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**LAUGHING AT MEAT AND FURY:
A MATERIALIST CRITIQUE OF U.S. LYNCHING CULTURE**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
with emphases in FEMINIST STUDIES and VISUAL STUDIES

by

Erin Gray

June 2017

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

Laughing at Meat and Fury: A Materialist Critique of U.S. Lynching Culture

Erin Gray

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examines lynching's aesthetic relationship to U.S. capitalist modernity. Through analyses of lynching photographs, postcards, and illustrations that circulated beyond the high era of lynching, the study troubles the end-of-lynching discourse that accompanied the ascendance of racial liberalism in the 1940s. Focusing on the repeated emergence and recession of the image of lynching in moments of political and economic crisis spanning from Progressive-era Georgia to Watts in 1965, the dissertation theorizes an altered historical and political genealogy of anti-black violence. It argues that dialectical constructions of lynching's political and cultural history contest divisions erected between spectacle mob killings that attracted thousands from the 1880s to the 1930s and the executions that have quietly disappeared the dead since the onset, during the New Deal, of a low era of lynching.

Where racial liberalism figures lynching as an affront to the U.S. justice system and proffers a triumphant narrative of the law's containment of extra-legal mob murder, *Laughing at Meat and Fury* theorizes lynching as an allegory for the present – as a belligerent image that illuminates the imbrication of vigilante violence and law-and-order. The dissertation analyzes critical moments when the image of lynching flashed up unexpectedly in a range of media: a photograph of a railway lynching that circulated in 1908 as a blood-stained postcard and again on the cover of a Communist Party USA pamphlet in 1934; courtroom photographs of Amy

Mallard testifying against members of the Ku Klux Klan published in *LIFE* magazine in 1949; the removal of a photograph of the lynching of “Bootjack” McDaniels from Edward Steichen’s Cold War photography exhibition, *The Family of Man*; and the incineration of a photograph of William Brown in *Now!*, a Cuban newsreel issued in 1965 in solidarity with the Watts rebellion. Mobilizing Marxist critical theory, black feminist theory, affect studies, psychoanalysis, and visual studies, the dissertation situates lynching at the center of the post-World War II law-and-order mandate. It argues that lynching photographs are moving images that subvert common notions of documentary truth, liberal justice, legal personhood, and historical time, and it uplifts – through speculative critique and poetic invention – a counter-archive that illuminates U.S lynching culture’s constitutive relationship to racial capitalism.

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The distinctive trait of this genocide is a cant that mouths aphorisms of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence even as it kills.

The genocide of which we complain is as much a fact as gravity. The whole world knows of it. The proof is in every day's newspapers, in every one's sight and hearing in these United States. In one form or another it has been practiced for more than three hundred years although never with such sinister implications for the welfare and peace of the world as at present. Its very familiarity disguises its horror. It is a crime so embedded in law, so explained away by specious rationale, so hidden by talk of liberty, that even the conscience of the tender minded is sometimes dulled. Yet the conscience of mankind cannot be beguiled from its duty by the pious phrases and the deadly legal euphemisms with which its perpetrators seek to transform their guilt into high moral purpose.

- Civil Rights Congress, *We Charge Genocide*

There is no progress. ... the Universe repeats itself endlessly and paws the ground in place.

- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

If we ignore this dialectical work of images, we risk understanding nothing and confusing everything: confusing fact with fetish, archive with appearance, work with manipulation, montage with lying, resemblance with assimilation, and so on. The image is neither *nothing*, nor *all*, nor is it *one* – it is not even *two*. It is deployed according to the minimum complexity supposed by *two points of view that confront each other under the gaze of a third*.

- Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*

Preface.

When the Streets Run Red

Shortly before the 2014 winter solstice, Americans took to the streets in large numbers to demand a system-wide response to police and vigilante terror against black life.¹ This wave had been building since the August 9th uprising that followed Officer Darren Wilson’s execution of teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the Ferguson Police Department’s militarized assault on Brown’s community following the murder. It was informed by the actions of protesters in Staten Island, New York City, and Cleveland following the police killings of Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, John Crawford III, and Tamir Rice. It was shaped by black feminists’ diligent insistence that these killings not be gendered male – that we highlight their historical conditioning by anti-black misogyny, that we recall the names of the women and girls raped and murdered by police, and that we understand that anti-black violence has always been a reproductive health concern.² These collective efforts crested into a “wave of indignation” on December 13th as thousands of bodies and voices coalesced in major cities across the U.S. and internationally for a day of action dubbed “the Millions March.”³

In the San Francisco Bay Area, as factions from different parts of the Bay converged at the Alameda County Courthouse in Oakland for a speak-out organized by U.C. Berkeley’s Black Student Union, word spread that pictures of black men hanging from nooses had been discovered that morning on the campus. Hushed and angry murmurs spread through the crowd as people considered the possibility that

local white supremacists might be spectacularizing racist terror on a national day of resistance to anti-black violence. But the lynching cut-outs found hanging in front of Sather Gate and near the Campanile at U.C. Berkeley (UCB) were not effigies of lynched black men; they were blown-up reproductions of photographs of twentieth-century lynching victims (figure 1). One of the photographic cut-outs depicted Laura Nelson, who was brutalized and hanged over the North Canadian River alongside her son, L.D., by a mob of white men in Okemah, Oklahoma in 1911 after deputies confronted her family at their home about a property dispute.⁴ The other photograph depicted George Meadows, who was lynched in Pratt Mines, Alabama on January 15, 1889. Printed across the cut-outs were the victims' names, along with Eric Garner's last words, "I can't breathe." On July 17, 2014, New York City police had confronted Garner for selling loose cigarettes after he broke up a public fight outside a Staten Island shop. When Garner protested that he was tired of being harassed by police (he alleged in 2007 that an NYPD officer conducted a rectal search on him on a public street), Officer Daniel Pantileo put him in an illegal chokehold while five officers piled on top of him. Garner announced eleven times that he could not breathe before dying from the compression of his neck and chest.

Just as the speaker at the Alameda County Courthouse failed to mention that one of the people pictured in the photographic cut-outs was a woman, so too did she forget to acknowledge Garner's presence in the mix. Her glib comments on the cut-outs were matched by the overwhelmingly reactionary response to them on social media and in local newspapers. Commentators swiftly deemed the images to be hateful "effigies" bound to destroy black dignity and halt political mobilizing. Social



Figure 1. Enlarged reproductions of two lynching photographs at the University of California, Berkeley, December 2014. The photograph on the left is of Laura Nelson, who was hanged in Oklahoma in 1911. The one on the right is of George Meadows, who was shot and hanged in Alabama in 1889.

psychologist and U.C. Berkeley Professor Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, who was trumpeted by journalists as an expert on “inter-race relations,” lambasted the action as a divisive assault. “Whether it’s commentary or provocation,” he responded, “it’s atrocious. It’s just mean, period. And heartless. And whoever did that simply needs to grow up.” Mendoza-Denton continued: “We need to come together to heal. ... We need a forum to help us process these very emotionally laden, very relevant events. But that has to be a two-way street. It has to be a dialog. And there’s got to be goodwill. And effigies are the very antithesis of that.”⁵ Mendoza-Denton’s reaction was echoed by other commentators, who were either unclear whether the photographs’ appearance was an anti-racist protest or a vicious assault, or felt that – whatever the intentions of those who had roped them to a tree and a gate – the images were too traumatizing to black students and faculty at UCB who have faced

racist attacks on campus. Others were simply confused about the connection between the history of lynching and the current crisis, in which police officers all over the country are exonerated for killing children, for killing the sick, for killing the unarmed and those armed with the weapons necessary to survive in a world underwritten by the brutal legacies of genocidal settler colonialism and slavery.

A few days after the appearance of the cut-outs, an anonymous collective of queer artists of color issued a statement taking responsibility for the images and explaining that their action was a work of historical confrontation that connects “past events to present ones.”⁶ The collective underscored that the images reference “endemic fault lines of hatred and persecution that are and should be deeply unsettling to the American consciousness” and that the question of taste raised by some of their critics was a straw man, a distraction from their attempt to make visible some of the faces and names of the innumerable black people murdered and disappeared from the nation’s historical consciousness.⁷ The anonymous collective’s statement reminds us that these disappearances are unsettling, as is the reappearance of the disappeared in our historical present. At its core, the collective’s act underscored that the disappearance-work that lay at the center of U.S. lynching culture structures anti-black policing today, and that confronting this disappearance-work is necessary if we are to imagine, prefigure, and instantiate true alternatives to a system that has normalized the use of force against black, brown, indigenous, poor, and gender non-conforming peoples.

Despite the artists’ statement, detractors continued to regard the visual action as a misstep and a triggering blow to a movement that seeks recognition for the

dignity and value of black life. On social media and in the streets, people voiced skepticism about the artists' motives, as well as sadness that anyone would subject black people at UCB to the horrifying image of lynching – as though that image were not already ingrained in our memories.⁸ Much of the confusion stemmed from commentators' description of the images as “effigies,” an erroneous designation that U.C. Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas Dirks perpetuated in his message to the Berkeley community the day following the images' appearance.⁹ Though an effigy, in its most basic sense, is a representation of a person, its more specific meaning involves the destruction of the represented person.¹⁰ Since effigies are fashioned to be undone and to mirror the undoing of those they represent, calling the photographic figurations of the Nelsons effigies constructs them as figures to be destroyed. As Leigh Raiford powerfully argues in her response to the media firestorm that greeted the collective's action, the cut-outs are better understood as elegies that inform the long history of speaking back to white supremacist terror by appropriating its tools to remember the dead and to call the living to action.¹¹

Lynching photographs have long been crucial to efforts to win support for grassroots anti-lynching action and legislation. In 1893, Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass enjoined fair-goers at the Chicago World's Fair to settle their sights on the nation's lynching craze when they re-circulated a photograph of a lynching of an unknown man in Clanton, Alabama in their pamphlet, *The Reason why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*. The image accompanied essays about lynch law, the segregation of railway travel, and the convict lease system to educate visitors about the grisly underside of the nation's modernization. The action

was strategic, for it exposed the violence that underlay the Columbian Exposition's ostentatious display of a seemingly natural "American progress." The expo activated white supremacist narratives of racial time in its contrasting exhibitions of Euro-American industry and "primitive" subalterns. Redistributing the spectacle of lynching into a space bound to a narrative of U.S. nationhood, Wells and Douglass illuminated the constitutive dependence of American industrialization, capital accumulation, and newly emergent conceptions of national unity and belonging on black super-exploitation and racialized extra-judicial violence.¹²

Like Wells's and Douglass's interventions at the Columbian Exposition, W.E.B. Du Bois's media activism in the NAACP publication, *The Crisis*, made photographs of lynching available outside of white supremacist circuits in order to reframe them as anti-lynching photographs.¹³ Though Du Bois had long refused to reproduce photographs of the lynched in *The Crisis*, he shifted his approach to organizing against racial slayings after the 1899 spectacle lynching of Sam Hose in Atlanta, Georgia. Hose had been tortured and killed in front of tens of thousands of spectators, and the news that his pickled organs and knuckles were on display (and perhaps being sold) at a local grocery store prompted Du Bois to take up the sensual and emotional parameters of aesthetic culture as legitimate grounds for activism.¹⁴ Du Bois, realizing that visual culture (and photography in particular) was key to the construction of racial difference and thus a battleground for social change, riffed the conventions of ethnographic display in his contribution to the 1900 Paris Exposition, *The American Negro Exhibit*. The photographs of mixed-race and white-passing black people in *Types of American Negroes, Georgia USA* appropriated the

visual conventions of eugenic photography while contesting racial science's "white supremacist taxonomy of identifiable difference" and its adherents' claim that mixed-race peoples formed a degenerate human type. Doing so troubled the global panic about miscegenation and its supposed threat to the future of the "white" race.¹⁵ Du Bois's recirculation of lynching photographs as anti-lynching photographs in *The Crisis*, along with his commissioned portraits for the Paris Expo, rendered the image of blackness socially constructed, and thus contested, ground.¹⁶

The editors of other black publications, as well as members of International Labor Defense (the legal wing of the Communist Party USA), and artists across the left followed suit throughout the twentieth century when they used lynching photographs and illustrations to challenge Americans to, in the words of historian Christopher Waldrep, "define their national character."¹⁷ Mobilizing photographs of the lynched to further anti-lynching protest is most often associated with the actions of Mamie Till following the lynching of her fourteen year-old son, Emmett, in Money, Mississippi in 1955. Till demanded that she have an open-casket funeral for Emmett so that the world could see what Roy Bryant and J.W. Millam had done to punish him for allegedly whistling at Carolyn Bryant at the Bryants' general store.¹⁸ Bryant and Millam kidnapped Till in the middle of the night from his uncle's home, beat him to death, and drowned him in the Tallahatchie river. Upwards of 200,000 mourners, civil rights supporters, and photographers paid their respects to Till's family during his four-day funeral, helping to realize Mamie Till's wish for the world to witness her son's brutal end.¹⁹ Though the lynching was covered extensively in the white and black press, only black editors published photographs

and illustrations of his bloated and disfigured corpse. The white press refused to publish the photographs taken at his funeral, and it was not until the television airing of the documentary *Eyes on the Prize* in 1987 that white Americans saw the photograph of Till that had helped galvanize the Civil Rights Movement.²⁰

As Fred Moten argues in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Mamie Till's opening of her son's casket was not solely a protest; it was a performance, "the disappearance of the disappearance of Emmett Till that emerges by way of exhibiting kinship's wounds."²¹ In contrast to the disappearance of Till from the white press – a move that Martin Berger cannily notes placed the press in league with Till's killers, who had beaten him in secret inside a barn and then used a cotton gin to bury his body in nearby waters – Emmett's broken face and his mother's refusal of his negation sounded a "scene of objection" that rendered his violent death as one resonant part of an anti-black totality.²² Positioning Till in community, Moten writes into what he conceptualizes as the photograph's phonic substance: a sonic cut or break that subtends the photograph and that arises from a black radical aesthetic tradition of making sensible the freedom drives of captive subjects. Breaking from Marx's account of value, in which commodities are silent and accrue value only upon being exchanged, Moten argues that the commodity that is also a person (the slave) speaks an originary value prior to exchange. "The commodity who speaks," he writes, "constitutes a kind of temporal warp that disrupts and augments not only Marx but the mode of subjectivity that the ultimate object of his critique, capital, both allows and disallows."²³ Enslaved peoples, through performance, sounded collective disruptions of the rules of property,

exchange, and signification “with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription.”²⁴ Where Saussurian linguistics takes the sign to be immaterial and aphonic, Moten seeks a poetics and politics that is true to the “material degradations” through which captive subjects are born.

Moten’s analysis hinges on the fact that children born to enslaved women followed the status of their mothers; reading this dialectically, Moten argues that the (slave) commodity is thus animated by the trace of the maternal. This maternal trace is what Hortense Spillers terms the “unheard and overlooked (overseen) at the heart of the spectacle.”²⁵ Spillers argues that in the dominant American grammar, *Partus sequitur ventrem*, the maxim of slave law that dictated that the condition of the slave mother is “forever entailed on all her remotest posterity,” is inscribed in black flesh as a principle of degradation.²⁶ In “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” Spillers writes:

I would make a distinction in this case between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies – some of them female – out of West African communities in concert with the African ‘middleman,’ we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the *flesh*, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding. If we think of the ‘flesh’ as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard.”²⁷

Flesh is not equivalent to what Hannah Arendt conceptualizes as pre-political *zoe*. It is created out of “the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet” in addition to courts of law.²⁸ These instruments create “a hieroglyphics of the flesh,” a grammar and an assortment of affects transmitted to

succeeding generations of black subjects. Flesh is the memory, carried spirit-wise and in muscle, of relations of enslavement and of the collective afterlife of slavery. For Spillers, black being and kinship are, respectively and relationally, “mother-dispossessed” and always already divided from the symbolic coherence of the patrifocal family. Flesh thus brings with it the knowledge that, after the breach of enslavement, black people are fixed outside the dominant terms of legal personhood because we are, ultimately and without repair, “father-lacking.”²⁹

Alexander Weheliye writes that this flesh(ly) wisdom is “the ether that holds together the world of Man while at the same time forming the conditions of possibility for this world’s demise.”³⁰ Increasingly, black critical theorists are taking up the concept of flesh not solely as an “object zone of exclusion that culminates in death but an alternate instantiation of humanity” that troubles and exceeds Eurocentric formations of the Human.³¹ Moten argues that it is possible to sense the maternal trace as aura and aural flesh – the performative, anoriginal whelp that signaled the captive subject’s fall – in visual objects, too; watching and listening to the photograph of Till in his casket, Moten hears the boy’s death moans, his imagined whistle and “bye, baby,” the revenant shrieks of jazz, and the beatings of enslaved ancestors.³² Moten insists that looking at Till’s photograph “implies that one desires something for this photograph. So that mourning turns. So that the looker is in danger of slipping, not away, but into something less comfortable than horror – aesthetic judgment, denial, laughter, some out and unprecedented reflection, movement, murder, song.”³³ What’s more, the screaming fungible object sounds an interval that throws the viewing subject into suspension.³⁴

Raiford's use of the term elegy to describe the cut-out action at Berkeley, while helpfully displacing effigy as the form of Nelson and Crawford's reappearance in public in 2015, is a misfit. Elegies, after all, are mournful and oriented toward the past. Susan Sontag writes that photographs "actively promote nostalgia. Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art. ... All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt."³⁵ Though not all photographs are elegiac, the passage reminds us that elegies, while calling up the memory of the dead rather than seeking to destroy it, are backward-looking mourning poems meant to enable healthy bereavement and the possibility of moving on.

The cut-outs might be more appropriately called complaints, for they carry with them the sadness of lamentation alongside the heaviness of accusation. Nelson and Meadows appeared at UCB held by and holding Garner through their visual incantation of his dying words. They appeared to contain the repetition of his wreckage as it played across the screens and pages of mass media, on banners and makeshift signs, and in the minds and hearts of those who rallied among millions. Nelson and Meadows appeared unexpectedly in Berkeley as heavy phantom-holds for the continuation of Garner's charge: that he was tired, that he was helping, that he was just trying to get by, that he will not take it anymore, and (perhaps not finally) that he can't breathe. Nelson, Meadows, and Garner gathered into an ensemble to charge the state and the white populace for being complicit in the historical crime of lynching, and to demand a form of redress that aims not to repair

the harms of the past so much as to reckon with the ways these harms continue to structure the present. They rendered a sonic cut in the reigning ideology of historical progress, which mistakes current police and vigilante violence against black Americans for a stunning aberration from colorblind democracy rather than the normal workings of neoliberal lynching culture.

While the potentially traumatic impact of looking at lynching photographs must be taken seriously, the sadness and shock – that deep unsettling – that accompanies the act of witnessing these incomprehensible acts may be the source of an insurgent praxis grounded in present need, informed by the struggles of the past, and oriented toward the future. Nelson’s and Meadow’s century-long sojourn from Okemah and Pratt Mines to Berkeley prompts us to recognize the entwined histories of state policing and extra-legal anti-black violence, and to deepen our understanding of the historically-specific ways that U.S. capitalism profits from the continued incapacitation of black life. Though much has changed in the 126 years that have accumulated between the deaths of Meadow, Nelson, and Garner, the violence against them is undergirded by a complex ideology of white supremacy whose integral relationship to U.S. capitalist democracy mainstream commentators failed to acknowledge. Like Garner, the Nelsons were harassed by the law for defending themselves against the racialized immiseration that stems from capitalist relations of gendered labor and (re)production. Oklahoma deputies confronted the farmers for stealing a cow to assuage their hunger, while Staten Island police murdered Garner for selling loose cigarettes to make ends meet. A mob of men emboldened by official and unofficial law hanged the Nelsons from a Midwestern

bridge over the Canadian River, while a mob of men in police uniform used an illegal chokehold to extinguish Garner's protestations against New York police, who arrest and finger and rub black and Latinx people to choking dust under the state's "Stop-and-Frisk" policy. In both instances, the law and its pale-faced auxiliary sanctioned lethal extra-legal and extra-economic violence to protect the interests of white capital. The cut-out action at UCB was an unambiguous act of protest, a performance calling out the relationship between the history of mob violence against African Americans and the history of policing in the U.S. as structurally bound to the gendered relations of dispossession, structural unemployment, and incapacitation that characterize U.S. racial capitalism.

In addition to recalling us to the historical and structural character of anti-blackness in the U.S., the decision on the part of the artist collective to insert the image of lynching into the current movement against police violence by enlarging and displaying George Farnum's photograph of Laura Nelson – the only known photograph of a female lynching victim, who was criminalized and murdered for protecting herself and the lives of her children – reiterates the need for a feminist analysis of lynching culture. Because lynching is often assumed to have been a masculine experience mediated by the desire for, and the exchange of, white women, it is imperative that we understand that the roots of anti-blackness lay in a spectacular and Manichean division between "black" and "white" that is dependent upon the engendering of black femininity.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, black women were terrorized by lynch law when they were subjected to sexualized beatings, rapes, and

murders that were part of white supremacist efforts to degrade black life. In the wake of Emancipation, and throughout the post-Reconstruction period of anti-black lynching, white supremacists systematically raped black women to terrorize their communities and bar them from citizenship.³⁶ White supremacist ideology not only sanctioned white-on-black rape because of the prevailing belief (codified in slave law) that black women were sexually promiscuous. It also constructed an illicit black femininity as the originating cause of black men's alleged propensity to rape white women, which, by the 1890s, became the reigning rationale for southern lynchings.³⁷ This was an inconvenient sidebar to the myth that race propagandists deployed after the demise of official slavery and the rise of its penal afterimage: that black people were biologically and culturally incapable of conforming to the gender and sexual norms that define access to capitalist citizenry. Insofar as black people were barred from stable home lives unmolested by gratuitous violence, they were imagined and forced to occupy virtue's criminal opposition.

Ida B. Wells's feminist anti-lynching praxis in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries elucidated U.S. lynch law as a mechanism through which white supremacists – with the support of their allies around the nation – maintained a monopoly on health, wealth, and freedom. In her reports for her Memphis newspaper, *The Free Speech*, as well as in her political pamphlets and the speeches she delivered in the U.S. and U.K., she tirelessly demonstrated that the lynching-for-rape discourse that pervaded most conservative and liberal discussions of lynching in the fin-de-siècle U.S. was based on anti-black racism, toxic Victorian gender norms, and rumor rather than fact. Three decades after blacks had begun to

reconstruct the postbellum South by participating in formal politics, establishing schools, and organizing alongside white workers for labor justice, the former slaveholding planter class sought to regain political power by refiguring black freedom as “domination.” Black power, after all, upended the white right to property that hinged on black exclusion. And because women are marked in patriarchal capitalist imaginaries as the carriers of culture, black power was assumed to encompass the social right to marry white, and thus to overturn the white right to property primarily figured in the form of white female flesh. Post-Emancipation southern Democrats, faced with a newly entrenched Republican voting bloc, discovered that sexual metaphors highlighting white masculine authority over public and private property were more effective in reinforcing white solidarity at the polls than were other kinds of political campaigns.³⁸ Wells consistently highlighted the sexual double standard that pervaded the South: that white men could systematically engage in sexual attacks on black women with impunity yet subject black men to unthinkable tortures for having consensual relationships with white women. She was careful to highlight lynchings of black girls and women, closing 1892’s *Southern Horrors* on a note of outrage at the lynching of a thirteen year-old black girl named Mildey Brown.³⁹

Wells’s anti-lynching writings exposed the fact that black people were lynched not for sexual impropriety but for posing a threat to the white social right to “health and happiness,” to white political control of the ballot, and to a white monopoly on capital maintained through the super-exploitation of black prison labor. In her unflinching attention to lynching’s inextricable ties to capitalist social relations,

Wells grounded her analyses of anti-black violence in the full national scope of white supremacy. In *The Reason Why*, Wells situated lynching within the politics of disfranchisement, the repeal of the Civil Rights Bill, segregation, and the convict lease system. “The mob spirit,” she writes, “has left the out of the way places where ignorance prevails, has thrown off the mask and with this new cry stalks in broad daylight in large cities, the centers of civilization, and is encouraged by the ‘leading citizens’ and the press.”⁴⁰ Wells was careful to point out that lynch law was not the result of impassioned, irrational, and local mob forces, but the logical outcome of an economic system structured around exploitation and domination. Lynching, she argued, was not “the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob,” but rather “the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people who openly avow that there is an ‘unwritten law’ that justifies them in putting human beings to death without complaint under oath, without trial by jury, without opportunity to make defense, and without right of appeal.”⁴¹

Lynching, in other words, was a constituent part of a rationalized capitalist order. Refusing to frame lynch mobs as irrational hordes wielding mass power as a result of a lack of legal infrastructure, Wells rooted lynch mobs’ power in their connectedness to a white supremacist political class that sought to maintain white social rights by any means necessary.⁴² In “A Red Record” (1894) as well as in “Mob Rule in New Orleans” (1900), “The East St. Louis Massacre” (1917), and “The Arkansas Race Riot” (1919), Wells underscored the collaborative ethic that existed between police and white lynch mobs, an analysis that activists as ideologically



Figure 2. “Th’ Law,” *The Crisis*, January 1935. Jerry Doyle illustrates the continuum of legal and extra-legal violence. In the 1930s, increasing numbers of African Americans were being killed by police officers and at the behest of white juries and the electric hand of the state.⁴³

divergent as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) and the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) would adopt throughout the twentieth century.⁴⁴ In her report on the East St. Louis massacre of 1917, for example, Wells highlighted the role that police and soldiers played in the destruction of black life during the three-day riot, which had been orchestrated by white union laborers and carried out with the support of the police and local militia. Wells collected testimony from survivors to demonstrate that the Illinois militia had been both negligent and complicit in the riot. Police, businessmen, and political leaders failed to name perpetrators they knew were involved in the rioting, and

police either failed to record the names of the white men they arrested, or destroyed their arrest records after they'd been released.⁴⁵ Wells insisted – as did her comrade T. Thomas Fortune, W.E.B Du Bois, black nationalists, and communist anti-lynching activists after her – that the criminal justice system was a bourgeois institution that served the interests of wealthy whites, thus highlighting the continuity between police laws and vigilance mobs.⁴⁶

We can learn much from Wells's revolutionary consciousness of the contradictions of a country whose citizens consistently appeal to the law yet allow for lawlessness when illegal force facilitates a racialized class hierarchy.⁴⁷ Wells crucially demonstrated that there were multiple kinds of "law" operating in the U.S., and she spoke of the imbrication of the Black Codes (which were passed in deep South states after the Civil War in order to criminalize black "vagrancy," mutual aid, autonomy, subsistence farming, and other practices that were seen to threaten the successful transformation of a slave economy into a capitalist wage labor economy) and lynch law when she argued in "Lynch Law in America" that capitalist "fortune-seekers made laws to meet their varying emergencies." Though Wells initially encouraged that "the strong arm of the law" be "brought to bear upon lynchers," she was never satisfied with courting the legal status quo. She bitingly chided "the Afro-American ministers, newspapers and leaders [who] counseled obedience to the law which did not protect them." Arguing that the law was on the side of the lynchers, Wells insisted that resisting lynch law required that blacks seek autonomous modes of support outside the law if they were to survive "the mockery of justice which

disarmed men and locked them in jails where they could be easily and safely reached by the mob.”⁴⁸

Wells’s critiques of capital and the liberal state, her attention to the continuity between the police laws and vigilance mobs, her attention in her later writings to the militant spirit guiding the survival efforts of black industrial workers and sharecroppers, and the implicit anti-capitalism of her boycott campaigns and later writings grew out of a black abolitionist tradition of testifying to the fully national vagaries of white sexual domination, political control, and the violence of the law.⁴⁹ The women who demanded freedom before Congress in the aftermath of their sexual brutalization at the hands of police officers during the Memphis Riots of 1866 drew on this abolitionist tradition, as did the black feminist literary tradition that emerged after Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* to demand that violence directed at individual women be placed in a larger public context and thus in relation to the collective violence aimed at their communities.⁵⁰

Framing the routinization of police force against people of color as a phase of the long lynching era, as the collective at UCB did, recalls us to a black materialist feminist tradition of articulating the ways that so-called “extra-legal” violence, serving as it has as a weapon of gendered political-economic control, is a supplement to the law rather than its negative limit.⁵¹ While there has never been consensus on the meaning of lynching, the popular etymology of the word indicates that it is a form of “establishment violence” that has been committed not outside but *to the side* of the law.⁵² Lynching in the U.S. has been modeled on a Jacksonian ethic of popular sovereignty that holds that the will of the people may legitimately supersede the

letter of the law.⁵³ Historically, it has simultaneously called upon populism *and* the formal legal system in order to bring together working-class whites and the capitalist class in right (white) exercises of force.⁵⁴ Since genocidal summary executions of American Indians, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans legitimated collective violence as a form of “popular justice” in the name of white settlement throughout the nineteenth century, southern white supremacists mobilized the symbolic power of lynching as law to garner support for the anti-black massacres that occurred throughout the South during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Douglass and Fortune thus began using the word “lynching” in the 1880s to strategically communicate to people that these southern massacres had the tacit approval of the whole nation and were a supplement to formal law rather than its opposite.⁵⁵

Black radicals’ rhetorical appropriation of lynching during the nineteenth century instated a political gap between what Jacques Rancière calls the sensible and the insensible. This division is manifested when subaltern modes of perception that are deemed illegitimate (insensible) by the status quo take up aesthetic-political space through collective enunciations that disrupt the governing “partition of the sensible.”⁵⁶ The UCB artist collective’s demand that we integrate the memory of lynching into our current quests for justice (and its members’ Fortunesque provocation that lynching might be an apt rhetorical weapon in the face of the anti-black force of the law in the twenty-first century) requires a political framework that contests the liberal traditions of historical teleology, possessive individualism, and abstract universalism.⁵⁷ Their collective plaint, flying in the face of Professor

Mendoza-Denton’s public statement that they pursue civil discourse, calls on us to engage lynching’s photographic legacy as a strategy of dissensus: a political practice that rearranges the sensible parameters of the world, intervening in the coordinates of “the visible and the sayable” to illuminate the structural roots of anti-black terror as well as prefigure new political worlds.⁵⁸ Bringing the Jim Crow environ of dominance, poverty, and murder into the twenty-first century may prove less startling than we expect it might be, if only because we are its living remains. But to muck about in it – to really sit in its misery, to use it as archive and refuge – might afford us new insights into the nefarious workings of white supremacist ideology, as well as ways we may refuse it.

Notes to Preface

¹ Some passages from this Preface appeared in a previously published article and are reproduced here with the permission of the publisher. See Erin Gray, “When the Streets Run Red: For a 21st Century Anti-Lynching Movement.” *Mute*, January 31, 2015, accessed online January 31, 2015, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/when-streets-run-red-21st-century-anti-lynching-movement>.

² See Dani McClain, “The Murder of Black Youth is a Reproductive Justice Issue,” *The Nation*, August 13, 2014, accessed August 14, 2014, <https://www.thenation.com/article/murder-black-youth-reproductive-justice-issue/>; The African American Policy Forum, *Did You Know? The Plight of Black Women and Girls in America*, February 17, 2014. Accessed December 29, 2014. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f20d90e4b0b80451158d8c/t/5422de0ee4b080d53cf82554/1411571214756/Did-You-Know-Plight-of-Black-Women.pdf>; Monique W. Morris, ‘Race, Gender, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls’, *The African American Policy Forum*, October 2012, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://schottfoundation.org/sites/default/files/resources/Morris-Race-Gender-and-the-School-to-Prison-Pipeline.pdf>; Insight, Center for Community Economic Development, *Lifting as We Climb: Women of Color, Wealth, and America’s Future*, Spring 2010, accessed December 1, 2015, www.marikochang.com/LiftingAsWeClimb.pdf; and The African American Policy Forum, “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected,” December 30, 2014, accessed January 4, 2015, www.aapf.org/recent/2014/12/coming-soon-blackgirlsmatter-pushed-out-overpoliced-and-underprotected/.

³ The phrase “wave of indignation” was used in the call for a National Day of Resistance, <http://fergusonaction.com/day-of-resistance/>.

⁴ Cut-outs of Michael Donald (d. Mobile, Alabama, 1981), Charlie Hale (d. Lawrenceville, Georgia, 1911), Garfield Burley (d. Newbern, Tennessee, 1902), and Curtis Brown (d. Newbern, Tennessee, 1902) were also said to have been displayed elsewhere in Berkeley as well as in Oakland. To my knowledge, no sightings of them were reported.

⁵ "Community responds to noose effigies found at Cal," *Berkeleyside*, December 13, <http://www.berkeleyside.com/2014/12/13/effigy-hung-from-sather-gate-before-berkeley-protest-march/comment-page-2/>.

⁶ Frances Dinkelspiel, "Anonymous artist collective claims responsibility for lynching effigies erected at UC Berkeley," *Berkeleyside*, December 14, 2014, <http://www.berkeleyside.com/2014/12/14/anonymous-artist-collective-claims-responsibility-for-lynching-effigies-erected-at-cal/>

⁷ As John Egerton writes in *Speak Now Against the Day*, beyond the official lynching statistics, many lynchings were classified as "disappearances, accidents, or some other form of homicide such as involuntary manslaughter or self-defense." *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

⁸ Paula Giddings suggests that a critical memory of lynching was responsible for the outraged response to Darren Wilson's execution of Michael Brown and to the sight of the slain teen's corpse rotting in the street for several hours following his death. See "It's Time for a 21st-Century Anti-Lynching Movement." *The Nation*, August 27, 2014, accessed online August 28, 2014, www.thenation.com/article/its-time-21st-century-anti-lynching-movement/.

⁹ "Community responds to noose effigies found at Cal," *Berkeleyside*, December 13, accessed online December 20, 2014, <http://www.berkeleyside.com/2014/12/13/effigy-hung-from-sather-gate-before-berkeley-protest-march/comment-page-2/>.

¹⁰ "effigy, n." OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59754> (accessed May 25, 2017).

¹¹ Leigh Raiford, "On Effigies and Elegies," *Insurgency: The Black Matter(s) Issue*, December 23, 2014, <http://www.thediasporablackmattersissue.com/raiford/>

¹² Lynching photographs did not circulate much beyond the South until the black press began publishing them in the 1910s. Wells pioneered the appropriation of lynching photographs when she published a postcard from the 1891 lynching of WR Martin in Clanton, Alabama in her 1895 pamphlet, *The Red Record*. See Ida B. Wells, *The Red Record, Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. February 8, 2005 [1895], accessed online January 3, 2010, www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm; see also Mark Simpson, "Archiving Hate: Lynching Postcards at the Limit of Social Circulation," *English Studies in Canada* 30:1 (March 2004), 18.

¹³ Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women and the Mob* (Chapel Hill: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 129; Leigh Raiford, "Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory," *History and Theory* 48 (December 2009): 112-129.

¹⁴ *Aesthesis*, etymologically, denotes the rooting of perceptive processes in the body and is about the multisensory character of perception rather than beauty or artifice. See Jennifer Fisher, "Tactile Affects," *Tessera* 32 (2002), 13.

¹⁵ See Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 2, 44-64.

¹⁶ Du Bois did this by situating blackness within history, economics, and global politics rather than biology. In 1937, in response to a reader troubled by the publication of lynching photographs in *The Crisis*, editors created a forum for readers to answer the question: "Do Lynching Pictures Create Race Hatred?" Most readers responded that they were necessary for fighting lynching and for passing the Wagner-Van-Nuyes anti-lynching bill. See Ashraf Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 71; Smith, *Photography on the Color Line*, 22; and Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 186-8.

¹⁷ Christopher Waldrep, *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of resistance from the Civil War to the civil rights era* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), xviii. See also Apel, *Imagery of*

Lynching, 32; Leigh Raiford, "The Consumption of Lynching Images," *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: International Center of Photography, 2003); Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

¹⁸ In early 2017, Tim Tyson published *The Blood of Emmett Till*, in which he cites Carolyn Bryant as admitting, during an interview with the author, that she had fabricated the story about Till's harassment, which led to his lynching. See Tim Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

¹⁹ Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 61.

²⁰ In Martin Berger's account, the white press refused to print photographs of Till because they were connected to the black liberation movement. He writes: "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." Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 129, 135.

²¹ Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 200.

²² Moten, *In the Break*, 1.

²³ Moten, *In the Break*, 11.

²⁴ Moten, *In the Break*, 12-13.

²⁵ Moten, *In the Break*, 15-17.

²⁶ Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 228.

²⁷ Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 206.

²⁸ Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 207; Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 39-40

²⁹ For Spillers, it is *mother loss* and the negation of blackness on the grounds that it lay outside the civilizing protocols of the family that subtends the gendered character of anti-black violence. Spillers advances a theorization of gendered social death that departs from the masculinist analysis by Orlando Patterson that explains black ontological negation as stemming from patriarchal natal alienation. See Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 220-221; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5-11, 38, 315-333.

³⁰ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 39-40

³¹ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 43; Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), esp. 3-4, 11, 13-48, 53-72.

³² Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 209.

³³ Moten, *In the Break*, 201.

³⁴ Moten, *In the Break*, 16, 196. For Alexander G. Weheliye, "the sonic in its nonlinguistic musical form provides one of the best examples of what Edouard Glissant has called 'opacity.' By opacity, he means that 'which is not obscure, though it is possible to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the perennial guarantee of participation and confluence.'" Glissant quoted in Alexander G. Weheliye, "I Am I Be': The Subject of Sonic Afro-modernity," *boundary 2* 30:2, (2003), 103.

³⁵ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), 15.

³⁶ Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 8.

³⁷ Gerda Lerner, "The Rape of Black Women as a Weapon of Terror," *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Random House, 1972), 186.

³⁸ Nell Painter, "Social Equality and Rape in the Fin-de-Siècle South," *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press), 117.

³⁹ Wells's analysis was echoed in critiques made by Lizelia Augusta Jenkins Moorner in *Prejudice Unveiled*, which identified sexual assaults of African American women as parallels of lynching. See Barbara McCaskill, "The Antislavery Roots of African American Women's Antilynching Literature, 1895-1920," *Gender and Lynching: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Evelyn M. Simien (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 73.

⁴⁰ Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2013 [1892]), 23.

⁴¹ Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America," 1900, accessed online June 14, 2014, www.blackpast.org/1900-ida-b-wells-lynch-law-america.

⁴² Rebecca N. Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labour Defense in U.S. Radical History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 120.

⁴³ Though Stewart Tolnay and E.M. Beck conclude that legal executions and lynchings are independent modes of social control, black people, activists, and radical scholars have long underscored their connections. See Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 93, 100, 106, 111; Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn argues that the elimination of race-specific penalties and the construction of a less permeable wall between official and unofficial executions has enhanced the appearance of state neutrality. Kaufman-Osborn suggestively argues that capital punishment contributes to what philosopher Charles Mills calls "the epistemology of ignorance" that buttresses the racial contract of the liberal U.S. polis. Capital punishment renders the racial contract less transparent and less susceptible to challenge. See Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, "Capital Punishment as Legal Lynching?" *From Lynch Mobs to the Killing State: Race and the Death Penalty in America*, edited by Charles J. Ogletree and Austin Sarat (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 38, 39; the Equal Justice Initiative, a southern nonprofit organization that organizes to end mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the U.S., argues that the death penalty in America is a "direct descendant of lynching." See Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Montgomery: EJI, 2015), 57.

⁴⁴ Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law*, 120.

⁴⁵ Ida B. Wells, *The East St. Louis Massacre: The Greatest Outrage of the Century* (Chicago: The Negro Fellowship Herald Press, 1917), accessed online March 17, 2013. <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.6259:3.lincoln>; Anne Rice, "Gender, Race, and Public Space: Photography and Memory in the Massacre of East Saint Louis and *The Crisis Magazine*," *Gender and Lynching: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Evelyn M. Simien (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 138, 144.

⁴⁶ Du Bois later stated "The police *is* the mob. The courts *are* the lynchers" in *The Crisis*, August, 1921. Quoted in Hill, *Men, Mobs, Law*, 119.

⁴⁷ Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law*, 113.

⁴⁸ Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America," 1900, accessed online June 14, 2014, www.blackpast.org/1900-ida-b-wells-lynch-law-america. Jacqueline Dowd Hall adopts the term "underlaw" from Peter Teachout's "Louisiana Underlaw" in *Southern Justice* in order to describe the position occupied by vigilantes. See Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 140.

⁴⁹ Matthew Quest, "Introduction: From Mob Rule to Independent African American Labor Action: Reconsidering Anarchy and Civilization in Ida B. Wells's Anti-Lynching Campaign," *Lynch Law in Georgia & Other Writings* (On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2013), 7-42.

⁵⁰ McCatskills, "The Antislavery Roots of African American Women's Antilynching Literature, 61-76.

⁵¹ Black people were subject to lynch law when they refused to adhere to the Black Codes of the Reconstruction era and to the Jim Crow laws of the New South that succeeded them. Lynching was effectively a *paralegal* supplement to the Black Codes, and its gratuitous violence served as a generalizable threat to enforce involuntary labor in the wake of Emancipation. See Abdul R. JanMohammed, *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 11-12, 18.

⁵² Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 19.

⁵³ The name Lynch transmogrified into a verb in the U.S. revolutionary context of the late eighteenth century to describe anti-Loyalist violence committed in Virginia at the behest of a man whose last name was Lynch, and who persuaded lawmakers in the Virginia legislature to, as Christopher Waldrep writes, “pass a special law indemnifying himself and his friend . . . The General Assembly articulated what would become the standard apology for lynching when it defined what Lynch and his fellows did as not strictly warranted by law, “although justified from the imminence of the danger.” Lynch’s name thereafter became a verb that signaled the life of extralegal authority within – rather than outside – the law. See Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, 18, 19.

⁵⁴ Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law*, 119.

⁵⁵ As Waldrep writes in *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, the notion that lynching is a form of community-sanctioned violence has historically distinguished it from the widespread “outrages” committed against black people throughout the Reconstruction period. Anti-black violence had been called “outrages,” “murders,” “massacres,” and “atrocities” throughout Reconstruction because they had targeted communities whose interests were represented by the Republican party. But by the 1890s, when the Federal government abandoned Reconstruction by allowing white supremacists Democrats to return to political power in the South, black activists started mobilizing the rhetoric of lynching to argue that anti-black violence was contingent upon the consent of those in political power not only locally but also nationally. Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, 5, 10, 73, 79-82.

⁵⁶ As Rancière explains, the division of the sensible “is also what occurred with some workers in the nineteenth century who began to put into circulation the word proletariat, which literally means ‘those who multiply’ and refers to a class of peoples in ancient Roman times whose sole existence was defined in terms of their reproductive capacity. In reappropriating these abandoned terms, these seventeenth-century preachers and nineteenth-century workers were able to designate an entire category of political subjectivity. Political subjectivity thus refers to an enunciative and demonstrative capacity to reconfigure the relation between the visible and the sayable, the relation between words and bodies: namely, what I refer to as ‘the partition of the sensible.’” See Jacques Rancière and Davide Panigra, “Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière,” *Diacritics* 30:2 (Summer 2000), 115; Davide Panigra, “‘Partage du sensible’: the distribution of the sensible,” *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 96.

⁵⁷ Recent work in queer and black studies approaches abjection as something to be confronted and worked through rather than repressed and repeated. Dariack Scott, in *Extravagant Abjection*, asks whether there is (black) power in experiences of racial-sexual abjection. Scott poses the difficult question of whether blackness as abjection can “be understood or experienced as an aspect of historical experience – a resource for the political present – that broadens and even enriches the expanse of what is human being rather than setting its limit or marking its terror-bound underside.” See Dariack Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*, 6, 9, 13, 15 23, 28, 155-15, 164-6, 207; See also Nicole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 111.

⁵⁸ Jacques Rancière writes: “Politics, before all else, is an intervention in the visible and the sayable.” See Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, edited and translated by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36-37. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, translated and edited by Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

Introduction.

Laughing at Meat and Fury

A dead Negro is with them now, as before, a common jest.
- Frederick Douglass, *The Lessons of the Hour*

The image of lynching has appeared in public with more frequency since the start of the twenty-first century – in *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, in reenactments that memorialize and recall the dead to those living and dying in the afterlife of slavery, in school playgrounds and libraries, in the nonconscious force that flares up every 28 hours to the rhythms of security and “reasonable” fear, and in the memories and actions of participants in the Movement for Black Lives – because it demands to be reckoned with and transfigured as a foundational chronotope in U.S. imaginaries of domination and freedom. Mikhail Bakhtin conceptualizes the chronotope as a dimension of experience in which temporality “thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” and “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history.”¹ Though Bakhtin’s elucidation of the chronotope was specific to literary narratives, the concept is helpful for thinking about how rituals of anti-black violence fashion the territorial and temporal boundaries of the nation not solely through contemplative forms of discourse and deliberation, but also through bodily processes of exchange and expenditure that normalize the abandonment of black life to injury, dispossession, and social death.² As Bakhtin writes, “the chronotope is an optic for

reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring.”³

The slave ship and plantation have been recognized as foundational chronotopes in transatlantic history because through them were formed the experiences of spatial and temporal foreclosure that characterize black diasporic life as a condition of subjection to the rationalized threats of injury and death.⁴ Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, theorizes the slave ship as a chronotope that underscores the global character of African enslavement and that functions as an “organizing symbol” for the circulation of bodies and ideas throughout the diaspora.⁵ In *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, Stephanie Smallwood writes of the terrorizing transformation of African captives into commodities and socially dead beings in their journey across the Middle Passage; the metaphysical experience of captive forced migration aboard slave ships, she writes, was a suspension “in a purgatory in between tenuous life and dishonorable death.”⁶ As Abdul JanMohamed writes, this temporal and spatial foreclosure defined plantation slavery, where the threat of death haunted slaves’ experiences of overwork, physical abuse, malnutrition, and psychic trauma while also functioning as a coercive device and a political-economic means of production.⁷ The existential experience of social death, as JanMohamed clarifies, is one of suspension that generates economic, social, and racial value.⁸

In the postbellum period, lynching literalized this suspension in its spectacular refiguration of “black” as a signifier for a post-slavery criminal class whose rightful place in the advancing space of the nation was in the throes of

disintegration: up in the air, feet dancing above ground, hands bound, skin crackling in flames. The practice of lynching figured its targets – members of all communities who dared trouble the racial caste system and its codes – into mortuary equivalents subject to civil incapacitation and political abjection.⁹

Lynching photographs, which were first taken in the late 1880s, functioned as spectacular conduits of terror meant to discipline citizens and non-citizens alike into the rigid confines prescribed by caste and place at the turbulent turn of the twentieth century.¹⁰ In addition to warning African Americans of the consequences of stepping out of place, lynching constructed time as a racialized experiential framework. It is no coincidence that, as a disciplinary method, lynching most frequently targeted black children and young adults under the age of twenty-five and under the aegis of a sexual panic about the nation's reproductive future. Blackness, during lynching's spectacular heyday, was constructed as a "death-bound" subject formation whose removal from the modernizing spaces of the nation was deemed necessary if the nation were to progress towards what white supremacist contemporaries conceived as its utopic, or white, future.¹¹ As spectacle, lynching confirmed what race propagandists of the day argued was the natural orientation of blacks toward death and what many hoped foreshadowed African Americans' extinction.¹² The photographs marked the first generations of African Americans to have grown up outside of the official confines of slavery as an excisable threat.¹³ Before too long, they hinted, the nation would be absolved of the threat that black freedom posed to white patriarchal dominance.

Lynching photographs time-stamped freed-peoples with an expiration date

that formed a marked contrast to the utopic ideology of progress that dominated nationalist rhetoric at the end of the nineteenth century. Reproductive discourses of race that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century tied whiteness to an expectation of power and property, an expectation that had emerged historically under capitalist class arrangements that secured the intergenerational transfer of status to one's white heirs. Even while whiteness was tied increasingly to corporeality via the reproductive telos of natural history, the instability of racial categories that was everywhere visible made it necessary to consolidate white power via things "external" to the body proper. White self-ownership, as a "possessive investment" in whiteness's future, emerged in the postbellum context as an anticipatory structure of feeling.¹⁴ Lynching mediated this anticipatory structure of feeling, both in its ritual form, and through the souvenirs that extended lynching through time and space.¹⁵ Its remains became prosthetic extensions of the white national body, a body that demanded technical support to secure its future. At the turn of the twentieth century, geographic models of belonging as well as evolutionary models of development rendered lynching legible as a salvific racializing motor of imperial national unity.¹⁶

Like the slave ship and the plantation, lynching's multiple sites and sights – the noose, the tree, the courthouse, the pyre – are spatiotemporal figures of sovereignty that connote not solely southern traditions of mastery, punishment, and criminalization. Rather than point to a strain of non-modern barbarism that demands to be highlighted and rooted out of an otherwise flawless U.S. democratic tradition, lynching's multiple sites and sights betray the fundamental role of torture

and death to the production and perpetuation of liberal democratic political structures. They are part and parcel of modern political-economic modes of governance that emerged in the wake of the Civil War. The northern criminal justice system that scripted white criminality as a reformable aberration in opposition to an incontrovertible black criminality was one element of this governance, as was the role that northern capitalists played in perpetuating sharecropping, railroad construction, and mining as racialized forms of labor in the South through their support of debt peonage, the convict lease system, and chain gangs.¹⁷ Lynching must thus be understood as part of a U.S. necropolitic that facilitates, in the words of Achille Mbembe, “the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations.”¹⁸

In October 2002, Emory University convened scholars for a three-day conference on lynching called “Lynching and Racial Violence in America: History and Legacy.” The conference, along with the touring exhibition, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, catalyzed an academic renaissance of lynching scholarship that has resulted in groundbreaking historical research into the lynchings of American Indian, Mexican, Mexican-American, and Chinese-American people in the West, in historical and discursive analyses of lynching’s rhetorical genealogy, in trenchant studies of lynching’s visual politics, and in critiques of lynching’s legacy in current regimes of surveillance, policing, mass incarceration, and state executions. In a significant departure from the ruling-class consensus throughout the twentieth century that lynching was a symptom of southern

underdevelopment, the new lynching scholarship insists on lynching's constitutive relationship to modernization in its focus on the relationship of the violence to southern industrialization, capitalist relations of production and labor, institutionalized segregation, the privatization of state executions, and the transition from the cult of an emotionally restrained and "chivalrous" Victorian masculinity to a culture that valorized violent masculinity.¹⁹ There have been in-depth studies of lynching's relationship to mass culture and changes in technologies of representation at the turn of the century: the development of the graphophone, the circulation of stereographs and postcards, and the popularity of modern spectacles that attracted throngs of onlookers to exoticizing and violent depictions of difference.²⁰ Via its memorializing objectification into souvenir form, lynching became a circulating commodity that made available to everyday Americans a powerful and importantly ambivalent storehouse of racializing feelings that secured the nation as a white space.²¹ Across the country, new citizen subjects grasped the contingencies of modernity against the familiar bestialization of black bodies – against bloodletting, fire-cries, and limbs gone limp among weeping, weighty trees.

The best of the new lynching scholarship situates the violence within the social, political, and economic relations of modernity while asking after the ways that various discourses have rendered lynching a non-modern aberration. Jacqueline Goldsby argues in *Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*, for example, that lynching, in addition to being a political and economic method of racial control, was a cognitive-aesthetic technology that secretly ordered "the new regimes and routines" of modern American life at the turn of the twentieth

century.²² Goldsby argues that lynching was conditioned by not only southern racism and the political economy of white supremacy but also by mass culture and the growth of monopoly capitalism. Indeed, it is lynching's "fit" with modern technologies and experiences – as well as lynching photographs' movement in and out of public view, "secreted" from visibility along a white supremacist circuit that largely controlled where, when, and by whom the images were seen – that has allowed lynching's varied meanings to be ignored, and the broader problem of anti-black violence to be "persistently disavowed."²³ The nullification of the full range of meanings embedded in lynching images, and the obfuscation of lynching's relationship to modernization is what Goldsby terms lynching's "cultural logic." This logic, she argues, ordered the nation's knowledge in ways that allowed Americans to "remember to forget" the violence, and is the source and force of the images' continued capacity to terrorize.²⁴

In her study of U.S. lynching culture, Goldsby looks to black literary production to rethink the relationship between racial violence, historical memory, epistemology, and aesthetics. Arguing that black literary treatments of anti-black violence manifest, at the level of form, lynching's non-manifest meanings, she focuses on the genres and forms through which black authors like Ida B. Wells, Gwendolyn Brooks, and James Weldon Johnson represented lynching.²⁵ Their formal choices – their decisions to work the pain of racial violence through such genres as the journalistic exposé, the ballad, the sonnet, and the novel – enabled them and their readers to comprehend lynching's normative relationship to American modernity.²⁶ Literary genre is, in Goldsby's estimation, an expression of

cognition that has epistemic consequences for our understanding and inhabitation of history. Highlighting how anti-lynching activists and black literary modernists troubled standard discourses about lynching as well as the anti-cognitive dimensions of spectacle, Goldsby proposes that black literary treatments of lynching are historical repositories for other ways of knowing lynching's disavowed modernity.

As Jennie Lightweis-Goff writes, after Goldsby's critique it is necessary to continue investigating and contesting lynching's rendition as anti-modern and anomalous to the history of the U.S.²⁷ Lightweis-Goff's own excellent study of lynching, *Blood at the Root: Lynching as Historical Nucleus*, investigates the willed and unwilling forgetting of lynching's "collective, public face" in the popular tendency to quarantine lynching in the South, in writers' refusal of lynching's present tense, and in the dominant construction of racism as a private affair, manifest, as Lightweis-Goff writes, "only in the invisible 'heart' and intention of the subject."²⁸ In *Laughing at Meat and Fury: A Materialist Critique of U.S. Lynching Culture*, I follow Goldsby's and Lightweis-Goff's aesthetic analyses of lynching's cultural logic – its epistemic disappearance of the memory and meaning of anti-black violence – by theorizing an altered historical and political genealogy of anti-black violence that troubles the "end-of-lynching discourse" that accompanied the ascendance of racial liberalism in the 1940s. Where racial liberalism figures lynching as an affront to the U.S. justice system and proffers a triumphant narrative of the law's containment of extra-legal mob murder, *Laughing at Meat and Fury* constructs a visual and theoretical counter-archive that presents lynching as an allegory for the present – as a belligerent image

that illuminates the imbrication of vigilante violence and liberal law and order.

Focusing on the repeated emergence and recession of the image of lynching in moments of political and economic crisis that span from Progressive-era Georgia to the uprising in Watts in 1965, I argue that dialectical constructions of lynching's political and cultural history render untenable the divisions so often erected between the spectacle mob killings that attracted thousands of participants from the 1880s to the 1930s and the executions that have quietly disappeared the dead since the onset, during the period of capitalist reform known as the New Deal, of what I call the low era of lynching. The dissertation pursues this argument by according attention to critical moments throughout the twentieth century when the image of lynching flashed up unexpectedly in a range of media. In my analyses of lynching's circulation in the mid- twentieth-century press, in a Cold War photography exhibition, and in a post-revolutionary Cuban newsreel, I theorize the lynching photograph as a dialectical, or moving, image that imbricates seemingly divergent historical periods. I argue that the moving image of lynching intensifies our political perception of the ways that anti-black terror has been naturalized as an inevitable feature of progressive modernity. The moving image of lynching is a dialectical image that illuminates U.S lynching culture's constitutive relationship to racial capitalism.

The history of lynching is often written onto its photographic legacy; because we have a surplus of horrifying evidence of the violence as it was captured by photographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we tend to assume that the doctrine ended at around the same historical moment that lynchings stopped drawing tens of thousands of spectating participants and when lynchers

withdrew the camera from their toolboxes – when the visual evidence tells us it ended. This positivist assumption, I argue, evinces an impoverished understanding of photography, the spectacle cultures of capitalism, and lynching’s relationship to the law. Recently, critics have proposed ways of being with photographs that do not foreclose their ethical potential.²⁹ Seeking a renewed approach to the relationship between the visual archive and spoken testimony regarding the Holocaust, Georges Didi-Huberman proposes that an “attentive questioning of images can lead to more than a cult of icons.” An ethical approach to atrocity photographs, he argues, requires that we speak of images with imagination; to do otherwise entails cutting them off from their dynamism.³⁰ To read an image with imagination entails bringing it into an assemblage comprising “written documents, contemporary testimonies, [and] other visual sources” into a “montage or puzzle” that “makes every image into the third of two images already joined in a montage ... [that] does not reduce the [ir] differences but, on the contrary, emphasizes them.”³¹ Through the juxtaposition of incommensurable elements, images acquire renewed readability.³²

I argue that there is more analytic work to be done around the iconographic, affective, and rhetorical weight of lynching, and that a central task of this work is to attend, whole-heartedly and whole-bodily, with the demands made by its photographic afterlife. Might lynching photographs be engaged as dialectical concatenations of horror and outrage? Do lynching images carry auras of struggle against racializing violence? If so, how do we grasp this experience? How do we seize hold of a critical memory of lynching we have been trained to disremember? *Laughing at Meat and Fury* centers around elements of lynching’s dispersed and

virtual archive that have been under- or unexamined to present a discursive space in which lynching images are given free rein to agitate as everyday warzones that invite us not to passive contemplation of subaltern suffering, but to a range of ambivalent responses that might be seen to have expiatory potential.³³

Laughing at Meat and Fury seeks to supplement studies of spectacle's symbolic force by urging visual studies scholars, and historians and theorists of political violence, to consider lynching's visual remains not only as representational images but also as performative objects. Those invested in white supremacy and those seeking to destabilize it have used these images as evidentiary means to vastly different ends – as evidence, on the right, that blackness is a containable threat that need not be admitted to social life, and as evidence by those on the left that social and political equality does not exist and that that must change. But lynching photographs' political power to mobilize people across vastly different experiential sectors of the color line was not merely a result of their narrative power to depict a clearly determined racial hierarchy. To understand how this is so requires seeing the bodies depicted throughout lynching's archive as more than mere grist for optical consumption. It requires an attention to these images' material lives – to their tactile germination in spectacle violence and to the work that this violence continues to exert after it has laid corporeal waste to the dispossessed.

Such an analysis begins from the supposition that lynching's remains work on us, and that their life-cycles cannot be fully explained via recourse to the conscious intentions of white supremacists and anti-lynching activists. In my reading, lynching photographs exceed their status as objects to become moving images that

manifest an animated subversion of our received notions of documentary truth, liberal justice, legal personhood, and historical time. They are aesthetic forms and forces of thought whose power lay in their ability to tell stories – cunning stories that might trouble the photographs’ reduction of their referents to reified objects. As moving images, lynching photographs demand the writing of a revolutionary philosophical history of anti-black terrorism’s generation of a white imaginary that organizes our subjection to the visual power of the law.³⁴ It is the task of this dissertation to write such a critique of lynching, and I begin in the first chapter by laying out my methodological approach to what I interpret as the photographs’ demand for a new poetics of anti-lynching knowledge.³⁵

My conceptualization of the moving image of lynching is influenced by Walter Benjamin’s writings on history, violence, and mass culture. For Benjamin, image is “that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. ... For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.³⁶ Image is, Benjamin writes, “dialectics at a standstill.” The dialectical image is a constellation between past and present moments as well as a schema for reading; Benjamin underscores that we encounter dialectical images in language, where they function allegorically and furnish an “unconscious optics”: a revolutionary perception of time that brings the present state of emergency to a halt. Following Benjamin’s materialist attunement to the “language of things” – his adage that commodities carry with them the wish- and dream-images of the collective and that the relationship between image and text

is decisive for materialist historiography – I re-write the image of lynching by creating a discursive space in which lynching objects may press close to thought as shocking images that ignite us to action rather than passivity. In this reading, the photographs and postcards that were central to turn-of-the-century spectacle murders are understood to be historiographic complexes through which we can read the violence of the past as prefiguring both the violence of the present and the continued necessity of a revolutionary opposition to the white supremacist capitalist state.

My aim is twofold: to present lynching as a nation form and to articulate the relationship between the history of anti-black terrorism in the U.S. to the conceptual and historical paradigm of modernity. I wish to alter the terms upon which lynching has been seen to be modern and national because these concepts, insofar as they have been mobilized according to liberal common sense, have failed black freedom movements. *Laughing at Meat and Fury* centers a key contradiction in the history of anti-lynching struggles: that the articulation of lynching as a *national* crisis whose abolition is said to require federal action has relied upon and fortified a liberal infrastructure that has historically rendered black suffering insensible. That this national framework was used to strengthen the very state apparatuses that have historically been mobilized to squash black power indicates the necessity of an abolitionist history of the state's involvement in lynching culture as well as the state's perpetuation via practices that fall outside of the signifying form of the law.

In the first instance, I aim to subject the history of the ideologically variable nation thesis – the idea that lynching is a national rather than a merely southern

phenomenon – to an abolitionist critique that demonstrates lynching’s entanglement with capitalist social relations and liberal legal structures, and that highlights the historic fallout from the nation thesis as its proponents fell whim to the colorblind dictates of liberal reform. I focus on the elision of black suffering from twentieth-century anti-lynching rhetoric as lynching became synonymous with anarchistic attacks on state power and legal authority. The inevitable whitewashing of lynching as an attack on the integrity of a republic founded on the principle of law-and-order and representative democracy is part of the dominant structure of end-of-lynching discourse, which continues to organize lynching historiography today.

End-of-lynching discourse became popular in the 1930s when southern reformists like the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) popularized its mission to end lynching by convincing southern whites that lynching was no longer a community-sanctioned practice. The campaigns undertaken by the ASWPL and by other southern liberal organizations like the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) sought to mitigate racist southern folkways through a combination of popular education rooted in the empiricist and data-driven principles of sociology, as well as via a reformist approach to governance that embraced the developmental principles of industry and technological advancement. In an article in the January 12, 1930 edition of the *New York Times*, a writer declared: “Lynching will be a lost crime by 1940—something for scientists to study and the rest of us to remember with unbelief—and it will be wiped out by radio, good roads and the newspapers.”³⁷ Southern liberals had a mechanistic understanding of racial conflict, rooting its origins in economic

competition and the supposed scarcity of resources, and failing to connect its economic motivations to the economic and extra-economic dictates of white supremacy. Convincing other white southerners to commit to the developing anti-lynching ethos among southern liberals required the refiguration of lynching from a form of popular, white supremacist justice to a fundamental contravention of democracy that primarily victimized whites. The colorblind transformation of lynching within the mainstream anti-lynching movement of the 1930s and 1940s disappeared the black victims of white supremacist violence that continued underground in the form of shootings, bombings, and quiet back-alley killings.³⁸ Nevertheless, southern liberals – armed with funds from northern philanthropists, sociological information to counter the myth of black concupiscence, and their own bourgeois hubris – optimistically announced that lynching was out of step with a truly New (but still segregated) South.

Throughout the two decades following the Second World War, liberal discourse, as Ashraf Rushdy writes, “conflated lynching and national identity so thoroughly that it became difficult to disentangle what ‘America’ could mean as a beacon of democratic freedom from what it did mean as a nation where lynching happened.”³⁹ To portray lynching as a national rather than a merely southern phenomenon was a bold and radical move, and one that had been initiated by black anti-lynching activists in the 1880s. But that it did so by displacing race from its main plot had enormous consequences for the future of anti-lynching activism, the formation of the Civil Rights Movement, and the growth of the carceral state.⁴⁰ Despite objections from some on the left, and even with the uptick in anti-black

terrorism throughout the country in response to the passage of civil rights legislation, the idea of lynching's end continued to gain popularity throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁴¹

As Rushdy argues, this framework continues to frame discussions of lynching, which often engage in a narrative ritual that cites, with abundant caveats, the place and time of lynching's final act. William S. McFreely, for example, writes that the 1931 lynching in Marion, Indiana was "the last classic lynching north of the Mason-Dixon line." Across lynching scholarship, writers frequently cite the kidnapping, several-hours long torture, and killing of Claude Neal in Marianna, Florida in 1934 as the last spectacle lynching. The Moore's Ford massacre in Walton County, Georgia in 1946 is popularly known as the "last mass lynching," even though extra-judicial group murders have been committed in the name of communal justice in the years since. Cynthia Carr argues that the "last large mob" was responsible for hanging Howard Wash from a bridge in Jones County, Mississippi on October 17, 1942. Dominic J. Capeci Jr. claims that the 1942 immolation of Cleo Wright in Sikeston, Missouri, "signaled the beginning of the end" of "mob racial lynching." According to Dora Apel, the "last publicly acknowledged lynching" occurred in Mobile, Alabama in 1981 when the Klan beat and hanged a teenager named Michael Donald from a tree in a multiracial neighborhood.⁴² Jonathan Markovitz, acknowledging lynching's power as a symbol, argues that lynching now functions as a broad metaphor for racism, and that its metaphorization has strengthened as it has "faded away as a material practice." Lynching, Markovitz writes, is primarily:

a figure of speech. While actual lynchings worked to provide lessons about the nature of southern society, the trope of lynching has been used to make implicit comparisons between the nature of particularly contentious events in the contemporary United States and what is now widely understood to be an exceptionally horrific part of our national past.⁴³

This dissertation critiques the tendency among historians and the general public to assign lynching to the past and to assume that today it serves as nothing but metaphor or ghostly precursor. Arguing that U.S. lynch law did not cease in the 1960s and that we can better understand lynching's historical continuities and transformations if we study its aesthetic mediation of racial capital, I examine how lynching objects and affects render political-economic techniques of gendered racial control both present to and absent from consciousness. I focus on the visual culture of liberal anti-lynching reform that has whitewashed lynching as an attack on the nation rather than a mechanism of white supremacist control that supplements state violence.

The framework of end-of-lynching discourse is the product of what Rushdy calls a "willed strategy of denial" that obscures other discourses of lynching.⁴⁴ It places the violence unalterably in the past, turning it into "a museum piece, a relic, an icon of a discredited religion with no remaining effective power."⁴⁵ I am interested in how this presumption of lynching's finitude shores up a hegemonic investment in the state's monopoly on violence as the right response to racial terrorism. The liberal anti-lynching movement insisted that anti-black terrorism could be contained through the introduction of state policing in the South and through the slow integration of southern courts into the northern criminal justice system. Southern liberals' disappearance of the overwhelming terror and harm done

to black people for generations across the country is beholden, I argue, as much to a liberal impulse to abstract universalism, historical teleology, and a love of the law as it is to white supremacy. I thus concentrate on moments throughout the twentieth century when the image of lynching – lynching as a dialectical image – flashes up to demonstrate liberalism’s affective proximity to white supremacy. Focusing upon the political intensities and aesthetic oscillations of U.S. lynch law throughout the early years of the low era of lynching, this study illuminates lynching culture’s fortification by a litigious structure of feeling. Each chapter seeks to demonstrate lynching’s entanglement with capitalist social relations and liberal legal structures, arguing that a radical critique of lynching invested in a quest for justice for the dead and for the freedom of the living is the philosophy of its history.⁴⁶

I am interested in U.S. lynching culture’s division of the sensible: its capacity to render a white supremacist social world whose affective tenacity has outlived its supposed delegitimation by a liberal, post-civil rights racial state. Concentrating on the period leading up to and directly following the racial crises that erupted during WWII and the Cold War, I root the era’s liberalization of state racial policy in the struggles that occurred over lynching as activists sought to pass or block anti-lynching legislation, sway southern popular opinion via research and other educational endeavors, and underscore or obscure lynching’s relationship to state violence.

What ethical, political, and methodological wisdom can we glean from materialist critique in order to read America’s lynching archives, those networked moments sedimented into horrifying loads in the forms of photographs, postcards,

broken bones, severed genitals, pickled fingers, flesh torn into sartorial readymades, and bloodied rope? How might a materialist engage these iterations of American necropolitics, these moments in lives lost to a death culture so pervasive that it catches us with a blind eye? The dissertation's interdisciplinary orientation mobilizes original archival research, close visual analysis, and feminist, Marxist, and post-marxist critical theory and theories of materialism. I mobilize frames of analysis developed in feminist theories of embodiment, affect, and power; queer theories of negativity and non-reproductive futurity; visual and performance studies; black cultural studies; psychoanalysis; Marxist photography studies; and Frankfurt School critical theory to inquire into the aesthetic mediation of U.S. lynch law. My approach to the history and politics of lynching photographs has been fundamentally shaped by my readings in historical materialism, the "pessimistic" turn in black studies, black feminist critique, affect studies, and insights from Jacques Lacan and Frantz Fanon about the subject as a structure of (racialized) desire. In the interests of developing a historically nuanced critique of U.S. lynching culture, I mobilize Marxist historical materialism – with its insistence that philosophy must seek to change rather than merely reflect the world – as well as the Spinozist materialism that insists that political praxis, our capacity to act in accordance with the political demands of the present, depends upon our ability to maximize appropriate political passions as well as political reason. My turn to Marxism is not meant to suggest that only through the prism of class can we understand political violence. I am critical of the way that Marxian categories have been mobilized to articulate the relationship between race and class even as I insist that Marxist critique is

invaluable to any analysis of gratuitous anti-black violence under capitalist relations of production. In this dissertation, I stage an encounter between these different modes of critique because I think they each provide necessary tools for interrogating the politics of the lynching image: its effects and affects, its residence on the threshold of sensibility, and its perpetuation of a white supremacist enjoyment that has been fundamental to the entrenchment of capitalist social relations.⁴⁷

My study's title, *Laughing at Meat and Fury*, is inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois's discussion in *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* of the tangle of horror and ridicule that characterized scenes of racializing violence in the post-WWI period of northern migration. Du Bois asks of northern industrialists:

What did they see? They saw something at which they had been taught to laugh and make sport; they saw that which the heading of every newspaper column, the lie of every cub reporter, the exaggeration of every press dispatch, and the distortion of every speech and book had taught them was a mass of despicable men, inhuman; *at best, laughable; at worst, the meat of mobs and fury.*⁴⁸

Du Bois sets up this dyadic relationship between the absurd comedy of racism and its tragic outcome and follows it some pages later with an impassioned meditation on the murderous rioting that occurred in East St. Louis four years after the end of WWI:

The white South laughed,—*it was infinitely funny*—the “niggers” who had gone North to escape slavery and lynching had met the fury of the mob which they had fled. Delegations rushed North from Mississippi and Texas, with suspicious timeliness and with great-hearted offers to take these workers back to a lesser hell.

So hell flamed in East St. Louis! The white men drove even black union men out of their unions and when the black men, beaten by night and assaulted, flew to arms and shot back at the marauders, five thousand rioters arose and surged like a crested stormwave, from noonday until midnight; they killed

and beat and murdered; they dashed out the brains of children and stripped off the clothes of women; they drove victims into the flames and hanged the helpless to the lighting poles. Fathers were killed before the faces of mothers; children were burned; heads were cut off with axes; pregnant women crawled and spawned in dark, wet fields; thieves went through houses and firebrands followed; bodies were thrown from bridges; and rocks and bricks flew through the air.⁴⁹

The rioting initiated by whites in East St. Louis was one node in the hellfire that swept across the U.S. in 1919, later to become known as “Red Summer.” I have quoted Du Bois at length here because the image of lynching that he fashions is so uncharacteristic; it occurs in an urban locale in the North, it begins as a result of a labor squabble, it targets children and women in addition to men, and it makes no mention of the rape myth that had been the mainstay of lynching in the nearly thirty-year period leading up to the start of WWI. Du Bois rightly centers lynching in a discussion of labor, war, and whiteness. But it is also his passing reference to humor at the start of the passage that I wish to highlight, for it calls attention to an under-examined element of lynching culture: the dialectic between bodily destruction and enjoyment, or what black critical theorists now call the libidinal economy of white supremacy.⁵⁰

Lynching produced a national structure of racial feeling that facilitated cross-class white unity. In his meditations on whiteness in *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil*, Du Bois characterizes the laughter-inducing joy felt by those who kill black people as a spiritual force that binds the soul of whiteness to the nation. In “making bonfires of human flesh and laughing at them hideously, and making the insulting of millions more than a matter of dislike,—rather a great religion, a world war-cry,” the men who revel in black death sound a taunt capable of instantiating a spiritual

brotherhood.⁵¹ Whiteness in Du Bois's analysis is a religious affect, and a noisy one at that. What Du Bois identifies as religious fervor is analogous to Benjamin's characterization of capitalism as a religion furious in self-righteous piety and enflamed by the strictures of guilt. Throughout this study, I examine the violent spirit of patriarchal whiteness in relation to that other modern religion that Karl Marx identified as the "religion of sensuous desire": commodity fetishism.⁵² In tune with Saidiya Hartman's analysis of the fungible and libidinal use of captive subjects in the U.S., I inquire into how the affective relationship outlined in Du Bois's analysis played out in the aesthetic responses generated by lynching and its mediating technologies.⁵³

This black feminist reconstruction of lynching's history turns to Benjamin's writings on history, photography, and mass culture to think about how the violence of lynching culture repeats, with important differences, the violence of chattel slavery in the U.S., how it mediates the violence of capitalist exploitation, and how this violence is reproduced in various aesthetic forms that each have a unique cognitive impact. Benjamin's analysis of allegory, of the exhibition value of the commodity in nineteenth-century Paris, his attention to culture as productive of ideology rather than an arena that simply reproduces, super-structurally, the structural violence of capitalist accumulation, can be productively thought alongside the writings of black feminist theorists who underscore the affective, bodily, and epistemic legacies of slavery. This might seem an unusual intellectual genealogy to think together, but Benjamin's theorization of allegory and his subsequent critique of a teleological philosophy of history share important qualities with black feminist

theorizations of the recursivity of slavery and of slavery's construction of black personhood as a fungible object. A materialist analysis of lynching accords equal attention to the instrumental effects of this killing sport and the ritual-affective dimensions of spectacle torture, which constructed blackness outside the time and terrain of citizenry and the Human.⁵⁴

Because lynching has made a resurgent appearance in both popular and academic histories alongside the so-called “post-linguistic” turn in the humanities, I engage the photographic history of lynching's circulation through many of the conceptual lenses developed by theorists of affect and new materialism. The range of thought that has, over the last decade, been categorized as part of the “affective turn” is expansive, and often contradictory. Affect describes the intertwining of felt bodily sensation, emotion, and consciousness in those charged moments that shape what a body can be and its power to act.⁵⁵ Though the Spinozist writings of Gilles Deleuze on the politics of affect first inspired me to pursue a critique of lynching photographs' affective power, I am no longer convinced, as Deleuze argues, that affect occurs only in between bodies as an immaterial and transitional state that completely deforms representation. Following Eugenie Brinkema's provocation, I read political sensation and affect as having and inhering in form.⁵⁶ Remaining attuned to affect's intensive capacity to exceed representation, I nevertheless seek to understand the ways it takes shape as text and image. I am also influenced by Lauren Berlant's and Sara Ahmed's writings on the role of the emotions in the construction of national belonging and in the creation of a moralist political public sphere.⁵⁷

What might it mean to historically articulate the experience of lynching and its aftermaths by writing into the photographs' affective force? What "qualities of affect" characterize the economy of lynching? In addition to employing Marxist methodologies in order to highlight the social relations that are obscured in the commodification of lynching photographs, I explore what visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards calls "the affective tone of photographs": their visual power and performance as images and as material objects.⁵⁸ By considering the aesthetic power of the visual and its relationship to touch – an intermingling increasingly referred to as haptic, and which includes not only sight and touch but also the motor sensations of proprioception and kinaesthesia – I investigate the affective power of lynching photographs as a central component of their motility.⁵⁹ Such an analysis contradicts the myth of the independent instant that has, until recently, dominated photographic discourse.⁶⁰ Following David Company's provocation that "The time and movement of photography deserve an analysis every bit as sophisticated as those extended to film," I take up the event of the still lynching photograph – its substance, force, and ability to register change.⁶¹

If time accumulates in things, and photographs are our most direct connection to the scene and experience of lynching (and this is, of course, debatable, a debate whose contours have largely shaped photography studies, and which I take up in detail in the first chapter), what might these photographs tell us about the temporality of lynch law and the philosophy of its history? For Benjamin, there is no history without the capacity to arrest historical movement; history is historical insofar as we may arrest, photographically, the catastrophic faith in progress

espoused by bourgeois historicists. The state of emergency, Benjamin argues, corresponds with the photographic event, which intervenes in the present to signal the need for a “caesura in the movement of thought,” for a mode of thinking history outside the confines of a philosophy of history that reifies dynamic social relations.⁶²

In the first chapter, “From Living Portraits to Dead Lies: Materialist Historiography and the Moving Image of Lynching,” I examine the discursive production, beginning in the 1930s, of the idea of lynching’s demise.⁶³ This was the period in which lynching went “underground,” as one NAACP propagandist wrote in 1940, as Southern liberals sought to contest the authority of lynch law in the name of economic progress and moral leadership.⁶⁴ The response to lynching on the part of Southern progressives formed a crucial historical antecedent to the racial break of the WWII period, during which the state resolved to solve the issue of extra-legal violence by popularizing a psychological understanding of racism as individual prejudice and by developing a law-and-order mandate to punish racist crimes through a carceral apparatus.⁶⁵ In the study’s opening chapter, I seek to deepen our critical understanding of the historical genesis of colorblindness in the U.S. in struggles over lynching. Asserting that a materialist approach to history alters our conceptualization of lynching’s political temporality and representational effects, I bring Walter Benjamin’s writings on photography and the philosophy of history into conversation with black Marxist analyses of lynching as a form of national oppression to theorize the study’s central leitmotif: the moving image of lynching. Inspired by Richard Wright’s provocation, in his anti-lynching poem, “Between the World and Me,” to step inside lynching’s remains, I undertake a

speculative reading of a 1908 railway lynching photograph that circulated first as a bloodstained postcard and then again in 1934 on the cover of a CPUSA anti-lynching pamphlet authored by Harry Haywood and Milton Howard. I argue that a locomotive motif common in lynching photography drew upon the photographic landscape genre to ritualize black incarceration and death as inevitable features of progressive modernity. In addition to situating anti-black mob violence within the nation's culture of mobility, I read a trail of bloody fingerprints that stains the surface of the railway postcard as an incitement to theorize lynching as a moving image that conjoins apparently distinct political and historical periods. I develop this theory in three additional chapters that focus upon the continued and transformed mobilization of extra-legal anti-black terror.

The second chapter, "Between Toombs County and Tombs of the Press: *LIFE* Magazine and the Lynching of Amy Mallard," examines a full-page, six-photograph spread in *LIFE* magazine of Amy Mallard's emotional breakdown at the 1948 Toombs County, Georgia trial of two of the men who killed her husband, WWII veteran Robert Mallard. The accompanying text in *LIFE* names the photographs "portraits of human grief and terror" while referencing Mallard's testimony as "hysterical." Focusing upon how Mallard's traumatic confrontation with her husband's murderers was captured and re-circulated as a motion study of grief by the liberal sentimental press, I read Mallard's photographic circulation through *LIFE* as a violent supplement to her dispossession by the Toombs County justice system, and inquire into the place of lynching in the post-WWII circulation of

atrocities photographs amid the burgeoning discourse of universal human rights and the mainstreaming of racial liberalism.

Why and to what effects did the photograph of the torture by blowtorch of Robert “Bootjack” McDaniels in rural Mississippi in 1937 enter into renewed circulation as part of the Cold War visual landscape? How might this lynching photograph – and photographs of lynching in general – configure the vicissitudes of American family feeling in the long twentieth century and highlight the contradictions of domestic ideology and the limitations of liberal humanism during the so-called “great American Century”? In chapter three, “America’s ‘Concrete Universal’: Excising Lynching from *The Family of Man*,” I explore the incorporation of the 1937 lynching photograph into Edward Steichen’s modernist Cold War photography exhibition, *The Family of Man*, as well as the circumstances surrounding Steichen’s removal of the photograph from the exhibition shortly after it opened in 1955 at the Museum of Modern Art. In addition to investigating the historical context of the image’s circulation, I argue that the initial inclusion of the photograph of McDaniels’ torture and murder in *The Family of Man* troubled Steichen’s contention that marriage, reproduction, waged labor, and faith in a Christian God were the ideal tools to ensure universal human survival in the anxious racial era of the atomic bomb. I also speculate – in keeping with the aesthetic and philosophical mandate of the exhibition, which Steichen claimed was an aesthetic depiction of universal humanity – what it might mean to conceive of the massacre as representative of a “concrete universal” history. Employing Benjamin’s and Theodor Adorno’s theories of negative dialectical totality, I argue that the

excised lynching photograph represents a particular instance of anti-black terror in the Mississippi Delta at the same time that we may glimpse within it an image of the white supremacist social structure that contradicted, in the wake of WWII, U.S. pretensions to global democratic leadership. I read the disappearance of the photograph from the exhibition as a key visual moment in the consolidation of Cold War civil rights and in the global spread of U.S. capitalist hegemony. Finally, I suggest an alternative “Family of Man” that highlights the centrality of anti-black violence to the affective formation of the normative family and to the racialization of the human.

In the fourth chapter, “The Incendiary Third Image of Lynching: Santiago Álvarez’s *Now!* and the Red Summer of 1965,” I consider what place minor cinema – theorized by Gilles Deleuze as a political force capable of inventing, through a collective enunciation, a “people to come” – might occupy in a materialist antiracist imaginary that contests the liberal response to lynching that won mainstream appeal over black radical and communist analyses of lynching during the 1930s. The focus of the chapter is Santiago Alvarez’s *Now!*, a revolutionary Cuban newsreel that Alvarez issued in defense of the Watts uprising in August of 1965. Alvarez, I argue, transfigures the white media’s reification of the collective actions taken in Watts as irrational race riots by inducting the visual culture of the rebellion into a series of images of white supremacist attacks on black life and of black self-defense. Focusing on Alvarez’s incineration, during the newsreel’s stunning crescendo, of a photograph of the public burning of William Brown in Omaha, Nebraska in 1919, I argue that *Now!* activates the photographic memory of burning and flesh cooking so

central to the control of the enslaved and of their descendants during the high and low eras of lynching in order to lend historical weight to Watts rebels' rejection of Cold War civil rights liberalism. Situating *Now!* in relation to Civil Rights and black power visual culture in the U.S., I theorize Alvarez's "nervous montage" technique as a form of what I call photo-dissemblage. My analysis proposes that fire emerges in 1960s minor cinema as a performative imbrication of the liberal politics of integration and the white supremacist libidinal economy of anti-black consumption.

Each of these chapters seeks to uplift, through speculative critique and poetic invention, a counter-archive that situates lynching at the center of the post-war law-and-order mandate. Chapter two on *LIFE* magazine and chapter three on *The Family of Man* undertake a materialist antiracist reading of lynching photographs that were incorporated into liberal propaganda, while the final chapter focuses upon a transnational cinematic critique of end-of-lynching discourse. In the dissertation's coda, I argue that *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* emerged in 2000 as a dialectical image of an impending era of terror. Each chapter seeks to demonstrate lynching's role as a technique of white warfare by illuminating common scenes of "post-war" everyday life as figurations of lynching's ugly coil. This conceptual framework connects lynching scholarship with the turn in black studies to a concern with the phantasms of history, to those experiential elements of the past that are foreclosed and indiscernible yet somehow present by virtue of the force they exert in our current lives.⁶⁶ This attention to that which lies beyond or beside representation might bring a renewed focus to the political importance of memory to the constitution of violent publics, to the ideological-affective impact of capturing

lynching in a photographic form that cites multiple pasts, and to the oppositional worlds we enact in the midst of the violence of the present.

Notes to Introduction

¹ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). Quoted in Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 425.

² I follow Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as not only "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" but also "the ability of privileged agents outside of state authority to grow accustomed to that vulnerability to violence." See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28. As Esther Peeren writes, "the chronotope may be said to function as an ideology of time-space that interpellates individuals as subjects in(to) collective space and in(to) collective time through specific spatial and temporal norms." See Esther Peeren, "Through the Lens of Chronotope: Suggestions for a Spatio-Temporal Perspective on Diaspora," *Diaspora and Memory: Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Life, Arts and Politics*, edited by Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephan Besser and Yolande Jansen (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 71.

³ Bakhtin quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), note 2, 221.

⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 4, 17; Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003), 20-23; Nicholas Mirzeoff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁵ The slave ship as chronotope figures the force of African enslavement, migration, and return on the formations of modernity. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 4, 17.

⁶ Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Cambridge: First Harvard University Press, 2007), 151.

⁷ In *The Death-Bound Subject*, Abdul JanMohamed writes that, "by commodifying life and death and deploying them against each other, slave societies were able to generate an implicit and unconscious contract that bound the slave via a threat of death [...] to generate an enormous amount of value." See Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 12, 267.

⁸ Linton Barrett, *Blackness and Value: Seeing Double* (Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29.

⁹ As Sandy Alexandre insightfully argues, lynching has been a "spatial technology of domination that privatizes and racializes particular spaces as 'white.'" Following the critical lead of Ida B. Wells and Cheryl Harris, Alexandre grounds the extra-judicial terrorism of lynching in practices of land theft on the part of impoverished whites who were forced to compete with freedpeople in the post-war southern labor market. In *Crusade for Justice*, Wells writes that "lynching really was an excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property. Harris's thesis in "Whiteness as Property" is that whiteness has been structured and codified as "property in oneself," and that the accumulation of this property is based fundamentally on exclusion. See Alexandre, *The Properties of Violence: Claims to Ownership in Representations of Lynching* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 6, 10; Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106:8 (June 1993), 1707-1791; Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, edited by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁰ Jessie Daniel Ames, a leading organizer with The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL), noted that “Sometimes even Southern white people forget their caste in a biracial society. When they do, though they are admonished, the outcome may be death to a Negro.” Quoted in Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 142.

¹¹ Mason Stokes, *The Color of Sex: Whiteness, Heterosexuality and the Fictions of White Supremacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), esp. 117, 143.

¹² As Khalil Muhammad argues, race propagandists in the 1890s mobilized the new statistical methods of sociology – data collection, census reports, empiricism writ large – to argue that African Americans were “naturally” disposed to higher rates of disease, criminal behavior, and mortality. Lynching naturalized blackness as given to torture and death with the textual support of racial science that purported the absence of black pain and recommended castration as an alternative to lynching. American scientists like Samuel Morton drew on European civilizationist discourse to argue that democracy originated amongst Anglo-Saxons, and that white Americans of English and German ancestry were the natural-born leaders of the U.S. Nathaniel Shaler, who studied under Louis Agassiz, similarly observed: “Every American, born to the manner of his kind, feels the world open to him’ and ‘when called on [will] be ready for statecraft.” See Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 5; Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West, 1850-1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 24; Ashraf Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 35.

¹³ Lynching’s visual reproduction did not simply depict racism; it also inscribed, as Jacqueline Goldsby writes, “how practices of racial violence were used to cultivate the experience and meaning of sight itself.” Goldsby explains how the lynching photographs and postcards that today stand as sensational records of terror were key not only to reconfigurations of race in the postbellum period, but to new orders of visual experience at the turn of the nineteenth-century. In addition to rendering racial categories visible by tying race to a binary framework, lynching’s visibility fit within broader national cultural developments such as the democratization of photography and the increasing popularity of cinema. See Jacqueline Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 6, 224, 238.

¹⁴ Raymond Williams, “Structure of Feeling,” *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-135.

¹⁵ Saidiya Hartman writes: “as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion.” See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 19.

¹⁷ See, for example, Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Alexander Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996); Dennis A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to WWII* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1853-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

¹⁸ Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” 14.

¹⁹ Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 273, 288; Elizabeth Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 203; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-77; Jennie Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root: Lynching as American Cultural Nucleus* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), 19-24; Analyses of lynching in the early to mid-twentieth century by Jesse Daniel Ames, Walter White, and others argued that lynching flourished in regions of the country that were resistant to the modernizing principles of industrialization and institutionalized criminal justice. See Jesse Daniel Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching: Review of Lynching, 1931-1941, With a Discussion of Recent Developments in This Field*

(Atlanta: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Inc., 1942), 16, 58; Walter White, *Rope & Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (Salem: Ayer Company, Publishers, 1969), 9-49.

²⁰ Gustavus Stadler, "Never Heard Such a Thing: Lynching and Phonographic Modernity," *Social Text*. 28:1 (2010): 87-105.

²¹ See Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 382.

²² Golsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 221.

²³ Golsby writes: "Lynching photographs did not exercise their power to oppress through their promiscuous circulation as market commodities; rather, the scarcity of the images, their unpredictable appearance and disappearance from general circulation, enhanced their awful force." See Golsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 248.

²⁴ Golsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 221.

²⁵ Golsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 21.

²⁶ Wells's "dynamitic" anti-lynching writings, for example, appropriated journalistic and sociological conventions to draw attention to "how forms of progress in early-modernist America sanctioned the proliferation of racial violence." Rather than merely repudiating lies, Wells's pamphlets exposed the ways the formal structures of the news, by embodying the flux of historical time as part of its rhetorical force, organized what was possible to know about lynching. See Golsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 49, 70.

²⁷ Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root*, 8.

²⁸ Lightweis-Goff performs an excellent reading of William Faulkner's abdication of witness. Faulkner refused to write a lynching story for *Vanity Fair* because he "never saw a lynching and could not describe one," despite the spectacle lynchings of Nelse Patton (1908) and Ellwood Higginbotham (1935) in Faulkner's hometown of Oxford, Mississippi, in 1908 and 1935, respectively. Faulkner refused to give lynching a present tense in the short stories, "Dry September" and "Pantaloon in Black," a rhetorical strategy that Lightweis-Goff argues "simultaneously preserves and dismantles the collectivity of the act." Hate Crime laws perpetuate the individualization of racism because they reify racist violence as individual rather than structural. See Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root*, 13, 26-27.

²⁹ Didi-Huberman, in *Images In Spite of All*, critiques the outright rejection of Holocaust photography on the part of the filmmakers of *Shoa*. Negating the idea that turning away from images of the *shoa* can bring it to "absolute speech," Didi-Huberman theorizes another mode of photographic engagement by looking long on four photographs "snatched by the *Sonderkommando* of crematorium V in Auschwitz [that] address the unimaginable, and refute it." The photographs, he writes, act as refutations of Nazi obfuscation. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs From Auschwitz*, translated by Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 19-20, 88.

³⁰ Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 113.

³¹ Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 138, 114.

³² I adopt, throughout this dissertation, Benjamin's term "readability" to conceptualize the image of lynching as a dialectical image. Benjamin's early analyses of language influenced his critique of historicism in "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and *The Arcades Project*. Materialist historiography is as much about ways of reading history as it is about writing history. In Convolute N of *The Arcades Project* (On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress), Benjamin writes: "The image that is read – which is to say the image in the now of its recognizability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded." His concept of the dialectical image is articulated between language and history; the dialectical image is a constellation that we happen upon in language, and is, as Anselm Haverkamp writes, a schema for reading history otherwise. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 456-488; Anselm Haverkamp, "Notes on the Dialectical Image (How Deconstructive Is It?)" *Diacritics* 22:3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1992), 71-74; Jean-Luc Nancy, "Finite History," *The Birth to Presence*, trans. by Brian Holmes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 143-148.

³³ As do many studies of lynching, mine turns on lynching's visual, material, and performance-based archives. Lynching's archive is, of course, incomplete. Lynching scholars have dealt with this lacuna in different ways. Goldsby, for example, turns to literary production to consider the possibility that there are untold histories of lynching that are only accessible to consciousness in the aesthetic forms of literary depiction. I take a different approach to pursuing lynching culture's untold stories by widening its archival parameters.

³⁴ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi, 349-351.

³⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Edited and translated by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010), 23.

³⁶ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 462 (N 2a3).

³⁷ "Foresees End of Lynching," *New York Times*, January 12, 1930.

³⁸ Not all anti-lynching advocates felt that lynching was declining, nor did they agree about what meaning to assign fluctuating rates of lynching in the first third of the twentieth century. Opponents of end-of-lynching discourse, as Ashraf Rushdy writes, "maintained that lynchings were part of a larger pattern of vigilante and extralegal violence in American history, and that the changes after the 1930s marked a transformation, not a termination, in that history." The NAACP wanted police killings and executions of black Americans to be categorized as lynchings, while the ASWPL believed that the Tuskegee Institute's definition of lynching was too capacious. See Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 96-7; Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, "Capital Punishment as Legal Lynching?" *From Lynch Mobs to the Killing State: Race and the Death Penalty in America*, edited by Charles J. Ogletree and Austin Sarat (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 38.

³⁹ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 103.

⁴⁰ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 231.

⁴¹ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 95.

⁴² William S. McFreely, "Afterword," *Under Sentence of Death*, 318; Cynthia Carr, *Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, a Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 198; John Ross, "At the Bar of Judge Lynch" 140; Dominic J. Capeci Jr., *The Lynching of Cleo Wright*. Some of these examples are drawn from Ashraf Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), note 20, 192. See also Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women and the Mob* (Chapel Hill: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 15.

⁴³ Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xvii, xviii, xx.

⁴⁴ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 15.

⁴⁵ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 105.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257; Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 461-2; Saidiya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:4 (Fall 2002): 757-774.

⁴⁷ Which is not to say that racialized murders were or are only committed by members of the ruling class. It is to recognize the epistemological intersection between reified consciousness and white supremacist ideology.

⁴⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (Pennsylvania State University. Electronic Classics Series, 2007 [1920]), 66-67, emphasis mine.

⁴⁹ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 71-72; emphasis mine.

⁵⁰ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *small axe* 26 (June 2008), 1, 5; Frank Wilderson, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Jared Sexton, "Racial Profiling and the Societies of Control," *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*, edited by Joy James (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 198, 213; Jared Sexton, "Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word," *rhizomes* 29 (2016).

⁵¹ Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 39.

⁵² Quoted in Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 117.

⁵³ What structural, symbolic, and affective connections are shared by minstrelsy and lynching? Eric Lott helps advance this line of inquiry when he remarks on the presence in minstrelsy of the “sheer overkill of songs in which black men are roasted, fished for, smoked like tobacco, peeled like potatoes, planted in the soil, or dried and hung up as advertisements.” Returning to Lott’s analysis of minstrelsy in *Love and Theft* helps us recall that minstrelsy became popular in the historical period in which lynching was retooled from a weapon of conquest against American Indians and Mexicans into a tactic directed at black and white abolitionists. Minstrelsy’s most popular period, from 1846-54, saw white laborers in the northeast dealing with the pre-Civil War contradictions of their workaday lives – marked, as they were, by labor struggles, the Wilmot Proviso debates over the extension of slavery, Seneca Falls, the Astor Place theater riot, Fugitive Slave law, and the Kansas-Nebraska bill – in the contradictory terrain of minstrel play. Constance Rourke in *American Humor* observes that “little Jim Crow appeared at almost the precise moment when [the abolitionist publication] *The Liberator* was founded.” In Lott’s description, the ridicule that lay at the heart of minstrel humor reinstated a gap between black and white members of the working class, even as it reveled in their identification. Minstrel characters were masks that working-class men slipped on for the purposes of mastering, through laughter and symbolic play, their anxieties about the growing precariousness of race, gender, and class in the years leading to the start of the Civil War. See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9, 15, 25, 71, 137, 150; and Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 98.

⁵⁴ Alexander Weheliye, following Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter, conceptualizes black studies as a field formation that analyzes the modern construction of the Human, a form of life fashioned at the intersection of legal and extra-legal force. Though the human is not a keyword for Benjamin, his writings on violence, fate, and history are fundamentally concerned with the becoming of the human outside the strictures of liberal thought. In writing a philosophy of lynching’s history, I seek to enrich our understanding of the relationship of anti-black terrorism in the U.S. to the conceptual and historical paradigm of modernity as an aesthetic regime for the production of the Human. Following Sylvia Wynter, Alexander Weheliye, and Rancière, I aim to focus upon modernity as a “time devoted to the material realization of a humanity still latent in mankind.” See Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 3-5; Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, “Unparalleled catastrophe for our species? Or, to give humanness a different future: conversations,” *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 1-9; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London & New York: Continuum, 2006), 27.

⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, “Lecture transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of Affect,” accessed online January 12, 2010, www.gold.ac.uk/media/deleuze_spinoza_affect.pdf

⁵⁶ Eugenie Brinkema writes: “There is a formula for work on affect, and it turns on a set of shared terms: speed, violence, agitation, pressures, forces, intensities. In other words, and against much of the spirit of Deleuze’s philosophy, which celebrated the minor, the changeable, and the multiple, Deleuzian theories of affect offer all repetition with no difference. When affect is taken as a synonym for violence or force (or intensity or sensation), one can only speak of its most abstract agitations instead of any particular textual workings.” She argues that the “only way out of the systematizing of intensity is through close reading.” Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), xiii, xv, 25, 36, 90.

⁵⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and Lauren Berlant, “The Epistemology of State Emotion,” *Dissent in Dangerous Times*, edited by Austin Sarat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 46-78; Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Lauren Berlant, “Intuitionists: History and the Affective Event,” *American Literary History*. 20.4 (2008): 845-860; Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002);

Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy and Politics," *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, eds. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1999.

⁵⁸ Edwards, Elizabeth and Janice Hart, eds. *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 34.

⁵⁹ Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi, 349-351.

⁶⁰ Photography has been popularly imagined in pursuit of the moment, as a sort of writing in light that "embalms time." See Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What is Cinema? Vol 1*, translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967). Bazin quoted in Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image of Time* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 39. See also Gilles Deleuze. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [1985]).

⁶¹ David Company quoted in Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory*, 6.

⁶² Walter Benjamin most famously mobilizes this argument in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in which he translates Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* into an allegorical emblem for the halting of the catastrophes of modernity. He writes elsewhere of this moment of arrest: in his essay on Goethe as the sudden emergence of the expressionless, with the general strike in "Critique of Violence," in his writings on Baudelaire on the petrified restlessness of the image, and with the flashlike perception of similarity that he develops in his writing on the mimetic faculty. Benjamin identifies the ability to arrest history through photography and the writing of aphoristic theses with the moment of revolution. Although Marx identifies revolutions as the "locomotives of world history," Benjamin suggests that "perhaps it is completely otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are, in this train of traveling generations, the reach for the emergency brake." See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 253-264; Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xx, xxi.

⁶³ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 2, 15-19, 95-103.

⁶⁴ The anonymous author of the report suggests that lynchings became less conspicuous because of nation-wide support for federal and state anti-lynching laws, writing: "The old mob is disappearing but the work of the mob goes on. ... Countless Negroes are lynched yearly, but their disappearance is shrouded in mystery, for they are dispatched quietly and without general knowledge." See Anonymous, "Lynching Goes Underground: A Report on a New Technique." Unpublished report sponsored by Senators Robert F. Wagner and Arthur Capper; and Representatives Joseph A. Cavagan and Hamilton Fish (January 1940), 7-8.

⁶⁵ Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 142-145, 209; Naomi Murakawa, *First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11, 30.

⁶⁶ Marilyn Ivy conceptualizes the phantasm as a cultural form and "epistemological object whose presence or absence cannot be definitively located." *Discourses of the Vanishing*. Quoted in Stephen Best, "Neither Lost Nor Found: Slavery and the Visual Archive," *Representations*. 113:1 (Winter 2011), 122.

Chapter 1.

From Living Portraits to Dead Lies: Materialist Historiography and the Moving Image of Lynching

Even though the captive flesh/body has been 'liberated,' and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not *matter*, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is 'murdered' over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise.

- Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*

Lynching photographs wield assaultive power because they are phantasms of histories we need to know but cannot readily perceive.

- Jacqueline Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*

Photography has long been associated with the foreclosure of the kind of critical memory that calls for active political engagement because of its memorializing and sentimental character.¹ Following Susan Sontag's popularization of the argument that photographs induce a "persistent split ... between being affected and being able to think and understand," it has become commonplace to argue that we become inured to scenes of atrocity and suffering the more we are exposed to them.² "So far as we feel sympathy," Sontag writes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence."³ More troubling, perhaps, is photography's potential to provoke the sort of "sorrowful witness" or sympathetic identification that turns the act of beholding another's suffering into a

meditation on the witnessing subject's own suffering.

This is a particularly vexed problem when writing about and teaching the photographic history of lynching in the U.S. Photography's integration into American mass culture coincided with the transformation of lynching in the 1880s into a specifically anti-black form of popular white justice. The violence's remarkable mediation by photography is one of the reasons that contemporaneous witnesses categorized violent death as a natural part of black life. Nineteenth-century discourses framed blackness not as a material social relation but as an epidermal signifier and indexing factor within a photographic archive that visually ranked humans according to a specious physiognomic epistemology.⁴ This occurred most infamously when race scientist Louis Agassiz commissioned daguerreotypes from Joseph T. Zealy of African-born slaves at a South Carolina plantation in 1850 as visible "proof" of the theory of polygenesis; the theory that "races" represent different species created by God.⁵ By the 1890s, when lynch mobs ritualistically incorporated photography into their increasingly spectacular killings, Buckner Payne's polygenetic thesis that the "negro" was a "beast in God's nomenclature" had become part of popular white supremacist discourse. Race scientists continued to make recourse to visual realism to reduce black people to a brute corporeality and to bolster Victorian-era constructions of whiteness as, in Coco Fusco's words, "a spirit that manifests in dynamic relation to the physical world."⁶ Lynching photographs thus took over, on a mass scale and with widened circulation, from the visual construction of enslaved personhood as a divergence from the Human.

The photographic legacy of lynching, particularly for whites who collected

and shared the images with kin and community, has facilitated the circumscription of the violence to the past. The photographic sign system is structured by the referent's physical imprint, traced by light rays, on the photographic plate. It is, in the terms of Charles Peirce's semiotic theory, an indexical sign. Where the symbol signifies according to social convention and the icon signifies by similarity, the index signifies, as Christian Metz writes, "by an actual contiguity or connection in the world: the lightning is the index of the storm."⁷ As Peirce's sign system has come to dominate photography studies, so has a myth of the independent instant. Photography has been popularly imagined in pursuit of the moment, as a writing in light that fixes or "embalms time" into a static and "immobile entity."⁸ The most influential (and controversial) theoretical-cultural touchstone for thinking about photographic indexicality has been Roland Barthes's discussion of photographic affect in *Camera Lucida*. For Barthes, photography's indexical marking by the referent – its singular capture at a specific moment – confers on photography its *noeme*, or essence: the *that-has-been* of the referent and the realization on the part of the photographic spectator that they, too, will one day have been.⁹ Historians and theorists of photography routinely interpret Barthes' writings in *Camera Lucida* as relegating the photographic referent to the past despite his insistence that the referent is present, not as metaphor, but "as *corpse*: [as] the living image of a dead thing." Reading *Camera Lucida* in tandem with Barthes' earlier writings on photography in *Image, Music, Text*, photography critics often oppose the medium to cinema, associating it with the death of the lost moment and claiming that it lacks the lively movement of duration.¹⁰

But we cannot dissociate lynching snapshots' political effects from the slow death that characterized the executions, and that preceded the photographs in chronological time only. Eric Lott writes that the lynching photograph "has a strange way of preceding the reality it records." The lynchings that we commonly think of as occurring before the pictures were taken are less "the cause than the effect of the pictures" themselves.¹¹ Photographs, after all, participate in discursive systems of power and meaning that produce, rather than mimic, reality. Lynching photographs were a central part of the performative power of these spectacle executions to render black life bare.¹² We must thus consider the pictures' indispensable participation in the event of lynching, an event that concatenates through time and space, and through different registers of experience and meaning.

If lynching photographs' historical and political reverberations extend far beyond the point of their referents' political and indexical capture, how might we work with them in ways that refuse static remembrance, that allow us to confront, as Mark Simpson writes, "the violence's uncanny powers of return"?¹³ What renewal lay in looking at and seizing the image of lynching? Might we work through the suffering borne by U.S. lynching culture not by turning away from scenes of anti-black subjection, but instead by inhabiting their photographic space and time? Is it possible that dialectical constructions of lynching images may tell cunning stories that trouble the photographs' reduction of their referents to reified objects?

In this chapter, I explore how a materialist approach to history and representation alters our conceptualization of lynching's political temporality and relationship to state power. This investigation takes shape through an encounter

with a photographic postcard that depicts a black man hanging in a train yard in Oxford, Georgia in 1908. The postcard depended upon a locomotive motif common in turn-of-the-century visual culture for its power as a circulating commodity that normalized individualizing conceptions of the public.¹⁴ The postcard is at once a landscape photograph and a portrait of blackness as death-bound, criminalized, and isolated. The image's ideological work is dependent upon the landscape genre's facilitation of aesthetic distance from the violence in the scene.¹⁵ I read this obfuscating gesture against the backdrop of the original spectacle lynching, which allowed passing train riders to watch the victim's suspension and decay through a panoramic vision that separated viewers' bodily habitus from the changing landscape of the nation.¹⁶ Finally, I consider how the aesthetics of movement at work in the original lynching spectacle are reiterated, to different effect, in the form of curious stains that trail across the surface of the postcard. Whether the pressures of time impressed upon the photographic surface, the trace of a liquid spill, or bloodstained fingerprints, the stains are haptic marks that speaks to the image's participation in multiple historical moments, and to its rootedness in historical struggles for freedom. If these unknowable stains are bloody fingerprints, they haunt the image with the force of the violent frenzy that created the original spectacle lynching. The stains might also function as screens that mark white spectators' possessive investment in the image while simultaneously shoring up their inability to remain anonymous masters of the gaze.

In the second section of the chapter, I critique – in conversation with Walter Benjamin's writings on aesthetics and the philosophy of history – the liberal political

underpinnings of end-of-lynching discourse, the name that Ashraf Rushdy has given to the narrative emplotment of lynching in the literature produced by the southern reformist anti-lynching movement in the 1920s and 1930s, and in historical and cultural studies scholarship on lynching since the 1980s. I am concerned with the impact that the ritual rhetorical repetition of lynching as a form of violence that falls outside of the law has had on our capacity to understand its constitutive relationship to U.S. liberal democracy. I begin by reading Richard Wright's 1935 anti-lynching poem "Between the World and Me" as an allegory for white southern reformists' rhetorical transformation of lynching, during the period of the poem's composition, into a colorblind attack on formal law, bourgeois rationality, and white safety. I argue that the idea that lynching is opposed to formal law has buttressed the idea that it exists in the past, and that a negative dialectical analysis of photographic affect based on the media's mixed status as an indexical and iconic signifying system may illuminate an altered historical genealogy of lynch law.

In the final section, I analyze the appropriation of the 1908 railway lynching by the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) in 1934 as an instance of this immanent remediating practice. The CPUSA circulated an edited version of the photograph on the cover of *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*, an anti-lynching pamphlet authored by Harry Haywood and Milton Howard as part of CPUSA efforts to organize for interracial working-class liberation under the auspices of black self-determination in the southern Black Belt, where lynchings were concentrated after Reconstruction. Where the photograph was first mobilized in postcard form to reify blackness as naturally disposed to death at the turn of the Jim Crow century, I argue

that its reappearance in 1934 as an icon of class warfare transformed it into a dialectical image that conferred on readers an historical perception attuned to the white supremacist foundations of liberal reform. Arguing that the photograph is a constellation that figures the antagonism between black radical and liberal analyses of lynching's violence, I suggest that the moving image of lynching, taken up allegorically, illuminates not merely the structures of white supremacy and anti-black hatred, but also the structural and affective formations of racial liberalism.

Oxford, Georgia, circa 1908

Dream houses of the collective: arcades, winter gardens, panoramas,
factories, wax museums, casinos, railroad stations.

- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Across the expanse of the image is the spill of the negative. A little more than half of the photograph is populated by a quiet sky. In it, a man hangs, *en plein air*.¹⁷ The image is eerily calm in light of the alarming panoply of gestures and expressions that populate the photographs of lynching that most of us can conjure in a beat. In this one, "Oxford" peeks out in bold white letters from the railway station, as do the words "Michigan" and "Automobile" that marked the train moving through the station at the time of the photograph's capture. Shooting up toward the negative expanse of white sky is a light post and the hanging body of an unidentified black man. The body in the picture's field carries the pose common to victims of hanging: his limp frame, bereft of life, stretches toward the ground while his face is forced up toward the light of a dark day. He is formally dressed in a dark suit, white



Figure 3. Unidentified lynching of an African American male. Circa 1908. Gelatin silver print. Real photo postcard. 3 ½ x 5 ½." Pencil inscription on reverse: "Oxford Georgia."

shirt, and black shoes. He may have been on his way to work, to church, to a funeral, to a community dance to meet a sweetheart. Perhaps he was simply a well-groomed stranger, caught in the crossroads. He may have been performing socially reproductive labor (the kind we normally circumscribe to the recognizably domestic

space of the home) as a Pullman Porter when he was killed, taken at the behest of a train conductor for reckless eyeballing, for dropping a serviette, for organizing with other porters on the clock. It is more likely, given the mail cart beneath him, that he was a postman who had arrived at the train station to pick up the Newton County mail.

This man was taken from a distance, a distance made of glass, of steel, of light and time. He is not the center of the image, for the dense horizontality of the lower part of the picture, intercut by wheels and text and tracks and grass, forms a lure for the eye. The Oxford train yard seems a sleepy ghost town around him as strands of the new creep across the picture's plane – train tracks, the light post from which he hangs, and a mail buggy, wheels big like cannon shields. The caption accompanying the postcard in *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* reads:

Publicizing their work was a priority for the mob that murdered this unidentified lynching victim. A lighted telephone pole near railroad tracks created a well-lit gallery for passing trains. The cart hugging the pole was used to transport incoming and outgoing mail. No accounts of this lynching have been found in local papers or state archives.

The image is shrouded in secrecy, silence, and invisibility. We do not know who the victim was, when he was murdered, who was responsible for his death, nor where the postcard traveled after its manufacture. The aesthetics of movement at work in the lynching are reiterated in the form of curious stains that trail across the right side of the postcard. Whether the result of photographic wear and tear, the trace of a liquid spill, or bloodstained fingerprints, the stain is an ambivalent visual mark, a detail that bears the imprint of human touch. It opens us to a materialist register

that points to the image's "semiotic unruliness," its secretion across various relations of time and space, and to the centrality of movement to its germination as a souvenir of death. The stain moves us across the image, inviting an affective reading attuned to the vectors of transition.¹⁸

Pursuing what Jacqueline Goldsby calls the "secreted, wayward trail" of this image necessitates moving across and between three moments in its constitution as an object with the variegated capacity to incite terror and amusement, to memorialize and mystify: 1) the cinematic organization of the initial spectacle lynching and its dependence on viewers' inhabitation of a moving train, 2) the image's status as a circulating postcard meant to deliver to someone far away a view of a scene and a hurried note on the kill, and 3) the curious touch of the stain, which can be read as bodily leakage or the pressures of time impressed upon the photographic surface.¹⁹ Each of these moments is defined by flow and calls for us to move from the hose's curve, past the train tracks, from the body to the stain, from the front of the card to its back. Though the postcard's various silences make it impossible to determine its specificities (who killed the man, who snapped the photograph, who looked at it, who passed it on, what person or postcard company manufactured it into a keepsake), it is possible to read the inventions of history and spatiality that the object takes part in by sitting critically with these ambivalent marks.²⁰ Each of these dimensions – the railway spectacle, the postcard, and the stain – are time-spaces that open us to the affective economies of the image.²¹

The scene depicted in the Georgia postcard gestures at lynchings' dependence on the growth of modern transportation networks in the early years of

the twentieth century.²² These sites were common motifs in lynching photographs, evidence that exercises of white supremacy were linked to the formations of modernity more widely.²³ Railroads were referents for progress in the white imaginary, “as spatial movement became so wedded to the concept of historical movement that these could no longer be distinguished.”²⁴ Urban planners’ decisions to position black neighborhoods at the edges of railroads created racialized inhabitations of time and space; the juxtaposition between rapid, technologized movement and impoverished black neighborhoods were material citations of the spatial stillness and temporal petrification accorded to black life in white supremacist discourse. The proximity of black neighborhoods in the borderlands along, or near, railroads also meant that these “darktowns” were frequently the backdrops for social displays of domination.²⁵ They demarcated the boundaries of belonging for those searching for waged labor and fleeing terror at the start of the century.

In the spectacle lynching captured in this 1908 postcard, Oxford’s train station became a kinetic mortuary, a *tableau vivant* for the merciless display of black death. Those responsible for the lynching went to great lengths to ensure that Oxford residents, and those traveling through the town by train, would see the dead postman – his death and the deaths of others like him – as part of the modernizing landscape. Wolfgang Shivelbush describes “panoramic vision” as a mode of perception that people experienced in the nineteenth century with the introduction of railway travel. Early descriptions of railroad journeys noted that the railroad and the landscape seemed like two separate worlds, that the train “seemed to strike its

way through it.”²⁶ Panoramic perception, functioning as an aesthetic correlate of conquest, facilitated spectators’ scopophilic incorporation of the landscape and the construction of subjects tied ideologically to it (women, the poor, people of color), as discrete and expendable entities.²⁷ Landscape is not simply a genre of representation; it is an ideological formation that arose alongside European colonization and U.S. imperialism to create an aesthetic sense of natural harmony strong enough to cover up the violence that occurred in occupied spaces.²⁸ Late nineteenth-century American audiences valued landscape photography because it allowed them to simultaneously value nature and industry.²⁹

The mail carrier may have been hanged from a light pole in a train station as punishment for his contravention of blacks’ boundedness, in the white imaginary, to agricultural labor. In *The New South Welcoming the Nations of the Earth*, James Moser portrays the New South as an industrial space backed by a black pastoral. This revisionist, white supremacist imbrication of tradition and progress confined black laborers to subservient roles in the New South economy.³⁰ The spectacle lynching pictured in this postcard occurred twelve years after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Louisiana’s “separate but equal” statute, and it provided segregated train riders with a panoramic vision of blackness under siege and of lynch law as the guarantor of social inequality. The original lynching pictured in the Oxford postcard captured and fixed blackness in the Georgia landscape as the deathly underside of modernization.



Figure 4. "The Blackest Land, The Whitest People," Stetson Kennedy.

Like the landscape genre, lynching was a medium for expressing the value of industrial progress.³¹ The Oxford railway functioned as a deathly circuit through which observers experienced a perceptual interplay between the landscape moving past them, the moving train that contained them, and their own bodies, immobile in seats or jostling in tune to the trains' movements.³² Though dependent upon the movement of the train, the lynching in the rail yard operationalized a cinematographic experience that is key to lynching's status as a modern phenomenon. In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Mary Ann Doane writes of the fascination with contingency and chance that accompanied the rationalization of time at the turn of the nineteenth century. The reification and visualization of time as the measure of capitalist value was initially developed to standardize railway travel times and telegraphic communication.³³ This mechanized time was not the lived time of the now, but an externalized phenomenon that had to be consulted and read.³⁴ Across the sciences – in physics,

biology, statistics, psychoanalysis, and physiology – time became a fraught object of knowledge as people sought to resist its industrial mechanization *and* make it legible.³⁵ Doane writes: “In the face of the abstraction of time... chance and the contingent are assigned an important ideological role – they become the highly cathected sites of both pleasure and anxiety.”³⁶ This drive to represent contingency was practiced in photography and cinema, emerging technologies of representation that were believed to archive duration, store presence, and represent ephemerality.³⁷ Modern subjects were imagined to repossess time by immersing themselves in cinematic and photographic attractions that carried them outside the shocks of modernity, outside “the temporality of clattering trains and cable cars.”³⁸

Oxford’s railway lynching allowed clattering trains to become sites of duration, too. Passing by the railway lynching, the train became an apparatus of travel and a filmic amusement ride that wedded the “voyage of analytical imagination to the pursuit of sensual pleasures.”³⁹ Viewers of the Oxford lynching rushed toward and then past the body left hanging in the rail depot in much the same way that cinema-goers at the time experienced filmic attractions. Three years prior to the Oxford lynching, a cinematic attraction called Hale’s Tours debuted in Kansas City. It was designed and moved like a railroad car, and it provided the kinds of panoramic views one would see while voyaging on the rails.⁴⁰ Peeking through windows from the protective confines of segregated train cars, white participant-spectators might have experienced the Oxford tableau in a similar way, the space of Georgia rushing anew past them, the black body a blip in a changing landscape. They perhaps even experienced their participation in terms of the common pre-

lynch chase scenes that were a standard trope in real and filmic lynching performances.⁴¹ Inhabiting spectacle space as industrial voyageurs rather than mere voyeurs, they would have experienced the lynching as a moving picture – as a mass-mediated scene of “visceral engagement.”⁴² Speeding by the body hanging in the depot, white voyageurs might have experienced the lynching as shocking and comforting, combining as it did the mechanization of the landscape along with a pastoral vision of black death.

Those riding by after dark would have seen yellow-white illumination and a black man hanging still in the night. The railway station, as the space of the man’s death, was manipulated into a frame or screen on which passing train-riders could watch the postman dying or glimpse his decaying corpse as a quasi-cinematic spectacle. The train carried these voyageurs into a liminal inhabitation of time-space that allowed its white passengers the illusion of managing the contingencies of modernity.⁴³ Speeding by the body hanged in the depot, observers experienced the lynching as a shocking time-image in which the contradictions of modern temporality – the mechanized, pulsatile time of capitalist modernity and the metronomic, rhythmic experience of subjective duration – coalesced.⁴⁴ It rendered manageable the contingencies of industrialization by spectacularizing the common scene of black suffering, while making contingent the rationalizations of vision and time that accompanied capitalist modernity. Inhabiting this moving image offered those initiated into the nation-wide system of commodity production something obscenely familiar to hold onto. Black death was, to many white eyes, the ordinary sight through which the privatizing shocks of modernity were managed.

For black writers at the time, trains and railways figured the tensions between the displacements engendered by formal and informal slavery and the circumscribed mobility furnished for blacks by technologies of travel and their racialized upkeep.⁴⁵ Service jobs on trains became coveted positions for black men and became one of the first unionized forms of affective labor in the country, but they brought with them the familiar indignities that accompanied domestic service. It is difficult to imagine the terror experienced by blacks riding the rails through Oxford throughout the duration of the lynching. Hanging in the railyard in Oxford in 1908, this man signaled to passersby that black people were without sanctuary, without the right to land; the lynching cited white supremacists' commitment to fix blackness in somatic suspension, to emplace it as displaced, as perpetually in flux in a newly modernizing American landscape.⁴⁶ Devoured by the train station and merciless, brutal gazes, this man signaled to passersby that black people had no right to life, land, or free movement.

As a circulating postcard, the image further reiterated the domestication of blackness in the white imagination. The writing on the verso of the postcard reads simply, "Oxford, Georgia," a move that renders the dead man secondary to the space of his demise.⁴⁷ The writing of the note on the verso functioned to cast off accountability, to defer judgment until the postcard was thrown in a drawer or buried in a family photo album. The postcard also functioned as a meta-commentary on the content of the photograph, which depicts lethal white resistance to black attempts at physical and economic mobility. This man was one of many black men in Georgia whose position as a mail carrier allowed him to earn more money than

black men employed in other forms of waged labor; whites frequently attacked black postmen in the early twentieth century for taking these positions. The postcard thus circulated a distal warning to blacks that postal labor was white men's work.

It is in this postcard's resurfacing in *Without Sanctuary* that an anxious white patriarchy reappears at its borders, suspect and vying for control over the abject contingencies of modern life. Via an approach attuned to the image as a relational material object, we gain access to the tactile presence of the killing gaze in the form of a collection of stains that moves across the right side of the image, spilling in large russet pools in between the train tracks at the picture's bottom, and re-emerging in smaller patches near the top of the image (figure 5). The stains gather near the new things: wires striping the sky, the spaces between the train tracks. It is easy to imagine, given the violent nature of the image, that the blood-colored stains are the tactile imprints of a particular person, perhaps one present at the scene of the murder, maybe even the person responsible for taking the pictured man's life and transforming it into a photo-card keepsake.⁴⁸ The stains are traces of the fleshy



Figure 5. Stains on postcard depicting unidentified lynching of an African-American male, Oxford, Georgia, 1908

encounter between bodies that dominated Jim Crow lynching rituals, a tactile encounter not visible in this photograph, but which subtends its very production.⁴⁹

If the stains are bloody fingerprints, they materially signal the breakdown of bodily boundaries, thus inscribing whiteness as more than the universalized, abstracted, and disembodied personhood it is often taken to signify. Turning to Lacan's writings on the gaze as a stain, it is possible to read this ambivalent and unknowable mark as an unwitting disruption of the assumed invisibility of white sovereignty. The stain haunts the image, manifesting an impression of the tactile force of the white gaze even while it undoes the very logic of mastery on which lynching images were assumed to function.⁵⁰ Where many film theorists characterize the gaze as an all-pervasive, panoptic structure of fetishistic voyeurism that masters the image, Jacques Lacan theorizes the gaze as an object – the *objet petit a(utre)* – of desire that undoes the subject and its will to representation.⁵¹ In Seminar XI, Lacan writes: “In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it – that is what we call the gaze.”⁵² The eye is an extension of the sovereign subject, but the gaze is predicated on lack and oriented towards death. The gaze is not “the vehicle through which the subject masters the object but a point in the Other that resists the mastery of vision.”⁵³ The gaze is the viewing subject's encounter with the object looking back at it; it involves the spectator in the image by disrupting his or her ability to remain “all-perceiving and unperceived.”⁵⁴ At the same time that the gaze involves the spectator in the image, it occludes his or her ability to fully

possess it; as Lacan remarks, “If I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen... the stain, the spot.”⁵⁵ The gaze, as a stain or screen, marks the point at which the subject can no longer see itself in the representation.⁵⁶ The *objet petit a* is thus nonspecular, occurring beyond the field of the visible.⁵⁷ As a trace of the white gaze, the collection of stains marks the spectator’s involvement in the image even while it occludes their ability to possess the abstract, disembodied personhood through which hegemonic citizenship has been constructed.

The stain is the mark of time. Lynching’s imagistic souvenirs are metamorphic objects whose mediation through the haptic sensation of movement disturbs the myth of the independent instant that dominates photographic discourse. This image comes to matter, in its initial instantiation as a cinematic railway spectacle, in life’s transmutation from a body laid bare to bodies beholding. And it comes to matter again, and differently, in the hands of someone unknown whom we might nevertheless hold accountable across his or her ineradicable bodily inscription.

If these unknowable stains are bloody fingerprints, they haunt the image with the force of the violent frenzy that created the spectacle lynching in the first place. If not the mark of curious bloody fingers tracing the touch of insatiable eyes, the stain might be the result of the picture’s submission to coloration as it was transformed from a black-and-white image to a sepia-toned postcard.⁵⁸ If not speaking to the card’s manufacture, perhaps the stains are simply the result of photographic decay. Though we do not have access to the stains’ precise history, they foreground the materiality of the photographic medium, on which the afterlife

of the spectacle depends. In this postcard, the imperceptible touch of the stains functions as a detail – a phantom-like, futural *punctum* – that opens the photograph to an extra-representational dynamism.⁵⁹

‘The Evidence of Things Not Seen’

Much has been written about the ideological work that lynching images perform at the level of representation. Amy Louise Wood emphasizes the symbolic status of lynching spectacles – their depiction of black subjection and white power – when she writes: “Lynching terrorized... because it existed *purely in the realm of representation* as horrific images that haunted... It was the spectacle of lynching, rather than the violence itself, that wrought psychological damage, that enforced black acquiescence to white domination.”⁶⁰ The haunting effects of lynching’s representation are indisputable. As Richard Wright famously writes in *Black Boy*:

The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness. Indeed, the white brutality that I had not seen was a more effective control of my behavior than that which I knew. The actual experience would have let me see the realistic outlines of what was really happening, but as long as it remained something terrible and yet remote, something whose horror and blood might descend upon me at any moment, I was compelled to give my entire imagination over to it, an act which blocked the springs of thought and feeling in me, creating a sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived.”⁶¹

Lynching’s aural afterlife in the black commons seems to exert the same psychological effects of haunting that Wood attributes to its spectacular, photographic representation. Wright, growing up in rural Mississippi in the 1920s, locates a gap between the “actual ... realistic outlines of what was really happening” *out there* – in the lynchlands that had captured his bootlegging uncle, his friend’s

brother, and those black boys who crept surreptitiously into the beds of white sex workers – and the mediate orbit of his imagination, which concocted, he suggests, a terrifying reality more real than his own situated experience.⁶² Wright, like Wood, suggests that the technics of public torture and killing were less brutal and horrifying than its spectacular mediation of everyday life. Lynching's capacity to haunt was apposite to its photographic capacity to re-present the bodies of the dead in the differential timespaces of the living and the living dead.

The distance between him and the lynched, Wright suggests, incites an imaginative overdrive that stills his capacity for thought and feeling in much the same way that the perceptual shock that accompanies the observation of a lynching, in person and in camera, is said to truncate one's critical capacity to make sense and meaning of the violence – to bring destroyed matter to matter. This, we know, was one of the purposes of lynch law: to warn, through an evanescent shock whose internalization transformed white sovereign violence into racialized discipline. Wright's experience of cognitive stilling thus brings his traumatizing awareness of being a potential target of lynch law into perceptual league with the joyful spectators of lynching's horrifying violence.⁶³ Though he does not directly reference the photographic technologies that facilitated lynching and that structured its modern epistemology, Wright's observations about living ordinary terror that he does not know in a traditional sense – terror that is out of sight but firmly in body and mind – recalls us to anti-black terror's legitimation, its transformation into an ordinary phenomenon, via the reifying effects of obscene visibility.

Obscene visibility describes public violence that is rendered private and unknowable through spectacle metamorphoses of the dying and the dead into photographic objects that affirm and continue to produce blackness as a fetishized relation of accumulation and fungibility, open to seemingly infinite uses: the procurement of honor, the theft of land and home, paid work during economic downturns, the staunching of labor organizing, white fantasy, and the full and frightening range of affective projections made possible by the history of chattel slavery. The subjection of the enslaved to market exchange and thus to a process of abstraction reified enslaved property as open to the enjoyments of the master class. Lynching's mediation by visual technologies of reproducibility allowed the lynched to be exchanged *after death* and for black personhood to be fashioned as the property of an economy of white enjoyment whose agents, Saidiya Hartman writes, experienced their possession and use of the black body as "the exercise of a right, as a "privilege or incorporeal hereditament."⁶⁴ Despite the public and collective nature of the violence, the transformation of the brutalized black body into visual commodities bestowed lynching with private meaning, rendering it a mundane and habitual backdrop against which subjects of the nation at the turn of the century were integrated into the technologized life of mass culture. White terror's obfuscation depended upon its concentration into sensory objects that indexed the veiling of blackness as perpetually out of time and out of place – as having no meaning, as in sight and yet out of mind.

Wright gestures in *Black Boy*, and indeed throughout his entire oeuvre, to the multiple levels of bodily consciousness through which racializing violence exerts its

effects. Resonating with his friend Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic discussion, in *Black Skin White Masks*, of the black subject's time-warping experience of the metropolitan French gaze as an intrusion into his colonized body, Wright's statement hits on violence's insidious capacity to wreak epistemic control at the not fully conscious levels of bodily and affective life.⁶⁵ Wright makes clear the extent to which the visual practices of slave plantation "oversight" (which had dispersed the police power of surveillance to all non-black peoples) had, by the Jim Crow era, transformed lynch law into a fantasmatic and sensory regime most terrorizing for its contingent, distributed, and extra-visual power.⁶⁶ People had some sense of how far white supremacists were willing to go to staunch black world-making by virtue of terror's diffuse permeation of everyday cognitive life. Lynching's reiteration as story (and as image, in Wood's analysis) turned it into an un/knowable threat, a sickening horizon and palpable memory carried, often unconsciously, like a sad and heavy sac by the loved ones of the disappeared. To hear repeatedly about the murders of black people that were taking place around him was enough to discipline Wright into quasi-docility (for a time, anyway) in the face of an unseen but sharply present panoptic eye. Hence Wright's assertion in *Black Boy* that he felt "like the victim of a thousand lynchings."⁶⁷

Within Wright's declaration is the remarkable claim to feel the pain of a quarter of those who had been (officially) disappeared by the fast force of lynch law's distributed agents and apparatuses. His is a claim to a collective pain, *and* to an experience of time travel that has him killed, and killed again, and yet still living to tell of it. But he does not trust that this feeling accords with "the realistic outline of

what was really happening.” Though Wright aligns live seeing with experiential knowing and hearing with a second-order knowing, an other-knowing, it is this knowing-from-hearing – from warning and cant, from rumor and slur – and its amplification by his imagination that informs his subjectification as a death-bound subject oriented toward a horizon foreshortened by the likelihood of his being lynched. Like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and other authors of slave narratives, Wright acknowledges the extent to which violent attacks on African American people are inscribed, as a text, in his black flesh.⁶⁸

A full decade before the publication of his autobiographical *Black Boy*, Wright published a poem about a sylvan mob killing called “Between the World and Me” that troubles the division he establishes in *Black Boy* between first-hand experiences of anti-black mob violence and collective, second-hand experiences of the violence’s terror and trauma.⁶⁹ It troubles, too, Fanon’s focus on the black subject’s constitution in relation to a racist symbolic to the exclusion of, as David Marriott puts it, “the reality of racist violence.”⁷⁰ It is no coincidence that the title of the poem reemerged in Wright’s autobiographic observations that the image of lynching he had formed in his mind as a child would form a veil between “me and the world in which I lived.”⁷¹ Where his later biographical meditations on lynching suggest that the fear he experienced as a child as a result of his community’s shared memories of violence takes him out of the world – that the threat of death blocks a full inhabitation of his body and environment – “Between the World and Me” suggests that spectatorial encounters with another’s lynching after the fact of their physical

death may make present the visceral sensations and material memory of that death and potentially enhance the spectating subject's bodily and affective capacities.

Lynching is not merely the subject of the poem; it is also its optic and an object that disturbs the distance that Wright would implant (perhaps healingly) between his writing self in the 1940s and his memoried self in the 1920s, wherein the former purports to know that what was "really happening" in lynchland was less terrible than the black blood he imagined seeping out of the white ether around him. If we read the poetic persona in "Between the World and Me" as black, as does Abdul JanMohamed in *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright's Archeology of Death*, it is easy to surmise that the poem gives us some sense of the black boy's imaginative inhabitation of the perspective of the lynched, his "intransitive identification" as a death-bound subject with the subjective experience of being the killed object of white enjoyment. Where Wright's 1945 autobiographical account of lynching eschews the trope of recounting an authentic experience of corporeal suffering in order to tell, instead, of racism's psychic trauma, his poetic meditation from 1935 turns on the violence's *felt, sensate, corporeal* immanence to death-bound subjects who have not yet experienced the full force of the law in real time, but whose imaginations, memories, and loved ones are so caught up in lynching's perceptual and affective hold that the violence figures in every corner of their lives.

In "Between the World and Me," the narrator stumbles "suddenly upon the thing": the scene of a recent lynching, the details of which rise up, "thrusting themselves between the world and me." So quickly does "the thing" become a scene that the narrating persona is startled into an empathic connection with the objects

that make up the poetic *mise-en-scène*. White bones and a “stony skull,” a charred stump of wood, torn tree limbs, a scorched rope still bearing the grease of gas fluid, the clothes of the lynched, and the various objects once belonging to those who witnessed the lynching all call the narrator to a recognition of what took place in the forest clearing. This “thing,” this complex death-scene whose constituent elements have not yet cooled, comes to life as day darkens to night and the narrator’s primary mode of perception switches from sight to sound. This sensory shift importantly occurs while the narrator is “frozen within cold pity/for the life that was gone” after surveying the scene and its suggestive contents. That he is frozen – in addition to setting up a stark contrast to the incendiary final stanza – suggests a cognitive distance that underscores the poem’s relevance to discussions about the epistemological consequences of lynching. It also evinces its author’s concern with the vagaries of empathy. Unlike the narrator of *Black Boy*, the narrator here is afforded an immersive, first-hand experience of lynching that becomes known to him first through the sense of sound. Immediately upon perceiving the stilling of his mind in the passive grip of pity, the narrator hears the sounds that so often preceded lynchings. The vicious, hungry barks of bloodhounds and the raucous screams of mob members take on an incantatory quality that animates the narrator’s becoming-lynched. Upon the “dry bones” and “grey ashes” melting into his body-space, the narrator sees “the witnesses” pass a flask “from mouth to mouth” against the glow of cigars and cigarettes. The sensory register then shifts in the following stanza to a rough tactility as the narrator is beaten up, tied to a stake, tortured with tar and feathers, doused in gasoline, and lit up. In the last stanza, the narrator’s ability to

recount the violence tellingly cools as he becomes subject to torture; his voice “drowned in the roar” of the mob, he is reduced to agonizing moans and pants in his final moments.

And yet he tells anyway of becoming “dry bones,” of taking the place of the “stony skull,” of becoming a telling object with the potential to blind other passersby into the distributed optic of social death. The lynching has supposedly ended, and yet the narrator steps, after a brief freeze, from the world of the living into that of the dead. The narrator’s immersion into the body-space of the lynched is catalyzed by his visual exchange with the skull; he is first frozen by its stony stare, and then swept into the skull’s memory of its exposure to, and eventual absorption into, the wooded landscape. He slips on the skull, a *memento mori* that reminds him not of his mortality but of the substitution of his mortality for the social death of being Jim Crowed. Adopting the perspective of the skull, the narrator, as JanMohamed writes, becomes a “suturing medium,” a binding figure that connects the dead to the world of the living. As the narrator’s perspective shifts in the second half of the poem from “viewing death from the vantage of life to viewing life from the vantage of death,” as he inhabits first the flesh and then the bones of the lynched, the narrating persona becomes lynched. The tenor of the narrator’s encounter with the lynching’s aftermath marks a qualitative distance from the author’s later distinction (one that seems categorical) between violence and its representation. Insofar as the poem figures the all-consuming threat of death in the world of the socially dead, it troubles Wood’s distinction between lynching’s violence and its spectacular

representation as well as Wright's own distinction, in his autobiography, between material and psycho-affective force.

In JanMohamed's analysis, the second half of the poem "subjectifies the facticity of death and lynching, constitutes the metaleptic reversal, the reflexive gaze that wants to bring the experience of the dead, sedimented subject back to life and to subject it to the action of sympathetic understanding."⁷² For JanMohamed, then, this procedure is animated by the narrating persona's desire to identify with the process of being lynched, a capacity to "overcome intersubjective boundaries and understand the predicament and the capabilities of the death-bound subject."⁷³ In JanMohamed's analysis, the poem is a staging ground for Wright's writerly practice of a "dialectic of death": a "deep existential inhabiting and experiencing of radically different or contradictory subject-positions."⁷⁴ Wright's poetry and fiction, JanMohamed argues, figures the death-bound subject's confrontation, at the level of the imagination, with an actual death that negates social death, transforming social death into what JanMohamed calls "symbolic death." The poem in this analysis thus constitutes a dream-work in which Wright confronts that which stands between him and the world; he inhabits actual death in resistant defiance of his death's commutation as the condition of remaining in *this* world as the socially dead. In JanMohamed's optimistic interpretation, the narrator, in shifting from spectating subject to experiencing object, experiences the lynching as a "baptism,' as a resurrection."⁷⁵

But we, in truth, know nothing about the person passing into the scene. What if we do not assume that the narrating spectator-lynchee is an extension of Wright? To read the poem dialectically is to consider the possibility that the

persona who “experiences” the lynching may not be black at all and to thus admit into our analysis the specter of white sympathetic attachment to pained black flesh. Could this be a white person, given over via curiosity to the pleasurable-repugnant *frisson* of spectacle culture, that JanMohamed reads as the sympathetic agent of the black lynch victim’s “resurrection”? To sit critically with this possibility demands an acknowledgment that to figure the dialectic between the persona-narrator of “Between the World and Me” and the lynched as a sympathetic one is to cede uncritical ground to a feeling tradition in liberalism that is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle from white supremacy.

As Saidiya Hartman writes in *Scenes of Subjection*, black fungibility in the U.S. was constituted by the exchangeability of captive subjects on the market as well as their openness to libidinal and symbolic use. In her querying of the qualities of affect distinctive to the economy of slavery and its afterlife, Hartman follows Orlando Patterson’s and Hortense Spillers’ arguments that the captive subject is, in Spillers’ words, “reduced to a thing, to *being* for the captor.”⁷⁶ Hartman elaborates:

The relation between pleasure and the possession of slave property, in both the figurative and literal senses, can be explained in part by the fungibility of the slave – that, the joy made possible by virtue of the replaceability and interchangeability endemic to the commodity – and by the extensive capacities of property – that is, the augmentation of the master subject through his embodiment in external objects and persons. Put differently, the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion. Thus, while the beaten and mutilated body presumably establishes the brute materiality of existence, the materiality of suffering regularly eludes (re)cognition by virtue of the body’s being replaced by other signs of value, as well as other bodies.

Reviving Patterson's discussion in *Slavery and Social Death* of the master class's parasitical dependence upon slaves for slave-owners' "honorable" social status, Hartman emphasizes that the replaceable and interchangeable capacities of the black object are ontologically necessary for the formation of white subjective boundaries, and not merely for economic benefit. Hartman carefully demonstrates the extent to which captive subjects were fashioned as fungible objects even by those who ostensibly agitated on behalf of slaves' emancipation. Abolitionists relied upon empathy, identification, and the display of white-looking slaves to garner support for the movement. Abolitionist John Rankin wrote: "We are naturally too callous to the sufferings of others, and consequently prone to look upon them with cold indifference, until, in imagination we identify ourselves with the sufferers, and make their sufferings our own."⁷⁷ As Hartman argues, empathy "confounds Rankin's efforts to identify with the enslaved because in making the slave's suffering his own, Rankin begins to feel for himself rather than for those whom this exercise in imagination presumably is designed to reach." Attempts on the part of white witnesses to affirm black humanity by feeling for themselves, Hartman argues, merely "exacerbate the idea that black sentience is inconceivable and unimaginable" and, in "possessing the abased and enslaved body, ultimately elide an understanding and acknowledgment of the slave's pain[.] Beyond evidence of slavery's crime, what does this exposure of the suffering body of the bondsman yield? Does this not reinforce the 'thingly' quality of the captive by reducing the body to evidence?"⁷⁸

Modern visuality, which has been shaped by transatlantic slavery, has constructed blackness as a mediating relation and form for the appearance of value,

not solely for those who have accumulated economic wealth by trading in human flesh, but also for those who professed empathy with enslaved peoples and a desire to end their enslavement.⁷⁹ Nineteenth-century abolitionists identified with images of anti-black atrocity in ways that obscured the suffering of enslaved subjects; this identificatory process entailed reveling in what slave apologists fashioned as blacks' "pained contentment" and the transmutation of racial wounding into an experience of *jouissance* in the viewing subject's experience of visual pleasure-in-pain.⁸⁰ Given the tradition of exhibiting black wounding as an incitement to moral self-fashioning, anti-racist makers, activists, and scholars have long struggled over how to look at, display, and discuss lynching photographs without perpetuating their terrorizing violence.

I would like to suggest, in contrast to JanMohamed's reading of the narrating persona as taking the place of the lynched so that she may be resurrected, that "Between the World and Me" functions as an allegory for the historical transformation of lynching's meaning during the period of the poem's composition, a transformation that depended upon the successful exchange, in the popular imagination, of black victims of white terror with white victims of transgressions of law-and-order. Read allegorically rather than through the symbolics of redemption, the poem does not stage the resurrection of the lynched. Instead, it figures the recursive structure of lynching and the dangers of white empathy at a crucial historical moment in which reformers, in opposition to the black radical insistence on lynching's material transformation, were trumpeting lynching's demise and the impending eschatological arrival of (segregated) equality.

Race liberals in the 1930s who were organizing against lynching in the South frequently framed the violence as a non-ideal aberration from an ideal liberalism whose inevitable appearance was conditioned by the disappearance of lynching's harm from public sight and discourse – not, as we might expect, its transformative eradication from the lives of the American Indians, Mexican Americans, African Americans, Chinese Americans, and other people of color who were most usually the targets of extra-legal establishment violence. “Between the World and Me,” I argue, figures the continuing shadow of lynching over the everyday lives of black people in the U.S. in the 1930s as well as the troubled occupation, by white reformers, of the position of the lynched and the disappearance of black body and flesh from anti-lynching discourse.

Liberalism and the Propaganda of History

Lynchings are spectacular incidents of the complete destruction of law and the courts while the mass rules.

- Jesse Daniel Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching*

The state itself has been lynched.

- Arthur Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*

Wright published “Between the World and Me” in 1935 while he was involved in Popular Front organizing with the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), and thus in close contact with the world-historical debates between reformists and those on the radical left about the most effective ways to defeat lynchers on the streets and in the courts. This was a dramatic period in the history of lynching and anti-lynching organizing; the era's economic crisis manifested in increased labor

competition, intensified immiseration, and an escalation in lethal attacks on black people by poor whites and by members of the ruling elite whose power was threatened by farmers' organizing efforts, particularly those that breached the color line. As the rates of extra-judicial killings grew throughout the 1930s, becoming concentrated in the South and directed with increasing brutality against black southerners, reformists sought to represent lynching as a contravention of southern Christian ideals and as a threat to regional development in order to sway popular consensus away from lynch law.⁸¹

It was also a time in which the discourse of legal lynching – which recognizes criminal justice brutality as a form of white supremacist popular justice – began to circulate beyond the orbit of the radical left. In the early 1930s, the movement to free the Scottsboro Nine popularized the term “legal lynching,” a phrase that emphasized what was already present in the rhetorical history of the word lynching: that it was a form of establishment violence that supplemented the diffuse and ambiguous powers of policing.⁸² The Communist International's ratification of the Black Belt thesis, the CPUSA's exhortation to its white members to defend black laborers, and the global defense campaign on behalf of the Scottsboro Nine popularized an understanding of lynching as a form of ruling-class violence that was appositional, rather than oppositional, to the law.

Lynching received increased national attention as the federal government implemented a racialized New Deal against the backdrop of Congressional debate over the Wagner-Van Nuyes anti-lynching bill. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, beholden to southern allies, refused to even speak out against lynching

until the spectacular mob killing of two white men named John Holmes and Thomas Thurmond in San Jose, California on November 26, 1933.⁸³ Though California Governor James Rolph Jr. triumphantly supported the lynching, other politicians and journalists described it as an assault on law, order, and the government.⁸⁴ The incident was, in the words of Republican representative Hamilton Fish of New York, a “rape of justice, liberty, civil rights, equal rights, human rights, human lives, and the Constitution itself.”⁸⁵ On December 6, 1933, in a dramatic departure from FDR’s refusal to publically comment on the recent lynchings of three black prisoners in Tuscaloosa and of George Armwood in Maryland, he went on public radio to warn the men who had lynched Thurmond and Holmes, as well as any future lynchers who would stand in the way of the state’s monopoly on violence, that they would be held accountable.⁸⁶ The heavily mediatized lynching of Thurmond and Holmes was a boon to the reformist anti-lynching movement, which had long sought to turn popular white opinion against lynching by framing it as a violation of sociological rationality, a Christian moral order, liberal ideals, and the law: as a violation of white sensibility rather than its structuring violence.

The Atlanta-based Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) had formed in response to the anti-black riots that occurred at the end of the First World War. Southern liberals reared in the Progressive tradition saw the migration that began during WWI as a challenge to their phantasmatic image of a stable southern racial order. Arguing that lynching was a form of working-class violence that threatened bourgeois rationality and state authority, CIC members at the organization’s first meeting in 1920 decided to organize bourgeois leaders for research and educational

campaigns about the harmful effects of lynching on New South industry, morale, and law.⁸⁷ Southern liberals typically framed racial reform as the responsibility of “rational” white southern college men who could ensure that political change would not threaten white supremacist southern folkways.⁸⁸ In educational pamphlets, CIC reformers taught white readers that lynching was not a chivalric defense of white womanhood, arguing that it was, instead, a “manifestation of social disorder and bad government that threatened the stability of the segregated status quo.”⁸⁹ A fully modern system of law and order, they argued, was necessary to contain the irrational violence of the poor. Accordingly, southern liberals also tried to strengthen stateways by encouraging the growth in state police forces and by proposing new state anti-lynching laws.⁹⁰ Taking an increasingly technocratic approach to governance, southern liberals, as W. Fitzhugh Brundage writes:

assumed that the modernization of the southern economy would eradicate many of the causes of mob violence. They predicted that as the South became increasingly urban and industrial, the mechanisms for social control in time would become strong enough to discourage extra-legal violence and discredit the values that sustained it.⁹¹

In the 1930s, white southern liberals contested lynching on two gendered fronts: from the standpoint of sociological realism (southerners could be reasoned with and their investments in anti-black violence rationalized out of existence) and through a sentimental appeal to family feeling through which white female anti-lynching activists sought to educate southerners about the mendacity of the lynching-for-rape narrative. As anti-black lynchings increased at the start of the decade, the Board of Directors of the CIC created the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching to investigate mob violence in the region.⁹² In 1930, a group of

white southern women organized in Atlanta at the behest of Jessie Daniel Ames and the CIC to found the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). Their mission was to end lynching by educating southern whites about its causes and prevention. They were convinced that lynchings were community-sanctioned acts of murder and that if they convinced southerners that the acts no longer subscribed to community standards, the lynchings would cease. Ames's contention that lynching would end was based on repudiating, as she writes in a 1938 assessment of newspaper editorials on lynching, "the claim that lynching is necessary to the protection of white women."⁹³

The official declaration of the Georgia chapter of the ASWPL stated: "The real victim in the crime of lynching, we affirm, is not the person done to death, but constituted and regularly established government." Southern liberals sought to end lynching by buttressing the repressive apparatuses of the state. One of the first major changes in southern stateways resulting from liberal reform efforts was the institution of state policing throughout much of the south in the 1920 and 1930s. In 1925, members of the CIC began campaigning for police to prevent lynchings, awarding bronze medals to cops who successfully averted mob killings. Over the next seven years, seventeen cops from eight states won these awards. Women in the ASWPL sought pledges from cops that read: "Believing that lynching is a crime which should not be tolerated in any civilized country, I pledge my support as an officer of law, to its eradication." The ASWPL also published the names of southern whites (96% of whom were women) who signed the anti-lynching pledge.⁹⁴ In *The*

Changing Character of Lynching, Ames claims that state patrols curb mobs, protect citizens, and maintain order:

With increasing efficiency and additional equipment in these states, and with the extension of their duties to law enforcement in the other southern states, state patrols were enabled to provide police protection, the inadequacy of which the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching had defined as a factor contributing to the incidence of mobs and lynchings. The organization of state patrols undoubtedly influenced not only the reduction in the number of lynchings, but also the decrease in the number of attempted lynchings.⁹⁵

Even members of the NAACP (itself riven by political differences and rivalries) capitulated to the idea that modernizing southern policing and instituting state police would result in a decrease in the use of lethal force against black people in the South. Walter White, who headed the organization in the 1930s, stated in his book, *Rope & Faggot*: “The chief difference between the states where there are many lynchings and those where there are few would seem to be police efficiency, and the freedom from mob violence which comes from that effectiveness.”⁹⁶ With the implementation of state anti-lynching laws that threatened to punish law enforcement officers who participated in mob violence, some state officials agreed to expedite the trials and executions of blacks accused of defying the Jim Crow racial order. But these trials, communists argued, amounted to lynchings even if “mobs” followed legal procedures. Though CIC pamphlets and articles authored by Ames heavily emphasized prevented lynchings, they were relatively quiet about the increasing numbers of legal lynchings.⁹⁷

As Amy Louise Wood argues, the language of lawlessness and civility allowed white southerners to distance themselves from lynching without abandoning their white supremacist convictions.⁹⁸ During this period, white liberal

newspaper editors and white and black anti-lynching activists frequently condemned lynching photographs' depiction of white savagery rather than the actions of white supremacists. An article in *The San Francisco Bulletin* concluded, for example, that "the strangest delusion in connection with lynching is that it is the victim who suffers most. In reality it is the [white] community who is lynched."⁹⁹ After the outcry from Roosevelt and other politicians, there was a marked decline in openly spectacular lynchings, and they occurred in fewer states; where between 1930 and 1935, there were lynchings recorded in 21 states, from 1936 to 1941, there were lynchings recorded in nine states. As Ames notes in *The Changing Character of Lynching*, 1936 marked a turning point when mobs committed fewer lynchings within the definition set out in federal anti-lynching bills.¹⁰⁰ By the mid-1930s, white southern editors regularly condemned lynching as a barbaric custom that threatened the social and economic progress of the South. Accordingly, lynching apologists shifted from lynching-for-rape discourse to the argument that courts failed to convict and punish black people who committed capital offenses. After 1936, this excuse also disappeared.¹⁰¹ By 1936, it became clear that minor infractions of law or of a white supremacist social code accounted for the majority of lynchings.¹⁰²

Southern liberalism, despite its adherents' scientific approach to social reform, was markedly paternalistic. Members of the ASWPL, believing that southern folkways were difficult to reform, excluded black women from its ranks. Ames insisted that the ASWPL was "not an interracial movement but a movement of southern women interested in law observance and law enforcement."¹⁰³ White

reformers, as the beneficiaries of white supremacy, were unwilling to confront the role that racial exploitation and domination had on the region's political turmoil. Southern liberals saw southern problems as fundamentally economic, and "assumed that the modernization of the southern economy would eradicate many of the causes of mob violence. They predicted that as the South became increasingly urban and industrial, the mechanisms for social control in time would become strong enough to discourage extra-legal violence and discredit the values that sustained it."¹⁰⁴ Hence Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black argued that the "race problem will work itself out" once economic problems were controlled.¹⁰⁵ Short-time Democratic Governor of Georgia, Ellis Arnall, argued that "the problem of the Negro in the South is a problem of economics. In a prosperous South, in a South that did not suffer from colonialism and exploitation, the Negro would prosper and would be able to obtain most of the things that he desires."¹⁰⁶

Sociological explorations of lynching at the time were beholden to University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park's theory of collective behavior. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage writes, Parks "encouraged scholars to view participants in collective violence as disproportionately deviant and isolated."¹⁰⁷ The emerging race relations paradigm, popularized by Park, rejected the biological determinism of Victorian-era racial science as a justification for racial oppression, proposing instead a cyclical theory of racial "conflict, competition, accommodation, and ultimately assimilation" that obscured the roots of anti-black domination. As Kimberley Johnson writes in *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Brown*: "Because this theory described a natural process, its proponents were

skeptical about the need for and the efficacy of government intervention, believing that assimilation and thus equality would eventually arrive on their own.”¹⁰⁸

Southern liberals, attempted to square national and southern creeds, sought to transform the meaning of democracy to accommodate the violently antidemocratic nature of southern political institutions. Avoiding references to black equality, they thus framed the poll tax as an issue of white democracy that could bring the Jim Crow order into league with American liberalism.¹⁰⁹

White southern reformers also worked to refigure lynching from a foundational white supremacist tactic of conquest and “popular justice” to a violation of American democracy. This is illustrated by Fritz Lang’s *Fury*, an anti-lynching film he directed for Hollywood and released to popular acclaim in 1936. In keeping with the liberal interpretation of lynching as an assault on the white body politic, Lang’s *Fury* dramatizes the lynching of a white man. *Fury*, in its depiction of lynching as a result not of structural racism but of “natural human impulses that only law, as the cornerstone of civilization” could resolve, accorded with liberal anti-lynching discourse.¹¹⁰ The film, in picturing the protagonist’s near-lynching as well as his descent into a vengeful vigilante, prompted audience identification with both the victims and perpetrators of lynching.¹¹¹

After Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released *Fury* in 1936, Walter White, who headed the NAACP, surmised: “More than I have ever seen it done before has the medium of the moving picture been used to bring home to America what mob violence really means.” White tried to arrange a viewing of the film at the White House because he believed that it could have more of an impact than W.E.B. Du

Bois's anti-lynching campaign in *The Crisis*, which combined in-depth reporting on anti-black massacres with shocking juxtapositions of lynching photographs with photographs of black joy, black innocence, and black excellence. For White to suggest that the moving image of a lynching of a white man could have a more dramatic impact on white viewers than the photographs published in the *Crisis* seems to miss the point that few (if any) whites read the *Crisis*.¹¹² It does, however, remind us that the cultivation of white sympathy had long been central to the anti-lynching movement.

By the end of the 1930s, as the state mobilized its expanded powers toward war-making rather than social welfare, radical analyses of lynching as a form of gender violence that lay at the juncture of white supremacist governance and capitalist social relations (and that was normalized until the 1930s as a form of violence necessary for the policing of gendered and sexual citizenship) were foreclosed by the popularization of liberal interpretations of the violence as a contravention of modern law-and-order. The national debate about anti-lynching legislation, the transubstantiation of anti-black harm into white shame, and the cultivation of a litigious structure of feeling cultivated a love of the law that doubly obscured the state's reliance on lethal forms of racialized policing that would ultimately expand the state's right to kill as well its right to incarcerate. Though its adherents were ostensibly working to improve the lives of black people, white reformists' strategies were beholden to white supremacist ideas about social equality and black inferiority. They profoundly obscured the sources of race hate and the proprietary enjoyments of anti-black brutality, and mistakenly assumed that

economic rationalism, development, and a refined segregation that allowed for black upward mobility could transform southern race and class relations and end

lynching. Amy Louise Wood writes:

the consistent rhetorical absence of the black victim – and, in fact, his displacement by the victimhood of American ideals – together with the conspicuous absence of lynching photographs in the white-owned press, suggests that many white Americans preferred to keep race in the shadowed background of public discussions about lynching.¹¹³

The problem was not merely that the white press paid more attention to the lynchings of white men than it did to the continued torture, lynching, and massacres that were committed against blacks. Where activists in the early twentieth century had reproduced photographs to underscore the extreme violence that underlay post-slavery life in the U.S., by the 1930s anti-black lynching photographs were being captioned with text that drew viewers' attention away from the harm done to those held captive in the images. They thus mobilized the spectacle of black death to highlight the fragility of white law-and-order. To reiterate Hartman: "while the beaten and mutilated body presumably establishes the brute materiality of existence, the materiality of suffering regularly eludes (re)cognition by virtue of the body's being replaced by other signs of value, as well as other bodies."¹¹⁴

The idea that the U.S. was nearly "lynch-free" had been introduced in the second decade of the twentieth century by southerners eager to allay the picture of the South as "the land of the tree and the home of the grave" (as Mississippi was known). In 1914, the NAACP magazine, the *Crisis*, reported that the American popular press was trumpeting the decline of lynching: "The season of rejoicing at the decline of lynching in the United States has been rather long drawn out this year

and quite vociferous.”¹¹⁵ The popularity of D.W. Griffiths’ *Birth of a Nation* (stills from which President Woodrow Wilson used in a poster celebrating America’s entrance into WWI), the horrifying spectacle lynching in 1915 of teenager Jesse Washington in Paris, Texas, and the racial terrorism that swept through the country throughout the war and that reached its apogee in what James Weldon Johnson named the “Red Summer” of 1919 belied the *Outlook’s* claim that lynching was in decline.¹¹⁶

It would not be long before the idea that lynching was a dying practice spread throughout popular discourse. The rhetorical mobilization of lynching’s decline reemerged in the 1930s. Members of CIC, ASWPL, the Southern Council on Human Welfare (SCHW), and SPC argued that lynching was declining because of its fundamental contravention of American democracy. In the educational materials produced by the CIC throughout the 1930s, there is a marked emphasis on the declining numbers of the dead. In keeping with the sociological training of many of its members, CIC pamphlets evince a hard faith in the statistical record, and in the rationalization of race relations through scientific planning. It is clear from the dates of these articles and reports that lynching, throughout the interwar period, was part of the nation’s end-of-year tallies and roundups: our top songs, our favorite movies, the President’s funniest quips, the most lucrative businesses, the numbers of lynch parties.

During the New Deal, the ASWPL began to characterize lynching as a “lost crime” in order to convince southerners to join them in denouncing the violence. Ames, as head of the ASWPL, “traced new developments in mob dynamics in the

1930s and declared that each signaled a ‘last’ of some sort – the last manhunt, the last torture, the last immolation.” Ames, as Rushdy notes, was so intent on claiming a ‘lynch-free year’ in America that she began challenging the Tuskegee Institute’s definition of lynching; as the NAACP and others in support of the Wagner-Van Nuys anti-lynching bill argued that lynching was changing in form rather than disappearing, and that so too must lynching’s definition change, the ASWPL argued for a restricted definition that would facilitate the arrival of a lynch-free year.¹¹⁷

Toward a Materialist Critique of U.S. Lynching Culture

The past has left images of itself in literary texts that are comparable to those which light imprints on a photosensitive plate. Only the future possesses developers active enough to bring these plates out perfectly.

- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

The speculative work table does not go without an imaginative montage table.

- Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*

I suggest that we read Wright’s poem as a microcosmic literary history of lynching during the period in which lynching itself became a fungible object. The meaning of lynching, as Christopher Waldrep has assiduously detailed, has always been ambiguous and flexible. During the 1930s, the rhetorical ambiguity of lynching was compounded by liberal misrecognition of the violence as harming, above and beyond any human, the system of formal law and liberal fantasies of continuist progress. Once we acknowledge the possibility that the poetic persona might be in blackface, it is possible to read “Between the World and Me” as a latent critique of the liberal center-left’s sentimental evacuation from public consciousness in the

1930s the relationship of lynching to white supremacy and the political-economic relations of capitalism. Wright's poem, I would like to suggest, intervenes in the political antagonism over lynching's supposed disappearance by staging a negative dialectical practice of looking. Reading Wright's troping of the skull allegorically suggests that the lynched in "Between the World and Me" does not undergo a resurrection so much as a troubled encounter with the violent vagaries of liberal-white supremacist epistemology.

The skull that serves as the poem's central trope connotes the (negative) dialectical workings of the philosophical figure of the death's head. In his first book, *On the Origins of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin analyzes the death's head, a frequent figure in Baroque mourning-plays, as an allegorical emblem for the alienation of meaning and the ruination of history in times of crisis.¹¹⁸ The death's head is an emblem, a "montage of visual image and linguistic sign," that figures the "Baroque vision of nature as allegorical representation of history."¹¹⁹ As Susan Buck-Morss explains:

Within philosophy, allegory has another status as the mode in which not the subject, but the objective world expresses meaning. The German Baroque dramatists understood each of nature's elements as full of significance that humans only needed to interpret in order to uncover truth. But the fact that each element could be translated in a multiplicity of paradoxical ways so that ultimately any object could stand for anything self, implied referential arbitrariness, which seemed to negate the very claim of a 'meaningful' nature.¹²⁰

Importantly, allegorical representation works according to a different historical horizon than metaphoricity; where symbolism hearkens to a transcendent ideal that is true in all historical moments, allegory is a deeply temporal mode that expresses

the experience of life fractured by political and economic devastation.¹²¹ As Buck-Morss writes, allegory allows us to make “visibly palpable the experience of a world in fragments, in which the passing of time means not progress but disintegration.”¹²² For Benjamin, “Baroque allegory was the mode of perception peculiar to a time of social disruption and protracted war, when human suffering and material ruin were the stuff and substance of historical experience.”¹²³

Benjamin’s analysis of Baroque allegory was crucial to his later conceptualization of commodity fetishism and the reification of everyday life in early capitalist, nineteenth-century Paris. In his writings on Charles Baudelaire, “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” and *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin conceptualizes the aesthetic operations of a commodity culture the objects of which, when displayed and consumed, are abstracted from the labor process and from the process of market exchange. This fetishism, he argues, is analogous to the abstraction of objects in allegorical signification. He writes in the *Arcades Project*: “The singular debasement of things through their signification, something characteristic of seventeenth-century allegory,’ finds its contemporary equivalent in the ‘singular debasement of things through their price.”¹²⁴ Allegory, he suggests, enacts the central logic of commodification by conferring on its subject matter an abstract signification analogous to the economic value that capitalist processes of exchange confer upon the commodity. As Ian Baucom explains: “Whether allegorically construed or circulated as a commodity, things, in both systems, signify not themselves but some superordinate ‘value’ whether it is understood as a meaning or an exchange value – in thus acquiring value, things find their concrete thingly nature temporarily

extinguished.”¹²⁵ The allegorical form accumulates throughout historical time to become legible within the nineteenth-century formation of capitalist exhibition value.

In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin refigures allegory from a theological trope that ultimately figures a form of spiritual redemption to a spirited, theologically-informed, marxist-inspired methodology that connects truth claims to the material world.¹²⁶ Benjamin’s project in his final, unfinished work is to generate the contours of an “innervative” encounter with the life of the commodity – to transform modern experience by encountering, allegorically, the commodity debris of industrialization’s first age. Where baroque drama staged, melancholically, the inevitability of decay, in the *Arcades Project* historical ruins are politically instructive.

As Buck-Morss writes:

the debris of industrial culture teaches us not the necessity of submitting to historical catastrophe, but the fragility of the social order that tells us this catastrophe is necessary. The crumbling of the monuments that were built to signify the immortality of civilization becomes proof, rather, of its transiency. And the fleetingness of temporal power does not cause sadness; it informs political practice.¹²⁷

Benjamin’s task with the *AP* was to collect the material remains of capitalism’s first era in Paris, and bring them into the present moment. This encounter was meant to awaken moderns to a truly political experience of the present, one that urgently inaugurates a catastrophic break from the course of history.¹²⁸

In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin captures this messianic dimension in the figure of the dialectical image. The dialectical image is the philosophical analogue of montage, and is a modern form of emblematics. Buck-

Morss proposes that the dialectical image is a destructive allegory that “bears – in opposition to the Baroque – the traces of anger needed to break into this world and lay its harmonious structures in ruins.”¹²⁹ The dialectical image is an actualization or redemption of “lost time, of the times embedded in the spaces of things.”¹³⁰ It is defined by a confrontation of opposites whose structure is non-identical and thus not structured on synthesis. The double focus is meant to illuminate industrial nature’s utopian potential and, simultaneously, the betrayal of that potential.¹³¹ As a disruption, or cut, in the passage of time, the dialectical image brings progress to a standstill. Benjamin writes:

To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions – there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest. Hence, the object constructed in the materialist presentation of history is itself the dialectical image. The latter is identical with the historical object; it justifies its violent expulsion from the continuum of historical process.¹³²

The past is actualized in the dialectical image in a way that allows us to experience the now as preformed in the past.¹³³ Where historicism “gives the ‘eternal’ image of the past, Benjamin’s “materialist historiography” supplies a unique experience with the past,” composed not from the actions of great men and celebrated events but from the refuse, the traces of the daily life of the collective.¹³⁴ True political experience explodes the continuum of history rather than identifying its culmination. This materialist, *constructivist* presentation of history, thinks Benjamin, might make possible an encounter with the energies that inhere in commodities when they fall out of circuits of exchange.

Dead commodities that have fallen out of exchange, Benjamin underscores, are nevertheless imbued with potential that stems from their fore-history as well as with what they became. These objects are thus temporal nuclei of the past and the present. Importantly, this transformative way of reading objects from the past refigures thinking as an act of constellation rather than conceptualization; the confrontation between tensions brings us to presence of mind. With the dialectical image, Benjamin renews historical materialism as a mode of actualization rather than one of future overcoming.¹³⁵ Key here is Benjamin's intuition that the energies of the revolution are immanent to the present. This immanence is what Benjamin means when he suggests in "Theses" that a constructivist historiography must contain a "weak" messianic dimension in addition to a historical materialist sensibility.¹³⁶ This weak messianism, as Alexander Gelley suggests, is not redemptive in the usual religious sense; in Benjamin's writings, messianism is more about a willingness to confront extreme alternatives posed by the present situation. It was related to what Benjamin refers to as *apokatostasis* – the recovery of the past not as a transcendent eschatology but as "discernment and extraction guided by present need."¹³⁷ Although Benjamin's discussion of the messianic mentions a sense of redemption, his words do not carry the sense of optimism that one might associate with this idea; indeed, his essay is imbued with sadness. Benjamin, writes Fredric Jameson, "offers the supreme example of the intellectual committed to revolutionary values in a world in which revolution cannot be expected to happen."¹³⁸ The dialectical image holds in tension the many potential paths that history could have taken and has taken in order to indicate the urgency of taking

action now rather than later.

Benjamin practices materialist historiography textually, as a weak messianic form of writing designed to, in Gelley's words, "incite a readership by means of image, example, anecdote, and citation."¹³⁹ Thus, in "The Author as Producer," Benjamin urges writers to inject the shocking energies of photography and film into language: "we shall make this demand most emphatically when we – the writers – take up photography and give photographs the captions that wrench them from commercial exchange in order to give them revolutionary use values."¹⁴⁰ Inspired also by Dada and Surrealist visual practices, Benjamin proposes that montage may function as an allegorical conceptual practice that "introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."¹⁴¹ In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin proposes that, where paintings invite a contemplative form of spectatorship, photography and film bypass consciousness to work directly on the human sensorium.¹⁴² Benjamin pursues the idea that film's shock effect on the human sensorium is the source of a potentially radical collective consciousness – that film may train moderns to adapt to the shocks of modernity if spectators learn to cushion these shock with a heightened "presence of mind."¹⁴³ Benjamin also theorizes photography as a mode of estrangement that, can "resist the known contours of a verbally mapped world."¹⁴⁴ In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin puts this dialectical method of critique into writerly practice by deploying the filmic technique of montage. In his constructivist-materialist historiography, the montage is a visual-cognitive principle that arrests time's passage in the service of a revolutionary praxis of remembrance and actualization.

Benjamin based the dialectical image on the montage aesthetic of modernity because he wanted the proletariat to appropriate technology's power in the service of a praxis that could reestablish the connection between the imagination and physical innervation – a connection destroyed by the *Erlebnis* of bourgeois culture.¹⁴⁵

Benjamin's early work on allegory provided a foundation for his later critique of the historicist philosophy of history as a developmental telos. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin exposes historicism's ideological representation of a past unity. Classic historicists, Benjamin writes, tell history from the point of view of the victors, as a story of progress rooted in an escape from the archaic and a return to a prefigured Absolute.¹⁴⁶ In contrast, Benjamin presents a radical reinterpretation of the dialectical experience of history; he offers readers a series of aphoristic provocations in which history as telos is refigured as a reiterative now-time, a disruptive concatenation of the past and the present that constellates in the dialectical image. This dialectical image links historical perception to historical responsibility:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it the way it was. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.... The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes.¹⁴⁷

In the dialectical image of historical progress, the archaic and modern conjoin to bring the linear unfolding of time to a standstill. History is thus the "subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now."¹⁴⁸ For Benjamin, an engaged philosophy of history does not merely free the present of the violence of the past; it discovers in the brutality of the past the

responsibility of a relational historical consciousness, an ethics of historical memory.¹⁴⁹ Rather than project forward toward freedom, Benjamin advises we “brush history against the grain” to excavate freedom’s threads of expression from the preformed relics of the past.¹⁵⁰ Benjamin identifies the ability to arrest history through photography and the writing of aphoristic theses with the moment of revolution. Although Marx identifies revolutions as the “locomotives of world history,” Benjamin suggests that “perhaps it is completely otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are, in this train of traveling generations, the reach for the emergency brake.”¹⁵¹

Benjamin’s materialist historiography disrupts the objectified myth of historical progress by reconstituting history in terms of “now-being.” Where historicism “gives the ‘eternal’ image of the past, historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past.”¹⁵² “Historical materialism must renounce the epic element in history. It blasts the epoch out of the reified ‘continuity of history.’ But it also explodes the homogeneity of the epoch, interspersing it with ruins – that is, with the present.”¹⁵³ We can see the seeds of this constructivist historiography in Convolute N of *The Arcades Project*, where Benjamin writes that the dissolution of mythology into the space of history can only happen through the awakening of a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been.¹⁵⁴ “A construction of history that looks backward, rather than forward, at the destruction of material nature as it *has actually taken place*, provides dialectical contrast to the futurist myth of historical progress (which can only be sustained by forgetting what has happened).”¹⁵⁵

In opposition to the opiate of classical historicism, which he calls the “strongest narcotic of the century,” Benjamin offers the dialectical image as the underlying experiential structure of a constructivist historiography.¹⁵⁶ The dialectical image is a constellation of awakening, an actualization or redemption of what Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin write in their introduction to the *Arcades Project* as “lost time, of the times embedded in the spaces of things.”¹⁵⁷

To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions – there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest. Hence, the object constructed in the materialist presentation of history is itself the dialectical image. The latter is identical with the historical object; it justifies its violent expulsion from the continuum of historical process.¹⁵⁸

From dialectical contrasts, life is born anew.¹⁵⁹ Against the prognosticators of decline, Benjamin sees crisis *and* survival in the refuse of early bourgeois life and takes up this refuse as the material of a revolutionary history.

For Benjamin, allegory is more relevant for socially transformative vision-making/imaginareering than is social realism because it makes possible an idea, expression, and experience of revolution without the teleological strictures of traditional Marxist narratives of revolutionary progress. Entering into bodily innervation with objects that have fallen out of use, Benjamin proposes, might lead us to lost utopian visions of the future so different than the future we inhabit that they form a constellation, or perceptual disturbance, capable of awakening us from the disruptions of memory and experience that characterize modernity. “The

materialist presentation of history leads the past to bring the present into a critical state.”¹⁶⁰

Lynching as a Weapon of National Oppression¹⁶¹

How might Wright’s poem about lynching, in its disordering of the time-space of the violence and the boundaries of subject and object in lynching’s expanded scene, suggest ways of knowing lynching that trouble hegemonic articulations of the violence as exceptional and anti-modern?¹⁶² How does the dialectical exchange of views between the living and the dead, as figured in the narrator’s inhabitation of the skull, help us think about the “disappearing” spectacular ordinances of U.S. lynching culture at the height of the federal government’s intervention into the era’s capitalist crisis? Wright’s poem, read allegorically, models and demands the extension of a negative dialectical approach to the problem of black fungibility at mid-century. In “Between the World and Me,” the skull is an untimely object that figures lynching’s recursive transformation and usability in U.S. culture.

As a dialectical image, the human skull, in addition to reminding those who encounter it of their own mortality, reveals the sorrow behind falsely redemptive notions of history.¹⁶³ The poem presents lynching’s *figurative* openness to misuse by reformers whose rhetorical machinations exacerbated the material violence. For lynching – defined here as extra-legal establishment violence that has historically conditioned the occupied, enslaved, and black subject’s elision from the category of the Human – at this historical juncture, became itself the abstract, figurative grounds for white reformers’ sentimental attachment to narratives of progress and

class-based fantasies about controlling mob feeling. As a result, lynching was abstracted from its source in colonization and slavery. Wright's poetic inhabitation of the perspective of the skull in "Between the World and Me" demands a renewed analytics of lynching's continued mediation of everyday life in the 1930s, not solely for those construed as its criminal targets but also for those whose worldviews had been informed by entering into the bodies of the tortured and by consuming subaltern pain as the destroyed anti-matter of a white body politic. If we are to understand and critique the relationship of extra-legal violence to the law, the way that struggles over lynching were integral to the shape that state power took in the U.S. throughout the twentieth century, and how lynching has been obscured and manipulated in keeping with exceptionalist narratives of U.S. liberal democracy, we must look at lynching photographs in new ways, perhaps making a move similar to the one enacted by Wright's narrator in "Between the World and Me": an inhabitation of death by thinking with, rather than merely about, lynching's remains.

Insofar as we may read "Between the World and Me" as confronting the problem of lynching's usability by people on all sides of the struggle, might the poem also insist on the ineradicable white supremacist structure of extra-legal establishment violence in the U.S.? Might the skull work also as a fantasy-space for encounters with other-being that critique and *exceed* the identificatory parameters of sympathy, rescue, and overcoming that organized liberal oppositions to lynching in the 1930s? What might happen to our critical relationship to photographic mediations and reproductions of violence if we follow the ellipses that extend the

end of the poem past the gaze, through the stony skull of the lynched that reaches “in yellow surprise at the sun”? How does the dialectical exchange of views between the living and the dead as figured in the narrator’s inhabitation of the skull help us think about photography’s relationship to the philosophy of lynching’s history? Might we read Wright’s poem as an immanent critique of U.S. lynching culture that seizes the restless image of lynching, stilling in the mire of its terrible and terrorizing organization of our sensible world to negotiate the sensible parameters of another world?

In the early 1930s, capitalist crisis compelled participants across the political left to face off against a common enemy: extra-legal, ruling-class violence. Anti-black lynchings and summary executions of labor organizers had risen with the onslaught of the worst economic depression since the late nineteenth century. For the first time since radical Reconstruction – when an interracial movement to battle the brutalities of sharecropping and forestall the full implementation of capitalism in the South was brutally halted by the 1876 Tilden-Hayes compromise and the return to political power of the former slave-holding class – white labor activists joined black liberationists in opposing lynch law.¹⁶⁴ Out of this context arose an analysis of lynching as a weapon of class warfare. In 1932, Harry Haywood and Milton Howard co-authored a political pamphlet entitled *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*.¹⁶⁵ Haywood and Howard’s Marxist-Leninist analysis of lynching emerged from their experiences in the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and from the Party’s nascent movement to organize impoverished sharecroppers in the southern Black Belt – neighboring counties in the South dominated by the

plantation economy and with a black demographic majority.¹⁶⁶ In 1928, Haywood had presented to the Communist International (Comintern) his thesis that black Americans comprised an oppressed nation within the empire-state of the United States of America.¹⁶⁷ Haywood was responsible for pushing the Party's agenda on what it called "the Negro Question" beyond the vulgar economic determinism it had inherited from the Socialist Labor Party toward a revolutionary internationalism that recognized the peculiarities of U.S. racial capitalism. The postbellum southern plantation system – based as it was on sharecropping, landlord supervision of crops, debt peonage, the convict lease system, and public chain gang labor – was a semi-feudal economy that had one foot in slavery and the other in capitalism. Its superstructural correlate, Haywood would note in 1933 in "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the United States," was segregation, disfranchisement, anti-miscegenation laws, and a host of other forms of domination backed by a "vicious system ... of arbitrary violence, the most vicious being the peculiar American institution of lynching."¹⁶⁸ It was in the Black Belt that post-Civil War lynchings had been concentrated and mobilized against black people who shirked the chains of the slave economy's afterbirth: the racial liberal labor contract that ensnared millions in a debt economy backed by police power and local white supremacist judiciaries.¹⁶⁹ Lynching, according to Haywood, was a mechanism of imperial violence that maintained a racialized division within the working class.

A mass multi-racial struggle on behalf of the self-determination of the black nation, Haywood argued, was to be the fulcrum of a worldwide proletarian revolution against U.S. imperialism.¹⁷⁰ Following Lenin's pronouncement in 1920

that “all Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies,” Haywood argued that it was incumbent upon the Comintern to officially support, in all regions of the country, black self-determination.¹⁷¹ In response, the 6th Congress passed a resolution in 1928 openly supporting “the right of the Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states.”¹⁷² Following Haywood’s analysis and the Comintern’s directive, the Depression-era CPUSA for the first time devoted significant resources and labor to organizing members and workers around the platform of national black liberation. With ancillary organizations like the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR) agitating for black working-class power in the North and International Labor Defense (ILD) – the legal defense wing of the CPUSA – organizing black sharecroppers in the South, the movement was nearly national in scale.¹⁷³

In 1931, the CPUSA became involved in its first anti-lynching defense campaign after the arrest and incarceration, near Scottsboro, Alabama, of nine young unemployed black men – Charlie Weems, Ozie Powell, Clarence Norris, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Haywood Patterson, Andy and Roy Wright, and Eugene Williams – on false charges of vagrancy and rape after they got into a fight with a group of white boys on a train. Ranging in age from 13-19, the Scottsboro Nine were almost lynched at the time of their arrests, tried without adequate counsel, convicted on flimsy evidence, and (with the exception of thirteen year-old Roy Wright) sentenced to die by the electric chair after a sham trial in the heart of

the Klan-controlled Black Belt.¹⁷⁴ After the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) refused to pick up the case, ILD intervened to defend the Nine. As part of its defense campaign, ILD – taking a cue from Ida B. Wells’ transnational anti-lynching crusade in the 1890s – staged a massive international speaking tour. Protests erupted in Paris, Moscow, and South Africa, and activists from all over the world overwhelmed the governor of Alabama with letters and telegrams demanding the immediate release of the Scottsboro Nine. The movement to free the Nine radicalized many black, working-class, and immigrant peoples. During the early phase of the Scottsboro campaign, black workers organized and participated in actions and strikes in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and among West Virginia coal miners in the National Miners Union. Large masses rallied to the unemployed workers’ movement and organized against evictions in black neighborhoods in Chicago and Cleveland. In Camp Hill, Alabama, the Sharecroppers’ Union emerged from the resistance of black tenant farmers to attacks from landlords and sheriffs.¹⁷⁵

It was during this expansion of black militancy that Haywood and Howard released their damning critique of lynching as a weapon of national oppression. Opening their analysis with the story of sharecropper Henry Lowry – who was burned at the stake on January 26, 1921 in Nodena, Arkansas by 500 people after killing his debt-master in self-defense – Haywood and Howard underscored that southern oligarchs’ employment of extra-economic violence was a response to class struggle on the part of millions of black workers subject to super-exploitation in a semi-feudal debt economy. *Lynching* shared much with William Pickens’s analysis of

the violence in *Lynching and Debt Slavery*. Pickens, writing the pamphlet in 1921 for the American Civil Liberties Union, argued that lynching was a method of economic exploitation that stemmed from the efforts of the ruling class to control black labor as well as from white workers' competition with black labor. He underscored the violence's instrumental role in maintaining the southern system of debt peonage and in stamping out black sharecroppers' efforts to organize farmers' unions in 1918 in Brooks and Lowndes County, Georgia, and in 1919 in Elaine, Arkansas.¹⁷⁶ Pickens cannily termed the southern region where lynching predominated – Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Alabama – the “American Congo” in recognition of the violence's relationship to international *Herrenvolk* democracy and colonial capitalism.¹⁷⁷ Pickens, Haywood, and Howard recognized that the new forms of racial slavery that emerged in the wake of the Civil War were specific to the contradictions of the era; neo-slavery was backed by the behemoth of American empire, whose emergence at the turn of the century was coterminous with the worst period of anti-black lynching in the South. “American imperialism,” Haywood wrote in 1933, “is the force that stands behind the Southern white ruling classes (capitalists and landlords) in their direct and violent plunder of the Negro masses in the Black Belt.”¹⁷⁸

In their pamphlet, Haywood and Howard deepened Pickens' conviction that to attack lynching without attacking the systems of debt- and convict-slavery in the Black Belt “is like trying to be rid of the phenomena of smoke and heat without disturbing the basic fire.”¹⁷⁹ To interrupt the basic fire, Haywood and Howard stressed one of lynch law's central contradictions: that it buttressed the exploitation

of the very members of the white working class who so often became agents of their bosses' terror campaigns. It was on this front that they demanded that white workers put their bodies on the line in defense of black life while refuting liberal articulations of lynching as an anti-American threat to law-and-order.

In *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*, Haywood and Howard used the term “courthouse lynching” to refute the legalistic approach of the anti-lynching campaigns undertaken by the NAACP and the investment of white liberals in the idea that state police could contain the violence. Though the Association’s director, Walter White, recognized the economic dimensions of the violence (he wrote in his 1929 book, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, that lynching “has always been the means of protection, not of white women, but of profits”), White and other members of the NAACP tended to emphasize the psychological aspects of the violence, blaming it on ignorance, boredom, and lawlessness.¹⁸⁰ The NAACP, in demanding a federal anti-lynching law and in pressuring the Department of Justice to use existing state laws to punish mob violence, and white liberals who did not support the passage of federal anti-lynching laws but believed that what they termed “the better classes” could stifle the violence, dangerously obscured the participation of the ruling class in the maintenance of white supremacist colonial capitalism.

Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression went a long way in elucidating the economic dimensions of state-sanctioned, anti-black terror. Drawing upon the narrative traditions of the radical anti-lynching and labor defense movements when they cited the law as a weapon of the forces of ruling-class power, Hayward and Howard importantly troubled the widespread conception that lynchings were the

result of the “victory of the lawless over the law.”¹⁸¹ Extra-legal violence and a white supremacist judiciary were instrumental bedfellows in the landed class’s quest to accumulate capital on the backs of super-exploited blacks.

The editors of CPUSA’s International Pamphlets series chose the Oxford railway photograph from 1908 as the cover of the anti-lynching pamphlet (figure 6). There is no mention of the photograph or the lynched man anywhere in the pamphlet. The photograph is cropped into an elongated vertical bar that runs along the right side of the cover. Everything in the original photograph is gone, save the man and a portion of the pole from which he hangs. There is a hint of railroad in the abstract line work opposite the photograph, but the pamphlet’s editors bring the dead postman close to readers, cropping him out of the train station and out of context so that he can function as an icon of class warfare. Where the postcard’s ideological work was dependent upon the landscape genre’s facilitation of aesthetic distance from the violence in the scene, the CPUSA pamphlet ensures that readers cannot turn away from the man to settle on other details.¹⁸²

Where the postcard circulated a commodified view of an industrializing New South, the 1934 pamphlet seized the photograph as an emblem for lynching’s assault on black workers. It may be seen to fetishize the dead man in turning him into an icon of Black Belt lynching. But perhaps we can understand CPUSA pamphleteers as appropriating, immanently, the fetish qualities of the photograph, in a negative dialectical fashion, to interrupt the deterministic and teleological parameters of southern liberalism.¹⁸³

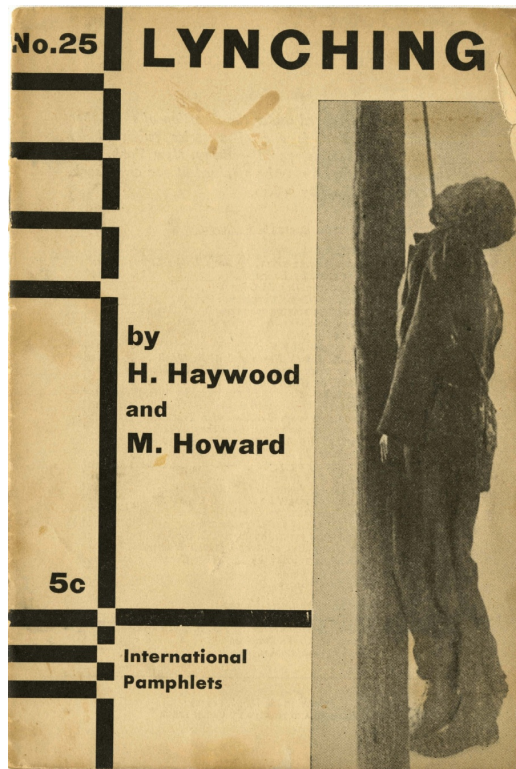


Figure 6. Cover of *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*, a CPUSA pamphlet from 1934.

Read dialectically and in light of the historical mobilization of the captive subject's fungible capacities, the CPUSA anti-lynching pamphlet and "Between the World and Me" signal a danger and a possibility that troubles JanMohamed's redemptive reading of Wright's poem: they insist, through an inhabitation of lynching's ruins, that the time-space of death continues to be visited upon black people even as they respond in different ways to the problem of interracial organizing against anti-black lynch law.

Conclusion

There must be some way to integrate death into living, neither ignoring it nor giving in to it.

– Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*

Wright's statement in *Black Boy* that he feared being lynched at any moment accords with other black writers' meditations on U.S. lynching culture's terrifying contingency. Lynching, a form of violence instrumental for the accumulation of capital but irreducible to the rational parameters of accumulation, struck at random and often for no reason at all, thus guaranteeing its correspondence with a modern epistemology of time ruled by chance and repetition. Members of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), while authoring *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations For Relief From a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* in 1951, cited Harry Haywood and Earl Conrad's unpublished paper, *Atrocities Against 15 Million Negro Citizens*, to emphasize, like Wright, the violent imprint of lynching on black psychic and affective life:

Perennial, hour by hour, moment by moment lynching of the Negro's soul in countless psychological, in myriad physical forms, that is the greatest and most *enduring* lynching of all ... This is written ... into the spiritual hanging of all those millions, it is carved into their daily thinking, woven into their total living experience. They are lynched in the thousands of glances from white supremacists all over the land every day, in discourtesies; insults, snobbery; in all the great events of the total national experience and as well in all the minutest experience. The great daily clash of two peoples living together in antagonism, with walls of bigotry between, is a mass lynch act committed constantly against the fifteen million.¹⁸⁴

According to Haywood, Conrad, and the CRC, the nation's dominant racialized antagonism was a "mass lynch act" comprised of physical and spiritual force.

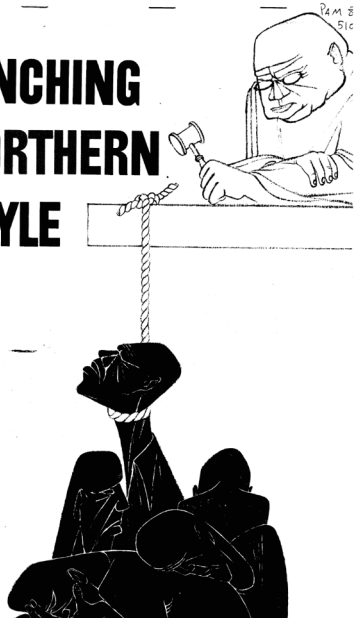
Though progressives often warned that spectacular forms of violence obscure the

more mundane, everyday workings of structural white supremacy, black radicals proposed at mid-century that the apparently outmoded terror of lynching shadowed other forms of anti-black domination. Thus, “the great events of the total national experience” as well as “the minutest experience” informed the terrorizing lynch atmosphere of anti-black America that the members of the CRC demanded the U.N. redress in 1951. Building upon the petitions submitted to the U.N. Economic and Social Council and Commission on Human Rights by the National Negro Congress (NNC) in 1946 and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1947, *We Charge Genocide* not only positioned lynch law as a still relevant, if transformed, category of experience in the post-war U.S.; the petition’s authors also demanded that the liberal state be held to international account for committing genocide against black Americans.

The manifesto, which Paul Robeson presented to the U.N. on December 17, 1951, demanded an international reckoning with the prolonged and ongoing genocide of black peoples in the U.S. It also functioned as a requiem for the Seven and McGee, who had been executed in February and May of that year.¹⁸⁵ William L. Patterson, the head of the CRC, had directed the study at the height of the organization’s failing fight to save the lives of black people across the country who had been convicted and sentenced to die by the state for “crimes” that spanned the familiar charges of rape and self-defense: the Martinsville Seven in Virginia, Willie McGee in Mississippi, and Rosa Lee Ingram and her teenage sons, Wallace and Sammy Lee, in Georgia. These campaigns, along with earlier ones to liberate Odell Waller in Virginia, the Groveland Four (Earnest Thomas, Charles Greenlee, Samuel

Shepherd and Walter Irvin) in Florida, and the Trenton Six (Ralph Cooper, Collis English, McKinley Forest, John McKenzie, James Thorpe, and Horace Wilson) in New Jersey, had publicized the phrase “legal lynching” to underscore the lethal imbrication of Jim Crow courts and white killing mobs.¹⁸⁶ Where the petitions by the NNC and NAACP charged the U.S. government with human rights abuses against black Americans, the CRC manifesto took up the timely language of “genocide” to underscore the necropolitical underpinnings of the “American Century.” It emphasized that a globalizing U.S. capitalist democracy was founded on and furnished by a sovereign right to kill, and that this right posed a threat to an international polity coming under the hegemonic sway of capitalist relations of production, reproduction, and sociality. The CRC adopted genocide – coined by Ralph Lemkin in 1944 by combining the Greek *genos* (for family or race), with the Latin derivative *cide* (for to kill) and described in the U.N. General Assembly’s 1948 definition as actions “with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group” – to indict the state with criminal violence.¹⁸⁷ As Naomi Murakawa writes, the petition, in presenting spectacular mob killings alongside so-called private murders and state-sanctioned executions, did not distinguish between illegal white violence and legal white violence “administered under color of law.”¹⁸⁸ It acknowledged that lynching was neither exceptional nor confined to the South and it indicted the conditions that contributed to the high rates of premature death, poverty and disease in black communities.¹⁸⁹ The use of the term genocide sounded an alarm that the peculiarities of the formations of racial capital in the U.S. – fomented by chattel slavery and slavery’s direct and indirect

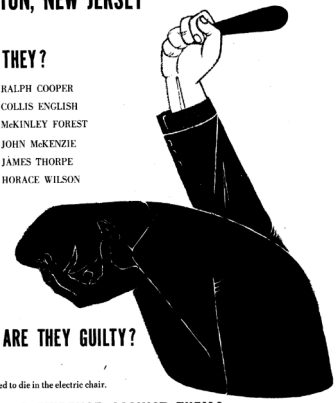
LYNCING NORTHERN STYLE



SIX INNOCENT MEN ARE SENTENCED TO DIE IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

WHO ARE THEY?

Their names are: RALPH COOPER
COLLIS ENGLISH
MCKINLEY FOREST
JOHN MCKENZIE
JAMES THORPE
HORACE WILSON



OF WHAT ARE THEY GUILTY?

Of being black.
They are sentenced to die in the electric chair.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THEM?

Five "confessions" to the murder of
William Horner, Trenton second-hand furniture dealer.
"Confessions" torn from innocent men by force.
"Confessions" given under the influence of drugs administered by police tormentors.

IS THIS A LYNCING?

YES!

Northern style.
Jersey style.

It is the way the law supports Jim Crow. It is the way
the law maintains segregation.
It is the government's answer to the American Negro's
striving for freedom and human dignity.

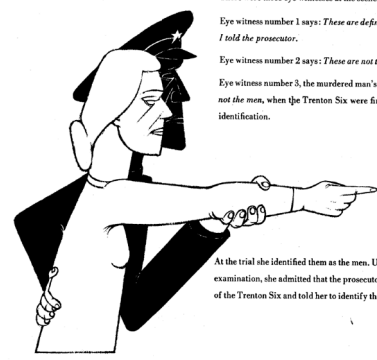


A "LEGAL" LYNCING

Engineered by the police department of Trenton.
With the cooperation of Trenton courts and officials.
Accompanied by "martial" police activities in Negro neighborhoods
—supported by Tommy guns, false arrests, roughing up of Negro
citizens.
Supported by a conspiracy of silence in the nation's newspapers.
Yes, this is a lynching. Not by men in klansmen's robes. But a
lynching northern style. By men in court robes and police uniforms.

HOW ABOUT THE EYE WITNESSES?

There were three eye witnesses at the scene of the crime.
Eye witness number 1 says: *These are definitely not the men,
I told the prosecutor.*
Eye witness number 2 says: *These are not the men.*
Eye witness number 3, the murdered man's wife, says: *They are
not the men, when the Trenton Six were first brought in for
identification.*



At the trial she identified them as the men. Under cross
examination, she admitted that the prosecutor showed her pictures
of the Trenton Six and told her to identify them as the murderers.

WHERE WERE THE SIX AT THE TIME OF THE CRIME? NOT AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

The proof is documented. Here it is.
COLLIS ENGLISH: Cashied a check at a store near his home at the very
time the crime was being committed in another part of the city. (The
check was a veteran's disability check.) Neighbors saw him.
RALPH COOPER: The mailman saw him at the home of his girl friend.
Cooper accepted a special delivery package at the very time of the murder.

Figure 7. Four pages from "Lynching Northern Style," Committee to Free the Trenton Six, Civil Rights Congress, 1948.

afterbirths of peonage, private and public convict leasing, super-exploited waged labor, and lynching – would haunt not merely those residing in that nation inside a nation that contemporaries referred to as the Black Belt, but may also return to roost in the pillaged corners of the expanding empire-state.¹⁹⁰

At this crucial juncture in global history, lynching emerged as an image to contest the U.S. state's right to govern the world. *We Charge Genocide* forwarded a counter-truth that underscored the state's liberal failure to achieve a rational monopoly on violence and thus its formation as a war machine that feeds on accumulations of sovereign violence, discipline, and control. Though liberal critics dismissed the petition as communist propaganda and a betrayal of national unity, the petition marked an important departure from the emerging Cold War status quo.¹⁹¹

Despite the attention on the part of the CRC to the overwhelming presence of lynching in American life in 1951, the Tuskegee Institute proclaimed in 1952 that lynching had ceased to be a valid index or “barometer for measuring the status of race relations in the United States.”¹⁹² The decision on the part of the Tuskegee Institute to halt its tabulation of lynchings in 1952 had a massive impact on the nation's ability to confront the altered terms of anti-black terrorism. While the final report on lynching issued by the Institute noted that other extra-legal means of control (like bombings and shootings) were still prevalent in the South, the media announced that lynching was over.¹⁹³ Thus an editorial from the January 2, 1954 edition of the *Washington Post* entitled, “End of Lynching,” reads, in full:

One of the best year-end news items has come out of the Tuskegee Institute. For two successive years the Nation has had no lynching. At least for the

present the blot that had so long stained the American record and poisoned the relations between the white and the colored races has been lifted. While Tuskegee will continue to compile lynching statistics, its president, Dr. L.H. Foster, reports realistically that its annual report on this subject has had its significance as a yardstick of race relations.

The current report will be especially gratifying to those who have believed that the states, themselves, under the impact of an aroused public opinion, could wipe out this especially heinous type of crime. To be sure, there are still would-be lynchers in the South and in other parts of the country. Lynchings were prevented last year in Alabama, New York and Arizona. But law enforcement is always a matter of eternal vigilance. There is a good reason to believe that, having wiped out this offense to American civilization, the states will continue to maintain their new record.¹⁹⁴

The last two sentences of the editorial are telling. Amid the backdrop of arguments in the cases that made up *Brown v. Board of Education*, this editor argues in no uncertain terms that the states should be left to govern themselves. The solution to lynching's complex mobilization of surveillance, profiling, threat, and torture is increased law enforcement. Lynch law, he thinks, should be displaced by official law. But official law does not abide by records. It avoids rationalization even as it classifies-to-kill the subaltern crew.

We need to theorize the provocation forwarded by the authors of *We Charge Genocide* that lynching occurs perennially, "hour by hour, moment by moment" and that its violence is material and immaterial and issues from the glance as much as from the rope, the gun, or the bomb.¹⁹⁵ Marguerite Cartwright responded to the claim officiated by the Tuskegee institute (and later popularized in the *Washington Post*) in a short article she published in the *Crisis* in April 1953, "The Mob Still Rides – Tuskegee Notwithstanding." In it, Cartwright challenges the use of statistics and Tuskegee's restricted definition of lynching, writing, "it is not the facts that are open

to question,—but the interpretation of the facts. ... While the Associated Press crows over ‘the nation’s first lynch-less year’ (by grace of the Tuskegee’s technical and doctrinaire definition), the rest of the story is obscured and casual readers are lulled into complacency.”¹⁹⁶ Cartwright suggests that Tuskegee instead take up the definition of lynching forwarded by southern sociologist Arthur Raper, “who sees it as an expression of determination and a technique of racial exploitation – economic, cultural, and political, *to force a choice between subservience and annihilation.*”¹⁹⁷ What Cartwright characterizes as a forced “*choice* between subservience and annihilation” results in positions taken by those petrified, restive, at unrest:

What of the Florida mobs roaming the countryside, stopping automobiles in search of Negroes, shooting into Negro homes, burning several? What of the occasions when the mob dominates the court, producing a legal lynching? What of Sheriff McCall who blandly staged a one-man lynching? What of police officers who cooperate with lynchers? What of the prejudiced courts and lily white juries who do the smoothest lynching jobs of all?¹⁹⁸

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ Charles Baudelaire charged photography with being an agent of forgetting rather than remembering history. See Deborah Willis, “Exposure,” in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 267; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).

² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), 20.

³ Sontag, *On Photography*, 71; Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2004), 102.

⁴ See Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography, and the Index,” in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco, Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 112-140.

⁵ Mirzoeff, “The Shadow and the Substance,” 114; Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 53-61; Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002) 47-73.

⁶ Coco Fusco, “Racial Time, Racial Marks, Racial Metaphors,” in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco, Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 37.

⁷ Charles Peirce writes: “A rap on the door is an index. Anything which focuses the attention is an index, in so far as it marks the junction between two portions of experience.” Charles Peirce quoted in Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1. Though Peirce claimed that photography was primarily indexical

and secondarily iconic, we can understand photography and film, particularly when combined with language, as mixed sign systems that combine the indexical, the iconic, and the symbolic. The indexical sign is formed from demonstrative pronouns like “this, here, and now” that shift our attention to particular objects, as well as from what Mary Ann Doane describes as “contingencies: wind blowing in a certain direction, a foot having landed in mud at precisely this place, a camera’s shutter opening at a given time.” See also Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 69, 91, 92, 93; Christian Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” *October* 34 (Autumn, 1985), 82.

⁸ André Bazin and Gilles Deleuze quoted in Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image of Time* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 39.

⁹ When Barthes looks at a photograph, he thinks of the referent’s death: ‘this will be’ and ‘this has been’: “I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake... I shudder... *over a catastrophe which has already occurred*. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe.” Barthes terms this piercing quality of the photograph the *punctum*. The *punctum* breaks apart the *studium* – a cognitive, distant spectatorship that evokes merely a polite interest in a photograph – by rising from the scene like an erratic arrow to wound its unsuspecting spectator. The *punctum* is spectatorship as force, a close, even haptic vision that wraps itself around the world of the image. As a detail that attracts and distracts, the *punctum* creates a blind field that launches the viewer into a life external to the photograph. Barthes underscores that the *punctum*’s power is most forcefully evoked by the referent’s *noeme*, or essence: its singular being there before the camera, which Barthes calls the “*that-has-been*.” Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26, 57, 96, emphasis in original.

¹⁰ This is largely the result of a common understanding of time as a chronological progression organized by movement. In his cinema books, Gilles Deleuze criticizes the rationalization of time and space in his conceptualization of the time-image, an image that breaks chronology and representation to reveal time as change or duration. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [1985]); Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory*, xii, 4, 43, 93;

¹¹ Eric Lott, “A Strange and Bitter Spectacle,” *First of the Month: A Website of the Radical Imagination* (June 1, 2002), accessed January 10, 2010, firstofthemonth.org/a-strange-and-bitter-spectacle/#more-118.

¹² Michael Hatt suggests that the circulation of lynchings’ remnants functioned as a memento of participation rather than justice: “Even if the viewer was not literally there, such an image functioned as a means of inclusion. This is because the souvenir is not merely a separate citation of the act; instead, the making and taking of souvenir objects, whether it be a visual image or a piece of the body, was part of the ritual itself. One might say that the image itself aspires to a performative status.” Hatt’s recognition of the performative status of lynching images indicates the generative rather than merely representative function of these objects. See Michael Hatt, “Race, Ritual, and Responsibility: Performativity and the Southern Lynching,” in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, edited by Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London: Routledge, 1999), 83. Brian Massumi reads images as “massively potentializing” forces, as the conveyors of emergence and existential transfer. See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 42-44.

¹³ Mark Simpson, “Archiving Hate: Lynching Postcards at the Limit of Social Circulation,” *English Studies in Canada* 30:1 (March 2004), 35.

¹⁴ Lauren Berlant, “The Epistemology of State Emotion,” in *Dissent in Dangerous Times*, edited by Austin Sarat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 50.

¹⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Preface to the Second Edition: Space, Place and Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell, vii-xv (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), viii.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Based on the style of the French Impressionists, *en plain air* – in the open air – became a popular photographic style in U.S. bourgeois portraiture in the 1880s. The photograph under analysis was published in James Allen, ed. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000), 170-171.

¹⁸ Susan Stewart suggests that, while the souvenir has a memorial function, souvenirs of death like relics, hunting trophies, and scalps “disrupt and disclaim” the continuity of the past: “Souvenirs of the

mortal body are not so much a nostalgic celebration of the past as they are an erasure of the significance of history.” Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 40. See also Jacqueline Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 253.

¹⁹ I adopt Goldsby’s use of the term secretion. See Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 266.

²⁰ Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 279.

²¹ In *TimeSpace*, Jon May and Nigel Thrift use “TimeSpace” to get at the intertexture of social time and spatial variation. TimeSpace, they write, is a “multidimensional network” and a “sense of social time” that is made and enacted “through a set of practices that include environmental and corporeal rhythms, disciplinary apparatuses, technologies, and texts. John May and Nigel Thrift, *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 2001) 4-6.

²² Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 203.

²³ Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 24, 221. Amy Louise Wood writes: “The most spectacular lynchings took place not in the countryside but in ... newly urbanizing places, where mobs hanged their victims from telegraph and telephone poles and where streetcars and railroads brought crowds to witness the violence.” Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5-6.

²⁴ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 91.

²⁵ George Revill, “Railways,” in *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*, ed. Stephan Harrison, Steve Pile, Nigel Thrift (London: Reaktion, 2004), 84-86.

84. Steven Hoelscher, “Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93:3 (September 2003), 670; Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 171.

²⁶ Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 23, 37.

²⁷ Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 61.

²⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell, 5-35. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7, 13.

²⁹ Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 4.

³⁰ Tera W. Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 83-84.

³¹ La Tanya Autry suggests that lynching photographs and landscape photographs are interrelated genres connected by their deployment of similar compositional techniques. La Tanya Autry, “Landscapes Interrupted: A Study of the Without Sanctuary Lynching Postcards,” MA Thesis, 2009, viii. See also Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 15; Joel Snyder, “Territorial Photography,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 187; Sandy Alexandre, “Out on a Limb: The Spatial Politics of Lynching Photography,” *Mississippi Quarterly: the journal of Southern cultures* (61:1/2) (Winter 2008): 71-112.

³² Giuliana Bruno terms this *transito*: a multiplicity of circulations and routes that include passages, traversals, transitions, transitory states, spatial erotics and emotion – corrodes the opposition between dwelling and travel. See Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), 55, 71.

³³ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 5-6.

³⁴ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 7.

³⁵ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 21.

³⁶ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 11.

³⁷ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 22.

³⁸ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 3, 9.

³⁹ Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 173.

⁴⁰ Mark Simpson, *Trafficking Subjects: The Politics of Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 92. Early filmmakers often explored the era’s

changing dynamics of speed and space by mounting cameras on vehicles such as streetcars, subway cars, trains, aerial balloons, and gondolas. As Sara Danius writes: “Predicated on the inversion of mobility and immobility, this widespread shooting technique produced an optical illusion of movement by suggesting that the environment rushed toward the camera.” See Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 414.

⁴¹ Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret*, 224.

⁴² Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 16; Berlant, “The Epistemology of State Emotion,” 50, 53.

⁴³ The term “peripatetic vision” is used by August Choisy, an architectural historian quoted in Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 56, 152.

⁴⁴ Deleuze conceptualizes the time-image around the fact that the continuous flow of images speeding by does not allow for critical distance. The time-image, acting on a pre-linguistic level, shocks thought and brings us into a confrontation with the “impoverishment” of thought. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 166. 1908 was a turning point in cinema history, marking as it did the appearance of narrative storytelling and a turn away from the so-called “actuals” that had dominated earlier films.

⁴⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 133.

⁴⁶ Alexandre, “Out on a limb,” 71-112.

⁴⁷ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 391.

⁴⁸ In 1903, Kodak created the Velox postcard paper stock, on which amateur photographers could print their photographs as postcards. An advertisement from that year reads: “Velox Postal Cards may be sent through the mails [sic] by affixing stamp on the address side. Sensitized on the back and have a surface suitable for writing upon. They make delightful souvenirs for travelers to send to their friends. Owing to the ease of manipulation, one may readily print on Velox postal cards in the evening at one’s hotel, and the following morning they may be written upon and mailed. They are especially advantageous in this respect to the touring amateur who has taken along his Kodak and Developing Machine.” Quoted in Rosamond B. Vaule, *As we were: American photographic postcards, 1905-1930* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2004), 54.

⁴⁹ Lynching rituals enacted a form of being-together that excluded subjugated peoples from the realm of the living, to echo Achille Mbembe. In *Making Whiteness*, Grace Hale recounts the bloodily homoerotic entanglement between white men at the lynching of Sam Hose in Coweta County, Georgia in 1899, at which there was a “mingling of white and black blood as men rushing to cut off pieces of Hose’s body cut off the hands of their friends instead.” See Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003), 29-30; see also Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 213, 236.

⁵⁰ The stain betrays the contradictions of whiteness that inhere in images of lynching. Whiteness has historically secured its representational power through invisibility, by being that which is the recognizable norm against which all other categories are measured, but which itself remains unseen. Shawn Michelle Smith argues that making white bodies bear the burden of the gaze (rather than representing the black body in suffering and death) is an important critical task. See Smith, *Photography on the Color Line*, 118. In this postcard, I argue, whiteness already bears the burden of the gaze.

⁵¹ Joan Copjec, “The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan,” *October* 49 (1989), 54.

⁵² Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts in Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, eds. Jacques-Alain Miller and translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 73.

⁵³ Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, 33.

⁵⁴ Todd McGowan, “Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and its Vicissitudes,” *Cinema Journal* 42: 3 (Spring 2003), 28-29.

⁵⁵ McGowan, “Looking for the Gaze,” 97.

⁵⁶ Copjec, “The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan,” 69.

⁵⁷ As an example, Lacan turns to Hans Holbein’s 1533 painting, *The Ambassadors*, in which the ostentatious wealth and power of two world travelers is intruded upon by the presence, in the painting’s lower right corner, of a skull. As a *memento mori*, the skull signifies death and disrupts the

men's sovereign power. It is threatening because it cannot be seen, or read, or made perfectly visible; it is the point at which something appears to be missing from representation, some meaning left unrevealed. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, 67-105; See also Todd McGowan, "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and its Vicissitudes," *Cinema Journal* 42: 3 (Spring 2003), 33.

⁵⁸ As Goldsby observes, the coloration of lynching photographs and postcards often worked to obscure details about the locations and reasons for lynching murders. See Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 271.

⁵⁹ I am influenced by Roland Barthes's writings in *Camera Lucida* of the extra-semiotic *punctum*, or shock, that occurs when looking at photographs, particularly photographs of suffering or of the dead. There are real problems with Barthes's analysis, however, particularly for black feminist critique; Barthes gives two meanings to the *punctum*: as an isolated detail in an image (form) and as photography's "that-has-been," its indexicality or intensity. While insisting that the *punctum* is a certificate of both erasure and presence, of a mortiferous co-presence between spectator and referent that implicates them both in a corporeal vulnerability, Barthes's meditations on photographic affect and temporality are founded upon and against images of blackness; he introduces the ideas of the "that-has-been" and the "*punctum*" in readings of photographs of black subjects. The idea of the "that-has-been" arises when Barthes references a photograph "he saved as a child of a slave market and that evoked in him horror and fascination because it proclaimed with certainty that such a thing had existed." He introduces the idea of the *punctum* in his reading of a portrait by James Van Der Zee of a black Harlemit; though Barthes proclaims to be attending to the extra-representational force of the image, his description of the woman in the photograph as a "Mammy" is conditioned, as Shawn Michelle Smith writes, by "a studium training" informed by a racialized and gendered class system. Furthermore, Barthes replaces the black woman in the photograph with his own aunt in an empathic flight of white fancy. Thus, when Barthes looks at a photograph and thinks of his own impending death in light of the death of the pictured referent, he does circumscribe the (racialized) referent in the past while allowing himself to imagine what will be. Shawn Michelle Smith notes: "Subsuming the woman of color under the white fantasy of the 'Mammy,' Barthes symbolically harnesses her procreative energies to raising a white brood, effacing her own potentially reproductive role as mother." She continues: "Ultimately, the *punctum* of Van Der Zee's photograph is activated by Barthes's nervous identification with his own aunt. Through a signifying slippage, Van Der Zee's aunt recalls Barthes's aunt, who finally recalls Barthes himself. What Barthes sees in this image of a woman who stands behind and to the side of her relatives, slightly in the shadows, is an image of his own aunt and ultimately of himself – an image of the one who stands to the side of the family narrative [as a gay man who never marries]." See Shawn Michelle Smith, "Race and Reproduction in *Camera Lucida*," in *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009), 244, 252, 253; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26, 57, 79, 87.

⁶⁰ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 1 (emphasis mine).

⁶¹ Richard Wright, *Black Boy: American Hunger: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991 [1945]).

⁶² As Abdul JanMohamed writes in *The Death-Bound Subject*, death mediates Wright's every encounter with and in the world. See Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 27.

⁶³ Jacqueline Goldsby helpfully reminds us that the lynching's gratuitous saturation of everyday life contradicts Cathy Caruth's theorization of trauma as stemming from exceptional forms of harm. See Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 172-174.

⁶⁴ Saidiya Hartman argues that market exchange enabled members of the master class to project their lawlike (and legally sanctioned) "feelings, ideas, desires, and values" onto the enslaved. "The relation between pleasure and the possession of slave property, in both the figurative and literal senses, can be explained in part by the fungibility of the slave – that is, the joy made possible by virtue of the replaceability and interchangeability endemic to the commodity – and by the extensive capacities of property – that is, the augmentation of the master subject through his embodiment in external objects and persons. Put differently, the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an

abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion. Thus, while the beaten and mutilated body presumably establishes the brute materiality of existence, the materiality of suffering regularly eludes (re)cognition by virtue of the body's being replaced by other signs of value, as well as other bodies." Enjoyment, Hartman argues, "defined the parameters of racial relations." See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21, 23.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Fanon's analysis of white fantasy and black experience, see David Marriott, *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁶⁶ For a discussion of plantation oversight, see Nicholas Mirzeoff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁶⁷ Fanon describes the gaze and racist utterances of a child as an "amputation," a flattening out. He writes: "I am over-determined from the outside. I am the slave, not of an 'idea' that others have of me, but of my appearing." See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin Whites Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 186-7.

⁶⁸ Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 204-209; Elizabeth Alexander, "Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?" *Public Culture* 7 (1994), 81-86.

⁶⁹ Richard Wright, "Between the World and Me," *Partisan Review* (July/August 1935).

⁷⁰ As Marriott recounts, Fanon writes: "Did the little black child see his father beaten or lynched by a white man? Has there been a real traumatism? To all of this we have to answer no." Marriott responds: "What about the child's encounter with a documentary photograph of a lynching ...? Crucially, does not the foregrounding of representation in the aetiology of black neuroses run the risk of disregarding the relationship between fantasy and reality, thereby bracketing off the real event as remembered?" Marriott employs this as an opening to a meditation on the way "a racist symbolic demands a scopic incorporation of socio-symbolic loss by black men. That the historical moment of this scopic demand coincides with a period of mass lynching is therefore not fortuitous and should not be lost sight of as a real event." In being confronted with the (real) sight of a castrated lynched black man, the black boy, in Marriott's analysis, is forced to devour, scopophilically, the site of abject masculinity as an interdiction against his own symbolic integrity and access to the law of the Father. The exchange here occurs between the phallus as signifier and the literal penis that was so often a focus of the lynch mob. But what of the tendency of lynch mobs to abort the fetuses and babies of the black women they lynched? That the ritual foreclosure of black futurity was often written in womb/tomb blood and placenta demands analysis, and may supplement Marriott's analysis, which, in arguing that castration removes black men from symbolic coherence assumes that black men are able to inhabit male subject positions within a white supremacist symbolic in the first place. That the "boundary between 'fantasmatic' and 'real' violence ... cannot ever be kept apart in relation to" more than just "the black penis" deserves analysis. See David Marriott, "Bordering on: The Black Penis," *Textual Practice* 10:1 (1996), 13-15.

⁷¹ Wright is riffing off Du Bois's observation at the start of *The Souls of Black Folk* that to be figure as a "problem" is what mediates his engagement with the white world: "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: ... How does it feel to be a problem?" W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 7.

⁷² JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject*, 29-30.

⁷³ JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject*, 29

⁷⁴ JanMohamed combines Heidegger, Hegel, and Patterson to read Wright's archaeology of death through the lens of a "dialectic of death." In this reading, social death furnishes the given condition or thesis, the actual death is the antithesis and symbolic death is the potential synthesis. It is important to emphasize here that, within this dialectic, actual death functions simultaneously as the necessary precondition of social death and its potential negation. See JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject*, 17, 30, 303 (note 13).

⁷⁵ JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject*, 30.

⁷⁶ Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 206.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 18.

⁷⁸ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 19.

⁷⁹ Modern visuality is a system that, to quote Hal Foster, determines “how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein,” and that, in the words of Nicholas Mirzeoff, is formed as a political antagonism or “point of contestation in political and cultural discourse over the very meaning of representation.” Nicholas Mirzeoff, “On Visuality,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 5:1 (2006), 55, 65, 67. On visuality as a disciplinary measure for separating and classifying subjects, and for normalizing means of social organization, see Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3-64. On race and value, see Lindon Barrett, *Blackness and Value: Seeing Double* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28-33; and Alessandra Raengo, *On the Sleeve of the Visual: Race as Face Value* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2013), esp. 89-116. Saidiya Hartman frames race as relational when she writes: “blackness is defined here in terms of social relationality rather than identity; thus blackness incorporates subjects normatively defined as black, the relations among blacks, whites, and others, and the practices that produce racial difference. Blackness marks a social relationship of dominance and abjection and potentially one of redress and emancipation.” See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 57.

⁸⁰ “Pained contentment” is Hartman’s phrase for the structure of feeling generated by the master discourse of the happy slave. The discourse of pained contentment was generated by the pageantry of the slave trade, in which enslaved people were forced to sing on their way to market as well as on the auction block in order to obscure the violence of slavery. See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, especially chapter 2. For an astute psychoanalytic take on lynching as an experience of *jouissance* in which the white mob disavows its own incoherence through pleasurable eruptions of violence, see Amy Ray Stewart, “Witnessing Horror: Psychoanalysis and the Abject Stain of Lynching Photography,” *Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Society* 19:4, 420.

⁸¹ Ashraf Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching: Review of Lynching, 1931-1941, With a Discussion of Recent Developments in This Field* (Atlanta: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Inc., 1942), 2.

⁸² Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4-24.

⁸³ Holmes and Thurmond had been charged with the kidnapping and murder of Brooke Hart, the son of a wealthy storeowner. See Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 214-219.

⁸⁴ Governor Rolph concluded that the incident was a “fine lesson to the whole nation.... There will be less kidnapping now.... I don't think they will arrest anyone for the lynching. They made a good job of it. If anyone is arrested for the good job, I'll pardon them all.” Quoted in “Vigilante Justice! Kidnappers Lynched By An Angry Mob,” Newsreel, November 26, 1933, accessed online June 6, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UdUagb_sfk.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 216.

⁸⁶ Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 103-104.

⁸⁷ Kimberley Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 49-50.

⁸⁸ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 24.

⁸⁹ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 45, 52-3.

⁹⁰ Southern reformers also lobbied for anti-lynching laws, which were passed in Kentucky in 1920, and later in South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. These laws, as Wells had forecasted, were never used to prosecute lynchers and were instead used by southern politicians like Harry Byrd of Virginia to support the argument that a federal anti-lynching law was not needed. The author of “Turn it Around,” which was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on December 21, 1921 argued: “We don’t want any Federal laws to stop lynching. We have enough State laws for this purpose. All we need is an enlightened conscience, to be aroused to the seriousness of lynching.” But legislation was patchy and never enforced. The CIC, in opposition to wishes of its black members, refused to endorse the Dyer anti-lynching bill until 1935. See Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 46, 48, 53.

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- ⁹¹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Introduction," in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 7.
- ⁹² Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching*, 1-2.
- ⁹³ Jesse Daniel Ames, "Editorial Treatment of Lynchings." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2:1 (January 1938), 77.
- ⁹⁴ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 59.
- ⁹⁵ Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching*, 16.
- ⁹⁶ Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (Salem: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 1969), 197.
- ⁹⁷ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 64.
- ⁹⁸ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 219.
- ⁹⁹ Quoted in Apel, *Imagery of Lynching*, 32; and Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 218.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching*, 2.
- ¹⁰¹ Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching* 5.
- ¹⁰² Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching* 5.
- ¹⁰³ Ames quoted in Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry*, 181-2; Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 57-58.
- ¹⁰⁴ Brundage, "Introduction," *Under Sentence of Death*, 7.
- ¹⁰⁵ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 87.
- ¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 105.
- ¹⁰⁷ Brundage, "Introduction," *Under Sentence of Death*, 6.
- ¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 28.
- ¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow*, 90.
- ¹¹⁰ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 235.
- ¹¹¹ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 235- 237.
- ¹¹² Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 223.
- ¹¹³ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 218.
- ¹¹⁴ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 21.
- ¹¹⁵ The passage continues: "Naturally, it has been led by the Bourbon *Outlook*. The *Outlook* admits to having heard that the editor of *the Crisis* 'claims that seventy-five of his people were hanged by mobs in 1913,' but the *Outlook* waves this little discrepancy aside with slight attention because, 'as Dr. Du Bois has accepted as authoritative the Chicago *Tribune's* figures for the years to 1913, his statistics for that year can hardly be admitted for purposes of comparison.'" See "The Decline of Lynching," *The Crisis* 8:1 (1914), 19; and Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 12.
- ¹¹⁶ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 221. The war had prompted an intensification of southern migration northward, competition between black and white laborers in the northern war industry, and widespread race rioting in northern and Midwestern cities.
- ¹¹⁷ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 101.
- ¹¹⁸ Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.
- ¹¹⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 161.
- ¹²⁰ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 229.
- ¹²¹ Where tragedy centers around a hero's conflict with God and fate, the mourning-play is about the sovereign in relation to the predicament of the state of emergency. Where tragedy is resolved, albeit catastrophically, "Benjamin locates the formal principle of Trauerspiel in the mourning for a perpetual and irresolvable state of emergency." See Howard Caygill "Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory," *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 247.
- ¹²² See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: Verso, 1998); "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); "Central Park," *New German Critique* 34 (Winter 1985): 32-58; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 18; Benjamin Cowan, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," *New German Critique* 22: 109-122; Steven Leddin, "Benjamin's Allegorical Hermeneutics:

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- The Critique of Historicism and the Disclosure of the Historical ‘Other,’” in *Otherness: Essays and Studies* 3.2, 17; Copeland and Struck, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion To Allegory*, 2.
- ¹²³ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 178.
- ¹²⁴ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 22.
- ¹²⁵ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 17.
- ¹²⁶ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 176.
- ¹²⁷ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 23, 170.
- ¹²⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 471.
- ¹²⁹ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 197.
- ¹³⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, xii.
- ¹³¹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 486 [N18a,2].
- ¹³² Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 475.
- ¹³³ Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, “Forward,” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), xii.
- ¹³⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 262; Eiland and McLaughlin, “Forward,” ix.
- ¹³⁵ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 460.
- ¹³⁶ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 254.
- ¹³⁷ Alexander Gelley, “Weak Messianism: Recovery and Prefiguration in Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project.” <http://www.ucsd.tv/search-details.aspx?showID=14864>. Accessed June 27, 2012, 53:00.
- ¹³⁸ Frederic Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter,” in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1999) 62.
- ¹³⁹ Alexander Gelley, “Weak Messianism.”
- ¹⁴⁰ Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorism, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978) 230.
- ¹⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 237.
- ¹⁴² Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 175.
- ¹⁴³ Benjamin, “Work of Art,” 234–5238.
- ¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 65.
- ¹⁴⁵ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 270.
- ¹⁴⁶ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 258.
- ¹⁴⁷ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 255
- ¹⁴⁸ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 261.
- ¹⁴⁹ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 260.
- ¹⁵⁰ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 257.
- ¹⁵¹ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”; Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xx, xxi.
- ¹⁵² Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 262.
- ¹⁵³ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 474.
- ¹⁵⁴ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 458.
- ¹⁵⁵ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 95.
- ¹⁵⁶ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 463.
- ¹⁵⁷ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, xii.
- ¹⁵⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 475 [N10a, 3].
- ¹⁵⁹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 459.
- ¹⁶⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 471.

¹⁶¹ Some passages from this section appeared in a previously published article and are reproduced here with the permission of the publisher. See Erin Gray, Introduction to *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*, *Viewpoint*, January 9, 2017, accessed January 9, 2017, www.viewpointmag.com/2017/01/09/lynching-a-weapon-of-national-oppression-1932/

¹⁶² Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret*, 291.

¹⁶³ Benjamin, *On the Origins of German Tragic Drama*, 166, 177-178; Bainard Cowan, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981), 117, 124.

¹⁶⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: in America 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1853-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

¹⁶⁵ Harry Haywood and Milton Howard, *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression*, International Pamphlets series, No. 25 (New York: International Publishers), under the direction of the Labor Research Association, Communist Party USA, 1932.

¹⁶⁶ The publication was part of a tradition of CPUSA pamphleteering that informed the Party's organizing. Pamphlets like James S. Allen's *The American Negro* were distributed alongside the Party's newspaper *The Daily Worker* to party members and other workers, becoming crucial educational tools as the Party shifted its focus in the late 1920s to the historical relationship between race and class.

¹⁶⁷ I take the concept of the empire-state from Moon-Kie Jung, "Introduction: Constituting the U.S. Empire-State and White Supremacy: The Early Years," in *The State of White Supremacy: Racism, Governance, and the United States*, eds. Moon-Kie Jung, João H. Costa Vargas and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-26.

¹⁶⁸ Harry Haywood, "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist*, September 1933. Herbert Aptheker, ed. Marxists Internet Archive. Marxists Internet Archive, accessed online November 30, 2016, www.marxists.org/archive/haywood/1933/09/x01.htm.

¹⁶⁹ On lynchings in the Black Belt, see Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992). On the post-slavery debt economy, see Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 116-147; Douglas A Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Double Day, 2002).

¹⁷⁰ Harry Haywood, "For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question," 1958. In *Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line*, edited by Paul Saba, accessed online October 1, 2016, www.marxists.org/history/erol/1956-1960/haywood02.htm.

¹⁷¹ V.I. Lenin, "Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions for the Second Congress of the Communist International," *Collected Works*, 2nd English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 31), 144-151.

¹⁷² The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States (Washington: Revolutionary Review Press, 1975), 13-22.

¹⁷³ Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Black Belt Communists," *Jacobin*, August 20, 2015; "The South Comes North in Detroit's Own Scottsboro Case. An Address Delivered in Detroit by Harry Haywood," May 22, 1934; "What is the ILD?" (New York: International Labor Defense, 1934).

¹⁷⁴ "They Shall Not Die! Stop the Legal Lynching! The Story of Scottsboro in Pictures" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1932 [third printing]); Joseph North, "Lynching Negro Children in Southern Courts (the Scottsboro Case)" (New York: International Labor Defense).

¹⁷⁵ Kelley, "The Black Belt Communists"; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹⁷⁶ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois and Martha Gruening, "The Massacre of East St. Louis," *The Crisis* 14:3 (September 1917), 219-238; Ida B. Wells, *The East St. Louis Massacre: The Greatest Outrage of the Century* (Chicago: The Negro Fellowship Herald Press, 1917), accessed online March 17, 2013. <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.6259:3.lincoln>; on the lynchings of the

Turners in Lowndes County, see Julie Buckner Armstrong, *Mary Turner and the Memory of Lynching* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 186-204.

¹⁷⁷ Pickens writes: "The quest of this Congo is not for rubber and ivory, but for cotton and sugar. Here labor is forced, and the laborer is a slave. The slavery is a cunningly contrived debt slavery to give the appearance of civilization and the sanction of law. A debt of a few hundred dollars may tie a black man and his family of ten as securely in bondage to a great white planter as if he had purchased their bodies." William Pickens, *Lynching and Debt Slavery* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1921), 2.

¹⁷⁸ Haywood would expand upon this in his in-depth exploration of the national question in his 1948 monograph, *Negro Liberation*, writing: "The rise of a finance-capitalist oligarchy to dominant position in American economic and political life precluded the possibility of peaceful democratic fusion of the Negro into a single American nation along with whites. [...] The Negro question had now definitely become the problem of an oppressed nation striving for national freedom against the main enemy, imperialism. [...] One can say that the Black Belt is a kind of 'internal colony' of American imperialism, made to function mainly as the raw material appendage of the latter. The character of the oppression of the Negro people in no sense differs from that of colonial peoples. The economy of the region is ... in the hands of white local capitalists and landlords, who act as the outpost command for the real rulers, the financial dynasty of Wall Street." See Haywood, "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist*, September 1933, edited by Herbert Aptheker, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed online November 30, 2016, www.marxists.org/archive/haywood/1933/09/x01.htm.

¹⁷⁹ Pickens, *Lynching and Debt Slavery*, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Walter White, *Rope & Faggot*, 9.

¹⁸¹ On the narrative traditions of the radical anti-lynching and labor defense movements, see Rebecca N. Hill's incomparable *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in U.S. Radical History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), esp. 4-12, 24.

¹⁸² Mitchell, "Space, Place, and Landscape," viii.

¹⁸³ Following Benjamin's writings on allegory, history, and photography, Theodor Adorno developed negative dialectics as a critical practice for resisting the fetishizing consequences of capitalist modernity. As Michael Taussig describes it, a dialectics of negation involves submitting to the "fetish-powers" of modern culture and "attempting to channel them in revolutionary directions." Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 122. Theodor Adorno's theory of non-identity posits a dialectical method based not on synthesis but on the recognition of difference and remainder. But where Adorno warns against the hubristic attitude that thinks itself capable of reaching the thing itself, Benjamin's messianic approach seeks to transform the commodity into a "living work." Adorno refused to think the object because he assumed that doing so would be to obliterate its otherness, to capture and reduce it to an object. Benjamin, however, was more Spinozist in his thinking.

¹⁸⁴ Civil Rights Congress, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations For Relief From a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York, Civil Rights Congress, 1951), 78.

¹⁸⁵ Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 85.

¹⁸⁶ Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 76.

¹⁸⁷ As Sharon Sliwinsky writes, Lemkin coined the term genocide in response to the conceptual block that many white American and European contemporaries experienced when discussing fascist atrocities that, for them, had no precedent and that Winston Churchill captured in a 1941 speech when he declared, "We are in the presence of a crime without a name." See Sharon Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 114-115.

¹⁸⁸ Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 55-56.

¹⁸⁹ Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 55-56.

¹⁹⁰ Joy James describes this as encompassing the homeland and the archipelago: "some 700 U.S. military bases, with their attendant prisons and sporadic (CIA) interrogation or torture chambers

scattered throughout the world.” Joy James, “Preface,” in *Warfare in the Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007), xiii.

¹⁹¹ It also spoke to the increasing influence of black feminists on left formations throughout the 1950s, as some of the manifesto’s authors had recently joined the ranks of the CPUSA. See Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56; Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 60-65.

¹⁹² Quoted in Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 101.

¹⁹³ Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching*, 101.

¹⁹⁴ “End of Lynching,” *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1954, 6, reproduced in full in Ralph Ginzburg, *100 Years of Lynchings* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1962), 240.

¹⁹⁵ Civil Rights Congress, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations For Relief From a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York, Civil Rights Congress, 1951), 78.

¹⁹⁶ Marguerite Cartwright, “The Mob Still Rides—Tuskegee Notwithstanding,” *Crisis* 60 (April 1953), 222.

¹⁹⁷ Cartwright, “The Mob Still Rides,” 223.

¹⁹⁸ Cartwright, “The Mob Still Rides,” 223.

Chapter 2.

Between Toombs County and Tombs of the Press: *LIFE* Magazine and the Lynching of Amy Mallard

In early 1949, two months after the lynching of Robert Mallard in Toombs County, Georgia, *LIFE* magazine printed a full-page, six-photograph spread of Amy Mallard's emotional testimony at the trial of two of her husband's killers (figure 8). In the photographs taken by *LIFE* photographer Francis Miller, Mallard is a portrait of enervated despair. She gazes toward the ground while gripping her handkerchief, cries out, twists away from the courtroom audience, and descends to the floor in a protective curl. The caption beneath the photographs reads: "On the witness stand, Amy Mallard collapses while telling how her husband was killed, falls to the floor praying and weeping hysterically."¹

LIFE's recourse to the language of *hysteria* to describe Mallard's legal confrontation with her husband's killers appears to contradict the opening line of the accompanying postcard story, which names the pictures "portraits of human grief and terror."² The story's reference to human grief and terror obliquely situates the images within the post-war discourses of fascist atrocity and universal humanity. It thus appears to interpellate Mallard, according to liberalizing common sense, into the cadre of aggrieved and bereaved persons seeking emotional closure and an impossible justice in the wake of the Second World War. But *LIFE*'s recognition of the terror experienced by a black woman in Georgia as *human* grief and terror is tempered, undone even, by the narrative ordering of the pictures (their supplementation by the magazine's characteristically cursory text), as well as by the

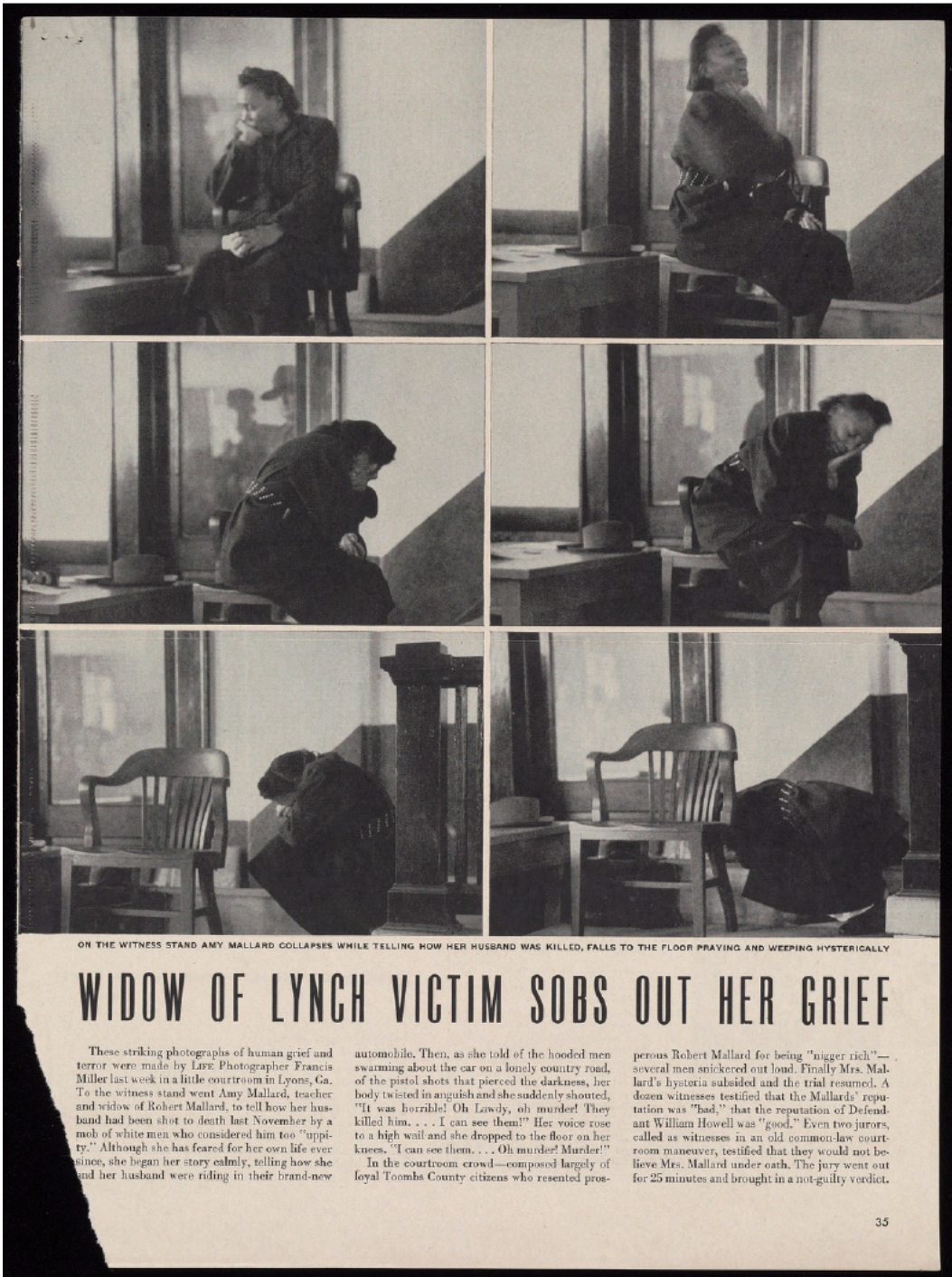


Figure 8. "Widow of Lynch Victim Sobs Out Her Grief." *LIFE* Magazine, Jan 24, 1949. From the James Weldon Johnson archive.

images' affective power as courtroom photographs shadowed by two other photographic disciplines that had, over the last century, normed the differential contours of racialized and gendered personhood: lynching and the proto-psychoanalytic science of psychology.

What does the devotion of an entire page of *LIFE* magazine to a montage of black trauma say – and unsay – about the gendered politics of racial liberal sentiment at midcentury? What do we make of the contradictory designation of Mallard, in that most popular of middle-class leisure reads, as a photographic referent of “human grief and terror” *and* as that medicalized and epistemologically unreliable figure, the hysteric? What happens to our conceptualization of lynching’s relationship to state power and hegemonic regimes of sense when lynching enters into unexpected constellation with the seemingly antiquated image of the Victorian hysteric? In this chapter, I take up in further detail my conceptualization of the moving image of lynching as an assemblage of objects and affects that troubles reified notions of anti-black violence. Here, I ask after the effects of the circulation of Miller’s six photographs of lynching survivor Amy Mallard through the newly pictorially-dominant print culture of the 1940s. I do so in order to investigate how mass mediated representations of lynching at mid-century instrumentalized black suffering to manufacture consent to a newly emerging and supposedly post-white supremacist social order.

In the wake of WWII, as the European Holocaust and anticolonial and antiracist movements worldwide initiated a crisis in the formal legitimacy of white supremacy, the U.S. government adopted a racial liberal program to ensure its

hegemony in an officially decolonizing world. As historians Mary Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann have demonstrated, the federal government's shifting stance toward the civil rights of black Americans grew out of pressures mounted by activists at home and abroad throughout the war, as well as by the changing exigencies of economic and military power after the Allied defeat of European fascism.³ Faced with the task of appeasing calls for decolonization, self-determination, and civil rights while not alienating international and southern allies, the U.S. government began developing a political framework that presented racial domination as a divergence from U.S. liberal democracy rather than one of its structuring conditions.⁴ Thus emerged a program of Cold War civil rights motivated in part by a reactionary attempt to thwart foreign attention to U.S. civil, political, social, and human rights abuses. Framed by an exceptionalist narrative that touted the U.S. as inherently progressive, the postwar liberal civil rights program appeared as though it were bound to ensure and enhance the rights of citizens that adhered to the normalizing and rationalizing claims of capitalist subjectivity.⁵ We must thus read *LIFE's* surprising recognition of the terror experienced by a black woman in Georgia as human grief and terror through the framework of a critical remembrance of the conscription of black subjects at mid-century into a form of national belonging that had, as its organizing ethos, the legitimation, on a global scale, of capitalist hegemony.

After the war, lynching officially became a national concern as the U.S. government managed its emerging image as a global leader for bourgeois democracy. At issue, then, is the circulation of the Mallard lynching through the

sensorium of a body politic reorganizing around the dictates of an officially antiracist liberal capitalism. I seek to trace the ongoingness of Mallard's death – and, indeed, of the many deaths that occurred in the white supremacist state of Georgia – in order to theorize, on the one hand, the crucial place of lynching within what Howard Winant has characterized as “the worldwide rupture of the racial status quo” that took place after WWII and, on the other, black being's troubling affront to the universalizing and normalizing prescriptions of liberal personhood.⁶ Examining how Mallard's confrontation with her husband's murderers was captured and circulated nationally as a motion study of grief by *LIFE* magazine, I argue that the liberal press in 1949 covertly manipulated the harms inflicted upon southern blacks by the Jim Crow justice system in order to bolster the emergent warfare state. *LIFE*, pathologizing Mallard as a mad black woman, simultaneously satisfied white hunger for black suffering while barring her from the “human rights” that were then being imagined and visualized in popular, state, and international discourse.

Widow of Lynch Victim Sobs Out Her Grief

There are six photographs. All are tightly framed, medium snapshots of Mallard on the witness stand. We see almost all of her slight frame – everything but her shins, ankles, and feet. We see the chair she sits in, the desk beside her, and the wood paneling that frames the mirrored wall behind her. In the first snapshot, she leans to the right and appears pensive and sad – like Rodin's thinker in a time and place where the love of knowledge is not for her having. The second snapshot catches her rising up from shock, spinning to the left and then up, her hand still

touching her face as though to keep part of her tethered to the courtroom. In the third photograph, she twists away from the judge, away from the lawyers, away from the photographer whose face is reflected in the mirror behind her and from the man who looks like a detective by his side. In the fourth photograph, Amy's other hand comes up as she falls to the side, seeming to nearly slip from her chair into a somnolent wake. In the last two frames of the series, Amy begins to vacate the image; held captive by the knowing and by the not knowing that subtends it, she is summoned into her husband's pain. She turns into it, even as she covers her face to avoid the awful sight of the mob before her. She ducks and crouches on the floor, shielding her face with a white handkerchief as she tucks herself in and descends into the night.

In *LIFE's* telling, Amy's breakdown marked a caesura in the trial. Loud citizen snickers greeted her cries and bodily contortions. "Finally, Mrs. Mallard's hysteria subsided and the trial resumed. ... Even two jurors, called as witnesses in an old common-law courtroom maneuver, testified that they would not believe Mrs. Mallard under oath." An assured and calm stream of testimony followed from a dozen witnesses – two of whom were *on the jury* – about the Mallards' "bad" reputations and "nigger rich" ways. The jury deliberated for 25 minutes before acquitting Klan members Roderick Clifton and William Howell. According to *LIFE's* recount, Amy's ordeal on the witness stand ended in the men's triumphant acquittal. Amy became the spectacular visual center of the legal proceedings; on trial herself, she emerged as a hysteric threshold figure – unreliable, malingering, and spent.

How does this courtroom scene, severed in *LIFE*'s photojournalistic recount from the long history of lynching in Georgia and organized according to the narrative paradigm of the sequence, bear on the changing image of lynching at mid-century? In the last chapter, I examined the delimitation of radical analyses of lynching as a form of gender violence that lay at the conjuncture of white supremacist governance and capitalist social relations. I sourced this foreclosure to the liberal proclivities of (white and black) southern progressives in the early twentieth century whose investment in teleological narratives of history and in an opposition between extra-legal violence and law and order obscured lynching's supplementation of state violence and bourgeois social norms. Early race liberals, I argued, were trapped in a positivist optic that failed to perceive what was hidden at the edges of the photographic frames that so often furnished "proof" of lynching's harm. The demise of lynching's spectacular harm, race liberals argued, signaled the bettering of race relations. By the time the U.S. entered the Second World War, the representational economy of lynching had markedly shifted in keeping with the protocols of progressivism; the violence had all but "disappeared" into what race radicals perceptively argued was a shift in lynchers' techniques and technics rather than a fundamental transformation of the structural and psychopolitical roots of anti-black terror. Southern progressives, though, continued to argue that lynching was a form of violence that stemmed from an impatient and regressive communal affect in opposition to the slow but steady hand of republican justice.

Liberals' faith in exceptionalist narratives of American democracy and in the state's sovereign right to a monopoly on violence was buttressed by the ascendancy

of documentary photography in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ In the U.S., reform photography, associated with Lewis Hine in the early twentieth century and later with the work of the socialist Photo League, was institutionalized in the 1930s when the Roosevelt government established the Workplace Progress Administration (WPA) and the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to lend a cultural hand to Keynesian economic reform. President Roosevelt, rooted in the liberal tradition, believed that documentary photography's emotional impact was crucial to social reform. As Lili Bezner writes, "Most documentarians ... believed in the primacy of evoking *feeling* in order to move the audience to action. FDR felt that social change was difficult if not impossible 'in our civilization unless you have sentiment.'"⁸ Appointing photographers like Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange to document poverty across the country, the head of the FSA, Roy Stryker, advised his photographers to steer clear of images that would cast too negative a light on the plight of African Americans. Pictures of black suffering were allowed, as long as they did not arouse interest in the racialization of poverty.⁹ While some FSA photographers did document black poverty (albeit in ways that served to reify the pastoral association of blackness and agricultural labor), Stryker ordered his photographers to stay away from the "shadow of terror" that maintained black super-exploitation.¹⁰ Photographers were also ordered to steer clear of the black activism that animated the period. FSA photographs taken by Edwin Rosskam in Chicago, for example, "showed black Chicagoans as politically quiescent" and largely detached from the economic workings of the city.¹¹ This was no doubt the result of Roosevelt's compromise with Southern politicians throughout the New Deal, who

promised the President that they would block his agricultural reforms if Congress were to pass anti-lynching legislation.¹² The popularization of social realist photography in the 1930s and its association with a positivist will-to-picture-humanity buttressed the emergent colorblind analysis of lynching as a threat to the dominant moral order rather than that order's greatest foil.

Relevant here is John Tagg's critique of the state's mobilization of documentary photography as a disciplinary technology. The state's turn to documentary photography in the 1930s, he argues, marked the emergence in the U.S. of a "public cultural strategy" that turns on "a rhetoric of recruitment" in order to define cohesion as a humanitarian value. The history of documentary, Tagg argues, has to be analyzed as a cultural strategy of a particular mode of governance that forms "a hybrid of discipline and spectacle, of documentation and publicity." The period of the New Deal in the U.S., Tagg writes, is "the paradigmatic historical moment for the social mobilization of documentary practices across the administrative agencies of the liberal, corporate State." In the midst of the economic, political, and cultural crises of the 1930s, "a decisive change in the machinery of social consent was compelled upon the liberal-democratic State" that registered not only in the strategy of social welfare but also in the:

mode of address of government communications and documentation. These now began to absorb strategies, techniques, and tropes not only from cultural anthropology but also from the arenas of publicity and commercial entertainment in an effort to articulate a believable public language of truth that would restore the logics of social sense, call out to a cohesive community, and relegitimize the corporate State as its paternal representative.¹³

The “symbolic infrastructure” of New Deal reforms, in which documentary photography’s affective power was mobilized toward the new security and welfare apparatus, would serve as the foundation for what Nikhil Singh characterizes as “the transnational power of the American warfare state during and after WWII.” The synthesis of liberalism and nationalism that animated the New Deal intensified during the war as state administrators began fashioning the U.S. as the author and guard of a new world order.¹⁴ The ideological straitening that accompanied the emergence of the warfare state as the U.S. became involved in the Allied fight against fascism further constricted the acceptable parameters of documentary photography. Where the documentary photographs of the 1930s focused on the conditions of the rural and urban poor, after 1940 state photographers were asked to produce more positive images of white and black rural life. This trend grew more prominent after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S.’s entry into WWII.¹⁵ As the Roosevelt administration shifted its focus from welfare to warfare in 1943, the New Deal reform agenda was stalled and replaced with what Singh characterizes as a “robust, military Keynesianism.”¹⁶ As the Truman administration contended with decolonization efforts at home and abroad by establishing the Marshall Plan and NATO, and as Popular Front coalitions dissolved in the face of the rightward consolidation of anti-communism, documentary photography increasingly became the cultural breeding ground of visions of American global hegemony.¹⁷

In the 1940s, documentary photography was absorbed into the mass media in a form of photojournalism whose authors were less concerned with social reform than with generating cultural unity and consent to the Cold War status quo.¹⁸

Henry Luce's media empire, which included *LIFE*, *Time*, and *Fortune* magazines, was frequently the vehicle of this propaganda. Luce had long aspired for his magazines to "picture the world," and, by the early years of the Second World War, Luce openly longed for his media empire to lead in the world of soft conservatism. As a result of its coverage of WWII, *LIFE* became enormously popular among white middle-class readers, its circulation jumping from 2.86 million in 1940 to 5.45 million readers by the year of Mallard's lynching.¹⁹ Luce was dedicated to achieving his vision of running the world's foremost picture magazine by making *LIFE* the populist (white, middle-class) center of a newly emerging Cold War liberalism that equated well-being with market freedom, the pleasures of consumption, and heteronormative social reproduction. Luce argued in his infamous 1941 essay, "An American Century," that strengthening U.S. military power abroad could mitigate the supposedly isolationist focus of the Roosevelt administration and the reforms of the New Deal.²⁰ Fearing that the war heralded a collapse of global imperialism, Luce proposed an "internationalism" of "many men. It must be a sharing with all peoples of our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our magnificent industrial products, our technical skills."²¹ Luce, arguing that the Republican Party needed to develop a "vital philosophy" and program for the U.S.'s ascension to world power, tasked his media empire with the role of accommodating Americans "spiritually and practically" to American leadership in what he termed a "vital international economy and in terms of an international moral order." "The 20th Century," Luce wrote with characteristic hubris, "is the American Century."²²

Luce's repeated recourse to the word "vitalism" throughout his essay is

telling. There were important racial parameters to the new cultural strategy that called for the depiction of African Americans as members of an American democratic family. As part of his promotion of the Cold War agenda, Luce advised his editors to conform to this new vision. With FSA photographers moving into the staffs of *LIFE* and *Fortune* during the postwar years, mass media treatments of black life that were in keeping with the disciplinary humanitarianism of the social realist era were not only possible; they became a recurring trope of a newly emerging global platform of law-and-order that turned on the image of federal protection of black life as evidence of capitalist democracy's universalizing potential.²³ The new hegemony required not merely the consent of the public; rather, it worked from the inside out, as a biopolitical and affective technique of immanent control.²⁴ Given that *LIFE* magazine published Miller's photographs of Amy Mallard one month after the General Assembly of the U.N. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the question becomes how readers flipping through the pages of *LIFE* received the magazine editors' invocation of black humanity as an expression of good will in keeping with the postwar cultural mandate and as an index of the expanding sphere of the life of the nation.

World War in the Black Belt

The Huns have wrecked the theory of the master race.
- Former Governor of Alabama Frank Dixon

Against the pronouncements of southern progressives in the mid-1930s that lynching had ended, widespread racial violence returned to U.S. streets upon the country's entry into WWII. Much of this violence erupted among civilians and

soldiers when northerners went south for military training, and when southerners migrated north and west for work in war industries. After the 1942 public burning of Cleo Wright in Sikeston, MO, political cartoonist Oliver Harrington published, in the black working-class magazine *The People's Voice*, an illustration juxtaposing Wright with a female victim of Nazi brutality (figure 9). Harrington's work during this period focused on the brutal ironies of the U.S.'s involvement in the war against European fascism. The illustration in *the People's Voice* juxtaposes a swastika with a place-marking sign that declares the site of Wright's death to be "Sikeston, MO, U.S.A." Fascist terror in Nazi-occupied European cities, Harrington proposes, is the mirror image of *Herrenvolk* democracy in the U.S. He was not the only one to make the connection. After the outbreak of racial terror in Detroit in 1943, activists likened the participation of the city's mayor and police, as well as Michigan police in the rioting as a form of fascist violence.²⁵ NAACP legal counsel Thurgood Marshall even called Detroit police "the Gestapo" of America.²⁶ Black economic migration and enlistment in the military had been largely inspired by a call for what the editors of the *Pittsburgh Courier* named a "Double Victory" against white supremacy in Europe and in the U.S.²⁷ Unfortunately, black service to capital and war did not result in full citizenship, nor did it result in freedom.

The war, in highlighting the imbrication of colonial rule, fascism, and racial apartheid, resulted in a widespread reckoning with the white supremacist basis of colonial capitalism.²⁸ As European countries condemned Nazi colonization in



Figure 9. Oliver Harrington, Untitled (1942). Published in *The People's Voice*.



Figure 10. Unknown artist, "For Aid and Comfort to the Enemy" (1943). During the summer of 1943, President Roosevelt diverted US army troops from the Allied war theater in North Africa to the streets of Detroit to stop white residents from attacking black Detroiters.²⁹

Eastern Europe, decolonial liberationists in Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Kenya, and elsewhere took heed, demanding their right to self-determination.³⁰ Black activists in the U.S., understanding that this shift might weaken the stranglehold of stateside white supremacy, continued to build off the momentum generated by the March on Washington Movement and the movements for black voting rights that had resulted in the April 3, 1944 Supreme Court decision in *Smith v. Allwright* to outlaw the white Democratic primary.³¹ After the Allied Victory, black soldiers returned home – trained in military combat and radicalized by their encounter with black diasporic struggles – to demand their right to vote and to live free from fear. And across the country, black protest was met with white violence. In Columbia, Tennessee in February 1946, police opened fire on a group of black citizens trying to stop the lynching of Navy veteran James Stephenson and his mother.³² Hundreds of state patrol officers and National Guardsmen destroyed black homes and businesses across the city, and then arrested and charged twenty-eight black Columbia residents with attempted murder. Two of those charged were killed while in police custody. That same month, police chief Lynwood Shull of Batesburg, South Carolina used a club to beat and gouge out the eyes of newly-discharged and uniformed Army Sergeant Isaac Woodard.³³ In August 1946, a mob used a blowtorch and a cleaver to dismember veteran John Jones near Minden, Louisiana. Though the Department of Justice charged the chief of police for his involvement in the lynching, an all-white jury acquitted the chief after a thirty-minute

deliberation.”³⁴ There were at least sixty reported violent deaths of black southerners at the hands of whites between August 1945 and the end of 1946.³⁵

Much of the violence, and the fiercest opposition to it, concentrated in Georgia. After the Supreme Court ruled against the constitutionality of white primaries, black businessmen, clergy, and civil rights activists launched the biggest black voter registration drive in Atlanta’s history, with black veterans as its foot soldiers.³⁶ Former Governor Eugene Talmadge – who had publically boasted about beating his black sharecroppers before facing off with federal judges in an attempt to preserve the whites-only Democratic primary in Georgia – reacted in his influential weekly editorial in *The Statesman*, writing: “THIS IS A WHITE MAN’S COUNTRY AND WE MUST KEEP IT SO.” In his editorial, Talmadge recommended that readers do whatever they could to prevent blacks from registering to vote.³⁷ He warned black Georgians to ignore the ruling in *Smith v. Allwright*, and emboldened whites to punish blacks for attempting to vote.³⁸ On May 9, 1946, after the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) launched Operation Dixie to form a third-party voting bloc for the progressive candidate Henry Wallace, the Atlanta Ku Klux Klan signaled its rebirth with a mass cross-lighting at Stone Mountain.³⁹ Sheriffs and deputies in some counties visited registered black voters at home to tell them that the county board of registrants was challenging their eligibility. Terror spread across Georgia, with blacks in some areas of the state refusing to participate in the voting drive due to fear.⁴⁰ Still, many Georgians, for the first time since Reconstruction, participated en masse in the congressional election on July 17, 1946.⁴¹

Retribution occurred on July 25, 1946 when a mob shot sixty bullets into George and Mae Murray Dorsey and Roger and Dorothy Malcom near the Moore's Ford bridge in Walton County, Georgia.⁴² The quadruple lynching in Walton County drew national and international headlines, with many activists fingering Eugene Talmadge as the chief instigator of the lynching. Political cartoons illustrated by Nathaniel Barkley Brown and published in the *Louisville Defender* pit an indifferent Congress basking in the glow of post-war détente against the continuing war in the southern states. Barkley Brown's illustration of a member of Congress languishing in a hammock while white rioters interfere in the Tennessee primary, a Klansman terrorizes Mississippi, and the Malcoms and Dorseys are killed in Georgia represented popular demands by activists that the local and federal governments be held responsible for these explosions of violence (figure 11, left).⁴³ In a second illustration, a redneck sits beneath the Malcoms and Dorseys, who are pictured hanging from a tree for symbolic effect (they were not hanged, recall, but shot) comfortable with the knowledge that Governor Talmadge condones the violence (figure 11, right). Given NAACP intelligence that law enforcement officers were involved in the Moore's Ford lynching, activists were especially intent on seeing the Walton County Sheriff's office brought to justice by the federal government.

The Moore's Ford lynching generated the kind of attention that anti-lynching leaders had demanded throughout the war. After the sixth recorded lynching of 1942, NAACP head Walter White had begun urging Senator Wagner to reopen the drive for a federal anti-lynching statute.⁴⁴ By the end of the war, activists

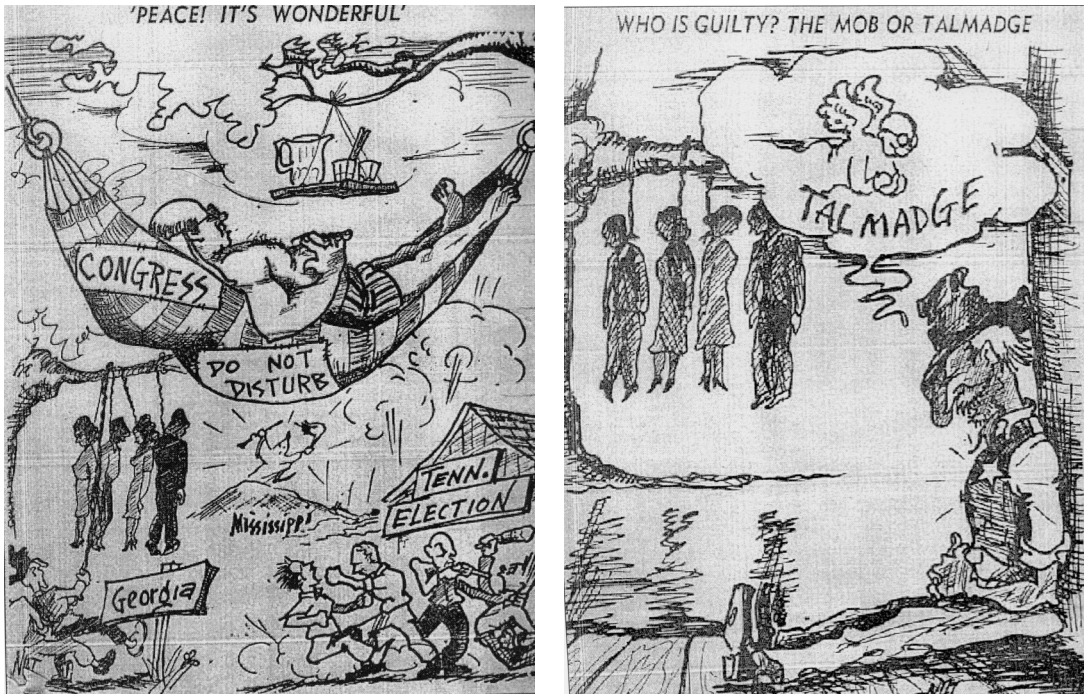


Figure 11. “Peace! It’s Wonderful!” (1946) and “Who is Guilty? The Mob or Talmadge?” (1946). Cartoons by Nathaniel Barkley Brown, Sr. originally published in the *Louisville Defender* and reproduced in *Walton County Georgia*.

in the U.S. were threatening to take their grievances to the newly established U.N., and they had reason to believe that foreign governments would support them; newspapers in Mexico, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere extensively covered the massacre of the Malcoms and Dorseys, prompting hundreds of people to write letters and telegrams in protest to the U.S. Justice Department. When Attorney General Tom Clark held a press conference to address international outrage at the lynching, he proclaimed that the Moore’s Ford massacre was “an affront to decent Americanism. Only due process of law sustains our claim to orderly self-government.”⁴⁵ His emphasis on due process of law and orderly self-government foreshadowed the shape that the government’s official response to lynching would

take in the coming years as the U.S. formally abrogated lynch law as a blot on its capacity to govern the world.

The Contested Image of Human Rights

Political struggles in the U.S. as well as the country's global political and economic interests were decisive in the construction of the post-war ideal of universal human rights, as well as in the ideal's constricted implementation. Many activists looked upon the formation of the U.N. in April 1945 as a potential source for the promotion of black civil, political, and human rights.⁴⁶ In June 1946, just one month before the Moore's Ford massacre, the U.S. National Negro Congress (NNC) presented a *Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of 13 Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America* to representatives of the U.N.

Economic and Social Council, which oversaw the Commission on Human Rights. The NNC petition was the first of three petitions submitted to the U.N. between 1946 and 1951 alleging human rights violations against black people by the U.S. government. The petition's authors, Max Yergan and Herbert Aptheker, called on the U.N. to adhere to its promise to protect ethnic and racial minorities and to promote and encourage "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."⁴⁷ Addressing the petition to Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the U.N., and to U.S. President Harry Truman, the petition's authors grounded their call for an international response to the plight of black Americans in the long-standing political, economic, and social discrimination against blacks in the U.S.⁴⁸ Yergan and Aptheker called on the

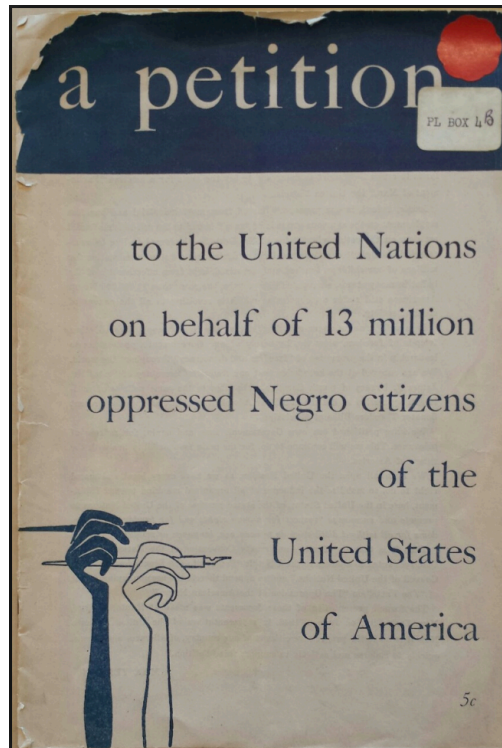


Figure 12. Cover of the National Negro Council's *A Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of 13 Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America* (1946).

Commission on Human Rights to study anti-black racism, to make recommendations and “take such other actions as it may deem proper ... to the end that ‘higher standards’ in the field of human rights may be achieved” by ending black super-exploitation and ensuring access to dignified housing, quality education, healthcare, and equality before the law.⁴⁹ In his short essay, “The Oppression of the American Negro: the Facts,” Aptheker cited a 1939 report by the Social Services Committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention that declared that there were more people held in 1939 in debt-slavery and peonage than had ever been chattel-slaves in the U.S. Aptheker ended his essay by arguing that the practice of anti-black violence, so common as to be institutionalized in the South, was “very much alive,”

against the prognostications of a previous generation of liberals who had declared lynching dead. “Of greater importance, today,” he wrote, is the device of ‘dry lynching,’ the secret, unpublicized mutilation or destruction of an ‘undesirable’ Negro by a small group of individuals (frequently, it is believed, officers of the law).” Here, Aptheker called upon the recent memory of the Moore’s Ford massacre and the widely-held belief among those on the anti-lynching left that police had been involved in the lynching.⁵⁰

NAACP leadership, inspired by this move on the part of the NNC, set to work creating a more detailed and scholarly petition under the direction of W.E.B. Du Bois.⁵¹ The following fall, the NAACP issued a petition called *An Appeal to the World! A Statement of Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States of America and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress*.⁵² Taking cues from his liberal collaborators and adversaries, Du Bois opened the petition by emphasizing the negative impact of segregation on “white America” for its contradiction of democratic government, its falsification of the country’s philanthropic assertions, and its supposed contravention of religious ideals.⁵³ “The disfranchisement of the American Negro,” Du Bois wrote, “makes the functioning of all democracy in the nation difficult; and as democracy fails to function in the leading democracy in the world it fails in the world.”⁵⁴ Attuned to the world-historical importance of the postwar realignment of political-economic power and the ideological blow dealt to white supremacy, Du Bois wrote:

But today the paradox again looms after the Second World War. We have recrudescence of race hate and caste restrictions on the United States and of these dangerous tendencies not simply for the United States itself but for all

nations. When will nations learn that their enemies are quite as often within their own country as without? It is not Russia that threatens the United States so much as Mississippi; not Stalin and Molotov but Bilbo and Rankin; internal injustice done to one's brothers is far more dangerous than the aggression of strangers from abroad."⁵⁵

Du Bois brilliantly framed his intervention within the very terms laid out by U.S. members of the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Within the borders of the U.S., the contradictions of liberal democracy posed a threat to internal others. These same contradictions posed a threat to international peace, as evidenced in the treatment of Mahatma Gandhi's physician, who was denied restaurant service while visiting the U.S. in 1947, and of Haiti's Secretary of Agriculture Francois Georges, who was denied hotel service in Georgia while attending a conference.

Because of caste custom and legislation along the color line, the United States is today in danger of encroaching upon the rights and privileges of its fellow nations. ... [these incidents] show clearly that a discrimination practiced in the U.S. against her own citizens and to a large extent a contravention of her own laws, cannot be persisted in, without infringing upon the rights of the peoples of the world and especially upon the ideals and the work of the United Nations.⁵⁶

Du Bois also covertly translated some of the tenets of the black nation thesis, forwarded almost two decades earlier by black communist Harry Haywood and officially adopted by the Communist International in 1928 and 1932, into liberal common sense. At the start and end of his introduction to the petition, he noted what many radicals believed to be the national character of black America; calling it a "nation within a nation" and noting that the black belt surpassed in size and population Argentina, Czechoslovakia, "the whole of Scandinavia," Canada, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Hungary and the Netherlands, Du Bois demanded that the U.N. recognize black America as "one of the considerable nations of the world."⁵⁷ Some

U.N. nations took heed; following the submission of *An Appeal* to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in October 1947, the NAACP was flooded with requests for copies from Russia, the U.K., and the Union of South Africa.⁵⁸ The petitions by the NNC and the NAACP forwarded an alternative vision of humanism, an anti-fascist humanism rooted in what Singh characterizes as a “universalist language invested with the symbolic power of their own struggles.”⁵⁹

In response to the petitions from the NNC and the NAACP, secretary of the UNCHR Petrus Schmidt told both organizations that they had to *prove* that discrimination existed.⁶⁰ Despite members’ valiant efforts to meet this demand, on December 4, 1947, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights rejected both petitions’ calls for international action on behalf of black human rights.⁶¹ U.S., British, and Soviet officials had been reticent from the beginning to codify human rights in the new U.N. charter.⁶² Nevertheless, the petitions by the NNC and the NAACP reinforced the international scrutiny of U.S. racial politics, much to the chagrin of the U.S. State Department. The State Department report on the “Problem of Discrimination and Minority Status in the United States” acknowledged that the “negro problem” had become a foreign policy problem, noting that the conditions of domination and exploitation prevalent across the country made the U.S. a prime candidate for a U.N. hearing.⁶³

On November 22, 1948, Robert Mallard – World War II veteran, successful businessman, and organizer for the black vote in Toombs County, Georgia – was gunned down by members of the KKK while driving home from an evening social with his wife, Amy, their son John, and two of Amy’s teenage cousins. The Mallards

owned a 32-acre farm in Lyons, and local whites had warned Robert in the weeks leading up to his death that his “life wouldn’t be worth a nickel” if he did not stop registering black voters for the November 2 election.⁶⁴ A few weeks later (and just a mere six weeks before the Mallard lynching would become contradictory fodder for *LIFE*’s image of the good American life and the country’s adherence to due process), the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶⁵ The declaration, which had been under construction for over two years upon its completion and adoption, proclaimed that dignity and rights were inherent and inalienable to “all members of the human family.”⁶⁶ Like the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence and the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the U.N. in 1948 declared the rights of humans to be natural, equal, and universal – despite the contrarian evidence of over 300 years of colonization and slavery, the recent genocidal atrocities committed by Nazis during the Second World War, and the intensification of racial terrorism by U.S. white supremacists upon U.S. entry into the war.⁶⁷ When the U.N. Human Rights Commission formed in 1946, U.S. Senators from Georgia and Texas immediately charged that human rights treaties would be a “back-door method of enacting federal anti-lynching legislation.” In her position as chair of the Subcommittee of the Commission on Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt reassured southern Democrats that the federal government could never interfere “in murder cases,” investigate concerns over “fair trials,” nor insist on “the right to education.”⁶⁸ Motivated by the public relations exigencies of the emergent Cold War, which demanded the cultivation of an image of U.S. capitalism as the paragon of democratic freedom, U.N. chairs Roosevelt and

John Foster Dulles ensured that the Declaration of Human Rights contained no language about racism, and fought for the insertion of a clause in the Declaration that would prevent the U.N. from actually implementing human rights within sovereign nation-states.⁶⁹ With this addendum, politicians in the U.K. and the Soviet Union agreed to codify human rights in a declaration that carried symbolic, rather than material, weight.⁷⁰

As Hannah Arendt argues in her condemnation of the idea of human rights in *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* and elsewhere, rights were hardly a *fait accompli* stemming from mere ontological existence. In her critique of the idea that human dignity and rights are inherent to human beings, Arendt counters that the “plight of stateless people revealed the modern conception of human dignity to be a mere abstraction and that the right to have rights cannot be claimed without citizenship.”⁷¹ Crucial for Arendt is the question of whether the notion of universal human rights does more to prohibit our capacity to actively judge injustice. For to be judged human, Arendt argues, one must have a legal personality.⁷² And this legal personality, Arendt argues in an extension of Kant’s writings on aesthetics, must be judged a particular instance of a universal principle. For Arendt, this universal principle is national citizenship; the right to have rights stems not from natural life (*zoe*) but from the political life (*bios*) of citizenship. Thus, for Arendt, the photographs of the Nazi camps that were reproduced in newspapers, illustrated magazines, newsreels, and exhibitions in the spring and summer of 1945 did little to picture the “humanity” of those who had no national status.⁷³ Photographs of life reduced to its barest physiological form by the horrifying machinery of the

Holocaust did not, contrary to the claims of the editors of *News Chronicle*, furnish “indisputable proof of Germany’s crimes against the human race.”⁷⁴ For Arendt, as Sharon Sliwinsky writes, holocaust photographs were proof that dignity *is* alienable.⁷⁵

In the context of postwar America, what thought did aesthetic (or, to be more precise, photographic) encounters with southern lynching give rise to? What epistemic formations – hegemonic and counter-hegemonic – took hold? Given *LIFE*’s focus on Mallard’s suffering, it might seem as though Miller’s photographs are anti-lynching photographs. We might even suppose that, in qualifying Mallard’s grief as a human condition for her inclusion in the post-war human community, *LIFE*’s editors reframed the focus in the liberal white press on lynchers’ inhumanity to the humanity of those affected by lynching’s expanded and expanding violence.⁷⁶ But if the Western imperial formation of the human that took shape through colonization and slavery is, as Sylvia Wynter argues, a *genre* of human being that reduces the human to Man – to *homo oeconomicus*, whose desires are bound to and determined by the market – and, if liberal invocations of the human and his rights were mobilized in the aftermath of Emancipation in ways that extended the suffering of freedpeoples, as Saidiya Hartman has demonstrated, we must read *LIFE*’s invocation of Amy’s *human grief and terror* very carefully indeed.⁷⁷

The Rise of the Racial Liberal State

In a liberal society, every performance of justice requires a performance of suffering.

- Asma Abbas, *Voice Lessons: Suffering and the Liberal Sensorium.*”

When the trial of Clifton and Howell began on January 11, 1949, *the Associated Press, the United Press, Time, LIFE, and New York Daily News* Television and Newsreel were there to cover the proceedings.⁷⁸ It was a rare occasion for two white men, especially in the Klan-controlled state of Georgia, to be indicted for lynching.⁷⁹ The Clifton-Howell trial was a prime opportunity for the capitalist press to bolster the burgeoning international image of civil rights reform. Indeed, the postwar shift toward integration *required* the massive production and dissemination of representations of black experience in tune with the sentimental, normalizing, and rationalizing systems of liberal-capitalist modernity.⁸⁰

As Jodi Melamed demonstrates in *Represent & Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, the postwar racial break and transition from a state formation ordered around white supremacist colonial capitalism to one predicated upon a formally antiracist, liberal-capitalist mode of governance required the dissemination of representations of black integration into U.S. society.⁸¹ Melamed analyzes the postwar race novel industry and academic literary studies as a “cultural technology for generating ... race-liberal orders” that sought to make some forms of difference legible while glorifying the culture of American capitalism as a panacea to U.S. and world-wide race relations.⁸² Race novels commissioned by the Rosenwald and Guggenheim grants and published by Doubleday and Harper Brothers disseminated an understanding of race as a moral and psychological dilemma that could be taken up by everyday white readers; those reading race novels were imagined to undergo, when encountering the trope of black victimization, “a heroic moral conversion” to a privileged liberal identity that recognized the fundamental

equality of African Americans.⁸³ The race relations industry, Melamed writes, “encouraged whites to internalize affective dispositions and to cultivate a race-liberal political identity. Thus, race novel discourse stabilized a field of social and moral value that made it possible for white Americans to comprehend the act of reading a novel as (and as a substitute for) an active politics of social transformation.”⁸⁴

Melamed’s analysis turns upon James Baldwin’s critique, in “Everybody’s Protest Novel,” of the sentimental protest tradition most commonly associated with nineteenth-century women’s and abolitionist fiction. “The ‘protest’ novel,” Baldwin writes in his 1949 essay:

is an accepted and comforting aspect of the American scene ... Whatever unsettling questions are raised are evanescent, titillating; remote, for this has nothing to do with us, it is safely ensconced in the social arena, where, indeed, it has nothing to do with anyone, so that finally we receive a very definite thrill of virtue from the fact that we are reading such a book at all. ... ‘As long as such books are being published,’ an American liberal once said to me, ‘everything will be all right.’⁸⁵

Baldwin is critical of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, whose “excessive and spurious emotion” is “the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty.” Stowe’s depictions of plantation brutality, motivated as they were by her Christian fear of damnation, do nothing to illuminate the roots of anti-blackness, and her characters are stock types, things that reaffirm the slave’s object status. This is by now a familiar critique, one that critics have associated with the fetishization, in abolitionist rhetoric, of enslaved peoples’ suffering, Stowe’s familiarity with Friedrich Schiller’s Enlightenment aesthetics of liberal progress, and the

sentimental affirmation in Victorian-era women's fiction of a division between market and home.⁸⁶ Influenced by the progressive account of history undertaken by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, Schiller transforms Kant's aesthetic philosophy into a developmental program that lifts *zoe* from an originary state of nature and compulsion toward a moral state ruled by the ethical laws of reason, choice, and freedom.⁸⁷ Extending Kant's account of the role of aesthetics in the formation of the liberal subject (whom Kant argues becomes aware of his freedom through the act of aesthetic judgment), Schiller locates the power of the aesthetic in the aesthetic object itself. As Elizabeth Dillon argues, "this concretization of beauty and aesthetics in the object" makes possible a didactic program for the aesthetic "production of a liberal political community."⁸⁸

American cultural studies scholars have strongly critiqued the role of sentimental aesthetics in the enculturation of nineteenth-century Victorians to the dictates of possessive individualism. What Lauren Berlant terms sentimentality's political pedagogy – its drive to "humanize structures of violence by enacting them through narratives that demonstrate the supposed universality of suffering and the transformative potentials of compassionate love" – emerged most forcefully during slavery in the contest between abolitionists and the slave plantocracy over the fate of the "peculiar institution."⁸⁹ When abolitionists began circulating images of wounded and suffering slaves to ballast their argument that enslaved peoples were capable of human feeling, pro-slavery advocates responded by representing sentimental attachments between slaves and the master class as evidence of slavery's

paternal order. Pro-slavery propaganda framed emotional bonds as correctives to violence. Thus, in the revisionist plantation pastoral, as Hartman writes:

slavery is depicted as an ‘organic relationship’... Even the regime of production becomes naturalized as ‘the rhythms of work,’ as if slave labor were merely another extension of blacks’ capacity for song and dance. The lure of the pastoral is in reconciling sentiment with the brute force of the racial-economic order.⁹⁰

In addition to racist representations of black quiescence to the slave order was the codification in law of slave personhood as fundamentally wounded, injurious, and criminal.⁹¹ In the slave codes first enacted in the late seventeenth century in Virginia and subsequently codified in all slave states, and in the black codes created by the planter class in the wake of the Civil War, the agency of black peoples (whether enslaved or free) was criminalized and “signified little more than a pained body or a recalcitrant in need of punishment.”⁹² Hence, Hartman argues, abolitionists’ focus on slaves’ suffering, their solicitation of a public beholding of black sensations of pain, reaffirmed what she terms the slave’s fungibility – her availability for various kinds of use, especially the enjoyments of the master class.⁹³

Baldwin also stunningly proposes that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is activated by what he calls “theological terror, the terror of damnation; and the spirit that breathes in this book, hot, self-righteous, fearful, is not different from that spirit of medieval times which sought to exorcize evil by burning witches; and is not different from that terror which activates a lynch mob.”⁹⁴ Baldwin’s reading of the liberal sentimental tradition as suffused with theological terror is compelling. Historically in the U.S., the recognition of black humanity, especially via the conduit of suffering, has intensified the exploitation and subjugation of black peoples.⁹⁵ In the 1940s, the

liberal turn to white racial affect as the ground on which legal civil rights reform could be secured was motivated, in part, by Gunnar Myrdal's prescription in *An American Dilemma* that to cure the nation's "Negro problem" required changing the feeling of white Americans toward black people. This recommendation seemed to come straight from an Enlightenment playbook, as Schiller argues that republican revolution depends on a revolution "within the subjective heart of the people."⁹⁶ To recognize Amy Mallard's grief and terror as human was thus to seize her for the uses of a race liberal society whose members were being encouraged to feel and recognize the inalienable rights of the human at a moment in which the human had visibly re-emerged as biopolitical resource and fodder for the expansion of transnational capitalism. Jacques Rancière, although fundamentally disagreeing with Arendt's "archipolitical" position, underscores the extent to which the state's newfound respect for "natural life" in the wake of the war facilitated a biopolitical turn (a turn to manage the life of the populace rather than the individual) in its sovereign capacity to govern.⁹⁷ Given *LIFE*'s nomination of Amy Mallard as hysterical – as thrown in and by passion – it is necessary to thus consider the ways Amy and the members of her immediate and extant communities were conscripted into a biopolitical order that vitalizes state governance by recruiting citizens and non-citizens through aesthetic mechanisms that intersect the juridical and the medical. As the welfare state grew into the warfare state, the U.S. government and its allied cultural apparatuses affirmed that the "raw life" of its black populace would be mobilized toward its emerging security program.⁹⁸ This manifested most starkly during Harry Truman's reelection campaign and throughout the early years of his

second term as he responded to pressures from activists to remedy anti-black discrimination by instating legal reforms that recognized black injury as the matter through which the state could figure an image of U.S. global governance.

Despite the roadblocks at the U.N., activists continued to pressure the Truman administration to respond to their demands for civil rights reform. Though reticent at first to support the NAACP, Truman found it politically expedient to form a special presidential committee to investigate mob violence. In December 1946, Truman formed a Presidential Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) to prepare an integrationist platform for voting rights, fair employment, housing, education, access to service in the Armed Forces, and criminal justice reform.⁹⁹ The following year, just six days after the NAACP petition was published, Truman's PCCR issued *To Secure These Rights*.¹⁰⁰ The report was heavily influenced by Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 report, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, which had framed racism as a psychological and moral issue that the U.S. was destined to correct as a result of its adherence to what Myrdal called "the American Creed": a commitment to the Enlightenment universals of liberty and equality. It also importantly cast the U.S.'s so-called "negro problem" as an issue relevant to international relations that would enable the U.S. to demonstrate its ability to rule a decolonizing world. Myrdal's study emphasized that the world was judging U.S. racial politics and that the triumph of transnational capitalism in the Cold War was dependent on civil rights reform.¹⁰¹ In similar fashion, *To Secure These Rights* argued that civil rights abuses in the U.S. had to be addressed because they were morally wrong, they harmed the economy, and they damaged U.S. foreign relations.¹⁰² Most

egregiously, the report framed southern lynchings as individual crimes that were regional exceptions to federal law-and-order. On February 2, 1948, Truman presented, to a Southern-controlled Congress, a civil rights package that included anti-lynching and anti-poll tax measures, as well as a fair employment commission.¹⁰³ The House Committee on the Judiciary, responding in particular to the CRC's recommendations for anti-lynching measures, asserted that "the strength of our moral leadership in world affairs will be seriously impaired if, as a nation, we continue to condone lynching and mob violence."¹⁰⁴

In keeping with earlier iterations of liberal anti-lynching reform, proponents of these legal measures emphasized the threat of extra-legal violence to state authority and to the white moral order over the impact that lynching had on black people. Adhering to the liberal split between the public and the private, race liberals sought to criminalize lynching as a form of private violence, leaving unchecked the frequent collusion of officers employed by the state in acts of extra-judicial violence. As Naomi Murakawa writes, this construction of liberal law-and-order divided the so-called private violence of lynching from the state executions and military violence through which the state sought to rationalize its use of force.¹⁰⁵ Even Walter White criticized the anti-lynching bill that emerged from the Judiciary Committee as "little more than a pious denunciation of lynching which, based on the NAACP's 39-year experience with the question, will do virtually nothing to stop that crime." The presidential committee's stipulation that required legal proof of conspiracy between lynch mobs and derelict officials made the bill worthless.¹⁰⁶

The symbolic nature of the bill, however, was not without material consequences. Indeed, it is precisely where the bill faltered – in its demand for proof of conspiracy between mob members and officers of the state – that we may source its most violent repercussions. The focus of the bill on the intentions of law officers to act unlawfully, in addition to obscuring the purposeful obfuscation of the limitations of police power in the Americas, dovetailed with *To Secure These Rights* in its adaptation of Myrdal’s sentimental prescription for a form of white racial affect that he believed would repair the nation’s racial ills.

Giving *LIFE* to Law and Order

Governor Talmadge and the Grand Dragon killed my husband.
- Amy Mallard

The photographic press, like the literary market, was conscripted into the vitalization of race liberal rhetoric, and to the attendant foreclosure of radical oppositions to white supremacist violence. As Luce sought to fashion his media empire as a leading voice in national politics and foreign affairs, his magazines altered their approach to racial representation.¹⁰⁷ By the early Cold War, the magazine began promoting the government’s new position on civil rights reform through what Wendy Kozol characterizes as a “color-blind and power-evasive rhetoric of race that helped shape the postwar national imagination about ... racial conflict.”¹⁰⁸ In keeping with the familial tropes that preoccupied U.S. and Soviet propagandists in their “cold” battle for economic and cultural hegemony, *LIFE* published increasingly idealized images of white and black families enjoying middle-

class domesticity. These images were meant to “suggest a larger narrative of national equality.”¹⁰⁹

How did Henry Luce’s media empire co-create the aesthetic conditions necessary for the codification of anti-lynching reform in the federal government’s emergent civil rights platform? How did *LIFE*’s seizure of Amy’s moving love-sorrow – its suspension of her grief in a series of photographic snapshots and its circulation and articulation of her heavy sadness as a hysterical breakdown – betray white ambivalence about the emerging cultural mandate to represent lynching as a threat to liberal governance? *LIFE*, in picturing Amy’s complex suffering and making it available to a viewing public, called on her to testify to the emergent post-war discourse of human rights. But the magazine’s recognition of Amy as hysterical – as thrown in and by passion – and its ordering of her breakdown as a series of snapshots seized the Mallard tragedy for uses that seemingly exceeded those of liberal sociality.

It is significant that *LIFE* positioned Amy, and the black feminine more generally, at the center of its photo-text. But rather than interpret this as a displacement of the black(ened) and criminalized male figure of the common lynching scenario, we might conceptualize *LIFE*’s photographic serialization of Amy’s breakdown – her being overcome by the second sight of her attackers and by her traumatic memory of her dying husband – as coterminous with the position of black femininity within the representational economy that undergirds U.S. lynching culture, and imperial Western humanism, more generally. While pro-lynching discourse from the turn of the century centered around three figures – the black

male aggressor, the white female victim, and the heroic white male avenger – the triad was shadowed by the figuration of the black woman as jezebel.¹¹⁰ Black women, within the southern lynching scenario, were positioned much as they were in slave law: as the source of seduction and violence.¹¹¹ Viewed as always already abdicating their moral and sexual responsibility within the Victorian ideal of “true womanhood” (which demanded that women be intellectually weak, physically delicate, spiritually pure, and sheltered from waged labor), black women were barred in the twin ideologies of white supremacy and true womanhood from possessing female gender.¹¹² Black women were thus held liable when white men raped them and were cast by advocates of lynching as the originating cause of black men’s mythical propensity for sexual violence.¹¹³ A passage in a 1904 magazine article by a southern white woman aptly illustrates this epistemic slippage: “a negro woman’s skin is generally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality. [Black women] are the greatest menace possible to the moral life of any community where they live. And they are evidently the chief instruments of the degradation of the men of their own race.”¹¹⁴ Though the broken bodies of black men were at the center of visual and written representations of lynching, black femininity was figured as the original corrupting mat(t)er. They thus shadowed lynching rituals, sustaining them as a structuring (photographic) absence.



Figure 13. Amy Mallard in the Toombs County Superior Courtroom, January 11, 1949. This is the first frame of the image sequence of Amy's breakdown. Francis Miller/*LIFE* Magazine.

At the start of the trial, Lanier announces that his only evidence in the case will be Mrs. Mallard. She is not to provide evidence against the farmers who attacked her family; she *is* the evidence. She takes the stand and sits firmly in the chair as atop a stage in the Toombs County Superior Courthouse. She is tense and frail and now scared as officials remove her friend and comrade Joseph Goldwasser from the courtroom and move her children to the black gallery above the judging fray. Now she cannot see them, she can only see her neighbor, William, and that farmer Roderick whom her husband once ordered off their land. These men who killed her husband look at her now with the icy stares of men who wish her dead. There is the Sherriff and his deputies. W.L. Lanier, the Toombs County Solicitor who is prosecuting the case, paces before her. The whole miserable mob is before

her, judging. Amy slouches and waits. This teacher is heavy with the weight of grief and the memory of her family's passage into the standstill.

Amy is blind to Lanier's wincing gait and to the shamefaced stares of the NAACP lawyers. She holds her chin in her palm, seems to hold her whole head as she contemplates, like a thinker at the gates of hell, what the outcome of this trial might be. As Lanier instructs her to speak to the events that led to her husband's death on November 22, she remembers that their headlights had seemed to flash more brightly as the men emerged from shadows on the roadside, as the whites of their hoods stood erect in the moonlight. But she knows that things had moved too fast for Robert to turn on the brights before those six shots rang out. She can still hear them, their shrill *plaps* breaching metal and flesh and seeming to dampen the light. Prosecutor Lanier paces in front of her as he waits for her to respond. There is a hushed murmur, a hollow white noise, and then she feels the light again, feels it flash sudden and bright against her skin.

In thinking about Mallard's contradictory status in the mid-century white press as bearing the indexical traces of grief and terror while also producing the performative stain of hysteria, we might productively recall Hortense Spillers' recitation, in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," of the litany of types through which the idea of the black woman as excess, as "signifying property *plus*," has cohered:

Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. Peaches,' and 'Brown Sugar,' 'Sapphire' and 'Earth Mother,' 'Aunty,' 'Granny,' God's 'Holy Fool,' a 'Miss Ebony First,' or 'Black Woman at the

Podium.’: I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.¹¹⁵

Spillers is motivated by Daniel Moynihan’s 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. She reminds us that the violent misnaming that characterized Moynihan’s assertion that a black matriarchate has impoverished and pathologized black life “borrows its narrative energies from the grid of associations, from the semantic and iconic folds buried deep in the collective past, that come to surround and signify the captive person.”¹¹⁶ Moynihan’s assertion that descent through the female line is a corrupting factor is part of a dominant symbolic order organized around the patriarchal law of the father that Spillers names an “American grammar.” Moynihan’s assumption of a corrupting black matriarchate is far from unique; even the abolitionist William Goodell argues in his study of slave law that *partus sequitur ventrem*, the legal doctrine that defined the status of enslaved children as following that of their mothers, is the “genuine and degrading principle of slavery, inasmuch as it places the slave upon a level with brute animals.”¹¹⁷ Spillers reminds us that the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, in his epochal conceptualization at mid-century of race as a cultural rather than biological phenomenon, referred to a loss of power among black men as a black *pathology*, and that he framed this pathology in the familiar terms of castration. Following the ruling episteme, like the authors of slave codes before him and Moynihan after him, Frazier asserts that this pathology is rooted in a black matriarchate.¹¹⁸

That the idea of a black matriarchate took hold in spite of the fact that neither enslaved women nor free black women had the power deserving of the name

matriarchate undergirds Spillers's claim that black femininity is a mythical signifier, a material-discursive site whose "form is empty but present, its meaning absent but full."¹¹⁹ Zakiyyah Jackson writes, following Spillers, that "the black mater(nal) signifies the foreclosed enabling condition of the modern grammar of representation: a space of nonsense or aphasia and correspondingly without a representative in the "I and thou" dialectical processes of recognition, value, and decision."¹²⁰ This American grammar, this complex historical misnaming, has circumscribed black humanity, rendering the recognition of black human being impossible within the parameters of patrifocal and propertied personhood. Spillers reminds us that black women in America are the "principle point of passage between the human and the non-human world. Her issue became the focus of a cunning difference – visually, psychologically, ontologically – as the route by which the dominant modes decided the distinction between humanity and 'other.'"¹²¹ Spillers conceptualizes the writing of black women out of sight and out of being as the "flesh" of an American episteme that binds personhood to property. Black flesh in the American grammar is usually cast as object and subject; it is, in Spillers words, "reduced to a thing, to *being* for the captor" that, in its reduction to otherness "translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general 'powerlessness,' resonating through various centers of human and social meaning."¹²²

The task, then, is to analyze why and how the transfiguration of lynching that served as a motor for the development of Cold War liberalism turned on an image of black femininity. How and why does the black femme emerge at mid-

century as the ground upon which to refigure the relationship of lynching to the public and to the realigning protocols of liberal governance? If the black woman, as Rizvana Bradley writes, is “the figure that crystallizes the arrangement between capital and the event of captivity,” how might we theorize the fact that Amy is not only made to work for *LIFE*, but to do so doubly, contradictorily – to signify blackness at mid-century as incorporable according to the terms of domestic normativity, and to signify her own failure to incorporate that norm?¹²³ What does this proto-civil rights widow do, and how does *LIFE*'s invocation of racial hysteria frame both her aesthetic practice in the Toombs County Courthouse and the image of it that lives on as the excessive extension of a “discursively empty and materially full” black (female) sexuality long exiled as and at lynching's violent source? To what ends is she hailed human and then seen to exceed that nomination?

Given that imperial Western humanism produces and reproduces black femininity as “trapped within immanence” and thus immune to representation, as Jackson writes, her representation will always produce tensions and misrecognitions. How, then, were spectators called upon to (mis)recognize human grief in the image-text in *LIFE*? What role did these photographs play in shaping an aesthetic scene of moral judgment that allowed the white, middle-class members of the magazine-reading public to at once empathize with Mallard's suffering (which is to say identify her suffering as their own), recognize their participation in the new *sensus communis* of race liberalism – and disavow her right to the rights of the human on the grounds that she was incoherent, babbling, too emotionally demonstrative, and thus in subjective excess of enlightened personhood? Does *LIFE* invoke the

specter of hysteria to underscore Amy's lack of respectability? How did the magazine's attempt to order her pathos turn her suffering into a *pathologeme* that contradicted its claim on her humanity? The double move – and the ideological ferment of national socialism in the racial sciences of the late nineteenth century – demands that we stretch the frame even further to consider how hysteria emerged as a discursive unit in the nineteenth century to figure the (racialized) threat to the reproduction of the nation. Doing so allows us to theorize the troubling slippage from pathos to pathology that occurs in *LIFE*'s serialization of Amy Mallard's trauma.

Lynching at Mid-Century: A Hysterical Image?

The woman bears within her an organ prone to terrible spasms, which uses her and arouses ghosts of all kinds in her imagination. It is in hysterical delirium that she returns to the past, hurls herself into the future, and that all times are present to her.

- Denis Diderot, "Sur les femme"

When the moving body is inaccessible, like a star whose movements one wishes to follow; when the body executes movements in various ways, or of such great extension that they cannot be directly inscribed on a piece of paper, photography compensates for mechanical procedures with great ease: it reduces the amplitude of movement, or else it amplifies it to a more suitable scale.

- Etienne-Jules Marey, *Le développement de la méthode graphique par la photographie*

Amy Mallard is shadowed by her husband's violent death at the hands of the Klan as her image is shadowed by the twisting figures of the Salpêtrière, the French medical prison where Jean-Martin Charcot performed photographic experiments on women in the late nineteenth century. *LIFE*'s verbal reference to hysteria, its editors' nomination of Amy's endurance of the violence of the Klan as a hysterical

outbreak rather than, say, an instance of brave vulnerability, is supported by the layout of the six photographs – by the editors’ decision to serialize Amy’s breakdown. *LIFE*, in calling upon Amy as evidence of the nation’s capacity for atonement, pictures her as the experimental material for the redefinition of America’s progress.¹²⁴

What relationship do Miller’s courtroom photographs have with the epistemic, aesthetic, and libidinal conventions of hysteria? *LIFE*’s representation of Amy’s ongoing experience of her husband’s lynching as a sequence of images recalls the photographic production of hysteria among the traumatized women of the Salpêtrière in nineteenth-century France. In the 1860s, psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot began employing photography in his disciplinary treatment of women incarcerated in the country’s largest asylum.¹²⁵ Influenced by painted representations of mental illness that were popular in Europe, by medieval iconography that had represented hysterical symptomology as a form of diabolic witchery, and by the converging techniques of anthropometry and physiognomy (whose practitioners purported to measure internal virtue from outward physical form), Charcot tasked resident photographer Albert Londe with documenting the visual manifestations of patients’ illnesses.¹²⁶ Charcot was inspired by his contemporary Francis Galton, the English statistician and founding eugenicist who began fashioning composite portraits in the 1880s to make visible what he considered to be degenerate types: the criminal, the alcoholic, the prostitute, the Jew, the insane, the loafer. Galton layered series of like images on top of each other to create photographic composites that pictured average types (figure 14). Seeking

to visualize the “unhealthy” evolution of the human species, Galton used photography to visualize statistical hereditary difference – to, in his words, “bring into evidence all the traits in which there is agreement, and to leave but a ghost of a



Figure 14. Francis Galton, Composite of “the Jewish Type,” 1883. Reproduced in volume 2 of Karl Pearson’s *The Life, Letters, and Labours of Francis Galton*.

trace of individual peculiarities.”¹²⁷ Consolidating the nascent technologies of photographic imaging and quantitative statistics, Galton aimed to visualize deviance as an Ur-text against which the English ruling class could police its caste system and the developing norms of bourgeois society. His composites resulted in criminal identification photographs that were designed, as Allan Sekula points out, to “quite literally facilitate the *arrest* of their referent.”¹²⁸ Galton’s attempt to arrest social beings into fixed types – to make visible statistical averages that were supposedly natural in origin – was the opening salvo in the development of a photographic penal archive, a “juridical photographic realism” whose adherents purport to visualize criminality.¹²⁹

Like Galton, Charcot was taken by the realist pretensions of early photographic discourse and sought to use it to represent the “totality of the disease.”¹³⁰ Charcot, as Ulrich Baer writes, “used the *tableau vivant* of the photograph (where time is immobilized, ‘engorged’) ... to create a *tableau clinique*, a clinical picture that would apply ‘in all places and at every time.’”¹³¹ Because hysteria was characterized by a confluence of symptoms, it was difficult, if not impossible, to classify its etiology. Indeed, hysteria had long been considered a uniquely feminine form of deception.¹³² Existing, as Sigmund Freud observed, “in its paralyses and other manifestations as if anatomy were non-existent, or as if it had no knowledge of it,” hysteria posed a distinct challenge to medical authority and to the medical establishment’s investment in an Enlightenment will-to-knowledge.¹³³ Though Charcot would turn the biological paradigm of hysteria on its head by redefining it as a disease of a (feminized) nervous system, he was motivated in doing so by the same misogynistic distrust of his patients’ passions. When he started his post at the Salpêtrière, Charcot thus turned to photography to catalog captives’ somatic and psychological pathologies, as well as to prove that he and his assistants were not fabricating the illnesses.¹³⁴

Charcot believed he could stymie and order women’s supposedly mercurial verbal and somatic outpourings by visual techniques; employing hypnosis, mesmerism, and photographic shock in his clinical practice with hysterics, Charcot sought to freeze patients’ histrionic movements to make them legible to medical authority.¹³⁵ Charcot and Londe used photography to transform patients’ symptoms into periodizing tableaux; dividing patients’ movements into identifiable phases,

they surmised, might organize the “scattered temporalities” present in the poses (the recurring somatic presence of past trauma) into developmental series encompassing the history, diagnosis, and prognosis of the patients (figure 15). Crucially, these

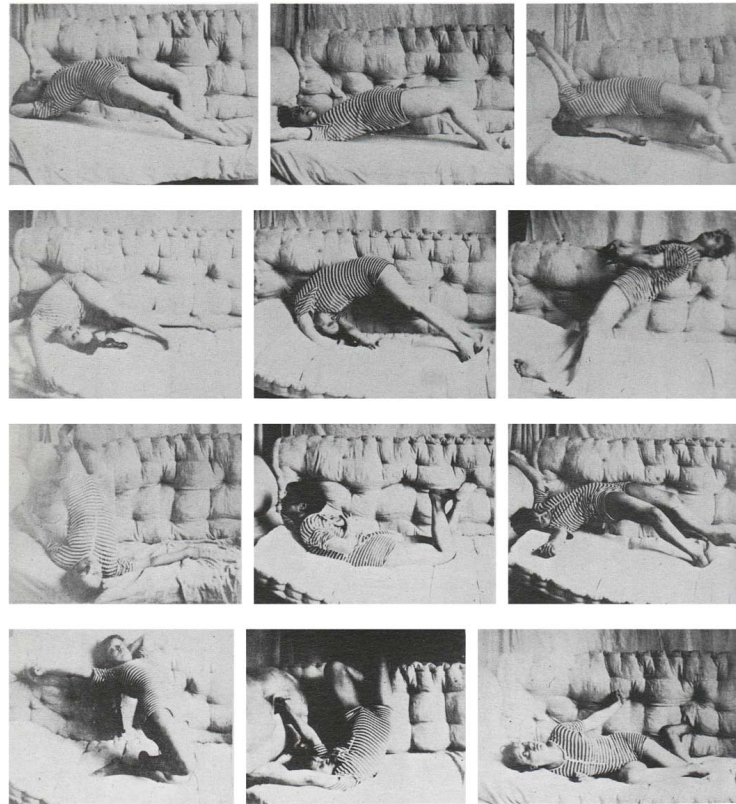


Figure 15. Rummo, two plates from the *Iconografia fotografica del grande Isterismo* (1890), dedicated to Charcot.

tableaux were shorn of their referents' verbal excesses. As Sander Gilman writes, “This fantasy of reducing the complexity of hysteria to statistics or charts rests on a notion of nineteenth-century science that everything is reducible to nonverbal form ... For once, it is said, you eliminate narrative, you remove the subjective aspect

from the evaluation of the disease and you have a real representation of the patient.”¹³⁶

Though Charcot did not employ the rhetoric of criminality, his medical clinic was undoubtedly a site for the punishment and containment of non-normative women and girls. Many of those admitted to the Salpêtrière were already traumatized by rape and other forms of gendered violence, and were traumatized again upon their arrival at the clinic when employees integrated them into the rhythms of confinement by beating them.¹³⁷ The reconstruction of hysteria in 1890s Victorian France as a psychosomatic illness coincided with the heightened normalization of the bourgeois family, the ascendance of global white supremacy, and the social crises inaugurated by the emergence of the “New Woman.”¹³⁸ Victorian elites mobilized the discourse of hysteria as a disquieting shibboleth against sick women who were maligned as feminists and against feminists denigrated for their affront to masculine authority. As Laura Briggs writes, following Lisa Tickner’s work on British suffrage, “for half a century and more, feminism and hysteria were readily mapped on to each other as forms of irregularity, disorder, and excess, and the claim that the women’s movement was made up of hysterical females was one of the principal means by which it was popularly discredited.”¹³⁹ As the movement for women’s suffrage expanded during the nineteenth century, feminist oration presented a new problem for the ruling elite.¹⁴⁰ Claire Kahan notes that the figure of the speaking woman provoked psychological ambivalence among women who were anxious about possessing the

power of voice. This anxiety, she notes, took the form of aphonia and paralysis, two of the defining features of hysteria.

To interrogate the figure of the hysterical woman as “both sign and symptom of conflict over the cultural meaning of gender” entails an acknowledgment of the constitutive role of race in engendering femininity.¹⁴¹ Though rarely seen as a discourse about race, the hystericization of women’s bodies was, as Michel Foucault writes, one of the sexual mechanisms of knowledge and power through which biopower took shape in the eighteenth century.¹⁴² White women’s challenges to patriarchal authority in the nineteenth century were often framed as a threat to their reproductive capacity and figured as a form of “race suicide.”¹⁴³ Though hysteria afflicted men and working-class women, the disease was popularly understood to most forcefully impact white, class-privileged women believed to be physically weakened by domestic torpor. As Laura Briggs writes:

White, affluent women were delicate, nervous, and often too frail to bear children successfully or often. Or, as the more punitive version had it, they withheld sexuality and avoided maternity through birth control or by deceiving physicians into aborting them. They transgressed against the natural order by seeking higher education and employment, often as teachers. Black, indigenous, immigrant, poor, and colonized women still gave birth naturally, and were easily and prolifically fertile.¹⁴⁴

Hysteria thus existed in the orbit of nineteenth-century racial science, which pitted the nervous, “over-civilized” bourgeois woman against “savage” women. As Victorian racial scientists fashioned theories that black people had greater capacity for pain than did whites, black women were imagined to be immune from physical pain as well as nervous disorders.¹⁴⁵ Given that reproduction was understood, by the end of the eighteenth century, as a biological, sexual and racialized process and as

the main motor of national health, it was a central concept-metaphor in the legitimation of white supremacist imperialism. This begs the question of whether the photographic ordering of hysteric poses was motivated by Victorian doctors' desire to order their patients' contingent movements, penetrate the "surface illusions" so readily associated with hysteria, and rationalize the contingent racial health of the nation.¹⁴⁶

The relationship of lynching and hysteria to blackness coheres around a shared absolute negation of black ma(t)ter – they both figure black ma(t)ter as the excess flesh that licenses and demands ritualized bloodletting and ever more grandiose schemes of confinement. How, then, does the serialization of Amy's breakdown figure black pathology as the uncanny underside to the health of the nation? How does the sick (traumatized, over-expressive, agitated, animated) black woman emerge, fungibly, for the use of the new regime? What times accumulate in this set of photographs, in the sextet that purports to capture Amy's passion?

The January 24, 1949 edition of *LIFE* opens, as the magazine so often did, with ads for juice and soap, tissues and breath fresheners, car comfort and baby wipes. Nineteen pages into the issue is a "Week's Events" section. It includes photographic stories on Puerto Rico's first elected governor (in which the magazine's writers refer to Puerto Ricans as "both citizens and backward stepchildren of the U.S."), the growing peace movement in France, and Indonesian guerilla warfare against Dutch incursions into northern Sumatra. Sandwiched between the stories about the burgeoning peace movement and imperialist warfare in Indonesia is the photo-text about the Howell-Clifton trial and an ad for frozen

spinach that promises consumers they can have the “work-free-est, farm-freshest spinach” (figure 16).¹⁴⁷ The photographic story in *LIFE* does not seem concerned with the reproduction/race bind that lay latent at the heart of the construction of the hysteric. But perhaps the invocation of hysteria signals the unconscious force



Figure 16. Add for frozen spinach and “Widow of Lynch Victim Sobs Out Her Grief,” *LIFE Magazine*, Jan 24, 1949.

of the domestic ideological framework of citizenship, the extent to which black incorporation, blacks’ right to the rights of the human, have relied upon an impossible collusion with the white supremacist fiction of the heteronormative family. Maybe Amy’s nerves and nervousness (a journalist covering the Clifton-Howell trial in *The Dunkirk Evening Observer* described Amy as “nervous,” “hysterical,” “under a physician’s care,” and “fearful of being attacked,” while the

Pittsburgh Courier reported that Amy remained on the witness stand for seventeen minutes before she broke down “into incoherent sobs”) signaled to members of the Luce machine an opportunity: a frailty and a new burden for white viewers who would be white compassionates.¹⁴⁸ It could also have functioned as a soothing balm to white readers in its suggestion that this widow, thrown from herself in bereavement, had entered into a state not conducive to the reproduction of her race. This would have been a misfit with the reproductive bind of citizens to the nation, perhaps, but one that might have facilitated an appearance of good faith protection and integration in disjunctive coincidence with the visual consumption of black pain. We might just as well conclude that Mallard’s nomination as hysterical acted also as a warning to potential black (on)lookers (though *LIFE* was consumed by middle and upper class white subjects, black laborers in white homes would surely have glimpsed at the magazine) that full citizenship rights demanded respectability.

Amy is the sole witness for the prosecution. Prosecutor Lanier paces in front of her as he prepares his next question. He approaches, asking her to tell how her husband was shot. *Howell stood on my side of the car with a rifle in his hands. They murdered him! The blood gushed from his mouth from his nose and a stream larger than my arm.* There is a hushed murmur, a hollow white noise, and then she feels the light again, feels it flash sudden and bright against her skin. The flash of the cameras –



Figure 17. Amy Mallard in the Toombs County Superior Courtroom, January 11, 1949. This is the second frame of the image sequence of Amy's breakdown. Francis Miller/*LIFE* Magazine.

mimicking the flash of the car headlights and the shots that followed fast – trigger her traumatic immersion in the scene of her husband's death. As Amy descends into the killing, she hears the shots. As she replays the men before her murdering her husband and trying to murder her, her child and adolescent cousins huddling shocked and out of reach behind her, her gaze on the floor of the car and the courtroom, those shots ring out. She is back there in that place where the blood pools and her heart is as loud as a crash. *Oh Lord, oh Lord, why did they murder him?*

The presence of the press at the trial induced Amy's re-witnessing of her husband's murder; her subjection to the shock effect of the photographic flash took her back into the sunken memory-space of the lynching. The flash functioned in the same way it did at the Salpêtrière, the same way it does in Jordan Peele's *Get Out*; as a shocking encounter with the repressed Real of a (racially) traumatic occurrence.¹⁴⁹

Charcot, recall, used flash photography to trigger in his patients the cataleptic movements that originated in buried traumas and that they exhibited during hysterical fits. Georges Didi-Huberman describes the catalepsy (from the Greek *katalepsia*, for “to seize upon”) provoked by the shock of Londe’s photographic flash as “a pinning in place.”¹⁵⁰ In this instance, the trauma is the racial encounter that left Robert Mallard dead, that reduced the black business area of Lyons to cinder, that resulted in an unnamed woman being beaten to death in an alleyway, that prompted the Mallard family to flee to upstate New York. Amy’s testimony was, in some senses, a repetition of the crime; in the courtroom, in the face of the flash of cameras, of men and women making strange at her as she was traversed by the sensation of her husband’s death and by the lacunae his loss had left in her life, there he was again. And then was gone.

At issue is Amy’s experience of the law’s gaze and of the popular press’s mediation of this gaze. In her seizure, Amy is constituted by the desire of the other and by that other’s formation as a subject through the constitutive experience of racial misrecognition. As Frantz Fanon writes in “The Lived Experience of the Black,” the white subject’s false impression of wholeness depends upon the abject stain of blackness in the visual field. Fanon famously takes up Lacan’s figuration of the fetish as a “freeze-frame” in his psychoanalytic exploration of the phenomenological experience of anti-black racism. Fanon conceives of the effects of the white gaze as a radical suspension of his bodily schema, as an “affective ankylosis” that pins him in place. Tellingly, *LIFE* reproduces Amy’s pain as a series

of snapshots. We might think of the snapshot montage of Amy's fall as a *tableau vivant*, as a living picture that puts her in paradoxical suspension.

Helpful in conceptualizing the racialized dimensions of the photo-text's seizure of Amy's love-sorrow is Sianne Ngai's analysis in *Ugly Feelings* of the racialized "affective spectacle" of animatedness in U.S. popular culture.¹⁵¹ Ngai writes: "The affective ideologeme of animatedness foregrounds the degree to which emotional qualities seem especially prone to sliding into *corporeal* qualities where the African-American subject is concerned, reinforcing the notion of race as a truth located, quite naturally, in the always obvious, highly visible body."¹⁵² This slippage tilts toward both political agitation and automation; as Ngai explains, animatedness construes the racialized body as a puppet, as "an instrument, porous and pliable, for the vocalization of others."¹⁵³ The racialization of animatedness renders it ugly:

in its racialized form animatedness loses its generally positive associations with human ... vitality and comes to resemble a kind of mechanization. At the same time, the minimal affect is turned into a form of emotional *excess*, and similarly stripped of its intentionality. Hence in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* it no longer matters what emotion, negative or positive, moves or animates the African-American slave; rather, his or her animated state itself becomes the primary object of the narrator's quasi-ethnographic fascination.¹⁵⁴

Ngai's conceptualization of animatedness locates this racialization of affect in the abolitionist writings of William Lloyd Garrison and Stowe. Garrison, in his testament to the authenticity of Douglass's slave narrative, ventriloquizes Douglass while breaking his bodily movement down into phases that suggest black corporeal animation's capacity to stimulate political agitation. Similarly, Stowe figures Uncle Tom's praying evocation of Scripture as emotionally valuable, as moving his

audience, because it takes the form of ventriloquism.¹⁵⁵ Both Garrison and Stowe's texts

dramatize the animation of racialized bodies for political purposes ... In both cases, the connection between animation and affectivity is surprisingly fostered through acts resembling the practice of puppeteering, involving either the body's ventriloquism or a physical manipulation of its parts. Yet the 'thinging' of the body in order to construct it, counter-intuitively, as impassioned is deployed by both abolitionists as a strategy of shifting the status of the body from thing to human, as if the racialized, hence already objectified body's reobjectification, in being animated, were paradoxically necessary to emphasize its personhood or subjectivity.¹⁵⁶

Ngai analyzes, as well, the racialization of animatedness in twentieth-century cartoons, thus helping us think about how mechanically reproducible technologies are crucial to transforming sentiment into a "racializing technology."¹⁵⁷

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes writes that photography "is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead."¹⁵⁸ Photography, for Barthes, overwhelmingly returns us to the past, to the "that-has-been" even as its referents appear lifelike and present. Though *LIFE*'s serialization of Amy's testimony calls to mind the chronophotographic experiments undertaken in the nineteenth century by Etienne-Jules Marey to picture duration, the snapshots arrest her movements on the witness stand, thereby returning the Mallards to the past.¹⁵⁹ Photography's indexical quality, the "that-has-been" aspect of the photograph that tethers it to the past, functions in this case, as Susan Sontag argues, to give the viewer the impression that they are disconnected from the violence depicted in the photographs.¹⁶⁰ *LIFE*'s reduction of Amy's seventeen-minute testimony into six snapshots turns her suffering into a *pathologeme*, into a photographic structure of feeling whose affective

force colludes with the magazine staff's editorialization.¹⁶¹ To conceptualize *LIFE*'s seizure of Amy's corporeal movements and its recuperation of her grief as a *pathologeme* is to underscore its attempt to order her excessive pathos. This *pathologeme*, following Fredric Jameson and Ngai's formulations, gave tenuous form to black pathology as a solution to the reigning social contradiction of the post-war period. The headline suggests that Amy's experience at the trial is at least partially cathartic. But grief, according to Barthes and Eugenie Brinkema, is undialectical, non-transformative. It weighs Amy down, and cannot be turned into testimony. That the flash photography in the courtroom would turn Amy's testimony into an untimely encounter makes sense if we think about grief as a photographic structure.

Conclusion: Can We Get a Witness?

If hysteria is a set of statements about the hysteric, then the hysteric is what eludes those statements.

- Gérard Wajcman, "The Hysteric's Discourse"

How does Amy's uncontainable grief at the loss of her husband, as well as the love that moved her to face his killers and her attackers to secure something akin to justice, signify as an extra-legal practice more egregious than the Klan's violence? What happens in the space between their trial and hers, between the new façade of southern justice and the ongoing exposure of Amy's grief to magazine-readers across the country? Can we conceptualize these photographs as lynching photographs?

I would like to end by suggesting that the trial's constitutive relationship to lynching emerges in *LIFE*'s photographic supplement. It is through arresting Mrs.

Mallard (first in her literal arrest by the Toombs County Sherriff and then in her photographic arrest by the popular press) that Clifton and Howell's innocence is secured. *LIFE* frames Amy's aesthetic practice – her being there on the witness stand, and her material and affective performance of her family's pain – as a greater outrage than the act of shooting a man dead because he drove a flashy car, ran a successful business, helped his friends vote, and took up residence on his wife's white family's farm. Amy's breakdown, her sudden fall into an "excessive" display of passion, turns the mock trial of Clifton and Howell into a different kind of mock trial – into the kind that had historically preceded lynchings in performative displays of white authority. Rituals of anti-black torture and extinguishment during the high era of lynching often included mock trials during which the accused would be forced, through torture, to confess to their alleged crimes.¹⁶² But the imputed guilt of the accused was not always elicited through confession. Lynchings became legible as forms of community justice because they enacted rather than named the guilt of the lynched, substituting a verbal legalistic procedure of establishing guilt with felicitous, performative action that worked analogously to a performative utterance in J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech.¹⁶³ In the aftermath of the lynching of Robert Mallard, Amy Mallard's body was called upon as evidence of the mob's innocence. The mob trial was, in fact, part of the lynching, was part of the ritual that established the guilt of the lynched.

My argument that the photographs function as lynching photographs turns precisely on her imputed guilt and the narrative shadowing the trial that Mrs. Mallard was the one responsible for her husband's death. When national newspapers

began to report on the assault in late November of 1948, federal pressure came down on Georgia Governor Herman Talmadge and on the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to investigate the lynching. Otherwise, the Toombs County Sheriff would be held liable according to the new standards set out by the PCCR that stipulated that local officials must be prosecuted if they failed to intervene or investigate lynchings. Governor Talmadge found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to hold the local Klan accountable unless he could demonstrate that someone else was responsible for the killing. After Talmadge ordered an inquiry, the Klan-affiliated Toombs County Sheriff and Georgia state highway police responded by arresting Amy at Robert's funeral in Savannah.¹⁶⁴ The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) interrogated Amy for nine hours, charged her with her husband's murder, and then ordered Sheriff Gray to release her without bond, and with no explanation.¹⁶⁵ At the trial, Howell and Clifton's defense attorney claimed that Amy's story was false because of alleged conflicting statements from "witnesses" who testified that she dropped a pistol from her clothing while bending over her dead husband, and that she had fired one of the two shots.¹⁶⁶ Near the end of the mob trial, defense lawyer T. Ross Sharpe called two of the trial jurors to testify as character witnesses on Howell's behalf. Both testified that they would not believe Mallard's testimony because of "her bad reputation."¹⁶⁷ They dressed Amy's bereaved and prayerful deposition in the language of dishonor and unreliability. Together, they pulled the trigger of the law with their eyes on a white prize they refused to abandon. Writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, journalist Robert Ratcliffe observed: "From the courthouse peanut gallery where colored spectators observed

developments of the trial, it didn't look like Howell was on trial at all. It appeared that Mrs. Amy Mallard, the slain man's widow, and Joseph Morris Goldwasser, Cleveland businessman who befriended Mrs. Mallard, were the defendants."¹⁶⁸ Indeed, the black press perceived the trial, which lasted a mere five hours, to be a mob trial, noting the fact that Aaron Kravitch, a lawyer employed by the Georgia Defense Committee and appointed to Amy, issued a public comment on the fairness of trial and that he was satisfied there would be "few Mallard cases in the future."¹⁶⁹

LIFE's symbolic and indexical capture does not seem, at first pass, to cloak Amy in the flesh of a discourse that has rationalized the expropriation of indigenous territories, the destruction of native and maroon life-ways, and the clearing of space for the emergence of an anti-black public. Amy Mallard's "hysterical" affective body became a site for the troubled production of an emerging national mandate of black incorporation after the global onto-epistemological breach inaugurated by World War II. But *LIFE's* turn to the language of hysteria immobilizes Amy, cloaking her in the flesh of a nominative discourse that discredits her pain as a spectacular and particularized racial performance. Peaches, Brown Sugar, Sapphire, Jezebel -- and now this hysteric, nigger rich and weeping, responsible for her husband's death. The photographs dissemble her hysteric dissemblance, put the lie to her cunning grief. In presenting Amy's pain as particular, *LIFE* bars her from the universalizing protocols of aesthetic judgment that Arendt believed to be a crucial component of a distant spectator's political capacity to judge another's belonging in a place in the world. *LIFE's* rhetorical nomination of Mallard as a black hysteric circumscribes her humanity, reminding readers that she belongs to no nation.

The six photographs of Amy on the witness stand are lynching photographs. They keep her on trial, under examination. *LIFE* magazine's attempt to order Amy's pathos turns her into a *pathologeme*, rendering her culpable for the crime. She is a stand-in for her husband; these photographs function as "proof" of his and her guilt. My reading of the six photographs of Amy Mallard has focused on the anxious effects of the post-war crisis among black Georgians besieged by a stalwart Klan-affiliated government resistant to federally-mandated racial progress and among the middle-class spectators across the country who glanced upon a moving image of lynching they had not seen before. I have read the circulation of these courtroom photographs as hysterical lynching photographs in order to suggest that Mallard's torturous treatment by the Toombs County justice system, by the state of Georgia, and by white middle-class *LIFE* readers turned her husband's death into an anti-black spectacle.

In the aftermath of the Mallard lynching, the black press published numerous photographs of Amy Mallard as a bereaved widow and doting mother fighting for legal redress in the killing of her husband. In a January 22 front-page story in *The Pittsburgh Courier* on Amy's "crucifixion" at the Clifton-Howell mob trial is a photograph of Amy with her son, John. The language of crucifixion hits on a common trope in black representations of lynching, in which the lynched are figured as victims and martyrs. Here we see the recourse to the family as a



Figure 18. “Georgia Justice! Mallard Widow is Crucified at KKK Mob Trial,” *Pittsburgh Courier*. January 22, 1949.

mechanism for grounding Mallard in the respectable terms of bourgeois citizenship. Amy’s image in the press was a harbinger of the images of civil rights mothers and widows that would, over the next two decades, picture the boundaries of Cold War activism. In the 1950s and 1960s, Mamie Till, Myrlie Evers-Williams, Coretta Scott King, and Betty Shabazz were photographed and valued, as Jennifer Nash writes, for their “proximity to murdered black male flesh.”¹⁷⁰ Represented as “staked in their grief and as thus oriented toward the past,” civil rights widows were:

regularly called upon to reflect on the distance between the unfolding present and a racist past when their husbands were violently killed. ... their own orientation toward the past is precisely what enables the nation to move

forward; their personal trauma permits a new kind of American futurity, one that both recognizes the racial inequities that permitted their husbands to be slaughtered and celebrates an American fantasy in which racial violence no longer persists.¹⁷¹

Even as I want to pit the *LIFE* photographs against the photographs of Amy that were published in the black press in order to resituate her in context, in community, in struggle – writing, breaking down, leaning on her daughter, being comforted by her baby, talking to Walter White – I want to also hold space for a critique of the conscious move on the part of activists and the black press to position her as a respectable middle class lady. During the mob trial in Toombs County, Amy did not order her grief according to the progressive terms demanded of her by the new race-liberal agenda. Breaking down in the midst of the state’s demand that she testify, Amy was not merely hysterical; she was unincorporable, eluding (in hysteric fashion) the statements made about her by the defendants, witnesses, jurors, and press.¹⁷²

In fact, her “testimony” was a kind of prolegomenon to the next phase of her life, in which she was put to brief use by the NAACP, who sponsored a speaking tour in which she testified across the country about her experiences with the Georgia justice system to promote civil rights legislation. The tour did not last long, however, as Amy’s relationship with the NAACP fell apart. In a private letter, Marshall and White doubted her veracity, concluding that it would be better to end the tour.¹⁷³ It is worth considering what Amy’s break from the representational politics of the NAACP and her subsequent collaborations with other black women against U.S. Cold War domestic and foreign policy might mean for a delineation of

the human beyond the rights-based paradigm of Man.¹⁷⁴

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ “Widow of Lynch Victim Sobs Out Her Grief,” *LIFE* Magazine (Jan 24, 1949), 35.

² “Widow,” *LIFE*, 35.

³ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁴ Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 9; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 2, 47.

⁵ Jodi Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” *Social Text* 24, no. 4 (2006), 5.

⁶ Asma Abbas, “Suffering and the Liberal Sensorium,” *Theory & Event* 13:2 (2010).

⁷ Lili Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal Into the Cold War* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1.

⁸ Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 5, 10.

⁹ FSA photographs of black laborers were often taken in extreme closeups in ways that reduced them to “a homogeneous background presence” of black labor that “worked the land.” See Nicholas Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 21.

¹⁰ Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, 79.

¹¹ Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, 174–6.

¹² I take this history up in more detail in chapter three in my analysis of the display of a photograph of the 1937 torture of Bootjack McDaniels in *The Family of Man*.

¹³ John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xxxi–xxxii.

¹⁴ Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 86.

¹⁵ Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, 188.

¹⁶ Singh, *Black is a Country*, 103.

¹⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 69.

¹⁸ Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 2.

¹⁹ James L. Baughman, “Who Read *LIFE*: The Circulation of America’s Favorite Magazine,” in *Looking at LIFE Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 44.

²⁰ Henry Luce, “An American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 23:2 (Spring 1999) [1941], 161.

²¹ Luce, “An American Century,” 169. Luce explicitly uses the term “internationalism” throughout his essay. See also Singh, *Black is a Country*, 129.

²² Luce, “An American Century,” 165–167.

²³ Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, 262.

²⁴ I take hegemony and biopower to be co-constitutive modes of governance in the U.S. context at midcentury, operating through normalization and through contests over meaning as well as through unconscious mechanisms and population management. See Joshua St. Pierre, “Fluency and the Biopolitics of Hegemony,” 181; Kylie Jarrett, “The Alternative to Post-Hegemony: Reproduction and Austerity’s Social Factory,” *Culture Unbound* 6, 2014: 137–157.

²⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 35.

²⁶ Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34.

²⁷ Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.

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- ²⁸ Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), ix; Singh, *Black is a Country*, 123.
- ²⁹ In a strange turn on the analogy, *LIFE* magazine editors, in a seven-page pictorial on the Detroit race riot of 1943, asserted that the bloody riots were the consequence of Nazi propaganda. See Brett Gray, "The Pitiless Spotlight of Publicity: *LIFE* and the World War II-Era Exposure of American Extremists," in *Looking at Life Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 93.
- ³⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 35, 53.
- ³¹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 57.
- ³² Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 38.
- ³³ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 54.
- ³⁴ Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 37.
- ³⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 55.
- ³⁶ Laura Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 26.
- ³⁷ Patrick Novotny, *This Georgia Rising: Education, Civil Rights, and the Politics of Change in Georgia in the 1940s* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007), 8, 27, 154, 177; Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake*, 35.
- ³⁸ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 63.
- ³⁹ Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake*, 31.
- ⁴⁰ Novotny, *This Georgia Rising*, 31.
- ⁴¹ Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake* 27; Novotny, *This Georgia Rising*, 152.
- ⁴² George and Mae Murray had worked together as sharecroppers alongside George's sister, Dorothy, and her husband, Roger, on a farm owned by Loy Harrison. Roger had been arrested after getting into a fight with Barnette Hester on July 11. Two weeks later, Harrison travelled to the jail, along with Dorothy and the Murrays, to bail out Roger. After successfully freeing him from jail and beginning to make their way home, they were ambushed by a group of men who ordered them out of Harrison's car. The men lined up the four sharecroppers, and shot them to death.
- ⁴³ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 60-61. An 1893 anti-lynching law in Georgia penalized sheriffs who failed to protect detainees from mobs. As in other states, the involvement of the police in a lynching makes it a federal crime. Though the FBI investigated, its agents were unable or unwilling to uncover conclusive evidence. No one was ever held accountable. See Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP crusade against lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 20.
- ⁴⁴ The NAACP built off the legal pressures they had been mounting since 1912. Ida B. Wells for a federal anti-lynching statute that would criminalize extra-judicial killings. In 1922, the Dyer bill had sought to fine counties and local officials for failing to stop or investigate lynchings, to jail officers who assisted lynch mobs, and to allow for federal action when local agents refused to respond to extralegal killings. Though the bill had passed in the House in 1922, it was repeatedly filibustered by Hatton Sumners and other southern Democrats from 1922-1924 on the grounds that the federal government had no constitutional jurisdiction in southern states. When lynchings rose again during the Depression, the organization renewed its legal drive with help from the ACLU and the Popular Front-era CPUSA, and under the sponsorship of Senate Democrats Wagner of New York and Costigan of Colorado. In 1935, 1937 and 1940, the legislation again passed in the House and failed in the Senate under pressure from southern senators, including South Carolina's "Cotton Ed" Smith. In January 1944, Congressman David Lane Powers introduced an anti-lynching bill to provide federal protection for black troops upon their return to civilian life. With national membership in the NAACP growing from 205,000 in 1943 to 395,000 in 1946, the organization entered into another intense phase of legal lobbying that lasted from 1947 to 1950. See Zangrando, *The NAACP crusade against lynching*, 61, 111, 114-115, 120, 137, 165, 170, 171.
- ⁴⁵ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 72; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 18-20.
- ⁴⁶ On April 25, 1945, fifty nations met in San Francisco to form the United Nations. The new international body was meant to facilitate cooperation in international law, security, economic development, and human rights.

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- ⁴⁷ National Negro Congress, *A Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of 13 Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America* (New York: National Negro Congress, 1946), 4–5; Article I, Sec. 3, Charter of the United Nations.
- ⁴⁸ National Negro Congress, *A Petition to the United Nations*, 3.
- ⁴⁹ National Negro Congress, *A Petition to the United Nations*, 7. Aptheker’s short essay charged that anti-black oppression was “based upon the inhuman, unscientific, Fascist theory of ‘racism.’” His report delineated blacks’ circumscription to the dirtiest and least remunerated labor, landlord gouging, poor housing quality, impoverished education, and subjection to disfranchisement, peonage, and violence. See Herbert Aptheker, “The Oppression of the American Negro: The Facts,” in *A Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of 13 Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America* (New York: National Negro Congress, 1946), 8.
- ⁵⁰ Aptheker, “The Oppression of the American Negro,” 14.
- ⁵¹ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 30.
- ⁵² Du Bois had the NAACP public relations director leak the petition, without White’s consent, to the *New York Times* and other newspapers. The *New York Times* immediately published the petition’s charge that the American South’s corruption of the democratic process posed a greater threat to the U.S. than did the Soviets. See George Streater, “Negroes to Bring Cause Before U.N.,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1947, 52; Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 103–104.
- ⁵³ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Introduction,” in NAACP, *An Appeal to the World! A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States of America and an Appeal the United Nations for Redress*. New York: NAACP, 1947), 2
- ⁵⁴ Du Bois, “Introduction,” in *An Appeal to the World!*, 6.
- ⁵⁵ Du Bois, “Introduction,” in *An Appeal to the World!*, 12. During WWII, Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi asked Congress to pass a bill that would deport black Americans to Africa. Senator Bilbo stated on the campaign trail in 1946 that “the best way to keep the nigger from voting... [was to] do it the night before an election,” and instructed his followers that, “If any nigger ties to organize to vote, use the tar and feathers and don’t forget the matches.” Quoted in Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, 64; see also Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 44.
- ⁵⁶ Du Bois, “Introduction,” in *An Appeal to the World!*, 13.
- ⁵⁷ Du Bois, “Introduction,” in *An Appeal to the World!*, 1, 13.
- ⁵⁸ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 44.
- ⁵⁹ Singh writes that black activist intellectuals and activists who have confronted assertions of universal moral, political and ethical value of the nation-state have done so through a dialectical discourse of race and nation, a “‘negative dialectic’ in which black intellectuals and activists recognized that racial belonging operates at scale that are both smaller and larger than the nation-state, and voiced visions of communal possibility that consistently surpassed the conceptions available in the prevailing idioms of U.S. political culture.” Black political life has been marked by generation of new universals, Singh writes; the critical task is to trace movements of black social thought and action in their self-consciously dialectical relationship to official civic ideology, rhetoric and norms of U.S. nationalism and government practice. Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” is one of earliest examples. Singh, *Black is a Country*, 44, 126.
- ⁶⁰ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 82.
- ⁶¹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 45.
- ⁶² At the Washington Conversations on International Peace and Security Organization held in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks (a former slave plantation in Washington, D.C.), representatives from the U.S., U.K., and Soviet Union had balked at China’s request that racial equality be a key element of the plans for a revised international agreement. Where Britain was concerned about its waning colonial power and the Soviet Union was keen to maintain its expanding sphere of influence, the U.S. feared international interference in its notoriously racist justice system. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 202.
- ⁶³ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 74–75.
- ⁶⁴ “Jail Wife of Mob Victim In Frame-Up,” *The Chicago Defender* (Dec 4, 1948), 2.

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- ⁶⁵ The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was formally adopted by United Nations on December 9, 1948 and ratified in 1951. The U.S. Senate did not adopt the Convention until 1986. See Sharon Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 115.
- ⁶⁶ United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 1.
- ⁶⁷ Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 15-19; Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 103-104.
- ⁶⁸ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 4.
- ⁶⁹ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 131-133.
- ⁷⁰ Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 205; Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 48.
- ⁷¹ Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 102-105.
- ⁷² Kant argues that aesthetic judgment is a “merely subjective” (and thus highly particularistic) form of thought that relies upon feelings rather than rational deliberation. Because aesthetic judgment is highly particularistic, Kant argues that it cannot be used to legislate. Sharon Sliwinsky writes that though “the mode of thought that animates the aesthetic realm is not equivalent or appropriate to the world of juridical legislation” – a realm that relies on argumentation – Kant did admit that such judgment has ‘a principle peculiar to itself upon which laws are sought.’ Aesthetic judgment uses particular instances to aim toward universal principles.” Where Kant based his moral and political philosophy on practical reason, Arendt redefined Kant’s aesthetic judgment as a moral and ethical issue, arguing that aesthetic judgment was a form of exemplary thought. Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 6, 24-25, 46; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books), 383; Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Press, 2003), 136.
- ⁷³ Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 19; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs From Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 68.
- ⁷⁴ Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 101-2.
- ⁷⁵ Sliwinsky, *Human Rights in Camera*, 105.
- ⁷⁶ As Amy Louise Wood, Shawn Michelle Smith, Leigh Raiford, and Courtney A. Baker have emphasized, when anti-lynching activists published photographs of lynching, they shied away from focusing on the violence’s black victims and instead focused on lynching’s assault on white civility, morality, and humanity. See Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 185-260; Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 115-144; Courtney A. Baker, *Humane Insight: Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death* (Urbana: the University of Illinois Press), 40.
- ⁷⁷ Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, “Unparalleled catastrophe for our species? Or, to give humanness a different future: conversations,” in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 10; Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Before man: Sylvia Wynter’s rewriting of the modern episteme,” in *Sylvia Wynter*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 96.
- ⁷⁸ “Mallard Lynch Trial Highlights: Negroes Sat in Gallery, But Not Without Fear,” *Pittsburgh Courier* (January 22, 1949), 5.
- ⁷⁹ A reporter for the Chicago Defender, writing about the mob trial, noted that the Klan “dominated the political and civic life of Toombs County.” See “Two Face Jail In Mallard Lynching,” 1.
- ⁸⁰ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, xi.
- ⁸¹ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, x.
- ⁸² Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, xv, xvi, xviii, 2-3, 22.
- ⁸³ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 24.
- ⁸⁴ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 24.
- ⁸⁵ Baldwin writes that Richard Wright’s *Native Son* is animated by this theological terror, for its protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is motivated by hatred and fear and his tragedy, according to Baldwin, is that he has accepted a theology that denies him life. “He admits the possibility of his being sub-human and feels constrained, therefore, to battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria

- bequeathed him at his birth. ... The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended." James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *Notes of a Native Son* (London: Pluto, 1985), 14-23. See also Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 34.
- ⁸⁶ Gillian Rose, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15-18, 40.
- ⁸⁷ Dillon, "Sentimental Aesthetics," 502.
- ⁸⁸ Dillon, "Sentimental Aesthetics," 503.
- ⁸⁹ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 42. The aesthetic cultivation of the subject in the affective terms of liberal sentimental culture creates what Lauren Berlant terms an "intimate public," an affective space that feels common but which is organized around the consumptive and privatizing cultivation of the self. Berlant argues that sentimentality's universalist pretensions take shape near, against, and above the political domain: "sentimental culture entails a proximate alternative community of individuals sanctioned by recognizing the authority of true feeling – authentic, virtuous, compassionate – at the core of a just world." Indeed, in liberal political philosophy and publics, suffering is a key imperative for the attainment of possessive individualism. John Locke and Kant argue that injury requires property, and that (as Asma Abbas glosses), "things attain the status of 'property' by virtue of how much injury they broker on our behalf. The injury to our property allows us to determine the injury we suffer." She continues: "Injury and property necessitate and reciprocate each other; victimhood requires property in injury, injury requires property in our bodies and in objects as extension of our bodies, and property itself requires the capacity to be harmed or injured. One's belonging to a liberal public, one's recognition by the state, is thus incumbent upon the transvaluation of injury into a commodified extension of the self that one nevertheless has to alienate in order to achieve the liberal parameters of personhood. See Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, viii, 5, 34; Asma Abbas, *Liberalism and Human Suffering: Materialist Reflections on Politics, Ethics, and Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 25.
- ⁹⁰ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53.
- ⁹¹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 94.
- ⁹² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1853-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 199-203; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 94.
- ⁹³ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 19; Baker, *Humane Insight*, 4.
- ⁹⁴ Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," 18.
- ⁹⁵ Alexander G Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 12.
- ⁹⁶ Elizabeth Dillon, "Sentimental Aesthetics," *American Literature*, 76:3 (September 2004), 502.
- ⁹⁷ Arendt's archipolitical position erects a division between the public and the private in her assertion that the proper place of rights is not in the private being of the individual but in the individual's participation in public political life. See Jacques Rancière, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3, (Spring/Summer 2004), 298, 300-301.
- ⁹⁸ Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland, "Raw Life: An Introduction," *Qui Parle*. 13:2 (Spring/Summer 2003): 53-62.
- ⁹⁹ Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 3; Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching*, 185.
- ¹⁰⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 77; Zangrando, *The NAACP crusade against lynching*, 175.
- ¹⁰¹ Singh, *Black is a Country*, 38-39, 136; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 13; Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 20.
- ¹⁰² Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 79-80.
- ¹⁰³ Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 116-7.
- ¹⁰⁴ Zangrando, *The NAACP crusade against lynching*, 193.
- ¹⁰⁵ Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, 29.

¹⁰⁶ White quoted in Zangrando, *The NAACP crusade against lynching*, 193-4. As Carolyn Anderson argues, Truman engaged in a politics of symbolic equality, as the “executive orders were issued with little or no funding to finance the endeavor; powerless commissions created to once again study ‘the Negro problem’ and give the aura of action; and directives issued from on high with no enforcement mechanism and no serious repercussions for noncompliance.” See Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ James L. Baughman, “Who Read *LIFE*: the Circulation of America’s Favorite Magazine,” in *Looking at LIFE Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 42. In his prospectus for *LIFE* magazine, Henry Luce wrote that the magazine “seeks to picture the world.” See Henry Luce, “A Prospectus for a New Magazine,” 4.

¹⁰⁸ Wendy Kozol, “Gazing at Race in the Pages of Life: Picturing Segregation through Theory and History,” in *Looking at LIFE Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 159, 162, 168. In its early years in the 1930s, *LIFE* had professed socially liberal ideas at the same time that it trafficked in typically demeaning imagery of black people and other people of color. A 1937 article on the blues musician Leadbelly, for example, was subtitled “Bad Nigger Makes Good Minstrel.” Brett Gray, “The Pitiless Spotlight of Publicity: *LIFE* and the World War II-Era Exposure of American Extremists,” Erika Doss, ed. *Looking at LIFE Magazine* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 78-79;

¹⁰⁹ Erika Doss, “Introduction: Looking at Life: Rethinking America’s Favorite Magazine, 1936-1972,” in *Looking at LIFE Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 229.

¹¹⁰ Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10-11. See Ida B. Wells and Jane Addams, *Lynching: An Exchange of Views*, edited and introduced by Bettina Aptheker. Occasional Paper No. 25 (1977).

¹¹¹ In her analysis of the discourse of seduction in slave law, Hartman demonstrates the pernicious attribution of willing assent of enslaved women to the rapacious sexual violence of plantation life. The discourse of seduction, Hartman writes, “makes recourse to the idea of reciprocal and collusive relations and engenders a precipitating construction of black female sexuality in which rape is unimaginable. As the enslaved is legally unable to give consent or offer resistance, she is presumed to be always willing.” See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 81, 92, 88.

¹¹² I am echoing Hartman, who writes: “The captive female does not possess gender as much as she is possessed by gender—that is, by way of a particular investment in and use of the body.” See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 100; Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 203-230; Angela Y. Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” *The Massachusetts Review* 13:1/2 (Winter-Spring 1972): 81-100; Ida B. Wells, etc.

¹¹³ Amii Larkin Barnard, “The Application of Critical Race Feminism to the Anti-Lynching Movement: Black Women’s Fight against Race and Gender Ideology, 1892-1920,” *UCLA Women’s Law Journal* 3 (1993), 11; Ashraf Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 13.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Barnard, “The Application of Critical Race Feminism to the Anti-Lynching Movement,” 11. See also Bettina Aptheker, *Woman’s legacy: essays on race, sex, and class in American history*, especially chapter 3. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982).

¹¹⁵ Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, 65.

¹¹⁶ Spillers, 69.

¹¹⁷ Spillers quoting Goodell in Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 79.

¹¹⁸ Spillers writes against this logic by questioning rather than assuming the legitimacy of proprietary notions of selfhood that are constitutive of the racialized gendering of property relations in the U.S. Rather than assume that black ontological negation stems from patriarchal natal alienation, Spillers advances a radical theorization of gendered social death that conceptualizes kinlessness as the process of being thrown *into* rather than *out of* the patrifocal or patronymic order. For her, the foreclosure of black being takes shape through the empirical and symbolical experience

of *mother loss*. For Spillers, it is mother loss and the negation of blackness on the grounds that it lay outside the civilizing protocols of the family that subtends the violent naming of black women. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 74.

¹¹⁹ Here I quote Roland Barthes, whose concept of mythic time Spillers takes up in her essay. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972 [1957]), 22. For a critique of Moynihan's use of the term matriarchate to describe enslaved black women, see Angela Y. Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Massachusetts Review* 13:1/2 (Winter-Spring 1972): 81-100.

¹²⁰ Zakiyyah Jackson, "The Sense of Things," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 2:2 (2016), 8.

¹²¹ Spillers, *Black, White, and In Color*, 155.

¹²² Spillers, *Black, White, and In Color*, 206.

¹²³ Rizvana Bradley writes: "Black femininity has circulated as both discursively empty and materially full, and this has direct implications for the way in which historically, the black woman has been biopolitically constructed, pathologized and held captive by slavery and capital, and excluded from the realm of symbolic power." See Rizvana Bradley, "Living in the Absence of a Body: The (Sus)Stain of Black Female (W)holeness," *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge* Issue 29 (2016), 6.

¹²⁴ I'm quoting Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology," *American Quarterly* 52:2 (June 2000), 246.

¹²⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003 [1982]), 124.

¹²⁶ Physiognomy appealed to both religious and scientific viewpoints by collapsing them in the rhetoric of morality. Based on the assumption of a solidarity between body and soul, physiognomy was imagined, in the words of the Swiss pastor Johann Lavater in 1772, as a "sermon on the goodness of God." Quoted in Patrizia Magli, "The Face and the Soul," *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* Part II, ed. Michael Feher (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 88; Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 175, 189; Sander L. Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander L. Gilman et. al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 351-352, 359. Both traditions influenced Charcot's practice and the developing representational economy of the Salpêtrière; Charcot had paintings of him and his patients on the walls of the asylum, and he conceptualized some of his patients' mysterious symptoms as forms of stigmata. In the words of Albert Londe, director of the photographic department of the Salpêtrière in the 1880s, "the photographic plate is the scientist's true retina." See Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 32.

¹²⁷ Galton quoted in Richard Twine, "Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body," *Body & Society* 8:1 (2002), 81.

¹²⁸ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 5, 12, 34.

¹²⁹ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive"; Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*.

¹³⁰ Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," 402.

¹³¹ Ulrich Baer, "Photography and Hysteria: Towards a Poetics of the Flash," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.1 (1994): 45.

¹³² Doctors and writers began to associate hysteria with deceit during the Middle Ages, when mental illness became coterminous with spirit possession and thus with the cunning of the devil. See Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject*, 105-106, 111.

¹³³ Baer, "Photography and Hysteria," 44-45.

¹³⁴ Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 17. Charcot's contemporaries accepted that the camera was, as Sander Gilman writes, "as necessary for the study of hysteria as the microscope was for histology." See Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," 352-3; Baer, "Photography and Hysteria," 64.

¹³⁵ Charcot noted: "You will meet with [simulation] at every step in the history of hysteria, and one finds himself sometimes admiring the amazing craft, sagacity, and perseverance which women, under the influence of this great neurosis, will put in play for the purposes of deception—especially when the physician is to be the victim. . . . It is incontestable that, in a multitude of cases, they have taken pleasure in distorting, by exaggerations, the principal circumstances of their disorder, in order to

-
- make them appear extraordinary and wonderful." Quoted in Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," 352; Baer, "Photography and Hysteria," 41-42.
- ¹³⁶ Gilman writes: "Charcot understands the realism of the image to transcend the crudity of the spoken word. In a letter to Freud on 23 November 1891 he commented concerning the transcription of his famed Tuesday lectures that "the stenographer is not a photographer." Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," 402, 415.
- ¹³⁷ Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 13.
- ¹³⁸ Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject* 118.
- ¹³⁹ Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria," 306.
- ¹⁴⁰ Claire Kahan, *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative, and the Figure of the Speaking Woman, 1850-1915* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), ix-xv).
- ¹⁴¹ Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria," 246-247.
- ¹⁴² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1. Sander Gilman writes: "For Freud the rejection of Charcot's mode of seeing the hysteric is also a rejection of the special relationship that the Jew has with the disease. The theme of the specific, inherited risk of the Jew for hysteria (and other forms of mental illness) was reflected in the work of Charcot which Freud translated. But even more so this general claim about the hereditary risk of the Jew was linked to a diagnostic system rooted in belief in external appearance as the source of knowledge about the pathological. For the seeing of the Jew as different was a topos of the world in which Freud lived. Satirical caricatures were to be found throughout the German-speaking world, which stressed the Jew's physical difference, and in the work of Charcot (and his contemporaries) these representations took on pathological significance." See Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," 415-6.
- ¹⁴³ Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria," 249-254; Alys Eve Weinbaum, *Wayward Reproductions: Genealogies of Race and Nation in Transatlantic Modern Thought* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), 4; Etienne Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 34-5.
- ¹⁴⁴ Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria," 265.
- ¹⁴⁵ Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria," 260.
- ¹⁴⁶ Joseph T. Zealy's North Carolina slave daguerreotypes for Dr. Louis Agassiz inaugurated the tradition of nineteenth-century anthropometric photography. See Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002) 47.
- ¹⁴⁷ *LIFE*, January 24, 1949, 19-34.
- ¹⁴⁸ "Trial of Georgia White Accused of Killing Negro Opened Today; Wife of Dead Man collapses in Courtroom" *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, January 11, 1949, 8; "Whitewash of Mob Cases is Predicted," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 11, 1948, 5.
- ¹⁴⁹ Jordan Peele, *Get Out*, 2017.
- ¹⁵⁰ Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 210.
- ¹⁵¹ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 125.
- ¹⁵² This racialized animatedness is what Ngai, following Fredric Jameson, terms an ideologeme: the smallest "unit" of an ideological system that is "never wholly visible and never fully present in any one of its individual utterances." Jameson situates the ideologeme at the center of the dialogical exchange between structure and superstructure and argues that it is the kernel of an aesthetic process of universalization that forms the basis of hegemonic ideology. Ngai mobilizes the ideologeme to discuss the ways that animation functions as both a rhetorical figure in addition to a screen practice. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 87-88, 95.
- ¹⁵³ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 31, 97.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ngai recalls the puppeteering scene in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as a paradigmatic illustration of black agitators as animated entertainers. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 32.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 95-97.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 9.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 92.
- ¹⁵⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 31-32.

¹⁵⁹ Marey's experiments in the graphic and photographic inscription of bodily movement, of the movements and moments that exceed human visibility, were part of widespread efforts in the late nineteenth century to, as Mary Ann Doane explains, "isolate and analyze the instant, to make an invisible time optically legible." Fragmenting and analyzing time and motion in his chronophotography (literally "the photography of time"), Marey was part of a community of physiologists in the late nineteenth century who sought to produce a "concept of life adequate to modernity – life as movement, process, change." His chronophotographs represented horses cantering, trotting or galloping, the movement of insect wings and the flight of birds. Marey's methods were aimed at cutting "into time so that it could become representable," with movement as the most "accessible expression of duration." In the instantaneous photography of the snapshot, instants that are normally blurred together in human vision can be disentangled; their presentation in a series give the appearance of duration, but, as Thierry de Duve writes, snapshots are inevitably past. For de Duve, rather than represent movement, instantaneous photography only produces a "petrified analogue" of movement; arresting action before its completion, the viewers will always be there too soon – trauma that structures instantaneous photography, for de Duve, lies in sudden vanishing of present tense, splitting into the contradiction of being simultaneously too late and too early. See Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4, 46–49, 103, 209.

¹⁶⁰ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977).

¹⁶¹ Pathologeme is a neologism inspired by the concept of the ideologeme. Originating in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Pvel Nikolaevich Medvedev in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* and adapted in Julia Kristeva's feminist writings on semiotics and desire as well as in Fredric Jameson's Marxist theorization of aesthetic ideology, the ideologeme is a concept-metaphor that elucidates the connection between linguistic utterances and their ideological contexts. For Bakhtin, writes Winfried Noth, "the ideologeme is practically any sign in human communication. Because it is 'an inseparable element of the unified ideological horizon of the social group' (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1928: 21), 'every word betrays the ideology of its speaker... every speaker, therefore is an ideologue, and every utterance an ideologeme' (Bakhtin 1937–38: 429). Winfried Noth, "Semiotics of ideology" *Semiotica* 148–1/4 (2004), 14–15. See also Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 2, 36; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 76.

¹⁶² This occurred in the lynching of Henry Smith.

¹⁶³ In Austin's challenge to logical positivism, "felicity" stands in the place of truth or falsity as an index of validity in a performative utterance. Michael Hatt persuasively argues that lynchings' often stylized nature fed on the assumed authenticity of southern affect; the antebellum system of honorable behavior, in which surface affect is read as truth, was given afterlife in ritual killings in which felicity rather than truth was invoked to validate and normalize routine violence. See Michael Hatt, "Race, Ritual, and Responsibility: Performativity and the Southern Lynching." *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, eds. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 77, 81.

¹⁶⁴ "Jail Wife Of Mob Victim In Frame-Up," *The Chicago Defender* (December 4, 1948), 1-2; "Five Decoys, Chicago Defender, 4.

¹⁶⁵ "Five 'Decoys' Surrender in Mallard Lynching Mystery," 4; "Slain Negro's Widow Released in Georgia," *New York Times* (November 29, 1948), 9.

¹⁶⁶ John Popham, "Georgians Freed in Negro's Killing; Two on Jury Testify for the Defense," *New York Times* (January 12, 1949), 30.

¹⁶⁷ Popham, "Georgians Freed in Negro's Killing," 1.

¹⁶⁸ Robert M. Ratcliffe, "Mallard Widow Is Crucified at KKK Mob Trial," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 22, 1949, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Amy's lawyer also opined that the case drew more attention than it deserved because of an impending bill for federal anti-lynching legislation. See "Mallard Lawyer Puts okay on Ga. 'Justice' At End of Lynch Trial," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 22, 1949, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Jennifer Nash, "Unwidowing: Rachel Jeantel, Black Death, and the 'Problem' of Black Intimacy," *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41:4 (2016), 757.

¹⁷¹ Nash, "Unwidowing," 757.

¹⁷² Gérard Wajcman, "The Hysteric's Discourse," *The Symptom*, accessed January 18, 2017, www.lacan.com/hystericdiscf.htm.

¹⁷³ John Warren, "Duck: A Legal History of Robert Mallard's Murder," *Civil Rights and Restorative Justice* (Working Document). Accessed online, January 2, 2016, <http://nuweb9.neu.edu/civilrights/wp-content/uploads/CRRJ-Mallard-Paper-3-21-12-v3.pdf>. In 1951, Amy joined the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, becoming an active member of the Cold War-era popular front against what contemporaries called "domestic genocide."

¹⁷⁴ See Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*.

Chapter 3.

America's 'Concrete Universal': Excising Lynching from *The Family of Man*

The public sphere is constituted in part by what can appear, and the regulation of the sphere of appearance is one way to establish what will count as reality, and what will not. It is also a way of establishing whose lives can be marked as lives, and whose deaths will count as deaths. Our capacity to feel and to apprehend hangs in the balance.

- Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*

It is the use that is made of pictures that makes them propaganda. These prints are obviously charged with human dynamite and the dynamite must be set off to become propaganda; they are not propaganda – not yet.

- Edward Steichen, "The FSA Photographers"

This chapter explores the removal of a photograph of the 1937 lynching of Robert "Bootjack" McDaniels from what is popularly known as the most successful and beloved photography exhibition of the twentieth century, Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man*. In the critical literature on the exhibition, little attention has been paid to the lynching photograph – to the circumstances of its production in 1937 in Mississippi, its subsequent circulation to the American middle class in the pages of *LIFE* magazine, its mobilization as propaganda on the floor of the Senate during the debate over the Wagner-Van Nuys anti-lynching bill, and its provenance as the first lynching photograph to appear in any major art institution in the United States in 1955 when Steichen selected it as part of his 500-picture opus on "human nature." In addition to exploring the historical context of the image's circulation, I consider – in keeping with the aesthetic and philosophical mandate of *The Family of Man*, which Steichen claimed was an aesthetic depiction of universal humanity –

what it might mean to conceive of lynching in general, and the Duck Hill massacre in particular, as representative of a universal history. In conversation with theories of negative dialectical totality, I argue that the excised lynching photograph represents a particular instance of anti-black terror in the Mississippi delta at the same time that we may glimpse within it an image of the world – the white supremacist social structure that was strengthened during the New Deal era in which the lynching occurred. This chapter proposes that the historical struggles that give meaning to the Duck Hill lynching photograph signify a concrete universal history of failed human freedom that flashes up to depose Steichen’s contention that marriage, waged labor, and a Christian God were, at mid-century, the ideal tools to ensure universal human survival in the anxious racial era of the atomic bomb.

“People are People the World Over”¹

On January 24, 1955, *The Family of Man* premiered at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to popular enthusiasm and critical acclaim. Comprised of “500-odd” photographs by 273 photographers, the exhibition was the ambitious attempt by its curator, Edward Steichen, to mobilize an international audience to his photographic vision of global peace.² The Luxembourg-American painter, photographer, ex-military officer, and then-director of the MoMA’s Photography Division was explicit about his vision for the show and for what he hoped would be its service to human history. As Steichen would write a few years after the exhibition’s premiere, the purpose of *The Family of Man* was “to show the relationship of man to man; to demonstrate what a wonderfully effective language

photography is in explaining man to man; and to express my own very firm belief that we are all alike on this earth, regardless of race or creed or color.”³ Steichen presented a modernist spin on an old positivism by reducing photography’s relational power to its capacity to present an object’s indexical trace (in this instance, to re-present the likeness of “man” relating to “man”) at the same time that he ascribed to photography the metaphoric power of symbolizing a universal human essence.⁴ Photography, he presumed, may match in form the matter at the heart of an idealist notion of human identity. Combining modernist exhibition techniques with documentary photographic content and a visual vocabulary that heralded the ascendant position of mid-century photo-journalism, Steichen and his curatorial assistants sought to integrate visitors into the feeling of a multinational, multicultural, and intergenerational “totality” – to create a specular display of human similitude and moral virtue in pacific opposition to the architects of Cold War belligerence.⁵

Steichen organized his theological vision of universal humanity around the tropes of heterosexuality, marriage, reproduction, and work, suggesting to 1950s audiences that full integration into a productivist schema might guard against the specter of Cold War nuclear annihilation, as well as regenerate those suffering from the physical and psychological fallout of WWII and the Korean War.⁶ Though *The Family of Man* has been canonized as a unique and formative event in the history of photography and mass media, critics have charged its author’s humanist vision with an obtuse naïveté whose domestic and domesticating framework was easily recuperated by the United States Information Agency (USIA) for its Kominform

project, an international anti-communist propaganda campaign in the late 1950s that circulated images of American families happily consuming mass-produced products.⁷ Indeed, nearly all of the 500 photographs that are included in the catalogue for *The Family of Man* trumpet the meta-text of the patriarchal family. Men court and caress women in England, Italy, Papua New Guinea, France, and the U.S. Pregnant women rejoice, convalesce, and wait. The exhibition even included a “pregnancy temple” in the form of a circular bassinet surrounded by a curtain.⁸ This shrine to maternal diffidence held photographs of women coddling their babies in places as diverse as Siberia, Australia, and Guatemala. After emerging from the cordoned-off baby birthing section, exhibition visitors were greeted with images of children undergoing various forms of parental tutelage.



Figure 19. The pregnancy temple in *The Family of Man* at the MoMA, 1955.



Figure 20. The family portraits room, with pictures of workers in the background. The family portraits were brought to speech with Steichen's heavy editorializing hand with the caption, attributed to an anonymous "Sioux Indian": "With all beings and all things we shall be as relatives."⁹

In addition to celebrating the "natural" virtue and vitality of the hetero-patriarchal family, the exhibition forwarded a vision of labor as a key ingredient to national and international peace and happiness. Indeed, both are framed as necessary to the continuity of earth and home. In the catalogue, photographs of agriculture and industry seem to flow seamlessly out of breathtaking photographs of American, French, and Iranian landscapes as mountain peaks give way to a shepherd's herd, stooped farmers, and, finally, the technical wizardry of the machine-age. Jakob Tuggener's close-up photograph of brawny Swiss male workers flows into Ansel Adam's rocky *Mt. Williamson from Manzanar* (1944) as if to suggest that the force of high industry has always been intended. Almost all the workers are male. And then finally we are given the world of "women's work": caring, washing, scrubbing,

watching. Manual labor is too much for us, Steichen suggests in his juxtaposition of a photograph of a female factory-worker with the weathered hands of a lady elder in Russell Lee's *The Hands of Mrs. Andrew Ostermeyer, Wife of a Homesteader, Woodbury County, Iowa* (1936). We can get on our knees, but the real making needs to be left to the boys. In *The Family of Man*, the original title and caption of Lee's photograph, like all the photographs in the collection, were removed in the name of the project's authorial message and replaced with: "If I did not work, these worlds would perish."¹⁰ As Roland Barthes observes in his scathing critique of *La Grande Famille des Hommes*, the 1957 Paris iteration of *The Family of Man*:

the Exhibition places [work] among the great universal facts, putting it on the same plane as birth and death, as if it was quite evident that it belongs to the same order of fate ... it will never be fair to confuse in a purely gestural identity the colonial and the Western worker ... we know very well that work is 'natural' just as long as it is 'profitable,' and that in modifying the inevitability of the profit, we shall perhaps one day modify the inevitability of labour. It is this entirely historified work which we should be told about, instead of an *eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures*.¹¹

We, of course, do not get a history of labor in *The Family of Man*. As in the U.S. Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographs that had popularized a social realist vision of Depression-era workers as "worthy" photographic subjects, *The Family of Man* heralded a working-class everyman as the productive mass subject of a photographic life.¹² Steichen, curating FSA-style documentary photographs alongside pictures from *LIFE* magazine to create a dynamic, modernist design, aimed to integrate his viewers into the exhibition by asking them to identify with the world of work as a universal category of human experience.

Unlike the Soviet Constructivist photo exhibitions that used montage

techniques to communize aesthetic activity as a form of social practice (to refigure the artist as worker), *The Family of Man* proffered a world of work guided by the hand of God.¹³ As Barthes notes, beneath the purely formal differences that present themselves to human appearance is an underlying unity, “a common mould. Of course this means postulating a human essence, and here is God re-introduced into our Exhibition: the diversity of men proclaims his power, his richness; the unity of their gestures demonstrates his will.”¹⁴ Steichen ultimately suggests that God guides and unites through the medium of photography, greeting as he does his exhibition visitors and the readers of its catalogue with a quotation from Genesis 1:3: “And God said, let there be light.” Photography, the medium that writes with light, can cover all equally, Steichen suggests. But the good order is bestowed upon those who favor the Church.¹⁵

The exhibition famously punctuated its heterosexual romance narrative, set against an environmental backdrop metabolized by human might and industry, with images of what truly threatened the international “family of man”: the bureaucratic technics of a burgeoning military-industrial complex. In *The Family of Man*, specters of past wars (the American Civil War, the Second World War, the Korean War) emerged to pique viewers to the real issue at hand: the threat of nuclear annihilation. In the catalogue, we never see the bomb, though visitors to the exhibition certainly did. There, the sublime experience of a 6 x 8 foot color photograph of the hydrogen bomb that was set off during test Mike of Operation Ivy in 1954 at Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands was the photo-text’s central leitmotif and the visual culmination of Steichen’s aesthetic argument: that we are, in the face of annihilation,

all one, an overwhelmed mass, and mustn't we learn to get along? Musn't we?
(figure 21).¹⁶



Figure 21. The explosion during test Mike of Operation Ivy, 1954. It was first published in *LIFE* magazine on May 3, 1954.

Among the carefully selected and positioned quotations that run through the exhibition and its catalogue are two that address the possibility of total nuclear annihilation. The first, attributed to an anonymous “Sioux Indian,” is: “This is the fire that will help the generations to come, if they use it in a sacred manner. But if they do not use it well, the fire will have the power to do them great harm.” The second is attributed to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission: “Nuclear weapons and atomic electric power are symbolic of the atomic age: On one side, frustration and

world destruction: on the other, creativity and a common ground for peace and cooperation.”¹⁷ We are given antagonistic and yet reductive broadsides – the Sioux’s sacred fire is to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission’s creative engineering as the former’s inferno is to the latter’s potentially world-destroying technics. Steichen essentially names the nuclear threat to the integrity of human life at the same time as its underlying power is signaled as the source of human becoming. Immediately after this verbal montage, which accompanies images of nuclear researchers, technicians, and politicians, are photographs of women in the global South – in Peru, the Ivory Coast, Egypt, Bali, “French Equatorial Africa” (now Chad, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, and “French” Cameroon) – gathering and transporting water and food from the source. Women in Yugoslavia and Sicily, Steichen’s own mother, even, are cooking for men in Germany, France, Austria, and the Belgian Congo. “Eat Bread and Salt and Speak the Truth,” we are told; rather than fire up the globe, why not use fire like our ancestors did, for sustenance, for truth? That way, moneyed women in New York and women in rural Japan can continue to drink to a common thirst. This global “ring-around-the-rosy” relies on the imperial trope of a regenerative return to a living land and to the song and dance of those who are closest to it, who gather in a cyclical time. The exhibition is rife with the motif of the eternal return. Ultimately, however, this ritual time is contained by the mythic time promulgated by a discourse of Christian teleology and by the dictates of capitalist development, the usual temporality for the genesis of “man.”

When we are threatened on Steichen’s watch, he returns us to the bourgeois

nuclear family, which he characterizes in his writings as “the root” of the family of man.¹⁸ Many critics have rightly pointed out that what is represented in the exhibition as universal is overwhelmingly American in its cultivation of a domestic vision of the family form – replete with properly positioned working members – as the right response to communal, *political* strife.¹⁹ Barthes articulated the most influential of these critiques in the short essay he composed in the summer of 1957 after seeing the exhibition in Paris. He borrowed the title of the French exhibition when naming his critique “La Grande Famille Des Hommes,” preserved that oddly tweaked name (which in French signifies both “great” and “large”) that when translated back into English figures even more forcefully the weight of Steichen’s distinctly American hubris. The thrust of Barthes’ critique is that the show submerges “History” underneath the soothing balm of a determined, orderly, and knowable “Nature.” As he points out, the “universal” constructs that are propounded most forcefully in the show – the patriarchal family and work – naturalize the subjection and domination that structure relations of labor and reproduction under capitalism, and that ballast its war-mongering figureheads’ ideological ammunition. “Everything here,” Barthes writes, “aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behavior where historical alienation introduces some ‘differences’ which we shall here quite simply call ‘injustices.’”²⁰ Shortly after this, Barthes becomes more explicit in his excoriation of the show for depicting a mythical human community in which power relations are so naturalized as to become invisible under the sweeping gesture of a

progressive and fated telos:

This myth of the human ‘condition’ rests on a very old mystification, which always consists in placing Nature at the bottom of History. Any classic humanism postulates that in scratching the history of men a little, the relativity of their institutions or the superficial diversity of their skins (but why not ask the parents of Emmet [sic] Till, the young Negro assassinated by the Whites what *they* think of *The Great Family of Man?*), one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature.²¹

Barthes makes a sudden parenthetical move mid-sentence, inserting a crack into Steichen’s too-smooth functioning vision of human love by recalling us to Emmett Till and to our anguished memory of his bludgeoned and bloated face. He also recalls us to Mamie Till, to a mother who had to expose her lynched son to repeated (photographic) exposure on the day of his (un)burial so that “the world” could see what Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam had done to her stuttering Bobo when they lynched him in Money, Mississippi in the summer of 1955.²² In fact, Till’s lynching occurred just six months after *The Family of Man* opened in New York City. By that time, *The Family of Man*’s showing at the MoMA had wrapped, and the USIA was preparing to absorb Steichen’s exhibition into its “soft” anti-Soviet propaganda campaign, which would begin in Berlin that September.²³ In the meantime, Till’s lynching had become a worldwide photographic event, prompted by activist members of his family who had mobilized the mass media’s pictorial turn at mid-century as well as the changing tide of public opinion about the lawfulness of white supremacist violence precisely to demonstrate that the democracy redeemed by the Allies’ victory during WWII had not extended to the U.S.²⁴

Till was on Barthes’ mind as he was on the minds of many in the middle years of the twentieth century. That Barthes thought of Till when he saw *La Grande*

Famille des Hommes in 1957 speaks to the advent of a black pictorial turn: to the black press's resolve to circulate Till's death mask as a defiant anti-lynching outcry in the face of a cowed and complicit liberal white press whose members, in keeping with the dominant narrative that lynching had already ended and that its resurgence in cases like Till's were aberrant exceptions in the post-war democratic U.S., refused to print photographs of Till's brutally battered body.²⁵ Barthes, in inserting this seemingly tangential yet crucially singular reference to Till's lynching in parentheses halfway through his reading of the exhibition, gestures toward a method he would later put to use in his last book, *Camera Lucida*, in which his most grief-laden ruminations on photographic ontology and familial loss (specifically the loss of his mother) are frequently bracketed in acts of affective resurrection. In "The Great Family of Man," Barthes cursorily evokes Till's lynching in much the same way, as though to indicate that the lynched act virtually, at the edges of *The Family of Man*, and perhaps more visibly so in a Paris that had historically been a site for the attempted *détournement* of U.S. white supremacist visual rhetoric at its grand exhibition in 1900 (I am thinking here of WEB Du Bois's award-winning exhibition of "Georgia Negro" photographs at the 1900 Paris exposition).²⁶ Here, in this instance, Barthes recalls Till to highlight what had been lost among the reported excitement that greeted the show during its display in the U.S., Berlin, Guatemala, and Paris from 1955-1957: that it exploited liberal pathos to draw viewers into an empathic belief in the idea of a transcendental human essence in order to draw attention *away* from the forms of racial stratification that had historically informed the fabrication of the idea of the human, historical forms of violence and structural

inequality that posed a more imminent threat to black American life than the bomb ever would.

Barthes' quick turn to Till in "The Great Family of Man" hits unconsciously on one of the exhibition's main gaps, itself the result of an act of disappearance: the oft-mentioned but under-theorized removal from *The Family of Man* of a 1937 photograph of the torture and lynching of Robert "Bootjack" McDaniels in Duck Hill, Mississippi. When *The Family of Man* opened in January, 1955 at the New York MoMA, visitors to the exhibition moved through the aforementioned heterosexual romance narrative and the interposed sections on marriage, land, and labor before shifting into a section that Steichen named "Man's Inhumanity to Man." There, visitors were greeted by two photographs: Andreas Feininger's *Midtown Fifth Avenue During Lunch Hour* (1948), a picture of New York City's Fifth Avenue teeming with the weight of hungry workers hustling beneath streetlights and flagged awnings, and Jerry Cooke's *Ohio Insane Asylum* (1946), a photograph of a woman crouched, with head down, on a bench against a shadowy wall in a psychiatric institution. The juxtaposition of these two photographs conjured a distinctly modern problematic while also shifting the tone and pacing of the exhibition toward its tragic – but ultimately redemptive – nuclear core.²⁷ After seeing Feininger's and Cooke's photographs, visitors were guided to the left side of the room, which featured more portraits of loneliness alongside scenes of familial strife, political turmoil, racial hatred, and genocidal violence. In them, a young boy is set to attack, with stick in hand, a female guardian. A young white girl struggles to get free from ropes that bind her to a tree. Captives are led through the Warsaw

Ghetto. Communists are about to be executed. And a young black man chained to a tree in rural Mississippi is torqued from the pull of the rope at his wrists and from the pain of the lacerations that cut into his torso (figure 22, following page).

This photograph, taken in 1937 at the lynching of McDaniels and Roosevelt Townes in Duck Hill, Mississippi, was removed two weeks into the exhibition's New York City premiere, and was also excluded from the accompanying catalogue.²⁸ Among the voluminous literature devoted to *The Family of Man's* blind spots and foreclosures, very little has been said of the photograph of McDaniels' torture. Critics might make cursory mention of the "death slump" that appeared on the museum's walls for a short time before its mysterious disappearance from the MoMA exhibition and from all subsequent exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad.²⁹ Writers sometimes gesture toward the photograph on their way to discussing Steichen's other representations of subaltern subjects, use it, as Steichen did, as a footstool to get onto something else, something more important, more legible, perhaps. Most of these critics do not name McDaniels, nor do they engage the photograph as a historical text whose inclusion in and excision from *The Family of Man* necessarily impacts the "global" meaning of the exhibition.³⁰

How do we understand the secretion of the Duck Hill lynching photograph in and out of *The Family of Man*? How did Steichen come to select the photograph

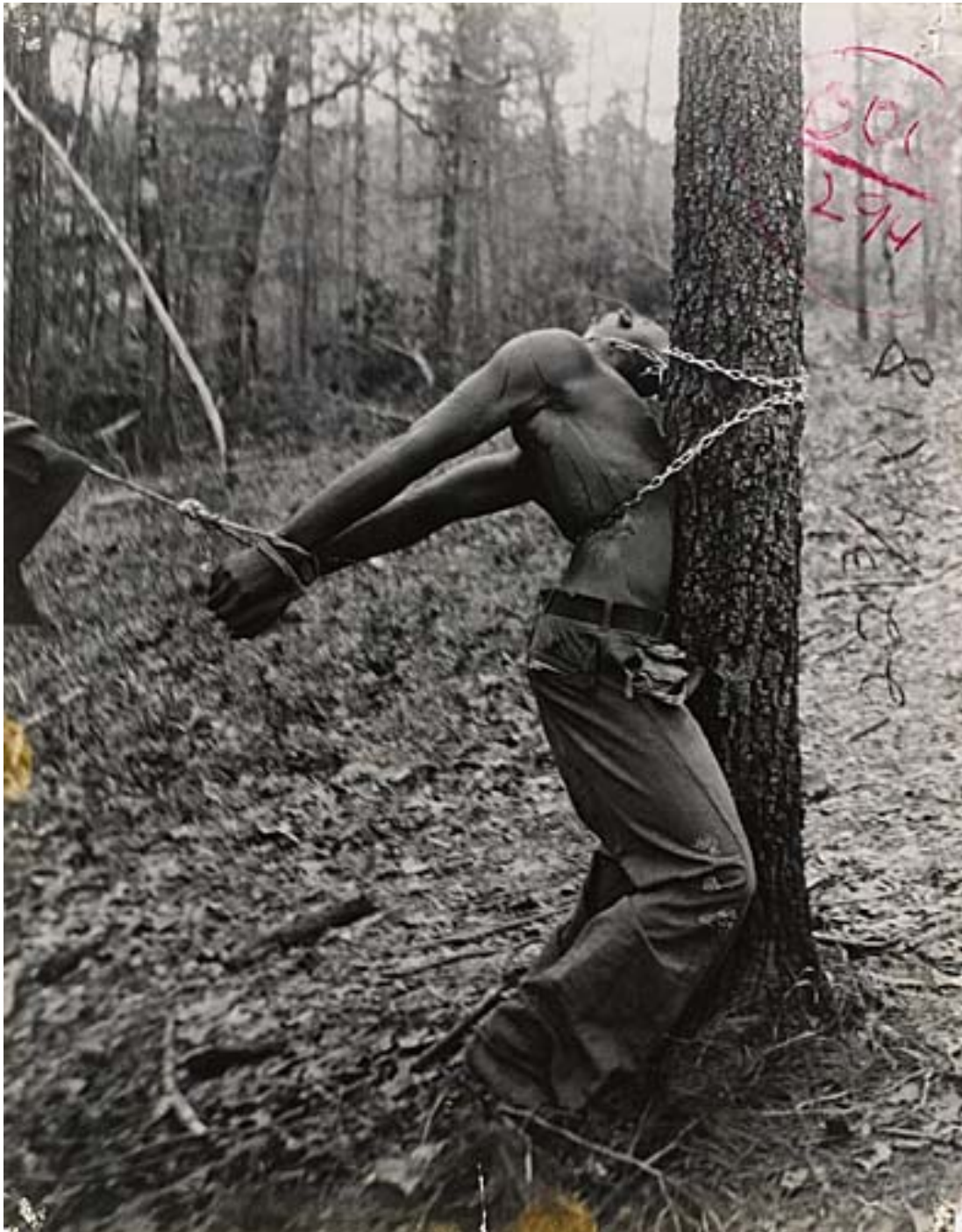


Figure 22. The lynching of “Bootjack” McDaniels in Duck Hill, Mississippi, unknown photographer (1937). This print is the one that Rolf Petersen, who developed photographs for *The Family of Man*, produced for the exhibition. In 2014, someone purchased it online for \$978.

from a pool of two million other photographs to represent an element or elements of the Human?³¹ How does the image event of a lynching in the backwoods of Mississippi on the fascist eve of WWII figure into but ultimately threaten Steichen's ambivalent vision of the troubled oneness of Man on the eve of an anticipated nuclear holocaust? Did Steichen see an equivalent – or at least a similitude – between the everyday, low-level warfare enacted against black Americans and the wars he had participated in and was arguably “working through” in the four photographic exhibitions he curated at the MoMA throughout the 1940s and 1950s? How does this photograph emerge as the part that has no part in Steichen's mid-century vision of humanity?

Reparative critiques of the exhibition may cite the initial inclusion of the Duck Hill photograph as evidence that Steichen's show was riven with antagonistic moments that have been, in the words of Lili Bezner, “buried under forty years of hostility toward the show.”³² Bezner and Eric Sandeen read the presence in *The Family of Man* of “unsettling, nonidealized images” that capture aspects of human behavior that pose a threat to the “oneness of mankind” as a subversion of the show's overwhelming vision of human identity, altruistic warmth, and universal love. Is the Duck Hill photograph evidence of a “subtle subterfuge” amid the banal conformity that informs *The Family of Man*? Did the photographs that accompanied it in the “Man's Inhumanity to Man” section, as Sandeen, Bezner, and Sarah James suggest, really nuance Steichen's ahistorical vision of human nature?³³

They Pause Before McDaniel's Turn

We might imagine visitors to the MoMA in the early weeks of 1955 flush with excitement to see the All. They hurry in and settle into a viewing crowd that moves according to a prescribed line that Steichen has drawn in the sand of his century. They proceed through pictures of young people loving and get carried away in the ring room, where they move in mimetic circles before settling into a reverent pace before situations that prick. These situations are historical events: the famous photographs of Nazis quashing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943. An anonymous photograph of two stone-throwers striking a Soviet tank during the 1953 uprising in East Berlin. Henri Cartier-Bresson's photograph of a crushing Shanghai queue as its members await government-issued gold and an imminent death trample. Marion Palfi's baby Angelino leaning sadly toward a fence that separates her from another world. But it is the photograph of a man, not-dead, vanishing into a tree before his final dislocation, that really gets them.³⁴ They pause, riveted to a hole in the wall, full up from shock and, for some, an unthinking glee. *Something is going on here. What's happening?*³⁵

This is the blowtorch massacre, in medias res. He's chained to a tree, chained by neck and midsection, his neck and face straining away from the camera as he turns away from the pain, from these men, from the camera itself, and from us.

We might imagine visitors to the MoMA a few weeks later flush with excitement to see this strange photograph of a black man being killed. Someone whispers, *do you know about the photograph of the man in chains? I've heard he's being lynched and that he doesn't look like the lynched. Take us to the blowtorch massacre.*

Steichen wants them to push onto the bomb, but there they stand, gaping and gawking at the black man enchained. What is he doing here in this museum in the year 1955 as if caught as a runaway on a northbound trail? They continue to watch him, continue to stand and seem caught in his headlights, stilled in a moment of misrecognition. They are supposed to move on to their own reflections in the next room, and to the bright orange fireball that follows. But here they are, stilled in his hunger, his hustle, his friend, the corn, his capture, his beating, their hunger, his incarceration, his trial, their hunger, his railroading, his sentencing, his being taken to the bus, his being hounded and spat upon, his stolen pockets, his shoes gone, the wheels beneath his feet, his hands tied, his hour-long excruciation, their torture, their blowtorch, the shots.

Regardless of the Place: *The Family of Man* and Universal History

When people come out of this show they'll feel that they've looked in a mirror.

- Edward Steichen, "The Family of Man," *Vogue*

The Family of Man ran for nearly four months at the MoMA before showing in other U.S. cities and internationally for six years. During its run, the exhibition attracted some 10 million viewers – more than had any previous American photography exhibition.³⁶ Steichen insisted that *The Family of Man* was successful because it communicated to its audiences through the universal language of photography, a sentimental language that Steichen, like vulgar realists before him, insisted required little mediation in the construction of its meaning.³⁷

Photography had long been thought of as a universal language. Accounts of

photography during its heady emergent period are riven with positivist realism. An 1840 newspaper account of a daguerreotype in Cincinnati reads as a proto-advertisement for *The Family of Man*: “It is the first universal language addressing itself to all who possess vision, and in characters alike understood in the courts of civilization and the hut of the savage. The pictorial language of Mexico, the hieroglyphics of Egypt are now superseded by reality.”³⁸ This advertisement constructed photography as a modern Babel whose communicative capacity both mirrored and surpassed previous visual sign systems, which are figured in the ad as fantastic primitive precursors to a civilized “real.” For photographic realists, there is no gap between the thing and the photographic representation of the thing; it is an indexical imprint of the photographed object’s essence. With photography, subject and object are thought to be united – identified – in an immediately given totality. In another text written during photography’s emergence, inventor Oliver Wendell Holmes asserts that the technology can reveal “hidden truth in a perfect harmonious affirmation of the realities of Nature.”³⁹ As Allan Sekula writes, Holmes perceived photography through the ideological constraints of bourgeois political economy and physiognomic realism: as a “‘universal equivalent’ capable of denoting the quantitative exchangeability of all sights. . . . Just as money is the universal gauge of exchange value, uniting all the world’s goods in a single system of transactions, so photographs are imagined to reduce all sights to relations of formal equivalence.”⁴⁰

As a decades-long impresario of the international art world who had long straddled the line between artist and instrumental realist, Steichen was steeped in this discourse of photographic realism, and he put it to full (albeit failed) effect in the

four large-scale war exhibitions he curated at the MoMA. During WWI, Steichen had pioneered aerial photography with the Army Signal Corps and in the 1940s had headed the navy photo unit in the Pacific.⁴¹ After imaging battlefields for the U.S. military, he committed himself to documentary photography, renouncing painting in the name of a closer communion with things “as they are.” “If we could really photograph war as it was,” he quixotically stated upon his re-entry into service at the start of WWII, “if war could be photographed in all its monstrous actuality ... that would be a great deterrent for war.”⁴² Yet his early war shows – *Road to Victory* (1942), *Power in the Pacific* (1945) and *Korea – the Impact of War in Photographs* (1951) – looked more like celebrations than critiques of U.S. military power. After seeing *Road to Victory*, Edward Alden Jewell observed in the *New York Times* that visitors to the exhibition were “drawn into a form of emotional citizenry”: “I think no one can see the exhibition without feeling that he is a part of the power of America. It is this inescapable sense of identity – the individual spectator identifying himself with the whole – that makes the event so moving.”⁴³ Visitors to his exhibitions were enthralled by the national affect generated by his war photographs. Steichen, in placing his faith in a photographic reality principle to do the political work of demilitarization, had set himself up for disappointment.

Although I had presented war in all its grimness in three exhibitions, I had failed to accomplish my mission. I had not incited people into taking open and united action against war itself. This failure made me take stock of my fundamental idea. What was wrong? I came to the conclusion that I had been working from a negative approach, that what was needed was a positive statement on what a wonderful thing life was, how marvelous people were, and, above all, how alike people were in all parts of the world.⁴⁴

The Family of Man would grow out of this failure, as Steichen committed himself to

reconstructing a sentimental image of America that promoted a protective retreat into the private Cold War bastion of family life.

The idea that photography could unify “diverse objects and materials” as well as function as a medium for universal communication was widespread after WWII, reaching a critical mass alongside the dispersion of photographs in the magazine culture of the 1950s that aimed to unify a white consuming class.⁴⁵ Steichen, upon taking the position of the Director of Photography at the MoMA, began searching for a connective antidote to the fascism that had flourished in Europe throughout the 1930s and 1940s. When MoMA Director René d’Harnoncourt applied to the Ford Foundation to secure funding for Steichen’s latest project, he set it within the framework outlined in the Foundation’s annual report in 1950. In it, the Foundation argued that humanity faced a choice between “democracy and authoritarianism,” an antinomy its members apparently found to be self-evident. d’Harnoncourt claimed that Steichen sought to intervene in this crisis by depicting the “basic concept of a free society” in an exhibition that was then being called *Image of America*. The show, d’Harnoncourt wrote, would demonstrate America’s flaws in addition to its ideals: “The existence of race prejudice and political corruption ... will not be denied but will be presented as a challenge in the continuing fight for the fullest realization of American ideals.”⁴⁶ In the exhibition’s nascent stage, it was to address the contradictions of U.S. democracy, contradictions that Steichen seems to have connected, on some level, to anti-black racism, given his plan in his early days with the MoMA to curate a show on “the subject of the American Negro... that will reveal the Negro simply as a human being, just like everybody else.”⁴⁷ Steichen’s

mission was in keeping with the postwar break from formal white supremacy and colonial capitalist modernity.⁴⁸

As Steichen continued to plan the exhibition, he decided that he would curate a show that spoke not only to America's troubled vision of itself, but that also envisioned the U.S. as a mirror of the world. He changed the title of the show from *An Image of America* to *The Family of Man*, a title that gestured to universal inclusion even as it was rooted in American particularity. Steichen had encountered the phrase "the family of man" in his brother-in-law Carl Sandburg's poetry, and had sourced it to Abraham Lincoln's message to Congress on July 4, 1861. In his speech on the issue of secession and the dissolution of the union, Lincoln had stated:

this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy – a government of the people, by the same people – can, or cannot, maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration according to organic law, in any case, can always ... break up their Government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: 'Is there, in all republics, this inherent, and fatal weakness?'⁴⁹

Lincoln makes it clear that the Civil War has brought not only the United States into conflict and disunion. The war may be occurring in a theater whose agents are fleeing plantations, seceding, going north, going south, and taking up arms in camps across the country, but its witnesses are worldwide and waiting for the fallout to the future of the American experiment in liberal democracy. Steichen named his exhibition after this portion of Lincoln's speech to signal his belief that American democracy should be mirrored the world over.⁵⁰

Even with this historically and politically contingent title at hand – one that might have reminded Steichen of U.S. liberal democracy’s imbrication with white supremacist rule and the continuing vagaries of racial slavery – Steichen began to articulate what for him was an emphatically “apolitical” vision for *The Family of Man*. By 1954, Steichen was clearer than ever that he was not interested in curating a photography event with overt political content; he wanted his photographic text to operate according to the kind of latent dynamic power he had perceived in the FSA photographs at the International Photographic Exhibit in 1938 at New York City’s Grand Central Terminal.⁵¹ It was the images’ nonidentity with an explicit political program that Steichen wished to emulate. But while Steichen professed a disinterest in political agendas, his exhibition proffered an overwhelmingly liberal vision of human history in its figuration of the individual as the motor of progress. “We are concerned with following the individual and the family unit from its reactions to the beginnings of life and continuing on through death and burial,” he announced a year prior to the exhibition’s unveiling.⁵² Steichen later emphasized in the exhibition press release that the show was to depict “the universal elements and aspects of human relations and the experiences common to all mankind rather than situations that represented conditions exclusively related or peculiar to a race, an event, a time or place.”⁵³ Nelson Rockefeller, who had funded the show, reiterated the point in his introductory remarks before the press on the exhibition’s opening night when he stated that the photography collection represented a “pageant” not of “events that have happened,” but of “experiences that matter.”⁵⁴ Of the two million photographs that Steichen and his assistants Wayne Miller and Dorothea Lange had reviewed for

possible inclusion in the exhibition, only those conveying “collective emotions” and “representing humanity in the abstract” had been selected. They chose photographs for their imputed capacity for communication, their ability to explain “man to man” through an emotional impact that Steichen trusted to do the work of the political.⁵⁵

Given Steichen’s purportedly apolitical guidelines, it is surprising that the photograph taken at the Duck Hill massacre in 1937 was one of hundreds of photographs originally published in *LIFE* magazine that made the final cut. Steichen’s decision to include a photograph of anti-black terror in *The Family of Man* suggests that he saw in the lynching photograph something of the universal history and nature of Man – that he deemed violent racism a threat to the democratic republic. According to Steichen’s constraint, the photograph of a torture by blowtorch of a black man in Duck Hill was not solely an index of a lynching; it was representative of an “experience that mattered” to all humans, anywhere, at any time. In keeping with his realist mandate, Steichen had to represent humanity’s dark side – the presence throughout history of conflict and contradiction, and the presence in daily life of the effects of *realpolitik* and of the subjection of life to the power of death – to more effectively buttress his show’s affirmative message of global peace. He associated this dark side with nuclear technology, but he needed weighty visual material to supplement the domestication of the mushroom cloud in U.S. visual culture, its association with what Peter Hales calls an “atomic sublime.” Anxiety about, and opposition to, nuclear power had been met throughout the 1940s and 1950s with the circulation of atomic iconography that sutured citizens’ fear of an atomic threat with an aesthetic experience of wonder and beauty. Science

journalist William L. Laurence reported on his reaction to the sight of a nuclear explosion in *LIFE* in 1945: “It was no longer smoke, or dust, or even a cloud of fire. It was a living thing, a new species of being ... it changed its shape into a flowerlike form, its giant petal curving downward, creamy-white outside, rose-colored inside.”⁵⁶ Laurence’s description casts the explosion in the comforting terms of the sublime, with its combination of pastoral quietude and religiosity, as a natural “wonder” manufactured not according to the dictates of political-economic hegemony but “a part of that benign collaboration among man, nature and divinity that had defined American destiny, a predetermined, even foreordained event.”⁵⁷ By the time Steichen began curating *The Family of Man*, the mushroom cloud had become reified in mass culture as an icon of beauty rather than terror. In the face of Manichean political positions and identifications during the Cold War, Steichen sought with *The Family of Man* to inject some terror back into mass media representations of atomic power, while capitalizing on the icon’s “sublime unifying principle”⁵⁸ And it was precisely through recourse to the visual rhetoric of a universal, divinely ordained progress (deployed in Laurence’s reaction to the sight of the exploding bomb, which imagines nature and history in eschatological cahoots with God) that Steichen would marshal his supposedly apolitical message of détente and unification.

Duck Hill in *The Family of Man*

No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.

- Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Steichen's protestations about politics and the unsuitability of pictures of "events that have happened" appear disingenuous. In his epic vision of a human whole, the section entitled "Man's Inhumanity to Man" strategically pictured historically-specific images of people starving to death, being led away to death camps, on the brink of murder, and undergoing torture in China, Poland, and the U.S. to solidify the exhibition's universalizing aesthetic. Steichen needed photographs that could conjure the kind of fear he was hoping to sublimate in the exhibition's triumphant denouement, in which images of children are meant to reassure spectators that a certain soothing future is nigh. The "Man's Inhumanity to Man" section was meant to shift spectators from a space of private reverie and identification with the family form (an identification that clearly was not universal among visitors to the museum) to a shocking encounter with real historical incidents – representative of Lincoln's named rogue "few" – that could provide the affective shift Steichen desired among his audience as they approached their immersive encounter with the reproduction of the atomic blast at Enewetak Atoll.

A photograph taken of the exhibition installation in its early days demonstrates something of what visitors saw in the "Man's Inhumanity to Man" section in its representation of a seemingly haphazard arrangement of eight photographs across a wall divided by transparent paneling (figure 23). At the top is Anna Riwkin-Brick's photograph of a woman with her arm raised in a gesture of outrage in Palestine, which shares a frame with a quotation by George Sand: "Humanity is outraged in me and with me. We must not dissimulate nor try to

forget this indignation which is one of the most passionate forms of love.”⁵⁹ Directly below this montage are three photographs arranged vertically and separated by a mere inch or two of gray gallery wall. The first two are of Jewish captives, coats on and hands raised, flanked by Nazi executioners leading them out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Their fate at the Treblinka extermination camp is foreshadowed by the smoke billowing behind them, which seems to push them from their rebel hold. Below these two photographs is the photograph of McDaniels, hamstrung by chains and ropes and torqued from the blowtorch torture that has occurred off-camera by members of an audience of hundreds we cannot see under a hot Mississippi sun. To the left of McDaniels is a picture of men on their knees, wrists tied, awaiting execution by the officers at their backs; and next to it, a too-small reproduction of Cas Oorthuys’s portrait of a starving woman in Holland whose glazed gaze past the camera-eye signals the force of her hunger as she lifts a bit of bread to her mouth. Above that and adjacent to the Holocaust photographs is a reproduction, larger than the others, of a photograph by George Silk of a Chinese boy begging for food. Set slightly apart from these photographs, on the same wall but on the other side of the transparent Plexiglas divider, is a strange photograph of a baby struggling to get free from between furniture legs. All of these photographs, with the exception of the baby, are of people who inhabit the space of social and political death in Steichen’s avowedly anti-political photo-text.

The juxtaposition of the inhumanity photographs with the photograph by Wayne Miller of a baby in the midst of a helpless sob, with other photographs in the section that appear to assuage (photographs of wistful women, women applying



Figure 23. A portion of the “Man’s Inhumanity to Man” section of *The Family of Man*. The Museum of Modern Art, 1955.

makeup, writing letters, gossiping, and spending time with their boyfriends, of teenagers cavorting, of people all over the world praying), and with a quotation by Anne Frank: “I still believe that people are really good at heart,” would have evoked in viewers feelings of horror, pity, sympathy, and guilt while also providing them with a way out of an aesthetic meditation on the historically contingent circumstances of these photographs’ capture, toward the feeling of an historical overcoming of the wars of the past half century.⁶⁰

Visitors to *The Family of Man* had seen these photographs before. The photographs of the last remaining inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto being herded at Nazi gunpoint to the Final Solution decreed by Operation Reinhard had been

circulated in the international press after they were submitted as part of S.S. officer Jurgen Stroop's report, "The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is No More!" to the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1945 and 1946.⁶¹ Museumgoers had also likely seen the photograph of McDaniels when it was initially published in *LIFE* magazine in 1937 if they had grown up in a home with a subscription to the Henry Luce publication in its early years (figure 24). *LIFE* first featured the



Figure 24. *LIFE* Magazine, April 26, 1937, 26. "One Lynching Spurs Congress to Stop Others."

photograph of McDaniels' lynching in its April 26, 1937 issue, where it appeared dead center of a one-page spread, between photographs of New York Representative Joseph A. Gavagan and Texas Representative Hatton Sumners, who were exchanging opposing arguments in the House on the fate of Gavagan's federal anti-lynching bill when the Duck Hill lynching occurred.⁶² The captions read:

Representative Joseph A. Gavagan of New York is the father of a Federal Anti-Lynching Bill, which reached the floor of the House of Representatives on April 12. Southern Congressmen prepared for a fight to prevent its passage. A frightful example of lynching occurred while the House was debating. At Duck Hill, Miss., two Negroes accused of murdering a white man were tortured with a blowtorch and lynched. The one shown above was "Bootjack" MacDaniel. Opposition to the Gavagan Bill was led by Representative Hatton Sumners of Texas, who condemned the Duck Hill affair but made an eloquent plea to let the South handle its own problem. The House cheered him but passed the bill."⁶³

McDaniels was lynched alongside his friend and colleague, Roosevelt Townes, on April 13, 1937. The two men had been seized from Sheriff E.E. Wright and his deputies after being arraigned at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Winona for the murder of Duck Hill grocer, George Windham. Twelve men who were alleged to be Windham's relatives captured McDaniels and Townes and loaded them onto a Chevrolet school bus that had been parked outside the courthouse. Hundreds of cars joined the bus in a cavalcade that headed to a clearing in the woods beside the store where Windham had been shot. There, as Howard Kester writes in his investigation for the NAACP, "three or four hundred men, women and children had gathered to observe the proceedings."⁶⁴ The men assigned to the pairs' torture tied them with heavy chains to two pine trees and began attacking McDaniels with

the flame of a blowtorch. Kester writes that after the blowtorch flames struck McDaniels' chest,

The piercing screams of the tortured man echoed among the hills ... Mingled with the agonizing cries of the condemned man was the steady purr of the flaming death that issued from the blow torch. From the wracked body and crazed mind of the victim the mob wrung a confession of guilt. The torch was withdrawn and a volley of bullets brought welcome death to the tormented prisoner chained to a lonely pine tree.⁶⁵

The mob then tortured Townes for an hour, severing his fingers and ears from his body with the blowtorch before dousing him in gasoline and setting him on fire.⁶⁶ After McDaniels and Townes died, the National Guard, who had been ordered by Mississippi Governor White to the scene, whipped a black man named Shorty Dorroh whom Townes and McDaniels had named during their torturous confessions as an accomplice in Windham's murder.⁶⁷

The photographs of the blowtorch lynching were taken by an anonymous photographer and distributed by Campbell's Studio 30 minutes north of Winona in Grenada, Mississippi. Campbell's Studio distributed the photographs to the white press, including Acme Newspictures and *LIFE* and *Time* magazines.⁶⁸ On the same day that *LIFE* first published the photograph, *Time* magazine published an article about the lynching's convergence with the debate in the U.S. House of what it editorialized as a "drastic" anti-lynching bill that would make lynching a federal crime.⁶⁹ *Time* accompanied the article with a second photograph that had been taken of the lynching (figure 25). When the NAACP tried to obtain these photographs, its members were told they could not purchase them from Campbell's Studio. When they reached out to *LIFE* magazine, its managers refused to participate with them

on the grounds that the anonymous photographer did “not care to become a storm center and has accordingly instructed us to refrain from giving his name to anyone.”⁷⁰

When news of the lynching of McDaniels and Townes reached the Capitol on April 13, the gruesome details persuaded enough Representatives to vote in favor of the bill, which passed in a vote of 277 to 199 on April 15, 1937. Later that autumn and in the winter of 1938, when debate over the bill had moved from the House to the Senate, the two photographs of McDaniels and Townes circulated on an anti-

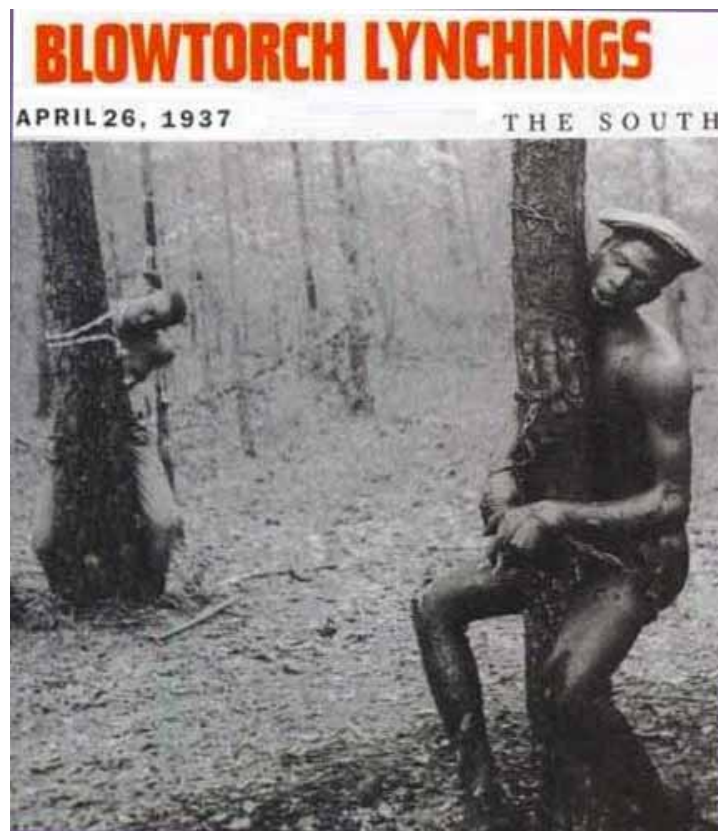


Figure 25. The lynching of Bootjack McDaniels and Roosevelt Townes, unknown photographer (1937). Photograph likely published in *Time Magazine*, April 26, 1937.⁷¹

lynching poster that Senator Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri displayed on a bulletin board in the Senate chamber (figure 26).⁷² Nevertheless, Southern Senators filibustered the Wagner-Van Nuys anti-lynching bill in early 1938.

The Duck Hill photographs were some of the first lynching photographs to be featured in the white press, which had always been reticent to publish photographs alongside its lurid and sensationalizing accounts of anti-black violence.⁷³ That these photographs appeared when they did is surprising, given their coincidence with the mainstream appeal of end-of-lynching discourse, which sought

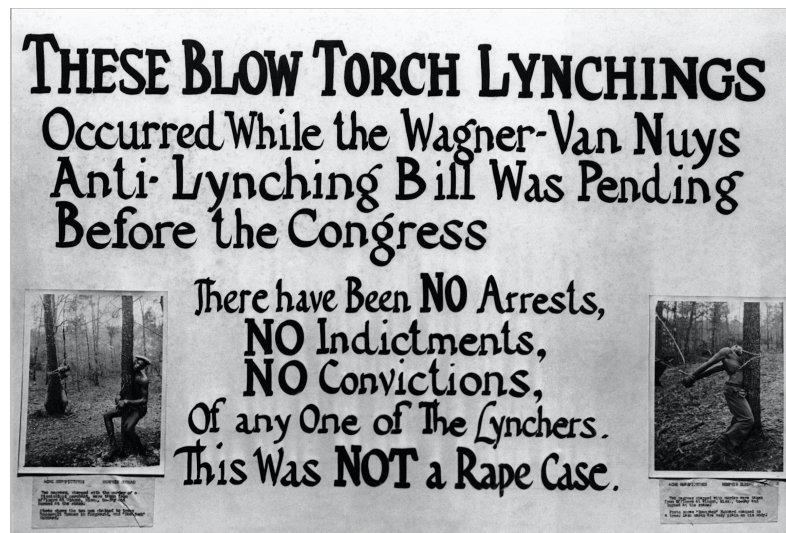


Figure 26. The Wagner-Van Nuys anti-lynching poster, 1937/1938.

to popularize anti-lynching sentiment on the grounds that extra-legal violence was an affront to southern economic growth and U.S. democratic ideals. As Amy Louise Wood writes, the appearance of the

photographs of Robert McDaniels's and Roosevelt Townes's tortured bodies ... in *Time* and *Life* magazines [was] a remarkable instance in which the struggling black body was made the center of anti-lynching discourse. These images later appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* as part of Senator Clark's anti-

lynching poster. For the most part, however, white Americans were reluctant to witness the sight of lynched black men.⁷⁴

Most mainstream anti-lynching discourse in the 1930s focused not on the violence perpetuated against blacks, but on the threat that lynching posed to white civility.⁷⁵ Despite the fact that physical brutality against African Americans soared during the Depression, President Roosevelt failed to endorse any of the three anti-lynching bills that came before Congress during his tenure in the White House.⁷⁶ In fact, Roosevelt only came out publically against lynching after the double lynching of Thomas Thurmond and John Holmes, two white men who had kidnapped and murdered a businessman's son in San Jose in 1933.⁷⁷ After California governor James Ralph praised the lynching, Roosevelt stated in a nationally broadcast address that the lynching had been the most "vile form of collective murder."⁷⁸ But he made no public statements when Claude Neal was brutally lynched in Marianna, Florida in 1934, when the Scottsboro Nine were legally lynched by the courts in 1931 and continually threatened with mob violence throughout the 1930s, nor when Annie Mae Meriweather, a black sharecropper and organizer with the Share Cropper Union in Lowndes County, Alabama, was beaten and sexually assaulted following the lynching of her husband and comrade, Jim Press Meriweather, by antiunion thugs Vaughn Ryles and Ralph McGuire in 1935.⁷⁹ The publication of the photographs of McDaniels and Townes in the white press was one of the few instances in which liberal and conservative whites were willing to center the black body in anti-lynching discourse.

Though Wood claims that the photographs of Townes and McDaniels never appeared in the black press, one of the photographs did circulate in the Baltimore *Afro-American* as part of Ralph Matthews, Jr.'s extensive coverage of the Duck Hill lynchings. On April 24, 1937, the same photograph that would eventually adorn the walls of the MoMA as part of *The Family of Man* was published on the front page of *The Afro-American*. Oddly, the man in the photograph is identified as Roosevelt Townes. Matthews, who allegedly spoke with Towne's wife, Christine, also published a photograph of Townes while he was alive.



Figure 27. The reproduction of the anonymous photograph of the Duck Hill lynching was published in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, which identified the man in the photograph not as Bootjack McDaniels but as Roosevelt Townes. The story by Ralph Matthews, Jr. also featured a photograph of Townes that was taken while he was alive.

There is no doubt, upon situating ourselves in the scope and movement of the exhibition, that Steichen instrumentalized the photographs of the near-dead, put them to particular use to encourage a historical recognizance of bodily pain and the multiple kinds of corporeal, psychological, epistemic, and political damage that modern warfare exacts. Because the Duck Hill photographs had been widely seen by consumers of both the popular white press and the black press, Steichen could rest assured that, as museumgoers moved from the inhumanities section through an adjoining room toward the nuclear chapter of his photographic text, the depictions of political abjection would come into uncomfortable resonance with a quotation by Bertrand Russell about the slow and torturous lethal fallout that would incur from a nuclear attack.⁸⁰ Susan Sontag writes that “emblems of suffering” like these “can be used like *memento mori*, as objects of contemplation to deepen one’s sense of reality; as secular icons, if you will. But that would seem to demand the equivalent of a sacred or meditative space in which to look at them.”⁸¹ With the installation of a darkened room painted red and holding a large color transparency of an exploding hydrogen bomb, Steichen provided his viewers with a meditative space into which they could carry the emotional charge of the photographs from the “Inhumanity” section.⁸² In the bomb room, these historically-specific photographs were to turn into abstract, politically neutral objects of contemplation. While promulgating a message of holism, Steichen didn’t fail to interrogate the core of negativity that informs every myth of identity. But he did it at the expense of a critical engagement with the differential forms of suffering that hierarchize the idea of the human. Rather than nuance Steichen’s conformist vision, then, these photographs formed

the *necessarily* contradictory center of Steichen's aesthetic argument: that human history was motivated by dialectical antagonisms that could be successfully transcended by patriarchal capitalism and reproductive futurity, by essentially reproducing the human species faster than the bomb could blast.

Shortly after seeing the lynching photograph alongside the other inhumanity photographs, viewers were led to a sequence consisting of nine photographic portraits of three men, three women, and three children, as well as a "portrait" whose referent was in a state of perpetual flux. At the center of the nine photographic portraits, at eye-level, Steichen had positioned a mirror so that spectators could see their faces reflected among portraits of people in Mexico, "Africa," Poland, U.S., Japan, Indochina, Italy, Korea, and Austria as they were ushered out of the inhumanities section and toward the bomb display. Seeing their own reflection was supposed to underscore their empathic identification with the atrocity scenes in the previous room, while also prompting them to read the other faces before them as members of their family. The idea was that they would suture the image of those around them to their reflection when they stepped into the bomb room. Together, they would be undone in the catastrophic aftermath of a nuclear explosion. And together, upon exiting the bomb room, they would be put back together again. After stepping from the darkened room, museumgoers were confronted by portraits of couples labeled "We two form a multitude," a photograph of a United Nations General Assembly, and photographs of people voting in elections all over the world. Following this was a room full of photographs of children, an image of a woman walking in water, and an image of a churning sea.

Steichen's exhibition designer, Paul Rudolph, said: "How to end the show was a difficult thing. You couldn't end with the atom bomb. It was about the idea of childhood and was a rebirth. It was done in pinks, warm color. It was light."⁸³ Narratologically, the exhibition operated as an epic journey.⁸⁴ Rudolph had designed *The Family of Man* to guide people's looking while giving them minimal space to wander so that visitors would move in a steady pace that mimicked the developmental accretion of time, from "the beginning of life and on through death and burial."⁸⁵ Steichen's obsequious amalgamation of photographs of parliamentary democracy in action and of children playing that capped the show off on a triumphant and harmonious note suggested that formal political representation is to national and international peace as the reproduction of the species is to private happiness.

It is not frequently acknowledged that the show made a markedly historical argument. But history is a keyword in Steichen's writings on his *Family of Man* and on photography in general, which Steichen asserts is an essentially historical technology whose use is paramount for human survival.⁸⁶ In fact, *The Family of Man* reflects on the central question posed by the philosophy of history: how are we to make sense out of the temporal unfolding of collective, human life?⁸⁷ The spirit of the exhibition's progressive narrativization of an inevitably peaceful and regenerating humanity is captured in the *LIFE* magazine sampling of the show. On Feb 14, 1955, *LIFE* magazine released its coverage of *The Family of Man*, which had opened some three weeks prior to Manhattan museumgoers.⁸⁸



Ernst Steichen, who is now 75, has dedicated his life since to encouraging the work of others. Five years ago he began planning the most ambitious photographic exhibition ever held: a series of photographic tours of the world, featuring the greatest work of all members of the human family, no matter in what country or in what stage of civilization they live.

COMMON BONDS OF MAN

Worldwide search by Steichen produces a photo show with a monumental theme

As the dean of American photographers, Ernst Steichen, who is now 75, has dedicated his life since to encouraging the work of others. Five years ago he began planning the most ambitious photographic exhibition ever held: a series of photographic tours of the world, featuring the greatest work of all members of the human family, no matter in what country or in what stage of civilization they live.

After having gone over some four million pictures, Steichen—assisted by Bruce White and a staff—finally assembled an impressive collection of 100 photographs of 100 photographers from 88 countries. Last month they went on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and immediately the photographs will circulate around the world. Some of the best individual pictures that did not compare up to the high purpose of the show—titled "The Family of Man"—but a good many are necessarily missing. For that, Steichen is sorry. The show "is a common testament . . . of humanity . . ."

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WORDLESS EXCHANGE OF JOYS BETWEEN NEW FORMER AND HER DAUGHTER
Ernst Steichen

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TIES OF FAMILY, THE FACE OF LOVE



REUNIFIED BLOOD NEAR PARIS
René Guizot



TERRAL INSTRUCTION IN BONGANALAND
R. B. Fisher



FATHERLY SOLITUDE IN BRIDEN
Ernst Steichen

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MAKE-UP IN SOUTH AFRICA
Ernst Steichen

POORING IN PHILADELPHIA
Ernst Steichen

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Figure 28. *LIFE* magazine's coverage of *The Family of Man*, February 14, 1955.

HARMONY IN WORK AND PLAY



CARGO-CARRIING ON THE GOLD COAST
Alfred Eisenstein



RENOVATION BY "SANDY DANCERS" IN NEVADA
Wayne Miller

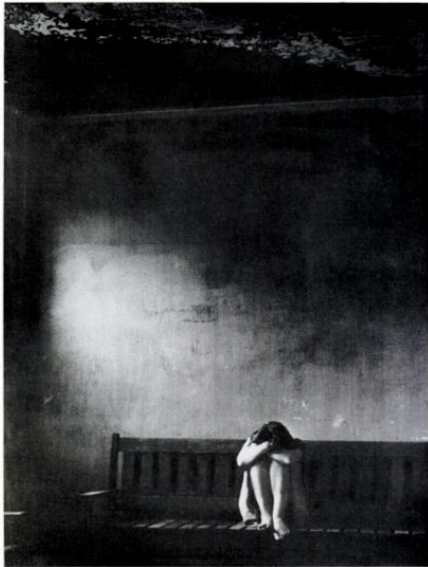


MEMORY IN MICHIGAN
Alfred Eisenstein



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LONELINESS—EVEN AMONG MANY



MEMORIAL IN AN ISLAND INSANE ASYLUM
Jerry Cooke

ANONYMITY IN A FIFTH AVENUE CROWD
Andrew Pattinger

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Figure 29. *LIFE* magazine's coverage of *The Family of Man*, February 14, 1955.



Figure 30. *LIFE* magazine's coverage of *The Family of Man*, February 14, 1955.

LIFE does not give us the picture of the bomb. It would have ruined the surprise. Instead, we get a glimpse of the overall emotional thrust of the show, a glimpse of the glimpse that people saw. *LIFE* editorializes *The Family of Man* in four short lines that recapitulate the core of Steichen's photographic argument about human history. *Ties of Family. The Face of Love. Harmony in Work and Play. Loneliness – Even Among Many. Tensions Turned to Dread and Hate. Fellowship in Silent Faith.* In the spread, the placement of the lynching photograph resonates with the cross-cut lines of men rowing and shoveling, of children marching, of queue-members clutching each other's arms. As Barthes argues, *The Family of Man* naturalizes historical-political abjection under the guise of aestheticized gestures. *LIFE*'s six-page gloss on *The Family of Man* reiterates Steichen's theotographic construction of Man's becoming according to the historicist principle of progress, as well as his admission that history's progressive rationality only exists through the subjugation of difference.⁸⁹ The Duck Hill photograph is the culmination of the hate that Steichen wished to negate and transcend. Here, its awful terrorizing force is contained by photographic visions of prayer, soldier solace, and faith.

“It was a fantastic picture”: Duck Hill Out of *The Family of Man*

In the exhibition catalogue, there are four missing photographs: the photograph of the 1937 lynching, the photograph of the 1954 atomic blast, one of photographs of the 1943 Warsaw uprising, and the photograph of men awaiting execution.⁹⁰ Does the removal of the lynching photograph within the first two weeks of the show's premier mimic the removal of other photographs throughout

The Family of Man's 62-country tour? Does it mirror, as Steichen's own logic might suggest, the removal of the mushroom cloud photograph from the Japanese exhibitions in 1956 and from the exhibition catalogue, or the removal of the image of the begging Chinese boy from the Moscow exhibition in 1959?⁹¹ What of the concurrent removal of the mirror from the "Faces" section?

When speculating on the lynching photograph's displacement from *The Family of Man*, Erina Duganne forecloses the visual specificity and meaning of McDaniels' torture and death. In wondering why the lynching photograph was pulled from the New York exhibition "one day after its opening" (and Duganne's timing is curious, as it contradicts accounts by Steichen and Miller that the photograph was removed two weeks after the show opened), Duganne turns to the removal of Silk's photograph of the homeless Chinese youth begging for food during *The Family of Man's* tenure in the U.S.S.R. When the exhibition was unveiled in Moscow in 1959, the photograph – which Steichen had asserted was a "universal depiction of starvation" – caused such a furor that the Soviet Union Chamber of Commerce (SUCC) ordered its removal. Duganne surmises that the SUCC made this order because the photo "was hateful," and that

the reception of the lynching photograph in the United States reflects a similar set of concerns. Although Steichen attempted to position the photograph as a universal depiction of hatred and oppression, in using a specifically racial content to evoke these notions, Steichen entered into the messy and tumultuous context of 1950s U.S. race relations.⁹²

According to Duganne, the Duck Hill lynching photograph would have humiliated American visitors to *The Family of Man* while standing in contrast to "the

generalized notions of humanity that Steichen intended the images in his exhibition to evoke.”⁹³

The idea that museumgoers found the lynching photograph insulting or humiliating is indeed suggested in a statement Steichen made to members of the Picture Division in 1955. “We tried to be very honest in this exhibition,” he discloses. “The lynching photograph has hurt many people – and many don’t like it in the show – but I feel it plays an important part. It is an expression of our honesty – we admit that we are not always right or good.”⁹⁴ Steichen’s comment suggests that visitors to *The Family of Man* were disturbed – “hurt” – by the lynching photograph’s presence in a photographic exhibit celebrating the fortitude of human bonds and the beneficence of liberal democratic representation. Politically conscious visitors to the exhibition may have rejected the presence of the lynching photograph on the grounds that Steichen was ill-equipped to broach the history of anti-black terrorism in the U.S., let alone do it justice. Including the photograph alongside portraits of other instances of “inhumanity” took attention away from the anti-black state of emergency that existed at mid-century in the U.S., as evidenced by the mass defense campaign against the 1948 legal lynching of Rosa Lee Ingram and her two sons, as well as by the formal submission in 1951 of allegations of genocide against black Americans by the Civil Rights Congress to the United Nations Genocide Convention.⁹⁵ In addition to this relativizing gesture, Steichen’s presentation of the photographs in the “Man’s Inhumanity to Man” section as repeated historical instances of injustice that prefigure the big injustice to come suggests that lynching and racial slavery are minor moments in a larger dialectic of struggle and freedom.

In the same way that Frantz Fanon refuses a dialectical schema in which the struggle of the enslaved against his master is one part of a transcendental sublation that mobilizes the emergence of a human universal, visitors to the MoMA in late January in 1955 may have rejected altogether the idea that lynching be relativized as a fungible form of violence alongside other mournable historical catastrophes.⁹⁶ For critical visitors to the exhibition, the lynching photograph's presence in a photo-text whose organizing principle and overarching schema was private sentiment rather than engagement in public politics was likely seen to be more harmful than helpful to black political movements for freedom.

But Steichen's focus on spectators' "hurt" at the sight of the photograph is curious when compared to his assistant Wayne Miller's recollection of the photograph's reception at the MoMA:

Steichen and I found that spectators were hesitating in front of that photograph. It became a disruption to the overall theme of the exhibition. We wanted the photographs to work together. Although it was a very, very important photograph. ... We observed the traffic flow. ... We wanted this exhibition to flow ... and the photograph was a stumbling block. People stumbled. It was a fantastic picture. It just didn't work there. ... We were dealing with a piece of music and this was a discordant note.⁹⁷

The idea that the lynching photograph served as a "discordant note" is repeated in an interview that Sandeen conducted with Miller while preparing to write *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America*, in which Miller admitted:

It was removed because [Steichen] felt that this violent picture might become a focal point ... so that people would focus on that and that would be used in press stories about the show and people would miss the point, the theme of the show being interrupted by this individual photograph... That [photo] provided a form of dissonance to the theme, so we removed it for that purpose, not because we didn't think it important, but the presentation of material was dissonant to the composition.⁹⁸

In both of these statements, Miller frames the lynching photograph as a “discordant” and “dissonant” element in an exhibition that Steichen metaphorized as a piece of music.⁹⁹ But unlike Steichen’s suggestion that people were hurt by the image and did not want to see it, Miller intimates, in his comments on the photograph being a “stumbling block,” that people were curious about it, that they were stopped short – even seized – by it.¹⁰⁰ In Miller’s comments on the photograph as a stumbling block, we may imagine visitors standing still, disrupting the preordained flow of *The Family of Man*, being thrown out of the progressive narrative, out of the epic journey. If *The Family of Man* inhabited the narrative temporality of epic overcoming, the Duck Hill photograph introduced a different temporality into the structure of the exhibition, taking it from a metaphysical representation of “experiences that matter” to an allegorical experience of the chasm that separates the mere life of the not-quite-human from the transcendent ideal of Man.¹⁰¹

According to Steichen’s schematic, the lynching photograph, once carried as an afterimage into the bomb room, should have transformed McDaniels’ torture into an icon of universal human depravation, thus abstracting it from the particularity of anti-black racism in the U.S. By including the lynching photograph in the “Inhumanity” section of *The Family of Man*, Steichen also sought to capitalize on an image of extra-legality in order to underscore his belief in a supposedly universal human desire for law-and-order, which he reiterated in the show’s presentation of photographs of people voting and in Dan Weiner’s photograph of a grave adjudicator in *Judge Learned Hand* (1951). Steichen essentially mobilized the

lynching photograph as a universal equivalent for his desire for a strictly defined order, for the law of the father, for the order of the same. As did many liberals at mid-century, he used the photograph to underscore his belief in the very legal system that had historically worked in tandem with the extra-legal violence of lynching to construct black Americans as criminally human.

But the photograph took away from Steichen's totalizing vision of the great white hope of the nuclear family because the majority of museumgoers, reared as they were in a white supremacist symbolic, could not recognize it as an "experience that mattered." The photograph disrupted the sentimental conceit of the exhibition because, in contrast to the other atrocity images, it punctuated the terror and sadness of the "Inhumanity" section with the *frisson* of black suffering in the white imaginary: the enjoyment that has historically accompanied anti-black torture and torment in the U.S.¹⁰² According to the hegemonic white supremacist optic that existed at mid-century, the lynching photograph was not a depiction of pain. As Saidiya Hartman writes, black pain is elusive in a social totality constituted by the slave relation – by a division between the Human and the black – in which black flesh is constituted as the source of a criminal humanity.¹⁰³ By highlighting the "libidinal economy of enjoyment" through which the Human has been forged, the Duck Hill lynching photograph brought into relief that, in the U.S., humans are exposed to their being-in-common when they are exposed to black death.¹⁰⁴

Where Steichen sought to raise the photographs in his exhibition from indexical representations to iconic symbols, there is an allegorical opacity to the Duck Hill photograph that pushes against museumgoers' potential recognition of

the lynching from *LIFE* (they had long since learned to disremember the man, the men, the charge, the place). According to Walter Benjamin, allegorical representation works according to a different historical horizon than metaphoricity; where symbolism hearkens to a transcendent ideal that is true in all historical moments, allegory is a deeply temporal mode that expresses the experience of life fractured by political and economic devastation.¹⁰⁵ When the lynching photograph seized museumgoers in its atonal grip, it arrested the progression of Steichen's narrative, bringing the catastrophe of history as progress to a halt in its demonstration of the coincidence of history and black non-being.¹⁰⁶ The photograph entered into renewed legibility to signal that the human was not an a priori agent in the pursuit of freedom, and that the human was yet to come. MoMA museumgoers, shocked, were confronted not with the linear time of bourgeois history but with the convergence, or constellation, of a not-so-distant anti-black past with their anti-black present. They were confronted with the sight of a spectacle lynching that had galvanized unexpected political support for a federal anti-lynching law in 1937, as well as with the failure of that bill to survive a Senate filibuster. They were confronted with a moment in which the state disavowed its liberal mandate to recognize and protect all from social suffering and with a moment to come in which the militant insistence upon a noncriminal black personhood would occur primarily through extra-legal civil disobedience rather than in the courts. Six months before Till's lynching would rouse global attention to the continuing depravity of anti-black violence in the U.S. and galvanize support for black civil rights movements, the photograph of the 1937 lynching of McDaniels reemerged fleetingly in the

public sphere to illuminate the political antagonism at the heart of U.S. liberal democracy: the gratuitous violence that exiles black subjects from a human relation predicated upon social recognition and self-ownership.¹⁰⁷

The image event of McDaniels' lynching in *The Family of Man* manifested a gap in the sensible fabric of Steichen's photographic essay about the oneness of Man, operating similarly to Theophilus Neokonkwo's destruction of four photographs of black subjects during the exhibition's Moscow run at Sokolniki Park in the summer of 1959.¹⁰⁸ A Nigerian medical student, Neokonkwo slashed photographs of Africans in *The Family of Man* because, as he argued in a statement published by the Baltimore *Afro-American*:

The collection portrayed white Americans and other Europeans in dignified cultural states – wealthy, healthy and wise, and American and West Indian Negroes, Africans and Asiatics as comparatively social inferiors – sick, raggerty [sic], destitute, and physically maladjusted. African men and women were portrayed either half clothed or naked. I could not stand the sight. It was insulting, undignified, and tendentious.¹⁰⁹

Neokonkwo's objections get at the heart of the fact that Steichen's vision of universal Man depended upon the appropriation of images of racialized non-identity in order to solidify his faith in photographic totality. During its time as an element of "Man's Inhumanity to Man," the Duck Hill photograph operated like Neokonkwo's knife by cutting into the consensus model of Steichen's dream, reinstating a gap between his ordering of beings and things into the places delimited for them by the international accumulation of capital to make visible the violence that undergirds narratives of historical progress.¹¹⁰ Neokonkwo's knife and the Duck Hill photograph mark instances in which the political was reintroduced into

the exhibition by making visible the gap between Steichen's dream of liberal democracy and the experience of white supremacy whose part in a capitalist totality is usually rendered insensible.¹¹¹

Lynching at Mid-Century, a Concrete Universal

The irreducible and ultimately unaccountable gap between a series and its excess, between the Whole and the One of its exception, is the very *terrain* of 'concrete universality.'

- Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*

With the Duck Hill photograph, the allegorical burst through the show's overwhelming symbolic holism to figure the political relations that bar nonwhite subjects from the category of the Human.¹¹² Steichen's initial inclusion of the Duck Hill photograph indicates that U.S. lynching was, or ought to have been, in Steichen's and everyone's mind, a global concern – not because anti-black violence is everywhere the same, nor because the photograph stands to represent the human tendency to desire the death of the Other, not even because the lynching of African Americans had always been a trans-Atlantic political concern, and had been of especial interest to Soviet Communists whose anti-capitalist propaganda often centered on the fundamental role that extra-legal and extra-economic force against black people played in the accumulation of capital in the U.S. Rather, lynching ought to have been a global concern, or a concern in Steichen's global imaginary, because it has been through anti-black violence that the Human has been born. The removal of the photograph highlights the most egregious error on Steichen's part: his assumption that human life can be separated from the political, that the political and

the racialized genres of being through which the political is lived can be relativized.

For Benjamin – a contemporary of Steichen’s whose writings on the relationship between history and photography provide a necessary political foil to *The Family of Man* – there is no history without the capacity to arrest historical movement; history is historical insofar as we may arrest, photographically, the catastrophic faith in progress espoused by bourgeois historicists. The state of emergency, Benjamin argues, corresponds with the photographic event, which intervenes in the present to signal the need for a “caesura in the movement of thought,” for a mode of thinking history outside the confines of a philosophy of history that reifies nature and history.¹¹³ Benjamin proposed that emblems of those targeted by what he terms “mythic violence” – his concept for violence that founds and preserves the law – are to be mobilized by materialist historians in their construction of photographic-allegorical texts that express the experience of living in crisis. As Benjamin’s colleague and friend Theodor Adorno would explain in a lecture in 1965, “No progress may be supposed that implies that humanity already existed and could therefore be assumed to continue to progress. Rather progress would be the establishment of humanity in the first place, the prospect of which opens up in the face of its extinction.”¹¹⁴

Given the opacity of black pain in a white supremacist visual culture that enjoys its association of depravity with black skin, how might this kind of messianic project work in a U.S. context? Can the particularity of the black body in pain act, in the words of Alexander Weheliye, as a “(de)tour, a relational passage to a version of the human unburdened by the shackles of Man”?¹¹⁵ The task for a black radical

messianic criticism is to write into the space of Steichen's failure, into the gap between the total vision of Man that mobilizes black abjection as the fungible vessel for the accumulation of sympathetic capital, into the gap between Steichen's analogy of European, Chinese, and black bare life and the particularity of what Frank Wilderson calls a black grammar of suffering.¹¹⁶

What if Steichen had stuck with his initial impulse to include the Duck Hill photograph in *The Family of Man*? What if he had decided not to police his audience's reactions, had shirked some of the control and authority he wielded in the exhibition's reception, had welcomed the pause in the traffic and flow of his tide?¹¹⁷ Can we conceive of another *Family of Man* that includes the Duck Hill photograph as the particular flesh of its universal framework? Can we imagine an alternative *Family of Man* in which the constitutive relationship between anti-blackness and the regimes of family and work are not repressed? In which we admit that lynching is a condition of the American *Family of Man*?¹¹⁸



Figure 31. This lynching reenactment occurred as part of an unknown family's camping trip in Westboro, Kansas in 1910. The photograph is one of over a dozen images that make up a vernacular photo album by the unidentified photographer(s). The International Center of Photography.



Figure 32. Consuelo Kanaga, *Annie Mae Meriweather* (1935). Radical photographer Kanaga was represented twice in *The Family of Man*, though this portrait of organizer and lynching survivor Annie Mae Meriweather did not make the cut.

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ In 1948 and 1949, *Ladies Home Journal* ran a series of twelve-page spreads titled, “People are People the World Over,” using Magnum agency photos. The series influenced Steichen’s vision for *The Family of Man*. See Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Image, and American History* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2007), 115.

² I take “500-odd” from Steichen’s description of his curatorial process in “Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity.” See Edward Steichen, “Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 41:3 (Spring 1958), 161.

³ Edward Steichen, “Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 41:3 (Spring 1958), 161.

⁴ Kevin Salemme, “Chasing Shadows: Steichen’s Dream of the Universal,” *History of Photography* 29:4 (2005), 372-377, 373.

⁵ Steichen’s manifestation of an international family depended upon both documentary realism and modernist exhibition techniques that had been practiced by the Soviet avant-garde, by the German Bauhaus, and by German National Socialists in their respective attempts to generate a mass subject. *The Family of Man* was composed of large-format monochrome photographic prints glued onto wooden frames or transparent Plexiglas suspended from the ceiling as well as fixed to the walls of the gallery. Steichen, as ambivalent as he was about propaganda, was clearly taken with the idea of “total environments,” which were designed to lead their occupants to, in the words of Herbert Bayer, who designed Steichen’s first three war exhibitions at the MoMA, a “planned reaction.” Bayer quoted in Christopher Phillips, “Steichen’s ‘Road to Victory,’” *Exposure* 18.2 (Fall 1980), 375. See also Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 118; Ribalta, *Public Photographic Spaces from Pressa to The Family of Man, 1928-1955* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2008); Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition, The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 61, 68-9; Sarah James “A Post-Fascist *Family of Man*? Cold War Humanism, Democracy, and Photography in Germany,” *Oxford Art Journal* 35.3 (2012), 321; Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998).

⁶ *The Family of Man* opened two years after the end of Korean war, and ten years after WWII, during the first decade of the “atomic age.” See Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 25; Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 32, 67; Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, “Denied Images: The Family of Man and the Shoa,” *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*, ed. Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004), 83; and Donald E. Pease, “Forward” in *Photographic Memories*, xi.

⁷ After the Soviet Union formed the Komintern, the U.S. formed its own under-cover propaganda offensive called the Kominform, sponsored and funded by the CIA to rally support for its capitalist regime. The CIA’s attempt to co-opt modernist art such as Abstract Expressionism as exemplary of U.S. freedom was part of this campaign. John O’Brien writes about *the Family of Man* installation in Russia under the guidance of the USIA: “The exhibition formed part of the American National Exhibition in Sokol’niki Park, the site of the infamous Krushchev-Nixon kitchen debate, occupying its own building adjacent to pavilions housing displays of automobiles, refrigerators, model homes, stereo equipment, vacuum cleaners, color televisions, air conditioners, Pepsi-Cola and other commodities of capitalist prosperity provided by American corporations for the occasion.” John O’Brien, “The Nuclear Family of Man,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, accessed online May 10, 2015, http://japanfocus.org/-john_o_brian/2816/article.html. See also Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 102-103.

⁸ Eugene Reznik, “Steichen’s Family of Man Restored: New Life for a Photographic Touchstone,” *Time*, July 11, 2013, accessed online July 14, 2015. <http://time.com/3800880/steichens-family-of-man-restored-new-life-for-a-photographic-touchstone/>. The USIA was “a government unit that was charged with distributing information about the culture and civic institutions of the United States and responding quickly to propaganda offensives mounted by the Soviet Union.” See Eric J. Sandeen, “The International Reception of Family of Man *History of Photography* 29:4 2005, 372-377, 345.

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- ⁹ Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 238; Duganne, *The Self in Black and White*, 75.
- ¹⁰ The quotation is attributed to Bhagavad-Gita. Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man* (New York City: The Museum of Modern Art, 1955), 75.
- ¹¹ Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," 102. Emphasis mine.
- ¹² Jorge Ribalta writes: "A paradigm of humanist photography during the post-war period in the West, this exhibition provided a sweeping representation of the working classes that arose after the war, and of the pact between capital and the workforce that led to the creation of the welfare State in the West." See Ribalta, *Public Photographic Spaces*, 23-24.
- ¹³ Ribalta, *Public Photographic Spaces*, 17.
- ¹⁴ Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," 100.
- ¹⁵ Mary Anne Staniszewski writes of the exhibition's "forthright religious message" that "Steichen did not, as he intended, transcend nationality and religion; The Family of Man portrayed instead a notion of civilization over which a very particular Western god presides. The religious moralism implied in the exhibitions of the 1940s reached full force in this 1955 show." See Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 236.
- ¹⁶ Other images in *Family of Man* alluded to sci exp with nuclear weapons: Andreas Feininger's *LIFE* image of a glowing test tube, Farbman's *Radiation Laboratory*, University of California, and Alfred Eisenstaedt's images of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.
- ¹⁷ Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 179.
- ¹⁸ The full quotation is: "This is the root. The family unit is the root of the family of man, and we are all alike." Steichen, "Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity," 164.
- ¹⁹ Marc-Emmanuel Melon, "The Patriarchal Family. Domestic Ideology in *the Family of Man*," in *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*. Ed. Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004), 69.
- ²⁰ Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," 101.
- ²¹ Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," 101.
- ²² Bobo was Till's nickname. Till was lynched for allegedly "wolf-whistling" at Carolyn Bryant in her general store while visiting his uncle and cousins from Chicago. Till had a nervous stutter, and his mother had taught him to whistle when he felt a stutter coming on.
- ²³ The United States Information Agency (USIA) began August 1, 1953 as an embedded unit within the State Department, and with representatives stationed in embassies abroad. Its mission was to project American culture abroad. The International Press Service was the core unit in the agency, and it was assigned to assemble hundreds of thousands of photographs into photo stories, filmstrips, exhibits, pamphlets, book and magazine reprints. See Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 110.
- ²⁴ Photographs of Till's body were published in *Jet*, *Ebony*, and the *Chicago Defender* to publicize his killers' court case. Jacqueline Goldsby writes: "Precisely because it is so expansive, the visual archive chronicling this case makes clear that the murder of Emmett Till coincided with that moment when 'instead of just recording reality, photographs ... became the norm for the way things appear to us, thereby changing the very idea of reality, and of realism.'" Goldsby describes the pictorial turn as marked by the emergence of visual media as a mode of cognition that contends equally with print literacy. See Jacqueline Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 297.
- ²⁵ Martin Berger, lecture, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2012.
- ²⁶ See Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).
- ²⁷ Feininger's lunchtime crowd had been foreshadowed by a photomural of another crowd that was attached to the walls outside the entrance doorway. As Erina Duganne writes, the faces in this crowd "became interchangeable with those who passed through the entrance." See Duganne, *The Self in Black and White*, 75.
- ²⁸ Given that most people's knowledge of the exhibition is generated in relation to the immensely popular catalogue intensifies the disappearance of the lynching from Steichen's vision of universal history.

²⁹ John O'Brien, "The Nuclear Family of Man," *Japan Focus*, n.p. http://japanfocus.org/~john-o_brian/2816/article.html

³⁰ The lack of attention to the photograph's place in *The Family of Man* is likely due to the scant information available in the archives of Edward Steichen, Wayne Miller, and the MoMA. As Mary Ann Staniszewski writes, there is no record of the photograph's removal in press reports or in the Museum's archives. Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 254.

³¹ Eugene Reznik, "Steichen's Family of Man Restored."

³² Eric Sandeen's prolific scholarship on the exhibition has largely catalyzed this reparative turn, which focuses on the exhibition's ambiguities. Sandeen argues that *The Family of Man* should be understood as an anti-McCarthy document in its refutation of a world divided between communism and capitalism, that we must distinguish between Steichen's intentions as the exhibition's curator and the intentions of the USIA in its direction of the exhibition's global circulation, and that we should not so readily dismiss the role of sentiment as a tendentious liberal ploy. Lili Bezner takes a similar stand when she emphasizes the difficulty of Steichen's position during the conservative Cold War years. "While the catalog from the *Family of Man* might make the exhibition seem the visual epitome of Eisenhower-era cultural stereotypes and middle-class myths, some images, ones often ignored, reveal ambiguity and contradiction" and "The analyses of a few specific images expose the contradictory forces, or subtle subterfuge, within the narrative totality of *The Family of Man*. In its time, this exhibition, in small part, countered right-wing, isolationist, imperialist rhetoric and aspired to a documentary language of humanistic inclusion, a point of view in contrast to the splintering of national and racial groups into enemy camps." See Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*; Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 123-4, 144, 173.

³³ See Sarah James's reading of the conflicted spectatorial experience created by the odd juxtaposition of Wynn Bullock's *Child in the forest* (1951) with Carl Sandburg's prologue. James, "A Post-Fascist *Family of Man*? Cold War Humanism, Democracy, and Photography in Germany," 335. Also instructive are James's and Monique Berlier's responses to Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff's argument that the Shoa is the "invisible center" of the exhibition, as well as her emphasis on the ambiguous ethnicity of the outraged woman in Israel who presides at the top of the "Man's Inhumanity to Man" section. See James, "A Post-Fascist *Family of Man*? Cold War Humanism, Democracy, and Photography in Germany," 328; Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, "Denied Images: The Family of Man and the Shoa," 11; and Monique Berlier, "The Family of Man: Readings of an Exhibition," *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, ed. Bonnie Brennan and Hanno Hardt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

³⁴ Marc-Emmanuel Melon, "The Patriarchal Family: Domestic Ideology in the Family of Man," in *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*, eds. Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004), 67.

³⁵ Wayne Miller, Steichen's primary assistant for the exhibition, "noted in an interview with Mary Anne Staniszewski that he and Steichen "found that spectators were hesitating in front of that photograph. It became a disruption to the overall theme of the exhibition." Quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 254. I take this up below.

³⁶ It showed in Dallas, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Minneapolis. The historiography on *The Family of Man* tends to focus on the exhibition's tour to China, Germany, Paris, Guatemala, and the Soviet Union. In 1964, the U.S. government donated the collection to Luxembourg. Since 1994, *The Family of Man* has been revived in its "original" form at Luxembourg's Clervaux Castle, where it continues to attract a large viewership. In 2003, the collection was listed on the UNESTO Memory of the World register." <http://www.steichencollections.lu/en/the-family-of-man>. See also Monique Berlier, "The Family of Man: Readings of an Exhibition," *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, edited by Bonnie Brennan and Hanno Hardt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 209; and Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 124.

³⁷ That he believed it required some mediation is evidenced by the quotations that accompanied the photographs on the museum walls. Steichen, who was concerned not with individual photographs nor the artists that made them, but with the show's overall effect, stated: "It is Photography ... giving an

account of itself. This is what it has done – it has made a record – a portrait of man. Feeling about people the way I do, I feel we have here an article of faith – an antidote to the horror we have been fed from day to day for a number of years.” He abdicates his own responsibility as the exhibition’s primary author in reiterating his belief that photography (here personified as Photography) communicates an unmediated reality directly to its viewers. Hence Steichen removed the titles and captions that the photographs’ authors ascribed to them with quotations from the Bible, modernist authors, and anonymous native informants. He does not acknowledge that he achieved this effect through his own labor, presenting himself as he does as essentially a conduit through which reality presents itself to the multitudes to feed them the “faith” – a key word in Steichen’s theotographic display of human redemption despite the odds – they need in the face of the daily horrors that Steichen gestures to, but does not name. Quoted in Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 57. Kevin Salemme, “Chasing Shadows: Steichen’s Dream of the Universal,” *History of Photography* 29:4 2005, 372-377, 376.

³⁸ Quoting “The Daguerreolite” *The Daily Chronicle* (Cincinnati), January 17, 1840; quoted in Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs” *Art Journal* 41.1 (Spring 1981), 17.

³⁹ Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Age of Photography,” *The Atlantic*, 1859,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/ideastour/technology/holmes-full.html>; quoted in Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” 22.

⁴⁰ Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” 22-23. Lest we think that Sekula inserts the language of political economy in his radical reading of Holmes’s discourse, it is necessary to recall that Holmes himself made explicit recourse to the language of money, which would not come into widespread currency until the Civil War. Holmes writes: “And as a means of facilitating the formation of public and private stereographic collections there must be arranged a comprehensive system of exchanges, so that there might grow up something like a universal currency of these banknotes, on promises to pay in solid substance, which the sun has engraved for the great Bank of Nature”

⁴¹ Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 1.

⁴² Quoted in Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 1

⁴³ Edward Alden Jewell, “Portrait of the Spirit of a Nation,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1942. Quoted in Fred Turner, “*The Family of Man* and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America,” *Public Culture* 24:1 (2012), 70.

⁴⁴ Steichen: *A Life in Photography*, n.p.

⁴⁵ Ribalta, *Public Photographic Spaces*, 22.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Turner, “*The Family of Man* and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America,” 74-75. See René d’Harnoncourt, “Image of America (Working Title), Outline of an Exhibition,” June 25, 1951, 1, d’Harnoncourt Papers, ser. 7, folder 85.

⁴⁷ Steichen quoted in Lili Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: from the new deal into the cold war* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 163. Bezner cites an unidentified article on “Rodin’s Funeral” in unmarked box, p. 6, Edward Steichen Archive.

⁴⁸ Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), x.

⁴⁹ Abraham Lincoln, “Messages to Congress (Excerpts), 1861-2.”

<http://www.historytools.org/sources/lincoln-messages.html>

⁵⁰ Steichen was turned on to Lincoln’s use of the phrase after the publication of his brother-in-law Carl Sandburg’s six-volume Lincoln bio, *the People, Yes*. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 43; Edward Steichen, “From Edward Steichen to Members of the Picture Division,” *Picturescope: Newsletter of the Picture Division, Special Libraries Association* 3:2 (July 1955), 7.

⁵¹ Eric Sandeen, “The Show You See with Your Heart: The Family of Man on Tour in the Cold War World,” *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*. Ed. Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004), 105.

⁵² Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 130.

⁵³ Press Release, "Museum of Modern Art Plans International Photography Exhibition," January 31, 1954, Edward Steichen Archives, MoMA, quoted in Duganne, *The Self in Black and White*, 142.

⁵⁴ Nelson Rockefeller, who established the USIA and was involved in CIA-sponsored cultural projects abroad, recognized the potential of Steichen's message for foreign policy purposes and was instrumental in getting the USIA to adopt the exhibition and send it abroad. The full quotation from which the above excerpts were drawn reads: "In the exhibition you will see, there is spread out before you a great pageant of the relationships and experiences that are common to all men at all times — a pageant not of *events that have happened*, but of *experiences that matter*. Here are the relationships of the lover to beloved, of mother to child, of father to son, of children in the family and in the community. Here is the incredibly old, the never-changing and ever-changing relationship of men and women at work — on the land, as artisans, in household tasks, in industries and the professions." Address by the Honorable Nelson A. Rockefeller Special Assistant to the President of the United States at the Preview of *The Family of Man*. January 24, 1955, at The Museum of Modern Art, 2. MoMA Archives, 1950-1959.

https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/1892/releases/MOMA_1955_0007_3.pdf?2010. See also Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 117.

⁵⁵ <http://www.steichencollections.lu/en/the-family-of-man>.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Peter B. Hales, "The Atomic Sublime," *American Studies* 32:1 (Spring 1991), 8.

⁵⁷ Hales, "The Atomic Sublime," 9.

⁵⁸ James, "A Post-Fascist *Family of Man*? Cold War Humanism, Democracy, and Photography in Germany," 335.

⁵⁹ Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 167.

⁶⁰ Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 162-163. The quotation by Frank, alongside the Holocaust photographs, is particularly pernicious. It is a cold bit of irony with the potential to turn Steichen's argument on its head. How are we to trust this man, who quotes a dead girl who has been killed by Nazis, that people are really good at heart?

⁶¹ These photographs were commissioned by high SS and Krakow police officer Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger and prepared by SS officer Jurgen Stroop.

⁶² The Gavagan anti-lynching bill was the first Federal anti-lynching legislation to go before Congress after the 1922 defeat of Dyer anti-lynching bill. Gavagan, who represented Harlem, authored the anti-lynching legislation and lobbied for it in the House, where Sumners, along with other Southern Representatives, launched a filibuster. After the lynching on April 12, the following report was read in the House: "Two Negroes were taken from ... custody ... as they were being returned to jail ... After they were seized the mob tortured their victims by searing their flesh with blasts from gasoline blow torches. After thus brutally burning them, the wild mob piled brush high about them, saturated the brush with gasoline, and touched a match to the pyre." *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 1st Session, 3434, 3563. Quoted in Isabelle Whelan, "The Politics of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation in the New Deal Era," September 2007. MA Thesis, Institute for the Study of the Americas, 1.

⁶³ *LIFE* misnames McDaniels "MacDaniel." The spread creates a relay between the image of McDaniels being pulled in both directions at once — from the pull of his tormentors and his own impulse to turn away from his capture — and the men above him who play with fire. The editors of *LIFE* describe Sumners' "plea" for Southern rights as "eloquent." Some of Sumners comments, as quoted in the *Chicago Tribune*, included: "Lynching in the South is gradually dying out under the force of public opinion. Back in 1892 lynching was at its height. Since then the crimes of this nature have been decreasing until today there is the happy promise of eventual extinction of such violations of law and order. The south can take care of this threat to peace and order and has demonstrated its ability to do so. But if the federal government should be called upon to interfere there is a real possibility that popular opinion will be so resentful of this outrage of state's rights that none can forecast what may be the result." See "Squabble Over Lynch Bill As Mob Kills Two," *The Chicago Tribune* April 14, 1937, 1.

⁶⁴ Howard Kester, "Lynching by Blow Torch" in the Howard Kester Papers #3834, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 4.

⁶⁵ Kester, "Lynching by Blow Torch," 5.

⁶⁶ Kester, "Lynching by Blow Torch," 5.

⁶⁷ Kester, "Lynching by Blow Torch," 6. According to Kester's report, the lynching was not the first time that McDaniels and Townes had been tortured by Mississippi authorities. Police had apprehended the two men after they were discovered disposing of "white mule," a fresh corn whiskey whose manufacture and consumption in the dry state of Mississippi had been made illegal by federal prohibition laws. According to local law, however, white men were allowed to create and sell the liquor. When they were unable to secure legal employment, McDaniels and Townes had turned to bootlegging, which was strictly off-limits to black men. Upon their arrest, they were whipped and ordered out of Winona. Following this, they returned to Duck Hill and began stealing corn. They were again caught, whipped, and this time ordered to leave Montgomery County, or else face death by "sudden pneumonia," a popular euphemism for lynching. The men reportedly left Duck Hill, though they were rumored to have returned and then again disappeared just after Windham's murder. According to Kester, Memphis officials were notified of Townes' alleged involvement in Windham's murder, arrested him, tortured a confession from him, and sent him to Jackson to await trial. As Kester writes, "the methods employed to obtain confessions from criminal suspects by Memphis police are known to be among the most brutal in the entire country and such confessions have no value whatsoever." Citizens of Montgomery, Grenada, Chickasaw, Webster, and Calhoun counties told Kester that Sheriff Wright knew of the mob's plans to kidnap Townes and McDaniels. "About two hours after the mob had escaped with the prisoners Sheriff Wright was moved to call Governor White at Jackson to inform him that there had been a lynching. It is interesting to observe that although the Sheriff had not quitted the court house square he knew what had happened twenty miles away." Howard Kester, "Lynching by Blow Torch" in the Howard Kester Papers #3834, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1-3, 7.

⁶⁸ See Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 220. *LIFE* magazine quoted in William D. Carrigan, *Lynching Reconsidered: New Perspectives in the Study of Mob Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 167, 172.

⁶⁹ The Gavagan bill sought to hold accountable public officials guilty of conspiring or cooperating in instances of mob violence (as had local and state police during the Duck Hill lynching) by subjecting them to five to twenty-five years of imprisonment, by mandating action by the U.S. District Court within thirty days of a lynching if state and local officials failed to respond, and by holding any counties involved in the abduction and death liable to a fine. The lynching also coincided with a farm conference in Jackson, Mississippi, at which Governor Hugh Lawson White boasted that Mississippi had not had a lynching in fifteen months. See Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 141-2. Quoted in Whelan, "The Politics of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation in the New Deal Era," 38. See also Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue During the Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁷⁰ Quoted in Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 220. While this decision is in line with journalistic standards, the response to the NAACP demonstrates white media complicity with lynching. This complicity was not new, of course; news publications had long been a central motivator of anti-black violence, having, since the 1890s, featured sensationalist news stories about lynchings that criminalized the lynched while excusing and perpetuating the actions of white supremacists. In addition to reporting on lynchings that had already occurred, newspapers featured advertisements for upcoming lynchings. By the 1930s, this trend had long stopped, though newspaper and magazine editors published lynching photographs more frequently than their predecessors had because the photographs circulated more widely due to the actions of anti-lynching activists.

⁷¹ I found a photograph of this magazine spread on the popular photography site, Flickr, through a Google search. I believe it is from *Time Magazine*.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/9332485@N02/4967020711/in/dateposted/>

⁷² See Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle* for a discussion of the publication of the anti-lynching poster in the *Chicago Tribune*. Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 197, 212 (note 56). See also “Representatives from South Also Back Lynch Bill,” *The Chicago Defender*, April 24, 1937; “Anti-Lynch Bill on Senate Calendar Next Session,” *The Crisis*, September 1937, 278. For coverage of the lynching in *The Afro-American*, see: Ralph Matthews, “Two Burned at Stake,” *The Afro-American*, April 17, 1937; Ralph Matthews, “Women Faint, Men Choke, at sight of lynch victims’ bodies,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937, 1-2; Ralph Matthews, “Eye-Witness Tells Story,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937, 1-2; “Anti-Lynch Bill Held Up in Senate,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937, 1-2; “Predict Passage of bill By Christmas,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937; Ralph Matthews, “Ralph Matthews Finds Real ‘Porgy and Bess’ Love Story in Life of Man Lynched by Mississippi Mob,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937; “Blow-Torch Lynchers Came From Other Counties, Says Prosecutor,” *The Afro-American*, April 24, 1937, 2; “The US Senate Can Halt Such Lynching as Duck Hill’s” (excerpted from Howard Kester’s NAACP report), *The Afro-American*, June 26, 1937; “Wagner Withdraws Anti-Lynch Bill,” *The Afro-American*, November 27, 1937. The photograph of the Senate anti-lynching poster was also published in “Anti-Lynching Poster,” *Lawrence Journal-World*, Nov 20, 1937.

⁷³ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.

⁷⁴ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 212-213.

⁷⁵ The language of lawlessness and civility allowed white southerners to distance themselves from lynching without abandoning their white supremacist convictions. “In fact,” Wood writes, “these convictions gave anti-lynching rhetoric added force. The notion that whites were more restrained and law-abiding than blacks only made images of frenzied, lawless white mobs more embarrassing.” Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 219. That white liberal anti-lynching leaders were more concerned with the South’s reputation than with the right of black people to life is evidenced in a letter that Jessie Daniel Ames (the executive director of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching and the most vehement proponent of end-of-lynching rhetoric) wrote to Democratic Senator Tom Connally of Texas upon his successful filibuster of the Wagner-Van Nuys anti-lynching bill in the Senate: “It will be a great relief to the public to have that measure laid on the shelf in order that the Senate may go about important and far-reaching legislation.” Ames to Connally, January 28, 1938, container 127, Tom Connally papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Quoted in Whelan, “The Politics of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation in the New Deal Era,” 8.

⁷⁶ The Roosevelt administration argued that the Costigan-Wagner anti-lynching bill of 1935 threatened Roosevelt’s legislative priorities of social security and the Emergency Relief Reappropriation Act. The Resettlement program, which was renamed the Farm Security Administration, displaced black sharecroppers as it resettled white migrants. See Jane Adams and D. Gorton, “This Land Ain’t My Land: The Eviction of Sharecroppers by the Farm Security Administration,” *Agricultural History* 83.3 (Summer 2009): 323-51; Whelan, “The Politics of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation in the New Deal Era,” 22; and Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950*, 128.

⁷⁷ After Thurmond and Holmes’s brutal demise on the lawn of the San Jose courthouse, politicians and journalists described the lynching as an assault on law, order, and the government. Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 216.

⁷⁸ “President & God,” *Time*, December 18, 1933. Quoted in Whelan, “The Politics of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation in the New Deal Era,” 11.

⁷⁹ Robyn D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 166. Albert Jackson, “Alabama’s Blood-Smeared Cotton,” *New Masses* 16.3 (September 24, 1935); reproduced in *Jim Crow America: A Documentary History*, Edited by Catherine M. Lewis, J. Richard Lewis (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2009), 114-115.

⁸⁰ The quotation reads: “The best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with hydrogen bombs is quite likely to put an end to the human race. . . . there will be universal death – sudden only

for a fortunate minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration.” Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 179.

⁸¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 119.

⁸² Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 244.

⁸³ Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 49; Rudolph quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 248-249.

⁸⁴ Ribalta, *Public Photographic Spaces*, 25.

⁸⁵ As Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff writes, the show was to flow calmly “in a main narrative stream with tributaries into which viewers are irresistibly drawn. The flow of images in the narrative is the flow of life itself.” Schmidt-Linsenhoff, “Denied Images: The Family of Man and the Shoa,” 91.

⁸⁶ Steichen, “Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity,” 161.

⁸⁷ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 109.

⁸⁸ *LIFE* magazine began in 1936, in the midst of a turn on the part of artists and mass media image-makers to the vocabulary of social realism. The magazine’s owner, Henry Luce, was “an ardent interventionist” who ordered his editors to ‘cultivate the martial spirit’ while celebrating the “American Century.” Luce quoted in John G Morris, “*The Family of Man*’ as American Foreign Policy,” *History of Photography* 29:4 2005: 360-371 362.

⁸⁹ The principle of progressive rationality, as we have learned from decades of post-Enlightenment critique, contains an internal conflict in that it can exist only when it subjugates difference. See Theodor Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures, 1964-1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 13, 17, 145; Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 47.

⁹⁰ The original hardcover version included a black and white photograph of Wayne Miller’s wife and three children standing before the nuclear blast in the exhibition’s bomb image, but subsequent versions of the book left it out. Miller explained that a color photograph was not practical in a black and white volume. Sandeen reminds us that viewers are more familiar with the catalogue version of the exhibition than with Steichen’s original vision, and that his nuclear argument is absent from many contemporary critiques. See Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 247; Turner, “*The Family of Man* and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America,” 74; Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 74.

⁹¹ O’Brien writes that “These images showed, as the photographs in *The Family of Man* did not, the human toll and devastation caused by the bomb. Soon, however, they were censored as well. When the emperor visited *The Family of Man* in Tokyo, Yamahata’s photographs were curtained off and then removed altogether from the exhibition.” See O’Brien, “The Nuclear Family of Man,” n.p. In Japan, the transparency of the exploding atom bomb was replaced by photographs by Yamahata Yosuke of the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which were collected in *Atomized Nagasaki*, and which Steichen is known to have consulted in his preparations for *The Family of Man*. See also Turner, “*The Family of Man* and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America,” 83.

⁹² Duganne, *The Self in Black and White*, 143.

⁹³ Duganne, *The Self in Black and White*, 145.

⁹⁴ Edward Steichen, “From Edward Steichen to Members of the Picture Division,” *Picturescope: Newsletter of the Picture Division, Special Libraries Association* 3, no. 2 (July 1955): 7.

⁹⁵ See Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Charles H. Martin, “Race, Gender, and Southern Justice: The Rosa Lee Ingram Case,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 29 (July 1985): 251-268; Erik S. McDuffie, “A ‘New Freedom Movement of Negro Women’: Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights during the Early Cold War,” *Radical History Review* 101 (Spring 2008): 81-106; and *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People* (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951).

⁹⁶ In *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon refutes the assimilation of black being-in-the-world to the Marxian idea of the proletariat and the fetish of class universalism. As Homi Bhabha glosses, Fanon

employs a phenomenological rather than a dialectical or genealogical mode of presentation to suggest that blackness must be grasped before dialectics reduces it once again to a serialized nothingness. See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 2004 (1963); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 233-235.

⁹⁷ Miller continued: "We observed the reactions of the crowds. Steichen and I talked about it. . . . If Steichen had other pressures on him, I had no idea. He didn't mention it to me." Miller's comments are taken from an interview conducted with him by Mary Anne Staniszewski, and quoted in her *The Power of Display*, 254.

⁹⁸ Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 49-50.

⁹⁹ The repeated photograph of a Peruvian flutist was, according to Steichen, a "kind of musical note." Quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 238.

¹⁰⁰ I am gesturing to John Berger's comments about the spectatorial experience of atrocity photographs in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 42.

¹⁰¹ Mere life is Benjamin's term for life exposed to the violence of the state. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (New York: Verso, 1998 [1963]); Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978); \ Rita Copeland and Peter Struck, Introduction, *The Cambridge Companion To Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

¹⁰² Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26.

¹⁰³ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 21. See also Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ My reading here is influenced by Louis Kaplan's discussion in *The Family of Man in American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxvii.

¹⁰⁵ Allegory is typically understood as a literary or rhetorical device of indirect representation; etymologically, it means "other-speaking" or "other-discourse." The metaphysical impulse of the symbol is constituted in the supposed endurance of its meaning. "The symbol as a structure of representation," writes Steven Leddin, "perpetuates the myth of the self-sufficiency of language as the expression of meaning. Meaning, in turn, is thus rendered timeless and concurrent within the conventions of linguistic usage." Benjamin argues that allegorical objects contain within them a nucleus of time. As Susan Buck-Morss writes, allegory allows us to make "visibly palpable the experience of a world in fragments, in which the passing of time means not progress but disintegration." See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*; "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); "Central Park," *New German Critique* 34 (Winter 1985): 32-58; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 18; Benjamin Cowan, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," *New German Critique* 22: 109-122; Steven Leddin, "Benjamin's Allegorical Hermeneutics: The Critique of Historicism and the Disclosure of the Historical 'Other,'" *Otherness: Essays and Studies* 3.2, 17; Copeland and Struck, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion To Allegory*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Lili Bezner writes: "The horrifying lynching image, within the context of *The Family of Man*, was not developed enough as a theme to join seamlessly with the totality of the show. That image may have ruptured the optimistic discourse too deeply by betraying the black subject, not as a safely objectified or noble fetish, but as a justifiably angry victim of racism." Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America*, 163.

¹⁰⁷ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Jared Sexton, "Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts," *Lateral Issue* 1 (2012); Frank Wilderson, III, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?" *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 9.10 (2003).

¹⁰⁸ Neokonkwo's knife and the Duck Hill photograph mobilized what Jacques Rancière calls *dissensus*, which "introduce[s] new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception." (Corcoran

in Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Edited and Translated by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010), 2)

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *The Afro-American*, August 22, 1959.

¹¹⁰ See Jacques Rancière for a discussion of politics as the interruption of the “distribution of the sensible,” as the manifestation of those who have no part in the perceptual coordinates of a community. For Rancière, *dissensus* “is the demonstration of a gap in the sensible itself.” Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Edited and Translated by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010), 3, 38.

¹¹¹ Slavoj Žižek writes: “Hegelian ‘concrete universality’ [is] thus much more paradoxical than it may appear: it has nothing whatsoever to do with any kind of aesthetic organic totality, since it reflexively ‘includes out’ the very excess and/or gap that forever spoils such a totality.” Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 113.

¹¹² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 3, 26. Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 38.

¹¹³ Benjamin most famously mobilizes this argument in “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in which he translates Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* into an allegorical emblem for the halting of the catastrophes of modernity. He writes elsewhere of this moment of arrest: in his essay on Goethe as the sudden emergence of the expressionless, with the general strike in “Critique of Violence,” in his writings on Baudelaire on the petrified restlessness of the image, and with the flashlike perception of similarity that he develops in his writing on the mimetic faculty. Benjamin identifies the ability to arrest history through photography and the writing of aphoristic theses with the moment of revolution. Although Marx identifies revolutions as the “locomotives of world history,” Benjamin suggests that “perhaps it is completely otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are, in this train of traveling generations, the reach for the emergency brake.” See Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”; Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xx, xxi.

¹¹⁴ Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 146.

¹¹⁵ Black political thinkers have, since Fanon, insisted on an inventive notion of the Human that we create in spite of the hegemony of Man. Wynter, as Weheliye writes, “disentangles Man from the human in order to use the space of subjects placed beyond the grasp of this domain as a vital point from which to invent hitherto unavailable genres of the human.” Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 24, 94.

¹¹⁶ See Wilderson, *Red, White & Black*, 4, 9.

¹¹⁷ I use the term police here in the sense that Rancière uses it. “The essence of the police,” he writes, lies neither in repression nor even in control over the living. Its essence lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible. Rancière, *Dissensus*, 36. Police interventions in public spaces consist primarily ... in recalling the obviousness of what there is, or rather of what there is not, and its slogan is: ‘Move along! There’s nothing to see here!’ ... It asserts that the space for circulating is nothing but the space of circulation. Politics, by contrast, consists in transforming this space of ‘moving-along,’ of circulation, into a space for the appearance of a subject: the people, the workers, the citizens. Rancière, *Dissensus*, 37. See also Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Right to Look,” *Critical Inquiry* 37: 3 (Spring 2011): 473-496.

¹¹⁸ A speculative orientation to the secretion of this photograph in and out of Steichen’s photo-essay is fitting, given the show’s theme of universal humanity and thus the problem of freedom. The philosophical question of the universal freedom of humans has been framed, since the Enlightenment and thus most often obliquely in the writings of the Western philosophical elite, in relation to the problem of racial slavery. Slavery, Susan Buck-Morss reminds us, became the “root metaphor” of Western political philosophy by the eighteenth century, with freedom considered by enlightenment thinkers as the highest and universal political value at the same time as many of them had political, economic, and epistemological stakes in slavery’s expansion. Since the 1840s, relations of mastery and slavery have been abstracted into a metaphor for class struggle. See Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, 21.

Chapter 4.

**The Incendiary Third Image of Lynching:
Santiago Álvarez's *Now!* and the Red Summer of 1965**

Now is the time of the furnaces, and only light should be seen.

- José Martí



Figure 33. “The embassy is left empty, all the plague leaves, the cancer disappears.” Santiago Álvarez, in a *noticiero* on the U.S.-Cuba diplomatic embargo of 1962, meets the women of Watts in 1965.

Ten years after international audiences came of Cold War age as spectators of *The Family of Man*, cinema-goers in post-revolutionary Cuba saw a markedly different vision of life in the U.S., albeit one rooted in a similar visual archeology partially grifted from the pages of *LIFE* magazine. In Santiago Álvarez's 1965

newsreel *Now!*, documentary photographs from the Black Star Photo Agency – which supplied the American press with much of its imagery – are intercut with civil rights film footage and set to the tune of Lena Horne’s 1963 civil rights anthem, “Now!”¹ In the opening moments of the film, California police and members of the National Guard ready for combat with the inhabitants of the Watts neighborhood in South Los Angeles against the unexpected and jovial pulse of the Jewish folk song, “Hava Nagila.” The film’s credits stream over a manipulated photograph of the January 18, 1964 Civil Rights Oval Office meeting with Lyndon B. Johnson. After the opening sequence, the newsreel shifts back to the dynamic images of confrontation that form the newsreel’s core: photographs and film footage from Birmingham, Selma, and Watts of people taking to the streets, police apprehending children and attacking adult demonstrators, and activists walking in chains, knocked unconscious, or slain by the law. Cut into this imagery are historical visuals from the period between the two World Wars: a Midwestern lynching, Ku Klux Klan gatherings, and a U.S. Nazi rally. The penultimate image is a photograph of a woman clutching a pole and a poster that reads “Remember Medgar Evers,” her fist punching the thick air in front of her while she howls into a crowd of photojournalists aiming their cameras in her direction. In the final candescent image, machinegun bullets shoot into a gray background to form the film’s reverberant incantation: NOW! (figure 34).

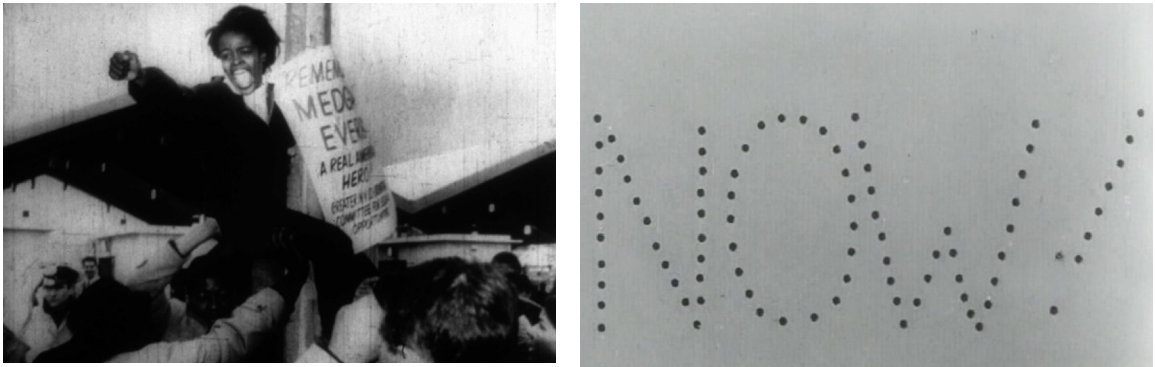


Figure 34. “The camera is the inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second.” Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas watch *Now!* while composing their 1969 classic essay, “Toward a Third Cinema.”

Why did a Cuban revolutionary charged with countering the alienating effects of Hollywood-style cinema on the Cuban people dedicate state resources and an entire newsreel to a cinematic animation of U.S. photographs of the struggle for black liberation? Crafting and releasing *Now!* in the immediate aftermath of the Watts uprising, Álvarez circulated a gesture of hemispheric solidarity to the emergent black power movement in the U.S., as well as a rebuke to the imperialist media’s racist portrayal of the revolt. *Now!* intervened in the state and corporate media response to the L.A. rebellion by framing the insurgency as a political response to the long history of anti-black violence overseen and enacted by police, military, paramilitary, and vigilante forces. Where the mainstream white press narrated the revolt as an irrational “race riot,” Álvarez positioned the spectacular visual culture of Watts within the long Civil Rights Movement (CRM) to complicate and condemn the dominant representation of the uprising as motivated by blind hatred and a lack of racial uplift. Mobilizing a storehouse of still

photographs and moving images, *Now!* launched an urgent and remarkably experimental précis on the growing discontent in black communities, on the changing winds of the CRM, and on the historical antagonisms between state, popular, and revolutionary violence.

Ten years after Steichen and the USIA decided that lynching had no place in *The Family of Man's* representation of Cold War conformity, Álvarez centered an iconic lynching photograph in his filmic screed against civil rights liberalism and in defense of the Watts uprising. During the newsreel's stunning crescendo, Álvarez activates a photograph of the public burning of William Brown during the 1919 race riot in Omaha, Nebraska by literally setting the photograph on fire. At first, a third of the lynching photograph is given to us, close and ablaze (figure 35, left). We see Brown's corpse through a framework of flames before Álvarez cuts to a close-up of the crowd around burning Brown, its white faces jocular and intensely curious, some turned toward the camera, some leaning into each other in homosocial camaraderie (figure 35, right). Others gaze off into the distance, or downward. One man's face, his eyes squinting and his mouth aloft in a grimace, is scrunched up in hardened resolve and discomfort at the heat and smell of the flesh that burns in front of him. And then we see a long shot of the entire photograph. Álvarez's montage – or image assemblage – cuts into the photograph of Brown's lynching to manage the order of our viewing. His cuts and the onscreen incineration of the photograph move Brown's lynching into the fiery present of the Watts conflagration and of all the conflagrations erupting through the deterritorialized continent of anti-imperial revolt.



Figure 35. Álvarez reactivates the 1919 burning of William Brown in Omaha Nebraska in *Now!*

For the flames that flicker in *Now!* do not merely index the fire that consumed Brown, that ate into his flesh while providing enough light for his photographic capture. The image enters into our field of vision in an infinite red summer; these flames consume Brown now, and again. This is Álvarez's fire, taken up in solidarity with the Watts arsonists, who took what they needed before setting fire to the parasite shops on Charcoal Alley. This is the fire – the fires – that rage through the deep, through the long *durée* of terror. Álvarez similarly took what he could access from newswires while in the midst of an embargo before rekindling the spark and suspending it before us in a dangerous visual field. This field is dangerous because it consists, if only partially, of spectacular images of white-on-black violence that may *stun and soothe and distance*. But the image appears before us in petrified unrest, both moving and still. It moves *dramatalurgically*, transforming the image through montage and through tactile acts of construction (*assemblage*) and destruction (*dissemblage*) that draw us out of the present and into a future-oriented memory of the long history of the capitalist state's warring response to black

political action.² The image enters our field of vision in an infinite red summer.

Álvarez's postcard to the Watts rebellion reminds us of the dual symbolic and material significance of fire within the history of U.S. racial enslavement – that it has been used to torture *and* set free those trapped in bondage. During formal slavery, the enslaved mobilized arson as an insurrectionary weapon to devastate the planter class, to destroy its plantations and kill its members; in 1865, for example, women enslaved in the South Carolina lowlands set fire to the rice plantations they had cultivated to usher in the local general strike that precipitated the Union's defeat of the Confederacy.³ But before the end of slavery, captives were hanged on meat hooks and “smoked” as part of their subjection to what the master class called “seasoning.” Seasoning rituals were practiced all over the Americas and were designed to break slaves of their will, to harden them to their endless labors and numb them to the abuse and violence that organized plantation life.⁴ As Vincent Woodard demonstrates in *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism in U.S. Slave Culture*, seasoning also developed masters' and overseers' “erotic appetites, tastes, and aesthetic longings” for the enslaved.⁵ Recalcitrant or otherwise unbreakable slaves were often burned at the stake in dramatic displays of annihilation. Brown's incendiary presence in *Now!* also reminds us, of course, that after the end of the U.S. Civil War, white supremacists burned freed peoples in the torturous outrages that would be known, by the end of Reconstruction, as lynchings. By the turn of the century, lynch mobs regularly employed fire in the hours-long torture and murder of men like Sam Hose and Jesse Washington, whose lynchings together attracted over 20,000 participant-spectators in 1899 and 1916,

respectively.⁶ During the high era of lynching, mobs used fire to slowly torture their victims, transforming them into the abject refuse of U.S. civil society. Doing so threatened black people at large into what Abdul JanMohamed characterizes as an aporetic death-bound subject position “neither quite dead nor alive” – an ontological position between the “flesh” of social death and the subhuman “meat” of the criminally dead.⁷ Indeed, the burning of lynching victims was often imagined by lynchers and by those who observed the killings as a form of *cooking* that inducted black Americans into the unmournable realm of the beast.

In this chapter, I consider how the literal practices and sensational metaphors of alimentary incorporation and necrophagia that emerged in U.S. slave plantation culture and that lent memorial precedent and political meaning to the scopical consumption of lynching imagery in the early twentieth century reemerged in the 1960s to influence black radical and Tricontinental critique.⁸ Black radicals in the U.S., including those who took to the streets of Southeast L.A in the summer of 1965, regularly referred to the agents of capitalist exploitation as parasites sucking the lifeblood of the poor residents of the inner city. The idea of a cannibalistic ruling class had long animated abolitionist, decolonial, and even conservative thought across the Americas.⁹ *Now!*, I argue, turns upon the material and affective power of fire to alter the readability of images of black revolt in Watts according to an internally differentiated set of concept-metaphors related to hunger and incorporation long taken up by black radical and anti-imperialist factions across the Americas. Like other left texts from the 1960s, *Now!* activates the incendiary memory of burning and flesh cooking so central to the control of the enslaved and of

their descendants during the high and low eras of lynching.¹⁰ I argue that it does so in order to lend historical weight to Watts rebels' rejection of Cold War civil rights liberalism and to conscript the structure of feeling that became black power into an internationalist and anti-imperialist framework. A dialectical image imbued with now-time, the cinematized lynching photograph enters into constellation with then-emergent political tendencies to spark in viewers a critical memory of the black international that had long opposed the type of liberal integration that was ascendant in the 1960s.



Figure 36. Fires burning in Southeast Los Angeles, August 8, 1965. Bettman/Corbis.

This chapter is concerned with the place minor cinema – theorized by Gilles Deleuze as a political force capable of inventing, through a collective enunciation, a “people to come” – might occupy in a materialist antiracist imaginary that contests the liberal response to lynching that had won mainstream appeal over black radical and communist analyses of the violence in the 1930s.¹¹ This ideological line, which pressed the threat of extra-legal violence to state authority, had informed the Truman Administration’s response to lynching during WWII. By 1948, and in concert with the kinds of recommendations put forth by Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma*, the liberal discourse on lynching as a threat to law and order had become national policy in the name of U.S. global hegemony and the international accumulation of capital. Situating *Now!* in relation to Civil Rights and black power visual culture in the U.S., my analysis proposes that fire emerges in 1960s minor cinema as a performative imbrication of the liberal politics of integration and the white supremacist libidinal economy of anti-black consumption. Mobilizing a technique of photo-dissemblage, Álvarez transfigures the white, liberal, and conservative media’s reification of the collective actions taken in Watts as an unthinking riot by inducting the visual culture of the rebellion into a series of images of white supremacist attacks on black life and of black self-defense.

Some film scholars have read the visual relay in *Now!* between CRM protest clashes with police and the imagery of lynching, the Klan, and Nazism as the newsreel’s misstep. John Hess, for example, writes that Álvarez’s “weakest moment as a filmmaker” occurs when he sets up an “analogy” in *Now!* “among Nazis, the KKK, the U.S. government, the police and guardsmen ... white racists, and LBJ.”¹²

This analogy, he charges, works well on an emotional level, but the ambiguity of their relationship to one another detracts from the power of the film.¹³ Kristi Wilson echoes Hess when she argues that U.S. imperialism, slavery, and the holocaust “compete” as thematic material in Álvarez’s film.¹⁴ Hess and Wilson reduce these moments in *Now!* – in which sheets of the past intrude into the cinematic present to express Yankee white supremacy’s historically global reach – to the semiology of analogy and theme. They thus obscure the film’s radically materialist methodology – one that critically relies on the meaning-making power of emotion – and politically internationalist intervention into the media’s dangerous nomination of the events in Watts as a “race riot.”¹⁵ I argue that, read at the root, the politician-police-vigilante assemblage that Álvarez sets up in *Now!* casts black America as an internally colonized nation and thus re-launches the critique of the state that had animated radical anti-lynching critique in the early twentieth century.

Post-Revolutionary Cuban Newsreels

Now! opened to Cuban film audiences six years after the January 1, 1959 overthrow of Fulgencio Batista and the subsequent founding of the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) as the visual arm of the revolution. In March 1959, three months after the triumph of the July 26 Movement, Alfredo Guevara, under the orders of Fidel Castro, founded ICAIC and appointed Álvarez as the head of its short film department.¹⁶ The following year, Álvarez became the director of ICAIC’s *Noticiero Latinoamericano* (Latin American Newsreel), and was tasked with producing one *noticiero* per week. The weekly newsreels were meant to

battle the counter-revolutionary propaganda reels from the rightwing El Nacional and El Noticiero America.¹⁷ From 1959-1964, Álvarez composed footage of *Commandante* Castro and company mixing with civilians into pithy and passionate communiqués that resembled traditional newsreels. Organized diegetically with clear narratives and omniscient, authorial voiceovers, these reels presented newsworthy events in a reportage style that matched, in form, the representation of the news on network television.¹⁸ In addition to disseminating Castro's speeches, the newsreels represented the transportation of ice across a Havana neighborhood, massive crowds reveling in the fervor of victory, and citizens reacting to the 1960 bombing of La Coubre.¹⁹ Others covered Ernesto Guevara's expedition to the Republic of Congo. In a newsreel from 1960, Castro and his delegation check into Hotel Theresa in Harlem before he addresses the United Nations gathering in Manhattan. In another, the island's bold literacy campaigners distribute educational materials across the country. Citation is frequent, and punctuated by Álvarez's baritone narration underscoring the rationale behind the passage of agrarian reform laws and other protocols for the popularization of the country's wealth. The filmmaker – filling in the missing voices of Castro, Guevara, and the country's Foreign Affairs Minister, Raoul Roa – denounces the Monroe Doctrine, which had long conscripted Cuba into the U.S.'s domain.²⁰ "Fatherland or death, we shall overcome," Castro announces in the wake of the U.S. military's mass murder of Cuban literacy teachers. Álvarez assures us that Cuba will remain a free territory of America, highlighting the *Commandante's* appeal to Cuban sovereignty and revolutionary nationalism. Many of these early newsreels are bound by mourning

and by poetic tropes that turn on Cubans' inhabitation, toxic absorption, and elimination of imperial violence, as in Álvarez's description of the breaking of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S. as a "disappearing cancer" – and of the return of that cancer after U.S. military intervention in 1962.

The 1962 U.S. embargo on Cuba emboldened the shift in Cuban state policy from the strident nationalism that had informed the July 26 Movement toward a revolutionary internationalism that participants in the global movement for post-war decolonization had been calling for since the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Within the emerging internationalist left, Third World solidarity amongst Asian, African, and American peoples was key, and Cuban revolutionaries, after seizing state power, began to focus on revolutionary internationalism as the force that would win out against U.S. imperialism.²¹ Cuban politicians and cultural workers imagined an alternative modernity organized around the collective ownership of the means of production, the rejection of worldwide imperialism, the (often misogynistic) lionization of the masculine citizen-soldier, and the elimination of racism.²² The latter had become official policy at the start of the revolution; indeed, the idea that Cuba was not afflicted with the kind of racial animosity that plagued the U.S. had long characterized its nationalist ideology, and remained a key element of its post-revolutionary internationalist ethos. At the Organization of American States meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay in 1961, Guevara announced: "it took many steps to affirm human dignity, one of the first having been the abolition of racial discrimination." The new administration argued that the revolution had ended racism when it desegregated public spaces,

education, and employment.²³ Though Cuban race relations were infected with their own complex brand of discrimination (after the revolution, autonomous Afro-Cuban organizations were banned in the name of a colorblind *Cubanidad* that often did more to alienate Afro-Cubans and members of the diaspora who visited the island than it did to foster revolutionary unity), Yankee white supremacy remained the primary foe of third world liberation and its emergent humanism.²⁴ Cultural workers in the U.S., Cuba, and across the Third World took up this line, too. The Tricontinental alliance known as the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) announced in its radio broadcasts that Cuban heroes could be of any racial or class background, an idea that had been tested in 1962 when ICAIC released Eduardo Manet's *Realengo 18*, in which black peasants lead the struggle in the 1930s against Cuban authorities.²⁵

While the U.S. embargo prompted Castro to nationalize the country's oil refineries as well as all remaining U.S. businesses, the Cuban government invited U.S. nationals to visit the island to see how the revolution was unfolding. In June 1960, a multiracial delegation of U.S. writers and activists called the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) travelled to the island to gather information to contest the U.S. media's negative portrayal of the revolution.²⁶ Black American writer and FPCC member Julian Mayfield asserted that the major accomplishment of the revolution was not that Cuba had cast off U.S. control, but rather that Afro-Cubans had achieved racial equality. "On a recent visit to the island," he wrote, "I saw proof that it doesn't take decades of gentle persuasion to deal a death blow to white supremacy. . . . The important lesson in the Cuban experience" is that "great social

change need not wait on the patient education of white supremacists.”²⁷ The intercommunalism fostered by the revolutionary state, by FPCC, and by unaffiliated black radicals allowed for *Now!* to come to fruition; Robert F. Williams, who edited the internationalist publication *The Crusader* while heading the militant Monroe, South Carolina chapter of the NAACP, gifted Álvarez a copy of Horne’s LP during one of his many visits to Cuba.

The 1962 embargo and the solidarity between Cuban and U.S. revolutionaries also pushed Álvarez’s cinematic practice to new materialist heights. Partially obstructing Álvarez’s access to news footage from the U.S., the embargo prompted him to generate creative means to represent current events. “The North Americans,” said Álvarez, “blockade us, so forcing us to improvise. . . . the greatest inspiration in the photo-collage of American magazines in my films is the American government who have prevented me getting hold of live material.”²⁸ With minimal access to “live footage,” Álvarez had to look to other sources to craft his filmic essays. Between 1962 and 1965, the aesthetic structure of his newsreels shifted from representation to an expressive and inventive protocol that centered on the employment of photographs and aural-image assemblages organized around the disjunctive confrontation of image and sound and the transformation of still photographs into moving and temporally complex image forms. By the time Álvarez released *Now!* in the summer of 1965, his journalism had grown into a creative cinema that was about more than mere reportage. Gone was the clear diegesis and narration laid over moving images taken from the news. Instead, Álvarez mobilized different visual, aural, and linguistic forms within the same cinematic frame in order

to establish an immanent remediation of the U.S. media's ideological-affective contribution to imperialist warfare. This remediation was furnished through the appropriation of photographic images that had circulated through the U.S. press as well as the recuperation of photo-montage techniques that had been absorbed into the media aesthetics of the global capitalist class.

¡Ahora es el momento!

Now! opens on the back of the police, who lead us in through the dark on a clandestine ambush. A state-issued helmet, its hard white round frame mimicking the blurry orb of streetlights in the distance, guides us into the street, bobbing up and down to reveal a readied rifle. We dash past meters, cars, and closed shops. Then we flip as the law leaps for a man pushed up against silver chrome while another man pushes up off the ground. The law extends its reach, lunging at the man with a baton like some tactless and uncoordinated child at play, leaping at him out of an inverted negative: black scatter, white run. We shake, and are suddenly underfoot as uniformed men march overhead in formation, and in clear contrast to the preceding chaos. And then we've flipped back to positive, with black in black and white in white. We're on the ground, observing under the heels of armed forces marching just past our field of vision.

Bayonets extend toward black civilians in Watts before we flip to our first still: U.S. National Park Service Photographer Abbie Rowe's photograph of President Lyndon B. Johnson's January 18, 1964 Oval Office meeting with the civil rights "big four": Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference (SCLC), Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP, Executive Director of the National Urban League Whitney Young, and James Farmer, then the National Director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). LBJ slips into the position previously occupied by the bayonet-wielding soldiers; the soldiers' knife-edged arms transmute into the president's glasses, forming an interior meta-commentary on the lethal power of the state's surveillance apparatus and the central role of the visual in King's campaign for freedom.²⁹ In Álvarez's frame, the photograph is given to us in shroud, as though wrapped for burial (figure 37). But instead of burying the image, Álvarez plays with the light and dark within it, alternately highlighting LBJ's taught posture and the dramatic exchange of looks within the image. The meeting in the photograph occurred two months after



Figure 37. Still from the opening credits of *Now!*

Johnson's ascension to the presidency following John F. Kennedy's assassination, ten days after Johnson's state of the union address invoking the importance of the yet-to-be-passed Civil Rights Bill, and two weeks after he had launched his "War on

Poverty.” The Oval Office meeting in 1964 signified to some people a moment of high victory and, perhaps, the last gasp of the movement. As an image event, the 1964 meeting circulated in the mainstream press as testament to an agreement of peace between the government establishment and the civil rights establishment; as noted in the *Daily Defender*, Johnson had agreed at the meeting that he would “take care of the Negro politicians” as long as the big four “take care of the negro revolt.”³⁰ Rowe’s photographs appeared in the national press, ostensibly to assuage readers that the increasing discontent across the nation could be quelled by state policy and the managerial acumen of civil rights figureheads. In reality, King, Wilkins, Young, and Farmer – intent on shaping the president’s new anti-poverty policy – had established the meeting with LBJ in order to discuss the economic disparities between black and white Americans, and to press for a strong response to national poverty that recognized the racialization of capitalist relations of production and labor. The meeting between the four civil rights leaders and LBJ thus also marked a crucial radicalizing point in the CRM as activists across the country ramped up their demands for economic justice.

In *Now!*, Rowe’s photograph functions as a backdrop for the film’s modest credits while foreshadowing Álvarez’s dissident, anti-imperialist reading of black civil rights and his reproach to civil rights liberalism. Álvarez splices the Oval Office encounter into his stream of moving and still images of counterrevolutionary violence, effectively establishing new informal avenues of surveillance *into* the Big House. In the opening moments of the credits, Álvarez tenses the Oval Office exchange by fading out portions of the picture to reveal a fissure at its core (figure

38). King and Wilkins lean into nothing. Farmer throws all the shade he can muster while LBJ and Young stare imploringly into a soft void. The Big Four are all alone.



Figure 38. "Las Personas: Negros y policías Norteamericanos." Stills from the opening credits of *Now!*

Álvarez *screens* the photograph, dividing it into a tripartite scene that muddies the televisual narrative of white paternalism and black submission. Though many critics read this opening credit sequence as a direct denunciation of civil rights reformism, I read it as a complication of the discourse of white paternalism that accompanied the photograph in its circulation in the mainstream press, as well as an implicit revelation of the big four's own nuanced relationship to liberal reform. In its transformation of the photograph into a triptych, *Now!* unravels the smooth space of

the original photograph, cutting the image into quarreling striations by inserting the big four onto the general plane of “*negros*” that inhabit the film.³¹ The newsreel thus transforms the Oval Office photograph from civil rights salvo to a visual prefiguration of the kind of movement radicalism that had long been espoused by black nationalists and communists, and that would become known in 1966 in the U.S. as black power.³² Álvarez’s manipulation of enemy propaganda during the opening credits positions viewers in *medias res*, at a crucial midpoint between the violent white supremacist backlashes against black protestors and churchgoers in 1963 – high-water moments when the CRM became an image event widely consumable by the viewing public – and the uprising in Watts in 1965.³³ The long credits sequence inaugurates the newsreel’s extension of Watts into the recent and not so recent past. Following the Oval Office meeting, Álvarez inducts the visual culture of the rebellion and the state backlash against it into a series of images of white supremacist attacks on black life during the campaigns to desegregate Birmingham and Selma from 1963-1965.

An Outrage, A Theft

Cuba was not the first country to be attacked. Cuba was not the first country in danger of being attacked. Everyone in this hemisphere knows that the government of the United States has always enforced its law, *the law of the jungle; make the law of the philosophy of dispossession disappear, and then the philosophy of war will have disappeared.*

- Fidel Castro

During the uprising, Álvarez set to work on his dissenting interpretation of the L.A. Rebellion as a defensive action against the capitalist state’s terrorizing depredation of the city’s poorest black community. To do so, he reframed many of

the photographs of the rebellion that had been published in *LIFE* and *Time*, setting them into productive resonance with those publications' earlier photographic treatments of civil rights struggles, as well as with other iconic symbols of racial enslavement that positioned the recent CRM and the emergent black power movement within a longer history of black movement-building.

When the rebellion kicked off, conservative news outlets like the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Review* repeated Daniel Patrick Moynihan's claims in *The Black Family: The Case for National Action* – leaked to the media just months before the fires raged in Southeast L.A. – that black family “disorganization” and women-headed households were to blame for the super-exploitation, hunger, and police violence that had led to the uprising. Moynihan, as Assistant Secretary of Labor for President Johnson, spoke on behalf of the state when he argued that “the family” was the cornerstone of society, and that safeguarding it was the first step in reducing the country's catastrophic wealth disparity. Like previous liberal administrators, Moynihan pinned the racialization of poverty and extra-economic social control on “black pathology” and argued that future rebellions could only be quelled by black capitulation to patriarchal family norms.³⁴ In response to the uprising in Watts following the police detainment and assault of Marquette Fry on August 11, 1965, the press largely ignored the political-economic relations that had conditioned the revolt in South L.A. – the 1962 police killing of Ronald Stokes during a raid on the Nation of Islam mosque, the 1964 repeal of the short-lived Rumford Fair Housing Act in California, mass unemployment, and the organized radicalization of Watts residents by autonomous groups and a coterie of civil rights and black nationalist

organizations active in the area.³⁵ Instead, the press categorized the violence as the spontaneous and irrational response of tainted subjects desperately in need of father law (figure 39).



Figure 39. “Racial Unrest Laid to Negro Family Failure, *Los Angeles Times*, 1965.

With Moynihan’s thesis hot in the air, people turned to deeply rooted beliefs in the moral force of the family to dismiss the direct actions in Watts as contraventions of juridical and moral order. In addition to directly referring to arsonists, looters, and those engaged in street battle with the police as members of “broken families,” the press and members of the state delegitimized riot participants’ actions by referring to them as animals.³⁶ Chief of Police William H. Parker announced to the media that “Somebody threw a rock, and then, like monkeys in a zoo, everybody else started throwing rocks.” In similar fashion, California Senator Thomas Kuchel called the uprising “the rule of the jungle.”³⁷ Government officials,

journalists, and police framed the collective actions of Watts residents as emerging from irrational feelings of anti-white hatred (figure 39). Governor Pat Brown declared, upon being forced home from a vacation: “California is a state where there is no racial discrimination,” thus disavowing the impact of structural racism on the lives of black Angelinos while stoking the pernicious conservative nomination of the revolt as a “race riot” motivated by animalistic anomie and only correctable via criminalization, punitive detention, and even death. The front-page stories that ran in *Time* and *LIFE* at the end of August declared that the uprising was a “riot,” with *LIFE* declaring it the “most destructive riot in U.S. history” (figure 40).



Figure 40. Front-page treatments of the Watts riots in *Time* and *LIFE*, August 1965.

The right had long mobilized the rhetoric of rioting to criminalize the militant actions of enslaved peoples, abolitionists, and the poor. In this instance, the language worked to obscure the white popular violence that had long targeted black communities throughout the U.S. Whites in the early twentieth century had staged

had resulted in the deaths and displacement of thousands of black citizens, the entrenchment of white supremacist control over the ballot, and the expropriation of black property. The riots in Tulsa resulted in the deaths of an estimated 300 black people (the precise number is unknown) as well as the destruction of forty-four blocks of black property.³⁸ While the official record puts the economic damage in Tulsa at \$1.5 million, black Tulsans filed more than \$4 million in claims. The Watts riots, while resulting in more economic damage than had been wrought in Tulsa, resulted in the deaths of thirty-four people (all but three of whom were black, and all at the hands of police and National Guardsmen). *LIFE* editors, in calling the Watts rebellion the “most destructive riot in U.S. history,” valued white property over black life. Conservative and liberal commentators’ nomination of the actions in Watts as race riots was a violent rhetorical move that, in addition to revealing the limitations of the dominant press narrative of the CRM, essentially delegitimized the actions as anarchic, irrational, and apolitical threats to white, bourgeois civilization.

The rhetoric and photographs illustrating these cover stories no doubt recalled readers to the previous year’s civil rights battles on the streets of Rochester, Harlem, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Jersey City. These uprisings had startled many white Americans whose relationship to the CRM had been shaped by the movement’s representation in the mainstream press as a movement of passive resistance to white brutality. The protagonists of the heavily televised campaigns in Birmingham and Selma had overwhelmingly won the sentimental support of liberal whites in the North who, due the media’s skewed representation of nonviolent civil

disobedience as passive, could support the idea of incremental civil rights reforms.³⁹ However, when blacks engaged the propaganda of the deed to make concrete demands – an end to police brutality and access to stable and fairly waged employment – in seeming excess of the demands that had been made in the southern CRM, liberals and conservatives alike were predictably incensed by the Watts community’s fiery manifesto. Gone were the liberal press platitudes about passive demonstrators in the South; many white liberals were simply not used to, nor ready to get behind, a militant movement for black power.⁴⁰ *LIFE* writers and editors decried politically-motivated collective actions and criminalized the low-income residents who seized goods from, and destroyed the property of, *selectively* chosen white business-owners who notoriously charged them inflated prices.⁴¹ The magazine’s multiple stories on the event sensationalized black collective action and police pushback, sometimes while citing bloodless statistics about the inner city’s staggering levels of unemployment and hunger.

In *Now!* Horne and Álvarez join forces to indict the press’s racist representation of the uprising. Following the credits, the film fades to black before alighting on Horne’s simmering face in triptych as the jumping rhythm of “Hava Nagila” rounds a slow corner. At the top of the verse, she calls up an image of pre-televsual Presidents Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln on channel 2 with Walter Cronkite helping to usher in civil rights reform. Two of LBJ’s slave-holding predecessors and the “Great Emancipator” emerge into a mass mediated present. Children sit stoop-wise, holding signage decrying police brutality. Two boys wince on a platform as they put the L.A. Sherriff’s department on notice –

and are arrested for it. We cut from Watts to a close-up of journalist and activist Myrlie Evers, and then pan down to Evers and her son, Darrell Kenyatta, who stares, weeping, into the void of his father's violent murder.⁴² The two are at Medgar Evers's funeral following his June 12, 1963 assassination by Klan member Byron De La Beckwith. Álvarez then zooms out to reveal the two gracing the cover of *Life* magazine in June 1963 (figure 42).

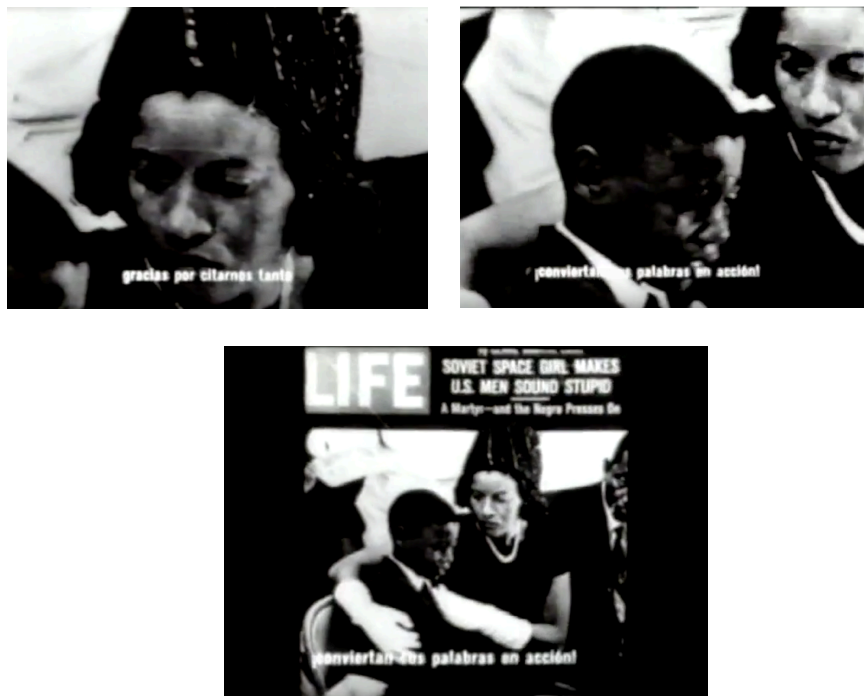


Figure 42. Myrlie and Darrell Kenyatta Evers at the funeral of Medgar Evers in 1963. Stills from *Now!*

The images shoot doubt through the exceptionalist tinge of Horne's lyrics, which seem to point to the presidents as inspiration for the CRM and to thus cast the movement as part of a national legacy of freedom and justice in line with the liberal consensus that black Americans may be integrated into the body politic without fundamentally altering political, economic, and social relations. The juxtaposition of

Horne's aural image – with its reference to presidential authority and the corporate news machine – and Álvarez's found photographs of the Evers funeral indict the mainstream press as well as televisual mass media in the U.S. for perpetuating the ideology of American exceptionalism while spectacularizing black grief and victimhood. The invocation of history and television in the opening stanza of "Now" is important given ICAIC's position that television, the prime technical organ of the imperial Fourth Estate, is a non-revolutionary medium.⁴³ In Álvarez's hands, the channel 2 news is tantamount to the bourgeois pretensions of *LIFE* magazine. Álvarez created a series of photo-collages and image-sound montages to situate Watts in a dissident and historically nuanced national context. Early in the newsreel, he places the L.A. Rebellion in visual continuum with the nation's two most recent and most widely watched political demonstrations: Birmingham in 1963 and Selma in 1965.⁴⁴ *I went and took a look in my old history book. It's there in black and white for all to see.* A police officer walks his fist up to the camera, gesturing for it to be put down. Álvarez insists on our right to look as he cuts to police beating up a Birmingham resident, and then to a series of weaponized hounds attacking demonstrators (figure 43).⁴⁵ Here, we see one of the newsreel's most recognizable images: Bill Hudson's iconic photograph of police dogs attacking the young Henry Lee Shambry on May 3, 1963 in Birmingham.⁴⁶ The city's Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor had publically stated that he wanted "to see the dogs work" on black protesters and that he believed that the spectacle of dogs attacking blacks would draw support for the police protection of white social rights.⁴⁷



Figure 43. Stills from *Now!* of police and dogs attacking protesters in Birmingham in 1963.

Dogs had long been a feature of southern plantation life and thus appeared in both white supremacist and abolitionist visual and print culture throughout the nineteenth century, hunting down escaped slaves.⁴⁸ Hounds were also a common feature of post-slavery lynching culture, as they were used to track lynch victims

and sometimes appeared in lynching photographs as part of the visualization of white supremacist police power (figure 44).⁴⁹



Figure 44. Four law enforcement agents and their bloodhounds pose for a photograph at the lynching of Will James. November 11, 1909, Cairo, Illinois. Etched in negative: “The Hounds.”

Contrary to Connor’s wishes, media representations of the dog attacks had, as King had rightly predicted, garnered support for the CRM among white liberal northerners.⁵⁰ Álvarez recalls us to these representations of black victimhood in the midst of the Watts uprising, suggesting that the actions of California police and National Guardsmen were tantamount to the actions of white supremacist police in the South. Animating the photographs with pans and zooms that frequently move from close-ups of the bodies under attack to longer views that include the perpetrators of aggression, Álvarez expands, through montage, the time-frame of Watts, turning it into a moving scene of anti-black terror.

Shortly after the credits, we see a close-up of a child’s eyes reflecting the floating head of the Lincoln Memorial. The Memorial had long been the scene of black protest and was a key visual site at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs

and Freedom (MWJF), which occurred two months after Evers' slaying. Lincoln's head emerges in double from the eyes of a black child who figures as witness to the atrocities being committed against his people (figure 45).⁵¹ In Álvarez's frame, the monumentalized head of the "Great Emancipator" emerges not to portend the coming freedom, but rather to signal a gap between revolutionary abolition and the appropriation of abolitionist struggle in the name of national security and unity.



Figures 45. The Lincoln Memorial becomes a death's head. Stills from *Now!*

Lincoln's severed, floating head is a death's head. In decapitating the Lincoln Memorial, Álvarez transforms the iconic symbol of national unity into a dialectical image that reveals the non-identity between the redemptive visions of history the Memorial normally serves and subaltern experiences of slavery, postbellum racial terror, and Jim Crow.⁵² Lincoln's death's head stalls the dominant historical narrative, in which a temporal continuity between past and present normally transfixes the Memorial into a soothing site for the contemplation of white beneficence and certain freedom. The fragment of the Memorial – its ruination in the space of Álvarez's newsreel – enables the performance of a political time-

consciousness that transforms the present into a fractured site of struggle.⁵³ This reading of the site is confirmed when we zoom out to a long shot of the Lincoln Memorial and then fade into a close-up of a photograph of a young black

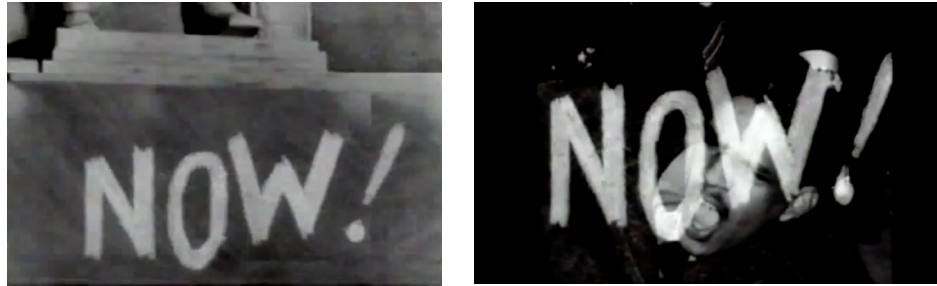


Figure 46. Stills from Now!

man, mid-wince, trampled beneath Lincoln's boot, with the word NOW! emblazoned across his face. As Horne's first "NOW!" rings out deeply, we zoom out to see the original photograph of the police beating the young man down (figure 44). Álvarez isolates various elements of the photograph, shifting from the man's face to the face of his attacker, his attacker's police hat, and his attacker's grip on his baton. This is the second time in the newsreel that an image of a U.S. president fades out of or into an image of the police.

Álvarez positions us in the contentious space of the MWJF, which took place at the Memorial and whose resounding slogan inspired the name of Álvarez's

newsreel. Horne wrote “Now” in 1963 in collaboration with Jule Styne, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green for a June Carnegie Hall benefit concert for the voter education and registration programs organized by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The songwriters named the song after the slogan chosen by SNCC for its upcoming mobilization to the capital in August, where Horne also performed the song.⁵⁴ Though Malcolm X and others criticized the march – the site of King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” – for capitulating to U.S. patriotism, the mobilization marked a crucial moment in the long civil rights movement in which activists on the far left, including those in SNCC, began to openly articulate a demand for political self-determination, economic freedom, and an end to the war in Vietnam.⁵⁵ During John Lewis’s incendiary speech (which he watered down after Robert F. Kennedy took issue with the speech’s original call for a second Civil War) in front of the Lincoln Memorial, he declared that SNCC, an organization for which he served as chairman, sought “a serious social revolution.”⁵⁶ Lewis’s MWJF speech, in its original version, gave rhetorical weight to his organization’s emphasis on the political urgency of their demands: “In good conscience,” he had written prior to his censors’ intervention, “we cannot support the administration’s Civil Rights Bill, for *it is too little, too late.*” Lewis had intended to communicate SNCC’s opposition to the impending bill, which did not meet the organization’s demands for economic justice, such as a universal livable minimum wage, robust measures to protect voting rights, and protection from what SNCC members referred to as a “police state” (three of their field secretaries were, at the time, facing the death penalty in Georgia for engaging in peaceful protest).⁵⁷



Figure 47. Bruce Davidson, *The March on Washington for Justice and Freedom* (1963).

Though the state censored Lewis's speech, SNCC's emphasis on the impact of institutional delay to the realization of black liberation remained in the visual ubiquity of the proclamation, "Now!" on MWJF banners, placards, and posters (figures 47 and 48). "Now!" emerged as the preeminent slogan for the MWJF, signaling an upsurge in the revolutionary tendencies of the long civil rights movement, tendencies that had been stifled throughout the previous two decades of Cold War civil rights by the anti-communist and anti-black status quo. In its strident rejection of obsequious petitioning and its pithy evocation of the urgent need for political transformation, "Now!" figured one of the movement's first rhetorical steps away from civil rights and toward black power. Álvarez's selection of the MWJF slogan as the namesake of his experimental newsreel signaled the continued urgency of black radical demands for revolution two years after the MWJF and four months after the Johnson administration passed the Voting Rights Act.

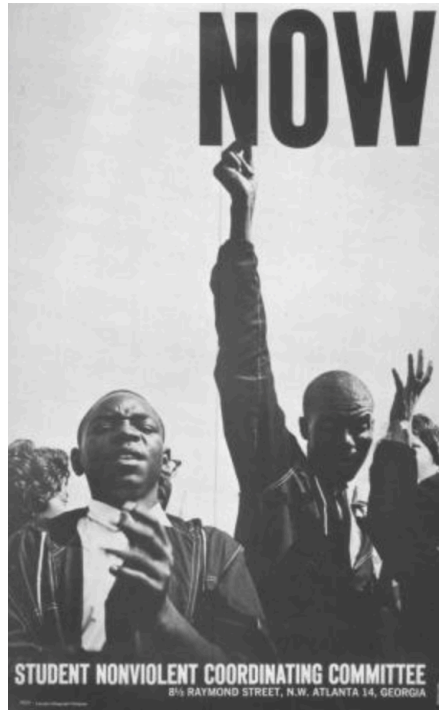


Figure 48. “Now.” SNCC Poster from Danny Lyon photograph, 1963. While some of the hands in the photograph clap and reach to give shape to dreams, the man on the right appears to hold up the NOW between his index and thumb, to prop up the possibility of a future free from terror and the grinding loom of death.

Inserting the MWJF – a traditional, state-sanctioned demonstration – into the space of the Watts riot imbues both actions with the energies of what Walter Benjamin calls *Jetztzeit*, or now-time: a revolutionary suspension of the catastrophic forward march of bourgeois history. In his unfinished *Arcades Project* (*AP*) as well as in his last essay, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin conceptualizes now-time as the perceptual correlate of his materialist historiography. Carrying the aesthetic principle of montage into the construction of history, Benjamin sought with the *AP* to, in his words, “assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event.”⁵⁸ Bringing dialectics to a

standstill, this constructivist materialism imbues the present with the energies of historical time – not a purely continuous time, but a time that moves according to the rhythm of sudden emergence fit for states of crisis and analogized by Benjamin as a lightning flash or flame.⁵⁹

Benjamin importantly maintains that dialectical images are encountered in language and that they are to be “held fast” when they flash up “in the now of ... recognizability” as spatial pictorial figures (*bildlich*) rather than as temporal coordinates to be affixed to a calendar or clock.⁶⁰ In *Now!*, the MWJF and Watts become dialectically attuned – each the other’s fore- or after-history, and each conferring on the other meanings not previously manifested. Indeed, all the constellations in *Now!* “attain to legibility” at a particular time: “the perilous critical moment” of the red summer of 1965.⁶¹ The explosive force of now-time blasts open the continuum of history to present the present as plural and saturated with the revolutionary energy of past movements.”⁶² Álvarez’s photo-collage of photographs from Birmingham, Selma, and Watts indicts the state’s amnesic response to the uprising. Filled with the presence of *Jetztzeit*, *Now!* presents the state of emergency in Watts as emerging from the “tradition of the oppressed” and thus ripe with possibility.

Burn, Baby, Burn!

The Negro masses are no longer prepared to wait for anybody; not for elections, not to count votes, not to wait on the Kennedys or for legislation, nor, in fact, for the Negro leaders themselves. They are going to move. Nothing can stop them from moving.

- Bayard Rustin

Horne’s iterative declaration – “Now, no more waitin,’ no more hesitatin,’

now, now, come on let's *get* some of that *stuff*" – seemed to foreshadow, in the summer of 1963, the coming (re)turn to the riot as a political tactic. Álvarez punctuates Horne's prescient refrain with scenes of the arrest of activists in Watts. He builds on Horne's observation (one rooted in the antagonisms of the CRM) of a gap between the communization of life resources (that everyone can "get some of that stuff") and her desire to create racial equality by adhering to constitutional protocol. The aural invocation of vengeful expropriation is important; Álvarez does not make use of the ubiquitous photographs of looting that editors published in the capitalist press. He instead focuses on the seizure of human beings by the state, thus inverting the criminal frame that the press was then erecting around the rebellion. After three minutes of photographs of police brutality against black protestors, we see interracial protestors amassing in the streets. Alvaraz pans across photographs of activists chained together as Horne moves into the song's second verse: *Everyone should love his brother / People all should love each other / Just don't take it literal, mister / No one wants to grab your sister / Now is the time! Now is the time!!!*

Horne bitinglly evokes the sexual valence and violence of social equality in the U.S. As an imagined encroachment upon white men's alleged sexual property, social equality had long signified miscegenation, the supposed denigration of white racial purity, and a threat to the Anglo-Saxon monopolization of wealth. Álvarez, catching Horne's caustic drift, makes a move previously taken up by decades of anti-lynching activists attuned to the violence's gendered pivot: he highlights anti-black misogyny and state-sanctioned sexual violence against black women by intercutting scenes of police grabbing and forcefully removing women from podiums and streets

in attempts to displace them from the movement. The women, upon being apprehended by police, respond to their capture by fighting back. They are arrested, dragged off by police to wagons and jailhouses.⁶³ Following Horne's gesture to the sexual politics of social equality, Álvarez pictures black women as the "stuff" of police plunder (figure 49).



Figure 49. Still from *Now!*

Horne returns to the chorus, this time faster and with increased rage. Álvarez transitions from the footage of police gangs apprehending women and carrying them to jail to a brief film clip of a U.S. Nazi rally. Next, we see a photograph of a bandaged child pinching her arm, an image of an adolescent girl fainting, another of a woman screaming as she crouches between parked cars, a woman laying prone in a man's arms, and another young woman collapsing into the arms of her male comrade. The child seems to see only her hurt, while the women are lost in the nightmares of history.⁶⁴ *Now, now, / Now, now, now, now, now, / Now / Now, now, now, now.* Álvarez pans across a photograph: in the lower right corner is a Nazi flag, and next to the flag are two bedraggled figures in the telltale attire of

the Klan. They flash onto the screen for mere seconds before Álvarez cuts to a close-up of a photograph of a black baby crying in terror, to another photograph of a cross-burning Klan rally, to an image of police pushing a young man to the ground, and then back to a more extreme close-up of the baby crying in terror. *The message of this song's not subtle / No discussion, no rebuttal.*

Álvarez shifts to a photograph of a finely-dressed woman in the midst of a cry before zooming into her hands, which are crossed as her fingers lace into her purse straps to form a conduit to the photograph that follows of a black man on his knees, his wrists tethered by rope and reminiscent of the bound and supplicant slave in the famous 1787 medallion by abolitionist Josiah Wedgwood, "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" Álvarez here employs the pan and zoom technique he uses throughout the newsreel to create a sense of movement and scale. He zooms out of his close-up of the man's rope-bound wrists and then pans up the photograph to reveal a gang of officers crowded above him. The effect is chilling, particularly considering the image's resonance with the Wedgwood medallion; here, the man is seen supplicating with the police, the overseers of white property. *We want more than just a promise / Say goodbye to Uncle Thomas / Call me naïve! / Still I believe!* Álvarez cuts from the photograph of a man bound and on his knees before a line of police to the dark void at the center of the film: the fiery close-up of the photograph of the 1919 lynching of William Brown in Omaha, Nebraska (figure 50). *We're created free and equal, / Now / Now / Now, now, now, now.* Álvarez does not rely in this crucial section of the film on pans and zooms to create the cuts of his cinematic montage. Instead, he sets it on fire.



Figure 50. Stills from *Now!* The burning of William Brown in 1965.

I imagine those seeing the newsreel for the first time think they are watching live footage of a man go up in flames – until they see the photograph in its entirety (figure 51). Before I see *Now!*, I see a reproduction of it: a 2014 remake of Álvarez’s film in homage to Mike Brown, who was executed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri in August of that year. A friend and colleague sends me his reconstructed newsreel before I leave for a convergence in Ferguson. I immediately recognize Will Brown, for I have seen the photograph of his lynching over and over again – reproduced in books and on websites. It is even shown to me on a cell phone in rural Georgia the following year by a young scholar who describes to me the order of the scene while he looks through his phone for the photograph he has saved: *He’s leaning back, he’s laid out on the pyre like Christ. Do you know who that was?*

Yes, I say, it was Will Brown. It was 1919, it was Red Summer. It is live and shrouded by the fire that consumes us. There are men watching, there is the crowd that consumes him, the whole scene is a grave.



Figure 51. Unknown Photographer, 1919. A crowd of jeering rioters burn the remains of William Brown in Omaha, Nebraska during “Red Summer.”

The source photograph for Álvarez’s reanimation was the photograph by an unknown photographer of the lynching of 41 year-old meat packinghouse worker Will Brown during the massive rioting that occurred over two days in September in Omaha, Nebraska at the end of the “Red Summer” of 1919. Two days before the rioting began, the *Omaha Bee* had published a headline claiming that a “black beast” was responsible for raping a local white woman named Agnes Loeback. Despite Loeback’s inability to identify Brown as her attacker, a mob set fire to the Douglas County Courthouse jail, nearly lynched the city’s mayor for calling for calm,

dragged Brown out of his jail cell, hanged him to an electric light pole, and riddled his body with bullets. Mob members dragged Brown's corpse from the back of a car for several blocks before dousing him with gasoline and setting him on fire. After Brown was burned, mob members kicked his remains down the street.⁶⁵

Alvarez likely came across the photograph in *LIFE* magazine's five-part series, in 1956, on the origins of segregation. Though *LIFE* had promoted its owner Henry Luce's conservative politics since its founding in 1936, the magazine's mandate shifted after the Second World War. Motivated by the public relations exigencies of the emergent Cold War, which demanded the cultivation of an image of U.S. capitalism as the engine of democracy, *LIFE* began disseminating representations of black integration into U.S. society. In the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, *LIFE* overwhelmingly aligned black demands for legal equality with assimilation into nuclear domestic relationships. In the second issue in its series on segregation, *LIFE* used the photograph of Brown's burning to illustrate the failures of Reconstruction by sandwiching Brown between illustrations of Booker T. Washington and the Klan, following which was a triumphant photograph of black pastors praying outside the Supreme Court in 1954. The spread ended with a two-page story on the black Faulkner family (figure 52). In representing blacks as criminalized victims and in highlighting accommodation, assimilation, the law, and patriarchal domestic partnerships as the main mechanisms for attaining freedom, *LIFE*'s take on segregation foreshadowed the popular press coverage of the clashes across the South in the early 1960s. As Martin Berger argues, the protagonists of the heavily televised campaigns in Birmingham and Selma largely won the

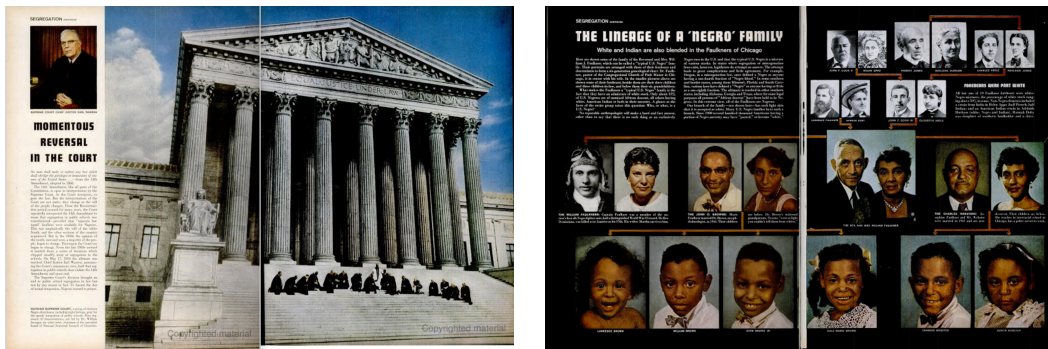
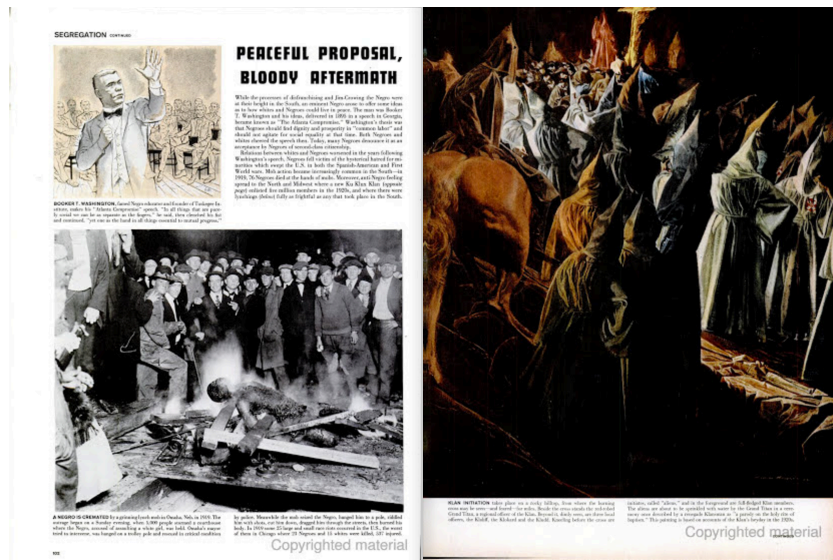


Figure 52. *Life* magazine's second story, in 1956, on the history of segregation.

sentimental support of liberal whites due to the mainstream media's skewed representation of nonviolent civil disobedience as passive and nonthreatening, with white action, whether reactive or empathetic, framed as the motor of political reform. In *Now!*, Álvarez reframes many of the images that were published in *LIFE*, essentially recuperating the technique of photo-collage that the magazine's editors had themselves appropriated from left image-makers in the 1930s.

What might we make of Álvarez's appropriation of this photograph, his induction of Brown into the assemblage of image and sound relations that make up the newsreel's critique of civil rights liberalism? What does the burning of the photograph do? On the surface, it seems obvious: Álvarez counters the white media's identification of the Watts uprising as a *race* riot by inserting the scene of a white race riot or anti-black massacre into the newsreel. The photograph's fiery entrance into the newsreel gives historical weight to Álvarez's focus on the brutalization and terror directed against black assertions of political power. Indeed, the photograph's presence in the film loudly asserts a relationship between policing and vigilante terrorism. But what is the nature of this relationship? And why did Álvarez select this particular lynching by fire during the summer of 1919 as the historical image through which to condemn the violence enacted by the state of California against the residents of Southeast L.A.? What is its historical index and how did the photograph attain legibility in 1965? More to the point, how does the lynching intervene into the condition of black power's emergence as a theory and practice of letting live, of flourishing while black?

Necrophagy at the Lynching Block

One tends to see only the thousand tricks of power which are enacted above ground; but these are the least part of it. Underneath, day in, day out, is digestion and again digestion.

- Elias Canetti

Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each 'now' is the now of a particular recognizability.

- Walter Benjamin

A third of those disappeared by lynching were incinerated. The slow and excruciating burning that could take hours and that filled the surrounding air with the horrid stench of flesh set to fire often occurred immediately after photographers snapped the requisite photographs of the dead and their captors. Photographs were also taken after the fires were set. In the photograph of the burning of John Lee in Durant, Oklahoma in 1911 – accorded a two-page spread in *Without Sanctuary* – the fire consumes Lee, his body emerging as a stain on the photograph in the form of a dense, black cloud. Another version of this lynching was marketed with the negative etched, “Coon Cooking” (figure 53). As evidenced in the photographic nomination of Durant’s lynching as a “coon cooking,” the use of fire to torture and kill the lynched informs lynching’s largely unacknowledged alimentary idiom. Participants at lynchings often turned their victims into disaggregated food-like commodities. At the 1899 spectacle lynching of Sam Hose, for example, members of the two thousand-person crowd cut Hose’s heart and liver into small pieces before pounding his bones into souvenir bits for the taking. As historian Leon Litwack recounts, the bones were sold for twenty-five cents, while “a piece of the liver ‘crisply cooked’ sold for ten cents.”⁶⁶ Hose’s knuckles were later rumored to be on display in an Atlanta grocery store.⁶⁷ In a grocery store, *crisply cooked*.



Figure 53. Townspeople gather for the burning of John Lee. August 13, 1911, Durant, Oklahoma. Gelatin silver print. Real photo postcard. 5 1/2 X 3 1/2.”

The violence of lynching was celebrated, brought home, and otherwise made familiar through recourse to a set of ravaging metaphors that sit firmly in the domains of eating and incorporation. Journalist James Howell Street wrote of the first lynching he witnessed in 1917 at the age of 14: “Farmers had come from miles around. Their wives and children and dogs were along. Many brought lunches – big six-layer cakes and fried chicken. They ate their picnic on the courthouse lawn, under the Confederate monument.”⁶⁸ In addition to turning lynchings into occasions to picnic with the family, laborers in the industrializing New South adjusted to the new temporal ordinances of the capitalist workday by indulging in lynching during their lunch breaks. On the verso of a postcard celebrating the lynching of Allen Brooks in Dallas, Texas in 1910, an anonymous viewer wrote: “I saw this on my noon hour and was very much in the bunch.”⁶⁹ Members of the crowd filled themselves with the bloody grist of a gothic feasting ritual that positioned blackness

as unmournable meat. Lynching in the New South was a lunching, a necro-nosh of biscuits and blood, corned beef and knuckle, baked Alaska, plum pudding, apple pie. Some cock. Another bloody wound.

An internal contradiction, perhaps, this expulsion through ingestion, black skin shoved into a black hole and a wide-open kitchen of cruelty. And yet, ingestion and assimilation have long been models for dealing with the anxieties of subjection and alterity, and, too, with the vagaries of power.⁷⁰ Jacques Derrida, for example, underscores the sacrificial structure of discourses of the Self in western metaphysics. The subject of modernity, he suggests, does not just master nature, he “accepts sacrifice and eats flesh” by incorporating objects and Others into himself in order to maintain the fantasy of originary wholeness.⁷¹ Hence Franz Fanon’s description of the lived experience of blackness as one of being reduced to a fact or fetish – to the rent, distorted, and bludgeoned negative imago against which the split white ego can imagine itself as whole. In *Black Skin White Masks*, he writes: “When the whites feel that they have become too mechanized, they turn to the men of color and ask them for a little human sustenance.”⁷²

In the U.S., eating has informed the production of racial difference since at least the late eighteenth century, and has served as a general mode for managing crises of gender, class, and national belonging. Kyla Tompkins suggests that the image of “the black body as food is rooted in the violent intimacies of the slave economy,” an observation found throughout slave narratives, including those written by Olauda Equiano and Frederick Douglass. In his autobiography, Douglass describes slavery as a cannibal being, writing: “There stood slavery ... glaring

frightfully upon us – its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and even now feasting itself greedily upon our own flesh.”⁷³ Saidiya Hartman mobilizes this trope in her exploration of the British slave warehouse, Cape Coast Castle, as one digestive node of a slave trade that many subject to it characterized as fundamentally cannibalistic. “Ingestion,” she writes in *Lose Your Mother*,

provides a vivid picture of the relation between the haves and the have-nots, the rulers and the ruled, the parasite and the host. . . . None knew this better than the slaves. They consistently described their captors as cannibals. Flesh eaters and roasters of men personified the dynamics of plunder and dispossession, unlike the euphemism of *trade*, which made the rout appear bloodless and consensual. None of the enslaved had ever agreed to any bargain that landed them there. Anthropophagy, the practice of eating the flesh of other human beings, aptly described the devouring of life by the machinery of the slave trade.⁷⁴

But as Vincent Woodard so steadfastly argues in *The Delectable Negro*, slaves’ references to cannibalism were neither folk delusion nor mere metaphor.

Cannibalization of the enslaved was a literal practice, both at sea and on slave plantations, and some slaves were even forced to eat themselves and their fellow slaves; a common punishment in the Caribbean involved cutting off slaves’ ears, broiling them, and making slaves eat them.⁷⁵ In the U.S., people engaged in medical cannibalism, the old world practice of eating the human blood and skin of those who had died violently, which some believed acted as a tonic.⁷⁶ Black abolitionists used their knowledge of these practices, deploying imagery of consumption to spark abolitionist sentiment. With the galvanization of abolition in the U.S. after the 1830s, even clergy, congressmen, and popular novelists debated whether the country was becoming a cannibal nation as a result of slavery.⁷⁷

In his study of the structural significance of social death to slave societies,

sociologist Orlando Patterson redefines slavery as human parasitism.⁷⁸ He takes the term from Carl O. Williams' study of slavery in Iceland, where Williams describes slave masters as the ultimate human parasites:

This class of the lowly is the source from which the master class draws its livelihood and leisure. Thralldom [slavery] is a degree of cannibalism. It is a system of man feeding upon man. The master is a human parasite, who, by the right of might, has secured his fellow-men in the bonds of thralldom in order to feed upon them and to use them for the satisfaction of his appetites.⁷⁹

Patterson popularized Williams' thesis in his focus upon the genesis of the slave's sub- or para-human status in her subjection to natal alienation, dishonor, namelessness, and violence. These four elements, Patterson writes, are crucial to introducing the slave into the community of the master as less-than-human, and to generating the codes of masculine honor that authorized the planter class's culture of consumption.⁸⁰ These elements also importantly secured affective ties between members of the master class that allowed for slavery in the U.S. to thrive.

Is anthropophagy – the eating of human flesh by human beings – a key pornotrope in U.S. lynching culture?⁸¹ To submit this brings us immediately against a turbid paradox: eating the Other can perhaps never be seen as a cannibalistic act insofar as the Other is Other in its divergence from the world of Man. *Funniest thing I ever smelled was him a burnin' and the way his flesh cooked it sizzled same as if we was a cookin' a pig or a cow...*⁸² Here, we are confronted head-on with one of the most widely discussed sensationalizing tropes in U.S. racial history: the bestialization of blackness, which we might more precisely characterize as the bestialization of the white desire for blackness. The recourse to food and animal metaphors in pro-

slavery discourse, postbellum white supremacist literature, and media reports of lynchings rendered a political divide between the rightful lives of white citizens and the mere lives of the enslaved and of the emancipated undead. To eat the Other, to perceive and enjoy the brutality against, and disarticulation of, black being, occurred through a symbolics of animality concomitant with the transformation of black being into an object of consumption, into a morsel of food. *This is the barbecue we had last night.* Those who developed and collected lynching photographs etched into them words like these, words like “Negro barbecue” and “coon cooking,” thereby adjoining the power of naming the Other as non-human to the pleasures of firing and eating their flesh.



Figure 54. “Thanksgiving in Missouri, 1933,” *Baltimore Afro-American*. From the clippings file of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Lynching’s alimentary idiom indicates the fundamentally *necrophagic* character of this country’s racializing violence: its capacity to position black bodily being in a proprioceptive no-Man’s land between flesh and meat, a zone marked by

the potential to be eaten and digested by the white flesh of the world.⁸³ I'm using flesh here quite consciously to invoke both Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Hortense Spillers' uses of the term. For Merleau-Ponty, flesh is the extra-corporeal interval between self and the world that depends upon the subject's ability to "become lost to itself in the opaque thickness of the body" – to experience the body in the "place where life hides away."⁸⁴ Flesh constitutes an extra-corporeal tissue that connects self to world, and is a precondition for a proprioceptive and ethical engagement with the world. Fanon argues, following Merleau-Ponty, that our belongingness in the world depends upon this ability to retreat into the anonymous layers of the body. But this bodily inwardness is precisely what is evacuated in the black subject's phenomenological experience of the racial epidermal schema. Where Merleau-Ponty's flesh is a membrane between him and the world, flesh is experienced by those who are racialized as black as something that divides them from themselves.⁸⁵ Hortense Spillers, on the other hand, uses the term "flesh" to designate the zero-degree of life that is experienced by the black diaspora in the wake of the triangle trade; flesh in her work is analogous to Walter Benjamin's mere life or Giorgio Agamben's *zoe*, which signifies the barest of life that is included in the polis according to a topological exclusion that marks it as readily killable.⁸⁶ Abdul JanMohamed suggests that because flesh is readily killable, it is convertible to an even lower ontological status, which he calls meat, or insensate flesh. JanMohamed further suggests that U.S. lynching culture controlled black subjects by converting them into what he calls "death-bound subjects" that were neither fully alive nor fully dead; they were, rather, in a proprioceptive no-Man's land between flesh and meat –

somewhere between the mere life of *zoe* and the political life of *bios* and always already visible before the Fanonian white flesh of the world.⁸⁷

These scenes of ingestion provoke us to think the lynching photograph as a cryptic enclave – as a mortuary space that prevents the burial, mourning, and grieving of the dead in its preservation of the lynched as the photographic living-dead. The bodies we see in lynching’s photographic archive have not been allowed to fully die as human because they have been transformed into, and preserved as, meat. They have been kept undead by being written into light so that they can neither live as human nor rest as the human dead.⁸⁸ Yet, as Derrida writes in his deconstructive response to psychoanalytic theories of incorporation and introjection, the melancholic incorporation of the excluded Other into the self ultimately results in a cryptic commemoration of the object’s exclusion. Inside the phallogocentric self is erected a tomb and a monument to the Other’s inclusive-exclusion.⁸⁹ The photographic devouring of the lynched body in light-writing signals its evacuation from history. And yet, as Derrida might suggest, the incorporative logic that has organized the normalization of lynching as a method of social control – the consumption of the lynched, and their preservation in a photo-cryptic cleft in the belly of Man – must produce a historical remainder. In *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*, Zita Nunes proposes that ideas of national and racial identify formation across the Americas during the twentieth century share a dependence on the metaphor of incorporation. Her analysis of the subaltern appropriation of the figure of cannibalism in Du Bois’s “The Souls of White Folk” and in Oswald de Andrade’s modernist screed, “Manifesto

Antropofago” reminds us that assimilation always presupposes a remainder. “The remainder,” she writes, “is a reminder that won’t keep the peace.”⁹⁰ In the photograph is a hole, and, in the postcard, a feeding. In the photograph is a hold; in the postcard, a heeding.

The Incendiary Third Image of Lynching

What went up that day, those flames, represented one thing. It was a burning not of those houses there you see, not of those shops there that you see, it was a burning up, a setting into flames, of a past, a whole past of suffering, generations of suffering, were going up into flames, from the days of slavery, right up to this day.

- I.B. Tabata

In a newsreel marked by a lack of “live” footage, it is perhaps ironic that the most active image in the film is also its oldest. In *Now!*, we see Brown’s remains through live fire, the flames jolting us into the space of the photograph, and thus into the scene of Brown’s disappearance. Álvarez, in setting the photograph on fire, essentially reenacts the lynching onscreen. In the live space of Brown’s incineration, Horne’s voice rings out from the future to highlight the racialized contradiction of U.S. democracy, so perfectly encapsulated in the words that ushered in, during the revolutionary era of the eighteenth century, U.S. independence from Britain as a sovereign nation of slave-owners: *We’re created free and equal, / Now / Now / Now, now, now, now.* Álvarez fuels the lacunary gap initially opened by Horne between this humanist sentiment and the experience of those not-yet-free by looking long on the scene of black holocaust.

Álvarez’s incineration of Brown’s photographic corpse was a canny move,

given the ubiquity of fire in the media circulation of the Watts uprising as a signifier of black criminality and a threat to white wealth and security. As Tom McDonough notes in his sharp reading of the Watts rebellion as counter-spectacle, many of the accounts of the riots in the mainstream press were written from a far-off place, from a view from above. Newspapers and magazines often published photographs “taken from helicopters, of devastated buildings and billowing clouds of smoke.”

McDonough proposes that the dominant image of the uprising, “its key signifier in the media’s imaginary, was that of fire, fire as an image, a dangerous and disturbing spectacle seen from afar.”⁹¹ Fire, as the key signifier of Watts, McDonough writes, would thus also need to be the ground of the riot’s defense.⁹² Indeed, this is one of the tacks that Guy Debord – Marxist-Leninist filmmaker, theorist, and member of the Paris collective Situationist International – chose in his defense of the uprising as a negation of the commodity spectacle. In “The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy,” Debord writes that Watts rebels used fire to light up their struggles. The French verb he uses to describe the actions of the rioters is *éclairer*, which, as McDonough notes, connotes enlightenment and illumination. The fires, for Debord, were a force of reason, “a human protest against a dehumanized life,” and a call to transcend the spectacle of commodity culture.⁹³

Now! intervenes in the condition of Watts’ knowability with the same element that arsonists had used to create their manifesto and drive out (in the discourse of the period) the parasitic colonizers of their neighborhood. Where the fires in Watts lit up a path to City Hall in a dramatic staging of the state’s liability for anti-black extortion, *Now!* similarly mobilizes fire to hold the state accountable

by positioning the actions of the LAPD and the National Guard within lynching's *longue durée*. As the black press in the U.S. had long done, Álvarez presents the photograph of Brown's lynching un-cropped. Álvarez insists that we see the revolting death-scene; he prioritizes Brown rather than the white mob gathered around him, focusing on the burning for six seconds before cutting to a middle shot of the mob and then to a view of the entire photograph. The crucial portion that comes to us in flames, in closeup, had been cropped out of the reproduction of the photograph in the white press since it was first published in *The Chicago Tribune* following the lynching in 1919. In an educational booklet made by the state of Nebraska, the photograph was cropped to focus viewers' attention on the well-dressed and mostly adolescent crowd gathered around Brown's burning body.⁹⁴ But an unedited version of the photograph was printed in the Christmas 1919 issue of the *Crisis* in an article about the causes of the riots earlier that year in Arkansas and Nebraska. The NAACP selected the same photograph as the frontispiece of its 1920 anti-lynching pamphlet, *An Appeal to the Conscience of the Civilized World* (figure 55).⁹⁵ The pamphlet announced that 78 black people had been lynched in 1919, and eleven "publicly burned alive" while three were burned after they had been killed. Juxtaposing the language of statistics with sensationalist newspaper headlines, the pamphlet reported on the numbers of dead per state, dedicating an entire page to the service men lynched upon their return from the war. Another page focused on the police officers who had colluded in the beatings and murders. In his *Crisis* article about the Omaha conflagration, "The Real Causes of Two Race Riots," Du Bois situates the riots and lynchings in the neo-slave economies of debt peonage, convict

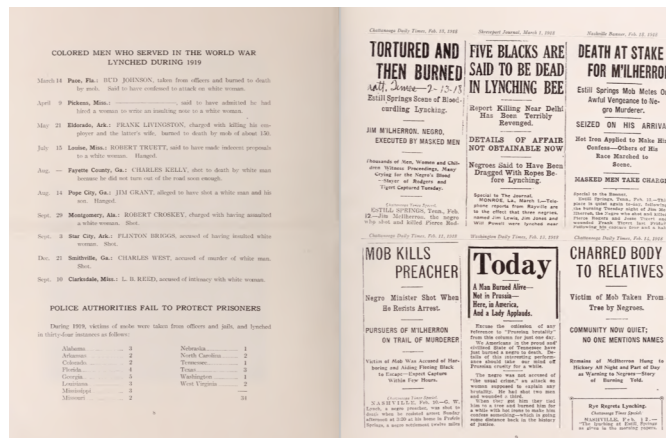
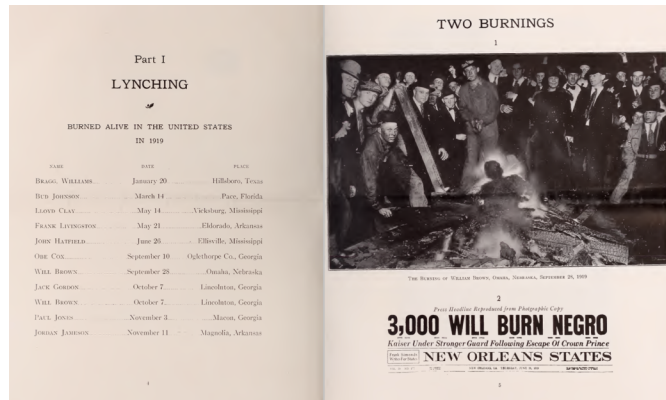


Figure 55. Pages from *An Appeal to the Conscience of the World*, an NAACP anti-lynching pamphlet from 1920. The spread is, by any standard, a collage. The photograph of Brown’s lynching allegedly depicts a lynching that has already happened, but when juxtaposed with the headline beneath it – which insists that 3,000 *will* burn negro – we glimpse the future in the past, as well as a productive confusion between the Midwest and the south.

leasing, and sharecropping, and connects the actions of black sharecropping members of the Farmers’ Household Union organizing for wages and self-defense in Philips County, Arkansas to the actions of blacks in Chicago, East St. Louis, and Washington to protect themselves from white rioters.⁹⁶ In the September 1919 issue of the *Crisis* – an issue that opened with the observation that “the war is ended” in Germany and “yet in America—Thirty-six Negroes are known to have been lynched

since the armistice was signed last November—one of them a woman—six of the others lynched by being burned at the stake” – Du Bois writes:

Brothers we are on the Great Deep. ... For three centuries we have suffered and cowered. No race ever gave Passive Resistance and Submission to Evil longer, more piteous trial. Today we raise the terrible weapon of Self-Defense. When the murderer comes, he shall no longer strike us in the back. When the armed lynchers gather, we too must gather armed. When the mob moves, we propose to meet it with bricks and clubs and guns.⁹⁷

In the U.S., wartime migrations, a rise in lynchings and white riots (there were ninety-one lynchings during WWI), and national strikes spawned what writers at the time called New Negro radicalism.⁹⁸ The increase in lynchings and white riots prompted Du Bois and the militant separatist Marcus Garvey to find common ground in their calls for self-defense. Similarly, Cyril Briggs, one of the founding members of the African Blood Brotherhood and editor of *The Messenger*, advised that blacks form a defense militia. The WWI period marked a turning point as blacks across the nation used their military training and increasing connections to global movements for decolonization and self-determination to resist attacks on their communities.⁹⁹ Black communist Harry Haywood writes in his autobiography of returning to Chicago from the battlefields of France as the riots of 1919 were beginning. As he and other black combat veterans gathered an arsenal and hid out in an apartment ready to fend off a rumored invasion by Irish street gangs, Haywood recalled, “It came to me then that I had been fighting the wrong war. The Germans weren’t the enemy – the enemy was right here at home.”¹⁰⁰

The Red Summer of 1919 intervenes in *Now!* to call our attention to the world war on black people across the diaspora and to the historical, post-WWI

emergence of black nationalism, which became an important ideological tendency in the critique of civil rights reformism during the 1960s. The emergence of the Omaha massacre into the field of image relations between Project Confrontation in Birmingham and the confrontations in Watts serves, much as lynching did, as a lure and a warning. But in this instance, rather than serving to warn against civic participation, economic advancement, and political power, Álvarez's quick cuts between politicians, the Klan cross-burning, the police, U.S. Nazis, and the Omaha race riot warns against national incorporation while also gesturing toward a flashpoint in the history of the black international: the reemergence, in the 1960s, of the black nation thesis alongside black radicals' turn to the politics of self-defense and hemispheric intercommunalism.¹⁰¹ Álvarez's incineration of the image accords on Watts and its underlying structure of feeling the memory of international solidarity in the fight against anti-black violence.

Assemblage and the Remediation of Terror

Given Álvarez's avowedly Marxist politics, it is easy to fold him into the lineage of radical Marxist image-makers that emerged in Russia around the 1917 revolution and in Germany in the 1920s. Álvarez was familiar, after all, with the experimental image practices that had developed during the Russian revolution. Early Soviet formalist artists like Alexander Rodchenko had embraced photography as an instrument of perceptual renewal that could be used to generate a new collective consciousness. Practicing techniques like close-ups, seriality, and graphic presentation that emphasized the means of production, and conceiving of art as anti-

individualist and materially grounded in social relations, these artists opposed the conscription of aesthetics into the private, bourgeois gallery system and insisted that art move into, and shape, the public sphere.¹⁰² Russian formalism also influenced filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein, who established the technique of montage as a dramatic system of visual counterpoint “fully analogous to human, psychological expression.” In his films, Eisenstein employed this method of visual counterpoint by juxtaposing dissimilar images whose meanings resulted from the resonance between, rather than within, their constitutive elements. Montage, for Eisenstein, is a dialectical method that leads to “the liberation of the action from the definition of time and space” and thus to intense emotions, new concepts, and fresh coordinates of Being.¹⁰³ Álvarez, who had screened Soviet films in his cine-club *Nuestro Tiempo* prior to the victory of the July 26 Movement, was conversant in the praxis of cinematic montage, and likely also with the photographic collages created by German Dada image-makers during and after the First World War.¹⁰⁴ While we can’t dismiss the role that montage plays in Álvarez’s films, the term does not fully capture the inventive aesthetics of his work. Álvarez discerned a way forward without full access to “live” footage of the latest clashes in the U.S. by employing not only montage and the formal photographic strategies (close-up, seriality) that had characterized Russian photography prior to the Soviet shift to documentary realism; the departure of his post-1962 newsreels from the genre’s informational conventions were also, I argue, inspired by a more thoroughly internationalist tradition of left counter-visibility.

Álvarez drew for inspiration not only upon the visual activism of those

residing outside the developed capitalist core, but also upon the practices of those who were, in the parlance of 1960s radical social movements, internally colonized.¹⁰⁵ I propose we think the formal workings of *Now!* in relation to the practice of assemblage, which became popular amongst West Coast artists like Edward Kienholz and Melvin Edwards in the 1960s. This practice emerged as artists in the U.S. were seeking a way to engage politically with the social and political upheavals of the 1960s without reducing their practice to figural conventions. As art historian Teresa Carbone writes, young artists at the time were challenged to “testify to the facts” of racial and economic injustice through abstraction rather than the documentary, social realist impulses that had gained ground in the 1930s.¹⁰⁶ Black artists like Romare Bearden and Merton D. Simpson of the Spiral art collective turned to collage as a way to insert imagery from the popular press into a polyvalent aesthetic field that problematized the reductive portrayal of blacks in the white media.¹⁰⁷ Black artists like Betye Saar and Melvin Edwards worked with the ambiguous power of illustration, painting, found imagery and objects to trouble the racial epistemology of photographic proof. These artists’ assemblages testified non-representationally, through a tactile immediacy, to the era’s turbulence (figure 56).

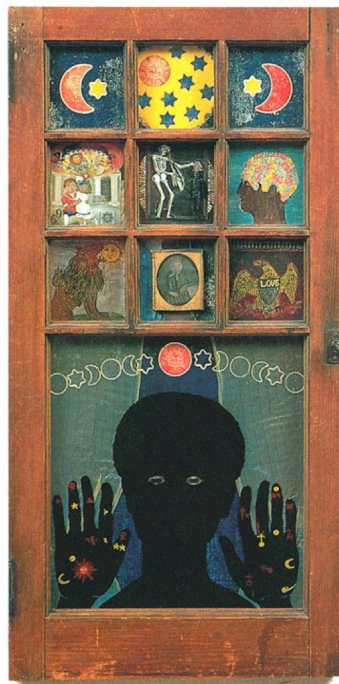


Figure 56. Above: Melvin Edwards, *August the Squared Fire*, 1965.
Below: Betye Saar, *Black Girl's Window*, 1969.

Watts artist-educators Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell, who were teaching at the Watts Tower Art Center during the uprising in 1965, turned to assemblage as the means through which to transform the detritus of the insurrection into a testament of love for community (figure 57). Retrieving three tons of charred wood, scrap metal, melted neon signs and other “fire-moulded debris” unleashed from ordinary use during the six days of rioting, Purifoy and Powell called on artists in the area to use the materials for pieces they would show in *66 Signs of Neon*, an exhibition they had conceived of during the six days of rioting. Analogizing their collection of found objects during the event to the other infamous “junkers of the community” – those so-called “looters” who released commodities from exchange by gifting them to the reserve of labor – Purifoy and Powell argued that Watts residents were in dire need of creative education alongside access to food, housing, and employment.¹⁰⁸ In *Watt’s Riot*, which Purifoy completed in 1966, and in his student John T. Riddle Jr.’s *Untitled (Fist)* (1965), elements of the city’s physical infrastructure, already twice transformed into junk by the movements of capital, by the anger of its residents, and by the fires that raged as testimonials of refusal, are further reassembled into injunctions to see and speak anew (figure 58).¹⁰⁹ Purifoy conceptualizes assemblage in the catalogue for *66 Signs of Neon* as a conduit to communication and becoming. His philosophy of artistic transformation through assemblage shares with the practitioners of Cuban radical cinema as well as with Gilles Deleuze an emphasis on collective fabulation, potentiality, and differentiation.



Figure 57. Left: Simon Rodia's landmark Watts Towers in Los Angeles. Right: Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell at the Watts Tower Art Center, 1964.



Figure 58. Left: Noah Purifoy, *Watts Riot*, 1966. Right: John T. Riddle Jr., *Untitled (Fist)*, c. 1965.

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze writes of the shift in political cinema's representational capacities after WWII in light of the war's impact on the perception and experience of time. In conversation with philosopher Henri Bergson's major theses on time – that the past coexists with the present and that each temporal moment is split into an actual and virtual dimension – Deleuze proposes that modern cinema, in contrast to classical cinema, subordinates the description of space to the functions of time and to the becoming of thought.¹¹⁰ The modern cinema of the time-image is a thought-provoking encounter rather than a representation. It affects the visible with a disturbance, with a sensory-motor break that makes characters into seers “struck by something intolerable in the world, and confronted by something unthinkable in thought.”¹¹¹ Deleuze sees in the modern cinema of the time-image an alternative to what he refers to throughout his philosophy as the dominant image of thought defined by representation and identity.¹¹² In the cinema of the time-image, he argues, being is subject to the irrational cuts of time, and thus to forces of becoming that are incommensurable with any whole.¹¹³ With becoming as its motor, post-war cinema temporalizes “the image in series where the present is never pure, but is rather the site of a constant crossing of the past and future.” Modern cinema, unlike classical cinema ordered around the production of the narrative-driven movement-image, effects what Deleuze calls a “camera consciousness” through its overlapping of past, present, and future.

The time-image, in invoking the impower of thought, expresses what

Deleuze refers to as the not yet – the virtuality – of “the people.”¹¹⁴ In classical cinema, Deleuze writes, “the people are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though they are blind or unconscious. Soviet cinema is an example: the people are already there in Eisenstein, who shows them performing a qualitative leap in *The General Line (Old and New)*.” He continues:

But a great many factors were to compromise this belief: the rise of Hitler, which gave cinema as its object not the masses become subject but the masses subjected; Stalinism, which replaced the unanimism of peoples with the tyrannical unity of a party; the break-up of the American people, who could no longer believe themselves to be either the melting-pot of peoples past or the seed of a people to come ... In short, if there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet ... *the people are missing*.¹¹⁵

Eisenstein’s narrative-driven political cinema represents people, politics, and the nation as transcendental ideals that exist as objects of thought that come into view through the rational cuts of montage. But *Now!*, like many other radical third world films, is marked by *irrational* cuts, by montages that confuse the ordering of narrative time and thus the existential historicity of being and national belonging. In the cinema of the time-image, “the people” emerge as one void among many to express the fundamental difficulty of being.¹¹⁶ Deleuze turns, albeit briefly, to postcolonial cinema when he writes that it is through “trance or crisis” that third world cinema constitutes an assemblage that brings people together “in order to make them produce collective utterances as the prefiguration of the people who are missing.”¹¹⁷ In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze locates the time-image’s affirmation of the people’s becoming within its turn away from narrative authority toward collective enunciation [*fabulation*]. This story-telling function occurs through the presence of

at least one intercessor who, whether on- or off-screen, provides a counterpoint to the other voices and images in the film.¹¹⁸ In the cinema of the time-image, the storyteller emerges as a figure who divides the image into disjunctive series.¹¹⁹ The serial nature of the cinema of the time-image, like the montage in the cinema of the movement-image, asks that spectators make connections between different images; however, it does not ask them to identify with these images, nor synthesize them into a whole.¹²⁰ In these series, there is an accumulation of images rather than a passage from one image to the next. Centering on the nonidentity of thought and thing, this method of creative invention rejects the Hegelian notion of synthesis and overcoming that was central to Eisenstein's conception of filmic montage. It creates what Deleuze's collaborator, Felix Guattari, called an *agencement*. Often translated into English as "assemblage," *agencement* refers to more than a simple conjoining of disparate phenomena; it expresses, as John Phillips glosses, "the connection between a state of affairs and the statements we can make about it." Assemblage describes a process through which individual persons or things "enter into composition with one another" to form an affinity while still retaining their capacity for differentiation.¹²¹ Deleuze notes that the cinematic consciousness that alights on the coming community is particularly important in postcolonial cinema's invention of a new people out of the crisis of being designated, by the colonizer or by the master-class, racialized non- or sub-humans. Indeed, Third Cinema, according to its theoreticians, was a necessary element of the collective creation of a new revolutionary subject whose conditions of emergence were not based on an ideal unity.¹²² Third Cinema, as one of the purveyors of the time-image, is principally

involved in the genesis of a decolonized people unassimilable to imperialist formations of the human.

In *Now!*, the non-identity between, on the one hand, the liberal democratic tradition of freedom and equality and, on the other, the global aspirations and prefigurative articulations of abolitionist freedom appears not solely through montage and photo-collage. In the reenactment of Brown's lynching, the contradiction manifests through the destructive practice of setting fire to a representation of black criminalization and death. Like his colleagues and comrades in California, Álvarez sought to complicate the politics of racial representation by intervening in documentary aesthetics. Through contradictory image-sound assemblages (in which Horne acts as an intercessor) and in the physical destruction of the lynching photograph by fire, Álvarez rides the boundary between the documentary politics of the early civil rights movement and the assemblage aesthetic that emerged during the contentious shift to black power. His employment of what I call photo-dissemblage pushes the genre of the newsreel into an expressive genre that delivers much more than the news. Reenacting the lynching onscreen transforms the photograph into an enabling image that contests the imperial universality of Cold War liberalism while prefiguring the emergence of a new international revolutionary subject.¹²³

Álvarez's increasingly experimental techniques in the 1960s inspired the developing movement among New Latin American filmmakers that Argentine filmmakers Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas term, in their 1969 manifesto, "Third Cinema." In the months and years following the release of *Now!*, the

alimentary rhetoric of hunger, parasitism, and digestion become central to the conceptualization of Third Cinema as a weapon in the international anti-imperialist struggle. In "Toward a Third Cinema," Getino and Solanas write that "every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image or purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the System finds indigestible."¹²⁴ Third cinema theoreticians commonly oriented their anti-imperialist praxis around their colonial experiences of underdevelopment and hunger, and advised a cinematic praxis that would starve the masters of the First World. In 1965, the Brazilian filmmaker, writer, and actor Glauber Rocha raised the hunger epidemic in countries exploited by capitalist imperialism to an existential ontological condition. The dependency of Latin America on imperialist countries, he wrote in "The Aesthetics of Hunger," "has led us to philosophical undernourishment and to impotence... It is for this reason that hunger in Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom; it is the essence of our society."¹²⁵ Picking up on Fanon's theses on violence in *Wretched of the Earth*, Rocha argues that a culture of hunger must, by necessity, respond with an aesthetics of violence: "This hunger will not be assuaged by moderate government reforms and ... the cloak of Technicolor cannot hide, but rather only aggravates, its tumours. Therefore, only a culture of hunger can qualitatively surpass its own structures by undermining and destroying them. The most noble cultural manifestation of hunger is violence."¹²⁶

Now! roots the assimilationist politics of integration in the slave-holding class's parasitic devoration of its slaves; in his secondary lynching of Brown in the

service of anti-imperialist black power, Álvarez suggests that lynching's historically sensational allusions to alimentary ingestion binds slaves and their descendants to colonial subalterns in a shared history of subjection to the parasitical desires and demands of the ruling class – figured, in this instance, in Álvarez's nomination of the LAPD as *policías Norteamericanos*. The lynching photograph emerges into the moving visual field of the newsreel as a devoration-image to arrest the progression of imperial time in its presentation of a man targeted by “mythic violence,” the violence that founds and preserves the law. In *Now!*, Álvarez allows the counter-memory of fire and its connection to the expropriation and protection of black life to enter into the scene of his Watts-inspired manifesto. Ultimately, Álvarez takes up the very element used during the rebellion to counter the weaponization of the discourse of “law and order” that littered the liberal and conservative backlash to the street actions in Watts.

The ideology and rhetoric of law and order had been used by the liberal anti-lynching establishment since the late nineteenth century to press for government support for state and federal anti-lynching legislation, and had served as the foundation of the Truman administration's response to lynching during the post-WWII crisis of white supremacy. As Naomi Murakawa explains in *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America*, this strategy – though successful in winning a consensus for soft anti-lynching reforms and setting institutional precedents while garnering mainstream support for civil rights legislation – ultimately fortified the carceral state and hardened the ideology of black criminality.¹²⁷ The representation of the rebellion as a disorganized “race riot”

facilitated the emergent conservative appropriation of the rhetoric of law and order to legitimate the heavily militarized state response to the rebellion. In fact, it was during the Watts rebellion that conservative factions began to trumpet the rhetoric of law and order to clamp down on the shifting tactics of the CRM. After the National Guard killed four residents of Watts on August 13, the state and the press reported that the lethal actions were necessary for the restoration of “law and order.”¹²⁸ “Law and order means that the police are free to start beating heads again,” said Woodrow Coleman, co-chairman of the Non-Violent Action Committee (N-VAC). “I called to a policeman to come help a wounded man. But what happened was that a car with five uniformed officers in it came along and when they saw a crowd on the corner they got out and just started swinging with their billy clubs. They didn’t say anything, just started swinging.”¹²⁹ Predictably, the coroner’s inquests ruled these and 26 of the other officer-involved killings that occurred in Watts “justifiable homicide.”¹³⁰

In December of 1965, four months after the intervention, the Johnson administration bolstered this interpretation when it issued its verdict on Watts, *Violence in the City – an End or a Beginning?* The report, known colloquially as the McCone Report, argued that the rioting was evidence of a new and menacing tendency in black protest. The Report blamed rioting on the migration of blacks from the South, claiming that rioters did not represent the overall *élan* of the black community and that their actions were “formless, quite senseless.”¹³¹ The Report argued that rioters were responding belatedly to previous clashes with police in the South rather than to the racist actions of the LAPD, and maintained that the

solution to preventing further riots was to elevate the poor rather than transform their conditions of existence.¹³² The Report made no mention of the 50 documented cases of police brutality that the American Civil Liberties Union had brought before the Commission, and Commission members refused to respond to Watts residents' demands for employment opportunities.¹³³

Álvarez was not the only imagist to turn to lynching photography in 1965 to comment upon the contemporary political situation that blacks faced in the U.S. That same year, members of the SNCC Photo Agency and SNCC Communications reproduced a lynching photograph by Mississippian O.N. Pruitt of Bert Moore and Dooley Morton lynched in July 1935 as a poster, inscribing the single word "Mississippi" at the bottom of the image. In 1969, Black Panther Party Minister of Culture, Emory Douglas, created a collage for the cover of a September issue of *The Black Panther*, the publication that the party distributed to its Oakland constituents and recruits (figure 59). The collage featured photographs of black men being arrested and corralled on the ground by police, as well as two iconic lynching photographs: the 1930 photograph of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Marion, Indiana, and the photograph of the burning of William Brown in Omaha Nebraska in 1919. The photographic collage is framed by the illustrated helmet of a crying black soldier. Behind his helmet is a placard declaring that the U.S. military "Free the GI's," in keeping with the sixth demand of the BPP's ten-point platform: "We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service." This multimedia collage addresses the high numbers of black men who were dying both in Vietnam and in the U.S. in the late 1960s. In Oakland, the Panthers were

grieving the death of their comrade, Bobby Hutton, who had recently been killed by police, and were fighting to free Newton and Cleaver from state execution.¹³⁴ As Leigh Raiford notes, Douglas's collage is one example of movement image-makers' transition, between 1965 and 1969, "from investing photographs with the burden of communicative work, to undermining photography's power to contain, to wielding representational power to contain photography."¹³⁵ As Raiford explains, the Panthers' "emergent visibility" did iconographic rather than merely documentary work; "expropriate[ing] spectacle, not only the state's power to shock and awe, but also the visual excesses projected onto blackness," movement photographers and artists indicted the media as complicit in anti-black violence.¹³⁶

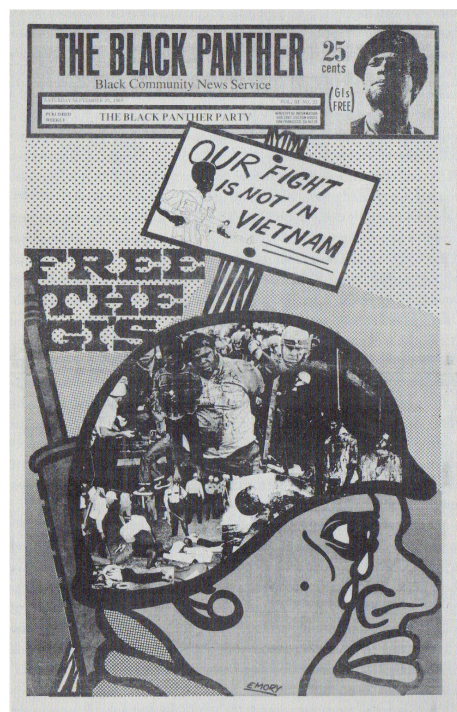


Figure 59. September 20, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther*. The lynching of Will Brown is part of the collage in the soldier's helmet.

Lynching figured within these cultural works to emphasize the historical longevity of state-sanctioned anti-black violence in the U.S., and to highlight the contradiction of black participation in imperialist warfare in Vietnam. *Now!*, I argue, participated in the complication of documentary aesthetics in the name of black power. Reenacting Brown's lynching onscreen to condemn the terroristic actions of the LAPD and the National Guard, and destroying the 1919 lynching's documentation to signal the necessity of black self-defense across the high and low eras of lynching, Alvarez heralded the turn to lynching, on the part of black power image-makers during the late 1960s, to condemn what SNCC members called a "permanent state of war." Du Bois had first articulated the idea of a racialized universal war against black people in his preface to the 1953 edition of *The Souls of Black Folk*; Huey P. Newton took it up in his June 1967 essay, "In Defense of Self-Defense" to critique the insufficiency of the rights-based approach of the mainstream Civil Rights movement.¹³⁷ In *Now!* and in Douglas's anti-war collage, the lynching of Will Brown figures the longevity of state-sanctioned anti-black terrorism, the historical emergence of a national movement for black self-defense, and the crucial position of international solidarity to the fight against lynch law in the wake of civil rights reforms.

Following the incineration of the lynching photograph in *Now!*, we transition to a line of activists chained together and walking down the street, and then to photographs of black children and adults with clenched fists, their wrists unbound, the Evers' mourner in mid-scream, and, finally, the bullet-written NOW!

The burning of the lynching photograph is an immanent assault on white supremacist visuality that allows for the emergence of the newsreel's penultimate image of a black woman unbound and leading the charge for revolutionary change. *Now!* fed dissident viewers' disidentification with the discourse of Cold War domesticity that worked in this period to contain post-WWII civil rights struggles. Juxtaposing still and moving imagery of the rebellion with archival photographs and moving imagery of contemporaneous struggles for black liberation, Álvarez shaped the photographs, film footage, Horne's lyrics and vocal performance, and his own selective Spanish subtitling into a six-minute polemic against the long history of gendered anti-black warfare. The filmmaker defied the corporate media's legitimization of counterinsurgent force in Watts by mounting his presentation of historical anti-black violence within a framework that consciously evoked and counteracted the discourse of domesticity. This gendered and white supremacist discourse had long informed the ideological superstructure of U.S. capitalism and had become an ideological flashpoint at the onset of the Cold War. Since the end of WWII, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had emphasized the importance of patriarchal authority as a cornerstone of patriotic belonging. Hence, Steichen had organized *The Family of Man's* modernist, anti-nuclear war message around photographic portraits of adolescent lust, worldwide conjugal rituals, and cherubic babies to suggest that the political and economic conflict that threatened to erupt into a third world war may be avoided by regression into marriage and private consumption. At the behest of the USIA, the exhibition's circulation through the Soviet Union served to reinforce this line when it acted as the literal pictorial backdrop of the Krushchev-

Nixon “kitchen debate” at the American National Exhibition in Sokolniki Park in Moscow in 1959. Accompanying pavilions displaying “automobiles, refrigerators, model homes, stereo equipment, vacuum cleaners, color televisions, air conditioners, and Pepsi-Cola,” the USIA’s *The Family of Man* provided a narrative and affective hold for American commodities to acquire their reified sheen as the arbiters of national happiness and international security.¹³⁸ In addition, the exhibition had pulled heavily from photographs previously published in *LIFE* magazine and other popular photographic engineers of U.S. hegemony, thus reducing heterogeneous world cultures into a bipartisan mass of “Man.” *The Family of Man* pressed the idea that heteronormative, bourgeois citizenship may trump the ills of postcolonial revolt that had begun to flourish after the defeat of European fascism.

Where *The Family of Man* incorporated people in Guatemala, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Iran into Steichen’s universalizing photographic vision, *Now!* reworked mid-century photojournalism to contest the imperialist discourses of bourgeois humanism, reproductive futurity, and East-West stratification. The newsreel focuses intently on black women and children as the protagonists not of private home lives but of public political rupture. Far from resting on photographs of black women and children as victims of state violence, Álvarez frames them as front-and-center participants in civil rights agitation and as the generators of the nascent black power movement; they take breaks from demonstrating, they struggle to hold onto signs of their discontent while police wrestle them, they are under arrest in South L.A., and they act as historical witnesses to the violence that tears them apart.

As a meditation on white supremacist state violence and an essayistic provocation to up the ante in the fight for black freedom, *Now!* evinces the Cuban government's solidarity with the struggle for African American liberation. Though it reuses photographs and film footage from the U.S., its primary distribution in Cuba means that we must also read it as a reproach to Cuban anti-blackness, and as a postcard to the international anti-imperialist left about the crucial position of anti-black violence within the circulation of global capital and the concomitant currency of white supremacy and fascist dictatorship. In many ways, Álvarez followed the Cuban cultural line of contesting U.S. hegemony by envisioning it as inhospitable to gendered reproduction. As Gronbeck writes, "child well-being was axiomatic in the confrontation between Cuba and the United States, part of the heteropatriarchal discourse ... over which country – which model of social organization, communist or capitalist – could adequately provide for future generations. It effectively centered on the question: Which male leader could successfully raise the nation's children and secure its mothers and wives?"¹³⁹ Álvarez operationalized the domestic framework popular in Cuban revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourse, but its children are not symbols "of the political viability of the nation," nor are its women simple icons of a nation's capacity to reproduce. Instead, the participants in this "nervous montage" agitprop press the movement for black liberation in revolutionary directions that exceed the formal, state-sanctioned parameters of modernization and gendered citizenship then dominant across the Americas.¹⁴⁰

Now! presented to film-goers in Cuba, in Leipzig (where the film won the Golden Dove prize at the 14th International Leipzig Documentary and Short Film

Week in 1965) and in the U.S. cinematic underground a moving portrait of the African American freedom movement as a key political flashpoint for the Cuban revolutionary class, and for anti-imperialist struggles around the globe. It thus figured an internationalist becoming that, as Getino and Solanas would later put to writing in their manifesto for a Third Cinema, paved a third way between the false universalisms of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. As D.N. Rodowick writes, this third way emerges from a becoming that is not “an ideal image of unity that already exists and must only be awakened into self-consciousness. Rather, it is ... an historical image that invents a future by creatively transforming occluded elements of the past.”¹⁴¹ Dispersing the Watts uprising across the long CRM contrasts its representation in the mainstream press as an irrational contravention of law and order. Álvarez instead frames the insurrection as an act of self-defense necessary for the protection and preservation of black life.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ The Black Star photographers migrated from Germany to New York City in 1935, where they applied their knowledge of German photojournalism – much of it developed in leftist magazines like *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* or *AIZ* (The Workers Pictorial Newspaper) – to the production of ruling-class media like *LIFE* magazine. Álvarez recuperated these practices “in a context of what he termed ‘accelerated underdevelopment.’” See Steyerl, “Archive in Motion,” *frieze* 3 Winter 2011–12; Peter Rist, “Agit-prop Cuban Style: Master Montagist Santiago Álvarez” 11:3 (March 2007); and Kristi M. Wilson, “Ecce Homo Novus: snapshots, the ‘new man’, and iconic montage in the work of Santiago Álvarez,” *Social Identities*, 19:3–4 (2013), 411.

² Álvarez has referred to his filmmaking style as “*documentalurgia*.” The portmanteau conjoins documentary with the classical Latin suffix *-urgia*, whose Greek root, *ergon*, means work. Álvarez’s neologism underscores the extent to which he works by hand on his films while also emphasizing his position as an artist-worker invested in revolutionary socialism. *Documentalurgia* calls attention, albeit obliquely, to the importance of music in his films; the Greek root of *documentalurgia*, *-ergon*, has a cognate in the Greek *orgia* for “religious performances” which became the root for the musical instrument we call the organ. The transformative power of Álvarez’s cinema stems in part from the central role that music plays in establishing the rhythm of his films.

³ Leslie Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women’s Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 128. On enslaved peoples’ general strike during the Civil

War, see W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Athenium, 1992 [1935]), 55-83.

⁴ A narrative published in *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* describes slaves beaten and hanged in a smoke house. In the words of Lerone Bennett Jr., seasoning, which lasted one to three years, was a “painful, mind-reversing operation in which two or three out of every ten [slaves] died.” See Vincent Woodard, *Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism in US Slave Culture*. New York: NYU Press, 2014), 31, 77.

⁵ Woodard, *Delectable Negro*, 31.

⁶ See Elisabeth Freeman’s investigative report on the lynching of Jesse Washington, which was published as an eight-page supplement in the *Crisis* in 1916. *The Crisis* circulated the report and Fred Gildersleeve’s gruesome photographs, which Freeman had procured during her investigation, to 700 newspapers and to Congress. See Elisabeth Freeman, “The Waco Horror,” the *Crisis* (July 1916), 1-8; Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 29-30.

⁷ Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright’s Archeology of Death* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 10, 19.

⁸ Latin American revolutionaries coined the term “Tricontinental” in 1966 at the Havana Tricontinental Conference, which brought together anticolonial and antiracist activists from Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Anne Garland Mahler and Besenia Rodriguez employ the term tricontinentalism to refer to the “critique of global capitalism and its exploitation of the world’s racialized peoples” articulated in the early 1960s. Both scholars underscore the extent to which black leftists had a pivotal role in shaping the ideology of third world intercommunalism. See Anne Garland Mahler, “The Global South in the Belly of the Beast: Viewing African American Civil Rights through a Tricontinental Lens,” *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 50, Number 1 (2015), 97; Besenia Rodriguez, “De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana: U.S. Black Radicals, the Cuban Revolution, and the Formation of a Tricontinental Ideology,” *Radical History Review* Issue 92 (Spring 2005), 62-87.

⁹ In Brazil, cannibalism served as a cultural metaphor for the post-slavery policy known as *embranquecimento*: the assimilation of Brazilians of color, through miscegenation, into a white national ideal. See Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), esp. 3-11.

¹⁰ The low era of lynching was marked by white supremacist bombings and arson attacks like the December 15, 1963 assault on the Birmingham Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Wesley.

¹¹ See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 216-223.

¹² John Hess, “Santiago Álvarez: Cine-agitator for the Cuban Revolution and the Third World.” in *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*, edited by Thomas Waugh (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press), 398.

¹³ Hess, “Santiago Álvarez,” 398.

¹⁴ Kristi M. Wilson, “Ecce Homo Novus: snapshots, the ‘new man’, and iconic montage in the work of Santiago Álvarez,” *Social Identities*, 19:3-4 (2013), 411.

¹⁵ I take the phrase “sheets of the past” from Deleuze’s writings on the time-image. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 99-110.

¹⁶ John Mraz, “October’s Offspring: Soviet Cinema and the Cuban Film Institute,” *Film Historia* 12:3 (2002); John Mraz, “Absolved by History: On the Aesthetics and Ideology of History in the Cuban Film Institute” *Film-Historia* Online 3.3 (1993), 385; John Mraz, “Santiago Álvarez: From Dramatic form to Direct Cinema,” *The Social Documentary in Latin America*. Edited by Julianne Burton (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 132.

¹⁷ Santiago Álvarez, with *Cineaste* editors, “5 Frames Are 5 Frames, Not 6, But 5: An Interview with Santiago Álvarez,” *Cineaste* 6:4 (Spring 1975), 17.

¹⁸ Santiago Álvarez, “5 Frames Are 5 Frames, Not 6, But 5,” *Cineaste*, 18.

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- ¹⁹ Mariana Johnson, "The Revolution Will Be Archived: Cuba's *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano*," *The Moving Image* 13:2: (Fall 2013): 6.
- ²⁰ John Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left, 1930-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9.
- ²¹ The conference, as Cynthia Young writes, defied the Cold War era's division of the globe into anticommunist and communist spheres, and sought to "craft an independent, nonaligned identity for the Third World by fostering alliances among the decolonizing and newly decolonized nations of Africa and Asia." Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a US Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 2.
- ²² Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 171.
- ²³ Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 211.
- ²⁴ Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 162.
- ²⁵ Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 215.
- ²⁶ Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana," 65, 84.
- ²⁷ Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitud Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana," 70.
- ²⁸ Michael Renov, "Civil Rights on the Screen," *Media, Popular Culture, and the American Century*. Edited by Kinsley Bolton and Jan Olsson (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2010), 278; quoting Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image*.
- ²⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Why We Can't Wait*; New York: Harper & Row, 1964; Leigh Raiford. *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1.
- ³⁰ "LBJ Meets with Negro Leaders: All Five Worry About Poverty," *The Daily Defender*, January 20, 1964, 5, col. 1.
- ³¹ "Negros" is the caption that Álvarez used to designate one half of the film's stated *personas* (the other being *policías Norteamericanos*).
- ³² Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots," Detroit, 1963. Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want" in the *New York Review of Books*; Nikhil Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 184.
- ³³ In 1963, CR participants endured violent attacks from police and paramilitary forces in Selma, Alabama on what became known as "Bloody Sunday," mourned the KKK bombing murder of young Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Carol Denise McNair at the Sixteenth St. Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and reeled from Byron De La Beckwith's assassination of Medgar Evers.
- ³⁴ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981).
- ³⁵ Marquette Frye told a reporter from *Ebony* that an officer "hit me on the knees with a blackjack and slapped me across the face with his hands." At the station, he told the same reporter, he was "knocked cold." Quoted in Sarah E. Stone Watt, *Women of Watts: Picturing the StrongBlackWoman in the 1965 Watts Uprising* (Pennsylvania State University, 2007), 65. See also Della Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded: How the Ghetto Fought Back* (The Los Angeles Local, Socialist Workers Party, July 1966); and Robin Kelley, "Watts: Remember what they built, not what they burned," *The Los Angeles Times* (August 11, 2015).
- ³⁶ As Jacques Lacan and others have written, the animal is "an iterative device deployed by the law for self-authorization." See Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "Being Human: Bestiality, Anthropophagy, and Law," in *Umbr(a): Ignorance of the Law*, No. 1 (2003), 99.
- ³⁷ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 8-9.
- ³⁸ See State Representative Don Ross, Prologue to Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 (February 28, 2001), viii; James Weldon Johnson, "The Tulsa Riots," *The Crisis* (July 2, 1921), 115.
- ³⁹ Martin Berger writes in *Seeing Through Race* that "most of the photographs that northern whites deemed representative of the [civil rights] struggle showed whites in charge. If, as many scholars of the civil rights era have claimed, photographs of the struggle helped advance social and legislative change, such photographs also limited the extent of reform from the start. To the degree that

narratives illustrating white power over blacks helped make the images nonthreatening to whites, the photographs impeded efforts to enact ... reforms that threatened white racial power." This framework, Berger argues, allowed northern liberals to imagine themselves as "sympathetic agents" and to disavow their complicity in systemic white supremacy. Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), x, 7, 43-45.

⁴⁰ Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race*, 3, 6-7, 35, 47-55.

⁴¹ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 17; Bayard Rustin, "The Watts," *Commentary*, 1966, n.p.

⁴² *LIFE*, June 28, 1963, 1.

⁴³ In Cuba, revolutionary filmmakers and perceptive Left audiences were attuned to the affective and structural differences between corporate television and radical cinema. Though Getino and Solanas conceptualize third cinema in opposition to what they term first and second cinema, we can also understand their political-aesthetic intervention as an affront to the workings of the televisual culture industry in the 1960s. See Michael Chanan, *Cuban Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 30-31.

⁴⁴ The success of these actions had depended upon their organizers' ability to frame the marches' participants as the righteous and civil bearers of passive resistance to white brutality. See Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race*, 2011.

⁴⁵ The idea that Álvarez insists on our right to look is inspired by the writings of Jacques Rancière and Nicholas Mirzoeff. See Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010), 37. The right to look confronts the police who say to us, "Move on, there's nothing to see here." See Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1-2, 69.

⁴⁶ *LIFE* had published the photograph as part of an eleven-page photo essay on Connor's dogs and fire hoses on May 17, 1963. See "The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham: They Fight a Fire that Won't Go Out," *LIFE* (May 17, 1963), 25-36.

⁴⁷ Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race*, 1-15, 50, 51.

⁴⁸ Berger, *Seeing Through Race*, 65.

⁴⁹ The recurrent presence of bloodhounds in lynching's visual archive has also lent a gendered stability to the violence in its association with hunting. See Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 74-78, 94.

⁵⁰ Berger, *Seeing Through Race*, 11-15, 23, 50-51.

⁵¹ John Hess, "Santiago Álvarez: Cine-agitator for the Cuban Revolution and the Third World," 391. Fairclough, Civil Rights and the Lincoln Memorial: The Censored Speeches of Robert R. Moton (1922) and John Lewis (1963), *The Journal of Negro History* 82:4 (Autumn, 1997), 414.

⁵² Benjamin writes that the death's head or corpse reveals the sorrow behind falsely redemptive notions of history. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: Verso, 1998), 166.

⁵³ Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*; Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 59.

⁵⁴ See Emilie Raymond, *Stars for Freedom: Hollywood, Black Celebrities, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 136.

⁵⁵ Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of African American History* 92: 2 (Spring, 2007), 265-288.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Julian Bond, "SNCC: What We Did" *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*. 52: 5 (October 2000): 5, accessed online July 1, 2016, <https://monthlyreview.org/2000/10/01/sncc-what-we-did/>. William P. Jones notes that Lewis endorsed Kennedy's civil rights bill "with great reservations," pointing out that the proposed legislation did nothing to protect African Americans from police brutality and racist violence, to uphold their right to vote in the South, or to "ensure the equality of a maid who earns \$5 a week in the home of a family whose income is \$100,000 a year." Urging marchers to seek alternatives to a political system corrupted by power and money, Lewis

declared, "Let us not forget that we are involved in a serious social revolution." William P. Jones, "The Move to Unity: Labor's Role in the March on Washington," *American Educator*, Fall 2013, accessed online July 30, 2016, <https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/fall-2013/move-unity>; John Lewis, "Text of Lewis' Speech at Washington," *Student Voice* 4, no. 3 (October 1963): 1, 3.

⁵⁷ Emphasis mine. Lewis's censors re-scripted his speech to read: "It is true that we support the present Civil Rights Bill in Congress. We support it with great reservations, however." See Adam Fairclough, "Civil Rights and the Lincoln Memorial: The Censored Speeches of Robert R. Moton (1922) and John Lewis (1963)," *The Journal of Negro History* 82:4 (Autumn, 1997), 409.

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 461 [N2,6].

⁵⁹ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 462 [N2a,3]; Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); 257.

⁶⁰ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 473 [N9,7].

⁶¹ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 463 [N3,1].

⁶² Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 24.

⁶³ As Leigh Raiford notes in her readings of CR-era photographs of black women confronting white police, "These images reveal the prominence of women on frontlines, eschewed by press articles and the first wave of movement history." Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 85.

⁶⁴ There is clearly a gendered difference in the way that Álvarez portrays the impact of state violence on men and women in this series; men are laid out by police while women are shown prone, often in the arms of their male comrades. But, in light of the previous series of "live" images of women resisting their capture, we may read these women as seers and visionaries.

⁶⁵ Orville D Menard, "Lest We Forget: The Lynching of Will Brown, Omaha's 1919 Race Riot," *Nebraska History* 91 (2010), 154. See also "Omaha Court House Is Burned; Troops in City. 9 Hour Battle Ends in Lynching; 2 Dead; 2 Shot," *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1919. For a history of Red Summer, see Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2011), 198-200.

⁶⁶ Leon Litwack, *Trouble In Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1998), 281.

⁶⁷ Litwack, *Trouble In Mind*, 204.

⁶⁸ Quoted in David Oshinky, *Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996), 104.

⁶⁹ James Allen, ed. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000), Images 10 and 11.

⁷⁰ Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 11. See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Continuum, 1962), 221; Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 113.

⁷¹ See Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism*, 229; Derrida, "Eating Well," *Points... Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 280-281.

⁷² Frantz Fanon importantly highlights the extent to which black subjects of the fetishizing racial gaze are compelled to devour the historical-racial schema's racist ideological-affective content in a process that he names lactification. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 29, 80.

⁷³ Douglass quoted in Woodard, *Delectable Negro*, 13; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 91.

⁷⁴ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 113, 115.

⁷⁵ Woodard, *Delectable Negro*, 46. Woodard cites John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 26.

⁷⁶ The Rev. Edward Taylor of New England, for example, dispensed remedies made from human blood, heart, and flesh. See Woodard, *Delectable Negro*, 92.

⁷⁷ Woodard, *Delectable Negro*, 63.

⁷⁸ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 14, 335-372.

⁷⁹ Williams quoted in Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 81.

⁸⁰ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 81.

⁸¹ I am borrowing Hortense Spillers's term *pornotrope* to suggest that eating metaphors in the lynching archive generate a symbolic surplus of pleasure and enjoyment that is affixed to the very being of blackness. See Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 206. See also Alexander G. Weheliye, "Pornotropes," *Journal of Visual Culture* 7:1 (2008): 65-81.

⁸² Participant at a lynching, 1940, quoted in Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10.

⁸³ JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject*, 10.

⁸⁴ Gayle Solomon, "The Place Where Life Hides Away: Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and the Location of Bodily Being." *Differences* 17:2 (2006), 107; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), 190.

⁸⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—the Chiasm" in *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), esp. 133-135. "In the white world," Fanon writes, "the man of color faces difficulties in the elaboration of his bodily schema. Knowledge of the body is a merely negating activity. It is knowledge in the third-person mode. The body is surrounded by an uncertainty that is certain." See Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 185.

⁸⁶ Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 206-208, 229; Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Reflections: Essays, Aphorism, Autobiographical Writings*, edited and with an introduction by Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 297; Giorgio Agamben, *Homer Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), esp. 3-11, 65, 85, 106, 110-111, 122, 127-128, 169, 187; See also Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 5-6, 30.

⁸⁷ The two conceptualizations of flesh are not identical – in Spillers, flesh constitutes a state of nature before a subject's entrance into the symbolic political realm, while in Merleau-Ponty flesh is an incorporeal social relation that allows a subject to exist as a body in the world. Nevertheless, they come together in Fanon's writings, where black subjects' experiences of being opened up, flayed, and reduced to a fully visible surface denies them proprioceptive recourse to their bodies' grounding in the world, thus cutting them off from a bodily sense of location.

⁸⁸ Sigmund Freud based his early psychoanalytic theory of object relations and identification on anthropological writings on cannibalism, and he later wrote of the role of the mournful introjection, or assimilation, of the lost love object to the formation of the ego. Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok later expanded this theory when they distinguished between introjection as a healthy response to the loss of a love object and incorporation as a pathological one. Sigmund Freud, *Totem & Taboo*, (1913) trans. James Strachey 1950) 141-43; Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 13. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis, volume I*, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004).

⁸⁹ Derrida deconstructively recasts incorporation and introjection as a phallogocentric fantasy that ultimately fails to fully consume the supplement to the ego; Man, he writes, introduces an object into the body "not to introject it, [but] in order to vomit it, in a way, into the inside, into the pocket of a cyst." See "Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," Forward to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1986), xxxviii.

⁹⁰ Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy*, xvi, 95.

⁹¹ "Races: Trigger of Hate," *Time*, August 20, 1965, 13; Tom McDonough, "The Decline of the Empire of the Visible or, The Burning of Los Angeles," *AA Files*, No. 62 (2011), 40-46; 41.

⁹² McDonough, "The Decline of the Empire of the Visible," 42.

⁹³ McDonough, "The Decline of the Empire of the Visible," 44.

⁹⁴ The photograph first appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, whose editor called it “a splendid one.” The *Chicago Tribune* cut out Brown’s body because it was deemed “too revolting for publication.” A cropped version of the photograph also appeared in “Omaha’s riot in story & picture, 1919,” a “story & image” booklet published in Omaha by the Educational Publishing Company shortly after the riot. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. “Omaha’s riot in story & picture, 1919. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 27, 2016.

<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-7c0e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

⁹⁵ “The Real Causes of Two Race Riots,” *The Crisis*, 56-62; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 212; NAACP, *An Appeal to the Conscience of the Civilized World* (New York: NAACP, 1920), 3.

⁹⁶ On the Arkansas riot, see Ida B. Wells, “The Arkansas Race Riot,” *Lynch Law in Georgia & Other Writings* (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2013), 155-160.

⁹⁷ *The Crisis* 18:5 (September 1919), 226, 231.

⁹⁸ Lynchings during wartime have always exceeded the numbers of lynchings that occur during times of so-called peace. IWW, “Justice for the Negro: How He Can Get It, 1; *The Crisis* 17:6 April 1919, 293.

⁹⁹ See Rebecca Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in US Radical History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 154-155.

¹⁰⁰ Cedric Johnson “Between Revolution and the Racial Ghetto: Harold Cruse and Harry Haywood Debate Class Struggle and the ‘Negro Question,’” *Historical Materialism* 24.2 (2016), 179.

¹⁰¹ Harold Cruse, in his 1962 essay, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” countered earlier formulations of the black nation thesis that circumscribed the black nation within the southern Black Belt. In Cruse’s estimation, the black nation within the U.S. has its roots as much in the North as it did in the southern black belt that had been the focus of black communist Harry Haywood’s writings in the 1920s and 1930s. Haywood had helped develop the CPUSA’s official line at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1928, which argued for self-determination in the southern black belt. Haywood, like Cruse after him, drew upon V.I. Lenin’s writings in 1917 that African Americans were an oppressed nation. While Haywood highlighted, like Lenin, the extent to which displacement from and dispossession of land lay at the center of U.S. racial capital, Cruse borrowed Lenin’s language on imperialism to elaborate a thesis of black underdevelopment. In 1958, the CPUSA argued that black migration out of the South had nullified the black belt thesis, embracing instead the NAACP slogan, “Free by ‘63.” See V.I. Lenin, “Theses on the National and Colonial Question,” *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!*; Cedric Johnson, “Between Revolution and the Racial Ghetto: Harold Cruse and Harry Haywood Debate Class Struggle and the ‘Negro Question,’” *Historical Materialism* 24.2 (2016), 177, 179.

¹⁰² Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style” *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 84, 86.

¹⁰³ Sergei Eisenstein, “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form,” *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), 58, 14; John Mraz, “October’s Offspring: Soviet Cinema and the Cuban Film Institute,” n.p.

¹⁰⁴ See Álvarez, “5 Frames Are 5 Frames, Not 6, But 5,” 17. On the influence of Russian formalism on German Dada, see Solomon-Godeau, “The Armed Vision Disarmed,” 94, 97. Artists like Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Hoch, and John Heartfield took up formalist photographic techniques in their photo-collages after the 1922 Soviet Art exhibition in Berlin; responding to the impacts of war and the technological mediation of everyday life on perception, these artists launched disjunctive and aggressive visual attacks on Nazi policy, psychology, and aesthetics. See Mariana Johnson, “The Revolution Will Be Archived: Cuba’s *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano*,” *The Moving Image* 13:2: (Fall 2013): 4; Mraz, “Absolved by History” 386.

¹⁰⁵ I.F. Stone quoted in David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 171.

¹⁰⁶ Teresa Carbone, “Exhibit A: Evidence and the Art Object,” *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 2014), 81.

- ¹⁰⁷ Carbone celebrates Bearden's collages for their ability to manipulate "photography's raw facts into a truer form of evidence" by overlaying appropriated photographic images of African Americans on top of each other to compose saturated, animated, and contradictory scenes. See Carbone, "Exhibit A," 84 and Erin Gray, Review of "Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties," *Panorama* 1:1 (Winter 2015), n.p.
- ¹⁰⁸ See Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell, *66 Signs of Neon*.
- ¹⁰⁹ Teresa Carbone, "Exhibit A: Evidence and the Art Object," 84.
- ¹¹⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 168.
- ¹¹¹ Deleuze here pits Eisenstein against the French writer, actor, and theater director Antonin Artaud, for whom cinema must "produce a shock, a nerve-wave, that gives rise to thought." For Artaud, the cinema confronts not the Whole but a fissure or crack, a figure of nothingness, a hole in appearances that "shatters every monologue of a thinking self." Cinema, "rather than making thought visible, directs itself to what does not let itself be thought in thought and to what does not let itself be seen in vision – the power of the false." See Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 169.
- ¹¹² Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 6.
- ¹¹³ In this way, the time-image cannot be reconciled with what Deleuze refers to as the regimes of truth that so often constitute cinematic images. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 275; Michael Shapiro, in *Cinematic Political Thought*, argues that experiencing events critically in the present is made possible not 'by the exercise of a faculty of judgment that can integrate the domains controlled by disparate cognitive functions, but by a cinematographic apparatus' that allows us to bolster our understanding of contemporary culture by jumping "between layers of time." Shapiro quoted in Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, 2. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 83, 100.
- ¹¹⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 2, 216; Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, 77.
- ¹¹⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 216.
- ¹¹⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 179.
- ¹¹⁷ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 224.
- ¹¹⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 171-172.
- ¹¹⁹ Deleuze writes: "Instead of one image after the other, there is one image *plus* another, and each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot." See Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 214.
- ¹²⁰ Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, 38.
- ¹²¹ Deleuze writes, "How can a being take another being into its world, while preserving or respecting the other's own relations and world?" See Deleuze, "Ethology: *Spinoza and us*," In J. Crary & S. Kwinter (Eds.), *Zone 6: Incorporations* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 625-628.
- ¹²² Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, "Toward a Third Cinema," *Tricontinental* 14 (October 1969), 108, 109, 120. See also Garcia Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* no. 20 (1979), 7.
- ¹²³ The phrase "enabling image" comes from D.N. Rodowick's *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 141.
- ¹²⁴ Getino and Solanas, "Toward a Third Cinema," 123-4.
- ¹²⁵ Glauber Rocha, "An Aesthetics of Hunger," 13
- ¹²⁶ Rocha, "An Aesthetics of Hunger," 13
- ¹²⁷ Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4, 11-18, 22.
- ¹²⁸ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 6.
- ¹²⁹ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 9.
- ¹³⁰ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 12.
- ¹³¹ Robert M. Fogelson, "White on Black: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots," *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol. 82, No. 3 (Sep., 1967), 342; California Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, "Violence in the city: an end or a beginning?: A report" (Los Angeles, 1965), 4.

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- ¹³² Daniel J. Nabors, "Manic Depression: Lyndon Johnson and the 1965 Watts Riots" (Waco: Baylor University 2009), 82.
- ¹³³ Rossa, *Why Watts Exploded*, 16.
- ¹³⁴ Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 25.
- ¹³⁵ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 27, 119.
- ¹³⁶ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 145.
- ¹³⁷ Keith P. Feldman, "Representing Permanent War: Black Power's Palestine and the End(s) of Civil Rights," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 8.2 (Fall 2008), 195.
- ¹³⁸ John O'Brien, "The Nuclear Family of Man," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, http://japanfocus.org/-john-o_brian/2816/article.html. See also Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 102-103.
- ¹³⁹ John Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 257-258.
- ¹⁴⁰ Gronbeck-Tedesco discusses Cuban nationalist investments in developmental narratives of progress and "human perfectability." See Gronbeck-Tedesco, *Cuba, the United States, and Cultures of the Transnational Left*, 260.
- ¹⁴¹ D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time-Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 153.

Coda.

The Ghost in the Whited Sepulcher:
The Lynch Doctrine in the Twenty-First Century

It is a strange century that opens and closes with images of dead black bodies at center stage of our national imaginary.

- Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*

Not then but now, how does this traumatic violence repeat itself, review itself, and yet remain so mystically unreal, so stunningly routine?

- Patricia Williams, "Without Sanctuary"

We are currently caught in lynching's afterimage and seem unable to shirk its glaring gaze. What might we glean from lynching's survival? To pose a closing question in this way and in the terms of lynching's living on – its *survie* – might seem odd. But lynching culture is caught in a stunning paradox, its objects gleaned from killing and yet facilitating endless encounters and forms of political power. In this coda, I look at three interleaved moments in twenty-first century lynching culture: the travelling exhibition of lynching photographs and postcards, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*; the role the memory of lynching has played in the genesis of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL); and the mobilization, by state attorneys in California, of an anti-lynching law that criminalizes activists who are confronting twenty-first century policing and criminal justice brutality. I argue that the image of lynching returned in 2000 as the

dialectical image of an impending era of terror.

Terror and the Time-Image of Retribution

To name the twenty-first century a century of terror likely recalls many Americans to an origin story involving two planes and the World Trade Center. Indeed, the attacks on New York City in 2001 inaugurated a “war on terror,” the partial dismantling of citizens’ civil liberties, and the full emergence of the U.S. security state. In the aftermath of the attacks, many commentators described the event as a sudden blow to a formerly free and formidably defended citizenry, and as the “most devastating terrorist attack in history.”¹ Pronouncements of this order, coupled with the visual repetition of the attacks, turned the assault into an exceptional emergency to inaugurate a political epoch of national suffering and risk management marked by preemptive military strikes, illegal torture, and seemingly endless warfare.

The notion that terror is an external force aimed at destabilizing U.S. hegemony, and the idea that 9/11 dealt a traumatic blow to American freedom, obscures the history of domestic anti-black terrorism that has conditioned the impulse to retribution and preemptive sacrifice characteristic of the post-9/11 order. In the cracks of the big image of the attacks on the World Trade Center were other images of terror that were no less iconic, but that worked according to an order in which the traumas of the everyday racial state occur not as an anomalous shock but according to the quotidian and banal rhythms of black dissemblance and white apathy, those differential responses to the trauma borne of enduring generations of



Figure 60. "The Fire" during the attack on the black neighborhoods of East St. Louis in 1917. Published in *The St. Louis Star* as well as in W.E.B. Du Bois's and Martha Gruening's report for *The Crisis* in September 1917, "The Massacre of East St. Louis."



Figure 61. Unknown photographer, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1921. Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

racial violence (see figures 60 and 61).²

Recall, after all, that New York City in the opening months of the twenty-first century was host to a radically different terroristic image event: the photographic exhibition, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (hereafter *WS*).³ The first iteration of James Allen's and John Littlefield's collection premiered under the name "Witness" to astonished crowds on January 25, 2000 at the Ruth Horowitz gallery in Manhattan. The show attracted roughly 5000 people to its display of sixty photographic postcards of lynchings from 1880 to 1960. The Allen/Littlefield collection is often said to be the first archive of its kind, making publically available many lynching photographs and postcards that had previously been circumscribed to private collections. Allen, the white antiques dealer who put the collection together, began discovering the images while shopping at southern flea markets and auctions during the 1980s and 1990s. He eventually began to seek out lynching photographs, which led him into people's homes and private photography collections, recovering, as he recounts, lynching photographs from "Ku Klux Klan members, the trunk of a prominent Savannah family, from people where the photographs were kept in albums alongside vacation pictures."⁴

WS toured the U.S. as a museum and gallery exhibit at Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum in 2001; in Atlanta in 2002 at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site; at Jackson State University in Mississippi in 2004; from 2003-2004 at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit; at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati in 2010; at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte in 2012, and was also turned into a

coffee table book and online archive. It demonstrated the interleaved spectacularity and banal regularity of anti-black torture and murder throughout the long twentieth century, and brought renewed attention to the extreme, yet largely disremembered, violence that underlay racialization's habituated life in the U.S.

The exhibition was predictably controversial, prompting critics to question Allen's and Littlefield's motives for collecting the images, as well as curators' desire to display them in a manner not, to many minds, far enough removed from the fetishizing modes of display that had turned black death into a spectacular amusement at the turn of the twentieth century. Critics feared that the images would, at worst, instigate racial hatred, and, at best, invite passive consumption, narcissistic appropriation, or sentimental detachment. Yet there were generous and generative responses to *WS*. The exhibition was the site of at least one family reunion, where members of a black family gathered at the Chicago History Museum in 2005 in the hopes of finding images of their disappeared grandfather.⁵ In addition, museum curators and gallery community liaisons organized workshops and talking circles for participant-observers of the exhibition. Staff at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh encouraged visitors to interact with each other and share their experiences of the photographs in video recordings made available to subsequent visitors.

The gathering of lynching photographs into a public archive also catalyzed the memorialization of the dead through monuments and interventionist actions.⁶ Since 2004, politicians, activists, actors, and educators have transformed the quadruple 1946 lynching of Roger and Dorothy Malcom and George and Mae

Murray Dorsey in Monroe, Georgia into an annual funerary protest. In addition to commemorating the Malcoms and Dorseys, the reenactment has increased public awareness of the massacre and pressured those who have information about the lynching to participate in the case's renewed investigation. The Moore's Ford lynching is one of 190 racially-motivated unsolved murders that make up the Cold Case Justice Initiative, a project whose legal team – emboldened by the 2007 Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act – are investigating twentieth-century lynchings as formal crimes.

This legal and critical memorial work is shared by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). In January 2015, EJI released a report called *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* that adjusts the recorded number of those lynched in the U.S. to 3,959 (up 700 from previous official numbers) by including in its tally those killed in the rash of race riots that targeted blacks in the North after the world wars.⁷ The report drew much attention from the left media, altering the conscious public's understanding of the sheer scale and gratuitous quality of anti-black violence throughout the country while also drawing critical (if entirely implicit) attention to lynching's protean meaning and embattled definition throughout the twentieth century. By including those who defended themselves during white-on-black riots in their updated "red record," EJI's *Lynching in America* problematizes the historical insistence on the part of liberal twentieth-century anti-lynching activists that the lynched were merely victims in need of protection from the state. Groups like the NAACP, in their decades-long fight for federal anti-lynching law, deemed the rhetorical victimization of the lynched necessary given the

liberal state's recognition of personhood on the grounds of suffering. Though ignored by commentators, this aspect of the report underscores the troubling racialization of the concept of self-defense.⁸

The Lynch Doctrine

In addition to prompting a surge of scholarship, the memorialization of the dead through monuments and interventionist actions, and the reopening of “cold cases” for formal investigation, *WS* presaged lynching's material intensification. After President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2008, there was a dramatic increase in white supremacist recruitment, terror plots, and assaults on American Indians



Figure 62. White supremacists across the U.S. responded to the election of former President Barack Obama with a flurry of burning effigies and nooses strung up in his name. At the 2012 Republican Convention, Clint Eastwood provided new symbolic fodder for the fire when he performed a bizarrely Brechtian roasting of President Obama, whom he addressed in the empty chair next to him. The day following Eastwood's performance, chairs were strung up in front yards in Texas and Virginia.

and people of color throughout the U.S. Black people (and black trans women especially) have been killed at alarming rates both judicially and extra-judicially,

while perpetrators of extra-judicial violence are given regular institutional impunity. The legislation known as “Stand Your Ground” has emboldened an already trigger-happy population to use deadly force when faced with the black imago of a noxious white imaginary.⁹ “Stand Your Ground” laws, which were sponsored by billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch, develop the Common Law principle codified in The Castle Doctrine that a person may shoot or stab or otherwise fight to kill in the name of protecting one’s property in oneself.

“Stand Your Ground” law first caught national attention after a self-appointed neighborhood watchman named George Zimmerman killed black teenager Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida. At trial, Zimmerman’s lawyers schooled the jury in the principles of Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law. While the law did not appear rhetorically in the trial proceedings, the legal principle was planted in jurors’ minds during jury instructions, and appeared in the spectacular trial proceedings once the cameras started rolling and Zimmerman’s lawyers began caricaturing Martin as a thug whose very existence in the gated community of the Retreat of Twin Lakes was an *a priori* threat against which Zimmerman had no choice but to unleash deadly self-defense.¹⁰ Zimmerman was found not guilty on July 12, 2013 of second-degree murder and manslaughter.

Several commentators remarked that Martin’s murder was tantamount to a lynching. During the NAACP national convention in Florida shortly following Zimmerman’s acquittal by a foreshortened and mostly white jury of six, radio host Joe Madison announced that Martin’s death was “nothing more than a modern day lynching. George Zimmerman became the judge, jury, and executioner.”¹¹ Scot

Nakagawa, in a thoughtful response to the Zimmerman verdict, ruminated on the similarity between Martin's murder and the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955. Both young men, he noted, were criminalized and taken out for breaking unwritten racial codes. Both Till's and Martin's murderers were tried and exonerated by juries of their peers. In both cases, the children's killers admitted with candor and zeal that they had, in fact, murdered the boys and that they were justified in doing so in the name of some larger public good.

On the face of it, the circumstances that led to Martin's death were less sensational than those that had led to Till's death 57 years prior. Rather than transgress a sexual code intrinsic to the social fabric of the South, Martin merely walked late at night through the gated community where he lived part-time with his father, Tracey Martin, and his father's partner. The seeming distance between Till's alleged sexual transgression and Martin's alleged trespassing are less dissimilar when we recall the convoluted ideological grounds of U.S. lynch law, which circle around the gendered racialization of property relations and movements through public space. Reverend Al Sharpton hinted at this relation when he asked publicly on July 16, 2013, "Does Trayvon Martin and the Trayvon Martins of this country have the civil right to go home?" Such a question, while perhaps implicit in the many outraged and sorrowful responses to the Zimmerman verdict, begs to be analyzed as one of the central tenets of U.S. lynch law – both at the eighteenth-century point of the phrase's rhetorical coining and now, at a time when the rhetoric and force of racial lynching continues to circulate, and may be seen to mark a new kind of lynch law that has yet to be named. For Martin's "offense," like Till's, was in breaking de

facto racial codes – and, by extension, the circumscription of white social space and the claim to the domestic that is its corollary – by claiming a gendered mobility that has historically been the property of white men. Till’s and Martin’s deaths can thus be analogized through an analysis of lynching’s domestic and domesticating affect-ideology: its figuration of the social as a private-public realized through and protected by a peculiarly American form of lawfare, a form of civil warfare practiced in the space and time of the law.¹²



Figure 63. Photograph by the author. Participants at the 2013 reenactment of the 1946 Moore’s Ford lynching in Monroe, Georgia. Reverend Fickland, the treasurer of the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials announced to participants: “*In many ways, this is the first Trayvon Martin situation, way back in 1946.*” Fickland wasn’t the only one with Trayvon on his mind at that year’s reenactment. The man pictured here wore his “Justice for Trayvon” t-shirt to the event.

Lynch Law – Then and Now

The discourse of “home” has been central to the deployment of lynching as a racializing technology since it first entered into rhetorical circulation in the

eighteenth century to demarcate the boundaries of the new American republic from threats from the “outside”: from British Loyalists in post-Revolutionary Virginia, from American Indians all over Turtle Island, from Mexican and Mexican Americans in the Southwest, from migrant workers from China on the Western frontier who were deemed alternately instrumental and threatening to the expansionist projects of the nineteenth century, and from abolitionists all over the U.S. who sought to emancipate slaves. White terror has been an overwhelmingly domesticating force, a form of violence that has conscripted people of color and women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds into a sociality of white male control.

Since its literal and rhetorical refiguration in the 1890s as a specifically anti-black form of violence – as a form of violence that has been instrumental to the reconstruction of blacks as a criminal class and thus to the maintenance of racial slavery – lynching has been predicated upon gender and sexual violence. In the 1890s, the term lynching became associated with anti-black violence when black activists took it up to describe and confront the widespread and largely unpredictable spate of deadly violence that marked the end of Reconstruction and the return to political power of landowning Democrats. As Angela Y. Davis writes, by the 1890s, when it became clear that African Americans no longer posed a political threat to the southern oligarchy, elite ideologues began manipulating deeply habituated sexual mores to justify anti-black violence:

After the betrayal of Reconstruction and the accompanying disenfranchisement of Black people, the specter of Black political supremacy as a pretext for lynching became outmoded. Still, as the postwar economic structure took shape, solidifying the superexploitation of Black labor, the

number of lynchings continued to rise. This was the historical juncture when the cry of rape emerged as the major justification for lynching.¹³

Until the turn of the century, lynching was defended in the southern and northern press through consistent recourse to the ideological fiction of the black sexual aggressor, a fiction that made sense to contemporaries because of the fundamental association of freedom in U.S. slave cultures with the patriarchal tenure of land, women, children, and slaves. Political freedom and citizenry were generated in the U.S. in experiential opposition to slaves' experiences of sexual exploitation; the institution of slavery and the experiential condition of social death were predicated upon sexual terror and rape, which served to reproduce the slave class as well as wreak psychological terror on slave communities.¹⁴ To be a free, independent man prior to the Civil War was contingent upon having no master and was synonymous with power over others in both the public and private spheres.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Civil War, the specter of post-war black social equality was thus seen to threaten white male supremacy in the most intimate ways.¹⁶ A man in Reconstruction Georgia said about his fellow whites: "if you talk about equality they at once conclude that you must take the negro into your parlor or into your bed – everywhere that you would take your wife."¹⁷ White elites manipulated these sexual ideologies in order to argue that lynching was the necessary and inevitable response to the threat of black social equality.¹⁸

After slavery's official end, domination and freedom took dialectical shape through the gendered lens of domestic ideology. Domestic ideology crafted the bourgeois home at a remove from the marketplace, which was popularly construed

as a space of contamination. The possessive individualism required to move between the space of the marketplace and the space of the home was only accessible to those who fit the dictates of Victorian manhood. Old South masculinity was resurrected and transformed at century's end in sacrificial outrages that posed, according to the time's changing ideology of manhood, a regenerative flipside to the abstractions of the growing capitalist economy.¹⁹ Vigilante and mob violence, though occurring outside home spaces, was scripted as manly heroism in service to the maintenance of domestic femininity and to masculine individualism. Anti-black outrages were often accompanied by nighttime incursions by white vigilantes into black homes. This practice, called "Whitecapping," occurred in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction South, and was responsible for the removal of African Americans from their domestic spaces, the destruction of their homes, and the rape of black women and girls.²⁰

Political agency in the postbellum period continued to be linked ideologically to sexual agency and control over reproduction through the legal construction of the "social." The discourses of (white) social rights and (black) social equality bring this to the fore. As Saidiya Hartman writes in *Scenes of Subjection*, "the social" was a nineteenth-century legal invention that served to differentiate social rights from civil and political rights. Social rights were framed in the 1895 civil rights cases and in 1896's *Plessy v. Ferguson* as rights to health, enjoyment, and comfort – rights of sentiment and affect that could not be guaranteed by the state, but rather by a slippery police power that fell into the hands of all whites.²¹ Hartman describes the social as:

an amorphous and mutable domain that overlaps the divisions of family, civil society, and the state; it is a crisis category that designates the slippage of the public and the private and the ‘intrusion’ of the bodily – health, hunger, and reproduction – into the public space of politics. Moreover, the law’s constitutive recognition of the social – in particular, the dominion of physical differences, corporeal impulses, and racial feelings – authorized the violation of rights inaugurated by the separate-but-equal doctrine. At the outer reaches of the law, ‘just and perfect inequality held forth in the social.’”²²

The concept of white social rights – “public safety, health, and morals” – allowed for black civil rights and political freedom to be undermined in the interests of the protection of private enjoyments that supposedly fell outside the purview of the law.²³ Hartman glosses this in the following way:

As elaborated in *The Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy*, the social designated a particular crisis and/or transformation of the public and the private that resulted in the privatization or domestic incorporation of the public realm. ... While officially designated as an autonomous realm beyond or immune to the intervention of the state, in fact, the social was the site of intense state regulation. Perhaps this is best explained as the law’s excess – that is, as a domain secreted by the state and that secretes the state.

What interests us here is that the social extended the domestic sphere outside the space of the home to secure the public as a private space for the production and reproduction of the feelings, sentiments, and affinities most amenable to the enjoyments of property-holding white male citizens.²⁴ Marriage was thus seen as a social rather than a civil right, and miscegenation statutes were created to protect “the interests of the future generations of the republic to come.”²⁵

The social, as it was conceived in the nineteenth century, was a shadow realm that facilitated the incorporation of the “public” into the “private.” Lynching, after Reconstruction, was hence excused as a private affair governed by sentiment and thus outside the reach of the law.²⁶ We might understand the discursive relation

between “the social” and “the law” in the terms laid out by Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben in their theorization of the state of exception as arising from a topological boundary in which extralegal authority arises from within the space of the law rather than from its outside. In such an understanding, the social, as it was imagined in nineteenth century civil rights cases, codified public spaces as sites for private sacrificial rites in which gendered, racial, and classed terms of belonging were strictly and starkly delineated.

Lynching is tethered to the liberal legal construction of the social as a space of “private” feeling and hence also to the larger capitalist regime of property that gives legibility to privacy as a social right. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, muckraking activist Ida B. Wells published anti-lynching pamphlets that analyzed the connection between postbellum economic competition and the widespread racial violence that had come to characterize everyday life throughout and following Reconstruction. Wells’s writings disputed the widespread idea that lynching was a judicious response on the behalf of upstanding white citizens to the scourge of black sexual criminality. She keenly demonstrated that lynching was inspired not by black criminality but by a national system of white supremacy that sought to prevent the accumulation of property within black communities. Lynching, Wells taught the nation, was an ideological ruse, and she demanded that lynching be recognized as a systemic form of political-economic terror designed to “get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property.”²⁷

Later anti-lynching activists and historians touched upon the connections between racial violence, land dispossession, and white property. NAACP anti-

lynching activist Walter White, in his investigative report on southern lynchings entitled *Rope and Faggot*, wrote that the majority of southern whites in the rural South were “propertyless, homeless migrants ... while farm ownership among Negroes was rapidly increasing.”²⁸ Historian Leon Litwack writes in *Trouble in Mind* of the relentless harassment faced by blacks during Jim Crow for accumulating property. In recent years, journalists with the Associated Press have investigated the link between racial violence and land thefts through the South that have contributed to the wealth disparity between blacks and whites in the U.S.²⁹

Police continue to enforce the severance between blackness and property. This is flagrantly clear when we recall cases such as the apprehension of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in the summer of 2009 under the suspicion of breaking and entering ... into his own home. This absurd drama occurs every day across the U.S., targeting people who have far less intellectual and social capital than Gates, Jr. does. In July 2013, Roy Middleton of Warrington, Florida was shot at seventeen times by police after he entered his mother’s car and rummaged around for cigarettes outside his home. Richard Haste, a narcotics officer, shot and killed eighteen year-old Ramarley Graham in his bathroom while the teenager flushed a baggie of marijuana down the toilet. One of the most chilling of these stories involves sixty-eight year-old Kenneth Chamberlain, who was gunned down in the middle of the night in his apartment in White Plains, New York when police visited his home after Chamberlain accidentally triggered his medical alert system pendant in his sleep. Even though the killing was recorded on the alert system phone, security cameras in the apartment building, and the officers’ own Taser cameras, the shooter was put on

modified assignment after the White Plains Safety Commissioner ruled the assault a “warranted use of deadly force.”³⁰

The flip side of this violent assault on black life in domestic spaces is the privatization, through “Stand Your Ground” laws, of extra-domestic spaces. Like lynch laws past, “Stand Your Ground” laws allow for the commons to be policed and segregated according to a Manichean racial framework. It is no coincidence that Martin was stalked and killed by Zimmerman in a gated community that, like other fortified enclaves of its kind across the U.S., flourished in a context of post-Fordist restructuring and the ghettoization of black life. We might consider the ways that “Stand Your Ground” laws further the circumscription of black life to a position of what Lois Wacquant terms “advanced marginality.”³¹ This would mean situating Martin’s death in the larger socio-spatial reconsolidation of the ghetto during the shift to de-industrialization.

In the early years of the twentieth century, sundown towns were residential enclaves in which blacks were only welcome between dawn and dusk for their labor. After dark, they were expected to stay away or be subject to violent removal. The Retreat of Twin Lakes on the night of February 26, 2012 effectively became a contemporary sundown town as Martin’s black skin was caught in Zimmerman’s headlights and then in the crosshairs of his Kel Tec PF 9 handgun. It did so not only because Zimmerman was unhinged by delusions of grandeur and racialized fear, but also because of the specific organization of space and property at the gated Retreat of Twin Lakes. Gated enclaves are “security-oriented and privately-governed territories” that were first built in the U.S. to separate wealthy families from



Figure 64. The Retreat of Twin Lakes, the gated community in Sanford, FL, where George Zimmerman killed Trayvon Martin.

industrializing cities. These were followed in the early twentieth century when the aristocracy on the east coast and in Hollywood built gated and fenced homes, and then again in the 1970s as retiree communities began popping up in California, Texas, Florida, and Arizona. Gated enclaves were further popularized during the period of white flight in the 1960s and 1980s, when middle class whites fled from urban centers during the media panic generated by President Nixon's 1969 address, "National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence." This address intensified the association of urban poor populations of color with crime and violence, and inaugurated what Mike Davis identifies as a "liaison between urban architecture and the police state."³²

Gated communities are like concentrated and intensified microcosms of the larger capitalist organization of territoriality. Historically and legally, the accumulation of property has been based fundamentally on exclusion. The dominant

legal understanding of property only stands in relation to its constitutive outside – the uncultivated ground of the “savage,” which runs through colonial mythology like a bloody trail at the end of a corpse drag.³³ Participation as a citizen in capitalist democracies has largely depended upon property ownership, which has historically materialized, through policing and settler violence, into different forms of spatial containment.³⁴ Hence David Goldberg writes: “Racisms become institutionally normalized in and through spatial configurations, just as social space is made to seem natural, a given, by being conceived and defined in racial terms.”³⁵ In the post-Fordist neoliberal context of widespread social abandonment, privatized and securitized communities have continued to expand.

The economic restructuring that has occurred since the 1970s with the demise of Fordism and the rise of a neoliberal economic regime that aims, at all costs, to direct social wealth away from the reproduction of the working and non-working poor has been organized along the lines of a restructuring of space.³⁶ What concerns us here is not merely the naturalization of social abandonment through spatial configurations, but also (re)new(ed) forms of legal discourse that normalize the use of violence in the name of protecting and proliferating white social life and security. It is in this larger economic context that Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law was passed in 2005 by Jeb Bush. “Stand Your Ground” came into effect largely through the lobbying efforts of The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), whose membership consists of conservative and neo-conservative legislatures and representatives of the private sector. Based upon the “Castle Doctrine” (or “Home Protection”) portion of the Florida Statute that pertains to

“Justifiable Use of Force,” “Stand Your Ground” makes it legal to defend one’s “dwelling, residence, or occupied vehicle” – or any place whatsoever in which white men feel threatened – without the duty to retreat.³⁷ Justifiable homicides have tripled since the law passed in 2005. Brendan Fischer, in a March 2012 article on ALEC and “Stand Your Ground” for The Center for Media and Democracy, rightly claims that “Stand Your Ground” codifies racial bias by giving vigilantes motivated by racism the license to decide when to use deadly force.³⁸

Incursions into domestic space are often cast as metaphoric rapes. But so, too, are incursions into public space by those who do not have the racial-economic cachet that grants one access to the public. While the Castle Doctrine and “Stand Your Ground” laws were repeatedly mentioned in liberal and left commentary on the Zimmerman verdict, there has been little examination of the linkages between the Common Law principle, its current legal manifestation in over twenty states, and its broader connection to capitalist modes of production that privatize the commons along racial lines. Anti-lynching defenders today might productively recall the foundational link between lynching, gender, and spatial control in post-slavery capitalist relations, and conceptualize lynching as existing within the space of laws such as “Stand Your Ground” that sanction violence in the name of private property and the sentiment of fear that is its exclusionary affective ground.

“Stand Your Ground” laws, like lynch laws past, privatize public violence. Like Till, Martin walked out of bounds. Addressing a white woman, walking around at night, smoking grass, posting menacing selfies, and running mouth on social media are, as Nakagawa notes, commonplace, ritual behaviors that, when

undertaken by black youth, are criminalized.³⁹ Martin was guilty of moving through the kind of spatial complex we can only describe as public-private. And when we recognize that the boundaries between the public and private are patrolled by relations of sex and gender, it is easier to recognize that Till's threat was Martin's threat rebound nearly fifty years later: the threat to the metonymic chain of woman-territory-nation. This is why Zimmerman's defense team could muster up the trope of the white woman in fear to bolster its construction of Martin as a thuggish transplant who had death coming to him. The defense team presented Retreat resident Olivia Bertalan as a "perfect witness" to the troubles that black boys bring to gated neighborhoods. Bertalan and her children survived a home invasion not long before Zimmerman shot Martin, and the prosecution called on her to testify about the invasion and to Zimmerman's subsequent pledge to keep her safe. Bertalan recounted how Zimmerman came to her defense in the wake of the invasion by promising her, over the course of twenty conversations, that he would do his best to rid their neighborhood of the culprits. She speculated that at least one of the young black men responsible for the home invasion lived in the neighborhood, and that it was even rumored that he lived "near the gate" – as did Martin's father and his father's partner.⁴⁰ Bertalan's testimony helped construct the Retreat of Twin Lakes as a space that was supposed to be fortified, and that had failed to protect her from the insecurities that black youth are suspected of harboring. Ultimately, Zimmerman's defense lawyers presented him and Martin as occupying different socio-spatial categories; they framed Martin as inhabiting a space of violence by claiming that he used the sidewalk as a weapon on the night of his death.

Zimmerman, meanwhile, was characterized by his lawyers as a law-abiding student who had carefully studied the law. Indeed, Zimmerman acted in the style of vigilant lawmen who have, since the colonization of Turtle Island, been known by different names – settler-era town watchmen, slave patrollers, Night Riders, Ku Kluxers, popo – but whose actions have boiled down to the same bottom line: protecting the economic interests and social enjoyments of the elite by offing threats to the republic of propertied whiteness.

As in past movements against structural anti-black violence, black women are today leading the most resolutely strident and politically nuanced actions against police and vigilante terror. In the wake of Zimmerman’s acquittal, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi created #BlackLivesMatter (BLM), a movement hashtag to affirm “the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum.”⁴¹ The movement that has grown out of the hashtag highlights organizers’ historical debt to past anti-lynching struggles, particularly to Wells’s intersectional analyses of racial and sexual violence, her internationalism and critiques of capital and the state, her advocacy of armed self-defense, and her abolitionist analysis of the policing apparatus that captures blacks in a racialized penal relation.⁴² Movement participants seeking to end law enforcement and paramilitary violence are increasingly engaging in rigorous analyses of the central role that extra-legal violence has played in the constitution of a liberal democratic regime designed to protect the interests of the ruling elite and their monopoly on social wealth. Many of those organizing against police brutality recognize that the

carceral state relegates black life to the status of a surplus population. Under neoliberal capitalism, the surplus section of the working class has been abandoned to social death by the punishment industry (which feeds off the poor and unwaged through traffic tickets, astronomical court fees, bail, and the contracting of prison labor) and to death at the hands of killer cops.⁴³

The Lynching of Jasmine Abdullah⁴⁴

BLM Pasadena activist Jasmine Abdullah was convicted June 2, 2016 of removing a detainee from police custody while calling for justice in the 2012 police murder of Kendrec McDade. Until early 2012, California's de-arrest law had codified the action as "felony lynching." By the time of Abdullah's arrest, the offense was no longer called "felony lynching," but "the taking by means of a riot of another person from the lawful custody of a peace officer" continues to be classified as a felony punishable by up to four years in prison.

California's de-arrest law emerged in 1933 to strengthen law enforcement in the aftermath of the beating of a San Jose sheriff and his deputies and the lynching of two white men. On November 26, 1933, a mob broke into the Santa Clara County Jail, removed John Holmes and Thomas Thurmond from their jail cells, and hanged the two white men from a tree in nearby St. James park.⁴⁵ Holmes and Thurmond had been charged with the kidnapping and murder of Brooke Hart, the son of a wealthy storeowner. After the lynching, California Governor James Rolph, Jr. triumphantly concluded that the incident was a "fine lesson to the whole nation. ... There will be less kidnapping now. ... I don't think they will arrest anyone for the

lynching. They made a good job of it. If anyone is arrested for the good job, I'll pardon them all."⁴⁶ Rolph's declaration was grounded in the bravado and reverence for natural law that had undergirded pro-lynching rhetoric for centuries.⁴⁷ When the San Jose mob lynched Holmes and Thurmond, its members drew upon the eighteenth-century definition of lynching as a colorblind form of popular justice to defend its extra-legal actions. And anti-lynching organizers responded by seizing the enormous press coverage of the lynching to forward their colorblind definition of lynching as a threat to the law. White moderates like New York Representative Hamilton Fish responded to the San Jose lynching by describing it as a "rape of justice, liberty, civil rights, equal rights, human rights, human lives, and the Constitution itself."⁴⁸ The 1933 lynching of Holmes and Thurmond provided the litigationist wing of the reformist anti-lynching movement with considerable leverage in its members' attempts to pass state anti-lynching laws.⁴⁹ California Governor Rolph responded to criticism of his initial support of the double lynching by supporting the passage by the California legislature of an anti-lynching law that criminalized the "seizure from law enforcement officers of a detained person in the interests of starting a riot." The law made no reference to other definitions of lynching that underscored the violence's relationship to white supremacy and community control.

In California, the charge of felony lynching lay practically dormant until 1971. That year, the California First District Court of Appeal concluded, in its decision in *People v. Anthony J.*, "that a person who takes part in a riot leading to his escape from custody can be convicted of his own lynching." The case expanded the

1933 codification of lynching to include a riot of two or more people that leads to their own escape. This 1971 amendment to the penal code upped the misdemeanor crime of rioting and resisting arrest to felony offenses punishable by up to four years in prison.⁵⁰ Activists were charged with felony lynching in 1986 at UC San Diego, in 1999 at an anti-fur demonstration in San Francisco, at an anti-G8 protest in San Francisco in 2005, and at Occupy protests in 2011 and 2012.⁵¹ In 2014 in Murrieta, CA, the law was used against Janet Mathieson, who was arrested with four other activists for supporting migrant detainees during an anti-immigration protest.⁵² Though none of these charges resulted in convictions, they normalized the deployment of the law against protesters.

Now, eighty-three years after the law's initial codification, California prosecutors are mobilizing the obscure law to criminalize BLM activists. Jasmine Abdullah became politicized after the Pasadena police killing of McDade on March 24, 2012. After participating in the BLM Freedom Ride to Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, Abdullah helped galvanize and direct the community's response, working closely with McDade's mother, Anya Slaughter, and other people in Pasadena who have lost loved ones to policing and incarceration. Pasadena police began harassing Abdullah after she helped organize a march to mark the three-year anniversary of McDade's slaying. Police first arrested her on March 30, 2015 for "failure to appear, terroristic threats, trespassing, petty theft, assault, and evading the police."⁵³ Prosecutors eventually dropped those charges. On August 29, 2015, Abdullah was with supporters in La Pintoresca Park in Pasadena when police began arresting a young woman in the crowd. When BLM members and supporters

jumped to the woman's defense and demanded the officers release her, police arrested Abdullah and quickly charged her with inciting a riot, child endangerment, delaying and obstructing peace officers, and removing a person from police custody. When Abdullah was brought to trial in the first week of June 2016, only the de-arresting charge formerly known as lynching remained.

Journalists, activists, and legal advocates responded by arguing that the use of the 1933 anti-lynching statute against Abdullah is a cruel irony and a perversion of the law.⁵⁴ While it is true that L.A. prosecutors have in recent years begun to mobilize California's anti-lynching law to criminalize activists and to cripple BLM and other revolutionary movements across the state, much of the criticism of Abdullah's prosecution and conviction drew on a caricatured understanding of U.S. lynch law and the state anti-lynching laws that legislators begrudgingly passed (and most often failed to enforce) throughout the twentieth century. The anti-lynching legislation was not created to defend and protect black lives from white mob violence. It resulted from the efforts of a reformist movement to secure anti-lynching legislation on the grounds that extra-judicial violence was a threat to law-and-order rather than to the right of black people to safety and security.⁵⁵

Shortly before Abdullah's second arrest in August, Governor Jerry Brown removed the word "lynching" from the California penal code.⁵⁶ He did so under pressure from Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson and California State Senator Holly Mitchell, a Los Angeles Democrat, after twenty-year-old black Sacramento activist Maile Hampton was charged on January 18, 2015 with felony lynching for attempting to pull a friend out of police custody at a protest near the Capitol.⁵⁷ Both

Johnson and Mitchell are black. Senator Mitchell has said that Governor Brown’s “swift approval” of her bill to remove the word lynching from the penal code “speaks to its obvious truth. It’s been said that strong words should be reserved for strong concepts, and ‘lynching’ has such a painful history for African Americans that the law should only use it for what it is - murder by mob.”⁵⁸

But the substance of the law remains intact. Hampton’s lawyer Linda Parisi has noted that simply removing the word “lynching” from the penal code does not alter the law, nor the way police and prosecutors are using it today to clamp down on activists. “I think we need to use that charge, regardless of what it’s called, as the legislative history intended it to be used,” Parisi told the *Sacramento Bee* in 2015. “If someone was in lawful custody a mob should not try to release them and do them harm. The legislative intent was that people should be protected from mob violence. That’s how the charge should be used regardless of the name we give it.”⁵⁹ Mitchell and Parisi obscure the fact that the 1933 anti-lynching law is being used as its original authors intended: to bolster law enforcement, and to protect the right of the state to define the boundaries of rational and legitimate violence. When Mitchell argues that we should only wield the rhetoric of lynching to refer to “murder by mob,” she obfuscates the protean history of the word, which has historically meant much more than collective murder.

On June 7, 2016, Judge Elaine Lu sentenced Abdullah to 90 days in jail, with 18 days served, and three years of probation. Abdullah, a working-class black political organizer, is the first person in California – indeed, in the nation – to be convicted of the felony offense of removing someone from police custody. Abdullah

joins other black activists like Michael Zinzun (who founded the Coalition Against Police Abuse in the 1970s) who have been violently targeted by Pasadena police in retaliation for their visionary resistance to anti-black state violence.⁶⁰ Abdullah's lawyer and comrades have rightly asserted that Abdullah's arrests and conviction are politically motivated and that she is the first political prisoner of the BLM movement.⁶¹ Abdullah's lawyer, Nana Gyamfi, took the charge one step further, proclaiming that the "prosecution of Jasmine [Abdullah] Richards is an attempted lynching of Jasmine and, by extension, the Movement for Black Lives in Pasadena, with the Pasadena District Attorney's Office and Pasadena Police Department as the lynch mob."⁶² Gyamfi, recuperating the rhetoric of lynching from the state in her assertion that Pasadena Police and the D.A.'s office comprise a lynch mob, calls to mind the rhetoric used by the International Labor Defense in the 1930s during its defense campaign of the Scottsboro Nine. Members of the Communist Party USA's legal defense wing theorized the trumped-up charges, sham trial, and death sentence of the Scottsboro Nine as a "legal lynching" – as a form of criminal justice brutality that resulted from legal procedure. The term emphasizes, like earlier black radical definitions of lynching as state-sanctioned anti-black violence, that merely bringing the violence under the control of the judicial system does not make it just.⁶³

Abdullah's conviction is a painful reminder of the danger of legal reforms that seek to quell violence – particularly historically state-sanctioned violence – by putting more money and power into law enforcement initiatives.⁶⁴ While the Los Angeles D.A.'s office is no longer wielding the rhetorical and emotional power of the word "lynching" against black radicals in California, it is using the 1933 law's

defense of police authority to neutralize a powerful movement for black freedom. In the midst of this, it is crucial that organizers not shy away from defending each other; as BLM organizers observe, “removing a Black person from police custody can be a life-saving action.”⁶⁵ This statement has been borne out by history. The revolutionary movement to abolish slavery in the U.S. would never have succeeded without the insurrectionary violence of anti-slavery activists, who employed de-arrest tactics in their efforts to free slaves from masters and overseers in the slave states and from bounty hunters in the North after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.⁶⁶

Harnessing a critical memory of lynching for a feminist anti-racist movement today means acknowledging that a diversity of tactics as well as an anti-capitalist analysis are necessary if we are to meaningfully confront and cripple the toxic complex of white supremacy, law enforcement, and gender violence in the U.S. Our outrage is as necessary as our love, and it prompts us to reject the ruling-class history of civil rights that teaches us that our freedom dreams have been stanchied by our supposedly colorblind present. This is an anti-lynching movement whose full power has yet to be realized.

Notes to Coda

¹ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), x.

² Jacqueline Goldsby, *Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20; Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Equal Justice Initiative: Montgomery, 2015), 66.

³ James Allen, ed. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers), 2000; Dora Apel, “Review: On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11,” *American Quarterly* 55: 3 (September 2003), 460.

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- ⁴ Quoted in Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women and the Mob* (Chapel Hill: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 8.
- ⁵ Jennie Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root: Lynching as American Cultural Nucleus* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 153.
- ⁶ The Mary Turner Project has dedicated a memorial and yearly vigil to Mary Turner (lynched in 1918 in Lowndes County, Georgia). In 2003 in Duluth, Minnesota, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie (lynched June 15, 1920) were memorialized with a plaque. In 2004, a plaque was erected for the black community of Rosewood, Florida. Jewish lynching victim Leo Frank was publicly remembered in 2008 with the installation of a marker in his name. See Julie Buckner Armstrong, *Mary Turner and the Memory of Lynching* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).
- ⁷ See chapters two and four of this study.
- ⁸ The victims of race riots have historically been excluded from lynching records on the grounds that they engaged in self-defense. EJI's move is interesting because, in highlighting murderous reactions to black self-defense, it calls attention to a contradiction that inheres in "Stand Your Ground" laws, which have been successfully mobilized in court by white defendants claiming self-defense against their black victims, while black defendants who claim self-defense and attempt to use the law are most often unsuccessful.
- ⁹ Frantz Fanon theorizes the imago as the set of racist historical images that condition every appearance of blackness, reducing it to the status of a specter suffused with vengeance and masochistic rage. Fanon theorizes the black imago based upon Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. For Fanon, the imago of the black makes them "responsible for every possible conflictual situation." See Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 139-146.
- ¹⁰ The Castle Doctrine was known colloquially throughout the 1980s as the "Make My Day" law. "Stand Your Ground" law differs from the English common law definition of self-defense, which requires retreat if it is reasonably possible.
- ¹¹ David Martosko, "Nothing more than a modern day lynching': NAACP Convention, Held Just Miles from Site of George Zimmerman Trial, Becomes an Unofficial 'Justice for Trayvon' rally," July 15, 2013, accessed November 4, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2364493/NAACP-convention-held-just-miles-site-George-Zimmerman-trial-unofficial-Justice-For-Trayvon-rally.html>.
- ¹² The term "lawfare" comes from John and Jean Comaroff's work on the coincidence of disorder and legality in postcolonies. See "Law and Disorder in the Postcolony." *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 15:2 (2007): 133-152.
- ¹³ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 186.
- ¹⁴ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 85. Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1995), 13. Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 199, 200; Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 7.
- ¹⁵ The link between domination and sexuality that shaped U.S. imaginaries of freedom throughout the nation's involvement in chattel slavery shaped lynching's eventual ideological predication upon rape. See Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 7; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 85; and Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 13, 46.
- ¹⁶ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 12.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21. This incredible remark reminds me of a statement made by a southern woman about the specter of "social equality": "If anything would make me kill my children, it would be the possibility that niggers might sometime eat at the same table and associate with as [sic] equals." Quoted in Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble In Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1998), 245.
- ¹⁸ Hortense J. Spillers. *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 67.
- ¹⁹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root*, 20; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 170. Popular sensational literature promoted "empire as redemptive,

where damaged urban masculinity might be rehabilitated.” Shelby Streeby quoted in Rebecca Hill, *Men, Mobs, Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 30-31.

²⁰ Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 8-10, 77-79, 183, 196.

²¹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 200.

²² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 192.

²³ Black’s Law Dictionary writes that the police power places “restraints on the personal freedom and property rights of persons for the protection of public safety, health, and morals.” Quoted in Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 198.

²⁴ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 165-168.

²⁵ Quoted in Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 200.

²⁶ The construction of lynching as a private occurrence mirrors the denial of slavery as a public institution. Slavery was understood to be a patriarchal and domestic institution, and thus a private relationship between a master and his charges. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 174.

²⁷ Quoted in Sandy Alexandre, “Out on a limb: the spatial politics of lynching photography.” *Mississippi Quarterly: the journal of Southern cultures* (61:1/2) (Winter 2008), 4.

²⁸ Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (Salem: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1969), 104.

²⁹ Arlene Notoro Morgan, Alice Irene Pifer, Keith Woods, eds., *The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race and Ethnicity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 186-193.

³⁰ Juan Gonzales, “Killed by Cops,” *New York Daily News*, April 4, 2012, accessed online April 5, 2012, <http://www.pressreader.com/usa/new-york-daily-news/20120404/281479273387577>.

³¹ Loic Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the ‘race question’ in the U.S.,” *New Left Review* 13 (January/February 2002), 50-51.

³² Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,” *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992), 157. Gated communities often feature physical gates as well as security and surveillance systems that patrol and keep records of those who enter and exit. Setha M. Low argues that this fortress architecture encodes class relations and residential segregation in the built environment while also materially producing “landscapes of fear.” As Elena Vesselinov points out, people regularly explain their desire to live in gated communities as stemming from a fear of racial and ethnic difference. See Setha M. Low, “Urban Fear: Building the Fortress City,” *City & Society* 9:1 (June 1997), 53; Setha M. Low “The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear,” *American Anthropologist* 103:1 (March 2001), 45; Elena Vesselinov, “Members Only: Gated Communities and Residential Segregation in the Metropolitan United States,” *Sociological Forum* 23:3 (July 2008), 539.

³³ Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106:8 (June 1993), 1707-1791.

³⁴ Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Line, 2002), 129-30.

³⁵ Goldberg quoted in Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 185.

³⁶ RL, “Wanderings of the Slave: Black Life and Social Death,” *Mute*, June 5, 2013, accessed June 7, 2013, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/wanderings-slave-black-life-and-social-death>.

³⁷ The racialized and gendered distinction is key. When Marissa Alexander tried to claim “Stand Your Ground” in her defense after she was arrested in 2010 for firing a warning shot into the ceiling after her estranged husband threatened to kill her, she was denied the defense. See Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan, “Stand Your Ground, Unless You’re a Battered Woman,” *Democracy Now!*, April 7, 2016, accessed May 31, 2016, https://www.democracynow.org/2016/4/7/stand_your_ground_unless_youre_a_battered.

³⁸ Brendan Fischer, “The Corporations Bankrolling ALEC, which Has Promoted the ‘Stand Your Ground’ Gun Law as a ‘Model’ Bill,” *PRWatch*, March 27, 2012, accessed April 14, 2013, <http://www.prwatch.org/news/2012/03/11383/corporations-bankrolling-alec-which-has-promoted-stand-your-ground-gun-law-model->

³⁹ Scot Nakagawa, "Same Sh*t, Different Decade: Trayvon Martin and the Politics of Race," *Race Files*, July 17, 2013, accessed July 18, 2013, <https://www.racefiles.com/2013/07/17/same-sh-t-different-decade-trayvon-martin-and-the-politics-of-race/>.

⁴⁰ Mychal Denzel Smith, "Trayvon Martin: From Lament to Rallying Cry," *The Nation*, July 15, 2013, accessed online November 14, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/175274/trayvon-martin-lament-rallying-cry%23axzz2ZEgByMRo#>; Jessica Valenti, "Fear and Consequences: George Zimmerman and the Protection of White Womanhood," *the Nation*, July 16, 2013, accessed online November 14, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/175299/fear-and-consequences-george-zimmerman-and-protection-white-womanhood#>.

⁴¹ Among those women killed by police in recent years and who are often sidelined or disremembered altogether are Yvette Smith, Tyisha Miller, Rekia Boyd, Sharmel Edwards, Shantel Davis, Shereese Francis, Miriam Carey, Tarika Wilson, Eleanor Bumpurs, and Aiyana Stanley-Jones. See Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, accessed online November 1, 2014, <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>.

⁴² These aspects of Wells's praxis grew out of a black abolitionist tradition of testifying to the fully national vagaries of white sexual domination, political control, and the violence of the law. See Matthew Quest, Introduction to *Lynch Law in Georgia & Other Writings* (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2013); Barbara McCatskills, "The Antislavery Roots of African American Women's Antilynching Literature, 1895-1920," *Gender and Lynching: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Evelyn M. Simien, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

⁴³ Max Ehrenfreund, "How Segregation Led to Speed Traps, Traffic Tickets and Distrust Outside St. Louis," *The Washington Post*, November 26, 2014, accessed online November 27, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/11/26/how-segregation-led-to-speed-traps-traffic-tickets-and-distrust-outside-st-louis/?utm_term=.912edffc2d9f; Joseph Shapiro, "In Ferguson, Court Fines and Fees Fuel Anger," *NPR*, August 25, 2014, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/08/25/343143937/in-ferguson-court-fines-and-fees-fuel-anger>. For literature on the reliance of capitalist accumulation on the existence of an unemployed population, see Karl Marx, 'The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation', *Capital* Volume 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1977) and Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review*, 66 (2010): 79-97, accessed online November 1, 2014, <https://newleftreview.org/II/66/michael-denning-wageless-life>. For an account of the racialization of the U.S. surplus population, see R.L., "Inextinguishable Fire: Ferguson and Beyond," *Mute*, November 17, 2014, accessed November 2014, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/inextinguishable-fire-ferguson-and-beyond>. On the role of the racialization of the informal economy and its impact on Eric Garner, see Salar Mohandesi, "Who Killed Eric Garner," *Jacobin*, December 17, 2014.

⁴⁴ This section has been slightly modified from Erin Gray, "Anti-Lynching Laws Were Never Meant to Protect Black Lives: The Case of Jasmine Abdullah," *Truthout*, June 15, 2016, accessed online June 15, 2016, www.truth-out.org/news/item/36445-anti-lynching-laws-were-never-meant-to-defend-black-lives-the-case-of-jasmine-abdullah

⁴⁵ California has a unique place in the history of U.S. lynch law. After the Mexican-American war, lynching became synonymous with the genocidal "frontier justice" that proved crucial to the materialization of white rule. Thousands of American Indians and Latinos were lynched as a condition of the territory's incorporation into the Union. In contrast to the popular image of the American West as a lawless frontier, those areas with the most law enforcement – constables, sheriffs, justices of the peace – had the highest incidents of summary executions, vigilance committees and lynch mobs. Ken Gonzales-Day's important investigative history of California lynchings has revealed that extra-judicial violence accompanied formal disfranchisement efforts like the Foreign Miner's Tax of 1851 and Anti-Vagrancy Act of 1855. These acts constructed Latinos as foreign threats to white rule in California. Twenty years later, when white supremacists across the South resorted to violence to regain power in the wake of the Civil War, lynch mobs in California also attacked Chinese laborers across the state. In Los Angeles, the Chinese massacre of 1871 left seventeen Chinese people dead. The widespread use of vigilante "justice" across California legitimized, both rhetorically and materially, the use of extra-legal violence against abolitionists and

free and enslaved black people across the country in the years leading up to the Civil War. In the era of revolutionary abolition, slave-owners began using the word lynching to describe the punishment and execution of slaves. The arguments furnished to excuse these lynchings foreshadowed the arguments that would be made to excuse lynchings in the post-Civil War period. See Christopher Waldrep, *Lynching in America: A History in Documents* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 27-112. On the 1877 lynching of José Chamales and Francisco Arias in Santa Cruz, California – one of the first photographed lynchings – see Geoffrey Dunn, “Santa Cruz’s Most Notorious Lynching,” *SantaCruz.com*, November 12, 2013, accessed online November 28, 2014,

http://www.santacruz.com/news/santa_cruzs_most_notorious_lynching.html.

⁴⁶ Rolph quoted in Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West, 1850-1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 108.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Hill, *Men, Mobs, and the Law*, 26, 103-109.

⁴⁸ Fish quoted in Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 216.

⁴⁹ Southern politicians had previously blocked the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, which had pressed for a federal anti-lynching law that would hold lynch mobs and law enforcement officers financially, politically, and legally responsible for participating in or condoning lynching. In response, Southern liberals responded by emphasizing the need for local anti-lynching laws that would not threaten states’ rights.

⁵⁰ As law professor Jody David Armour notes, “D.A.’s have dusted off an old law and found that it’s useful to go after protesters that they want to charge with and convict for a felony rather than a misdemeanor.” Jody David Amour quoted in “How a California lynching law led to the conviction of a Black Lives Matter activist,” *KPCC*, June 3, 2016, accessed June 4, 2016,

www.scp.org/programs/take-two/2016/06/03/49412/black-lives-matter-activist-and-the-legacy-of-a-ca/; see also “California ‘Lynching’ laws – California Penal Code 405a,” accessed online June 5, 2016, <https://www.wklaw.com/practice-areas/california-lynching-laws-california-penal-code-405a/>.

⁵¹ Susie Cagle, “OPD Arrests Protesters for ‘Lynching,’” *East Bay Express*, January 11, 2012, accessed online June 7, 2016, <https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/opd-arrests-protesters-for-lynching/Content?oid=3096451>; see also “Occupy Los Angeles Protester Sergio Ballesteros Arrested at Artwalk for Alleged Lynching,” *Huffington Post Arts & Culture*, January 16, 2012, accessed online June 7, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/16/sergio-ballesteros-occupy-la-arrest_n_1208985.html

⁵² “Fear and Lynching in California,” *Huffpost Blog*, November 2, 2014, accessed online June 8, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-slovick/the-murrieta-five_b_5720174.html

⁵³ Anti-Media News Desk, #BLACKLIVESMATTER Organizer Facing Terrorism Charge, April 1, 2015, accessed June 7, 2016, <http://theantimedia.org/blacklivesmatter-organizer-facing-terrorism-charge/>; Amando Flavio, “Police in Pasadena Charge Organizer of BlackLivesMatter With Terrorism,” *anonhq.com*, accessed June 8, 2016, <http://anonhq.com/police-pasadena-charge-organizer-blacklivesmatter-terrorism/>

⁵⁴ Shaun King, “Jasmine Richards is the first political prisoner from the Black Lives Matter Movement after Conviction for Felony Lynching,” *New York Daily News*, June 2, 2016, accessed June 6, 2016, <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/black-lives-matter-organizer-jasmine-richards-convicted-attempted-lynching>; BYP100 Statement Demanding for the Release of Jasmine Abdullah, June 6, 2016, accessed June 6, 2016, <http://byp100.org/byp100-statement-demanding-the-release-of-jasmine-abdullah/>; Sameer Rao, “Black Lives Matter Organizer Jasmine Richards Convicted of ‘Attempted Lynching,’” June 3, 2016, accessed June 6, 2016, <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/black-lives-matter-organizer-jasmine-richards-convicted-attempted-lynching>

⁵⁵ Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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- ⁵⁶ David Siders, "Jerry Brown Signs 'Lynching' Law Bill, *The Sacramento Bee*, July 2, 2015, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article26105974.html>.
- ⁵⁷ Thandisizwe Chimurenga, "In Strange Twist of History, Black Activist Charged with Lynching," *Truthout*, April 5, 2015, accessed June 6, 2016, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/29998-in-strange-twist-of-history-black-activist-charged-with-lynching>.
- ⁵⁸ Justin Sullivan, "Officials Change California Law After Activist's 'Lynching' Arrest," *CBS News*, July 3, 2015, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/california-lynching-law-governor-jerry-brown/>.
- ⁵⁹ Marissa Lang, "DA Drops 'Lynching' Charge Against Sacramento Activist," *The Sacramento Bee*, April 30, 2015, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article19980522.html>.
- ⁶⁰ Thank you to Craig Gilmore for pointing out this connection to me. See Jocelyn Y. Stewart, "Michael Zinzun, 57; Ex-Black Panther Challenged Southland Police Agencies," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2006, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jul/12/local/me-zinzun12>.
- ⁶¹ Victoria M. Massie, "What Activist Jasmine Richards's 'Lynching' Conviction Means for the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Vox*, June 21, 2016 [updated version], accessed online June 6, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/6/11839620/jasmine-richards-black-lives-matter-lynching>; King, "Jasmine Richards is the first political prisoner from the Black Lives Matter Movement after Conviction for Felony Lynching."
- ⁶² Black Lives Matter, "Black Lives Matter Organizer, Jasmine Abdullah AKA Jasmine Richards Targeted and Convicted of 'Attempted Lynching,'" press release, June 2, 2016, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/black-lives-matter-organizer-jasmine-abdullah-aka-jasmine-richards-targeted-and-convicted-of-attempted-lynching/>.
- ⁶³ On legal lynchings, see Harry Redmond, "The Ingrams Shall Not Die! The Story of Georgia's New Terror," March 1948, Box 20, Folder 79, American Left Ephemera Collection, 1894-2008, AIS. 2007.11, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, accessed online April 10, 2016, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/u/ulsmanscripts/pdf/31735066246095.pdf>; Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55-56; Harry Haywood and Milton Howard, Milton, *Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression* (New York: International Pamphlets [No. 25], under the direction of the Labor Research Association, Communist Party USA, 1932); Rebecca N. Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in U.S. Radical History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, "Capital Punishment as Legal Lynching?," *From Lynch Mobs to the Killing State: Race and the Death Penalty in America*, edited by Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. and Austin Sarat (New York: New York University Press), 21-55; *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations For Relief From a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York, Civil Rights Congress, 1951).
- ⁶⁴ Ryan Conrad, ed., *Against Equality: Prisons Will Not Protect You*, accessed online June 8, 2016, <http://www.deanspade.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/againstequality.pdf>.
- ⁶⁵ Black Lives Matter, "Black Lives Matter Organizer, Jasmine Abdullah AKA Jasmine Richards Targeted and Convicted of 'Attempted Lynching.'"
- ⁶⁶ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

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