed for draining Smith and Carlos's protest of its violent threat. Missing was the will of a critical number of white reporters and editors to place the case before millions of moderate and liberal whites. Sympathetic framing in dozens of national newscasts, newspapers, and magazines would have ignited a firestorm of controversy, but it would also have launched a substantive dialogue on race, which is the only route to peaceful and far-reaching reform.

67 King, *Stride toward Freedom,* 113.

68 For more on the operation of nonviolent persuasion, see Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 117–82.

69 Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary,* February 1964, reprinted in Rustin, *Down the Line,* 117; for Rustin's influence on King's position, see Garrow, *Bearing the Cross,* 439.

4. THE LOST IMAGES OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Epigraph: Russell Meek, letter to the editor, *Chicago Daily Defender,* May 13, 1963, 12.

1 Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 379. For period mention of white Birmingham papers' unwillingness to publish photographs of the campaign, see Bill Garrison, "Struggle!" *Muhammad Speaks,* May 13, 1963, 8. For a discussion of how Birmingham's white radio stations refrained from reporting on the protests and how white station owners pressured all but one local black station to follow suit, see Julian Williams, "Black Radio and Civil Rights: Birmingham, 1956–1963," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 12:1 (May 2005): 47–60.

2 For reproductions of the UPI photograph in the black press, see "We Have Won in Birmingham," *New York Amsterdam News,* May 11, 1963, 1; "This Is America—1963," *Chicago Daily Defender,* May 7, 1963, 1; A. S. "Doc" Young, "Shame on America!" *Los Angeles Sentinel,* May 9, 1963, 1; "Dirty Tactics Used in Birmingham, Ala.," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 18, 1963, 3; "Arrest Ala. Style," *Afro-American (Baltimore, MD),* May 18, 1963, 6; Lerone Bennett Jr., "Mood of the Negro," *Ebony,* July 1963, 34; "Turned the Tide in Birmingham," *Jet,* May 23, 1963, 24–25. The UPI photograph of Witherspoon's arrest also appears in King's *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), in the photographic signature between pages 50 and 51.

3 "We Have Won," *Amsterdam News,* 1; Young, "Shame," 1, 4.

4 Simeon Booker, *Black Man's America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 150; Bennett, "Mood of the Negro," 34.

5 The UPI Witherspoon photograph appeared on the inside pages of the following white publications: "Birmingham: 'War,' " *New York Mirror,* May 7, 1963, 2; *Philadelphia Inquirer,* May 7, 1963, 14; "No Holds Barred," *New York Herald Tribune,* May 7, 1963, 12. I have located the AP version only in "Races: Freedom—Now," *Time,* May 17, 1963, 24. Both the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Daily News* reproduced photographs of Witherspoon struggling with police moments before she landed on her back. See Raymond R. Coffey, "Boy, 5, Asked for Jail, Too," *Boston Globe,* May 7, 1963, 44; *New York Daily News,* May 7, 1963, 1. The UPI version of the photograph that appeared in the black press also appeared with an

article by the black civil rights activist and communist James E. Jackson, "What Are You Doing about Birmingham?" *Daily Worker,* May 12, 1963, 12.

6 "Races: Freedom—Now," 24.

7 *Jet,* May 23, 1963, 24–25.

8 The Hudson photograph appeared in the following white publications: *Boston Globe, New York Daily News, New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle,* and *Newsweek;* and in the black publications *Jet* and *Muhammad Speaks.* It was not reproduced in the following black publications: *New York Amsterdam News, Afro-American (Baltimore, MD), Los Angeles Sentinel, Philadelphia Tribune, Birmingham World, Pittsburgh Courier, Chicago Daily Defender, Tri-State Defender (Memphis, TN),* or *Ebony.* For articles reproducing Hudson's photograph, see Claude Sitton, "Violence Explodes at Racial Protests in Alabama," *New York Times,* May 4, 1963, A-1; *New York Daily News,* May 4, 1963, 1; "Keeping Peace in Alabama—Police, Fire Hoses and Dogs," *New York Herald Tribune,* May 4, 1963, 1; "New Alabama Riot: Police Dogs, Fire Hoses Halt March," *Los Angeles Times,* May 4, 1963, 1; "Dogs and Fire Hoses Turned on Negroes: Marchers Sent Sprawling," *Chicago Tribune,* May 4, 1963, N-1, N-4; "Dogs and Fire Hoses Rout 3,000 Negroes," *Boston Globe,* May 4, 1963, 1; "Police Dogs, Hoses Smash Negro March," *San Francisco Chronicle,* May 4, 1963, 1; *Philadelphia Inquirer,* May 7, 1963, 14; "Birmingham, U.S.A.: 'Look at Them Run,'" *Newsweek,* May 13, 1963, 27. See also Alvin Adams, "Picture Seen around the World Changed Boy's Drop-Out Plan," *Jet,* October 10, 1963, 27; "Dogs vs. People?" *Muhammad Speaks,* May 13, 1963, 15.

9 The black photographer Chester Higgins Jr. said, "During the civil rights period, Charles Moore, being white and southern, had great advantages working in the South. I could not have done what he did." Quoted in Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 106. Ernest C. Withers made much the same point about Moore. Speaking specifically of Moore's Birmingham photographs, he told an interviewer, "Charles Moore being white, it was just a little, slight privilege to white photographers that black photographers didn't get that privilege to be that close to anything that was going on." Marshand Boone, "Oral History Interview with Ernest Withers," Syracuse University, Newhouse School, Civil Rights and the Press Center http://civilrightsandthepress.syr.edu/oral_histories.html. On the caption practices of the AP, see Julian Cox, *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1956–1968* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2008), 23.

10 "We Have Won," *Amsterdam News,* 1; "Dirty Tactics," *Pittsburgh Courier,* 3; Bennett, "Mood of the Negro," 34. The UPI caption for the photograph in the archives of CORBIS reads, "BXP050607-5/6/63-BIRMINGHAM, ALA; Unidentified Negro woman is

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14 Ibid., 16.

15 Ibid., 17.

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subdued by three policemen after she refused to be arrested quietly and began scuffling with an officer. She was taken away in handcuffs."

11 John Britton, "Victory in Birmingham Can Be Democracy's Finest Hour," *Jet,* May 2, 1963, 15. The illustration reproduced in figure 47, of the anonymous woman struggling against arrest, shows slightly different action from that in the *Jet* photograph. I was unable to secure the *Jet* image for reproduction.

12 Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 144–49. *New York Herald Tribune* article of August 22, 1965, cited in ibid., 144–45.

13 Albert C. "Buck" Persons, "How Images Are Created," in *The True Selma Story: Sex and Civil Rights* (Birmingham: Esco Publishers, Inc., 1965), 16, 18.

14 Ibid., 16.

15 Ibid., 17.

16 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984), 16, 36–37. For discussions of the stereotypes faced by black women, see Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991), 74–84; Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 272–73.

17 Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, "'Dress modestly, neatly . . . as if you were going to church': Respectability, Class and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement," in Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, eds., *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 84–86. Also see Ruth Feldstein, "'I Wanted the Whole World to See': Race, Gender, and Constructions of Motherhood in the Death of Emmett Till," in Joanne Meyerwitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 264–65; David A. J. Richards, *Disarming Manhood: Roots of Ethical Resistance* (Athens, GA: Swallow Press, 2005), 140–41; Steve Estes, *I Am a Man! Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For historical context, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 93–143.

18 The historian Ruth Feldstein argues that black organizers' decision to insist on dominant models of femininity among protestors advanced the cause of racial justice while reinscribing the inequalities of midcentury gender. Since women of color were forced to act out dominant gender norms that served the interests of men, they paradoxically promoted black rights partly at the expense of women's rights: "Deviations from approved . . . feminine behavior interfered with the possibility of racial progress." In Ruth Feldstein, *Mother-*

hood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 133.

19 A. S. "Doc" Young, "Shame on America!" *Los Angeles Sentinel,* May 9, 1963, 4.

20 "'Little Child Shall Lead Them,'" *Tri-State Defender (Memphis, TN),* May 25, 1963, 6.

21 "Dirty Tactics," *Pittsburgh Courier,* 3. A caption for photographs of dogs unleashed against young marchers in Birmingham, appearing on the same page of the *Courier* as the AP photograph, asks rhetorically about the animals and their handlers: "Brave Dogs and Men???"

22 Persons, *The True Selma Story,* 17.

23 On May 7, 1963, the *New York Mirror* reported that Witherspoon "failed to move on as ordered" (2), and the *New York Herald Tribune* said that she "refused to move on during prorest marches . . . and resisted rhe officers when ordered to leave" (12).

24 "Woman Slugs Sheriff in Selma as Negroes Line Up to Vote," *Washington Post,* January 26, 1965, 2; "Negro Woman Strikes Selma Sheriff in Face," *Los Angeles Times,* January 26, 1965, 3; "Selma Sheriff Clubs Negro Woman," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 26, 1965, 1, 8; "Fight Marks Selma Voter Registration," *Baltimore Sun,* January 26, 1965, 5; "Selma Negroes Register, Pace Slow; Sheriff Hit," *Hartford Courant,* January 26, 1965, 6; "Negro Woman Slugs Sheriff in Vote Drive," *Chicago Tribune,* January 26, 1965, 3, 9; "Woman Slugs Sheriff," *Washington Post,* 2. Cort's AP photograph of Cooper illustrates all of these articles, aside from the article in the *Baltimore Sun,* which uses a slightly different image by Cort. Black publications gave extensive print coverage to the incident bur less frequenrly illustrated their articles with phorographs; when they did so, they typically did not use Cort's photograph. Black accounts provided greater context for the violence, explaining that Clark "grabbed," "manhandled," or "removed forcibly" Martin Luther King from a registration line, and so provoked Cooper, or that he initiated a violent assault on the peaceful Cooper, to which she responded. They also report the excitement that average blacks in Selma felt in seeing Cooper's defiance and the disinterest of mainstream civil rights leaders, and the papers that supported them, in promoting such violence. See John Lynch, "Lady Slugs Sheriff in Selma Scuffle," *Chicago Daily Defender,* January 26, 1965, 3, 10; "Rev. King Back in Selma as Court Bans Registtation Interference," *Philadelphia Tribune,* January 26, 1965, 1, 2; "Praise Sheriff-Slugging 'Bama Matron's Courage," *Pittsburgh Courier,* January 30, 1965, 1; "34 Arrested, Woman Beaten in Selma Negro Vorer Drive," *Call and Post,* January 30, 1965, 1, 2; John H. Britton, "Selma Woman's Gitdle a Big Factor in Fight with Sheriff," *Jet,* February, 11, 1965, 6–8. The only black publications to include photographs of Cooper's struggle were the *Defender* and *Jet.* The former used a UPI image that is a much less graphic depiction of violence than those used in the white press. *Jet* provided a sequence of graphic photographs of the attack but did not use Cort's.

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25 "Civil Rights: Black Eye," *Newsweek,* February 8, 1965, 24; "Selma, Contd.," *Time,* February 5, 1965, 24.

26 For a description of Gadsden's size, see Adams, "Picture Seen around the World," 26.

27 John Britton documented the youngsters' experiences in "Cute Youngsrer Determined 'To Make rhis Land My Home,'" *Jet,* May 23, 1963, 18.

28 Amzie Moore quoted in Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 234–35.

29 David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 431, 437. For other scholars' assessments of the foundational nature of the incident and its representation in the modern civil rights struggle, see Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 44; Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 181; Christine Harold and Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8:2 (2005): 265.

30 One of the killers, J. W. Milam, used this phrase when he questioned a black child in Mose Wright's home. He repeated ir ro a reporter after his acquittal. In William Bradford Huie, "The Shocking Story of the Approved Killing in Mississippi," *Look,* January 24, 1956, 48. Curtis Jones, a cousin of Emmett's who went with him from Chicago to visit relatives in Mississippi, reports that the men who came to the house asked for "the one who did the talking." Quoted in Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 4.

31 Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003), 135–39; Federal Bureau of Investigation, report on Emmett Till murder, prepared February 9, 2006, Case ID# 44A-JN-30112 & 62D-JN-30045, 99; available at http://foia.fbi.gov/till/till.pdf.

32 Bradley's comment was widely reported in the black press. See "3rd Lynching of Year Shocks Nation," *Afro-American (Baltimore, MD),* September 10, 1955, 2. Mamie Bradley, "I Want You to Know What They Did to My Boy," speech delivered at Bethel AME Church, Baltimore, Maryland, October 29, 1955, quoted in Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954–1965* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 137–38.

33 Theodore Coleman, "Latest Atrocity in Mississippi Arouses Nation," *Pittsburgh Courier,* September 10, 1955, 4. The photograph in the *Courier* provides only a glimpse of Till's head. It is the least graphic of the newspaper images cited here. For other illustrations of Till's battered head, see "Lynch Trial Begins," *Afro-American (Baltimore, MD),* September 24, 1955, 1; "Thousands Mourn as Final Rites Are Conducted for Young Victim of Southern

Brutality," *Michigan Chronicle,* September 12, 1955, 2; "Mississippi Barbarism," *Crisis,* October 1955, 479; "Mass Meet on Till Murder," *New York Amsterdam News,* September 17, 1955, 1; "Mississippi Shame," *Chicago Defender,* Seprember 17, 1955, 19; "Youth's Eye Gouged Our by Lynchers," *Philadelphia Tribune,* September 17, 1955, 1; "Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped Chicago Youth," *Jet,* September 15, 1955, 9; "Will Mississippi Whitewash the Emmetr Till Slaying?" *Jet,* September 22, 1955, 9; Ernest C. Withers, *Complete Photo Story of Till Murder Case* (Memphis, TN: Wither's *[sic]* Photographers, 1955). Withers printed and sold one thousand copies of his booklet. *Jet*'s photograph of Till was reprinted in rhe magazine on borh the thirtierh and fiftieth anniversaries of the killing. See Simeon Booker, "30 Years Ago: How Emmett Till's Lynching Launched Civil Rights Drive," *Jet,* June 17, 1985, 12–15, 18; Margena A. Christian, "Emmett Till's Legacy: 50 Years Later," *Jet,* September 19, 2005, 20–25. Although I have been unable to locate the relevant copy of the *American Negro,* its editor, Gus Savage, is credited with printing the first picrure of Till's corpse. The image reputedly appeared in the September 1955 edition (volume 1, number 2).

34 Muhammad Ali with Richard Durham, *The Greatest: My Own Story* (New York: Random House, 1975), 34–35; also see the "Memoirs" in Christopher Metress, ed., *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 226–88.

35 For a meticulous documentary hisrory of American reactions to rhe Till murder, which highlights the particular trauma rhat the photographs engendered in blacks, see Metress, *Lynching of Emmett Till;* and Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress, eds., *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008). Scholars variously atrribute the phrase "Till generation" or "Emmetr Till generarion" to philosopher Lucious Outlaw, historian John Dittmer, and SNCC activist and sociologist Joyce Ladner. See Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago, 1940–1955* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 198–99; Joyce Ladner, "The Sourh: Old New Land," *New York Times,* May 17, 1979, A-23; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: Universiry of Illinois Press, 1994), 58.

36 Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York: Abbeville Publishing Group, 1993), 201.

37 Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 88. The authors cite Goldberg, *Power of Photography,* 201, and an interview rhey conducted with Withers. They, in turn, are cited in Cox, *Road to Freedom,* 21.

38 See Withers, *Complete Photo Story of Till Murder Case.* There is evidence that Johnson Publications did license, at least selectively, the Till phorographs taken by David Jackson,

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because the credit line for the reproduction of Till's battered face in the *Crisis* is "David Jackson—Johnson Pub. Co." The clarity of the image indicates that the photograph was not appropriated from *Jet* or a newspaper reprint. See "Mississippi Barbarism," *Crisis,* October 1955, 479.

39 George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during World War II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 10–19; *Life* caption quored in *Reporting World War II* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 639.

40 I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the ways in which whites did use the *idea* of the murdered Till to further disempower blacks. The civil rights activist Anne Moody has movingly recounted how the white woman who employed her as a domestic servant when she was a child held the specter of the killing over her as a threat for misbehaving blacks. As Moody wrote in her autobiography, "For the first time out of all her trying, Mrs. Burke had made me feel like rotten garbage. Many times she had tried to instill fear within me and subdue me and had given up. But when she talked about Emmett Till there was something in her voice that sent chills and fear all over me." In Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dell Books, 1968), 125; along similar lines, William Bradford Huie, the reporter who interviewed Milam and Bryant after their acquittal, recounted that one of the killers' lawyers encouraged their posttrial confession as a means of sending a warning to blacks and pro-integrationist whites. As the lawyer explained to Huie, "There ain't gonna be no integration. There ain't gonna be no nigger votin'. And *the sooner everybody in this country realizes it, the better.* If any more pressure is put on us, the Tallahatchie River won't hold all the niggers that'll be thrown into it" [emphasis in otiginal]. J.J. Breland quoted in Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 54.

41 Langston Hughes, "Langston Hughes Wonders Why No Lynching Probes," *Chicago Defender,* October 1, 1955, 4.

42 Till-Mobley and Benson, *Death of Innocence,* 139; Withers, *Complete Photo Story,* unpaginated preface following page 2.

43 "Reign of Horror," *Chicago Defender,* September 17, 1955, 2.

44 "Bombshell in the Till Case," *New York Post,* January 11, 1956, quoted in remarks by Representative Charles Diggs of Michigan ("The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi") entered on January 5, 1956, *Congressional Record,* 84th Cong., 2nd sess., 1956, vol. 102, pt. 14, A248; "Mississippi: The Place, the Acquittal," *Newsweek,* October 3, 1955, 29; "The Law: Trial by Jury," *Time,* October 3, 1955, 19; "Emmett Till's Day in Court," *Life,* October 3, 1955, 37.

45 The *New York Times* ran seventeen stories on Till in September 1955, thirteen of which focused on the trial; the *Washington Post* carried six Till stories during the month, with

five dealing with the trial; the *Chicago Defender* ran thirty-two stories, with just ten of them dealing with the trial; the *Chicago Tribune,* in Till's hometown, carried a balanced ratio, with five stories on the murder and five on the trial. As indicated by the number of Till articles published in the *Defender* during September, the white press published significantly fewer Till-related articles overall.

46 David A. Nichols, *A Matter of Justice: Eisenhower and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 277, 116–18; Till-Mobley and Benson, *Death of Innocence,* 200–201.

47 Representative Arthur G. Klein, "Murder in Mississippi," January 31, 1956, quoting Roger Goebel, "Murder in Mississippi," *Town and Village,* Fall 1955, *Congressional Record,* 84th Cong., 2nd sess., 1956, vol. 102, pt. 16, A1905.

48 Ashraf Rushdy, "Exquisite Corpse," *Transitions* 9:3 (2000): 70–77.

49 The previous Mississippi murder was of Reverend George Lee, president of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership and NAACP worker. He was shot to death while driving alone in Belzoni, Mississippi, on May 7, 1955. No one was convicted of the crime. For more on the 1955 murders of Mississippi blacks George Lee (May 7), Lamar Smith (August 13), and Clinton Melton (December 3), and on the attempted murder of Gus Courts (November), see Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 34–41. Interestingly, George Lee's widow insisted on an open casket to display her husband's battered body in May 1955, four months before Till's death.

50 William Bradford Huie interview, quoted in Raines, *My Soul Is Rested,* 389.

51 In Huie, "The Shocking Story," 50.

52 John Herbers, a United Press International reporter at the Till trial, described his interaction with the Greenville publisher in a letter to Paul Hendrickson on February 27, 2000. Quoted in Paul Hendrickson, *Sons of Mississippi: A Story of Race and Its Legacy* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 319.

53 Retyped FBI transcript of the *Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam Trial for the Murder of Emmett Till,* 176, 269, 277–78, 49; available at http://foia.fbi.gov/till/till.pdf.

54 Huie, "The Shocking Story," 46; and William Bradford Huie, *Wolf Whistle* (New York: Signet Books, 1959), 48–49.

55 Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy, *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 8, 47, 74, 9, 7.

56 Huie, *Wolf Whistle,* 36. In her autobiography, Mamie Bradley notes that after news of her husband's hanging became public, black servicemen from her husband's unit in Europe told her they were convinced that he was framed. Huie's statistics indicating that eighty-

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seven of the ninety-five American soldiers hanged for the rape and/or murder of civilians were black suggest either that blacks were overprosecuted or that whites were underprosecuted for the crimes. In either case, the numbers call into question the race neutrality of the era's system of military justice. In Till-Mobley and Benson, *Death of Innocence,* 203–4.

57 "In Memoriam, Emmett Till," *Life,* October 10, 1955, 48; Dan Wakefield, "Justice in Sumner: Land of the Free," *Nation,* October 1, 1955, 284–85; "Death in Mississippi," *Commonweal,* September 23, 1955, 603–4; "Mississippi: The Place, the Acquittal," 24, 29.

58 For a handful of indicative examples, see "Ask Ike to Act in Dixie Death of Chicago Boy," *Chicago Tribune,* September 2, 1955, 2; "2,500 at Rites Here for Boy, 14, Slain in South," *Chicago Tribune,* September 4, 1955, 11; "Mississippi to Sift Negro Boy's Slaying," *New York Times,* September 2, 1955, 37; "Morher to Testify: Will Appear at Trial of Two in Slaying of Negro Boy," *New York Times,* September 13, 1955, 28; "Thousands Pass Bier of Slain Negro Boy," *Washington Post,* September 4, 1955, 3; "Two Indicted in Boy-Killing Plead Innocent," *Washington Post,* September 7, 1955, 44.

59 Renee C. Romano, "Narratives of Redemption: The Birmingham Church Bombing Trials and the Construction of Civil Rights Memory," in Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 96–133.

60 The Black Panther poster of Newton was even reproduced in the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* to illustrate their stories on the Panthers. By 1968, the editors of the *New York Times* deemed the image sufficiently well-known to refer to it in an unillustrated article as "the picture showing Newton seated in a flare-backed chair, a rifle in his right hand and a spear in his left." The symbolic power of the poster was such that in 1968 two Oakland police officers fired more than a dozen shots at one hanging in the window of the headquarters of the Panther's Oakland branch. On the poster's use in the white media, see Sol Stern, "The Call of the Black Panthers," *New York Times,* August 6, 1967, 10–11, 62–64; Wallace Turner, "Negroes Press Nomination of Indicted Militant," *New York Times,* February 5, 1968, 70; Ray Rogers, "The Who and Why of Black Militant Leader Huey Newton," *Los Angeles Times,* April 1, 1968, 1, 6. On the police destruction of the poster in Oakland, see Wallace Turner, "Coast Police Fire at Panther Camp," *New York Times,* September 11, 1968, 37. On the creation of the photograph and its symbolism for the Panthers, see Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1970), 182–83. For more on the imagery of Black Power, see Erika Doss, "Imagining the Panthers: Representing Black Power and Masculinity, 1960s–1990s," *Prospects* 23 (1998): 483–516. For more on the framing of the Panthers and armed blacks in the 1960s, see Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007); Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and*

the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

61 Negative characterizations of the protesr appear in the following articles: Brent Musburger, "Bizarre Protest by Smith, Carlos Tarnishes Medals," *Chicago's American,* October 17, 1968, 4; "U.S. Apologizes for Athletes' 'Discourtesy,'" *Los Angeles Times,* October 18, 1968, 1; Arthur Daley, "The Incident," *New York Times,* October 20, 1968, S-2; San Jose State Associated Student Body President Dick Miner quoted in the *Spartan Daily,* October 21, 1968, newspaper clipping in the "Speed City" file in San Jose State, Martin Luther King, Jr., Library Special Collections; *Washington Post,* October 20, 1968, reprinted in the *Spartan Daily,* October 23, 1968, newspaper clipping in the "Speed City" file in San Jose State, Martin Luther King, Jr., Library Special Collections; "Olympic Protestors Draw Boos, Praise," *Chicago Daily News,* October 17, 1968, 54; "Black-Fist Display Gets Varied Reaction in Olympic Village," *Los Angeles Times,* October 18, 1968, D-2; Jim Murray, "The Olympic Games—No Place for a Sportswriter," *Los Angeles Times,* October 20, 1968, H-1.

62 Daley, "The Incident," S-2.

63 On white concern about potential protesrs by Evans and his teammates, see Shirley Povich, "'Black Power' on the Victory Stand," *Los Angeles Times,* October 17, 1968, C-4; and Charles Maher, "U.S. Expels Smith, Carlos from Olympic Team," *Los Angeles Times,* October 19, 1968, A-3.

64 Louis Duino, "Evans Scores 'Double' Via Record, Humility," *San Jose Mercury News,* Ocrober, 17, 1968, 65.

65 Maher, "U.S. Expels Smith," 3.

66 "Olympic Trouble Threat Eases," *News,* October 19, 1968, quoted in Douglas Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete: The 1968 Olympic Protests and Their Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 164.

67 Joseph M. Sheehan, "2 Black Power Advocates Ousted from Olympics," *New York Times,* October 19, 1968, 1, 45.

68 Arthur Daley, "Far Reaching Repercussions," *New York Times,* reprinted in the *San Jose Mercury News,* October, 20, 1968, 79.

69 "Some Negro Athletes Threaten to 'Go Home' with Smith and Carlos," *New York Times,* October 19, 1968, 45.

70 "Olympic Trouble Threat Eases," *News,* October 19, 1968, quoted in Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete,* 164; Duino, "Evans Scores 'Double,'" 65.

71 Daley, "Far Reaching Repercussions," 79.

72 Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt,* xv. To Hartmann's list of adjectives that coded Olympic triumph, "heterosexual" must be added.

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76 Art Rosenbau
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77 J. White, *Black*
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79 Neil Allen, "A

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81 Mary Herrin
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82 "Confusion,
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83 Ernest Siegel,

84 Smith intervi
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85 Richard Bous

86 Marcelle Fort

87 Gertrude Wi
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88 Smith, "Char
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73 Mike Marqusee, "Sport and Stereotype: From Role Model to Muhammad Ali," *Race and Class* 36:4 (April/June 1995): 21, quoted in Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 241. Bass herself notes that the protest "did not throw the iconography of America out, but rather pushed for a more inclusive politics of citizenship" (241), though she does not specify the means by which it did so.

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75 "The Olympics: Black Complaint," *Time,* October 25, 1968, 62.

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81 Mary Herring, Thomas B. Jankowski, and Ronald E. Brown, "Pro-Black Doesn't Mean Anti-White: The Structure of African American Group Identity," *Journal of Politics* 61:2 (May 1999): 365.

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87 Gertrude Wilson, "UFT Egos—and Black Athletes," *New York Amsterdam News,* November 2, 1968, 19.

88 Smith, "Changing Racial Labels," 503. Also see Gina Philogène, *From Black to African American: A New Social Representation* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 85–88.

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