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Freezing the Movement on Film: Iconic Photos of the Civil Rights Movement[1]

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Abstract

Iconic photographs are a powerful tool for preserving images of significant historic and cultural events. This paper examines the meanings conveyed by three iconic pictures of the Civil Rights Movement: Elizabeth Eckford harassed by a mob outside Little Rock's Central High School; sit-in demonstrators at a Mississippi lunch counter; and police dogs attacking a young black man in Birmingham, Alabama. Utilizing the conceptual framework developed by Hariman and Lucaites (2007) I identify the elements that contribute to the iconic status of each photo. By dramatically portraying African Americans resisting oppression and illustrating the violence inherent in the Jim Crow system of racial segregation, these images captured the attention of a nation and helped advance the cause of racial equality.

The photo shows a slender young woman neatly dressed in a white shirtwaist dress, her eyes hidden behind large dark glasses, making her way down a crowded city street. Her face is impassive, showing neither happiness nor sorrow. The notebook she carries in the crook of her arm marks her as a school girl. Following a few steps behind are three other girls, also clutching school books, but they are not friendly companions of the dark-skinned girl at the center of their attention. A short brunette looks to be consumed with rage and screams at the tall girl walking in front of her. Another girl, this one a blonde with her arms filled with books, joins in the catcalls. Two stern-looking older women striding on their left convey icy disapproval with hostile gazes. A gang of men trails behind; some stare in resentful antipathy, others laugh and joke at the spectacle. One can easily imagine the ugly threats and vile epithets they hurl at the solitary girl. She continues walking, hoping to escape the mob's fury. In the background, three helmeted soldiers stand at parade rest. The military men look on, but make no move to disperse the angry throng. The young woman is black; all members of the

surrounding crowd are white. No other African Americans are visible on the street. This appears to be a racial confrontation.

The date is September 4, 1957, and the setting is Little Rock, Arkansas. The girl in the center of this scene is Elizabeth Eckford, the first African American student to attempt to enter Central High School. That morning she rode the city bus to school. When Elizabeth tried to enter the campus she was turned away by soldiers of the Arkansas National Guard.[2] The dramatic photo of her encounter with the mob was taken by Will Counts, a young photographer for the *Arkansas Democrat*. The next day his picture of Eckford's retreat appeared on front pages of newspapers across the United States. It was the runner-up for the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for photography. In subsequent years his photo has been reprinted in history textbooks, magazine articles, documentary films, book covers, and can be viewed on hundreds of Internet websites. Counts' historic photo has come to symbolize the struggle for school desegregation. It is an icon of the Civil Rights Movement; an image that is instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with the Little Rock story.

Photography is commonly considered a means for *preserving* memories. However, when a photo's viewers have no first-hand knowledge of the individuals or events portrayed, the photographic image can become a tool for *creating* memories. As Susan Sontag has observed, "photographs help construct—and revise—our sense of a more distant past." (2003:85) Just as sculptors and painters in past ages depicted the heroic deeds of ancient warriors; today iconic photos memorialize significant episodes from our recent history. For those who study the Little Rock story more than half a century after those extraordinary events, the photo of Elizabeth Eckford may be their most lasting impression of the crisis. Significant legal and political issues were contested at Central High School in September of 1957. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus' defiance forced President Dwight Eisenhower to dispatch federal troops to ensure compliance with court ordered desegregation and reassert the primacy of the federal government. Faubus' attempt to defy the courts was defeated as Eckford and the other members of the Little Rock Nine eventually were admitted to Central High School. However, today's students are more likely to recall the image of a lone black girl bravely making her way home through the crowd of hostile whites than the abstract

constitutional principles at stake in Little Rock. As Sontag notes, “the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form for memorizing it.” (2003:22) For many Americans the photo of Eckford pursued by the mob represents the essential reality of the Little Rock crisis.

Elizabeth Eckford, 1957. Photo by Will Counts.

Photos help create the meanings that mediate our understanding of the past, but not all photographic images have equal impact. In a world where the media daily bombard consumers with thousands of images, only a handful stands out. They command the viewer’s attention and convey an enduring message. These become iconic images—widely recognized representations of historic events that are frequently reproduced across a range of media.[3] The most basic attribute confirming a picture’s iconic status is its frequent and widespread reproduction. Among hundreds of photos included in thirteen volumes of civil rights photography examined by the author, three are most frequently reproduced—Eckford and the Little Rock mob, a Jackson,

Mississippi, lunch counter sit-in protest, and police dogs attacking a young demonstrator in Birmingham, Alabama. Their repeated presentation has made this trio of images the most readily recognized icons of the Civil Rights Movement, ones that help define what the movement represented. Detailed analysis of these iconic photos reveals how popular understanding of the movement has been shaped by its depiction in the mass media.

The second iconic photo of the Civil Rights Movement epitomizes the sit-in demonstrations that captured the nation's attention beginning on February 1, 1960, when four African American college students asked to be served at a "whites only" dime store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. When denied service they remained seated until the store closed. The next day they returned bringing more of their fellow students. Their protest continued for four months until the management began serving customers on an integrated basis. This successful direct action technique spread quickly and in subsequent months was adopted in numerous protests against Jim Crow eating arrangements in cities across the South.

The Jackson photo shows three figures seated on lunch counter stools. Two are white and one is black. The white man's face is turned away from the camera, as is the head of the young white woman seated next to him. The only demonstrator whose face is clearly visible is the lone African American woman—Anne Moody, a student at Tougaloo College. Her head is slightly bowed, her eyes partly closed, her mouth set in a look of weary exasperation. The white woman also shows signs of fatigue as she props her head with her arm. Standing behind the trio are more than a dozen white males, most of them teenagers. They are casually dressed in t-shirts and sport shirts with their hair slicked back in the fashion of the day. The young man closest to the camera holds a clear glass sugar container with its top screwed open over the head of the white female demonstrator. No one tries to restrain him. Light colored debris, apparently sugar dumped before the picture was snapped, covers the heads of all three protestors. The arms of the trio and the counter surface are also coated with sugar. The shirt of the male demonstrator is stained with a dark liquid evoking an image of blood. His neck and the back of his head also appear damp. The three protestors passively endure this

persecution, making no response to their tormenters, while the smirking members of the crowd seem to be enjoying their cruel sport.[4]

Jackson, Mississippi, sit-in, 1963. Photo by Fred Blackwell.

This unforgettable photo was shot by Fred Blackwell, a photographer for the *Jackson Daily News*, on May 28, 1963 at the Jackson Woolworth's store. His presence that day was no accident. Student organizers of the protest against segregation in downtown businesses had given the press advance notice of their intention to integrate the lunch counter. By the time Blackwell arrived on the scene the waitresses had fled to the kitchen giving him an unimpeded view from behind the counter. From this vantage point he was able to capture the faces of both the demonstrators and their adversaries. Because the instigators of the original 1960 Greensboro sit-ins did not fully appreciate the power of the media, the photographic record of those early protests is incomplete.

Although the Jackson picture was taken three years after the peak of the sit-in movement, it has been extensively used to represent all similar demonstrations.[5]

The third iconic photo of the Civil Rights Movement shows a square-jawed police officer holding a snarling German shepherd with his left hand while he grabs the shirtfront of a young black man with his right. The dog lunges for the young man's midsection, its bared teeth only a few inches from his stomach. A second officer, also restraining an agitated police dog, is poised nearby, ready to join the fray if needed. A crowd of African American spectators stands in the street viewing this confrontation with alarm. An older woman in a print skirt gapes open-mouthed, horrified by the attack. A heavyset man in a dark suit looks over his shoulder in disbelief. The target of this assault is a lanky teenager. His shirttail is pulled out from his pants. Although his left hand rests on the officer's wrist, he does not appear to be resisting. His face is strangely calm as he focuses on the vicious dog snapping at his waist.

Birmingham demonstration, 1963. Photo by Bill Hudson.

This photo was taken in Birmingham, Alabama, by Bill Hudson, a veteran photographer for the Associated Press. The events depicted represent the culmination of a series of demonstrations against segregated businesses orchestrated by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the spring of 1963. Birmingham's hot-tempered commissioner of public safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had jailed hundreds of young people in earlier protest marches. As his jail filled Connor's patience wore thin. On May 3 he reached his breaking point and ordered his men to disperse the marchers by force. Firefighters blasted the youthful protestors with high pressure hoses and police officers deployed trained attack dogs to scatter the crowds. The young man captured in the photo was fifteen-year-old Walter Gadsen, a bystander caught up in the day's events. The next day Hudson's iconic image of Gadsen in the clutches of the police appeared on the front pages of leading newspapers including *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Later that week *Time* and *Newsweek* reprinted the same photo. Historian of photography, Vicki Goldberg, writes that before its publication "Racism had been an abstract idea, an *ism* like socialism or unionism," but this image and others like it "gave this abstraction a visible image which was easier to hate than an idea." (1990:204) President John F. Kennedy told a group of supporters that the picture "made him sick." Across the United States millions of Americans shared his reaction.

In their pioneering book, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites define the iconic photograph as "an aesthetically familiar form of civic performance coordinating an array of semiotic transcriptions that project an emotional scenario to manage a basic contradiction or recurrent crisis." (2007:29) These five elements—aesthetic familiarity, emotional scenario, civic performance, semiotic transcription, and basic contradiction—provide a useful conceptual framework for the analysis of these photos.

Unlike fine art photography that confounds conventional expectations, Hariman and Lucaites assert that photojournalism "must be structured by familiar patterns of artistic design." (2007:29) In other words, the viewers' attention must focus on the content of the image and not be distracted by the photographer's creative technique. Unusual camera angles, obscured figures, or opaque lighting would weaken the power of the image. This is readily evident in the iconic photos examined here. All three

images are clearly focused and conventionally composed. The main figure is located directly in the center of each photo—Elizabeth Eckford in Little Rock, Anne Moody in Jackson, and the police officer in Birmingham. This central position helps rivet the viewer's attention on the principal characters. In each case, spectators are arrayed behind the key actors so the camera has an unimpeded view of the action. The looks and gestures of the onlookers are focused on the central characters which encourages the viewer to do the same. Variation in shading is another critical element. The difference between the black skin of the victims and the white skin of the aggressors heightens the racial tension in each photo. The contrast of Elizabeth Eckford's dark skin against the crisp white fabric of her dress further emphasizes her distinctiveness. Numerical imbalance is a significant factor in all three photos. In Jackson and Little Rock a lone African American is surrounded by a mob of hostile whites; in Birmingham the numbers are reversed—a pair of white officers is outnumbered by a crowd of blacks. Each of the images is situated in a familiar setting—a city street in Little Rock and Birmingham, a crowded dime store lunch counter in Jackson. Even if they never visited these cities, viewers can readily identify these recognizable locales. This familiarity makes it easier to decipher the action in each photo.

All iconic images contain strong emotional content; this is the basis of their considerable power. According to Hariman and Lucaites, these photos possess the ability to activate "vital repertories of social behavior" that place the people depicted in the image in a social relationship with the viewer. This linkage is established primarily through "powerful evocations of emotional experiences" and these responses then become a "basis for understanding and action." In effect, the audience "establishes an affective relationship with the people in the picture" imaginatively sharing the emotions displayed by sympathetic figures and reacting against the emotions expressed by their adversaries. (2007: 35) This emotional identification is clearly seen in these iconic photos of the Civil Rights Movement.

Elizabeth Eckford's impassive face is the centerpiece of the Little Rock picture. Although at first glance she appears emotionless, closer inspection of the image reveals her pose to be a façade. The hateful screams of the young brunette, the catcalls of the other students, and the disapproving gazes of the stern matrons cannot be ignored.

Elizabeth bravely struggles to maintain her composure. Dark glasses partially hide her fear, but her unsteady mouth hints that she is on the brink of an emotional meltdown. The audience shares the terror that Elizabeth is feeling—the panic of being surrounded by a sea of hostile faces without a friendly person in sight, the overwhelming realization that her life may be in danger. White Americans viewing this photo, at least those not wedded to the segregationist cause, most likely feel another emotion on viewing the young black woman being persecuted by the mob—a sense of shame. The barely controlled rage expressed by the white high school students is upsetting; their ferocity seems totally unwarranted. There is no apparent reason for their outburst. The audience wonders, "Why in the world are these respectably dressed teens acting so badly toward this inoffensive girl? What has she done to hurt them?" Instead of identifying with other whites, the photo's powerful emotional content compels white viewers to empathize with Elizabeth Eckford and condemn her antagonists for their hurtful behavior.

A similar dynamic is at work in the photo of the Jackson sit-in. In this case, Anne Moody's frustrated look speaks volumes. She has endured abuse at the hands of the young men who taunt and torment her. Her resigned expression suggests that she has been seated at the lunch counter for some time and plans to remain until her foes tire of their malicious entertainment. The audience cannot see the faces of her two fellow protestors, but it's safe to assume they share her determination. The sight of lunch counter patrons covered with sugar and other condiments is completely unexpected. That the recipients of this abuse make no effort to defend themselves or retaliate is more disconcerting. In contrast, the young men who are responsible for their distress seem to be enjoying themselves. Unlike the Little Rock mob, they do not appear to be angered by the sit-in demonstration as much as they are pleased with their own antics. One is reminded of the description by conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick on seeing a similar gang of white toughs heckling well-mannered civil rights demonstrators: "ragtail, slack-jawed, black jacketed, grinning fit-to-kill…It gives one pause." (Goldfield, 1990:121) Once again, well-intentioned whites will feel shame.

In many respects, the photo of the Birmingham confrontation is the most disturbing of the three images. Rather than threatening violence or engaging in petty harassment, this photo shows two police officers physically attacking a harmless-

looking young man. The snarling police dog is alarming; one does not usually witness an assault like this, especially when the victim appears so completely unthreatening. The viewer's initial reaction is fear. Who would not be terrified by a vicious attack dog lunging at one's midsection? In this regard, Walter Gadsen's lack of visible alarm is puzzling. How can he maintain his composure with a vicious German shepherd biting at his stomach? This reinforces Sontag's observation that, "For photographs to accuse, and possibly to alter conduct, they must shock." (2003:81) Most viewers will find this image deeply troubling and that is what makes it so effective. Seeing this photo, the viewer asks: "Why are these officers behaving so inhumanely? What has this boy done to them?" The officer holding Walter's shirt and sweater has his jaw set in determination not to let his captive escape. The officer's combative stance replicates his dog's aggressive posture. There is no apparent explanation for his outrageous actions. Rather than feeling respect for the officer, sympathetic viewers must condemn his excessive behavior. Because it challenges the legitimacy of established authority and encourages support for those like Walter who defy his power, this is a profoundly subversive image.

Central to Hariman and Lucaites' analysis is the contention that the iconic photo functions as a form of civic performance. (2007:30-33) They observe how the framing of the photograph creates a space similar to a theatrical stage. This "marks the work as a special selection of reality that acquires greater intensity" than the world outside the frame. Characters within the photo may be viewed as actors who communicate crucial information through their costumes and gestures. Symbolic elements in the photo's setting also help convey its political message. Using these dramatic devices, the iconic photo does not just transmit factual information, "but refashions social forms to restructure understanding, motivate action, and organize collective memory." (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007:33) Thus, these photos shape our comprehension of the Civil Rights Movement.

In the Little Rock photo the viewer witnesses a courageous performance by a solitary hero. Moments before the picture was taken, an unescorted Elizabeth Eckford approached the guardsmen surrounding Central High School and was turned away although white students were allowed to enter. As she withdraws from the scene of her rebuff Elizabeth is surrounded by members of a scornful, disapproving chorus who

denounce her audacious effort to trespass on grounds reserved for whites. They harshly scold her, reinforcing the message that African Americans are not welcome on their turf. Badly outnumbered and seeing no alternative, Eckford has accepted defeat, at least temporarily, and is trying to make a dignified exit. The mob, however, will not permit her to get away so easily. They continue to hound and harass her; they pile humiliation on top of rejection; they threaten to surround her and cut off all escape routes. Thus far, the mob has employed only verbal abuse, but the potential for physical harm is very real.[6]

The Jackson sit-in photo also reveals a civic performance, although this drama is staged in the cramped quarters of dime store lunch counter rather than on a city street. The instigators of the confrontation, the three young people at the counter, are passive, seemingly rooted on their stools. Their slumped posture, the weary expression of the lone black woman, and the amount of debris dumped on them indicates they have held their position for some time. There is no indication that they intend to leave. The crowd of young men presses within inches of their prey as they continue to harass the immobile protestors. Most likely, they are tossing insults and crude jokes at the silent trio. One suspects they are thinking of new ways to abuse their victims. Evidence of recent attacks is visible on the protestors' bodies and clothing and more may come at any minute, yet the victims make no move to retaliate or even to protect themselves from further mistreatment. The viewer asks: "How much longer can these protestors continue to endure this mistreatment? When will they reach their breaking point? Will they strike back at their attackers or will they decide to abandon this quixotic protest?" In the tradition of Emerson, Gandhi, and King, their nonviolent performance is a vivid example of political theatre.

The Birmingham photo shows actors in the middle of a civic performance, this one also taking place on a busy thoroughfare. The protests that triggered the police crack-down were carefully staged in full public view to maximize their impact, not only for residents of Birmingham, but, more importantly, for the entire nation and beyond. Andrew Young, one of Martin Luther King's lieutenants in Birmingham, has written about these demonstrations, "[W]e were well aware that each night we were receiving close to a million dollars' worth of prime TV exposure [on the network news]. Accordingly, we attempted to plan our demonstrations so that a distinct message was

conveyed each day." (1996:225) Hundreds of demonstrators, most of them school children, marched to protest segregation in downtown stores. Birmingham authorities attempted to silence the protests by dispersing the participants with hoses and dogs. King urged his followers not to resist. Police controlled the implements of force; the protestors' sole weapon was their claim to the moral high ground. In the photo two white policemen, both armed with pistols and holding snarling German shepherds by their leashes, converge on a nonresistant boy. For Walter Gadsen there is no possibility of escape; soon he will be hauled off to jail while the officers continue to hunt for more victims. In the background, older African American spectators look on in shocked disbelief at the drama unfolding before them. Their accusing looks silently ask: "How can the police behave so badly? What has this young man done to warrant being attacked by vicious police dogs?"

Hariman and Lucaites identify semiotic transcription as an essential device present in iconic photos. This concept, they explain, refers to "the artistic, social, and political codes that are used to provide multiple representations of an event." Photos that achieve iconic status successfully fuse these codes into an image of collective experience which then provides "resources for interpreting historical processes." (2007:34) The dominant code in these iconic photos of the Civil Rights Movement is a racial code. In the United States during the mid-twentieth century, African Americans were largely unseen in representations of public life. With the exception of a select few entertainers and athletes, blacks seldom appeared in news photographs. They were, in Ralph Ellison's classic phrase, largely "invisible" to white eyes. When African Americans did occasionally surface in mass media, they usually were portrayed in humble, subservient roles such as laborers, domestic workers, or poor tenant farmers. News coverage of the Civil Rights Movement helped remove this cloak of invisibility from black people in the United States. African American protestors emerged as actors on the national scene as they challenged the prevailing racial code.

Both the Little Rock and Jackson photos portray a single black figure in a setting populated by a far greater number of whites. The tension between the lone black intruder and the whites who dominate the space is palpable. Both Elizabeth Eckford and Anne Moody are trespassing in territory formerly reserved for whites. The white

onlookers assert their claim to ownership of this public space by trying to drive the black interlopers back to their segregated reservations. Although Moody has two white colleagues, their presence is not essential. Without Moody's black countenance, the photo loses its meaning; there would be no reason for conflict.

Although Eckford and Moody have been singled out for reprimand, nothing in their appearance or demeanor indicates they are guilty of any infraction other than being present in an area where they are not welcome. Eckford's fashionable attire is equivalent in every respect to the dresses worn by the white school girls tormenting her. Her posture is erect and dignified. Only skin color sets her apart. While Moody's attire is not as distinctive as Eckford's, she certainly is dressed as well or better than her teenage adversaries. Her seated position makes her vulnerable to attacks from behind, yet she strives to maintain a respectable upright posture.

The coding is different in the Birmingham photo. Here symbols of white power and authority are more prominently displayed. The police uniforms stand out. From their military caps to their spit-shined shoes, the two officers are covered from head to toe with signs of their superior status. Holstered pistols carried on their wide belts confirm their power. The barely restrained dogs multiply the potential for officially sanctioned violence. Unlike Little Rock and Jackson, the Birmingham confrontation is not a contest between unarmed civilians; it is a one-sided struggle with white policemen asserting their authority through the use of force. The two officers are the only whites present. They are outnumbered by the crowd of African American spectators yet they dominate the scene. They proclaim their power by grabbing Walter Gadsen without fear of retaliation or censure; no one lifts a finger to complain or stop them. The young black man apparently has defied their authority and will be punished for this transgression.

Gender also is a prominent element in two of the photos. In Little Rock all of the principal figures are female. The white women, although dressed appropriately, are acting in a distinctly unladylike fashion. Rather than displaying the reserved, courteous demeanor expected of women in public places, they exhibit aggressive, threatening behavior stereotypically associated with men. Their breach of conventional feminine etiquette adds to the drama of the scene. In Jackson the aggressors are men, but two of their three targets are women. The conventional code of chivalrous conduct requires

men to treat women with respect, to show them courtesy, and to refrain from crude and obnoxious behavior in the presence of a lady. By harassing and berating Moody and her companion not only do they startle the viewer, they forfeit any possibility of sympathetic consideration. Their actions confirm they are not gentlemen; they cede the moral high ground to their long-suffering victims.

Contradiction and crisis is the final element in Hariman and Lucaites' analysis of iconic images. They contend that all political systems contain fundamental contradictions—issues that potentially divide citizens and can create crises of legitimacy for the state. In this context, iconic photos help people imagine an "alternative model of social reality" in which the contradiction is eliminated and replaced by new political arrangements. The visual icon thus becomes "an aesthetic resource for the performative mediation of conflicts." (2007:37) The genesis of the Civil Rights Movement was rooted in the basic discrepancy between the promise of equal rights for all citizens embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the systematic denial of these rights for African Americans.[7] In the 1950s African Americans launched a multifaceted campaign to expose and resolve this dilemma. While the movement employed a variety of strategies, the most successful involved the creation of public confrontations in which nonviolent demonstrators confronted symbols of racial inequality. As Martin Luther King, Jr. acknowledged in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," to cast off the entrenched Jim Crow system of racial segregation it was first necessary to create an atmosphere of crisis. Photos of African American protestors being brutally treated by racist mobs and southern authorities dramatically concentrated the nation's attention on discriminatory practices and convinced supportive whites that government intervention was needed to resolve the crisis. The media played a central role, advancing the movement by highlighting the problem of racial inequality, presenting black protestors in a sympathetic light, and providing a national forum for their grievances. Much of the Civil Rights Movement's success can be attributed to its skillful manipulation of the press and television. Civil rights demonstrators consciously created scenarios that portrayed them as worthy of full citizenship. Sit-in participants and Freedom Riders dressed in their "Sunday best"—men in suit coats, white shirts, and ties; women in dresses and high heels. They were instructed to act with dignity and respect. This meant not responding

to the inevitable insults directed at them, not even laughing or joking—nothing that would detract from their serious purpose. They carried themselves with pride and self-respect. The same cannot be said of their white antagonists who reacted to the presence of African American protestors with hostility, anger, bad manners, and plenty of verbal and physical abuse.

Each of the iconic photos examined here clearly illustrates the basic contradiction of decent African American citizens being denied elemental rights for no reason other than their skin color. More importantly, however, they also communicate a sense of urgency that images of segregated facilities and black poverty alone could not do. All three photos show black people seeking equal treatment but meeting harsh resistance from hostile, unyielding whites. Their message is unmistakable—a crisis is brewing in the streets of Little Rock, Jackson, and Birmingham and something must be done to settle it. In their decisions to publish and circulate these images, editors helped communicate this sense of crisis and unwittingly confirmed their iconic status.

The creation of these iconic photos was the result of a three-sided collaboration between the activists who initiated the events, the photographers who decided that a particular image was worth capturing on film, and the editors who selected the images for reproduction. Ultimately, however, it is members of the audience who attribute meaning to the photos. Drawing upon the messages encoded in the image, the context in which the image appears, and their accumulated knowledge and experience, contemporary viewers apprehend the meaning anew. That these iconic photos of the Civil Rights Movement retain their power after fifty years is a testament to the courage of the young people who stood up for their rights, the righteousness of their cause, and the skill of the photographers who captured their images.

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Endnotes

[1] Paper presented at the 2012 meeting of the New York State Sociological Association.

[2] For a full account of Eckford's ordeal see Jacoway, 2007.

[3] This definition and much of the subsequent discussion is shaped by the work of Hariman and Lucaites, (2007).

[4] Moody later described this scene in her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi.* "At noon, students from a nearby white high school started pouring in to Woolworth's. …A few started to heckle and the newsmen became interested again. The white students started shouting all kinds of anti-Negro slogans. We were called a little bit of everything. …A couple of the boys took one end of the rope and made it into a hangman's noose. Several attempts were made to put it around our necks. …We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. …The mob started smearing us with ketchup, mustard, sugar, pies, and everything on the counter. Soon Joan [Trumpauer] and I were joined by John Salter. The moment he sat down he was hit on the jaw by what appeared to be brass knuckles. Blood gushed from his face and someone threw salt into the open wound. …About ninety policemen were standing outside the store; they had been watching the whole thing through the windows, but had not come in to stop the mob or do anything." (1968:237-39).

[5] It is the only photo of civil rights demonstrators included in *Life: Decades of the Twentieth Century: The Way We Were.* (1999:124-25).

[6] Eckford's precarious condition evokes images of African American lynchings. See Amy Louise Wood, (2009).

[7] This is the thesis of Gunnar Myrdal's seminal study, *An American Dilemma,* (1944).