

“I Didn’t Know She Took Pictures”

African American Women Photographers in
the Long Civil Rights Movement

Emily Brady

University ID: 14311051

*Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts*

25th March 2021

I dedicate this PhD to my grandparents – Barbara and Robert MacDonald. For sparking my love of learning and always filling my life with love.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Illustrations	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter One – “I Made Them Look Good”: Portrait Photographers of the Long Civil Rights Movement	48
Chapter Two – “For the Brothers and Sisters”: Anthropological Photography in the African Diaspora	138
Chapter Three – “No Matter What it Takes to Get the Job Done”: African American Women Photographers in the Military from World War Two to Vietnam	193
Chapter Four – “Let the World See What I See”: African American Women’s Photojournalism in the Long Civil Rights Movement	237
Chapter Five – “The Struggle for Equality and Justice for All”: Organisational Photography in the Long Civil Rights Movement	293
Conclusion	358
Bibliography	375

Abstract

This thesis provides a meaningful intervention in the history of African American women photographers in the long Civil Rights Movement. These women were “agents of change,” who cultivated “spaces of agency” in their lives and in their images. This highlights the importance of everyday activism within the movement; through acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation, these women were able to both occupy space as photographers and document the community-orientated activism around them. The photographers, and their photography, claimed both physical space and symbolic space in the long Civil Rights Movement. As photographers, they occupied physical space by creating “spaces of agency” wherein they empowered people in their communities to have their photographs taken, and the photographers symbolically claimed space in the photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement as artists and businesswomen. With their photography, they also operated within physical and symbolic “spaces of agency”: physically their photographs occupied space – as the images were displayed in homes or in publications – and symbolically their work documented acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation, as African Americans challenged segregation by occupying and integrating public space. As such, this thesis intervenes in scholarship of both the long Civil Rights Movement and the spatial turn, whilst centring the activism and agency of African American women. Navigating the often conflicting societal pressures of the politics of respectability, these women worked within a long Civil Rights Movement to achieve a literal and metaphorical reclamation of space through their photography.

Acknowledgements

This PhD would not have been possible without the support of my supervisory team: Professor Zoe Trodd and Dr. Stephanie Lewthwaite. They have consistently gone above and beyond the normal requirements of a supervisor in order to help me deliver this project, and continued to encourage and inspire me. I'd also like to thank Dr. Karen Salt, who supervised the first year of my project, and Dr. Robin Vandome, who I worked with during my Masters, as both of them helped formulate some of the key ideas of this thesis.

This project was funded by AHRC Midlands3Cities, and I am grateful for the support and opportunities provided over the course of this PhD. I would also like to thank the staff at the various archives which I visited, and which I accessed remotely, for providing me with the materials that make up the backbone of this project. These include: the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago; The Amistad Research Centre, Tulane University; and Kenneth Spencer Research Library, The University of Kansas Libraries. I am exceedingly grateful to Dr. Doris Derby, who agreed to meet with me and partake in a six hour interview that both challenged and advanced my initial thesis conclusions.

I am also grateful to the community of PGRs in the American and Canadian Studies and Black Studies Departments at the University of

Nottingham. Working within such a stimulating community of academics has been a privilege over the past five years. In particular, I would like to thank Jimmy Brookes, Hannah Jeffrey, Olivia Wright, George Cox, Kelly Beestone, Keisha Bruce, Elle Griffiths, Charlotte James and especially Lauren Eglen for their unwavering support at various stages of this PhD.

The support of my friends and family has been invaluable, and I would like to thank my dad and step mum, my siblings Lilly and Dan, my grandparents, my Uncle Ian (who inspired me to take American Studies), and my whole family for their unwavering love and support. In particular, I want to thank my mum, whose belief in me has continued to inspire me throughout my life. I would also like to thank Cat Usherwood and her partner James, who opened their home to me during the pandemic.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Doris Derby, <i>Nurse and Doctor, Health Clinic in the Mississippi Delta</i> , 1968.	1
Figure 2: Matrion Kilson, <i>Black women as percent of Black professionals, by occupation, selected years, 1890-1970</i> , 1977.	25
Figure 3: Louise Jefferson, <i>The Negro in national defense NAACP conference, Houston, Texas, June 24-29, 1941</i> .	42
Figure 4: Louise Jefferson, <i>Untitled</i> , date unknown.	45
Figure 5: OCW Taylor, <i>The Crescent City Pictorial</i> , 1926.	48
Figure 6: Emily Brady, <i>Chapter Outline Visual Guide</i> , 2020.	51
Figure 7: Wilhelmina Roberts, <i>Wilhelmina Robert's daughter</i> , date unknown.	66
Figure 8: Wilhelmina Roberts, <i>Grandmother with three children</i> , date unknown.	67
Figure 9: Elise Forrest Harleston, <i>Miss Bailey with the African Shawl</i> , 1930.	76
Figure 10: Edwin A. Harleston, <i>Miss Bailey with the African Shawl</i> , 1930.	76

Figure 11: Elise Harleston, <i>Market woman</i> , date unknown	78
Figure 12: Elise Harleston, <i>Chimney Sweep</i> , date unknown.	79
Figure 13: Elnora Teal, <i>Mrs. Irene Frazier</i> , date unknown.	86
Figure 14: Elnora Teal, <i>Portrait of two girls with a sewing machine</i> , date unknown.	88
Figure 15: <i>Copy of advertisement in Yearbook of Dillard University</i> , 1957.	92
Figure 16: <i>Senior Class</i> , 1957.	94
Figure 17: Adine Williams, <i>Camera Masters Studio</i> , 1946-1956.	96
Figure 18: Winifred Hall Allen, <i>Untitled portrait</i> , date unknown.	102
Figure 19: Winifred Hall Allen, <i>Mrs. Scott, owner of Ritz Shopper</i> , <i>seated in front</i> , date unknown.	104
Figure 20: Florestine Collins, <i>Mae Fuller Keller</i> , ca.1920s.	111
Figure 21: Florestine Collins, <i>Unidentified graduate and</i> <i>communicant</i> , ca.1920s.	113
Figure 22: Elnora Frazier, <i>Elaine Williams (Elnora Frazier's niece)</i> , ca. 1960s.	118
	119

Figure 23: Elnora Frazier, <i>Juanita Williams at Courtesy Photo Lab</i> , 1960.	
Figure 24: Juanita Williams, <i>Lodge Group, Houston, Texas</i> , ca. 1960s.	122
Figure 25: Louise Martin, <i>Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.</i> , date unknown.	128
Figure 26: Louise Martin, <i>Coretta Scott King, Houston, Texas</i> , 1970.	130
Figure 27: Tiffany Smith, <i>The Fourth Ward Photo Parlour</i> , 2020.	133
Figure 28: Photographer unknown, <i>Pauli and I (left and right) visit with the Mulamuzi, the chief justice of Buganda (next to Pauli), at his home in Kampala</i> , 1936.	138
Figure 29: Photographer Unknown, “Mother” Vernon and Her <i>South African “Children,”</i> 1925.	154
Figure 30: Photographer unknown, “Mother Vernon” with <i>Heathen Zulu Girls</i> , 1925.	156
Figure 31: Eslanda Goode Robeson, <i>Mukama of Toro on the steps of his palace</i> , 1936.	167
Figure 32: Eslanda Robeson, <i>Lady of Nkole ferry</i> , 1936.	169
Figure 33: Eslanda Goode Robeson, <i>Chinese Trip, Mme, Chou En Lai</i> , 1950.	171

Figure 34: Eslanda Robeson, <i>Coronation House in palace grounds at Kabarole</i> , 1936.	177
Figure 35: Doris Derby, <i>African Hut</i> , 1960.	178
Figure 36: Emily Vernon, <i>Scene at the Dedication of the Emily Vernon Mission at Queme, Basutoland</i> , ca. 1925.	178
Figure 37: Doris Derby, <i>Fishermen</i> , 1960.	180
Figure 38: Doris Derby, <i>unnamed photograph</i> , 1960.	181
Figure 39: Doris Derby, <i>Una Sewing Co-op - Black Dolls A</i> , 1968.	183
Figure 40: Doris Derby, <i>Una Sewing Co-op - Black Dolls B</i> , 1968.	184
Figure 41: Doris Derby, <i>A Visit to West Africa</i> , date unknown.	186
Figure 42: Doris Derby, <i>untitled photograph</i> , date unknown.	187
Figure 43: Delphine Diallo, <i>Samsara</i> , 2017	189
Figure 44: Elise Forrest Harleston, <i>Old Man "Scout,"</i> date unknown.	193
Figure 45: Unknown Photographer, <i>The Photographer</i> , date unknown.	210
Figure 46: Unknown photographer, <i>"Tex" on assignment</i> , date unknown.	213

Figure 47: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, <i>WAC Nurse, “Enemy Ears Are Listening,”</i> date unknown.	215
Figure 48: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, <i>WAC Nursing Staff</i> , date unknown.	218
Figure 49: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, <i>Listening to the radio at the bamboo fence</i> , date unknown.	219
Figure 50: Photographer unknown, <i>The Photographer</i> , date unknown.	226
Figure 51: Jeffrey Rease, <i>Beatrice Muse Price, 96, of pell City, Ala.,</i> 2019.	233
Figure 52: Vera Jackson, <i>Charlotta Bass and other members attend a meeting</i> , ca. 1950s.	251
Figure 53: Vera Jackson, <i>Birthday Celebration for Mary McLeod Bethune</i> , date unknown.	253
Figure 54: Vera Jackson, <i>Dorothy Dandridge, Portrait</i> , date unknown.	255
Figure 55: Vera Jackson, <i>Picketing in Los Angeles</i> , 1948.	258
Figure 56: Louise Martin, <i>The King family being escorted at funeral</i> , 1968.	264

Figure 57: Louise Martin, <i>Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral procession, Atlanta, 1968.</i>	266
Figure 58: Louise Martin, <i>A Young Jesse Jackson at Dr. King's Funeral, 1968.</i>	267
Figure 59: Louise Martin, <i>Group Portrait of the Matrons of the Mission Society of Antioch Baptist Church, 1965.</i>	269
Figure 60: Mikki Ferrill, <i>Dr King at the Freedom Festival, 1966.</i>	275
Figure 61: Mikki Ferrill, <i>Dr. King, ca. 1966.</i>	276
Figure 62: Mikki Ferrill, <i>Writing On The Wall, 1972.</i>	279
Figure 63: Mikki Ferrill, <i>Untitled, ca. 1970s.</i>	283
Figure 64: Mikki Ferrill, <i>Elizabeth Catlett and Student Tiburcio Ortiz, 1970.</i>	286
Figure 65: Lynsey Weatherspoon, <i>Protestors in Atlanta, Georgia, over African-Americans killed by police brutality, 2020.</i>	288
Figure 66: Doris Derby, <i>L. C. Dorsey, Civil Rights Worker from Shelby, Mississippi, at the Vegetable Cooperative, 1968.</i>	311
Figure 67: Doris Derby, <i>Children protest outside the YMCA, Jackson, Mississippi, ca. 1960s.</i>	315

Figure 68: Doris Derby, <i>Men working on the Wall of Truth Mural, Chicago, IL, 1969.</i>	317
Figure 69: Doris Derby, <i>Fannie Lou Hamer</i> , date unknown.	319
Figure 70: Doris Derby, <i>June Johnson, Mississippi</i> , 1968.	322
Figure 71: Doris Derby, <i>A woman registers to vote, Mississippi</i> , ca. 1960s.	325
Figure 72: Doris Derby, <i>Untitled</i> , date unknown.	329
Figure 73: Elaine Tomlin, <i>Ralph Abernathy, Martin Luther King Jnr., and Paul Shutttersworth</i> , date unknown.	338
Figure 74: Elaine Tomlin, <i>Rosa Parks speaking into a microphone at an event</i> , ca. 1960s.	340
Figure 75: Elaine Tomlin, <i>National Organization for Women Members Picket an Atlanta Winn Dixie Store in support of SCLC's Boycott of the 1260-store chain</i> , ca. 1980s.	343
Figure 76: Elaine Tomlin, <i>Unknown Title</i> , 1982.	345
Figure 77: Elaine Tomlin, <i>Charleston, South Carolina</i> , 1968.	347
Figure 78: Elaine Tomlin, <i>Today's Manchild, Tomorrow's Man</i> , 1970.	349

Figure 79: Lynn Marshall Linnemeier, with photography by Dr. Doris A. Derby, Shelia Turner and Susan Ross, <i>Journey to Freedom: Women of the Civil Rights Movement</i> , 2017.	352
Figure 80: Photographer unknown, <i>JR paints a mural</i> , 2013.	355
Figure 81: Photographer Unknown, “I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance,” 1864	359
Figure 82: <i>Kodak Advertisement</i> , 1964.	362
Figure 83: William P. Lanier, <i>Betty Harris Foxx</i> , 1960.	364
Figure 84: Photographer Unknown, <i>Beverly</i> , 1960.	364
Figure 85: Tony Rhoden, <i>Comely Candidates</i> , 1962.	365
Figure 86: Florestine Perrault Bertrand, <i>self-portrait</i> , ca. 1920s.	366
Figure 87: Winifred Allen, <i>The Photographer</i> , date unknown.	367
Figure 88: Vera Jackson, <i>The Photographer</i> , date unknown.	369
Figure 89: Photographer Unknown, <i>Doris Derby, Mississippi</i> , ca. 1960s.	370

Introduction



Figure 1. Doris Derby, *Nurse and Doctor, Health Clinic in the Mississippi Delta*, 1968.
Source: Julian Cox, *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement 1956-1968*
(Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2008), 105.

In 2008, the *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement 1956 – 1968* exhibition, curated by Julian Cox, was held at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The exhibition featured the photographs of dozens of photographers, including African American photographer Doris Derby. Former leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) John Lewis and field photographer Danny Lyons attended the opening of the exhibition. According to Lyons, when Derby was introduced as a photographer Lewis said, “I didn’t know she took pictures.”¹ It is worth noting that in his account Lyons does not refer to Derby by name, but as Derby is described as “she” and

¹ Danny Lyons, “Time Will Tell, Part Two,” *Bleak Beauty Blog*, 14 June 2008, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://bleakbeauty.com/2008/06/14/time-will-tell-part-two/>.

“a former SNCC worker,” whilst the only other woman in the exhibition did not work for SNCC, it is clear that Derby is the woman to whom Lewis referred. Lewis and Derby had worked alongside each other, and yet Lewis was not aware that photography was such a key facet of Derby’s activism.²

This exchange attests to the intriguing position of Derby’s photographic work: Derby’s archive of imagery and history as a photographer have been unrecognised for decades, even by some of the most important figures of the Civil Rights Movement. Within this exhibition, Doris Derby was the only African American woman whose work was exhibited, and one of only two women. This poses several research questions: (1) who are the other Black women who have been forgotten as photographers of the long Civil Rights Movement, (2) what do their experiences and photographs teach us about the movement, and (3) what do these photographs tell us about Black women’s social and cultural mobility across this period? In this thesis, I not only explore the dozens of Black women who took photographs during the long Civil Rights Movement, but I also reveal how notions of spatio-symbolic reclamation were central to their work. Spatio-symbolic reclamation refers to how space was occupied, claimed, and represented by Black women photographers and their subjects, encompassing both physical and symbolic definitions of space.³ The women in this thesis cultivated symbolic and

² “Dr. Doris Derby Awards,” *Dashboard*, accessed 30 August 2020, <http://www.dashboard.us/dr-doris-derby>.

³ The importance of spatio-symbolism in works of the Civil Rights Movement has been articulated by Zoe Trodd in photography and Julia Istomina in literature. I further this analysis by framing this around the idea of “reclamation” – of African Americans asserting agency to both lay claim to and to occupy space. For instance, the decision to march in the streets for the right to vote lays claim to physical space (the streets for the right to protest) and symbolic space (the ballot box). The presence of a photographer to take photographs of such events and disseminate them emphasises the role of representing these acts. See: Zoe Trodd, “A Negative Utopia: Protest Memory and the Spatio-Symbolism of Civil Rights Literature and

physical “spaces of agency” which empowered themselves, their photographic subjects, and their communities.

Crucial to understanding Derby’s work is the relationship of her photography to space: exhibitions and galleries were too often off-limits to African American women photographers, yet within this exhibition Derby asserted both her work and identity on the walls of the gallery. Furthermore, Derby captured her subjects in the act of reclaiming and utilising space in her images. For example, her image of nurse Ora Bouie (Fig. 1) demonstrates the quiet dignity of the Black professional woman at the forefront of her frame. Positioning the nurse as the focal point of the image, Derby frames the image to empower Ora Bouie. As with much of Derby’s work, the photograph offers a muted and unassuming perspective. Nurse Bouie’s dominant position in the right of the frame, taking up the length of the image, casts her in a powerful, protective role that stands between the photographer and the figures behind her. In using space to focus our attention on Nurse Bouie, Derby invites the viewer to linger on her professional composure and the quiet dignity of her appearance. Derby’s photography demonstrates how cultivating photographic space for Black women – both in photographs and exhibitions – broadens our understanding the Civil Rights Movement, for as Derby states:

I have one [exhibition] called Women, Agents of Change in the American Civil Rights Movement. And that’s women across the country, across the board, it’s not just Mississippi [...] And I always say that it’s important for women, their images and their contribution – it should be known that it is all different levels. I say nationally known, known within like on a state level, on a community level, some not

Photography,” *African American Review* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2008); Julia Istomina, “The Terror of Ahistoricity: Reading the Frame(-up) through and against Film Noir in Richard Wright’s “The Man Who Lived Underground,”” *African American Review* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 111-127.

known outside of that small area, but they all made a contribution in some way for some aspect of the civil rights movement to take place. They may be educated, they may not be educated. They may be old, they may be young. And so, it's a wide gambit of women represented in *Women, Agents of Change*.⁴

Derby advocates a multifaceted look at women's contributions to the movement – across the country, at various levels of power, and for various backgrounds – that reflects the multiplicity of the women involved. It is these women whom Derby, and the other women in this thesis, record and celebrate with their photography. The photographers themselves were key figures in their communities, as Deborah Willis crucially suggests that African American photographers were “ambassadors” within their communities.⁵ In this way, these “ambassadors” assumed roles of leadership and agency, acting as “agents of change.” These acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation, therefore, challenge perceptions of the long Civil Rights Movement that fail to consider the contributions of African American women photographers, and these spaces reveal both the photographers and their subjects as “agents of change” who dynamically shaped both the movement and its photographic canon.

This introduction introduces and contextualises several key concepts. Firstly, I will explore the idea of the “long Civil Rights Movement,” and frame it in relation to the spatial turn. I then introduce and explain my interpretation of bell hooks's term “spaces of agency” as it pertains to African American women photographers, before interrogating spatial aspects of Black women's activism and the movement's wider visual culture. After contextualising the

⁴ Doris Derby, *Interview with the author*, Atlanta, Georgia, September 2018.

⁵ Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2000), 35.

literature surrounding this project, including defining the concept of the politics of respectability, I will then outline both my methodology and terminology. This introduction will conclude by exploring the figure of Louise Jefferson who, as a complex figure who cuts across multiple genres, nuances the genre-oriented structure of this thesis.

The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Spatial Turn

This thesis orientates itself both within scholarship of the long Civil Rights Movement and the spatial turn to argue that African American women photographers engaged in acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation through their photography. Considering the ways in which African American women photographers claimed space in both their photography and their careers adds weight to the conceptual framework of the Civil Rights Movement as a long movement. This thesis adopts the idea of a long Civil Rights Movement as defined by academics such as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, who advocates for “a more robust, more progressive, and truer story [...] that took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s,” and “in the 1960s and 1970s inspired a movement of movements’ that def[ies] any narrative of collapse.”⁶ Although I extend an understanding of the long Civil Rights Movement before the 1930s, and reframe the locus of activism around Black women, Hall nonetheless extends our understanding of the Civil Rights Movement beyond a starting point in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board* decision, and beyond the assassination

⁶ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1235.

of the movement's spiritual leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, a "master narrative" which dominates most public histories of the Civil Rights Movement.⁷ Instead, Hall and other scholars root the Civil Rights Movement in the evolving racial consciousness of the New Deal era, bolstered by the Second World War.⁸ Some scholars argue that the definition can be extended even further back in time, arguing that the roots of the movement lie in the presence of enslaved African Americans in America, the era of Reconstruction, or the era of the First World War – an argument that is supported by this thesis, which extends the long Civil Rights Movement to the 1910s.⁹

The idea of a long Civil Rights Movement has been scrutinised and contested: Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lange equate the long Civil Rights Movement to a "vampire," arguing that Hall's approach flattens and homogenises the movement and "bleed[s] the meaning(s) out of Civil Rights and Black Power."¹⁰ Considering the Civil Rights Movement as a long movement risks rendering it meaningless in its never-ending scope. Yet I am less preoccupied with simplistic arguments over the "start" and "end" of the

⁷ Whilst most revisionist history of the Civil Rights Movement has expanded to include grassroots figures and women, most public history tends to focus on a grand master narrative. See: M. Bahati Kuumba, "Dismantling the Master's Narrative: Teaching Gender, Race, and Class in the Civil Rights Movement," in *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement: Freedom's Bittersweet Song*, ed. Julie Buckner Armstrong, Susan Hult Edwards, Houston Bryan Roberson, and Rhonda Y. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jennifer Frost, "Using 'Master Narrative' to Teach History: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement," *The History Teacher* 45, no. 3 (May 2012): 437-446.

⁸ Further analysis on the "long Civil Rights Movement" can be seen in the following works: Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Laurie B. Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁹ John A. Salmond, "'The Long and Short of It': Some Reflections on the Recent Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 1 (July 2013): 55.

¹⁰ 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, no. 2 (Spring, 2007): 265-288.

movement. Rather, I assert that the primary goals of the Civil Rights Movement were to access and desegregate space, and to assert forms of self-representation and ownership within these spaces. These same dynamics have yet to be recognised in the lives and works of Black women photographers.

This thesis also engages with the spatial turn, as it considers how notions of space and spatial reclamation inform the photography of African American women photographers, particularly with regard to social space. In turn, this “corresponds to post-structuralists’ agnosticism about both naturalistic and universal explanations about single-voiced historical narratives,” rejecting a “master narrative” or single-voiced approach to history.¹¹ The correlation between space and activism has been articulated by scholars such as Steve Pile, who explores the “spatiality of resistance” and how “spaces of resistance are distinct from spaces of domination,” as power dynamics inform access to space.¹² Whilst this provides an initial understanding of the importance of space to social movements, scholars have further considered the spatial turn in relation to the long Civil Rights Movement specifically.

The importance of spatial reclamation to the long Civil Rights Movement has been articulated by Lauren Elizabeth Beaupre, who states that “local reconfigurations of urban space by religious institutions deserve to be

¹¹ Denis Cosgrove, “Introduction: Mapping Meaning,” in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 7. For more on the resurgence of the spatial turn, and its resurgence across multiple disciplines in the 1990s in the UK and US, see: *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Barney Warf and Santa Arias (London & New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹² Steve Pile, “Opposition, Political Identities, and Spaces of Resistance,” in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (New York: Routledge, 1997), 5.

recognized as a prime factor in the long road to civil rights,” and that “spatial gains functioned as one of the earliest manifestations of the Civil Rights Movement, provided a blue-print for later attempts to gain political and economic rights, and continuously functioned as one of the Movement’s key assets in the quest for equality.”¹³ Events such as sit-ins were overtly about claiming the right to exist in space, and desegregation efforts targeted social spaces such as buses and lunch counters.¹⁴ Furthermore, many spaces formulated an activist consciousness: spaces such as churches and beauty shops enabled Black women to gather, share their experiences, and enact change.¹⁵ Elizabeth Abel asserts that battles over space functioned to defy the visual politics of exclusion championed by white supremacists, through techniques such as signage in the Jim Crow era, stating: “race and space were constructed in relation to each other through words tacked directly to the built environment.”¹⁶ As such, spatial-reclamation was a crucial characteristic of both the long Civil Rights Movement and Black women’s photography in this era.¹⁷

¹³ Lauren Elizabeth Beaupre, “Saints and the “Long Civil Rights Movement”: Claiming Space in Memphis,” *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 6 (2012): 972.

¹⁴ Michael Biggs and Kenneth T. Andrews, “Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South in the Early 1960s,” *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 2, (April 2015): 416- 443.

¹⁵ The activist function of beauty shops will be discussed later in this introduction. See: Tiffany M. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women’s Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2010), 15.

¹⁷ See: Maria Lowe, ““Sowing the Seeds of Discontent”: Tougaloo College’s Social Science Forums as a Prefigurative Movement Free Space, 1952-1964,” *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 6 (July 2009): 865-887; Joshua F. J. Inwood, “Critical pedagogy and the fierce urgency of now: opening up space for crucial reflections on the U.S. civil rights movement,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 18, no. 4 (2017): 451-465.

Yet scholarship on the long Civil Rights movement is not just limited to physical space: Samira Abdur-Rahman considers the work of author Jacqueline Woodson through a lens of symbolic, imagined space within the long Civil Rights Movement, noting how Woodson advocates the “embrace of dreaming as a freedom space,”¹⁸ and stating that her poems “assert that an aesthetics of long civil rights memory requires the creation of similarly complex and composite spaces.”¹⁹ The idea of “composite spaces” suggests that these spaces are made up of multiple complex elements, merging together to make a cohesive final space, consistent with the complex symbolic spaces cultivated by the women in this thesis. That Black women photographers and their subjects prominently occupied space further defies a simplistic Civil Rights Movement “master narrative,” which continues to persist in public memory, thus supporting a revisionist understanding of the movement. This thesis argues that the claiming of visual and public space had roots with the earliest Black women portraitists in the late 1910s and early 1920s. These women cultivated their portrait studios into pictorialist fantasy spaces through which to express and display an idealised self, consistent with the politics of respectability that would inform much of the long Civil Rights Movement.

The visual canon of the long Civil Rights Movement has also begun to shift beyond a simplistic “master narrative,” through works such as Don Carleton’s *Struggle for Justice: Four Decades of Civil Rights Photography* (2020). This photographic collection features “some of the civil rights

¹⁸ Samira Abdur-Rahman, “Spaces of the Ancestor: Jacqueline Woodson and the Long Civil Rights Movement,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 42, no. 2 (April 2018): 186.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

movement's most iconic images taken between the 1930s and 1970s.”²⁰ In this way, Carleton extends the visual canon of the movement to encapsulate efforts to combat Jim Crow segregation preceding and following World War Two. However, of the eighteen featured photographers in this collection, all of them are men. Carleton's study focuses on photojournalists and draws entirely from the archives at the Dolph Briscoe Centre for American History, indicating that women photographers in this field are scarce in this collection and, by implication, in wider archives. Therefore, whilst the cultural history of the Civil Rights Movement explores notions of a “long” movement, it remains entrenched in a male-dominated visual canon with limited space for women.

“Spaces of Agency”: Black Women's Activism and Visual Culture

By exploring the lives and works of Black women photographers in the long Civil Rights Movement, we see how women laid claim to both physical and symbolic spaces. As photographers, and through their photography, these women created what bell hooks calls “spaces of agency.”²¹ As photographers, the women in this thesis claimed both physical space – be that in a studio space, organisational space, or in a public space taking photographs – and symbolic space within the canon of Civil Rights photography as Black women and businesswomen.²² With their photography, they also operated within

²⁰ Don Carleton, *Struggle for Justice: Four Decades of Civil Rights Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 5.

²¹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 123.

²² In this thesis, I adopt the language of English (UK), and hence employ “organisation.” However, where scholars or organisations have used Americanised English (e.g. Schomburg Center), I have kept this as written.

physical and symbolic “spaces of agency.” Their work recorded and captured contestations of physical space, wherein African Americans challenged segregation by occupying and integrating space. In Derby’s image of the nurse, for instance, that the African American nurse occupies space is made all the more significant given the segregated context in which nurses were forced to operate. The Tufts Delta Health Clinic was established in 1965, in the predominantly Black town of Mound Bayou, where medical facilities were segregated and the Black population received substandard medical treatment.²³ By occupying this space in a professional capacity, therefore, Derby’s subject protected and saved lives in the context of a racist healthcare system that neglected the rights, dignity and health of African Americans.

hooks’s term “spaces of agency” only appears once in her text *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), yet it is a foundational idea in this thesis. In hooks’s feminist scholarship the primacy of space is uppermost, as she notes that, “we must make the oppositional space where our sexuality can be named and represented, where we are sexual subjects—no longer bound and trapped.”²⁴ By applying a term coined by a Black feminist writer to an underdeveloped field of Black women’s visual culture, this thesis places multiple Black scholars, including hooks, Doris Derby, and Deborah Willis, in conversation with each other within this thesis’s foundational argument. Throughout this thesis, I consider hooks’s “spaces of agency” alongside

²³ “Through the lens of civil rights photographer Doris Derby – in pictures,” *The Guardian*, 1 February 2020, accessed 30 August 2020,

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2020/feb/01/civil-rights-photographer-doris-derby-we-will-walk-turner-contemporary>.

²⁴ hooks, *Black Looks*, 87.

Derby's notion of women as "agents of change" to assert that spaces can be transformative and active.²⁵ Describing "spaces of agency," hooks writes:

Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, naming what we see. The "gaze" has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "awareness" politicizes "looking" relations—one learns to look a certain way in order to resist.²⁶

The power dynamics which hooks identifies here underpin this thesis, which argues that Black women photographers carved out symbolic and physical spaces both for their photographs and as professional photographers. By linking this to the "gaze," hooks identifies the power of looking and being looked at as vitally important in forming "spaces of agency." In other words, the African American women photographers in this thesis frequently cultivated spaces which functioned as sites of resistance: they portrayed their subjects and themselves as powerful "agents of change" in line with the ideology of the long Civil Rights Movement by asserting their right to witness and be witnessed in spaces public and private. Within her lens, for example, Derby photographed the nurse as an "agent of change" within the site of the hospital. This does not suggest that these women were consciously engaged in acts of resistance and reclaiming space all of the time, since their constant struggles over space put some limitations on photographers and their photographs as vectors of resistance. For some women, such as Doris Derby, their

²⁵ Within this thesis I keep these core phrases in quotation marks, to emphasise the original authorship of these statements.

²⁶ hooks, *Black Looks*, 123.

photography was supplementary to other roles. Indeed, all of the women in this thesis were impacted by societal expectations and misogynoir.²⁷ Nevertheless, the photography in this thesis gave those in its frame the power to see themselves, and to be seen by others – a power which was enabled by the efforts of Black women photographers.

Through an understanding of spatio-symbolic reclamation, the act of visiting a site and being photographed or taking a photograph can be understood as an activist act.²⁸ Derby's decision to visit the health clinic to photograph a nurse, for example, not only served to document the figure; it also granted the nurse dignity and agency. Richard Powell argues that Black portraiture is an act of pride and self-actualisation, and within Black portraiture subjects and photographers are capable of "cutting a figure," wherein they engage in "active visibility."²⁹ Powell asserts that a photographic object can share a "conceptual challenge of self-awareness and self-agency, especially as it impacts (and functions within the portraiture of) peoples of African descent, who have struggled with this challenge under the real-life constraints of vilification, dependency, and an all-consuming desire for freedom."³⁰ Hence, having a photograph taken can become an activistic and empowering act – and although Powell's discussion focuses on portraiture and the studio, this

²⁷ Misogynoir was defined by Moya Bailey and refers to the intersection of misogyny and racism as it pertains to Black women. Moya Bailey, "New Terms of Resistance: A Response to Zenzele Isoke," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society* 15, no. 14 (2013): 341-343.

²⁸ Deborah Willis explores the link between family photography and activism, noting that, "personal art interrogates or overturns social ideas to make powerful statements about race and gender in American culture." Willis asserts that family photography can serve activist functions that challenge white supremacy. See: Deborah Willis, *Family History Memory: Recording African American Life* (New York: Hylas Publishing, 2005), 188.

²⁹ Richard J. Powell, *Cutting a Figure: Fashioning Black Portraiture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2008), 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

encompasses broader photographic genres as well. The photographs themselves were a further space of physical contestation and affirmation of Black identities, as the photographs were displayed in homes, newspapers, or other works, thus affirming pride and dignity. For African Americans to both see and be seen in ways that promoted their dignity was empowering. As Derby asserted, “we have to look into ourselves and develop what we need to free ourselves and give ourselves what we need. This was needed to expand the potential empowerment of the movement.”³¹ Symbolically, the photographs in this thesis created space in the photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement to better appreciate the everyday activism of grassroots communities and women, as people contested and occupied both physical and symbolic space in these images.

Black women were the driving force behind the Civil Rights Movement, yet the visual canon of the movement often fails to reflect this.³² Countless women marched, boycotted, organised and protested the injustices of racial segregation, and “more than any single leader, it was these thousands of unheralded women who launched the modern civil rights movement.”³³ From everyday activists to figureheads and leaders such as Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer and Septima Clark, the movement was enabled by the tireless activism of Black women.³⁴ However, the canon of Civil Rights

³¹ Doris Derby, “Talkin’ Revolution with Dr. Doris Derby,” *Alternate Roots*, accessed 24 February 2021, <https://alternateroots.org/talkin-revolution-with-dr-doris-derby/>.

³² I will discuss the dominant canon of Civil Rights photography later in this introduction but felt it important to acknowledge the omission of Black women as participants and photographers early in this thesis.

³³ Martin A. Berger, *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2013), 13.

³⁴ For works that consider the contributions of African American women to the long Civil Rights Movement, texts include: Faith S. Holsaert, et al., eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois

Movement photography often fails to accurately reflect the experiences of Black women in the Civil Rights Movement, particularly with regard to the most canonical, iconic photographs. Martin A. Berger notes, “activists and historians know that women and young people appear in surprisingly few of the famous images of the civil rights struggle given the key role they played in advancing the cause.”³⁵ This is in part due to the canonical focus on charismatic male leadership and scenes of violence or conflict, which the mainstream press of the time were more likely to print. Where women do appear in photography, Berger asserts that they tend to be engaged in acts of “passive resistance,” wherein they are presented as harmless figures in need of protection, such as in famous images of Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, and Elizabeth Eckford.³⁶ Although these images and activist contributions were important, making such images the cornerstone of Black women in the movement’s photographic canon does a disservice to women’s organising and frequently behind-the-scenes support. Black women photographers tended to portray other Black women with more agency and authority within the movement than white, male photographers did.

As photographers, in order to attain these careers and claim these spaces, African American women navigated the often conflicting societal pressures of the politics of respectability and the drive to occupy public space. These pressures shifted according to time and geographic location, alongside gender and race-based oppressions that circumscribed Black women’s lives

Press, 2010); Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse and Barbara Woods, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990).

³⁵ Berger, *Freedom Now!*, 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

and cultural and spatial mobility. This thesis expands the study of Black women's work to consider a photographic dimension, especially in relation to space. Although scholars have increasingly explored Black women's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, they have yet to offer an in-depth consideration of their photographic work. Furthermore, whilst Deborah Willis explores the interconnectedness of Black women's visual culture and the history of labour in her essay, "Searching for Memories: Visualizing My Art and Our Work," which combines the history of women's work with her own familial experiences, this thesis extends beyond the individual to encapsulate the broader historical moment of the long Civil Rights Movement.³⁷ Whilst many scholars have broadened our understanding of the history of Black women's professional careers and working lives, the field of photography is frequently overlooked.

Although scholars have considered how spatial reclamation played (and continues to play) a key role in Black women's activism, including both within the realms of work and the "homeplace," this consideration has not been extended to photographic work.³⁸ As Jacqueline Jones writes, "because of their doubly disadvantaged status, black women were confined to two types of work that seems ironically contradictory – the first was domestic and institutional servitude, vindictively termed women's work; the other was manual labour so physically arduous it was usually considered men's work."³⁹ Within the

³⁷ Deborah Willis, "Searching for Memories: Visualizing My Art and Our Work," in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*, ed. Sharon Harley & The Black Women and Work Collective (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 218-230.

³⁸ Zenzele Isoke, "The Politics of Homemaking: Black Feminist Transformations of a Cityscape," *Transforming Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (2011): 117.

³⁹ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 3-4.

occupations available to them, Black women have consistently cultivated networks and “spaces of agency,” as Tiffany M. Gill writes of the role of beauticians: “the black beauty industry must be understood as providing one of the most important opportunities for black women to assert leadership in their communities and in the larger political arena.”⁴⁰ Yet African American women also cultivated “spaces of agency” within the domestic space of the home, as hooks articulates that “the task of making homeplace was not simply a matter of black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination.”⁴¹ As such, the creation, cultivation, and occupation of space became central to the many ways in which African American women empowered themselves, their families, and their communities. As the twentieth century progressed, African American women were able to readily enter public life through the workforce, and occupying space remained central to their activism. Yet there remains a significant gap in the history of Black women’s labour through historians’ omission of professional photography.

Space, Race, Cultural Production and Everyday Activism

As the Civil Rights Movement relied on desegregating and laying claim to public space, the work of the women in this thesis represented a literal and metaphorical desegregation of space by focussing on African American – and

⁴⁰ Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 2.

⁴¹ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 384.

especially women's – agency and racial pride. In advocating inclusion, these women supported the view of Susan Sontag who stated that “photographs help people take possession of space in which they are insecure.”⁴² Scholars of the spatial turn state that governmental and societal practices contribute to the “racial formation” of the country and exacerbate African American insecurity,⁴³ thus relegating some racial groups to unequal treatment through what Lefebvre terms “spatial practice.”⁴⁴ It is this spatial exclusion that the Civil Rights Movement contested. Further to this, Chicana studies scholar Raul Homero Villa asserts a complementary conceptualisation of space in his study of Chicana Los Angeles. Villa states that by acting within and beyond the segregated space of the *barrio*, Chicana cultural production manifests “alternative needs and interests to those of the dominant public sphere” that are orientated around “re-creating and re-imagining dominant urban space as community-enabling place.”⁴⁵ Villa's analysis can be extended to encapsulate the experiences of Black women photographers, as they utilised cultural means of expression in order to empower their own community within white-dominated and segregated Black spaces. Villa's assertion that cultural expression may encapsulate both “leisure activities” and “the formal articulation of community defensive goals” suggests leisure activities and community politics can intimately intertwine through art.⁴⁶ Informed by Villa's understanding of spatial practice, this thesis interrogates how African

⁴² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 9.

⁴³ Michael Omi and Harold Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

⁴⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 50.

⁴⁵ Raul Homero Villa, *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

American women's photography engaged in a reclamation of physical and symbolic space during the long Civil Rights Movement.

This reclamation of space can be understood as an activist act, as the women in this thesis captured acts of "everyday activism" in their images.

Scholars Patterson, Howard and Kinloch explore the term everyday activism in relation to their own facilitation of the discussion group, Black Women's Gathering Place (BWGP):

This type of activism rebuffs traditional conceptions as activism as a public activity that adheres to a publicly accepted definition. Our everyday activism occurs in both public and private spaces, in "official" and unofficial contexts, including inside educational institutions (schools and universities). As Black women, we advocate for the education of our children and students. We make our existence, humanity, voices, and opinions known and heard in the presence of white privilege and social injustice.⁴⁷

The consideration and integration of both public *and* private space makes "everyday activism" an important concept when considering the spatial interventions made by Black women photographers. Furthermore, this definition builds on the view of P. H. Collins, who asserts that "Black women journey toward an understanding of how our personal lives have been shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class."⁴⁸ This thesis incorporates these definitions of everyday activism to refer to the lived realities and daily conduct of those who participated in the long Civil Rights Movement, outside of the large-scale events and protests which dominate the existing photographic canon. Although these events were undoubtedly

⁴⁷ A. N. Patterson, A. Howard, and V Kinloch, "Black Feminism and Critical Media Literacy: Moving from the Margin to the Center," *Meridians* 15, no. 1 (2016): 43-44.

⁴⁸ P. H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York & London: Routledge, 2000), 114.

important, everyday activism reframes the movement from a series of large-scale events to a constant, daily struggle against racism in which individuals occupied many spaces, both physical and symbolic, and often through grassroots activism.⁴⁹

The act of posing for a picture in one's finest clothing in a studio space and then hanging the image in the family home, in defiance of white-held racist notions about African American inferiority, can be interpreted as an act of everyday activism just as valid as marching in a protest.⁵⁰ Powell's notion of "cutting a figure" – of empowering oneself through photography – can be applied to multiple contexts outside of a studio space. In the case of Doris Derby's image of Ora Bouie, the act of documenting the nurse claiming space in her daily working life as a professional, dignified woman can be understood as activist, which empowers the nurse against a backdrop of systemic oppression. Everyday activism is also connected with notions of "pleasure activism," which is "the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and / or supremacy."⁵¹ Photographers reclaiming space to express their communities as they wanted to be seen constitute these elements of "pleasure activism." Everyday activism can encapsulate both the unnamed protestors on the street and the highly visible leaders who attempted to direct the course of the movement, who tend to occupy a prominent place in the canon of Civil

⁴⁹ Notions of grassroots activism are emphasised through a consideration of a long Civil Rights Movement, as the focus tends to be less on national leaders. See: Thomas J. Sugrue and Haley Leuthart, "Northern Lights: The Black Freedom Struggle Outside the South," *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 1 (January 2012): 9-15.

⁵⁰ Willis, *Family History Memory*.

⁵¹ adrienne maree brown, "introduction," in *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, ed. adrienne maree brown (Chico & Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019), 13.

Rights Movement photography. All of these subjects were engaged in claiming and occupying space in both media-centric moments of high visibility, and day-to-day smaller moments of resistance.

Establishing a Photographic “Canon” of the Long Civil Rights Movement and Defining the Politics of Respectability

The literature surrounding Black women’s photography in the twentieth century is minimal, although there are some notable exceptions. The most significant text is Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe’s ground-breaking *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (1985). Moutoussamy-Ashe creates an encyclopaedia of African American women photographers, including biographical information and an impressive archive of images. Moutoussamy-Ashe’s research provided a vital platform for this project, and this thesis stands on the shoulders of this work. Yet at the time of publication, Moutoussamy-Ashe’s publication was criticised for its lack of detail and limited scope, with one critic calling the work a “pioneering but incomplete attempt to account for black women photographers.”⁵² However, rather than a failing of the text, Moutoussamy-Ashe’s work should be appreciated for working within a biographical context, and not claiming to present a complete history. Due to the archival silences, a complete history of Black women photographers would be an impossible endeavour. Moutoussamy-Ashe’s text makes a powerful intervention into a visual canon and scholarship that too often excludes Black

⁵² G. Craven, “Review of Moutoussamy-Ashe, Jeanne. *Viewfinders*,” *Choice: Current Reviews For College Libraries* 24, no. 1 (September 1986): 110.

women. This thesis expands on Moutoussamy-Ashe's work to address the silences surrounding Black women photographers' place in the photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement.

Most exhibitions and published exhibition collections of Civil Rights Movement photography reveal a lack of space dedicated to women photographers, and especially African American women photographers. Surveying six collections of civil rights photography, women make up only 5 percent of all photographers in these collections, with 12.5 percent being unknown and 82.5 percent being male.⁵³ Of these images, only 6 were by African American women, which is 0.89 percent of the total.⁵⁴ Although other cultural factors made it difficult for African American women to carry cameras into protests, such as the increased threat of violence they would have faced, the focus on images generated by men risks excluding valuable perspectives on the movement. Closer examination of these texts confirms this male-dominated focus. Steven Kasher's *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954 – 1968* (1996) is an important work that combines imagery and text to convey a rich history of the movement, yet it largely excludes the photography of women from its collection. Of the photographers in the text, Kasher states that “their pictures almost always convey the sense

⁵³ These statistics were gathered by surveying six collections of Civil Rights Movement photography: Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954 – 1968* (New York & London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996); Julian Cox, *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement 1956-1968* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2008); Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, *Double Exposure: Through the African American Lens* (Washington DC: D Giles Ltd, 2015); Mark Speltz, *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016); Leslie G. Kelen, ed., *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011); and Berger, *Freedom Now!*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

that they were photographing their own leaders, their own enemies, their own fellow victims.”⁵⁵ However, Kasher follows this with an all-male list of photographers including Gordon Parks, Ernest Withers and Bob Fletcher. Within this text, Kasher defines his “their” as “male.” Therefore, the perspective of male photographers, both African American and white, is assumed as the dominant lens through which to view the movement.

The dominant photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement also presents the movement in certain ways, privileging certain perspectives and events over others. The depictions of African American women as largely marginalised “passive resisters” has been previously acknowledged, yet scholars have identified multiple trends in the images of the Civil Rights Movement that have become most recognisable to the general public in the past decades. First, Leigh Raiford suggests that images of charismatic male leadership are a common feature in the canon of the movement, as having “one identifiable charismatic personality at the forefront leading the masses [was] a hallmark of established, traditional civil rights organizations like the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with Dr. King at the helm.”⁵⁶ Christopher D. Rounds noted in 2020 that King continues to tower over public memory of the civil rights struggle, as politicians and companies utilise the legacy of King to assert their own agendas: for example, “regular commercialism surrounding the annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which finds King’s name being exploited to hawk everything from

⁵⁵ Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 12.

⁵⁶ Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned In A Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 68.

Nordstrom's to McDonald's."⁵⁷ Whilst these public invocations present a sanitised, nonconfrontational version of King, they nevertheless painted him as synonymous with the wider movement.⁵⁸ Although revisionist understandings of the movement have advanced the role of grassroots organisations and women, the visual culture and wider public history of the civil rights struggle remains entrenched in the past and continues to focus on charismatic male leaders.

A second theme within the dominant canon is that of a simplistic narrative of peaceful Black protest juxtaposed against white violence. Martin A. Berger interrogates this idea in depth in *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle* (2013), stating "in both the public imagination and our history books, the civil rights story is overwhelmingly one of well-behaved black protestors victimized by racist and violent whites."⁵⁹ This simplistic narrative not only creates an uncomplicated, "good versus bad" perspective that belies the deeply entrenched and insidious power structures designed to deny African Americans civil rights, but it also creates a narrative imbued with power dynamics. Berger states that, "according to the photographs published by the mainstream media, whites, and not blacks, held the power needed to set the pace and establish the extent of reform."⁶⁰ Considering the work of African American women photographers creates a

⁵⁷ Christopher D. Rounds, "'Dead Men Make Such Convenient Heroes': The Use and Misuse of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy as Political Propaganda," *Journal of Black Studies* 51, no. 4 (2020): 327-328. For further discussion of the persistence of King in public memory, see: Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 140.

⁵⁸ Kevin Bruyneel, "The King's Body: The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the Politics of Collective Memory," *History and Memory* 26, no. 1 (Spring / Summer 2014): 75-108.

⁵⁹ Berger, *Freedom Now!*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

significant intervention by focusing on community organising and the role of women who illuminate the everyday activism of the movement. Furthermore, whilst most photographic collections focus on a documentary mode of photography, this thesis expands our understanding of the photographic genres employed in the long Civil Rights Movement by addressing portraiture and anthropological photography.

Table 2. Black women as percent of black professionals, by occupation, selected years, 1890-1970

Occupation	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970
Total	26.0	33.0	42.5	48.8	46.4	55.3	58.4	60.9	61.2
Accountants			20.2				34.1	36.6	45.4
Actors	5.1	12.7	41.4	30.2	33.2	10.9	31.4		24.1
Architects	0	0	5.1	0	0	0	0		8.5
Artists	44.0	36.4	38.9	41.7	47.6	29.1	22.5	39.2	23.1
Authors	24.2	25.3	29.6	14.0	16.3	22.4		35.3	30.7
Chemists			3.3	3.9	3.9	0	14.7	0	16.0
Clergy	4	1.1	3.9	1.2	5.8	0	4.0	0	3.9
College professors	(²)	(²)	30.2	46.7	47.5	39.8	36.2	35.0	45.2
Dentists	1.7	3.3	5.4	3.2	1.5	7.8	3.6	0	5.5
Designers			4.2	24.1	45.2	36.5	33.3	14.5	39.3
Editors	3.7	5.5	9.1	(¹)	20.2	(¹)	25.0	(¹)	47.1
Engineers			0	0	0	0	8.8	0	5
Lawyers	0	1.4	3	4	1.9	3.7	6.1	8.1	13.3
Musicians	31.6	30.3	41.9	36.2	26.8	28.2	35.7	38.3	18.8
Nurses			88.7	95.7	97.4	98.2	96.5	100.0	93.7
Physicians	12.7	9.2	12.4	5.9	11.4	3.6	15.4	23.0	18.6
Photographers			10.1	16.6	15.6		16.2		16.3
Librarians				68.1	85.7	100	81.4		82.8
Social workers			66.3		79.7	64.9	66.3	60.1	63.2
Teachers, elementary	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	84.9	86.5
Teachers, secondary	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	78.6	55.1	59.1
Teachers, not elsewhere classified	252.7	263.6	276.2	282.4	283.9	278.7	0	69.3	
Pharmacists							19.6	0	

¹ Category includes editors and authors.
² Category includes college professors and other teachers of various levels.

NOTE: Dashes indicate no data available.

Figure 2. Matrimon Kilson, *Black women as percent of Black professionals, by occupation, selected years, 1890-1970*, 1977.

Source: Marion Kilson, "Black women in the professions, 1890-1970," *Monthly Labor Review* 100, no. 5 (May 1977): 39.

Part of the reason for the neglect of Black women photographers in Civil Rights photographic canon is the scarcity of readily available photographers, as well as a lack of information surrounding their lives; from census information alone it is clear that photography was not a common occupation for Black women in the early to mid-twentieth century (Fig. 2).⁶¹

⁶¹ This table demonstrates how as a proportion of the Black working population, who are already marginalised in the field of photography, Black women are significantly underrepresented.

This was partly due to how photography as a career was regarded by both Black and white society, as its masculine and scientific connotations meant that it was difficult for Black women to acquire the social capital to achieve this career without stigma or appearing unrespectable. Whilst African American men have worked the camera since photography's conception, with Jules Lion working in New Orleans as early as 1840, the history of African American women's photography is farobscure. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe uncovered a handful of nineteenth-century photographers such as Mary E. Flenoy in Danville, but frustratingly little is known about such figures, as "no one in Danville today has ever heard of Mary Flenoy or has any sense of a black woman in 1899 with a camera in her hand."⁶² The lack of information about Flenoy speaks both to the precarity of photographers at the time, and the lack of archives surrounding this work. Despite their scarcity, these women nevertheless made important spatio-symbolic interventions within their communities, photography, and the canon of Civil Rights Movement photography.

From an intersectional perspective, the Black women in this thesis mostly belong to the middle-class. This was, in part, due to the nature of professional photography in the early to mid-twentieth century, when affording a camera required a degree of social capital and formal training that working-class African Americans could not access. Yet class did not just inform who had access to the camera and "spaces of agency"; the politics of respectability ensured that middle-class notions of acceptable individual behaviour governed photographic conventions and notions of professionalism. The politics of

⁶² Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders.*, 25.

respectability broadly refers to the idea of a subordinated group of individuals adopting the cultural standards of the oppressors in order to provide evidence of their equality and counter the idea of their inferiority. In this case, it refers to African Americans adopting the standards of white middle-class respectability in order to challenge white perceptions of their inferiority. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham first coined the term “politics of respectability” in *Righteous Discontent* (1993), ascribing its origins to the Black Baptist church in the late nineteenth century, wherein Black women:

equated black public behaviour to the advancement of African Americans as a group. They felt certain that “respectable” behaviour in public would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America, and hence they strove to win the black lower class’s psychological allegiance to temperance, industriousness, thrift, refine manners, and Victorian sexual morals.⁶³

Through governing individual behaviour in line with middle-class standards, the politics of respectability countered white-held stereotypes of African Americans.⁶⁴ The politics of respectability emerged as a counterpoint to these characterisations, as Farah Jasmine Griffin writes: “the politics of respectability first emerged as a way to counter the images of black Americans as lazy, shiftless, stupid, and immoral in popular culture and the racist pseudosciences of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁵ Yet whilst the goal was to

⁶³ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14.

⁶⁴ White people have long represented African Americans in stereotypical ways. With regard to women, such harmful stereotypes include asexual figures such as the mammy, hypersexual figures such as the jezebel and the sapphire, and Madonna figures such as the Tragic Mulatta. Indeed, the Black female body has been part of a long, oppressive history on which white notions are placed – see the racist daguerreotypes of Delia taken by Louis Agassiz. See: Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁶⁵ Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 2000): 34.

counter stereotypes, Griffin also articulates one of the paradoxes of the politics of respectability: although the politics of respectability was at odds with white societal expectations of Black dignity, it evoked largely white aesthetics and “reflected an acceptance and internalization of these representations.”⁶⁶ When the politics of respectability was utilised as a tactic within the long Civil Rights Movement, it again relied on situating individual conduct within the realms of middle-class respectability to combat white supremacy.⁶⁷

From a contemporary perspective, the politics of respectability is deeply flawed as it relies on the idealisation of white middle-class standards, and much modern scholarship criticises this ideology.⁶⁸ Figures such as E. Franklin Frazier also decried respectability politics in the 1960s through a class lens. He argued that the Black bourgeoisie “accepted unconditionally the values of the white bourgeois world: its morals and its canons of respectability, its standards of beauty and consumption.”⁶⁹ In so doing, Frazier argues that the politics of respectability hinges on the wholehearted rejection of the African American “folk” culture. Not only did the aesthetic evoked in these images reject Black folk culture; it coded white aesthetics as a signifier of being middle-class. However, the politics of respectability was constantly in flux, as early portraiture would adhere most strictly to these modes of thought and being. Photographers such as Florestine Collins in the New Orleans of the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Danielle L. McGuire, *At The Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 102.

⁶⁸ Paisley Jane Harris, “Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women’s History and Black Feminism,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 212-22.; Mikaela Pitcan, Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd, “Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23, no. 3, (May 2018): 163-179.

⁶⁹ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeois* (Free Press, 1965), 26.

1920s would utilise feminine pictorial techniques and targeted adverts for children to adhere to the politics of respectability. As the role of documentary photography developed in the mid-twentieth century, so too would the role of portraiture and attitudes to space. When it became less taboo for African American women to emerge beyond the domesticated studio space, portraiture began to follow women outside, with portraitists such as Louise Martin photographing readily in public space. Throughout this period, the aesthetics of the politics of respectability were vital tools that granted African American women photographers access to spaces which they would otherwise struggle to access.

The politics of respectability played a key role in the careers of African American women photographers. In the early twentieth century, some African Americans believed that photography was not a respectable, feminine pastime or career. In the 1902 essay “Photography for Our Young People,” W. W. Holland recalled an interaction where a young African American woman was offered “a photography outfit as a present,” and she responded by saying: “Oh, I cannot bother with a tripod and a camera. I need my hands to hold up my skirts!”⁷⁰ To this one woman, holding a camera was at odds with her expected feminine identity. Yet these attitudes changed by 1939, when Estelle Hill Scott conducted a study entitled *Occupational Changes Among Negroes in Chicago*. In this, photography was listed as a “clean” profession in which “Negroes were most heavily represented.”⁷¹ In Scott’s study, the term “clean” is interchangeable with the modern term “white collar,” indicating the middle-

⁷⁰ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 20.

⁷¹ Estelle Hill Scott, *Occupational Changes Among Negroes in Chicago* (Work Projects Administration, 1939), 49.

class nature of the work. This suggests that photography was regarded as a respectable occupation in the context of the 1930s onwards, although Black women would continue to be largely excluded from the field as “the contraction of the national economy undercut black women’s already inferior position in the agricultural, domestic service, and industrial sectors.”⁷²

This change in attitudes also affected the kinds of networks utilised by Black women photographers, and how they were able to access space. For this thesis, I distinguish two kinds of networks: personal and professional.⁷³

Personal networks are those which refer to an individual’s private life and relationships, commonly including family and friends. Professional networks refer to public relationships, such as between employer and employee, and between formal institutions. For women prior to the late 1930s, it was most common that they would reconfigure personal networks into professional networks, often embarking on their photographic careers with their husbands or with members of their family. In the rare occasions where this was not the case, they otherwise signified the politics of respectability within their work. It is likely that the increasing accessibility of photography to women was in part due to the changing role of women in society and the kinds of networks which they were able to utilise during the twentieth century. However, it was also in part due to the feminine aesthetic of pictorialism making photography an increasingly acceptable pursuit for women. This thesis not only considers the

⁷² Jones, *Labour of Love*, 231.

⁷³ Although discussion of Black women’s networks exists, it has yet to be applied to African American women photographers. See: Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American women of the South and the advancement of the race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002).

development of African American women photographer's networks, and how they demonstrate the shift of Black women workers from private to public spaces in line with a developing politics of respectability, but also how this emergence can be understood as an act of spatial reclamation across the long Civil Rights Movement.

Methodology and Terminology

Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe's *Viewfinders* text established a foundation for my initial research, providing multiple clues for further exploration. This thesis significantly advances Moutoussamy-Ashe's original work by adding newly recovered figures into the history of Black women's photography, incorporating thorough image analysis and an original oral interview with Dr. Doris Derby, and framing the discussion around the new contexts of the long Civil Rights Movement and spatial reclamation. Whilst several photographers in this thesis were found by way of Moutoussamy-Ashe's ground-breaking work, the methodological approach adopted in this thesis advances the history of Black women photographers beyond this original scope. When conducting research into Black women photographers, I systematically searched the recently digitised archives of *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines for several key terms, which both yielded further photographers and additional information about and images by the photographers I was already aware of. Throughout this process, I kept an updated database of photographers comprising of key demographic information and the fields within which the photographers worked. Upon

analysing this data, several consistent genre categories would emerge, around which I ultimately organised my thesis.

The figures in this initial spreadsheet pointed me towards several research archives and the need for oral testimony.⁷⁴ I conducted an interview of over six hours with Dr. Doris Derby in September 2018. Not only was Dr. Derby a photographer and activist during the movement, but her skills as a professor of African American Studies and Anthropology allowed for a critical discussion of my work.⁷⁵ Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, I read the texts, images and materials within this thesis through an intersectional lens. This draws on the key conceptual frameworks of bell hooks's "spaces of agency," which I position within the "spatial turn," alongside Derby's depictions of women as "agents of change" within the movement. As such, notions of spatio-symbolic reclamation are centred around Black women's activism, both behind and in front of the camera. This thesis therefore recovers the archive of African American women's photography during the long Civil Rights Movement, and considers their lives and work in spatio-symbolic terms to reveal a mode of protest rooted in everyday activism.

My methodological approach also necessitated self-interrogation and consideration of my own positionality as a white woman. As the language shifts around terms such as "long Civil Rights Movement," so too does the language surrounding race. This thesis adopts the terms "African American,"

⁷⁴ The archives utilised in this thesis include: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; The Amistad Research Centre, Tulane University; and Kenneth Spencer Research Library, The University of Kansas Libraries.

⁷⁵ Dr. Derby challenged the placeholder definition of "activist photographer" for Chapter Five, which was ultimately revised to "organisational photographer."

“Black” and “white,” capitalising in line with the Associated Press’s usage rules.⁷⁶ Definition of “African American” and “Black” requires further scrutiny. Whilst “African American” is commonly used to refer to individuals of African descent who were born in America, “Black” encompasses a global definition which recognises people of African descent on every continent. As such, in an American context, these terms are often seen as personal preference according to each individual, although the language is likely to evolve over the coming decades.

Furthermore, there are photographers in this thesis who complicate simple definitions of “Black” or “African American”: the first chapter of this thesis features Winifred Hall Allen, who was a Jamaican immigrant, and the photographer Florestine Collins, who was of Creole descent. Collins’s and Allen’s experiences should not be homogenised, as their experiences differed according to their respective cultural heritages and geographic locations. However, their shared experiences of navigating the personal and professional networks available to them, and reclaiming space in their communities, makes considering their work together valuable.⁷⁷ This connective approach is shared by Arthé A. Anthony – Florestine Collins’s great-niece, primary biographer, and a leading historian – who asserts that, “sometimes I use ‘Creole,’ ‘black,’

⁷⁶ These rules were changed in July 2020 following the protests of the death of George Floyd, which challenged many organisations to review their practices with respect to race. The AP found that “capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs.” Whilst I adopt these terms in my writing, I leave the terms as they are in cited sources or quotes, to reflect the original intent of the author at the time they were written. See: David Baurder, “AP Says It Will Capitalize Black But Not White,” *AP News*, 20 July 2020, accessed 6 December 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/7e36c00c5af0436abc09e051261ffff>.

⁷⁷ Both women appear in histories of African American and Black photographers, see: *Through A Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*, dir. Thomas Allen Harris (Sundance: Chimpanzee Productions, 2014), DVD.

and ‘African American’ interchangeably because, despite their white ancestry, Creoles lived on the colored side of the color line.”⁷⁸ Collins and Allen’s contributions were deeply rooted in African American culture and community.⁷⁹ By exploring these photographers within their own unique geographic and cultural contexts yet acknowledging the elements of discrimination and networking that were similar, Allen and Collins demonstrate their centrality to the history of African American women’s photography. These discussions about race, class and nationality are complex and nuanced, and I am aware that my positionality as a white woman may inadvertently obscure my perceptions of certain elements of the African American experience. Therefore, I position this work in relation to, and in conversation with, many of the African American women who have already made significant strides in the field of Black visual culture and Civil Rights Movement studies, including Deborah Willis, Leigh Raiford and, most crucially, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe.

Chapter Overview

Throughout this thesis, I explore various spatio-symbolic acts of reclamation, and how African American women cultivate “spaces of agency,” according to the mode of photography being adopted. This approach allows for consideration of the genre nuances within each kind of photographic career,

⁷⁸ Arthé A. Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans: A Creole Photographer’s View of the Early Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 2.

⁷⁹ When speaking about communities, I utilised both “Black” and “African American.” Whilst these communities were frequently not monolithic – and included a range of Black identities – most communities were concentrated in an American context, in African American communities.

such as a portraitist or anthropologist. It also allows me to structure this thesis in a broad chronological order, as some photographic styles and genres waxed and waned as the decades progressed. As portraiture was the most prominent field of photography for African American women photographers in the early twentieth century, Chapter One considers the work of Black women portrait photographers. In this chapter I demonstrate how the first portrait photographers engaged with practices of desegregation by occupying both physical and symbolic space in their lives and work, balancing entering public workspaces with a strict politics of respectability. These women navigated personal networks in order to claim space within both the white-dominated artistic medium of pictorialism and the male-dominated space of the studio. In turn, they used those spaces to present their communities with dignity, in terms of not just race, but gender and class as well. This chapter considers the work of photographers who operated within familial networks and “mom-and-pop” studios, including Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts and Elise Forrest Harleston. Following this, I explore the shifting networks of Black women photographers who worked with their husbands until gaining their own studio space, such as Elnora Teal and Adine Williams. Finally, I consider those who worked independently of personal, marital networks, such as Florestine Collins, Winifred Hall Allen, Louise Martin, Elnora Frazier, and Juanita Williams. These women’s photographs claimed physical space for Black representation and symbolic space in the long Civil Rights Movement photographic canon for the role of everyday people. The act of going to a studio to have a photograph taken claimed both physical and metaphorical

space by asserting racial pride in a form of everyday activism enabled by the efforts of Black women photographers.

Chapter Two considers the work of Black women anthropologist photographers from the 1920s onwards, who reclaimed both symbolic and physical space in their lives and photography. Anthropological exchanges were closely linked to familial networks which shifted over time, as earlier figures such as Emily T. Vernon relied directly on their husband's assistance, whilst later figures such as Doris Derby did not. They created symbolic "spaces of agency" to advocate for transatlantic connectivity between the people of Africa and African Americans in the United States by suggesting kinship in their photographs, desegregating barriers of misrepresentation and removing barriers of distance between African peoples within the diaspora. In this chapter, the figures of Emily Vernon, Eslanda Goode Robeson and Doris Derby span different decades and adopt different approaches to their work. Whilst their work was rooted in familial language during the first half of the twentieth century, by the early 1960s these diasporic ties were more overtly political in nature. Within their photographs, these women showed both African people and African Americans (often themselves) occupying space within their photographs, and frequently sharing space, thus underscoring the diasporic nature of the long Civil Rights Movement.

Chapter Three explores Black women military photographers, and how their occupation of physical and symbolic space challenged segregation in the military and the photographic canon. The military has long been a space which has been tied to calls for citizenship, in which the right to fight for one's country has been viewed as a civil right and, in turn, a patriotic duty that

demands the recognition of civil rights. Following the official desegregation of the military in 1948, women such as Elizabeth “Tex” Williams and Grendel A. Howard were among some of the first Black women to occupy space in the military after this time. Hence, their images of their colleagues occupying physical space as Black women in uniform stand as evidence of this progress. This was furthered by their focus on self-representation, as Williams and Howard proudly wore their own uniforms in their images. Whilst it is difficult to know in what context their photography was used, their images show African Americans occupying physical space (in uniform, on army bases, handling equipment) and symbolic space (on the frontline of integrating the army). These images claimed symbolic space by rooting the integrationist ideals of the Civil Rights Movement within the work of Black servicemen and women, affirming their right to occupy previously segregated space. Furthermore, the women in this chapter are the first to attain careers without support from familial networks, relying instead on professional networks and participation in US government organisations. Hence, the women in this chapter can be understood as advocating for equality for Black servicemen and women in the professional space of the US military.

Black women photojournalists emerged in the 1940s, following the Second World War, and continued to occupy physical and symbolic space both in their careers as photographers and in their photography. Chapter Four explores how these photographers occupied public space in order to take journalistic photographs, often taking images at public events. By occupying this physical space, they also occupied a symbolic space within the photographic trajectory of the long Civil Rights Movement. Within their

photography, these women claimed physical space in news media, whether in the Black press or national newspapers. Furthermore, their images showed African American subjects occupying space by engaging in protests, marches and acts of everyday activism. This chapter in particular suggests that whilst the long Civil Rights Movement defies an easily marked end and beginning, by the 1970s some individuals had shifted from advocating for integrated space to advocating for independent Black spaces away from a white gaze, focussing on public and cultural spaces such as dance halls. Whilst the spatial reclamation of the long Civil Rights Movement still held sway for some during the 1970s, as organisations such as the SCLC continued to articulate their struggle in spatial terms, some individuals, such as Mikki Ferrill, departed from this desegregationist focus.⁸⁰ Ferrill's work also departed from the confines of the politics of respectability by embracing the complexity and richness of Black working-class cultures. However, all of these women's work demonstrates how the fight for physical and symbolic space shaped both movement photography and the lives of these women.

The final chapter considers what I term "organisational photography," which refers to individuals who affiliated with and worked for organisations that operated in the Civil Rights Movement, such as SNCC and SCLC. African American women photographers who worked with Civil Rights organisations also engaged with notions of physical and symbolic space, both in the content of their photographs and their careers as photographers. This chapter focuses on two women: Doris Derby from SNCC and Elaine Tomlin from SCLC. As Black women photographers, they occupied public space to take their

⁸⁰ See the work of Elaine Tomlin in Chapter Five of this thesis.

photographs and negotiated various activist networks. For instance, Derby worked within SNCC and other organisations to capture images of Black women working at community-orientated sites of activism such as vegetable co-ops. The symbolic space they claimed as photographers challenges the conventional canon of the movement, which focuses on male photographers and representations of dramatic events and activities. Hence, their photography provided evidence of the less visible activism of the movement, including the contributions of grassroots activists and women.

Louise Jefferson and the Limitations of Genre

The ways in which Black women photographers occupied physical and metaphorical space, both in their careers and in their photography, centres this thesis around work, and the occupations these women had. These occupations also correlate to photographic genres, including portraiture, anthropology, and three modes which combine documentary and portraiture styles in different environments: military photography, photojournalism, and organisational photography. Although considering the role of women in the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of work and genre may exclude the role of amateur photographers, focussing on professional photographers allows for a more nuanced focus on the professional and personal networks used to reclaim space. Whilst the amateur would often take photographs for themselves or their families for no fee, the women in this thesis worked for specific audiences. This means that some women feature in multiple chapters of this thesis as they navigated different photographic genres or lines of work: for instance, Louise

Martin worked as both a portraitist and a photojournalist, and is present in both the first and fourth chapters of this thesis. However, this structure, which relies on categorising the work done by these women, risks excluding those who operated across *multiple* modes of photography, and those who resisted the label of photographer or practised photography as a secondary role within their wider working lives. These women challenge any simplistic binaries or definitions of style, genre, or photographic history, and instead demand a more nuanced interrogation. An example of this type of challenging figure is Louise Jefferson.

Jefferson was a woman of multiple talents: on the dustjacket of her book, *The Decorative Arts of Africa* (1973), she is described as “an artist, photographer, and cartographer whose work has appeared in many books and periodicals.”⁸¹ Jefferson moved to New York City to attend Hunter College and was one of the founding members of the Harlem Artist’s Guild in 1935. Jefferson was the artistic director and production assistant at Friendship Press from 1942 to 1960 and produced design work for organisations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL). Throughout her life, Jefferson was an avid photographer. Her obituary in the *Litchfield Enquirer* states that:

Even in her late 80’s, Ms. Jefferson kept a camera on the bookshelf by her apartment door. She liked knowing it was there to grab at a moment’s notice. “You never know what might happen, who might come,” she once said in an interview. “You’ve always got to be ready to catch the rhythm. Rhythm is always changing, even in the places and the people you see day after day.”⁸²

⁸¹ Louise E. Jefferson, *The Decorative Arts of Africa* (The Viking Press, 1973).

⁸² Diana Stewart Jones, “Obituaries,” *The Litchfield Enquirer*, Louise E. Jefferson Papers, 1925-2001, Box 8, Folder 6, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Yet details and exact dates of note within Louise Jefferson's life remain shrouded in mystery. In 1938, Jefferson was living in New York City, and active in the local, vibrant art scene. From 1931, Jefferson was a roommate to civil rights activist Pauli Murray, when "both were poor and struggling."⁸³ During this stage of her career she was mainly a freelancer, and therefore had to deal with financial hardship, at some points selling her cameras to make ends meet.⁸⁴ Jefferson also encountered white supremacist backlash to her work. She illustrated *We Sing America* (1936), a songbook within which Jefferson drew children of various ethnic backgrounds playing together. However, this book was not only banned by Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia; several copies of the book were also burnt. Talmadge promised to "get rid of that book and all books of that kind."⁸⁵ For decades she was an editor with the Friendship Press, which was a publishing house dedicated to Christian books. Although Jefferson's responsibilities were numerous, her skills as an illustrator and cartographer were in particularly high demand.

⁸³ Robert L. Johns, "Louise E. Jefferson," in *Notable Black American Women II*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith (New York et al: Gale Research, 1996), 329.

⁸⁴ Jana King, "Louise E. Jefferson," *Design Journeys, AIGA Diversity and Inclusion*, accessed 30 December 2020, <https://www.aiga.org/design-journeys-louise-e-jefferson>.

⁸⁵ Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 96.

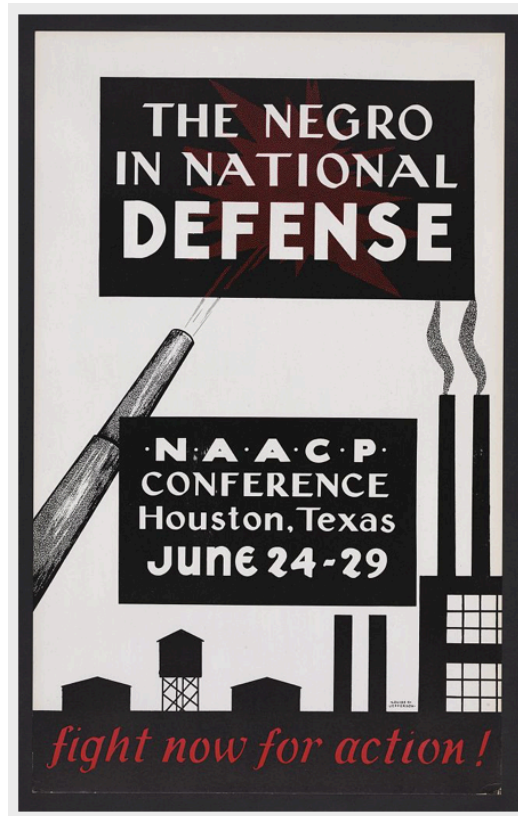


Figure 3. Louise Jefferson, *The Negro in national defense NAACP conference, Houston, Texas, June 24-29, 1941.*

Source: *Library of Congress*, accessed 30 June 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010648421/>.

Jefferson’s work rejects easy categorisation in any one photographic genre. In the example of organisational photography, a case can certainly be made that Jefferson adhered to the criteria for an organisational activist. Firstly, she regularly did design work for organisations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League. In addition, Jefferson also designed the front cover for *The Crisis* in December 1973, with the words, “Peace on Earth” and “NAACP” alongside each other.⁸⁶ Perhaps most significantly, Jefferson designed and illustrated the NAACP Conference poster for the 1941 year, with a dynamic red, black and white design (Fig. 3). Nor did Jefferson’s

⁸⁶ Designs – Magazine and Book Covers, 1973-1974, Louise E. Jefferson Papers, 1925-2001, Box 13, Folder 13, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

organisational affiliation end with design work; Jefferson was present in such organisations as the Women's Africa Committee, alongside Dorothy Height and Yvonne Williams, the Harold Jackson Memorial Committee,⁸⁷ and the 1962 Leadership Programme for African Women.⁸⁸ Jefferson frequently designed the publicity materials for the National Urban League's Beaux Art's Ball.

However, Jefferson operated across multiple photographic styles and genres, and in multiple symbolic and canonical spaces: Jefferson's 1973 text, *The Decorative Arts of Africa*, engages with anthropological photography; she took portraits of such public figures as Thurgood Marshall, and candid photographs of key events and services held for the funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr.. Even the label of photographer was one that Jefferson resisted. Stating in an interview in 1986, she said: "I wish that people would stop calling me a photographer."⁸⁹ However, Jefferson also resisted efforts to casualise her photographic work as "snapshots," stating that "there's a difference between a photograph and a snapshot, and I hate snapshots."⁹⁰ Jefferson's refusal to fall into one category serves as a welcome reminder of the heterogeneity of the field of photography; whilst the women in this thesis may be grouped together, their experiences, artistic perspectives, and beliefs should not be flattened into one homogenous group. Rather, this thesis encourages us to celebrate the innovations of these women, to appreciate the

⁸⁷ Ephemera – Miscellaneous Collected Ephemera, Folder 3, Box 35, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁸⁸ Louise E. Jefferson Papers – Ephemera, Folder 11, Box 36, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁸⁹ King, "Louise E. Jefferson."

⁹⁰ "Everything Dovetails: Louise E. Jefferson," *Sketch People*, March 2011, accessed 20 August 2020, <http://tjbanks927.blogspot.com/2011/03/everything-dovetails-louise-e-jefferson.html>.

hurdles and barriers they overcame in order to promote acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation in both their images and their lives.

Jefferson serves as a fitting introductory figure precisely because she demonstrates how Black women photographers traversed multiple genres of photography to reclaim physical and symbolic space. As a photographer, Jefferson occupied physical space as a businesswoman, working in various fields across decades of work. Although her photographic role was often secondary or supplementary to her primary mode of work, which was predominantly publishing, Jefferson navigated personal friendships and professional relationships with figures such as Langston Hughes in the context of the Harlem Renaissance in order to solidify her role in the New York art scene. Through these networks, she integrated organisations such as the Friendship Press.

Jefferson also occupied symbolic space as a photographer by disrupting a photographic canon which denied space for African American women as activists and photographers. In terms of physical space, her portraits of celebrities such as Thurgood Marshall and Lena Horne were circulated both privately and publicly, being stored in Jefferson's archive and in the homes of her subjects. *The Decorative Arts of Africa* showcased over three hundred original photographs and illustrations of different kinds of African cultural production, including art, textiles, and fashion. Within this text, Jefferson carved out space to provide, in her own words, "a visual sampling of what the spirit and tempo of the African artist's role has been in the past and what it

continues to be today.”⁹¹ Jefferson therefore advocated for the same kinds of diasporic connectivity between Africans and African Americans as can be seen by the anthropological figures in Chapter Two of this thesis. As Jefferson claimed, quoting Calvin Douglas at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, “if the vitality of a culture can be measured in terms of its ability to produce art and enlarge its conception of human life, it is not difficult to understand why so many black people in the United States today look to Africa as their cultural source.”⁹²

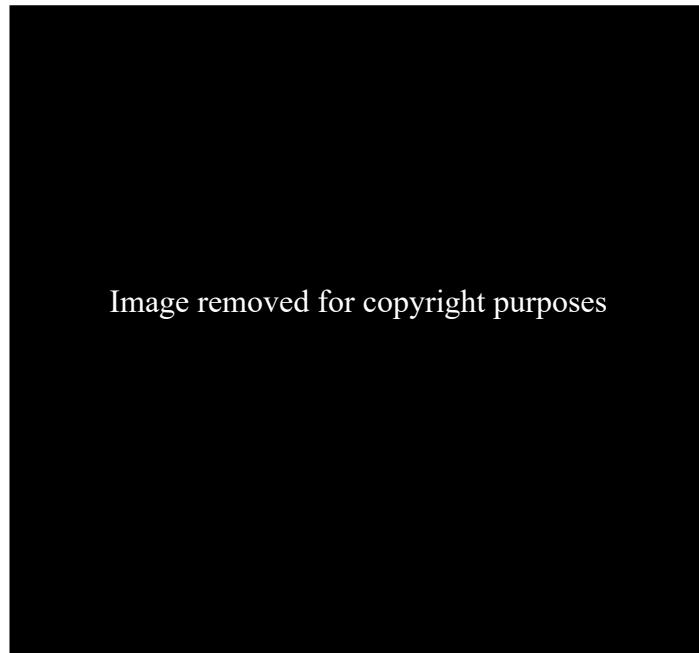


Figure 4. Louise Jefferson, *Untitled*, date unknown.
Source: Laura McCray, “Women as Leaders,” *The Church Woman: An Ecumenical Magazine*, April 1967.

Alongside this diasporic connectivity in Jefferson’s photographs, we see African women and girls occupying public space. One of Jefferson’s images was used to accompany a story by journalist Laura McCray in April

⁹¹ Jefferson, *The Decorative Arts of Africa*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 9.

1967, wherein the role of women and girls as leaders in Africa is illuminated (Fig. 4).⁹³ In the image, a girl stands surrounded by other children, many of whom are boys. They all look to the same spot and appear to be engaged in some sort of educational activity. Both the girl's central framing and the placement of the heading indicate women's agency in this image. The accompanying text champions the leadership of women in communities in Africa, noting that "the women of Africa are seeking ways to improve their status and they know that their daughters' success will be more likely with a good education."⁹⁴ As such, Jefferson's photography is utilised to celebrate women as "agents of change" in Africa, and to attest to the educational aspirations of African girls. Many of the images in *The Decorative Arts of Africa* focus on women, demonstrating their hair styles and fashions, and hence asserting them as "art." In this way, Jefferson created space in her work for women, and images of women occupying physical space on their own terms, in their own fashion. Hence, Jefferson utilised spatio-symbolic tactics to centre African women's experiences in her work, and advocate for diasporic connections between Africa and African America.

The work of Louise Jefferson may not at first glance appear to be overtly engaged with the long Civil Rights Movement. However, in placing her work in dialogue with the other African American women photographers in this thesis, we see how Jefferson created "spaces of agency" to advocate for a diasporic artistic consciousness – both in terms of physical space and symbolic space. In so doing, Jefferson painted those in her lens – and

⁹³ It is unclear which country in Africa this image is taken in.

⁹⁴ Laura McCray, "Women as Leaders," *The Church Woman: An Ecumenical Magazine*, April 1967, 11.

particularly women – as “agents of change.” Advocating for African American rights to occupy space was crucial to both African American women’s photography and the long Civil Rights Movement. By championing the right of African Americans to occupy space, and by claiming space within their own varied careers, the African American women in this thesis engaged in acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation and created an archive of photographic images that empowered the subject.

Chapter One

“I Made Them Look Good”: Portrait Photographers of the Long Civil Rights Movement

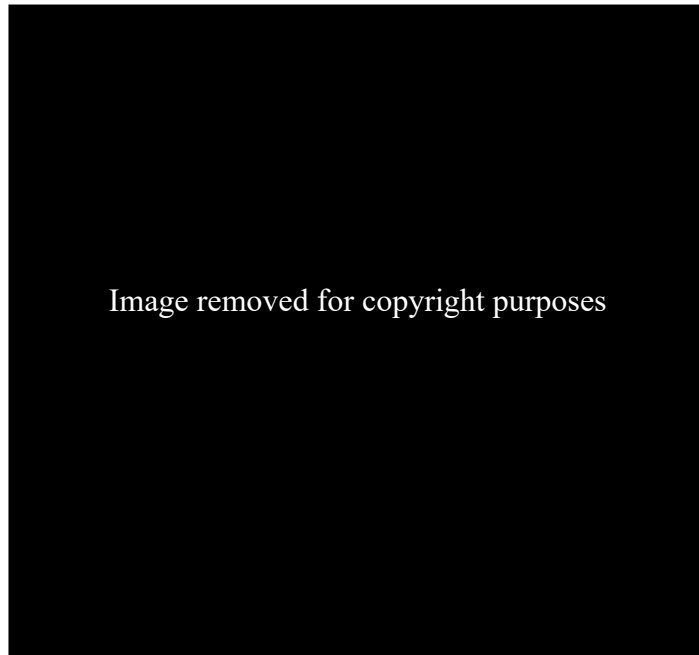


Figure 5. OCW Taylor, *The Crescent City Pictorial*, 1926.
Source: OCW Taylor, *The Crescent City Pictorial*, Tulane University Digital Library, accessed
2 December 2016,
<http://cdm16313.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16313coll63/id/35>.

In 1925 and 1926, local photographer Florestine Collins occupied advertising space in various New Orleans' publications. The advertisements were for her photographic studio which, at the time, was the only one in the city run by a Black woman photographer and in direct competition with many other male photographers. Yet Collins skilfully negotiated the limits placed on her gender into a unique marketing tool through her tactical use of advertising and

occupying space. A *New Orleans Herald* advertisement from 1925 stated that: “I Like to Make Pictures of Children.”¹ Collins also asked her potential customers: “why not a picture of the child with the first book bag, on the way to school for the first time – preserve that wonderful moment.”² Scholar Arthé A. Anthony maintains that this advertisement “appeals to mothers with its implications that as a woman photographer [Collins] had special skills for understanding the importance of critical moments in a child’s development.”³

Although Collins never had children herself, she used her gender and the assumptions that people made at the time to contribute to her status as a businesswoman. In a 1926 advertisement in the *Crescent City Pictorial: A Souvenir, Dedicated to the Progress of the Colored Citizens of New Orleans* – a one-off publication that profiled several leading Black-owned organisations and businesses in New Orleans – there is a self-portrait of Collins in which she sits centrally, and her direct gaze towards the viewer is emphasised by the fact that it is the only portrait on the page, meaning it immediately catches the reader’s eye (Fig. 5). In a second image, a small boy sits in the centre of the frame, dwarfed by the high ceilings and the downward angle created by the perspective of the room. Collins, standing to the viewer’s left, contrasts with this image: in her pale dress she frames the boy literally within the scene and spatially within the photograph. Here, we see Collins at work, not looking at the camera, with the contrast created by her dress emphasising her femininity. At the same time her disregard of the viewer and focus on her dress

¹ This advertisement appeared in the very first edition of the newspaper, before it was renamed *The Louisiana Weekly* one month later. Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 41.

² Arthé A. Anthony, “Florestine Perrault Collins and the Gendered Politics of Black Portraiture in 1920s New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 177.

³ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 74.

emphasises her status as a businesswoman. By claiming space for her own self-representation, and hence asserting her own identity and gender so directly in her advertisement, Collins is “cutting a figure” and placing herself at a competitive advantage over her male counterparts. As such, these periodicals – both of which were created by African Americans and dedicated to the “enlightening, ennobling and empowering people of color,” act as “spaces of agency,” as Collins’s advertisements claim spatio-symbolic space.⁴

The photographic portraitists considered in this chapter operated within a wide variety of geographic locations, professional and personal networks, and across different decades. What unites them is not just their race and mode of photographic practice, but their dedication to empowering their subjects by cultivating physical and metaphorical “spaces of agency.” As photographers, and through their photographs, these women engaged in acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation. Despite societal pressures largely restricting African American women portraitists to a domesticated studio space, as photographers, these women transformed these studios into sites through which to empower their local communities, often aided and enabled by a blended professional and personal network. They also occupied symbolic space, as these women challenged segregation in the white-dominated field of pictorialist photography and the male-dominated canon of the long Civil Rights Movement. The photographs these women took in turn created physical space to commemorate the sitter, with the resulting images frequently displayed in family homes, Black publications, or other sites of racial pride. Furthermore, these photographs occupy symbolic space as artifacts of a long Civil Rights

⁴ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 41.

Movement, demonstrating how those who posed for photographs were engaged with a politics of respectability in their occupation of space and how this constituted a form of everyday activism. By considering how these photographers created “spaces of agency” for themselves, their subjects, and their communities – whilst frequently portraying women as “agents of change” – we can broaden our understanding of the contribution of African American women’s photography to the long Civil Rights Movement.

The Portrait Studio and the Photographic Portrait as “Spaces of Agency”

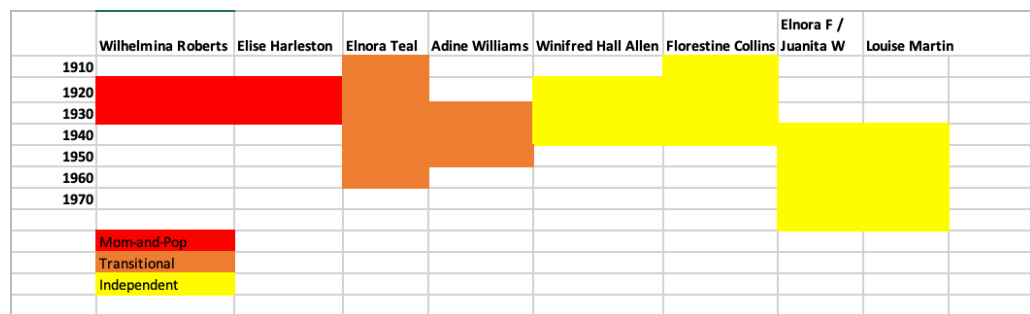


Figure 6. Emily Brady, *Chapter Outline Visual Guide*, 2020.

The networks that Black women portrait photographers navigated to achieve the careers which enabled them to claim and create these “spaces of agency” ranged from personal to professional. Some worked within familial networks, alongside their husbands, such as Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts, and Elise Forrest Harleston. “Mom-and-pops” studios were commonplace, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. Some other Black women photographers worked with their husbands until gaining their own studio space, such as Elnora Teal and Adine Williams. Others worked independently, such as

Florestine Collins, Winifred Hall Allen, Louise Martin, Elnora Frazier, and Juanita Williams. This chapter is orientated around these different categories of studio – from co-run “mom-and-pops,” to transitional and independent studios – and it considers figures according to chronological order and studio category. The above timeline demonstrates the structure of this chapter: it begins with the two “mom-and-pop” structured portraitists, Roberts and Harleston, who had stopped working by 1930 (Fig. 6). It then analyses the two transitional photographers who had stopped by 1960 – Teal and Williams. Finally, the timeline demonstrates the placement of the remaining independent photographers – Allen, Collins, Frazier, Williams and Martin – who took up the longest chronological period and whose studios were all closed by 1970.

This quasi-chronological approach allows this chapter to encompass several transitions: the shift from pictorialism to incorporation of modernism, the shift from women working in domesticated space to more public space, and the shift in the politics and values of the long Civil Rights Movement. Within these contexts, the politics of respectability shaped how African American women photographers worked within their communities. In terms of Black women’s activism, at the turn of the century, this often meant Black clubwomen chose “silence and secrecy” in the face of white, sexualised violence to counter “slandorous images.”⁵ Ideas of the ‘New Negro’ post-World War One governed individual behaviour according to standards of respectability and desires for racial uplift, yet often focussed on men’s attainments.

⁵ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, 93.

By the 1940s, however, Black women protested more publicly and received more public attention than ever before, as they increasingly testified about their experiences. The politics of respectability was often used to regulate African Americans' behaviour during the early twentieth century, but by the early part of the Cold War was utilised increasingly to "persuade national and international Cold War audiences of the humanity, dignity, and righteousness of Southern Black protesters whose acts of exposure undermined the international credibility of U.S.-American democratic capitalism."⁶ Although still paradoxical, the politics of respectability increasingly became a public weapon of protest. Portraiture played a key role in this – whilst in the 1950s and 1960s documentary photography was used to bring the realities of the horrors of the Civil Rights Movement into people's homes, portraiture allowed African Americans to celebrate their own personal and individualistic dignity in line with ideals of everyday activism. Although documentary photography captured protests, boycotts, marches and violent retaliations throughout the long Civil Rights Movement, portraiture functioned alongside it to capture the everyday dignity and aspirations of a community, grounded in the work of African American women.

As African American women photographers shifted from private, domesticated spaces (the studio) to public spaces (businesses and organisations), so too did their relationship to their communities. For all of the women in this thesis, the studio became a crucial "space of agency" wherein having a photograph taken became a community ritual. To use Collins as an

⁶ Katharina M. Fackler, "Ambivalent Frames: Rosa Parks and the Visual Grammar of Respectability," *Souls* 18, no. 2 (2016): 272.

example, Arthé A. Anthony maintains that for members of the New Orleans community, “dressing up symbolised the transformation they underwent when they were no longer at work, where they were expected to be deferential to whites in manner and dress.”⁷ The physical space of the studio provided a reason for communities to “dress up” and “transform” in a Black-owned space away from the gaze of whites. As resident Mrs Ruth Barthélemy stated, for each of her children she made “two stops: the church for baptism, and the photographer.”⁸ As portrait studios became cornerstones of their communities, the physical spaces they occupied became crucial “spaces of agency,” and the act of occupying space by visiting the studio can be understood as an act of everyday activism rooted in leisure and pleasure. Yet it was not just the studio that functioned as a physical space. The photographs that these women produced were symbolic spaces imbued with key values and beliefs. These photographic objects were not just ornaments; they were weapons of defiance and racial pride.

Symbolically, African American women photographers made spatial interventions within the canon of a long Civil Rights Movement, the history of Black women’s work, and within the canon of pictorialism. African American activists were well aware of the power of portrait photography by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass praised the invention of photography, stating that “the humblest servant girl may now possess a picture of herself such as the wealth of kings could not

⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁸ Anthony, “Florestine Perrault Collins,” 177.

purchase fifty years ago.”⁹ Douglass also became the most photographed American of the nineteenth century, having sat for over 160 photographic portraits.¹⁰ By cultivating space for himself within the realm of portraiture – both symbolically by being photographed and asserting his dignity, and physically by producing photographs for display – Douglass recognised both the accessibility of photography, and the potential of images as tools for abolition.

Other activists such as Ida B. Wells and W. E. B. Du Bois recognised photography’s power as a “space of agency,” and cultivated space within their publications for portraiture. Campaigner and journalist Ida B. Wells used portrait photography as one way to combat the horrific lynching of African Americans. Leigh Raiford notes of Wells’s anti-lynching campaign that she “chose to arm herself with photography as a weapon in her arsenal of evidence.”¹¹ Portrait photography was a key component of this, as Raiford notes:

Just as photographs of executed African Americans relayed the raw violence of lynching and the abjection of the black figure, the genre of portraiture conferred and confirmed black dignity, respectability, and humanity. Wells augmented her literature with professionally made photographs of lynchings, of herself, and of a lynch victim’s loved ones left behind in order to present a fuller picture of what was at stake in the fight against lynching: black womanhood, the sanctity of the black family, and the credibility of American civilization as a whole.¹²

⁹ Shawn Michelle Smith and Maurice O. Wallace, “Introduction: Pictures and Progress,” in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of Early African American Identity*, eds. Shawn Michelle Smith and Maurice O. Wallace (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.

¹⁰ John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century’s Most Photographed American* (New York & London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), ix.

¹¹ Leigh Raiford, “Ida B. Wells and the Shadow Archive,” in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 299.

¹² Ibid.

In Wells's hands, a family portrait became a testament to the loss of a family member, husband and father. Wells was not alone in cultivating space for portrait photography in activism at the turn of the century. Founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) and editor of *The Crisis* magazine, W.E.B. Du Bois famously stated that, "all art is propaganda and ever must be [...] I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda."¹³ That Du Bois took this attitude is notable given the prominent role of photography and portraiture in *The Crisis* magazine. On multiple occasions, portraits of children appeared on the front cover, which suggests that Du Bois viewed these seemingly domesticated images as "propaganda," through which to challenge the racism of the white population.¹⁴ That Du Bois dedicated significant space within his publication to portraiture demonstrates the medium's capacity for activism. Du Bois recognised the power of portrait photography, and so cultivated "spaces of activism" where such images could be prominently displayed to the magazine's Black readers.

However, the object of the photographic portrait did not derive its power from merely being displayed in public spaces, such as in print publications. Contemporary academics such as bell hooks have echoed Du Bois's statement that art and propaganda blend together within the portrait, yet further this understanding to encapsulate the domestic, private space as well. hooks notes that, "the photos on my grandfather's wall were propaganda meant to counter all the other negative propaganda I was bombarded with every

¹³ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," *The Crisis*, October 1926, 295.

¹⁴ *The Crisis*, October 1912, 261–312.

day.”¹⁵ hooks argues that photography forged within a private sphere can have a powerful impact on the viewer and the subject. hooks asserts that the images in Southern African American homes functioned as “sites of resistance” and “a space where [...] dehumanization could be countered.”¹⁶ In other words, portrait photography functioned as a “space of agency” as the artifact of the photograph could be prominently displayed in the family home. This allowed not just for the depiction of the subject in line with aesthetic ideals that imply respectability and racial pride, but also as a space which rejects white supremacist views – an act of everyday activism alongside visiting the studio. The role of portraiture had a symbiotic relationship with more conventional Civil Rights Movement photography, as the photography of the streets asserted the struggle in public space, whilst portraiture asserted the intrinsic dignity of the Black community in private space. This spatio-symbolic reclamation reveals the empowering nature of portrait photography in the long Civil Rights Movement, and the importance of the photographers who cultivated such spaces.

The women in this thesis did not just claim space in the canon of the long Civil Rights Movement, however. A key facet of African American women’s portraiture in the early twentieth century was the white-dominated aesthetic mode of pictorialism. Since the late nineteenth century, white women had cultivated pictorialism to suggest that femininity was a desirable skill in photography. Whilst white women had, according to Naomi Rosenblum “been

¹⁵ James Estrin, “Honoring the Legacy of African-American Women,” *The New York Times*, *Kolumn Magazine*, 26 May 2016, <http://www.kolumnmagazine.com/2016/05/26/honoring-legacy-african-american-women/>.

¹⁶ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 59.

actively involved with photography ever since the medium was first introduced in 1839,” this was mostly in behind-the-scenes roles.¹⁷ The turning point for white women in photography came with two important factors: the debates surrounding whether photography could be considered ‘art,’ and the increasing accessibility of the equipment following the invention of the Kodak camera in 1888. This set the stage for pictorialism, of which Judith Davidov states: “Pictorialist photographers, one might say, wished to preserve in their carefully crafted pictures the very thing Walter Benjamin declared dead after the invention of photography: the *aura*, the unique and irreproducible quality that made pictorial a work ‘art.’”¹⁸ In this way, pictorialism was more about capturing a sense of feeling and emotion than it was about capturing scientific truth, although the two naturally bled into each other as photographers staged and constructed the truth. Rather than a site of scientific study, the pictorialist’s studio functioned as a fantasy, theatrical, and performative space. For the first time in photographic history, women’s assumed femininity was a desirable trait. Rosenblum writes that “women were supposed to have an intrinsic artistry that enabled them to convey each individual’s character and to understand the virtue of indefiniteness, which brought the camera image closer to hand-made art.”¹⁹ Yet these were not neutral images. Davidov notes of key pictorialist Gertrude Käsebier that her “special interest in studies of mothers and children had to do with her interest in progressive child-raising methods.”²⁰ As such, Käsebier used the realm of pictorialism and portraiture to

¹⁷ Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers* (London, New York & Paris: Abbeville Press, 1994), 7.

¹⁸ Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women’s Camera: Self / Body / Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 52.

¹⁹ Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 75.

²⁰ Davidov, *Women’s Camera*, 60.

advocate for her progressive agenda. And as white women cultivated symbolic and physical space for themselves in photographic practice through pictorialism, whilst utilising the aesthetic convention to promote their own political ideals, so too did African American women.

Given the prevalence of African American women photographers in the field of portraiture, this chapter considers the work of nine women. As such, they will not be interrogated in the depth that figures in subsequent chapters are; in particular, photographic analysis will be more limited in scope. This allows not only for a comprehensive look at the genre of portraiture, but also for a comparative perspective between the women. Those whose careers were closely entangled with their husbands – Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts and Elise Forrest Harleston – tended to largely occupy domesticated spaces, and appeared in the early 1910s to 1930s. These “mom-and-pops” studios demonstrate the importance of personal networks to professional careers. Those who worked in transitional studios – Elnora Teal and Adine Williams – represent a shift that took place when notions of Black women’s work changed in the 1930s, as photography became a more acceptable career. Finally, the women who worked entirely independently of their husbands – such as Florestine Collins, Winifred Hall Allen, Louise Martin, Elnora Frazier, and Juanita Williams – often traversed professional networks, empowered by other photographers in their communities. These women were all “agents of change” who championed dignified representation for their communities. All of these photographers navigated the complicated politics of respectability that shaped their personal lives, professional careers, and portrait aesthetics. In so doing, they cultivated “spaces of agency” in physical and symbolic terms by claiming

space for both their photographs and their careers as photographers, to represent those in their communities.

“Mom-and-Pop” Studios

During the early twentieth century, many women worked closely in photographic studios with their husbands. In 1920, Alice W. Chambers noted that, “in no other profession could a wife be as much assistance to her husband without technical knowhow,” resulting in the emergence of “mom-and-pop” studios.²¹ Within these “mom-and-pop” studios, the network of marriage was crucial to the careers of many African American women, including Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts in Columbia, South Carolina, and Elise Forrest Harleston in Charleston, South Carolina. As such, whilst these studios functioned as “spaces of agency,” the blending of personal and professional networks complicates a simplistic reading of the lives and works of these women. For instance, Harleston took photographs from which her husband painted, creating a unique and complex power dynamic wherein artistic intent and authorship was blurred. Nonetheless, these women both created and claimed symbolic and physical space through these operations.

These photographers occupied the physical space of the studio in line with gender expectations and notions of respectability of the time, particularly in the segregated South, where the Black community were frequently not permitted to enter white-owned studios. Whilst the husband tended to be the primary photographer and business owner, with the wife in a supportive role,

²¹ Alice W. Chambers, “Of Interest to Women,” *Camera* 24 (August 1920): 436.

she was nevertheless an active agent in the business. Typically, her work was consigned to the studio space, whilst her husband was able to take photographs in public space. Symbolically, presenting an image of a family business was an effective marketing tool to appeal to local communities, in addition to a collaborative business strategy. As Rosenblum notes, “prewar ideas often held sway in this branch of photography,” as aesthetics remained rooted in traditional family values and pictorialist portraiture.²² However, Rosenblum also states that these “mom-and-pop” studios were “relatively unsophisticated ventures,” which disregards both the artistic merits of the studio, and their role in challenging white supremacist notions of Black inferiority.²³ The photographs produced by these studios occupied physical space in family homes and within the publications or exhibitions in which they appeared, and they displayed African American members of the community occupying space in line with the politics of respectability. The taking and displaying of these images became a form of everyday activism for those in the Black community.

Within this history, there are many details and figures about whom little is known. As the decades have passed, many of the stories and images of the women who sought this unusual career have been lost and their space within photographic history diminished. For instance, Jennie Louise Touissant Welcome opened a studio with her husband, yet none of her work has survived today.²⁴ This should not, however, be misconstrued as a suggestion that the

²² Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 150.

²³ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁴ The Touissant Conservatory of Art and Music opened in 1910, with an advertisement in *Crisis* magazine declaring Welcome “the foremost female artist of the race.” Welcome’s known work focused on the achievements of Black soldiers in World War One, including creating a documentary called *Doing Their Bit* and a lithograph celebrating the 369th Coloured Infantry. Although important to acknowledge, and dedicated to depicting racial pride through creating patriotic material, a lack of surviving material hinders detailed discussion in this

women who I have been able to source for this thesis had any more or less impact on their communities and on photographic history than other Black women photographers in the early to mid-twentieth century. The photographic industry was one in which the artists themselves may not have viewed their work as particularly historically or culturally significant; for many women, photography may have simply been a financial means to an end, or a way to collaborate with their husbands. This means that sometimes photographers did not attach much significance to their photographs as objects or artefacts, and so their images were lost to time. For instance, Jewelle Anderson describes how Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, writer of *Viewfinders*, discovered a cache of Winifred Hall Allen's photographs:

[Moutoussamy-Ashe] interviewed Winifred Hall Allen, a contemporary of the late Mr. VanDerZee, in her small apartment. There she found three boxes of negatives stored at the top of a closet. They were infested with cockroaches and Allen had to be persuaded to let Ashe take some of the negatives away to clean them up. The three boxes represented less than half of her collection. The rest she'd destroyed feeling that they had no value. Her sense of the prevailing culture's sentiments about their lack of worth was, of course, sadly accurate.²⁵

As such, the archive of African American women's portraiture is incomplete. A further challenge to presenting this history is the conflation of studio photography, in which the photography produced in a studio was credited to the studio's primary owner, who was typically the husband. Many studios stamped all their images with only the name of the studio, making it difficult to ascertain the individual photographer who had taken the picture. Despite

chapter. See: Pearl Bowser, "Pioneers of Black Documentary Film," in *Struggles for Representation: African American Documentary Film and Video*, edited by Phyllis R. Klotman and Janet K. Cutler (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 17.

²⁵ Jewelle Gomez, "A Century of Black Women Photographed," in *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from the 1850s to the Present*, ed. Liz Heron and Val Williams (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 452.

challenging archival silences, the women in these studios nevertheless occupied and claimed both symbolic and physical space in order to create “spaces of agency” for their communities.

“She and My Father Started a Mission”: Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts and the Roberts Art Studio

Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts worked within the personal network of her marriage in order to access a professional career, and to claim space in a photographic studio. As such, Roberts also claimed symbolic space in both the history of photography, including pictorialism, and in the long Civil Rights Movement. Roberts’s photographs, in turn, functioned as “spaces of agency” in which her community could see themselves in line with a politics of respectability. The act of visiting the studio to be photographed and displaying those photographs prominently in the home, can be understood as acts of everyday activism. However, within the contemporary canon, Roberts’s photography has not received due recognition. In 2019, Thomas L. Johnson and Phillip C. Dunn’s *A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts* was reprinted for the first time since 1994. This collection of nearly two hundred photographs offers a seemingly comprehensive look at the Roberts Art Studio, and was met with an “immediate, widespread, and gratifying” response.²⁶ Yet the text fails to acknowledge the contribution of Wilhelmina Pearl Selena Roberts, the wife of Richard Roberts, to the studio.

²⁶ Thomas L. Johnson, “Afterword: The Odyssey of *A True Likeness*,” in *A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts, 1920-1936*, eds. Thomas L. Johnson and Phillip C. Dunn (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2019), First published 1986, 202.

During the mornings, Richard Roberts worked at the post office, and so left the studio in the hands of others. Johnson suggests that this work was mainly left in the hands of photographic assistants, such as Janie Paris,²⁷ acknowledging that “when an assistant was not available, Mrs. Roberts tended the studio.”²⁸ Yet as early as 1985, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe championed Wilhelmina Roberts’s role as a photographer in her text *Viewfinders*. As one of the women profiled, Moutoussamy-Ashe places Roberts’s experiences alongside several of her own photographs, which she has identified as Roberts’s. None of these appear in the collection of Johnson and Dunn. Whilst the collection does make clear the support which Roberts provided to her husband, and profiles her, according to her daughter, as “a small, energetic, talented woman who ‘lived education,’ worked hard, and responded to the appeal of anyone in need,” the collection denies Roberts agency as a photographer within her own right.²⁹ As such, Roberts is denied space in the history of photography and the long Civil Rights Movement. Nonetheless, Roberts was an “agent of change” who made a powerful contribution to her local community, cultivating a studio space and producing photographs that functioned as “spaces of agency.”

A college educated, family-orientated woman, Roberts took photographs in the studio which her self-taught husband ran; following their

²⁷ Many photography studios would employ photographic assistants, a substantial number of whom were women. In addition to Paris, examples including Bernedice Wesley, who worked with Winifred Hall Allen, Lucille Moore with Elnora Teal, and Valrian Burrell Montgomery with Florestine Collins.

²⁸ Thomas L. Johnson, “Richard Samuel Roberts: An Introduction,” in *A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts, 1920-1936*, eds. Thomas L. Johnson and Phillip C. Dunn (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2019), First published 1986, 7.

²⁹ *A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts, 1920-1936*, eds. Thomas L. Johnson and Phillip C. Dunn (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2019), First published 1986, 7.

marriage in 1902, the couple moved to Columbia, South Carolina with their eight children in 1920. Richard opened The Roberts's Art Studio later that year.³⁰ Despite the studio being Richard's venture, Roberts "learned from her husband the mechanics of the camera," managing the studio and taking photographs when he was at work at his "income-producing job."³¹ Roberts took the initiative to read photographic books, thus gaining her own knowledge on the subject, despite having no formal training or instruction aside from that which her husband taught her.³² Her passion for motherhood came through in her photography. Roberts's daughter noted that "my mother was crazy about babies," and that she often combined her own childcare with her work as a photographer, stating that "she was sort of minding her own baby while she was taking the picture of this other child."³³ These images of children became Roberts's area of expertise. Although Roberts never took photographs outside of the studio, Roberts's gender and familial network became intrinsic to the "spaces of agency" that she cultivated.

³⁰ Wilhelmina Roberts Wynn, "Wilhelmina Roberts: Black Woman Photographer," Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

³¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 40.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Wilhelmina Roberts Wynn, interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, "Interview," 1-2, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.



Figure 7. Wilhelmina Roberts, *Wilhelmina Robert's daughter*, date unknown.
Source: Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (New York & London: Writers & Readers Publishing, Inc., 1993), 41.

Roberts's images of children demonstrate how her photographs showed African Americans occupying space with an emphasis on respectability, as well as how central children were to her own professional career. The photograph Roberts took of her own daughter underlines the notions of respectability within pictorialism (Fig. 7). In this image, the young girl wears a white dress framed against a dark background. The pictorialist aesthetic is apparent in the use of domestic, feminine props, such as the chaise longue, which performs the dual function of creating a stylish portrait and suggesting affluence. In this way, the image of a young child performs the respectability and middle-class aspirations of the family. This is an aspiration that, according to her daughter, Roberts understood all too well. As her mother was once enslaved, this meant that Roberts "was trying very hard to become educated and move away from slavery and I think it was important to her how people

looked.”³⁴ As Roberts’s daughter maintains, “she felt photography was an important record. She and my father started a mission.”³⁵ This idea of photography as a “mission” speaks to the everyday activist connotations, as well as her emphasis on creating a symbolic space for an archive of her family images. To record one’s family at their best, and fulfil middle-class aspirations, was a desire that the Roberts family’s enslaved past perhaps entrenched in Roberts’s photographic staging and her subject’s occupation of space. Roberts’s use of pictorialism was an act of spatio-symbolic reclamation, as she used the white-dominated form in order to portray her subjects within an acceptable politics of respectability for the era.



Figure 8. Wilhelmina Roberts, *Grandmother with three children*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 42.

Roberts’s image *Grandmother with three children* further demonstrated how she utilised the conventions of pictorialism to advocate for respectability

³⁴ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 15.

³⁵ Ibid.

within the space of her photographs (Fig. 8). The contrast between the white dresses and the dark background, use of props in the form of balloons, and soft focus give this image a feminine quality. In addition, what little can be seen of the painted backdrop suggests flowers, curtains, and a painted bay window, which is again consistent with the romantic qualities of pictorialism within a domestic setting. Whilst in portraiture it was common for subjects to hold objects of symbolic significance – for instance, a man seeking to appear intelligent might hold a book – here the grandmother at the centre of the image holds the hands of her granddaughters in her lap. We can also see that she rests one of her hands on the shoulder of her granddaughter. In this way, Roberts shows her subjects intimately sharing space, creating an image that cultivates a sense of a close, interlinked family. The family gaze directly into the camera, meeting the eye of the viewer. This creates an empowering impression of the woman, placing her at the centre of her entwined family unit, in the same way that Roberts was an “agent of change” in her own family. This is consistent with the conventions of standard photographic portraiture of the early twentieth century, whereby meeting the gaze of the camera brought the viewer into the image, thus creating “the necessary incorporation of the viewer’s gaze into the subject matter of portraiture.”³⁶

The fashion of the subjects also indicates respectability, as the subjects are dressed in fine, conservative clothing, consistent with the clothing style worn for church at the time. Clothing is a key signifier of the politics of respectability, as Tanisha C. Ford states that a respectable outfit worn outside of the home in this era consisted of “clothing that covered most of the body,

³⁶ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Islington: Reaktion Books Limited, 1991), 8.

including long skirts or dresses and long-sleeved shirtwaist blouses in white or pinstripe.”³⁷ In addition, “their hair was straightened and neatly put into buns or French twists, and accessories such as gloves, hats, and post earrings lent a sense of refinement and sartorial elegance that could distinguish a woman with professional training from a working-class woman.”³⁸ This image, therefore, signals that the subjects of the photograph are a united, dignified, family with middle-class aspirations, in line with the politics of respectability. By creating a space in which this family could embody these ideals in defiance of racism, Roberts served as an active agent of change who presented her community as they wished to be seen and celebrated.

Yet Roberts did not just cultivate space through her photographs – as a photographer, Roberts created space for herself both within the history of photography and the physical space of the studio. Wilhelmina Roberts did not enter the world of photography until she married her photographer husband in 1902 at the age of 19, and did not become an active photographer until her husband opened his own studio. Outside of the studio, Richard did not permit his wife and daughters to work because, according to Wilhelmina and Richard’s daughter, “he knew that segregation would be too much. He didn’t want us to experience that.”³⁹ However, within the context of his studio, Wilhelmina Roberts was able to experience working life and develop her own artistic voice. What began as Roberts selling homemade cookies in the waiting area of the studio, in a classically gendered form of labour, soon evolved into a

³⁷ Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 70.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wilhelmina Roberts Wynn, “Interview,” 17.

more photographic role.⁴⁰ When asked what her mother's most important contribution to the studio was, Roberts's daughter stated:

I think it was in meeting the people who came there, and they had confidence in her, and I think they were then able to be more relaxed when Dad took the pictures. Also, she was the one who designed a little dressing room and kept it supplied with things that people would use to comb and brush their hair when they came in.⁴¹

The ability of Roberts to set her clients at ease was a vital skill, echoed by contemporaries such as Alfred Wilkes, who noted that "the ability to take a sitter out of his painful self-consciousness is one of a photographer's most valuable assets."⁴² Roberts also helped pose the subjects whilst her husband took their pictures and adjusted their clothing and appearance accordingly. Roberts's role can be read as a traditionally maternal one as she set subjects at ease, undertaking gendered labour to cultivate a physical "space of agency" in the studio – one that is imbued with feminine notions of respectability, cultivating the studio as a private, intimate, family-orientated space.

When Richard Roberts died in 1936, Wilhelmina Roberts "closed the studio and sold the equipment," as she and Richard "had built a close relationship centred on taking pictures."⁴³ She never worked in photography again. Although Roberts's son Gerald attempted to take over the studio, she served a purely advisory role and the studio quickly closed. Roberts's community, and perhaps Wilhelmina herself, viewed photography as intrinsically linked to her role as a mother and a wife, and hence her ability to

⁴⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁴¹ Ibid, 8.

⁴² Alfred Wilkes, "Photography at Customers' Homes," *Wilson's Photographic Magazine* (May 1901), 177.

⁴³ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 41.

occupy the physical space of the studio hinged on her husband. Whilst this means that upon her husband's death she gave up the career that she had been developing, and the network of marriage limited what she was able to photograph and how much credit she received for it, it also means that her work reflected the aspirations and desires of her community, both behind the camera and in front of it. As such, the physical and symbolic "spaces of agency" which Roberts claimed reflected the nature of the politics of respectability that governed the content of Roberts's photographs and the spaces she was able to occupy. Nonetheless, Roberts's images show that she was an early "agent of change" who, despite the limitations she faced, championed her community – in the space of the studio, and within the white-dominated medium of pictorialism. To requote Deborah Willis, she was a true "ambassador" to her community.

"Two Hearts That Beat As One": Elise Forrest Harleston and the Harleston Studio

When a local newspaper reported on the 1921 marriage of Edwin A. Harleston and Elise B. Forrest, it described their union under the heading "'Two Hearts That Beat As One' In the City by the Sea."⁴⁴ Their marriage was not just one of kinship and love; it also marked the beginning of a business venture between the two in spring 1922. For the next few years, the Harleston Studio in Charleston, South Carolina produced representations of the African

⁴⁴ "Two Hearts That Beat As One In The City By The Sea," Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 16, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

American community, as Edwin painted portraits directly from the photographic portraits that Elise Forrest Harleston took. Yet the newspaper announcing their marriage did not frame their upcoming venture as one of equal partners. The reporter describes Mr Harleston as “an artist of pronounced ability [who] has done some highly credible work painting portraits of well-known men of the race,” and Mrs Harleston as someone who, alongside her experience as a teacher and clerk, “has also given some time to the study of photography.”⁴⁵ As such, the reporter created a sense that Edwin was the primary artist, whilst Harleston was framed almost as a hobbyist. This belies the fact that Harleston was instrumental in cultivating both the space of the studio and the photographs and portraits themselves as “spaces of agency.”

As a photographer, Harleston utilised personal networks in line with the politics of respectability to claim space in the photographic studio, and she challenged both the white-dominated pictorialist canon, and the male-dominated long Civil Rights Movement. Harleston’s photographs, in turn, cultivated space within the homes in which they were displayed as a kind of everyday activism. This photography, furthermore, demonstrates the sitters’ compliance with the politics of respectability. Yet despite this importance, Harleston’s omission has continued into subsequent decades, as art historians continue to neglect the role that Elise Harleston played within the Harleston Studio. In recent years Edwin Harleston has been increasingly lauded as a key artist of the Charleston Renaissance, a period of artistic awakening in Charleston between World War One and World War Two.⁴⁶ During an

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Susan V. Donaldson, “Charleston’s Racial Politics of Historic Preservation: The Case of Edwin A. Harleston,” in *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low*

exhibition of his work at Your Heritage House in 1983, the exhibition guide notes that “without Elise’s assistance and encouragement, it would have been impossible for Teddy to work in the undertaking business, execute his painting, and give so generously of his time to the community.”⁴⁷ Yet this exhibit, whilst discussing Elise Harleston’s role in the business and as a photographer, fails to include any of Harleston’s images, or consider her work on its own merit. As such, Harleston is denied space in the canon of photographic history despite the importance of her work in cultivating space for those in her community.

As with Roberts, the personal network of marriage was crucial to Harleston’s ability to function as a photographer in the physical space of the studio. However, Harleston also traversed professional networks, albeit at the behest of her husband. During her time at the E. Brunel School of Photography in New York in 1919, Edwin asked her to “Find out for me, please, every fine point about photographing a drawing and a painting for patent reasons – we may need it someday.”⁴⁸ It is revealing that Edwin asked her to do it “for me,” suggesting that she undertook work directly on his behalf. This is further compounded when Harleston wrote, whilst teasing him on why he had not yet proposed to her, “Or don’t you want to send me to that school of Photography any more yet again?”⁴⁹ Reading further extracts of their correspondence, Harleston wrote to Edwin that:

Country, 1900-1940, eds. James M. Hutchisson & Harlan Greene (University of Georgia Press, 2003), 176.

⁴⁷ “Edwin A. Harleston: Painter of an Era 1882-1931,” 18, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection 1985-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁴⁸ Mae Whitlock Gentry, “Elise Forrest Harleston,” *African-Americans and South Carolina*, accessed 24 May 2017, <http://polisci.usca.edu/aasc/EliseForrestHarleston.htm>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

I am the only woman, there is one other colored, a young man from Wilson, N.C, and a Jap. Then there are Jews, Germans and Danish. They are very polite and today, everyone wanted to show me something. The instructor is a young man, German I think, I can hardly understand him.⁵⁰

This illustrates how unusual it was that a Black woman would undergo training at this time. Following her graduation in 1921, Edwin suggested that Harleston study at the Tuskegee Institute, as he “sensed in Elise much more latent talent,” and “he was still away most of the time.”⁵¹ Whilst there, Harleston was able to study under C. M. Battey, who was described by *Crisis* magazine as, “one of the few colored photographers who has gained real artistic success.”⁵² Although her training was at the instruction of her husband, Harleston emerged from her studies as a proficient photographer, enabled by the network of her marriage to enter into male-dominated educational establishments.

The Harleston Studio opened in 1922. Although Edwin Harleston became renowned, with famous poets such as Langston Hughes entering his studio and Du Bois referring to Edwin as “the leading portrait artist of the race,” racial prejudice dogged his career.⁵³ He had to keep up business as an undertaker whilst simultaneously pursuing a career as an artist, often storing caskets in the Harleston Studio.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the studio was a “space of agency” that in turn produced work that represented the community around them and how they wished to be seen. Edwin proclaimed his beliefs when he

⁵⁰ “Letter from Elise to her husband,” Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 16, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁵¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 34.

⁵² Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 39.

⁵³ “Edwin Harleston: 1882-1931,” The Johnson Collection, accessed 25 April 2017, <http://thejohnsoncollection.org/edwin-harleston/>.

⁵⁴ “Edwin Harleston 1882-1931,” *Gibbes Museum*, accessed 12 April 2017, <http://www.qivmg.com/gibbes/html/harlest/harlestf.htm>.

wrote to Elise of his plan to carry on the legacy of Henry Ossawa Tanner, the first internationally acclaimed African American portrait painter, by portraying African Americans “in our varied lives and types with the classic technique and the truth, not caricatures . . . to do the dignified portrait and take the picturesque composition of arrangements or scenes showing the thousand and one interests of our group in industry, religion, general social contact.”⁵⁵ As such, Edwin Harleston’s work was preoccupied with making his clients appear in line with the politics of respectability, in order to counter stereotypes and harmful beliefs about African Americans. Due to the closeness of their partnership and work, we can assume that Elise shared these ideals, and she represented her subjects in line with this view. Indeed, it is clear just how closely Edwin imitated Harleston’s work when the paintings and photographs are compared side by side.

⁵⁵ “Edwin Harleston: 1882-1931,” The Johnson Collection.



Figure 9. Elise Forrest Harleston, *Miss Bailey with the African Shawl*, 1930.
Source: Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.



Figure 10. Edwin A. Harleston, *Miss Bailey with the African Shawl*, 1930.
Source: "Miss Bailey with the African Shawl," *ArtNet*, accessed 2 May 2017, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/edwin-augustus-harleston/miss-bailey-with-the-african-shawl-BXQMXKTDGtYhU3IkpdsMHg2>.

Edwin's *Portrait of Miss Sue Bailey with the African Shawl* (Fig. 10) is based on Harleston's *Photograph of Miss Sue Bailey* (Fig. 9), and the painting is a near-perfect copy of the photograph. The posing of the figure, with the hands crossed in the lap, modest clothing, and fashionable yet demure hair style is consistent with the idea of "the New Negro." Although no set definition of the 'New Negro' exists, Deborah Willis posits that this was a "new intellectual community" who were "proud of their race, self-reliant, and demanded full citizenship rights."⁵⁶ Focussing on middle-class notions and aesthetics, this ideology privileged a masculine identity, as it largely "cast women in a supporting role" in the movement.⁵⁷ Yet here the Harlestons make a woman central to the frame. The prominence of the term "African shawl" in the caption indicates its importance: the shawl draws on portrait conventions from the 19th century, calling to mind the self-portraits that Sojourner Truth used to call for the abolition of slavery, and which were consistent with Southern ideals of female propriety, adding an "African" twist on this conventional imagery.⁵⁸ Whilst every photographer had to tread the line of portraying their female subjects as either an example of white Republican Motherhood at one extreme or a 'jezebel' at the other, the Southern conservative ideals of respectability rooted the images in a more nineteenth century style synonymous with the former, particularly for the older generation. The 'New Negro Woman' that Harleston presents is brought to life

⁵⁶ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 35.

⁵⁷ Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, *Portraits of the New Negro Woman: Visual and Literary Culture in the Harlem Renaissance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), xviii.

⁵⁸ Consideration of Sojourner Truth and her utilisation of portrait photography is explored further in the conclusion. See: Augusta Rohrbach, "Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).

in Edwin's image, with the addition of colour, removal of background furniture (such as the curtain), and closer emphasis on the face of the sitter. Harleston's image, when compared directly with Edwin's interpretation of it, shows just how instrumental Harleston's images were to Edwin's success. Many of Harleston's photographs have a thumb tack imprint on their corners, showing where Edwin attached them to his easel while painting.⁵⁹ Not only does this emphasise the network of marriage within Harleston's work, as the role of her husband was central, it also reveals how notions of respectability governed the imagery that Harleston produced. In this way, Harleston and her husband cultivated "spaces of agency" in which Harleston could practice photography, and they could represent their community in line with notions of respectability. In this way, Harleston engaged in spatio-symbolic reclamation of white-dominated modes of representation – pictorialism and painted portraiture.



Figure 11. Elise Harleston, *Market woman*, date unknown.

⁵⁹ "Edwin A. Harleston: Painter of an Era 1882-1931," 17.

Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 39.



Figure 12. Elise Harleston, *Chimney Sweep*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 39.

Notably, Elise Harleston’s “spaces of agency” were not always tied to notions of respectability rooted in a middle-class identity, nor were the acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation limited to one class dynamic. The images of the market woman (Fig. 11) and chimney sweep (Fig. 12) are less traditional in their nature, as they are body-length images, and the backdrop is deliberately blank. In contrast to some of the elaborately painted backdrops in other photographs, or backgrounds that are kept dark to provide contrast with the subject’s pale clothing, this blank space is a marked departure. This provides no distraction from the people posing within the photo, who meet the camera’s gaze directly. The centrality of the subject’s working tools to the images – including the market woman’s baskets and trays, and the chimney sweep’s walking stick and apparatus on his back – gives the image a sense of credibility. However, their clothing, whilst undeniably well-worn, is neat and

clean, indicative of the middle-class need to convey working people in a way that is aesthetically pleasing within portraiture. Hence, Harleston presents her subjects within a form of working-class dignity, through her lens of middle-class decorum. In this way, Harleston conveyed a sense of working-class respectability in her photography, as these particular images were a testament to the sacrifices and hardships that the older generation had endured and survived for the next generation. These photographs demonstrate one of the photographic “spaces of agency” which Harleston cultivated in order to uplift their communities.

Despite some of the artistic freedom that their relationship offered, Harleston’s career remained inextricably tied to that of her husband, and she rarely photographed outside of the studio space. As in the case of the Roberts’s Studio, when Edwin died of pneumonia in 1931, Harleston shut down the studio and did not practice photography again. One of the last images she took was of Edwin’s “flower-covered, unmarked grave.”⁶⁰ According to her great-niece, “Elise never spoke of her first husband or her work as a photographer, but for almost 40 years, she saved all of Edwin’s letters and nearly two dozen of her glass-plate negatives, a cache that was discovered after her death.”⁶¹ Like the other women in this section of the chapter, Harleston’s marriage formed a foundational network and a gateway into a professional and artistic space. Harleston worked to cultivate several “spaces of agency”: she helped build her husband’s studio, created photographs which depicted her community in a way that captured its members’ dignity and respectability, and,

⁶⁰ Gentry, “Elise Forrest Harleston.”

⁶¹ Ibid.

alongside the other women in this chapter, contributed to the canon of early twentieth-century photography and the long Civil Rights Movement.

Transitional Studios

Whilst there were many African American women who never practiced photography outside of the studios run by their husbands, there were others to whom the network of marriage was a gateway to a more independent career. Whether through bereavement, divorce, or by the expansion of their business into multiple sites, the women in this section of the chapter transitioned from being assistants in their husband's studios to owning and operating a studio in their own right. As such, they cultivated "spaces of agency" with their photographs and as photographers independently of their husbands. Elnora Teal in Houston, Texas, and Adine Williams in New Orleans, Louisiana were "agents of change" who represent a transition in the networks available to women, and indicate that, whilst their husband's support was necessary for starting their studios, over the subsequent years it became increasingly societally acceptable and possible for them to run studios independently. These dates defy easy categorisation, as the dates in which some studios spaces were opened is vague. Nevertheless, it is apparent that by the 1940s women photographers who were established in their local communities were able to branch out on their own. As such, they were able to cultivate physical space within their photographic studios, and symbolically intervene in photographic histories of Black Americans. They enabled the people in their communities to both be photographed and display their images in their homes, in an act of

everyday activism. These women also attempted to operate within a more public space than in previous decades, and often resisted photographing in an entirely studio-based setting. Crucially, by the 1940s, the role of pictorialism in Black women's portraiture was gradually replaced by a more modern approach with the photography of Teal and Williams, and their emphasis on capturing the reality of the sitter. Pictorialism still informed many portraiture conventions – such as a focus on contrast and femininity – yet some features of this, such as painted fantastical backdrops, began to fall out of fashion. The photographs themselves functioned in multiple spaces – from the walls of homes to yearbooks – and further our understanding of an early Civil Rights visual aesthetic rooted in a politics of respectability that still evoked middle-class propriety.

A key example of this is the figure of Rosa Parks, who famously sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott with her refusal to obey segregationist practices on a bus in 1955. Whilst Rosa Parks was portrayed as following the principles of the politics of respectability, as someone whose “class background, moral reputation, and public record could withstand withering white scrutiny and inspire African-American unity,” she nevertheless risked racist retaliation in taking her stance.⁶² Protests around Parks's arrest and the subsequent boycott demonstrates the increasing weaponization of the politics of respectability, and the increasing public role of African American women on the frontlines of protest. Yet the politics of respectability both inform how she is remembered in public memory, and governed how she was presented at the time. Even her booking photograph displays these elements, as Fackler

⁶² McGuire, *Dark End of the Street*, 94-95.

notes, “Parks’s composed posture, her neat hairdo including white flowers that signal innocence, her speckless suit, and the way in which she delicately holds the numbered sign with her finger tips, visually allude to a kind of feminine middle-class respectability that is more akin to the socially affirmative bourgeois portrait.”⁶³ As such, the politics of respectability, as well as the conventions of portraiture, both continue to govern Parks’s representation.

It is important to note that there are significant archival gaps surrounding the history of African American women who worked in transitional studios. Two examples are Alberta H. Brown and Ethel Worthington, who were active in the early twentieth century, who have largely been neglected in scholarship. Although Brown and Worthington are profiled in Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe’s *Viewfinders*, with entries noting that both women would come to take over their husband’s studio, the lack of detail and substantial surviving photography to accompany the entries reveals the silences surrounding these women’s lives and works.⁶⁴ This historical obscurity demonstrates how power dynamics have informed who occupies space in historical memory – as these women’s canonical recognition is eclipsed by their husbands – and reveals the limitations surrounding African American women’s agency and resistance during this period. Nonetheless, Brown and Worthington were both able to utilise the network of marriage to cultivate their own “spaces of agency” within their studios and their few surviving photographs. As research in this field continues to develop, the

⁶³ Katharina M. Fackler, “Ambivalent Frames: Rosa Parks and the Visual Grammar of Respectability,” *Souls* 18, no. 2 (2016): 277.

⁶⁴ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 73, 106.

symbolic space they occupy in the history of photography and the long Civil Rights Movement will only grow.

“Photography of a Better Kind”: Elnora Teal and the Teal Portrait Studio

Elnora Teal was an African American woman who ran a portrait studio with her husband in the segregated South, yet their relationship and business took on a unique structure. Teal claimed and cultivated multiple “spaces of agency” during her decades as a portrait photographer in Houston, Texas, grounded in representing and carving out space for her community. From the studio space to the homes of her clients, Teal’s business cultivated multiple sites of spatio-symbolic reclamation. This was enabled by Teal’s transformation of personal networks into professional ones, as she started photography as an assistant and ended up as the head of her own business. Upon their marriage, itinerant photographer Arthur Teal taught Elnora Teal the basics of photography and he opened a studio in Houston, Texas at 111 Andrews Street in 1919.⁶⁵ Here, they worked together as photographer and photographic assistant, in a relationship dynamic similar to that of the Roberts’s studio. As the business expanded, however, so too did Teal’s role. Moutoussamy-Ashe asserts that “she grew to love developing photos in the studio,” and began to take a more active role in the business.⁶⁶ Within a few years, the Teals had opened two studios: one at 411 ½ Milan in the heart of downtown Houston, and another on Dowling Street in the heart of the Black residential community.⁶⁷ When Arthur

⁶⁵ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

purchased the second studio, Teal took sole control of the Milan studio, entirely independent of her husband. Although they shared the same name – The Teal Portrait Studio – after her husband’s death in 1956, Teal continued to run the studio for almost a decade until 1965. For the nearly fifty years that Teal worked in photography, she cultivated “spaces of agency” by capturing her community in lines with an evolving politics of respectability and shifting photographic conventions, making her work transitional in more ways than one.

Many historians have failed to acknowledge the collaborative, or transitional, element of the Teals’ business structure. Rosenblum argues that Elnora Teal typifies the “mom-and-pop” style of studio, as “an even larger group of women were active throughout the nation in so-called “mom-and-pop” studios. Elnora Teal, a black woman who first with her husband and then independently operated a portrait business in downtown Houston from 1919 until 1965, typifies this kind of involvement.”⁶⁸ Rosenblum expands on this view in *A History of Women Photographers*, writing that, “At the Teal Portrait studio, which existed in Houston from 1919 to 1965, Elnora Teal was in charge of the studio sittings, while Arthur Teal travelled throughout the state to take photographs in black college communities.”⁶⁹ However, Rosenblum fails to acknowledge the decade in which Teal ran the studio by herself; the Teal Portrait Studio was only a “mom-and-pop” venture for a few decades. Furthermore, the Teal Portrait Studio operated over multiple sites, allowing Elnora Teal a degree of autonomy over the space, which most “mom-and-pop”

⁶⁸ Naomi Rosenblum, “Women in Photography: A Historical Overview,” *Exposure* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 19.

⁶⁹ Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 151.

studios did not have. Furthermore, whilst art historian Alan Govenar's comprehensive work *Portraits of Community: African American Photography in Texas* (1996) includes Teal, she is largely presented as a secondary figure to her husband and none of her own work appears.⁷⁰ Despite these restrictions and contemporary neglect, Teal nevertheless significantly impacted her community.



Figure 13. Elnora Teal, *Mrs. Irene Frazier*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 47.

Although Elnora Teal ran her own studio in the 1920s, she was still restricted in what she could take images of, and what spaces she could occupy. She remained mostly, although not entirely, in a studio setting whilst her husband was able to freely travel and photograph outside. In addition, Teal's subject matter was often limited to women and children. Her husband, on the

⁷⁰ Alan Govenar, *Portraits of Community: African American Photography in Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996).

other hand, was able to capture a more diverse range of subjects. Yet within these confines, Elnora Teal “had earned her own reputation.”⁷¹ Teal’s images are mostly of women and children, consistent with formal portraiture and ideas of pictorialism. One image shows a mother and child (Fig. 13). Where most figures appear alone in the frame, here they appear together. The framing of the photo places the entwined hands of baby and mother in the centre of the photograph. By emphasising the literal interconnectedness of their hands, Teal emphasises the closeness of their relationship through her manipulation of space. Doubtless, the mother also contributed to this staging, but Teal made the hands the centre of the image. The use of white fabric and pearls, suggesting refinement, is consistent with ideals for both pictorialism and the politics of respectability. This image also demonstrates that Teal’s gender did not just dictate the credit she has received in the present day, but also the clients that her business appealed to in her lifetime. Teal’s studio proved particularly popular with women and children. Her female clients saw Teal’s gender as an advantage, as they perceived that she would be more sensitive to the needs of female and young clients than her husband photographer. Teal’s images display many of the conventions of portraiture that African American women adhered to during the early twentieth century. By exploiting this network, Teal was able to take images which celebrated the middle-class, respectable aspirations of her clients, in line with the ideology of the Civil Rights Movement. As such, Teal cultivated “spaces of agency” within which to empower her community, within her studio and her photographs.

⁷¹ Ibid., 20.

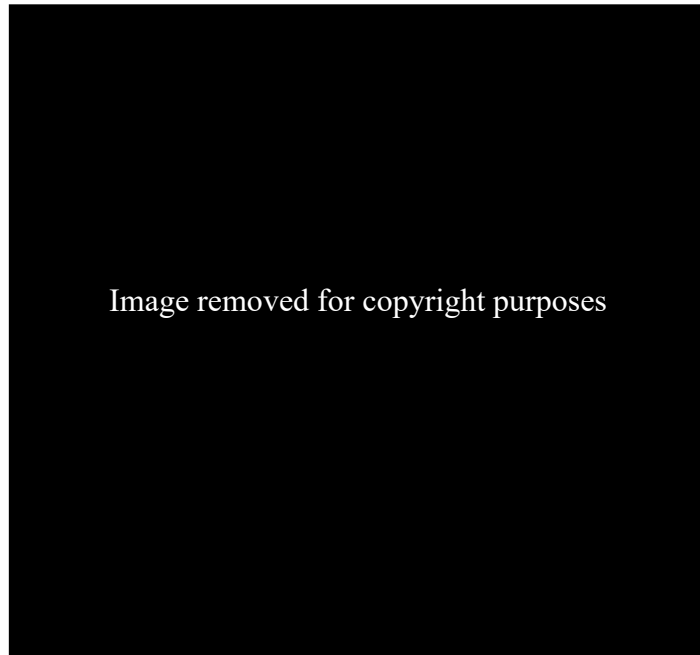


Figure 14. Elnora Teal, *Portrait of two girls with a sewing machine*, date unknown.
Source: Kendall Curlee, "Teal Portrait Studio," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed 10 September 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kjtwc>.

Yet on the rare occasions that Teal was able to take photographs in a public, outdoor setting, gendered conventions still governed her portraiture. In her *Portrait of two girls with a sewing machine*, we see two women working at a sewing machine, with one displaying the fabric for the camera and the other looking on (Fig. 14). It is interesting that this outside photograph breaks one domestic realm – that of the domesticated studio space – yet keeps the trappings of conventionally ‘female’ work as seamstresses. Furthermore, the clothing the two women are wearing is inconsistent with working clothes of the time, as they both wear pale dresses and smart shoes more consistent with the style of Sunday best. As one woman faces the camera, and holds the fabric in her hands, we are given the sense that this image is staged rather than candid. Therefore, even the few images that Teal was able to take outside of

her studio space are imbued with gendered expectations and aesthetic choices that emphasise respectability. Although the politics of respectability enabled women to be photographed and to photograph outside of the home, the trappings of gendered labour are central. Yet by occupying the outside space, in whatever capacity, Teal marks a departure from the women previously discussed in this chapter, who were almost entirely limited to an indoor, domesticated space. As such, Teal pushed at the boundaries of the “spaces of agency” which she occupied.

This image of two women taken outside of a studio setting further underpins Teal’s role as a transitional figure in the photographic history of Black women portraitists and their relation to “spaces of agency.” Teal navigated the network of marriage and established her own business venture. Despite the limitations of this – in terms of the gendered subject matter she was able to photograph and typically being restricted to a studio space – Teal produced a powerful archive of imagery which represented Black middle-class aspirations in Houston during the 1920s to 1960s. Furthermore, the work of both Albert and Elnora Teal in the Teal Portrait Studio was further transitional in its support of the next generation of Black women photographers. When The Teal School of Photography opened in 1942, this venture led to the training of dozens of men and, crucially, women, including Elnora Frazier and Juanita Williams, who appear later in this chapter as independent photographers. Although the school was largely her husband’s venture, Elnora Teal contributed to a culture of supporting young Black women to take up photography. In this way, Teal was able to cultivate “spaces of agency” for subsequent generations of photographers. Teal’s fluid use of the politics of

respectability, which adapted over the decades, conveyed dignity within the pictorialist tradition, and was enabled by her gender. Teal was able to utilise this synthesis of approach not just as a business tool and network, but as an act of spatio-symbolic reclamation for her community and herself.

“We Make You Look Good Around the World”: Adine Williams and the McClain Studio, Camera Masters, and The Picture Place

As a transitional figure who operated multiple studio spaces as “spaces of agency,” Williams is a marked departure from the figures who came before her, whose careers and images were governed by a politics of respectability that bound them to personal networks and pictorialist imagery. Williams’s photography was displayed in multiple community-orientated spaces – from households to yearbooks – yet has been largely omitted from photographic history. Adine Williams was born in Louisiana, beginning a career in photography in 1936 when she took a job at the Wiltz Photography Studio, in New Orleans. In the 1940s she married Eddie Williams and they opened a studio called the McClain Studio. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe notes that business was particularly good during wartime years, as the studio was situated across from a United States Service Organisation (USO) Centre.⁷² As a recreational space for military personnel, for whom being photographed in uniform would have been a matter of racial pride, their business thrived as they serviced the demand for these photographs rooted in patriotism.⁷³ Unusually

⁷² Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 136.

⁷³ For more information on the racial pride associated with portraits of soldiers, see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

for the time, Adine Williams and her first husband divorced, and Williams set up her own studios called Camera Masters. Although she remarried, and her second husband Eddie Williams ran the business alongside her, Moutoussamy-Ashe defines Williams's studio as "her own studio."⁷⁴ Adine and Eddie operated a successful studio in Monterey, California for many years, before returning to Louisiana to run the Picture Place in Baton Rouge. Her business motto was "we make you look good around the world."⁷⁵ This focus on making individuals "look good" can be seen in the glimpses of her work which have been uncovered.

As with many of the women in this thesis, little of Adine Williams's work has survived. The scarcity of the archive is compounded by the fact that the studios she operated in were frequently co-owned with her husbands, causing some confusion over who took which image. However, the 1957 Yearbook of Dillard University provides an insight into both the business practices and images which Williams produced. The portraits and advertisements demonstrate a departure from strict pictorialist modes, adopting both a mechanical and minimalist perspective. Likewise, by 1957 the politics of respectability had evolved from the earlier figures in this chapter. The emergence of African American women more readily into public space, bolstered by increasing testimony and slowly increasing accountability against white violence, shifted the politics of respectability into a more public sphere. Figures such as Rosa Parks exemplified this shift. This was echoed in women's fashions, as Ford notes, "although black college women's hemlines

⁷⁴ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 136.

⁷⁵ Jan Batiste Adkins, *African Americans of Monterey County* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 119.

became shorter and their hair was allowed to hang loose, respectable attire still included nylon stockings, cardigan sweaters, skirts and dresses, pearl necklaces, and modestly heeled pumps.”⁷⁶ As styles such as pictorialism had fallen out of fashion since the time of Roberts and Harleston, the politics of respectability had relaxed slightly to accommodate more agency for women in public spaces and more modern styles, although a focus on middle-class conduct remained.



Figure 15. *Copy of advertisement in Yearbook of Dillard University, 1957.*
Source: Bernard E. Rogers, ed., *The 1957 Le Diable Bleu : The Yearbook of Dillard University*, accessed 20 January 2021,
https://ia803007.us.archive.org/18/items/1957LeDiableBleu/1957_le_diable_bleu_complete_pdf.pdf.

The 1957 yearbook contains hundreds of images, including formal portraits, and images of classroom and recreational activities. The *Finis* reveals that Williams assisted in taking and compiling the photographs for this collection, with editor Bernard E. Rogers thanking “Mr. and Mrs. Edward

⁷⁶ Ford, *Liberated Threads*, 70.

Williams of Camera Masters Studio who went above and beyond contract and fees in supplying us with deadline pictures.”⁷⁷ It is interesting that Williams is credited in conjunction with, and perhaps subservient to, her husband, when the adverts in the collection privilege Williams’s identity (Fig. 15). Within the image of this advertisement, Williams occupies space prominently, and frames herself to the right of several pieces of camera equipment. Cameras, lights, tripods, and copies of photographs adorn the table next to which Williams stands, holding the equipment in her hands. This signifies expertise and familiarity with the equipment. This is compounded by the statement in the advertisement that, “through the eyes of these cameras over 30,000 individuals have been recorded.”⁷⁸ By claiming space both in and through this advertisement, and by positioning herself holding the camera whilst this claim is made, Adine is associated with this achievement in the mind of the reader. Although the advertisement is credited to “Eddie and Adine Williams,” Williams’s central positioning in the advert advocates for her role as central to the studio. The fact that Williams was able to take photographs in a more public space than the women who came before her – that of a school – indicates that by the 1950s there was a shift in the kinds of spaces that African American women photographers were able to claim and occupy.

⁷⁷ *The 1957 Le Diable Bleu : The Yearbook of Dillard University*, ed. Bernard E. Rogers, accessed 20 January 2021, https://ia803007.us.archive.org/18/items/1957LeDiableBleu/1957_le_diable_bleu_complete_pdf.pdf

⁷⁸ Ibid.

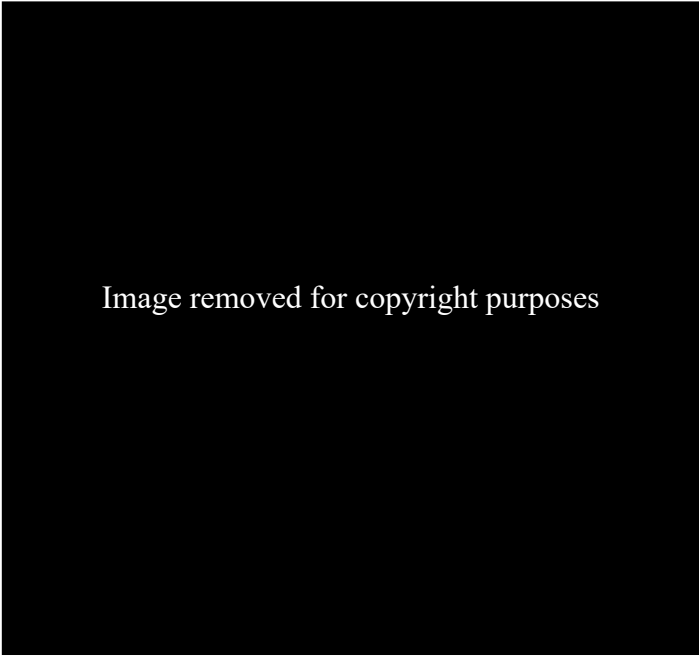


Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 16. *Senior Class*, 1957.
Source: Rogers, *The 1957 Le Diable Bleu*, 33.

Although it is difficult to ascertain who took the photographs in the yearbook – whether Adine Williams, Eddie Williams, or another uncredited studio photographer – their close resemblance to the images on the table in her advertisement indicates that these images were most likely taken by Williams herself, or at least by someone who she worked closely with who reflected the visual style of her studio. Throughout the book, there are multiple grids of portraits representing different students, both men and women (Fig. 16). These photographs indicate the respectable nature of portraits at the time, and demonstrate a departure from pictorialism in favour of more realist lens: the portraits are staged from the shoulders up, with some sitters facing the camera directly and making eye contact, whilst other are positioned off at an angle, gazing past the viewer. The men tend to wear suits, with close cropped hair.

The women wear a range of clothing, yet all with high necklines and pinned up hair, which indicates the conservative nature of the fashion of the time. From these photographs, we can see that the portraiture of the time exhibited a fashion and a staging that focussed on respectability informed by white standards of beauty. Whereas by the late 1960s “younger activists rejected many of the integrationist, nonviolent direct action protest tactics” after which “the Afro [...] came to exemplify the spirit of this culture,” in 1957 respectability that adhered somewhat to white beauty standards and activism were intimately intertwined.⁷⁹ The placement within a yearbook further compounds this focus on respectability, as this document was intended to function as a record of the achievements of the school community. In this way, the Camera Masters Studio contributed a respectable, visual archive to commemorate the achievements of the local Black community, cultivating the yearbook and the site in which these photographs were taken as “spaces of agency.”

⁷⁹ Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 123.



Figure 17. Adine Williams, *Camera Masters Studio*, 1946-1956.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 137.

The style of these portraits can also be seen within a larger image of the Camera Masters studio (Fig. 17). This image of Williams's studio displays not only the physical space in which she worked, but also shows some of the images within. We can see dozens of portraits of individual figures, including men, women, and children, and two group images above the door. Although it is difficult to conduct a close reading of the photographs at a distance, it is apparent that the visible images all show smiling, dressed up, dignified figures in line with the realist photographic conventions of the era. Not only do we get the sense of her studio as a domestic, decorated space, but we also get a sense of the kind of images she produced. Of particular note is the image of the soldier on the bottom of the table, as well as hung up on the wall. This indicates not only respectability, but the notions of patriotism that civil rights activists had long used to promote African American civil rights. The studio

represents an intersection of domestic and professional space, as the soft furnishing enticed customers and created a homey atmosphere.

The intersection of personal and professional networks did not just exist between Williams and her husband; Adine's daughter Leah followed in her mother's footsteps to become a successful photographer in her own right, adopting the family slogan: "we make you look good around the world." Adine's daughter Leah was almost born in the studio space, as Adine recounts: "The very night she was born, I worked in the darkroom processing film and making prints, just before being taken to the hospital for delivery. She was born into photography."⁸⁰ Leah then "followed in her mother's footsteps," by becoming a photographer and carrying on the family business.⁸¹ As another familial network, Williams's husband was still an active part of the studio, as witnessed by the credit he received in the yearbook. Nevertheless, Adine Williams worked within the networks available to her to cultivate multiple "spaces of agency" – from photographs, to yearbooks, to advertisements, to the studios themselves. Crucially, Williams created a studio space in which African American sitters were portrayed with dignity in an act of everyday activism, and where their achievements could be recorded in print. Williams engaged with respectability politics within her imagery, yet used it to make her subjects "look good around the world" as an "ambassador" to her community. As such, Adine Williams was an "agent of change" with regard to visual culture, the long Civil Rights Movement, and representing her local community through acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation.

⁸⁰ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 174

⁸¹ County Adkins, *African Americans of Monterey County*, 119.

Independent Studios and Photographers

Although the model of the “mom-and-pop” studio continues to the present day, as the twentieth century progressed it no longer became the only way in which Black women photographers could claim space within a studio setting. This was partially due to the changing gender conventions of the time, as photography outside of studio settings became a more acceptable career for women by the mid-twentieth century, fuelled in part by the changing notions of labour during the Second World War. Yet it was also due to the spatio-symbolic reclamation of several women who defied convention to carve out photographic careers for themselves, including Florestine Collins, Winifred Hall Allen, Louise Martin, Elnora Frazier and Juanita Williams. These women defied expectations and made use of the networks available to them to be able to work within the realm of portraiture without the need for a photographer husband. As photographers, they claimed their own physical space within their own studio spaces, wherein they adopted multiple techniques to advocate for Black dignity and counter white supremacy. They also claimed symbolic space in photographic history and the long Civil Rights Movement visual history, as well as cultivating space for Black women within the form of pictorialism. Yet this was not without its limitations, as Black women photographers continue to be omitted from photographic canon, causing the work of such figures as Dora Miller to be lost.⁸²

⁸² Dora Miller was active in California, taking over the Avalon Photography Studio, before she died at the age of 33 in 1951. Currently, it is unknown if any of her photographs survived. See: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 20.

Although pictorialism was being replaced by a more realistic portrait style in the 1940s, particularly in the urban North, the idea of the studio as a fantasy space in which to embody idealised class identities persisted across the decades. However, as before, the photographs themselves continued to function as “spaces of agency,” as they became sites of racial pride to be displayed in homes in an act of everyday activism. Furthermore, the photographs show African Americans occupying and claiming space for themselves both inside and outside of a studio space. However, the continuing engagement with a politics of respectability would remain consistent into the 1960s, as the ideology continued to hold influence in the Civil Rights Movement. Although the politics of respectability had updated with the fashions of the time, and it became more acceptable for Black women to work in public, un-domesticated spaces, it still upheld traditional gender roles and middle-class ideals.

“Marching Out Into The Streets”: Winifred Hall Allen and the Winifred Hall Photo Studio

Winifred Hall Allen was a Harlem-based photographer who occupied a unique space for Black women photographers at this time, as most other Black women photographers were concentrated in the South. Yet despite differences in the kinds of images she could produce and the networks she could utilise, Allen matched her peer’s dedication to cultivating and claiming various “spaces of agency” through her craft. As a photographer, Allen occupied her own studio space, utilising professional networks in order to do so, but also took photographs in a public space. Allen intervenes not just in photographic

history, nor the representations of the long Civil Rights Movement, but in the visual culture of the Harlem Renaissance. The photographs themselves occupied physical space – both within homes, and also for business purposes such as advertisements – yet their symbolic space in photographic canon has been displaced, as their afterlives were limited. Within her photographs, we see African American people, frequently women, occupying and claiming multiple domestic and public spaces in acts of everyday activism. Allen represented the women in her community as “agents of change” enabled by her acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation.

Active during both the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Depression, Allen was, unlike many of the women in this chapter, a Jamaican immigrant. Arriving in New York City at the age of 18, she received formal training at the New York Institute of Photography whilst working as an apprentice at the Woodard Studio.⁸³ By working her way up through the apprenticeship to eventually taking control of the studio, Allen took full advantage of her professional networks to claim space as one of the key documenters of the Harlem Renaissance. Allen did not rely on the network of marriage in order to occupy the physical space of the studio. Although she was initially dependent on Woodard Studio owner William Woodard, as she apprenticed for him before taking over his studio, this was independent of marital ties. She then renamed the studio in her own name: the Winifred Hall Photo studio.

Allen worked as a photographer for over twenty years, but gave up her career around 1950 to begin a career as a nurse. The reason why is unclear, but

⁸³ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 60.

later in her life she regarded her photographs as so worthless that most of them were destroyed by decay in a storage box. As such, the symbolic photographic space occupied by her images within various photographic canons has been diminished. Allen's work was largely neglected until recovered by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe for her 1985 book *Viewfinders*. Perhaps part of the reason for this was that the specific mode of respectability that was advocated by Harlem contemporaries such as Allen and James VanDerZee went out of style in subsequent decades. Sarah Blair asserts that:

although Harlem was becoming one of several U.S. centers for black photographers, the latter had emerged during the Renaissance out of a commercial studio tradition dependent on uplift modes; its most distinguished commissioners, James VanDerZee and Winifred Hall Allen, were generally dismissed in the decades after the Renaissance as purveyors of an overly stylized, white-mimed gentility.⁸⁴

Yet despite operating within photographic modes that adopted white portraiture conventions, Allen nevertheless utilised these conventions in order to portray her community with what was considered dignity for the era. Within the space of the portrait studio during the 1930s, Allen adopted a politics of respectability consistent with the other women in this chapter, which captured the dignity of her subjects according to pictorialist and largely white, middle-class aesthetics. However, Allen was also able to work outside of the studio space, where she adapted the politics of respectability to function in a public space, consistent with the emerging modernist tradition. By adopting and adapting these photographic modes, Allen represented Harlem's Black community in a way that championed their identities as dignified, respectable

⁸⁴ Sara Blair, *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 31.

members of society. In so doing, Allen engaged in the “protest politics” that formed the earlier decades of the long Civil Rights Movement.⁸⁵



Figure 18. Winifred Hall Allen, *Untitled portrait*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 65.

With regard to conventional portraiture, one of Allen’s key business models was to encourage walk-ins to engage in more elaborate services. Photographic assistant Bernedice Wesley recounts how Allen had a standard photographic booth – “a sit-in one like in the subway” – to entice customers.⁸⁶ Winifred Hall Allen used her interpersonal skills to put the client at ease; “she could coax them to relax and so they came out sort of vivid and living.”⁸⁷ This can be seen in the relaxed posing of the figures, and is also indicative of the

⁸⁵ Ross Webb, ““I Am Voting For Myself, My Children, and My Race This Time”: Black Labour, Community Mobilisation and Civil Rights Unionism: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920s,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 31, no. 1 (July 2012): 43.

⁸⁶ Bernedice Wesley, interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, “Interview with Bernedice Wesley,” 8, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

intrinsic role Allen had in their posing. Allen's astute management of commercial and entrepreneurial aspects of photography shows how decisively she took charge of the professional sphere. Yet within the space of the Winifred Hall Photo Studio, Allen continued the visual tradition of the Black women photographers who had come before her, by blending the aesthetics of pictorialism and portraiture in order to convey the respectability of the sitter, and cultivating the studio space as an empowering space. Allen's *Untitled Portrait* is consistent with traditional portraiture photography, as we see a woman in pale dress and pearls against a painted background (Fig. 18). The dream-like trees and open cast-iron gate are consistent with ideas of pictorialism as a fantastical dream space. Furthermore, the fashion of the woman sitting, including her hair, make-up, and jewellery, all convey middle-class aesthetics of beauty and refinement within conventions of the first half of the twentieth century. This portrait was likely intended for private consumption. As such, this photograph demonstrates how Black women in Harlem sought to be represented in portraiture, and the acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation which they were able to undertake, both as sitter and as photographer, in the studio space.



Figure 19. Winifred Hall Allen, *Mrs. Scott, owner of Ritz Shoppe, seated in front*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 67.

Outside of the private space of her studio, Allen took images of multiple community and business sites within the Black community of Harlem. Images of jazz bands, Garveyite meetings, and lido pools were all part of Allen's archive. Particularly notable is Allen's images of beauty parlours owned and operated by Black women, as "she documented the businesses owned and operated by women in that community."⁸⁸ In this way, those scholars who have dubbed Allen as purely a "portrait photographer" are inaccurate.⁸⁹ Allen's photograph of Mrs. Scott at her beauty parlour Ritz Shoppe portrays her as an empowering figure (Fig. 19). Here, the photograph shows the interior of the business, with all of the women employees sat in their chairs in a diagonal line. The line they create matches that of the pattern on the

⁸⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Africana: The Encyclopaedia of the African and African American Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 388.

⁸⁹ Jacqueline Ellis, *Silent Witnesses: Representations of Working-Class Women in the United States* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1998), 13.

floor, creating a sense of continuation and symmetry within the image. This matches the uniformity of the women – their hairstyles, uniform, and shoes are all consistent with each other, and create a sense of professionalism in the regularity of their appearance. Mrs. Scott, the business owner, meets the gaze of the camera and sits at the front of the women, implying her authority in the space. In addition, the use of repeating pattern, reflection, and negative space (as seen in the bottom left) is consistent with a modernist lens. Although this image is clearly posed, and therefore rejects a more documentary lens, the modernist techniques work in the interest of focussing on the modelling of Mrs. Scott as an empowered businesswoman.

Allen combines the function of documentary and modernist photography alongside elements of portraiture in order to convey the business as a “space of agency” – whilst the business is a space for performance of an ideal identity, it is based on the hard work and entrepreneurship of Black women, rather than a fantastical painted backdrop. The image is aspirational, yet grounded in reality. Indeed, beauticians cultivated their beauty shops as “spaces of agency” during the early twentieth century, extending into the Civil Rights Movement as beauty salons “functioned as asylums for black women ravaged by the effects of segregation and served as incubators of black women’s leadership and platforms from which to agitate for social and political change.”⁹⁰ These beauty shops, like the photographic studios in this chapter, functioned as sites of everyday activism. As such, Allen not only uses

⁹⁰ Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 99.

her camera to champion the beauty shop as a “space of agency,” but also empowers Mrs. Scott as an “agent of change.”

Within the space of her studio, Winifred Hall Allen blended both domestic and professional space in order to sustain her career. Allen’s photographic assistant Bernedice Wesley states that: “I think she was married or either divorced, at least separated, because she slept in the back of the store. That shop essentially had three parts, three partitions.”⁹¹ Of the domestic and professional space, Wesley stated that she “could never tell where one ended and one began.”⁹² In this way, for an unknown period of time, her studio formed both her home and her work; a blending of the domestic and the professional space. Instead of relying on the network of marriage, Allen utilised professional networks to establish herself as a businesswoman. Winifred Hall Allen worked for twenty years documenting Harlem and its residents. Her bold use of both pictorialism and a more documentary mode in her images is indicative of her nature as an important transitional figure in the mid-twentieth century, as she occupied multiple physical and symbolic spaces. In terms of spatio-symbolic reclamation, it is fitting that Wesley, Allen’s assistant, recalls how she remembered her as a “kind of a very secret person [who] kept things to herself [...] but I can see her yet strapping her camera on her and marching out into the streets.”⁹³ This image of Allen “marching out into the streets” at a time when it was unusual for Black women photographers to do so demonstrates that Allen was not just an “agent of change,” but a pioneering photographer dedicated to capturing sites of Black empowerment.

⁹¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, “Interview with Bernedice Wesley,” 1.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

“Boss Lady”: Florestine Collins and Bertrand’s Studio and Collins Studio

The figure of Florestine Collins is one who has recently been recovered in Black women’s photographic history, thanks in large part to the recovery work carried out by Arthé A. Anthony, who is Collins’s great-niece as well as an established academic. Anthony told Collins’s story in the documentary *Through A Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People* (2014), and the book *Picturing Black New Orleans: A Creole Photographer’s View of the Early Twentieth Century* (2012). As such, Collins occupies a symbolic space in the history of Black women photographers, alongside the physical spaces she occupied through her studios. These studio “spaces of agency” empowered people within her community to have their likenesses taken. Furthermore, her photographs could then be displayed in family homes, which created an archive for the family, and formed a key ritual and everyday activist act within her community. Within the photographs themselves, the Black community of New Orleans can be seen in line with the politics of respectability, as conveyed through pictorialist techniques. All of this was enabled by the skilled way in which Collins manipulated professional networks and segregated systems in order to create her own business and cultivate “spaces of agency.”

Florestine Collins was a Creole woman born in New Orleans in 1895. Like Allen, Collins did not navigate marital networks in order to attain her career. Collins utilised her pale skin to pass as white and gain access to an industry which otherwise would have been closed to her. In the 1910s she worked as a clerk for Jerome Hannafin, a finisher (developer and printer) for

Herbert J. Harvey, and, prior to her 1917 marriage, a stationary embosser and developer for the Eastman Kodak Company.⁹⁴ Thanks to her utilisation of the very segregationist system that intended to constrain her, receiving training in white-owned establishments to then utilise these skills within the Black community, by the time that Collins had set up her first studio in 1920, she was a fully-trained businesswoman and photographer.

New Orleans during the early twentieth century was segregated along lines that were not merely Black and white: the Creole identity further complicated the racial makeup of the city. Historically, Creoles had been regarded by whites as “an unusually superior class of black,” and been spared the worst of the treatment that African Americans faced.⁹⁵ However, both Civil War curfews and an influx of white immigrants further polarised Black and white identities, and by 1900s all such special treatment had been lost. Despite this subjugation of Creole communities under segregation, many Creoles “continued to see themselves as a culturally distinct group” and “even though they were not legally granted the same rights afforded whites, by no means would they tolerate categorization with blacks.”⁹⁶ To pass as white, therefore, would have still been an act which would have carried significant risk of repercussion for Collins, in addition to the significant mental strain and “trauma” often associated with passing.⁹⁷ Yet Collins successfully navigated these risks, and was able to open studios in her own right and in her own name.

⁹⁴ Anthony, “Florestine Perrault Collins,” 170.

⁹⁵ Sylvie Du Bois and Megan Melançon, “Creole Is, Creole Ain’t: Diachronic and Synchronic Attitudes toward Creole Identity in Southern Louisiana,” *Language in Society* 29, no. 2 (June 2000), 240.

⁹⁶ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 19.

⁹⁷ Luminita M. Dragulescu, “Race Trauma at the End of the Millennium: (Narrative) Passing in Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*,” *Philip Roth Studies* 10, no. 1, (Spring 2014): 98.

As such, Collins navigated professional spaces that would have normally been closed to her, in order to cultivate her own physical and symbolic “spaces of agency.”

Collins’s first studio was in the private, domesticated space of her living room, and mostly serviced family and friends. However, Collins was soon able to utilise the skill she acquired in white-owned studios to open her own studio in the Black commercial district of New Orleans, taking her training directly to the Black community to photograph society events, and women and children. By 1923, Collins’s business success had grown to such an extent that she was able to move Bertrand’s Studio from her living room into a studio on 610 North Claiborne Avenue, in the heart of the African American community. Although Collins did not rely on marital networks in order to achieve her business – her first husband was referred to as “iceman” by her family for his conservative views– her family were actively involved in her studio. Not only were they sitters for practice photographs, but Collins utilised their labour in many ways: her mother and grandmother frequently helped with the housework and cooking; her father built a darkroom extension onto her house; her sister Thelma Lombard was a saleswoman; her other sister Mildred Gardina and family friend Walterine Celestine were co-managers of the establishment; and her brother Arthur also became a successful photographer.⁹⁸ Indeed, Anthony mistakenly assumed that Collins had learned photography from her brother, but Collins “corrected the mistaken assumption in no uncertain terms, making it clear that she, the oldest, had introduced her

⁹⁸ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 11.

younger siblings to photography.”⁹⁹ Ironically, her brother was able to journey outside of the studio and town in order to take photographs further afield; something that Collins was rarely able to do. In this way, the politics of respectability, and ideas of what a Black woman could and could not do, governed Collins’s career. At times Collins was frustrated by her lack of mobility and found her efforts to photograph outside of a domesticated studio space rebuffed. For instance, when Collins was not selected to photograph a group picture of local bridge club *Entre Nous*, Collins’s friend Marguerite Perez “vividly recalled how angry she was that she was not chosen as the group’s photographer.”¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Collins utilised her family to support her “spaces of agency,” rather than relying on them as equal business partners. Whilst the politics of respectability affected what spaces Collins could photograph in, she nonetheless utilised pictorialist techniques to empower those within her photographs.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 67.



Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 20. Florestine Collins, *Mae Fuller Keller*, ca.1920s.
Source: Arthé A. Anthony, “Florestine Perrault Collins and the Gendered Politics of Black Portraiture in 1920s New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 43, no. 2 (Spring, 2002), 181.

Collins’s photograph of Mae Fuller Keller (Fig. 20) is one that historian Arthé A. Anthony has emphasised the importance of, stating that the photograph captures Keller’s “self-possession and confident beauty and sexuality,” despite her being employed as a “mere maid.”¹⁰¹ This indicates the pictorial tradition in this image, as the studio acts as a fantasy space for Keller, wherein she can record herself in line with the politics of respectability and middle-class aspirations of the time. The studio quite literally becomes a “space of agency” – wherein Keller has the agency to dress and appear as she wishes. In particular, Anthony focuses on her staging, and how she is “seated while posing provocatively, but gracefully, on a beach with her legs crossed” and with a “sleeveless short dress, watch, and “Egyptian bob” hairstyle” which

¹⁰¹ Anthony, “Florestine Perrault Collins,” 174.

“symbolize the personal and political freedoms sought by many women.”¹⁰² In this carefully chosen pose, the viewer’s attention is drawn to every aspect of Fuller’s outfit; the intricate lace of her hem, the watch round her wrist, and the immaculately clean suede of her shoes. It is rare that Collins fits the entire person within a frame, yet this image of Fuller is posed in such a way as to capture her from head to toe. The pose that Collins puts her in is playful, and whilst Fuller engages with the camera she does not quite smile. Rather, it appears as though she is in the act of turning to face the viewer, her mouth slightly parted as though about to speak. The fact that Collins has posed her so unusually, breaking the conventions of the traditional portraiture that she usually adheres to, makes this image an example of Collins’s attempts to push the boundaries of her art. The overall effect is one of empowerment and independence; this young woman is casual, relaxed, and yet effortlessly elegant in her dress, fully occupying and claiming the space of the photograph.

¹⁰² Ibid., 175.



Figure 21. Florestine Collins, *Unidentified graduate and communicant*, ca.1920s.
Source: Staff of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, "Florestine Perrault Collins," *knowlouisiana.org Encyclopaedia of Louisiana*, 12 September 2012, accessed 13 July 2020, <http://www.knowlouisiana.org/entry/florestine-perrault-collins>.

The images of *Unidentified graduate and communicant* from the early stages of her career in the 1920s typify the portraiture of children that Collins took (Fig. 21). Here, we see two African American children occupying space in Collins's studio at a foundational moment in their lives. Collins's theatrical use of props and costume is in full force here, as the older girl sits on an elaborately carved throne, holding a rolled-up document that the viewer is to assume is her diploma. This is consistent with pictorial portraiture conventions. The boy, likewise, holds in one hand a tall candle, and in the other a bible with dangling rosary beads. Both children are dressed from head to toe in spotless white clothing, indicating the conservative nature of their outfits and their purpose. Their expressions are solemn, and they meet the camera's gaze directly, indicating the gravitas of their achievements. Collins's framing – light on a dark background, full-length, seating the girl so the two

are at a similar eye-level – paints both of these events as equally important and equally reverential within the space of the photograph. Indeed, the Church was a vital community site for African Americans and Creoles in 1920s and 1930s New Orleans, and so Collins’s skill at being able to photograph within conventions that pleased church-goers was central to her business strategy. This photograph in turn demonstrates how Collins’s studio functioned not just as a physical “space of agency,” but a symbolic one as well, as it became a community ritual to have a picture taken there during key events. To have photographs of such key moments achieved empowerment through commemoration, as these images could then be displayed in the family home as a further site of racial pride.

Collins was active until her retirement in 1949. Through her work, Collins provided a fantasy space for women such as Mae Fuller Keller to portray themselves as they wished to be seen, and a provided a permanent record of the moments which her community most wanted to preserve. In so doing, Collins asserted that the people within her photographs had worth and merit. By photographing them in lines with the politics of respectability, and focussing on middle-class aspirations, Collins advocated for the equality of those within her lens. Yet Collins also empowered women within the space of the studio as employees; Valrian Murrell Montgomery, who worked in Collins’s studio whilst a student at Xavier University, wanted to “avoid addressing her too informally as Florestine or employing the overly formal Mrs. Collins.”¹⁰³ She therefore settled on an alternative title – “Boss Lady.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

That Collins was referred to in this way speaks to the power dynamics within the “spaces of agency” which Collins cultivated; Collins has authority, but also seeks to empower those she worked with. In navigating the limited networks available to her, Collins adhered to respectability politics to challenge white supremacy, in a manner consistent with that of the long Civil Rights Movement. These seemingly conservative photographs, therefore, can be read as both producing and being products of multiple “spaces of agency,” both physical and symbolic.

“It’s Not Just A Matter of Sitting A Person Before A Camera”: Elnora Frazier, Juanita Williams, and the Teal School of Photography

Within the realm of portrait photography, the state of Texas is represented especially highly in this chapter, particularly within the city of Houston. With segregation leading African Americans to seek out Black-owned and operated studios, the existence of the Teal Portrait Studio and, crucially, the Teal School of Photography contributed to the unusually high number of Black women photographers operating within one city. Within this “space of agency,” A. C. Teal taught dozens of African Americans how to take and finish photographs, resulting in many of them attaining careers in photography. Although there may have been similar institutions in other states that may have similarly produced African American photographers, the Teal School of Photography’s public profile in contemporary newspapers, alongside the research of such scholars as Alan Govenar, has made its legacy more accessible. Of particular note is the training given to two Black women photographers: Elnora Frazier and Juanita Williams. Both of these women became lifelong friends. As

photographers, they credited the Teal School of Photography with starting their careers. Although Elnora Teal did not teach in the school, this being left to her husband, she nonetheless took Frazier and Williams under her wing and worked with both of them. For these two women, it was the network of the Teal Portrait Studio, and the husband and wife team, that enabled them to achieve careers in photography. This “space of agency” empowered them to cultivate their own spaces: within studios, within the canon of photography, within their images, and within the objects of their photographs.

Occupying symbolic space, both Elnora Frazier and Juanita Williams are included in Alan Govenar’s *Portraits of Community: African American Photography in Texas* (1996), and both credit the Teal family with starting their passion for photography. Frazier writes that, “I became interested in photography after I graduated high school because Mr. Teal, who was a noted black photographer at the time, advertised that he was going to have classes.”¹⁰⁵ Williams knew the Teals as family friends before she joined the school and worked closely with Elnora Teal, with Williams stating “I would just watch her [Elnora Teal] , and then finally I just got interested and she taught me.”¹⁰⁶ Both women’s experiences with the Teals ignited a passion for photography that continued throughout their lives and they continued to cultivate “spaces of agency” in their community. Their work reflected the utilisation of the politics of respectability of the 1940s onwards to represent their community with dignity, yet also represented a shift in both the networks

¹⁰⁵ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 170.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

women utilised to gain photographic careers, and the spaces in which they were permitted to photograph.

Elnora Frazier was born in 1924, and graduated from Houston College in 1940. After training with the Teal School of Photography, Frazier graduated in 1942. In *Reflections in Black*, Deborah Willis notes that “Frazier photographed various church events and family experiences.”¹⁰⁷ Frazier worked with Arthur Teal for around fifteen years. Of Arthur and Elnora Teal, Frazier worked more with Arthur, noting that, “I was mostly associated with Mr. Teal. Juanita Williams was mostly associated with Mrs. Teal. She kind of grew up with them.”¹⁰⁸ Following his death, Frazier worked with Elnora Teal “off and on, but it wasn’t on a regular basis.”¹⁰⁹ She then worked in the National Photographic Labs as a printer, before retiring in 1989. Frazier never owned her own studio, noting that, “I’ve always been affiliated with some form of studio as a daily worker.”¹¹⁰ Yet Elnora Frazier had her own philosophy when it came to photography:

Even in photographing, you always want to put a little of you, a little of your individuality in anything that you do. That’s what separates you from the next person, even though the next person might be better at something than you. But it’s your own interpretation, the way you see it and the way you feel it. That’s why some people can get better photographs than others. It’s not just a matter of sitting a person before a camera.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 116.

¹⁰⁸ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 170.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 171.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 172.

Considering Frazier's emphasis on individuality influencing style, it is therefore fitting to consider her work independently, despite being largely affiliated with other people's studios throughout her life. Although she never had her own studio, Frazier nevertheless cultivated "spaces of agency" within her images.

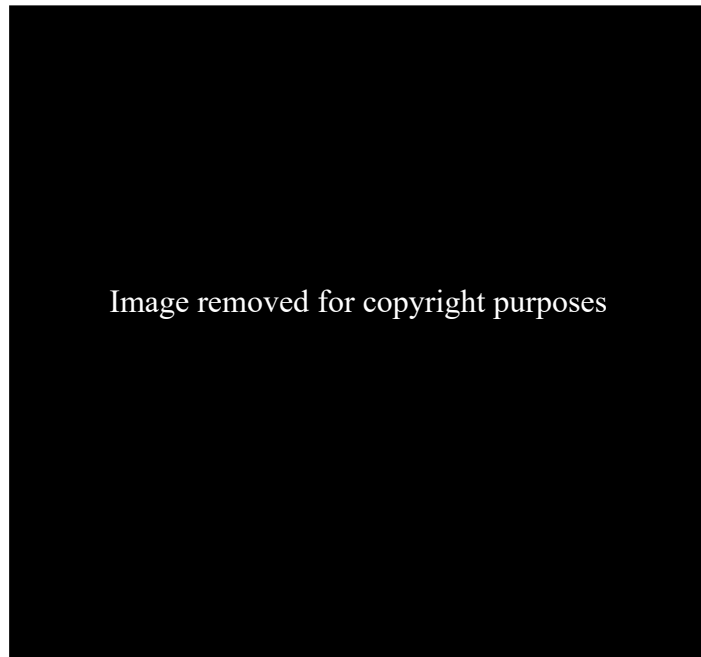


Figure 22. Elnora Frazier, *Elaine Williams (Elnora Frazier's niece)*, ca. 1960s.
Source: "Elnora Frazier," *The International Center of Photography*, accessed 12 March 2021, <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/elaine-williams-niece-of-elnora-frazier>.

In some ways, Elnora Frazier's photography typifies many of the pictorialist portraiture conventions of the Black photographers who came before her. Frazier's photograph of her niece shows the young girl in highly respectable clothing; the framing of her white dress, gloves, and headband against a dark background are consistent with pictorialist conventions, as well as indicative of the fashion at the time (Fig. 22). Williams's skirt has been positioned so that it flairs around her as she sits, allowing the detail of the lace hem to be more clearly seen, and the sitter can be seen holding a book and a set

of pearled rosary beads, signifying both her dedication to her faith and her respectability. However, the lack of a painted backdrop or elaborate setting suggests that portraiture, whilst still evoking pictorialism, was also tending towards a more modernist approach. By the 1960s, we can see a shift in portraiture conventions.



Figure 23. Elnora Frazier, *Juanita Williams at Courtesy Photo Lab*, 1960.
Source: Alan Govenar, *Portraits of Community: African American Photography in Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996), 181.

Frazier did not just take pictures of family members, nor only of children – she also took portraits of Black men and women in her community. Whilst many of these appear to have been taken in a studio space, one notable exception is Frazier’s image of Juanita Williams, taken at Courtesy Photo Lab (Fig. 23). In this image, Juanita Williams engages with machinery as part of the photographic process, with her pointed fingers as the focal point of the image. Although her clothing and style still conveys respectability – as her hair is pinned and her clothes are demure and neat – her handling of the technical

equipment conveys this respectability in line with her being an expert within her field. Juanita Williams's photograph shows respectability and professionalism, yet within the realm of being a competent technician. In this way, although the politics of respectability is still being enacted, it has shifted to encapsulate dynamic careers outside of the domestic sphere. This can be seen further in her portraiture's embrace of modernism. As such, Frazier cultivated multiple "spaces of agency" from within studio settings, and more public settings. In this way, we can see how the legacy of the Teal Portrait Studio persisted.

The style of the Teal Portrait Studio, and its emphasis on spatio-symbolic reclamation, is also evident in the work of Juanita Williams. Juanita Williams was born in 1926, and throughout her childhood became acquainted with the Teal Portrait Studio. In particular, she worked closely with Elnora Teal, noting that "I made up the chemicals, and then she taught me to use the printer," and later "she would get me to always go and take the pictures of the groups or whatever the people would call for. Mrs. Teal only took photographs in the studio."¹¹² Williams worked at the Teal Studio from 1941 to 1951, and then again from 1952 to 1954, and attended the Teal School of Photography from 1942 to 1944, indicating that by the 1950s it had become more acceptable for women to work outside of a studio setting. Her biography on the International Centre of Photography reads: "during that period she learned standard photographic techniques, including lab chemistry, retouching, and hand-coloring."¹¹³ Williams worked in other studios throughout her career,

¹¹² Ibid., 180.

¹¹³ "Artist, S. Juanita Williams," *International Center of Photography*, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/s-juanita-williams?all/all/all/all/0>.

before opening her own studio out of her home. However, unlike some of the other women in this chapter who operated studios out of their homes, Juanita Williams deliberately sought to make it look as much like a business as possible, rather than prioritising a homely, domestic atmosphere: “I had a blind in the front where it wouldn’t look like a house. I had a sign on there and then I had a picture window out there where they could see that I made pictures inside.”¹¹⁴ In this way, Williams was able to build on the foundation given to her by the Teal Portrait Studio in order to articulate her own style and cultivate her own “spaces of agency” that avoided the intentionally domesticated studios of the past.

¹¹⁴ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 181.



Figure 24. Juanita Williams, *Lodge Group, Houston, Texas*, ca. 1960s.
Source: Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 187.

Like Frazier, Williams took a wide range of images. Within the collection *Portraits of Community*, Williams has pictures of children playing in the snow, staged portraits, and photographs of events. Yet, in a departure from the Black women portraitists of earlier generations, Williams journeyed outside of the studio space to take photographs. One example of such photography is the image entitled *Lodge Group*, indicating that by the 1960s women such as Williams were able to take photographs outside of a studio space (Fig. 24). This photograph shows several African American women at some sort of freemason gathering. Based on the logo on the floor, of a five-pointed star in various colours, it may be the Order of the Eastern Star, which is open to both men and women. Freemason organisations such as this, according to scholars such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar, “served as the staging ground for reform and protest organizations and were the foundation of the

social and economic structure of black society.”¹¹⁵ This is a view supported by Skocpol and Oser, who argue that, “rivalling churches as community institutions, many black fraternal federations became active in struggles for equal civil rights.”¹¹⁶ These freemason gatherings functioned as “spaces of agency” for Black women in the community, which Williams records and reproduces through her lens. Importantly, Williams cultivates “spaces of agency” outside of traditional civil rights organisations. The framing of the photograph compounds the importance of the organisation, as the women are arranged into rows, positioned around the Masonic logo on the floor. The women in the back row face one direction, and the two women kneeling serve to bookend the logo, with the word “faithful” visible closest to the women: Williams clearly possessed a high level of skill in order to position this many women whilst making the sign on the floor mostly readable, thus drawing attention to it. As such, Williams demonstrates how Black women in her community were politically active “agents of change.”

Both Elnora Frazier and Juanita Williams are a testament to the legacy of Teal Portrait Studio and School. They both received their training from the Teals, and both worked with Elnora Teal at some point in their lives. However, they also added an individual element to their work which allowed them to move beyond their training, and to cultivate their own “spaces of agency.” In particular, they departed from Teal’s generation of photography to, by the time of the 1960s, be able to move outside of a studio space, in order to take a wide

¹¹⁵ Paul Lawrence Dunbar, “Hidden in Plain Sight: African American Secret Societies and Black Freemasonry,” *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 624.

¹¹⁶ Theda Skocpol and Jennifer Lynn Oser, “Organization despite Adversity: The Origins and Development of African American Fraternal Associations,” *Social Science History* 28, no. 3, (Fall 2004): 367.

range of photography. The shift in networks following World War Two – after which it was more acceptable for women to work as photographers – meant that marriage was no longer the main network used to attain a photographic career and cultivate “spaces of agency.” Yet what would remain consistent is the emphasis on a politics of respectability that championed Black dignity, although it focussed more on women’s organisations and careers than the Teal studio had done. In this way, the photography of Frazier and Williams created an archive of imagery which should be regarded as part of the long Civil Rights Movement, as they used their cameras to capture their communities with dignity, and to record the activities that were most important to them. Hence, they advocated for Black equality through the emulation of white photographic standards and the cultivation of physical and symbolic “spaces of agency.” Yet it was not just the Teals that Frazier and Williams associated with. They worked with another Black women photographer in Houston, Texas, namely Louise Martin.

“I Demanded A Certain Attitude in My Studio”: Louise Martin and the Louise Martin Art Studio

Louise Martin was a key figure in the Houston photographic scene by the mid-twentieth century. Elnora Frazier recalls that she, “helped Louise Martin a couple of times when she was in the school season. She was kind of rushed.”¹¹⁷ Juanita Williams also worked with Martin on occasion, and recalls:

I really didn’t work with Louise. I went and helped her. She got into a tight jam one time, and she didn’t know how to print her negatives. She was afraid that she didn’t have time to go back and photograph the

¹¹⁷ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 171.

students at Booker T. Washington. I think that was her first year that she had done Booker T. Washington School, and she got into a jam and so I went and showed her how to get out of the jam.¹¹⁸

It is notable that, on both occasions, Williams and Frazier relay situations wherein Louise Martin was seemingly close to being overwhelmed with her workload. However, this is not surprising given the wide range of work that Martin did, as not only was she a portrait photographer with her own studio, but she was also a journalistic photographer.¹¹⁹ However, although her photojournalism is also of note, her portraiture made up “about 75 percent of my work,” and so deserves independent analysis.¹²⁰ As such, Louise Martin occupied and claimed multiple “spaces of agency” throughout her decades long career, both inside and outside of a studio space. As a portraitist, Martin ran her own physical studio space, and took portraits for organisations, relying on professional networks to do so. Martin also takes up space as a photographer symbolically, as she has appeared in several photographic histories of the region. Martin’s photographs took up physical space as objects that promoted racial pride through a version of the politics of respectability, although this was far less rigidly conservative than earlier decades had been. Martin captured both the candid and the posed moments that represented her community, presenting both canonical civil rights leaders and members of her community as “agents of change” engaged in acts of everyday activism.

Louise Martin was born in Brenham, Texas, in 1914. According to Moutoussamy-Ashe, Martin “always knew what she wanted to do” and was

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 181.

¹¹⁹ Louise Martin’s journalistic photography will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four of this thesis.

¹²⁰ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 218.

determined to become a professional photographer.¹²¹ She rejected the more gendered forms of labour that her mother wanted for her, stating, “my mother would have sent me to Prairie View College as it was very close to us and the rates were relatively reasonable, but what Prairie View offered, I did not want [...] I always wanted to be a photographer and pursue my art.”¹²² Martin was unable to attend any photographic schools in the South due to segregation, so she studied in Chicago at the Art Institute and the American School of Photography, before moving to Denver University in Colorado, where she was the only African American woman enrolled in the school. Martin earned her degree in photography and utilised entirely professional networks to advance her career. Although she was married in 1945, her marriage broke down due to her career, as she stated that “he was not wanting me to become a businesswoman. He was the conventional-type husband: a woman should be at home with the children.”¹²³ Martin refused to curtail her ambition to fulfil a traditional marital role.

World War Two provided many opportunities for photographers, as changing attitudes to women in work and increasing demand for photography led to a rise in the number of women photographers.¹²⁴ Martin was poised to take advantage of this, stating “anytime there is a war, there are two things you can count on: a lot of babies, and a lot of picture making.”¹²⁵ Martin was able to take photographs of soldiers and families, and in 1946 Louise Martin opened the Louise Martin Art Studio in Houston, Texas, where she would

¹²¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 122.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 218.

¹²⁴ More on the role of World War Two in the history of Black women photographers can be seen in Chapter Three of this thesis.

¹²⁵ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 123.

quickly garner a reputation as Houston's "society photographer."¹²⁶ Whilst Martin rejected many of the gender norms of the time, her gender did serve to her advantage in the studio space, as she acknowledged that three-fourths of her clients were women.¹²⁷ Her portrait studio operated successfully until the 1990s, as she noted that "there's nothing in the world you can do without photography. You couldn't even get a job digging a hole ditch without an application and you must have a photograph of that."¹²⁸ Throughout her career, the label of "society photographer" – of a photographer ingrained within the fabric of their local community – stuck to Martin, and she received much local acclaim throughout her life.¹²⁹ In 1967, the Houston League of Business and Professional Women named Martin the Outstanding Businesswoman of the Year and she was "among black women honoured by the Houston Chronicle in 1969."¹³⁰ She had twenty-seven awards in photography by the early 1970s. Yet although her work has been celebrated at a local level and featured in texts such as Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe's *Viewfinders* and Deborah Willis' *Reflections in Black*, her photography has not been established as part of the canon of Civil Rights Movement photography. As such, the symbolic space which Martin occupies as a photographer is limited. In particular, her portraiture has long been omitted and overlooked, despite engaging with some of the most canonized leaders of the movement.

¹²⁶ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 115.

¹²⁷ "Louise O. Martin," *International Centre of Photography*, accessed 8 January 2020, <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/louise-o-martin?all/all/all/all/0>.

¹²⁸ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 126.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹³⁰ "Martin, Louise Ozelle," *Texas State Historical Association*, accessed 8 January 2020, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmara>.



Figure 25. Louise Martin, *Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 127.

Martin took portraits of a wide range of subject, including men, women, and children. In *Viewfinders*, three of her portraits of African American men can be seen, including one of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. (Fig. 25). The first time Louise Martin photographed King she did not know who he was: “Louise Martin had never heard of Martin Luther King, Jr. when she took his picture at the graduating class ceremony of Houston’s Irma Hughes Business College in 1958. King was a stand-in speaker for the President of Morehouse College who couldn’t attend.”¹³¹ It is unclear whether this portrait was taken during this first interaction, or a subsequent one. Within the portrait, King is positioned at a three-quarter angle, and makes direct eye contact with the camera. King is smiling in the image, although is keeping his emotions withdrawn, with his direct gaze arresting the viewer. Yet not only is

¹³¹ “The Photography of Louise Ozelle Martin,” *Arts Brookfield*, accessed 24 October 2020, <https://www.artsbrookfield.com/event/photography-louise-ozelle-martin/>.

this image evidence of the politics of respectability, in King's neat clothing and conventional pose, it also demonstrates how portraiture engaged with the Civil Rights Movement. Images of King dominate the symbolic space of Civil Rights Movement visual culture, and by taking a portrait of King, Martin expands the realm of Civil Rights Movement photography from a purely documentary mode, to portraiture. It is ironic that Martin would also cover King's funeral nearly a decade later, as the only Black woman photographer present. Martin also photographed celebrities such as Lena Horne, John Kennedy, and Richard Nixon. Working with such famous people may have intimidated some photographers, yet within Martin's studio, she states that she had no qualms about reminding her customers who was in charge:

I demanded a certain attitude in my studio. I stomped my foot and they would do what I told them. They came to me for a service. If you come to me for a photograph, I'm going to make some good proofs for you to select from. Then you leave the rest to me [...] You trust me as your photographer.¹³²

¹³² Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 218.

This assertiveness indicates what an empowering space Martin’s studio was and how much authority she held within its walls. It was a true “space of agency” in which Martin could both hold authority and represent her community.



Figure 26. Louise Martin, *Coretta Scott King, Houston, Texas*, 1970.
Source: “Louise O. Martin,” *International Center of Photography*, accessed 13 May 2020, <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/coretta-scott-king>.

Of all of Martin’s photographs, perhaps the most iconic is her image of Coretta Scott King (Fig. 26). King has been referred to as “the first lady of the civil rights movement.”¹³³ Although King was a respected activist and campaigner for equal rights throughout her life, she is remembered in public memory primarily as the wife of Martin Luther King, Jr..¹³⁴ Vicky Crawford noted that some contemporary historians have looked unfavourably on the

¹³³ “Coretta Scott King: The First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement, (1927-2006),” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 50 (Winter, 2005/2006): 60.

¹³⁴ Norwood, Arlisha R., “Coretta Scott King, 1927-2006,” *National Women’s History Museum*, 2017, accessed 29 October 2020, www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/coretta-scott-king.

legacy of Coretta Scott King, as “she resembled her 19th- and early 20th-century foremothers who dedicated themselves to social uplift. Their ‘politics of respectability’ stemmed from historical experiences under segregation that left them guardedly cautious and self-protective.”¹³⁵ However, just as the politics of respectability was an activist tool for Coretta Scott King, it was also an activist tool for the portraitists of the era. In some ways, Martin’s portrait of King demonstrates these conventions. Whilst the circumstances within which this photograph was taken are unclear, the extreme close up allows the viewer an intimate impression of King’s face, as her earrings and makeup are clearly visible – the closeness of the image is such that the viewer can see the line on Scott’s lips, the eyeliner on her eyes, and her sculpted eyebrows. This well-kempt and demure experience is consistent with the conventions of respectability.

What is unconventional, however, is the staging of King’s portrait. The extreme closeness of the camera, coupled with King closing her eyes, creates a sense of intimacy and closeness to the subject. Half of King’s face is in dark shadow, drawing the viewer’s eyes to those features which are exposed to the light. Contrast between King’s dark hair and the grey background, with a white light in between, creates an aura around King, and the contrasts make it appear as though she is wearing a veil. This creates the impression that she is in prayer, or even suggestive of a death mask. In either case, Martin manipulates space in her image to create an intimate portrait of King, challenging the viewer to linger on her peaceful yet powerful presence. In this 1970 portrait,

¹³⁵ Vicki Crawford, “Coretta Scott King and the Struggle for Civil and Human Rights: An Enduring Legacy,” *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 106.

Martin engages in the Black photographic tradition of championing African American women activists and leaders as “agents of change.” That this image could be produced outside of the conventional confines of the movement, with the image taken in 1970, further demonstrates not just how activism continued after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, but how portraiture is a vital genre through which scholars should consider the movement. When asked about her work, Martin reflected that “I made them look good.”¹³⁶ This simple phrase has a double meaning: Martin made her sitters look aesthetically pleasing, but she also made them look like active agents of change, in line with the politics of respectability. The multiple spaces that Martin “made” – from her studio to the photographs themselves – provided multiple sites of spatio-symbolic reclamation for both her community, and key Civil Rights Movement leaders. These ranged from physical sites – such as her studio, and the spaces her photographs would occupy – to symbolic, as Martin’s portraits advocate for the inclusion of portraiture in the canon of Civil Rights Movement photography.

¹³⁶ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 126.

Conclusion



Figure 27. Tiffany Smith, *The Fourth Ward Photo Parlour*, 2020.
Source: “The Project,” *We, Women*, accessed 1 November 2020,
<https://www.wewomenphoto.com/project>.

In January 2020, the *We, Women* project began fundraising to share the images of its photographic collective around the world, stating: “Through a radical transformation of image-making—with the goal of contributing to lasting change—We, Women believes we can revolutionize how we see our world and ultimately, ourselves.”¹³⁷ Curator Willow Naomi Curry and photographer Tiffany Smith have utilised this project to create *The Fourth Ward Photo Parlour*, which centres on the Fourth Ward in Houston, and is directly inspired by the work of Elnora and Arthur C. Teal from the Teal Portrait Studio. Staging a “visual rebellion,” *We, Women* raises funds for women, trans and non-binary photographers to pursue projects that “reclaims photography.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ “The Project,” *We, Women*, accessed 1 November 2020, <https://www.wewomenphoto.com>.

¹³⁸ “We, Women: the platform staging a ‘visual rebellion’ – in pictures,” *The Guardian*, 22 January 2020, accessed 1 November 2020,

These images offer a counterpoint to the photographs of the Teal studio: the portraits eschew the politics of respectability, with its pictorial and white middle-class aspirations, to adopt a perspective that explores a vibrant Black aesthetic, with a tropical backdrop (Fig. 27). The portrait of three women together – one smiling, all close together, dressed in bright colours and flowers in their hair – is a celebration of Black joy. This project was specifically designed to be placed in dialogue with the Teal Portrait Studio, as “Drawing inspiration from the Teal Portrait Studio, established in 1919, the Parlour eschews the respectability politics inherent in the idea of ‘humanizing’ black people.”¹³⁹ This project serves as a counterpoint to the entrenchment of a politics of respectability within Black portraiture in the past, as this new project focuses on “emphasizing the continuity between the Black past and present, and the beauty and significance of existing outside of establishment valuations.”¹⁴⁰ As such, this project reclaims space for Black joy and self-representation and it is telling that the grass confirms this image is taken in an outside space. From the first half of the twentieth century, where emulating the standards of white pictorialism was used to advocate for Black dignity in a private space of a studio, the twenty-first century photographic tradition creates space for Black artists to celebrate Black identity in vibrant colour, in outside spaces, and in their own independent art projects. However, the photography of the Teals – including creating space to train subsequent photographers and advocating for Black equality within white portraiture

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2020/jan/22/we-women-artists-photographers-critical-issues>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ *We, Women*.

conventions – worked within the confines of the era to create an impactful body of imagery and multiple “spaces of agency.”

Whilst the portraiture studio as a physical “space of agency” and the everyday activism that ensued may seem far removed from marching in protests or participating in boycotts, in reality the two were complementary forces in the struggle for equality. These images were often prominently displayed within family homes, allowing for a degree of self and racial pride that was mirrored in the marches in the streets, and the photographs were facilitated by the “spaces of agency” that these African American women photographers cultivated. These images were for private consumption, not for wide, public distribution. Where portraiture images were for public distribution, as in advertising, they still embodied a sense of dignity and respectability that mirrored the politics of respectability of the Civil Rights Movement and acts of everyday resistance.

Furthermore, that these women mostly captured images of women is an interesting indicator of their clientele. It suggests that their gender allowed them certain benefits, but also restrictions in the spaces that they could occupy. Gender was a unique selling point for these photographers’ clients. Their implied femininity meant that women were likely more attracted to their business, for images of both themselves and their children. Florestine Collins exemplified this, as she made gender central to her advertising and included images of herself posing children. However, Collins also fell out with local organisations when they chose to have a male photographer take their society photographs rather than her. In this way, her gender defined the kinds of clients that it was deemed appropriate for her to have. The prominent role of

women in these images suggests that this is an expectation most women portraitists had to manage. This is indicative of the limits on Black women's agency, as although they cultivated "spaces of agency," many were confined to a domesticated studio space. Some of these women, such as Allen and Martin, utilised the documentary mode of photography alongside portraiture in order to challenge these expectations and break these confines.

Yet the issue of which spaces African American women could occupy within societal expectations impacted all women, not just photographers. These gender dynamics extended not just to their clientele, but to their personal lives, as many of these women's livelihoods were in "mom-and-pop" studios, in which their primary business network was that of marriage. It is no coincidence that the earliest African American women photographers utilised marriage as a key network in their careers. Elnora Teal, for example, married an itinerant photographer and received training from her husband. The two had a significant impact in their community, and built a network of Black photographers around them, many of whom were women. Florestine Collins and Winifred Hall Allen worked independent of marriage, but nevertheless relied on male figures through apprenticeships on their journey to becoming photographers. Louise Martin represents a breakthrough in this regard, as she attended the American School of Photography, before being the only Black woman at Denver University in Colorado in the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences and joining multiple photographic organisations. In many ways Martin represents photography moving somewhat out of the community-orientated, feminine role, and into photojournalism and business.

Despite the developing differences in networks and training, however, it is notable how consistent the representation of Black communities are within these images. Although there were regional nuances, Black women portraitists consistently cultivated physical and symbolic “spaces of agency” wherein they utilised pictorial conventions and conservative fashions in order to represent a politics of respectability in their images. They were active “agents of change” in their communities. Through their gendered labour, and utilisation of networks both personal and professional, these women claimed space in which they represented their communities with dignity, in defiance of racism.

These photographs can therefore be read as sites of spatio-symbolic resistance and reclamation, which prioritise Black women’s experiences. By considering the work of Black women portraitists, we not only uncover a rich archive of forgotten artists and photographs, but also challenge a narrow definition of the Civil Rights Movement that encompasses portraiture and a wider timeframe. By cultivating spaces for Black self-expression, these women contributed to notions of Black pride and the right to equal treatment, by forever preserving important moments to be framed on a subject’s wall. Whilst the marches in the street were undoubtedly crucial to the movement, the pictures on the walls fuelled the fire of protest.

Chapter Two

“For the Brothers and Sisters”: Anthropological Photography in the African Diaspora



Figure 28. Photographer unknown, *Pauli and I (left and right) visit with the Mulamuzi, the chief justice of Buganda (next to Pauli), at his home in Kampala, 1936.*
Source: Eslanda Robeson, *African Journey* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1945).

In Eslanda Goode Robeson’s anthropological text *African Journey* (1945) there is an image of four figures standing side by side: Eslanda Robeson, her son Pauli, the Mulamuzi (the chief justice of Buganda), and an unknown second boy (Fig. 28). All figures are dressed in respectable clothing for their respective cultures, with the Mulamuzi wearing an official white robe with a blazer around it. Eslanda Robeson herself is dressed in a skirt, long coat, and hat with earrings clearly visible. Robeson is the only one clearly at ease with

the camera, as she smiles openly at the viewer. The positioning of the figures – with the two boys separating the two adults – serves as a bridge between the African and African American identities of the adults. Robeson’s African American identity is positioned alongside the Mulamuzi’s African identity in what Maureen Mahon terms a “diasporic politics of identification. This viewpoint recognizes, creates, and extends cultural and political connections among people of African descent.”¹ The idea of a “diasporic politics of identification” speaks to a connectivity among Black people in Africa and the United States, consistent with the ideas of Pan-Africanism.

Robeson’s presence in the image challenges traditional lines of anthropological photography, whilst the anthropological aspects of *African Journey* defies its categorisation as a tourist snapshot. Leigh Raiford, in her analysis of the image, argues “if anthropology photography finds pleasure in difference, family snapshots locate joy in sameness,” and that including Pauli in the image participates in “clearly hailing Africans as family, and locating her Pan-Africanist political vision in the space of kinship.”² Raiford advocates for a ‘Robesonian’ anthropological approach – one that challenges Roland Barthes’ idea of photography as “that-has-been” and instead, offers images that demonstrate “a diasporic encounter in the present.”³ Raiford seeks to create a new framework in anthropological study and reveals the familial nature of the African diaspora. I further both Mahon’s concept of a “diasporic politics of

¹ Maureen Mahon, “Eslanda Goode Robeson’s African Journey: The Politics of Identification and Representation in the African Diaspora,” *Souls, A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 8, no. 3 (2006).

² Leigh Raiford, “Chapter 7: The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson’s *African Journey*,” in *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture*, eds. Leigh Raiford and Heike Raphael-Hernandez (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2017), 146.

³ *Ibid.*, 136.

identification” and Raiford’s consideration of “familial” networks, to reveal the spatio-symbolic acts of reclamation present in African American women’s anthropological work during the long Civil Rights Movement.

Throughout the twentieth century, African American women journeyed across the sea to the various countries in Africa to document their experiences and the cultures with which they interacted. Several key photographers – including Emily Vernon, Eslanda Goode Robeson, and Doris Derby – employed photographic techniques rooted in anthropology to create physical and symbolic “spaces of agency” that promoted a diasporic connectivity between African and African American peoples. However, they would do so with different aims: from missionary conversion, to Pan-Africanist activism, to anthropological education. Nevertheless, these women used the camera as a tool to convey their findings to an American, and mostly Black, audience.

These women operated in networks which shifted over the decades: Emily Vernon worked in a strictly familial network alongside her husband in the 1920s; Eslanda Goode Robeson utilised her academic networks in London alongside the remote support of her husband in the 1930s; and Doris Derby navigated educational and professional networks in the 1950s and 1960s. This demonstrates the continuing emergence of Black women photographers from domestic, more private spheres to public spheres of work across the twentieth century. This shift is further reflected in their photography, as the image of a transatlantic family is expressed most frequently in the first half of the twentieth century, becoming superseded by more overt scientific and educational techniques by the 1960s. Exploring how Black women photographers employed anthropological photographic techniques furthers our

understanding of how African American women's personal and professional networks interacted and shifted over the twentieth century, and why. In this chapter, I argue that these women occupied physical space on the African continent through various networks, creating symbolic "spaces of agency" to advocate for diasporic connectivity between the people of Africa and African Americans.

These "spaces of agency" were cultivated within physical and symbolic space. For the photographers themselves, they navigated various personal and professional networks to travel and conduct fieldwork which would enlarge the diasporic space. The women in this chapter created representations of the Black diaspora through their photography, challenging a twentieth century anthropological canon that privileged the colonising perspective of white men. They captured a perspective of African life focused on the experience of local women through a lens of transatlantic connectivity and familiarity. Through these intersecting "spaces of agency," through photography and photographer, and through physical and symbolic space, these women used their photography as a medium through which to communicate their gendered Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism, The Long Civil Rights Movement and Anthropology

Pan-Africanism has been defined by Keisha Blain as "the belief that African peoples, on the continent and in the diaspora, share a common past and identity."⁴ In the early twentieth century, "Pan-Africanist intellectuals and

⁴ Keisha N. Blain, " "We Want to Set the World on Fire": Black Nationalist Women and Diasporic Politics in the *New Negro World*, 1940-1944," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 195.

activists sought to consolidate a sense of connection rooted in shared African ancestry and enhanced by similar structural conditions.”⁵ Although Pan-Africanism was not a uniform ideology – as figures such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey would advocate for different approaches – it nonetheless demonstrated a shift in consciousness to a more global perspective in the early twentieth century. A “diasporic politics of identification” was present across the decades of the long Civil Rights Movement. For example, Jeremy I. Levitt argues that “like DuBois, [Martin Luther] King closely embraced this special relationship built on racial affinity and oppression.”⁶ Yet Levitt’s scope evokes a male-focused history of Pan-Africanism. Blain has argued that Black women activists “created spaces of their own in which to experiment with various strategies and ideologies,”⁷ and were “forging diaspora” across the twentieth century.⁸ The women in this chapter bolster this perspective. However, Tunde Adeleke argues that African Americans approached Pan-Africanism with an innate sense of Western superiority, and that “in laying claim to African identity, Afrocentrists merely emphasize the aesthetics of African culture [...] whilst ignoring [...] the ‘legislative’ authority of African culture.”⁹ The power dynamics in African American assertions of connection can therefore not be ignored. Nonetheless, a developing Pan-Africanist consciousness shaped many of the cultural interactions of the women analysed in this chapter.

⁵ Mahon, “Eslanda Goode Robeson’s African Journey,” 104.

⁶ Jeremy I. Levitt, “Beyond Borders: Martin Luther King, Jr., Africa, and Pan Africanism,” *Temple International and Comparative Law Journal* 31, no. 1 (2017): 312.

⁷ Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Freedom Struggle* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹ Tunde Adeleke, “Black Americans and Africa: A Critique of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 529.

The photography of Vernon, Robeson and Derby furthers our understanding of the long Civil Rights Movement as a global movement in which Black women were keenly aware of their diasporic connections to Africa. As Kevin Baines states, “in addition to prompting a reconsideration of the movement's tactics, an engagement with the global context of decolonization, the emergence of new African and Asian nations from European colonial rule during the 1950s and 1960s, reveals a wider spectrum of political consciousness and debate among black activists” than a focus solely on the domestic movement of the 1950s and 1960s allows.¹⁰ The long Civil Rights Movement was rooted in resistance to slavery in the nineteenth century, and extended into the liberation ideologies of anti-apartheid activism in Africa and the United States in the 1980s.¹¹ Although these struggles manifested in unique environments with unique nuances, both were preoccupied with access to, and occupation of, segregated spaces. In South Africa, for instance, pre-apartheid rural segregation was prevalent, yet failed to take root to the same extent in the American South due to the continuing reliance on Black labour to support white agriculture.¹² The lives and works of these women demonstrate how Black women’s anthropological photography advocated for spatio-symbolic calls for transatlantic connectivity. As Eslanda Goode Robeson positioned familial snapshots alongside anthropological

¹⁰ Kevin Gaines, “The Civil Rights Movement in World Perspective,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 1 (January 2007): 57.

¹¹ See: George Fredrickson, *Black Liberation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Jessica O’Connor, ““Racism Anywhere Threatens Freedom Everywhere”: The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Black America’s Anti-Apartheid Activism,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 2 (December 2015).

¹² Elizabeth A. Herbin-Triant, “Southern Segregation South Africa-Style: Maurice Evans, Clarence Poe, and the Ideology of Rural Segregation,” *Agricultural History* 87, no. 2 (Spring 2013). See also: Richard Jordan, “A Militant Crusade In Africa: The Great Commission And Segregation,” *Church History* 83, no. 4 (December 2014).

observations, she demonstrated how photography could link communities across oceans.

The use of an anthropological photographic lens further complicates this Pan-Africanist approach. An anthropological lens challenges the photographic history of the Civil Rights Movement because while most photographic histories commence in the 1950s and focus on a documentary mode, anthropological photography expands this focus back to the 1920s. At a time when photographic portraits of the ‘New Negro’ ideal were used for African American resistance post-World War One, Black women photographers created photographic anthropological work to advocate for diasporic connectivity. As modernism developed across the twentieth century, and the camera became a more affordable and transportable object, it became easier to employ genres outside of a portrait studio. I argue that the anthropological work of these women challenges the existing photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s – which focuses on a documentary mode, charismatic male leadership, and dramatic scenes of conflict.

Whilst notions of overt everyday activism are not as prominent in this chapter as in others, as the photographic exchanges involve the African American photographer travelling in exceptional circumstances, the women nevertheless strive to cultivate a sense of familiarity between their African photographic subjects and their African American viewers. Furthermore, anthropological photography is preoccupied with presenting its subjects in ways representative of their lived experiences. Rooted in the early nineteenth century, the field of anthropology was informed by scientific modes of

thought, and made claims for objectivity. Yet in reality, anthropological study throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century was entrenched with colonial notions of “othering.” In navigating the power dynamics between the relationship of photographer and subject, these women advocate for transatlantic connectivity as both “insider” and “outsider” of the cultures they experienced. The twentieth century saw an increase in travel among African American middle-class women – partially informed by a shifting politics of respectability – enabling the women in this study to undertake anthropological fieldwork that led to different forms of relationships being facilitated through their different networks. Indeed, it must be noted that the women in this chapter belong to the middle-class, and therefore they had the privilege and means of travel unavailable to most Black and working-class Americans throughout the 1920s to 1960s.

The American Anthropology Association (AAA) defines anthropology as simply “the study of what makes us human.”¹³ The women in this chapter were most concerned with cultural anthropology, of which the AAA states, “sociocultural anthropologists explore how people in different places live and understand the world around them,” as “sociocultural anthropologists often find that the best way to learn about diverse peoples and cultures is to spend time living among them.”¹⁴ Studying the human experience can be inherently problematic when a culture that is perceived as ‘dominant’ attempts to make an intervention in another culture. In the early twentieth century “anthropology

¹³ “What is Anthropology?”, *American Anthropological Association*, accessed 3 January 2020, <https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2150&navItemNumber=740>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

[was] the authoritative – yet overwhelmingly Eurocentric and masculinist – study of humankind.”¹⁵ Non-white perspectives were side-lined, and the continent of Africa was viewed as a rich site of study. In 1964 anthropologist Jacques J. Maquet argued that “through stressing the moral inferiority of the African at an earlier period and the dangers of rapid change at a later one and emphasizing the difference between European and African throughout, the anthropologist was providing conceptual and theoretical models which were socially useful to the existing colonial system.”¹⁶ Images of Africans from diverse regions and cultures came under the anthropological category of the “Savage Other.”¹⁷ As such, the legacy of colonialism and its origins in white supremacy has heavily influenced anthropology.

Although the term “anthropology” accurately describes the photographic mode in which Black women photographers operated, the work of these women is more nuanced than any simple label can qualify. Anthropology relies on an “outsider” status; the ideal of an impartial observer who documents a society whilst attempting to impact upon it as little as possible. Yet the women in this chapter often did not adopt an “outsider” status; instead, they drew on their African heritage to attempt to live within the cultures they studied. Drawing on their “insider” status speaks to the cultivation of a Pan-Africanist approach, whereby they used their Blackness in order to interact with other cultures. The approach of many women in this

¹⁵ Faye V. Harrison and Ira E. Harrison, “Introduction: Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of a Subjugated Knowledge,” in *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*, eds. Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1.

¹⁶ Diane Lewis, “Anthropology and Colonialism,” *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 5 (December 1973): 583.

¹⁷ T.K. Oommen, “The Pasts and Futures of Anthropology and Sociology: Implications of Shifting Locations,” *Sociological Bulletin* 59, no. 3 (September-December 2010): 304-305.

chapter evokes ethnography rather than anthropology, as the women inserted themselves into the communities with which they worked. Specifically, autoethnography is defined by Ellis and Bochner as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.”¹⁸ The author is given an established voice and consciously filters their observations through their own experience, which is evident in the images in this chapter wherein the photographers are pictured alongside their subjects.

Yet even adopting this definition of autoethnography may be insufficient, as some of the women in this chapter did not intend merely to observe or interact, keeping an impartial and objective viewpoint, but to fundamentally change the cultures they met. Emily Vernon was a missionary who went to South Africa to convert people to Christianity. I argue that the labels of autoethnography, ethnography and anthropology are useful insofar as they allow us to fully appreciate the fluidity with which these women documented the diaspora and claimed space. At various points these women occupied space as anthropologists, ethnographers, tourists, or missionaries. Considering why they assumed these roles, and why they alternated, provides insight into both the insider / outsider dichotomy the women faced in their dual identities as a part of the African diaspora and citizens of the United States. It also brings their gendered perspectives to the forefront of analysis, as the various roles speak to alternately personal and professional roles.

¹⁸ C. Ellis and A. P. Bochner, “Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 2000): 739.

These women further the anthropological approach of such innovative Black women as Zora Neale Hurston, whose utilisation of the visual, challenging of genre, and gender politics in her work challenged the white male gaze that dominated anthropology.¹⁹ Gwendolyn Mikell asserts that, despite Hurston's ground-breaking texts such as *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938), she was more commonly remembered as a "literary chronicler of black life and folklore than as an anthropologist."²⁰ Through her photography, Hurston explored the duality of the anthropological insider / outsider dichotomy, emerging as what Daphne Lamothe calls a "native ethnographer" on account of both her "racial identity" and ethnographic training.²¹ Furthermore, Hurston's gender influenced her anthropology, particularly given her focus on women's roles in the communities which she explored, informed by ideas of the New Negro. Mikell suggests that Hurston ultimately rejected the "New Negro" label as it applied to women, as "she gradually and decisively put aside the 'New Negro,' images of black women as idealized portrayals of primordial Africanity and of the value of black feminine beauty and motherhood to African men because they jarred with her memory of what black women had become in segregated cities."²² As such, the women in this chapter can be considered as part of a tradition of Black women's anthropological thought, as they navigated complex gender, genre, and relationship dynamics with their subjects of study.

¹⁹ Although Hurston's anthropology utilised photography, the unclear nature of who took the photographs in the text complicates sustained photographic analysis in this thesis.

²⁰ Gwendolyn Mikell, "Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston," *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*, eds. Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 53

²¹ Daphne Lamothe, *Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2.

²² Mikell, "Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston," 57,

**“I Took Many Pictures of the Country and the People”: Emily Vernon
and Missionary Photography**

Emily Vernon was a missionary who exercised anthropological techniques in her photography and demonstrates how African American women’s anthropological photography was concerned with the occupation and reclamation of space, both symbolic and physical. Unlike the other women in this chapter, Vernon utilised personal networks to travel to South Africa with the explicit aim of converting people to Christianity. A tactic within this was taking pictures of local people to advocate for transatlantic connectivity through “spaces of agency.” Vernon’s photography and her life as a photographer, which was supplementary to her primary role as a missionary, demonstrates the prominence of spatio-symbolic reclamation in the work of African American women’s photography during the long Civil Rights Movement, as she places herself within sites of cultural exchange. Mary K. Schueneman has argued that the Civil Rights Movement and African American women’s Christian missions are in “historical continuity,” as the women chose to “encounter and confront segregation and Jim Crow, and they did so in explicitly religious vocations and spaces where their confidence in the authority of their Christian faith and vocation took prominence over their confidence in the authority of the US constitution.”²³ The religious foundations of the long Civil Rights Movement and the Christian missions of the 1920s underscores this.

²³ Mary K. Schueneman, “A Leavening Force: African American Women and Christian Mission in the Civil Rights Era,” *Church History* 81, no. 4 (December 2012): 876.

Missionaries in the 1920s frequently applied the ideas of the “New Negro” during the Harlem Renaissance to an African context, advocating for Pan-Africanism. Schueneman argues “in their search for their true selves, the artists of the movement strove to find meaning in their being part of the black race [...] these black American writers, artists and musicians considered their work a link in the long chain of black civilization and culture which had started in Africa.”²⁴ During this period, missionary programmes marked “the most important point of contact between black Americans and South Africa.”²⁵ These exchanges came with their own power dynamics; academic Yekutiel Gershow suggests that “the African American myth” persisted as many Africans “mythologized the black American experience, idealized black Americans accomplishments and well-being, downplayed their miseries.”²⁶ Yet the desire in African American missionaries to convert Africans was rooted not just in notions of Christian superiority, but the fundamental idea that “the black man was capable and able.”²⁷ As such, missionary activism and photography can be understood as an extension of New Negro ideology, Pan-Africanism, and the long Civil Rights Movement.

Vernon was born in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Vernon married Bishop William Tesch Vernon in 1906, which allowed her to leave behind her career as a teacher of Latin and mathematics at Western University, and she became active in organising women in religious institutions. Vernon’s focus on creating space for women was present in her later photographic work. After

²⁴ Yekutiel Gershow, *Africans on African-Americans: The Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 106.

²⁵ James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), xii.

²⁶ Gershow, *Africans on African Americans*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

her husband was consecrated a Bishop of the A.M.E. Church and assigned to the 17th Episcopal District in South Africa in 1920, Emily Vernon went to South Africa with him. The couple stayed until 1924, and while there Vernon worked on *South Africa: An Open Door – A Story in Pictures* (ca. 1925). She used anthropological photographic techniques and discussed communities according to “type,” evoking anthropological language.²⁸ She wrote in the preface: “I took many pictures of the country and the people.”²⁹

In the 1890s, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) was a well-established, independent institution. During this time, the organisation solidified its merger with the South African Ethiopian Church, establishing itself as the most important independent African American institution operating in colonial South Africa in the late nineteenth century. This merger ushered in a new era of missionary activity, as religious African Americans traversed the Atlantic in order to convert local South Africans to Christianity. Despite the apparent differences between the emphasis on science and religion, the aims and techniques of anthropologists and missionaries at the time were often similar. The stated aims of the missionaries were to change the cultures with which they interacted, whilst anthropologists attempted to leave the cultures intact, but both projected Western assumptions and ideals onto their subjects as they entered a different cultural space. They both sought to educate the American public about the people of Africa, albeit with a clear agenda in place. In the case of anthropologists, this was commonly to impose white

²⁸ E. E. Vernon, *South Africa: An Open Door – A Story in Pictures* (c.1925), Bishop William Tecumseh Vernon Collection, RH MS 529, Folder 17, Box 3, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence, Kansas.

²⁹ Mikell, “Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston,” 57.

colonial superiority. The missionaries, meanwhile, often juxtaposed the ‘savagery’ of the native Africans against their successful reform and missionary programmes, aiming to convince the American public of their necessity. A significant way in which anthropological and missionary activities were similar at the turn of the century was their utilisation of photography.

The importance of photography to the AME is a new field of scholarship as previous studies of missionary materials have remained focussed on textual evidence. There is little consideration of Vernon’s text in any academic work, meaning that the current space she occupies as a photographer in African American missionary history, photographic history, and the long Civil Rights Movement, is minimal. In 2018, Elisabeth Engel published an article in which she examined the visual components of this heretofore underdeveloped archive. Engel argued that missionaries engaged in photography as “a ‘contact zone’ in which subaltern subjects met and began to negotiate the extents to which they resembled, or did not resemble, one another by drawing on colonial otherness and the refined look by which African Americans expressed their racial uplift since emancipation.”³⁰ The centrality of photography to the AME mission was confirmed by Levy J. Coppin, a AME bishop in the early 1900s, who during a trip to the North Cape stated:

My traveling companion [...] is a photographer, and he brought with him his instruments and we remained most of the day Monday that we might make photographs of the church, ox cart and the house occupied as Episcopal Residence at Green River, one of which – the ox cart scene – is being prepared for the A.M.E. Review. These are truly historic pictures and may be handed down to posterity as historical land [sic] marks [sic] in our South African work.³¹

³⁰ Elisabeth Engel, “Southern Looks? A History of African American Missionary Photography of Africa, 1890s–1930s,” *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 2 (May 2018): 390–417.

³¹ Ibid.

The description of the photographs as “historical landmarks” is evocative of the occupation of space, as it suggests that the photographs themselves function as important sites of memory, and a record of their activities. Engel dedicates considerable space to Emily Vernon in her article, indicating how Vernon’s work forms part of a “forgotten archive” which utilises visual tropes of the “New Negro.” I extend Engel’s analysis by considering Vernon’s work through an anthropological framework.

For Vernon, marriage functioned as a professional network as well as a personal one. Through her marriage to Bishop William Tesch Vernon, she was able to travel across the Atlantic in 1920 and work in South Africa for four years. Her career was closely tied to his, and whilst this provided opportunities, it also brought restrictions. For instance, in 1924 her husband established The Emily Vernon Institute, an A.M.E. missionary school. While it was an honour to have a school named after her, this coming at the behest of her husband indicates how he shaped her experiences of South Africa, and her photographic work was frequently associated with his work. Vernon’s photographic work was undertaken not just to support the work of A.M.E. but, by extension, her husband as well. Despite this, Vernon was able to assert herself as a missionary and photographer in South Africa, who employed

anthropological techniques facilitated through the personal network of her marriage.



Figure 29. Photographer Unknown, “Mother” Vernon and Her South African “Children,” 1925.

Source: Emily E. Vernon, *South Africa: An Open Door – A Story in Pictures* (c.1925), Bishop William Tecumseh Vernon Collection, Kansas Collection, RH MS 529, Box 3, Folder 17, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence, Kansas.

Through examining Vernon’s work, it becomes apparent how central the Methodist faith was to Vernon’s identity, as was her commitment to education. The “spaces of agency” that she cultivated in her photography, therefore, resonate with these ideas. The image “Mother” Vernon and her South African “Children” (Fig. 29), featured in *South Africa: An Open Door*, shows six South African children positioned next to Vernon, who holds a chalkboard with “ABCD 1234 JESUS” written on it. The juxtaposition between Vernon and the children is marked, as she wears a long white dress, which covers her arms and legs, while the children are only semi-clothed. Engel suggests that this image is designed to “contrast the well-dressed African American subjects with nude, small, and sexless African children as

their fundamental others. Their superiority and benign authority was visibly enhanced by their gesturing as patrons who extended the promises of Christian charity.”³² The staging in this photograph deliberately exoticizes the South African children in an attempt to justify the A.M.E.’s interventions. This attitude is further reflected by the title of the book. If Africa is “An Open Door” as the title suggests, to whom is it open? The staging of this photograph suggests it is open to the Christianizing force of African American missionaries. Vernon uses her ideas of the diasporic connection between African Americans and Africans on the continent to present African Americans as the ideal missionaries to convert Africans as a way of advancing their struggle for liberation. Vernon’s “spaces of agency” within this image represent both a physical and symbolic space – both the location of South Africa, and the idea of South Africa.

The captioning of the image is also gendered. Despite having no children, Vernon is referred to by the image’s caption as “Mother.” Vernon performs the role of surrogate mother as well as teacher, suggesting that ideas of diasporic connectivity adopt a familial lens in Vernon’s work. Engel also notes the gendered implications of the captions, arguing that this evokes a theme of adoption, whilst the employment of quotation marks around the term “Mother,” “made clear that the family concept was used metaphorically, defying the condescending idea of the African American single mother who gave birth to numbers of children far beyond the well-ordered nuclear family.”³³ In this way the gendered politics of respectability come into focus,

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

as in the early twentieth century African American women were often held to high moralistic standards of behaviour in order to advance the race. These quotation marks also emphasise that this is an imagined relationship, as Vernon implies that she is part of the imagined African family that extends beyond the continent throughout the diaspora. In this case, Vernon's own respectability is underscored by assuming the position of adoptive mother to comparatively undressed, and hence less respectable (according to American standards), children. Robeson implies that she is bringing 'respectability' to the children in the image, whilst the nurturing role of mother conjures up notions of advancement and progress. Vernon occupied physical space in her photographs as surrogate mother, educator, and Christian – evoking the idea of a diasporic family to cultivate diasporic connectivity.



Figure 30. Photographer unknown, *"Mother Vernon" with Heathen Zulu Girls*, 1925.
Source: Vernon, *South Africa*.

Vernon's use of the anthropological technique of ethnography was central to her missionary photography, as she utilised this approach to suggest a connection to her subjects. Vernon stated in *South Africa: An Open Door* that her aim was to offer African American viewers a glimpse of the "farthest mission field" and "a new vision of our responsibility for those who sit in darkness."³⁴ The suggestion that Africa is synonymous with "darkness" reflects the both the colonising nature of Christian missionaries, as well as colonial legacies of anthropological thought – that the culture of the individual doing the anthropological work is superior to the culture being explored. This is an outright rejection of cultural relativism, seemingly suggesting estrangement from anthropological ideals. However, Engel also emphasises the role of ethnography at play in Vernon's images:

Vernon's determination to closely emulate well-known visions of African exoticism revealed the power of ethnographical preconceptions. In Vernon's re-enactment, the depicted South Africans followed the role model she suggested in terms of costumes and hairstyles. They presented themselves almost naked, wearing solely flamboyant bangles, chaplets, and loincloths.³⁵

By providing the viewer with familiar ethnographic templates of native Africans, Vernon sought to justify the presence of the A.M.E. in South Africa. Staging images of Africans which were coded as "exotic" with "ethnographical preconceptions" effectively othered them, allowing Vernon to posit herself as a redeemer of uneducated, and the A.M.E. as a morally righteous organisation. Indeed, one of the images is entitled "Heathen Zulu Girls" (Fig. 30). The use of the term "Heathen" suggests that their lack of a recognizable Western faith

³⁴ Vernon, *South Africa*.

³⁵ Engel, "Southern Looks?."

is as much a part of their identity as their race and gender. That this term is intended negatively is confirmed by the caption “many thousands are in this condition,” which suggests that these women’s “condition” is undesirable.³⁶ It is through her staging and captioning that Vernon ‘others’ her subjects within the photographs, whilst simultaneously indicating familial relationships to indicate an ‘insider’ status. Allowing herself space within the image, and occupying a central position, indicates that she wished to be viewed, to an extent, as a “native ethnographer” – as part of the community – whilst her dress and captioning testifies to her desire to maintain her Western sense of superiority according to conventional politics of respectability. By using the anthropological technique of ethnographic and autoethnographic photography, therefore, Vernon attempts to bolster her missionary materials with scientific clout. She engages with a kind of “diasporic politics of identification,” in that she is creating familial ties to the continent whilst maintaining ideas of American superiority. In other words, Vernon utilises spatio-symbolic techniques in her photographs to cultivate her role as both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ within this community.

Emily Vernon marks a vital starting point for considering the spatio-symbolic techniques used by African American women photographers in anthropological and ethnographic circles. Vernon’s personal networks enabled her to occupy physical space as a photographer in South Africa in the early 1920s, yet her symbolic space as a photographer in photographic history is overlooked. Moreover, Vernon did not operate solely as a missionary photographer, nor an anthropological photographer, nor even an ethnographic

³⁶ Vernon, *South Africa*.

photographer; she operated within a gradient, shifting her lens to the camerawork which best reflected the message she attempted to convey. That message is undoubtedly laden with problematic colonial views of South Africa insofar as she portrays it as a land of “darkness” and “heathens” who need redemption. By occupying physical space in her photographs and evoking the standards of the New Negro in the 1920s with her own dress and uplift politics, Vernon posits herself within the ideology of the long Civil Rights Movement, as she evoked the politics of respectability as a method to claim space. Vernon also evokes a symbolic shared space, as the familial ideas raised within the images, despite their restrictions, convey a sense of transatlantic identity and a form of Pan-Africanism. This connectivity took on forms that were patronising and familial. From the problematic groundwork of missionary activities, we can see a sense of kinship and responsibility emerging towards the continent of Africa; one that would become less patronising in the decades to come.

“For The Brothers and Sisters, Who Will Know Whom I Mean”: Eslanda Goode Robeson and *African Journey* (1945)

Throughout the twentieth century, Eslanda Goode Robeson was an outspoken activist and campaigner for civil rights. From her work with organisations such as the Progressive Party and Sojourners for Truth and Justice, to delivering public speeches, Robeson used her platform to advocate for decolonisation and Black internationalism around the world, whilst campaigning for increased civil rights for African Americans at home. She published works such as *Paul Robeson, Negro* (1930) and *African Journey* (1945), both of which offered

criticisms of segregation and discriminatory practices in the United States. Scholar Leigh Raiford described her as “a committed anticolonial and antiracist activist.”³⁷ In 1953, both Eslanda Goode Robeson and Langston Hughes were called before Senator Joseph McCarthy to respond to allegations of communism. Yet scholars often place her behind her husband – the actor and activist Paul Robeson. Even publications which seek to elevate Robeson as an activist in her own right mention her husband before her.³⁸ Although being the wife of Paul Robeson undoubtedly afforded Robeson a degree of social mobility and privilege, she was nevertheless a powerful activist independent of her husband.

Alongside her activism, Robeson was a keen photographer. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe’s ground-breaking text *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (1993) illuminates the work that Robeson did as a photographer, stating that “Eslanda was never recognised in the field of study to which she devoted so much time.”³⁹ Robeson was a keen photographer throughout her life, and photography formed a key component of *African Journey*, which documented a trip she took to South Africa, Uganda, and the Belgian Congo in 1936. Her son, Paul Robeson Jr., remarked that, “by 1936 the camera was an extension of her. She was by then obviously a professional with the camera. She knew what she was doing.”⁴⁰ Robeson had a darkroom in

³⁷ Raiford, “The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson’s *African Journey*,” 134 .

³⁸ Robert, Shaffer, “Out of the Shadows: The Political Writings of Eslanda Goode Robeson,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 66, no. 1 (1999): 47.

³⁹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 95.

⁴⁰ Paul Robeson, Jr., interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, “Interview,” 10, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

the family home, and her son recalled that, “she got many candid shots of friends, of interesting people.”⁴¹

Although Robeson was an impressive activist and writer, who championed the rights of African Americans for decades, her work as an anthropologist is often underdeveloped in discussions of her life and work. Born in 1895, she travelled extensively around the world due to her upper-class celebrity lifestyle and spent decades campaigning for racial equality and decolonisation in Africa. Anthropological thought was a key aspect of Robeson’s photographic approach. She studied anthropology at the London School of Economics (LSE) where she developed her thesis: anthropology as “dynamic interpretation,” and the study of “man and his relation to his fellow man, and to his changing environments. Thus, it includes the study of primitive man under primitive conditions, of modern man under modern conditions, of human relations, race relations, of education, of social institutions.”⁴² Robeson’s emphasis on racial justice put her at odds with cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who had pioneered participant observation of social anthropology and held racist views. On one occasion, after a seminar in which the discussion focussed on the issue of American segregation, Robeson wrote a ten-page reflection to Malinowski, stating: “Last week we talked about the idea of Segregation as a possible solution to the Negro Problem in America. There was so much I wanted to tell you about the idea, that I have put it down on paper.”⁴³ *African Journey* was a powerful

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

⁴² Raiford, “The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson’s *African Journey*,” 139.

⁴³ Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs Paul Robeson* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), 89.

infusion of anthropological work, travel writing, and protest literature, traversing multiple genres in her anthropological work.

Robeson cultivated multiple “spaces of agency” as a photographer and within her photographs. As a photographer, Robeson occupied physical space, utilising personal and professional networks to enlarge the diasporic scope of civil rights activism. Robeson also occupied symbolic space as a photographer, challenging the white male domination of the field of anthropology to privilege the view of African American women. Robeson cultivated space for her subjects that advocated diasporic connectivity through familial language. Robeson also focused on the role of women in the communities she visited, which took on less patronising forms than Vernon’s mission work had. As such, Robeson’s anthropological work can be understood as spatio-symbolic reclamation, which broadens our understanding of the Civil Rights Movement as a long movement in terms of chronology, geographic scope, and types of activism and photographic genre utilised.

As a photographer and anthropologist, Robeson navigated professional and personal networks to conduct one of her first anthropological trips to South Africa in 1936. This allowed her to access physical space as a photographer which would have otherwise been closed to her. Although her academic record at the London School of Economics gave her the professional networks and skills she needed, her personal networks were also vital to her ability to conduct fieldwork. Travelling to South Africa at this time was exceedingly difficult, as “there were unique emotional, psychological, and even logistical challenges. European colonialism still dominated the

continent.”⁴⁴ The legacy of implied inferiority continued from Vernon’s day, as Ransby argues that “even many Black Americans shunned any association with the land of their ancestors, viewing it as backwards and an embarrassment,” equating it with “Tarzan comic books and stories about cannibalism.”⁴⁵ Although Eslanda was unable to obtain a visa, she decided to travel to South Africa with her son Pauli regardless. Moutoussamy-Ashe documented that “before her departure she telexed ahead to friends in South Africa – Max Yergan and a very well respected South African doctor – who were to meet her at the boat. When she and Pauli arrived, they were greeted by Yergan and by the local Africans. Eslanda was granted her visa.”⁴⁶ In this way her friends and family served as a professional network alongside a familiar one, effectively granting her access to physical space on the African continent.

The role of Eslanda Robeson’s husband is also crucial, as in many ways Paul Robeson enabled her travel. At various points in *African Journey* Eslanda speculates that Paul assisted behind the scenes. When she met immigration and customs officials, she recalled that they “were very kind and helpful,” leading her to suspect Paul Robeson’s intervention: “I sense Paul’s hand somewhere.”⁴⁷ A reviewer of *African Journey* at the time noted that Robeson could have been “in danger of repelling us with her evident overprivilege [sic]” as she travelled like a “princess.”⁴⁸ However, they assured the reader that “we forget it in the much more pressing evidence of her aliveness to the African people,” which asserts the reality that, if it were not for

⁴⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 94.

⁴⁷ Eslanda Robeson, *African Journey* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1945), 93.

⁴⁸ Francis Hackett, “Book of the Times,” *The New York Times*, Thursday, August 9, 1945.

Robeson's privilege and her utilisation of it, there is no way a text of this nature by an African American woman could have been produced.⁴⁹ Robeson wielded her roles as woman, mother, and wife of Paul Robeson to attain freedom of movement and access to spaces that would have otherwise been denied to her.

Robeson created a space for diasporic connection through familial language in her work, but unlike Vernon did not seek to change Africans' culture in any way. Rather, Robeson sought to celebrate both the continent and her connection to it as an African American woman. Robeson's dedication to her 1945 anthropological text *African Journey* is an immediate call for a diasporic familial connection, as she writes "for the brothers and sisters, who will know whom I mean."⁵⁰ In so doing, from the very start of this text Robeson cultivates a sense of family in her work, consistent with what Nicholas Grant calls "the idea of the Pan-African family."⁵¹ Throughout this work, Imaobong D. Umoren argues that Robeson links the struggles on the African continent to those in the United States, as "the many comments Robeson made about the similarities of racism in South Africa and the United States demonstrate how her trip deepened her knowledge about the links between colonial and racial oppression in South Africa and the Jim Crow South that was linked to her Pan-Africanism."⁵² However, Umoren does not consider Robeson's photography within this framework. Yet this belief was not just present in her photography – the role of a family structure proved vital

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Robeson, *African Journey*.

⁵¹ Nicholas Grant, *Winning Our Freedoms Together: African Americans and Apartheid, 1945 – 1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 162.

⁵² Imaobong D. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 49.

in Robeson's life and work. It is significant that she had her own darkroom where she developed her own images in her own residence. That a domestic space was utilised and transformed into a professional one, collapsing the boundaries of the personal and political, speaks to the transient nature of the role of photography in Eslanda's life. Yet whilst Robeson was undoubtedly dedicated to her family her son Pauli speculates that part of the reason Robeson was so passionate about photography was because it was something that was "uniquely hers."⁵³ Whilst Paul was not overbearing, and Pauli noted that "he was not threatened by a successful wife or by great artists [...]" he encouraged Mother in many different careers," he also acknowledged that his mother was often frustrated to be regarded primarily as the wife of Paul Robeson.⁵⁴

In 1945, almost a decade after her trip, Eslanda Robeson published her account of her experience across Africa in the book *African Journey*. Her photographs form a key facet of this text and Maureen Mahon argues that she utilised photography to reflect her "diasporic politics of identification" – a claim which can be extended to encompass the acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation with which Robeson was engaged. With over sixty images included in the text and subjects ranging from people to objects to landscapes, Mahon argues:

Here, she followed the anthropological process of providing information to make "the exotic" seem familiar, selecting photographs that attacked dominant representations of "primitive Africa." There are pictures of a wedding party, family groups, and neatly attired children standing outside their school. These are not wild-eyed natives, but people who have homes and families. Their hair is carefully groomed and their clothes—whether Western or African—are tidy.

⁵³ Robeson, Jnr., "Interview," 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Many of the photo captions identify people by name or occupation, individualizing them and creating a feel of informal snapshots from a vacation rather than of scientific data.⁵⁵

The aim of challenging pre-conceived notions of a “primitive” Africa is certainly supported by Robeson herself. When meeting with local South Africans at Burns Hill, Robeson remarked to the audience how “these Africans, these ‘primitives,’ made me feel humble and respectful. I blush with shame for the mental picture my fellow Negroes in America have of our African brothers: wild black savages in leopard skins, waving spears and eating raw meat.”⁵⁶ She acknowledged her own role in perpetuating such stereotypes when she remarked, “well, there will be no sequel to *Sanders!*”⁵⁷ As such, Robeson created space in her text for photographs of African subjects in line with a politics of respectability that would convey dignity to an African American audience.

While Emily Vernon blended ethnographic signifiers with missionary photography, Robeson blended informal snapshots with anthropology to preserve the everyday dignity of her subjects whilst still providing factual evidence. Furthermore, Robeson’s anthropological approach fluctuated between genres. Raiford notes how her images encapsulated the feeling of the tourist snapshot. This was an ideological choice, as “emboldened by brewing anticolonial struggles, and inspired by her own diasporic consciousness, she undertook this journey as at once intellectual fieldwork, political

⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁶ Robeson, *African Journey*, 49.

⁵⁷ Robeson refers to the film *Sanders of the River* (1935). Paul Robeson starred as an African tribal chief, intending to present a positive and proud depiction of Africa. Eslanda Goode Robeson was his manager at this time. However, in the editing process the film instead advocated for imperialist and colonial rule. See: Ransby, *Eslanda*, 96-97.

reconnaissance, and family vacation.”⁵⁸ Therefore, Robeson’s fluidity with genre echoes that of the other African American women anthropologists in this chapter, as does her utilisation of anthropology in service of Pan-Africanist activism. In her images, Robeson desegregates the symbolic space of the anthropological canon, and advances spaces of equality across the diaspora.



Figure 31. Eslanda Goode Robeson, *Mukama of Toro on the steps of his palace*, 1936.
Source: Robeson, *African Journey*.

Robeson’s photography demonstrates her desire to treat her subjects with respect, and to empower them within the spaces they occupy. Throughout *African Journey*, Robeson’s written accounts of taking pictures affirm that she consistently asked for the person’s permission. Robeson stated: “I never bring it [my camera] out unless I am sure no one will mind.”⁵⁹ On one notable occasion, she described an interaction with the Mukama (King) of Toro (Fig. 31):

⁵⁸ Raiford, “The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson’s *African Journey*,” 134.

⁵⁹ Robeson, *African Journey*, 112.

When he brought out the coronation robes for me to see I looked at them so longingly he laughed and said I could photograph them if I wished. I took pictures of the throne, the drums, spears, and the especially significant Crown-and-Beard. I was so interested and enthusiastic that soon I had Kaboha, Nyabongo, and Mukama himself helping me arrange the articles in the sun [...] finally Mukama put on his robes and sat on the throne for me. He was terrific.⁶⁰

This emphasis on consent and the ethics of taking images of Africans stands in contrast to Vernon, who posed her subjects like props to convey her own meaning to the audience. Robeson's politeness "put people at ease" in a way that enabled her to ethically photograph those she wished to document.⁶¹ This also speaks to the insider / outsider attitude Robeson adopted, as she sought the approval of those she photographed and ingratiate herself among them.

Robeson placed herself and her son in some images, conveying their acceptance within the community to the viewer. Robeson empowered her subjects to have their photographs taken through ethical practice, documenting them in their own space and working in collaboration with the subject as she too occupies the space. Although there are always relations of power embedded in the photographer-subject relationship, Robeson nevertheless made a conscious effort to empower her subjects and gain their consent in order to convey her "diasporic politics of identification," to her African American readers.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁶¹ Robeson Jnr., "Interview," 10.



Figure 32. Eslanda Robeson, *Lady of Nkole ferry*, 1936.
Source: Robeson, *African Journey*.

An image that evokes a more gendered reading is *Lady on Nkole Ferry* (Fig. 32). In this image, a woman sits on a raft, looking unsmilingly at the camera. Robeson was less preoccupied with capturing an aesthetically pleasing and traditionally respectable kind of femininity consistent with American portraiture norms, and more with capturing an accurate snapshot of an African woman occupying space. The fact that the woman is unsmiling, as is common with most tourist images, indicates that an anthropological lens is at play here. Yet she also resisted “othering” the woman, as Emily Vernon’s images did, by having the figure unposed and un-performative. Her eyes are at the centre of the frame, indicating that her identity and personhood is the focal point of the image. Her pose is relaxed and casual, with her hands crossed in her lap. This image further expressed Robeson’s “diasporic politics of identification,” granting the viewer an insight into this woman’s life. Comparing the captions

of Vernon's images with Robeson's also reveals the implications of gendered language. While Robeson referred to her subject respectfully as "Lady on Nkole ferry," Vernon's were "Heathen Zulu Girls." Referring to someone as a "lady" rather than a "girl" implies dignity and status. Robeson's son Pauli stated that Eslanda made people comfortable due to "her judgement as to where she was and what was appropriate and what wasn't."⁶² This image shows a woman occupying space, and it is notable that the woman is alone in the image, as it implies a sense of independence against a seemingly infinite space of water. As Umoren notes, "An emphasis on the political role and agency of African women features heavily in *African Journey*, and Robeson repeatedly disproves the notion that African women were uninterested in politics."⁶³ Whilst the woman in the image is not engaged in overtly political activity, Robeson's photography nevertheless portrays women with agency, independence, and dignity.

⁶² Ibid., 10.

⁶³ Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists*, 49.



Figure 33. Eslanda Goode Robeson, *Chinese Trip, Mme, Chou En Lai*, 1950.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 96.

Eslanda Goode Robeson's anthropological endeavours were not limited to her trip presented in *African Journey*. Although Robeson took this trip in 1936, the final section was written just before the book's publication in 1945. In this section, Robeson provides a brief overview of the years that have passed, noting that "I have continued my study of anthropology over the years – in England, in Russia, and now here in America at the Hartford Seminary Foundation."⁶⁴ Robeson also travelled to China soon after the revolution, where she continued to blend the tourist snapshot alongside an anthropological lens, frequently including pictures of women (Fig. 33). She continued to take informal snapshots of her family, including her mother, husband and son. Yet she would never exhibit her work, as "she always claimed it was a hobby. Maybe it was because she didn't want to subject herself to professional

⁶⁴ Robeson, *African Journey*, 185.

standards.”⁶⁵ Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe concludes that photography was “supplemental to everything else she did in her life.”⁶⁶ Robeson’s work moved between many symbolic spaces, from private to public, professional to hobby, and anthropology to tourist snapshot.

Eslanda Goode Robeson’s role as an African American woman conducting anthropological photography in Africa in this era offers a unique photographic perspective. It is not just the existence of Robeson’s photographs that indicate their significance; their content and meaning point to an anthropological framework that enriches our understanding of the long Civil Rights Movement. Robeson is involved in acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation that point to the diasporic connectivity of African Americans and Africans, both emphasising the global context of the long Civil Rights Movement and broadening definitions of activism. Robeson’s manipulation of genre – from anthropology to tourist snapshot – and her exploitation of insider / outsider status – from “native ethnographer” to foreign visitor – indicates the fluidity of African American women’s anthropology at this time. Like Vernon, Robeson utilises a familial subtext to her imagery through self-representation within a photographer and subject dynamic imbued with power disparities, yet unlike Vernon does not seek to change or convert the people she meets. Robeson’s Pan-Africanism informed her encounters, emphasising exchanges with willing participants. As a photographer, Robeson used personal and professional networks to access spaces that otherwise would have been denied her. Robeson’s work as a photographer also challenges the symbolic space of the

⁶⁵ Robeson, Jnr., “Interview,” 22.

⁶⁶ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 95.

long Civil Rights Movement canon, which excludes women photographers and focuses on the United States.

“What Kind of Life the People Have”: Anthropology and Community in the Photographs of Doris Derby

Doris Derby was an activist and academic in organisations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She set up the Free Southern Theatre in Mississippi, and worked with Southern Media, an organisation that was dedicated to producing media that showcased the movement. Most of Derby’s photography can be described as organisational photography, as she orientated her photography around the groups she worked for. Her photographic work of this nature in the 1960s has been documented in Civil Rights Movement collections such as *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South*, *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle*, and *This Light of Ours: Activists Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement*. Although a recovery of Derby’s contribution to the Civil Rights Movement is emerging, no substantial analysis of Dr Derby’s work as an anthropologist, and how this contributes to her photography, has occurred.

An anthropological approach was crucial to Derby’s photography and acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation shaped her career as a photographer. As a photographer, Derby occupied physical space on the continent of Africa, enabled by her professional networks. Derby also promoted a Pan-Africanist approach to the long Civil Rights Movement, expanding narrow

understandings of both the geographic and ideological scope of the movement. Although her work resonates with Robeson's, Derby did not evoke explicitly familial language, nor navigate familial networks in order to conduct her work. Derby's photographs generate physical "spaces of agency," as Derby employed her images of Africa to educate and inspire African American communities. Derby's photography reveals how she took her anthropological understanding, artifacts, and photographs, and "integrated them with things that I did in Mississippi, so I was able to, for example, take art and sculpture to community meetings. And dress up in African dress because I thought it was important for people to know about African culture and history."⁶⁷

Born in 1939, Derby grew up in New York City, where she was passionate about representing her community from a young age. She recalled:

As a youngster growing up in New York, from early on I saw my mission in life as one who would identify, document, associate with, and learn from black artists, dancers, writers, musicians, actors, poets, and historians to gather information and get it out to our people in whatever form I could because it was sorely lacking in our community and wasn't readily available in mainstream textbooks, magazines, newspapers, movies or on TV. In addition to gaining wisdom from my elders and extended family members, church and community members, I knew I needed multiple resources to draw from and learn about black history, our contributions to America, and to learn about our glorious African past.⁶⁸

From her earliest years, Doris Derby committed herself to increasing the visibility of her community. Derby's childhood was rooted in a "diasporic politics of identification," from her extra-curricular activities to her family. Derby's understanding of her place in the African diaspora was nurtured

⁶⁷ Doris Derby, *Interview with the author*.

⁶⁸ Derby, "Talkin' Revolution with Dr. Doris Derby."

during childhood. She recalled studying African dance: “once a week I would go to 135th street, past the Schomburg, and go to the Y[YMCA]. I was interested in African dance – and always questioning why we didn’t have more of our culture and history in books, in the movies, in school productions, and so on.”⁶⁹ Derby would also visit the Schomburg Center where she would often read about Africa. Another influence for Derby was her Aunt, a missionary in Liberia from the 1930s to the 1950s.⁷⁰ Derby recounted how:

She would write a lot of letters to my grandparents and when we’d go to see them [...] they would read the letters. And I did meet her one time. She came back to the States. So I had that influence – the knowledge of Africa and it was in my head – one day I want to go to Africa. I want to learn about African people, their culture, so on and so forth, because here my Aunt is living there, so it’s something that’s okay, she’s doing whatever she’s doing.⁷¹

Studying African dance and hearing about her Aunt’s missionary work in Africa helped shape Derby’s Pan-Africanist perspective. Although Derby was inspired by her family, she did not utilise a personal, familial network to pursue her career as a photographer. Instead, the professional networks she cultivated through education and extracurricular activities facilitated her extensive travel, a privilege afforded her due to her middle-class status.

Derby attended Hunter College in New York for her undergraduate degree where she studied Cultural and Social Anthropology and Elementary Education. At the same time, she worked for the New York branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) and

⁶⁹ Derby, *Interview with the Author*.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

SNCC.⁷² She went on to earn a Masters and Ph.D. in Social Anthropology, with a focus on African culture, from the University of Illinois in 1972. She would go on to work as an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department at the University Center of Georgia until her retirement.⁷³ Derby outlined her own anthropological ideology when she stated that “as a person who was a cultural anthropologist, I believed in living in the community and finding out what kind of life the people have.”⁷⁴ This desire to document the community by adopting an insider status to better understand it speaks to the field of the “native ethnographer,” and again to the shifting of approaches in anthropological fieldwork. Fluidity and adaptation would inform much of Derby’s experience of both anthropology and the long Civil Rights Movement.

Derby’s first anthropological trip was in 1960, to Nigeria, after she received a scholarship from the NAACP.⁷⁵ This indicates the centrality of Pan-Africanism to key civil rights organisations – indeed, the NAACP adopted a “liberal anticommunism” during the Cold War, stopping their activism against colonialism and subsequent government criticism, making them one of the most moderate of the civil rights organisations.⁷⁶ Sponsoring a trip to Nigeria, however, counters this argument and demonstrates the importance of Pan-Africanism in even liberal organisations. At this time, leadership of Pan-Africanism had largely been passed to the continent itself, although Pan-

⁷² “Dr. Derby Bio,” *Boabab Flowers*, accessed 25 May 2020, <https://www.boababflowersfilm.com/dr-derby-bio>.

⁷³ “Dr. Derby CV,” Deborah Willis Professional Files, Sc MG 482, Box 22, Folder 1, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York..

⁷⁴ Doris Derby, interview by Joseph Mosnier, PhD, *Civil Rights History Project collection*, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2010039_crhp0008, 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

⁷⁶ Manfred Berg, “Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War,” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 2007): 76.

Africanism had been theorised by both African American (such as Claudia Jones, Shirley Graham, and W. E. B. Du Bois) and African (Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta) intellectuals and activists. Although activists in the Civil Rights Movement continued to have global understandings of the struggle for freedom, Pan-Africanism was not a central component of the nonviolent direct action of the 1950s and 1960s. However, Pan-Africanism became more dominant in the Black Power Movement in the late 1960s, as the then exiled Nkrumah stated, “Black Power is part of a world rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the exploited against the exploiter [...] It is linked with the Pan-African struggle for unity on the African continent, and with all those who strive to establish a socialist society.”⁷⁷ Yet from the early 1960s, Pan-Africanism was a consistent component of Doris Derby’s activism and featured heavily in her photography.

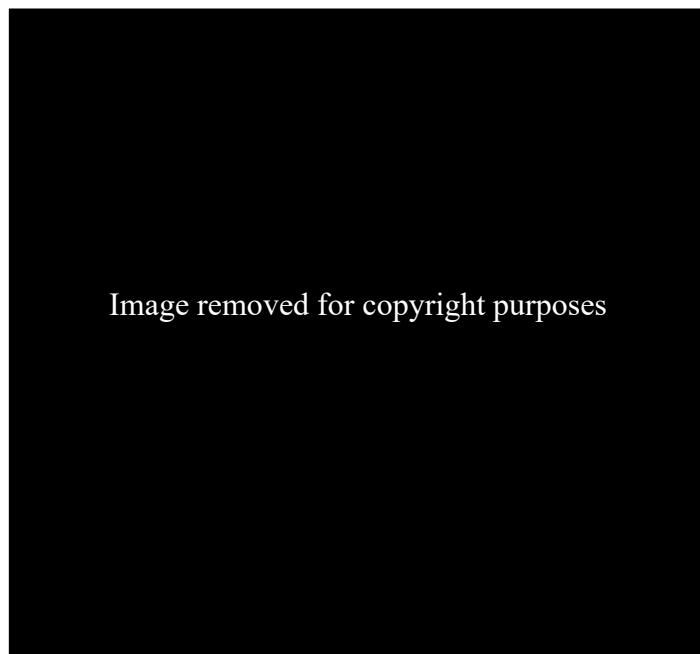


Figure 34. Eslanda Robeson, *Coronation House in palace grounds at Kabarole*, 1936.
Source: Robeson, *African Journey*.

⁷⁷ Hakim, Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 168.



Figure 35. Doris Derby, *African Hut*, 1960.
Source: Doris Adelaide Derby papers, 1960-1992, Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Box 9, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.



Figure 36. Emily Vernon, *Scene at the Dedication of the Emily Vernon Mission at Queme, Basutoland*, ca. 1925.
Source: Vernon, *South Africa*.

Although Vernon and Robeson travelled to Africa in years prior, Derby was the first in this chapter to do so without using a familial network. Derby

did, however, share her experience with them upon her return: “When I came back we had a big family gathering for my parents’ twenty-fifth anniversary, and we also celebrated my trip to Nigeria. We had a lot of relatives, and I gave a report, and showed the clothes and different artefacts that I bought back.”⁷⁸

Derby undertook several trips to Africa in her life, documenting her experience with her camera. Like Robeson, the subject matter of her photographs varied widely, and included wide landscapes, architecture, and people. There are clear parallels between her image of African huts and those taken by Eslanda Goode Robeson in *African Journey*. Both show architecturally similar thatched roofed huts, taken without a human presence in the photograph to allow the image to focus solely on the dwellings (Fig. 34 and Fig. 35). There is a further contrast with the work of Vernon. The only buildings as the focal point of *South Africa: An Open Door* are the missionary churches being built; which indicates Vernon’s text aimed to celebrate the role of the missionaries over accurate depictions of African life (Fig. 36). To dedicate space to images of African architecture demonstrates their worth to an American audience.

⁷⁸ Derby, *Interview with the Author*.



Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 37. Doris Derby, *Fishermen*, 1960.
Source: Doris Adelaide Derby papers, Box 9.

Derby also took images of people with her anthropological lens. Of particular note is an image of fisherman holding a net out at sea whilst a small boy sits watching them (Fig. 37). This image not only demonstrates African men performing their jobs, but also showcases a communal activity. The sight of the six men silhouetted against the sea as a young boy watches them casts them as idols to be looked up to and respected, enhanced by the breaking wave spraying foam over a figure yet failing to break the line of men. The spatio-symbolic implications of this image compound this, as the line of men consistently divides this space, implying their control of the landscape and unity. The emphasis on communal action is one that would take deep roots within both Derby's activist and anthropological beliefs. Unlike Robeson and Vernon, Derby did not position herself in her photography of Africa. By the 1960s, implying a familial connection or needing to act as a bridge within the space of the photograph was no longer necessary to convey transatlantic

connectivity in Black women's photography. Instead, Derby's image of the fishermen is framed so that we follow the gaze of a small boy to the right of the frame. By the 1960s, changing attitudes towards Black women's occupation of public space meant that whilst Derby evoked a connection to Africa, it was done without explicitly evoking familial notions or networks, signifying shifts in Black women photographers' professionalism as more independent.



Figure 38. Doris Derby, *unnamed photograph*, 1960.
Source: Doris Adelaide Derby papers, Box 9.

In Derby's images of African women occupying space outside, her anthropological lens is clear (Fig. 38). Like Louise Jefferson's *The Decorative Arts of Africa*, explored in the introduction to this thesis, Derby demonstrated her preoccupation with African women's modes of cultural expression, including hair styles. In the same way Jefferson dedicated a portion of her text to "dress" and "hair styles," treating women's fashion and hairstyles as

cultural, artistic artifacts which “requires a great deal of skill,” Derby highlighted the artistic and cultural merits of her subject’s hair style.⁷⁹ In the framing of the photograph, the central woman faces away from the camera with her face in silhouette. This allows the viewer to focus on her headdress, the elaborate pattern, and the folds in the fabric which hold it in place. The artistry and pattern are further compounded by the second woman to the left of the frame, who wears her headdress with the fabric in a slightly different fold, demonstrating the variety of headdresses available. The women themselves stand in a crowd of people, all of whom appear to be looking at the same, unknown sight. In this image, Derby created space for African women and their modes of cultural expression. Derby’s use of anthropological techniques to create space for Black women further extended into her activism in the American South.

Doris Derby initially planned to conduct an anthropological trip to Mexico in the summer of 1962. However, upon visiting the Albany Movement Office en route, she found:

They need all hands on deck, so to speak. Well, I could see how things were going and I had a lot of skills, and they were asking me to do this and that and the other thing. And so, I ended up doing several things. And before I knew it, the summer was almost going to be over, and I decided I wasn’t going to New [sic] Mexico.⁸⁰

Although she was not able to continue with her trip, her commitment to the field of anthropology remained clear in the images that she produced. Her images in America echoed her photographs in Africa, as they too evoked

⁷⁹ Jefferson, *The Decorative Arts of Africa*, 106.

⁸⁰ Derby, *Civil Rights History Collection*, 19.

“spaces of agency” to include women and focused on community-orientated activity. Although Derby’s formal anthropological training was paused whilst she assisted the civil rights effort, her photographic career was just beginning, and with it, her anthropological focus developed further, fuelling and shaping her activism.



Figure 39: Doris Derby, *Una Sewing Co-op - Black Dolls A*, 1968.
Source: Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2014.23.12.8.



Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 40. Doris Derby, *Una Sewing Co-op - Black Dolls B*, 1968.
Source: Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

A key component of Derby's anthropological work and civil rights activism was a focus on women creating communal "spaces of agency." Women as "agents of change" was a common theme in Derby's work. In 1968, Doris Derby took a series of photos of the Una Sewing Co-Op. Based in Clay County, Mississippi, the images show women at work making clothes and items for the community. Included in these images are those of an unnamed African American woman making Black dolls. The act of making these dolls takes on a spatial-symbolic significance when considered alongside 'The Doll Test,' conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark, which formed part of the landmark case *Brown v. Board* (1954).⁸¹ As the African American woman

⁸¹ This test involved asking African American children which doll they preferred to play with, and which doll they identified with, out of a Black doll and a white doll. When results indicated that the children identified with the Black doll but preferred the white Doll, "the Clarks concluded that the children had internalized society's racist messages and thus suffered from wounded self-esteem." See: Gwen Bergner, "Black Children, White Preference: Brown

makes the very dolls which African American children have been conditioned not to embrace, she challenges the notion of white supremacy. The focus is on the act of creation rather than the individual, with the first image depicting only the hands of the woman as she crafts the doll (Fig. 39). Although there are some indicators of individuality – the woman’s ring and string bracelet adding a personal element – the woman’s hands remain isolated in the frame. This is further underscored by the blurred background, which pulls the foreground into sharper focus. In this way, her work, and therefore her contribution to the community, is privileged over her individual identity. Even in the second image where the identity of the woman is more central, the image is framed with her hands at the centre (Fig. 40). In the background a dark sewing machine further compounding the atmosphere of work and professionalism. The direction of the woman’s eyes also encourage the viewer to focus on the woman’s hands, on her act of creation. In keeping the woman unnamed, Derby privileged the communal effort over the individual in her images of the Mississippi collectives.

Collectives were also a significant component of Derby’s anthropological thought and she consistently advocated for them as “spaces of agency” for African American communities. For her Master’s Thesis in Applied Anthropology, Derby wrote *The Needs of Handicraft Cooperatives: A Field Study*. In this text, she argued that the success of such cooperatives lay in local communities, as “the local base has to be strong in order for the business

v. Board, the Doll Tests, and the Politics of Self Esteem,” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (June 2009): 299.

to be a stable concern.”⁸² Derby worked on the ground in these cooperatives. In the 1960s she would help to incorporate Liberty House, even going on a tour of the States to promote the collective, appearing in *Jet* magazine and on national radio.⁸³ Cooperatives were sites of community activism designed to empower African Americans through self-sufficiency, with leadership structures frequently focussed on consensus rather than top-down leadership.⁸⁴ In these images Derby draws the viewer’s attention to the act of production, and invites them to observe the figure working undisrupted, making use of her anthropological skills to convey a sense of communal activism. Derby’s anthropological perspective draws her activist lens to focus on the work and occupation of space through community action.

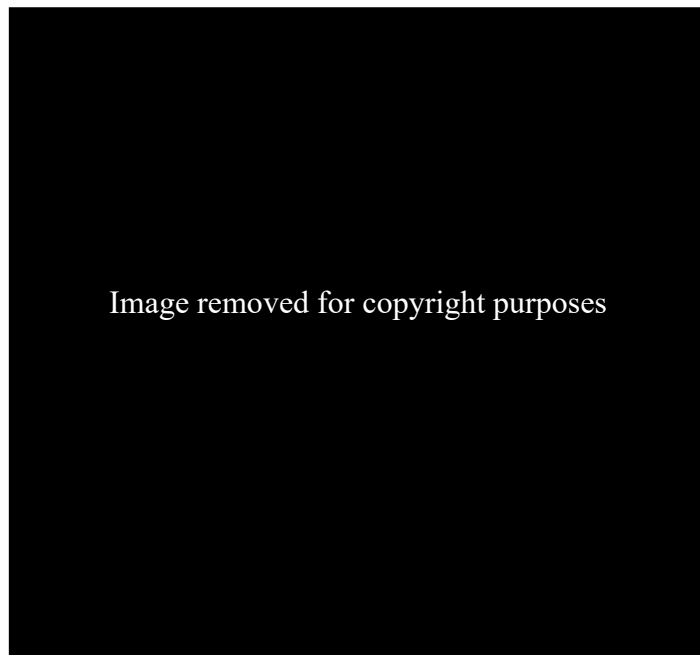


Figure 41. Doris Derby, *A Visit to West Africa*, date unknown.

⁸² Doris Derby, “The Needs of Handicraft Cooperatives: A Field Study,” *Derby, Doris Adelaide papers, Box 4, Folder 1*, The Rose Library, University of Atlanta Archives, 27.

⁸³ “Liberty House Markets the Crafts of Freedom,” *Jet Magazine*, 16 March 1967, 53.

⁸⁴ Co-operatives are explored in more depth in the section on Doris Derby’s organisational photography in Chapter Five of this thesis. See: Belinda Robnett, “African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (May 1996): 1661-1693.

Source: Doris Adelaide Derby papers, Box 9.



Figure 42. Doris Derby, *untitled photograph*, date unknown.
Source: Doris Adelaide Derby papers, Box 9.

Yet Derby's anthropological use of photography as a tool of spatio-symbolic reclamation did not end with the act of taking photographs. Her role as an educator meant that she also applied her anthropological photography in an educational capacity in the American South during the long Civil Rights Movement. The photographs Derby took in Africa did not remain private objects. Instead, Derby displayed and shared them as part of her activism. She held exhibitions and talks with her images prominently displayed (Fig. 41) and ran educational workshops through programmes such as Head Start for children to engage with her photography (Fig. 42). As such, the physical space occupied by these photographs as tactile, engaging objects enhances Derby's anthropological activism by functioning as "spaces of agency," wherein they can impart to their audience the importance of diasporic connectivity in line

with Pan-African ideals. In the two photographs from these events presented here, Derby's photographs are prominently placed on the walls for exhibition. In one photo, attendees are pictured sitting nearby and in the other, photos are positioned in the hands of an African American boy. Multiple spaces are engaged with: the physical sites recorded in Africa, the physical space of these photographs being displayed in educational contexts, and the symbolic calls for diasporic connectivity. These intersecting spatio-symbolic acts of reclamation demonstrate how Derby's anthropological lens fuelled her Civil Rights Movement activism.

Derby herself has stated the importance of such educational spaces for her activism. She focused her comments on the African sculptures, of which one is visible in her photograph of her *A Visit to West Africa* exhibition:

I was always very interested in African sculpture, I actually studied African art and African sculpture before and during the time I was in Mississippi. See, I did a lot before I left New York and then those interests continued. I integrated them with things that I did in Mississippi, so I was able to, for example, take art and sculpture to community meetings. And dress up in African dress because I thought it was important for people to know about African culture and history. I just did it on my own.⁸⁵

Derby used her interest in art to create "spaces of agency," wherein members of African American communities could engage with artifacts from the diaspora. As can be attested by the photographs of exhibitions and children, Derby's own photography was a crucial component of this, as she created spaces within which diasporic connectivity could occur. In Derby's hands,

⁸⁵ Derby, *Interview with the Author*.

anthropology was a tool to create and claim physical and symbolic space from an activist lens that privileged community activism and the role of women.

Conclusion



Figure 43. Delphine Diallo, *Samsara*, 2017.
Source: Nina Siegal, “‘My Intention Was to Change the Gaze’: Artist Delphine Diallo Wants to Change the Way Photographers Depict Black Women,” *Artnet*, 28 November 2019, accessed 30 July 2020, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/delphine-diallo-profile-1709460>.

While the camera has been used by white anthropologists to colonise and exoticize Black women, contemporary artists have explored ways to challenge these representations. Delphine Diallo, a Brooklyn-based French-Senegalese photographer, addresses the power dynamics apparent in anthropological photography by stating, “I am not taking pictures, I am giving pictures.”⁸⁶ This inversion of power dynamics can be seen in Diallo’s 2017 piece *Samsara* (Fig.

⁸⁶ Nina Siegal, “‘My Intention Was to Change the Gaze’: Artist Delphine Diallo Wants to Change the Way Photographers Depict Black Women,” *Artnet*, 28 November 2019, accessed 30 July 2020, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/delphine-diallo-profile-1709460>.

43). The term “samsara” refers to the concept of life, death and rebirth in cyclical nature, and is prevalent in many Indian religions such as Hinduism. This can be seen in the hair artistry of the sitter, as her hair is wound around her head in a series of intertwining, overlapping, and seemingly endless loops. The figure is made pivotal in the delicate dance between life and death reflecting the title of the piece; the literal translation of “samsara” from Sanskrit is “world.” The collage around the central photograph represents a wide variety of photographic subjects and genres – from photographs of artifacts, architecture, portraits, abstracts, animals, and images which we recognise as anthropological in nature. This vibrant and textured mixed media centres the sitter, placing her within a rich and complex cultural landscape. In this way, Diallo poses a counterpoint to the dominant anthropological modes of the twentieth century, noting that, “my intention from the beginning, when I got into photography, was actually to change the gaze [...] My intention of taking a photograph is to give my subject a real and true reflection of the light that they put in me. I am giving them back something of who they are.”⁸⁷ Diallo’s work grapples with the very power dynamics and genre transitions that the African American women anthropologists in this chapter navigated decades earlier.

The women in this chapter operated across decades, networks, and anthropological approaches to access space on the African continent. Emily Vernon employed anthropological techniques as a part of her missionary work and utilised the familial network of her spouse to achieve a career that allowed her to travel to South Africa. Active in the early 1920s, Vernon’s photographic

⁸⁷ Ibid.

lens connected African Americans to South Africans by demonstrating the latter's capacity for religion, and their ability to be "saved" by Christianity. Eslanda Goode Robeson in the 1930s, on the other hand, documented the realities of life on the African continent to inspire African Americans to expand their racial connectivity and pride. Although Robeson did use personal networks to access the African continent –both personal friendships and the renown of her husband– she also used professional networks, including her African colleagues and contacts from her study at LSE. In the 1960s, Doris Derby departed from the two figures before her. She operated within almost entirely professional networks to travel to Africa and conduct her fieldwork. Although details of her trips to Africa are limited, Derby's work shows how her anthropological techniques informed her activism in the United States. Furthermore, Derby shared her findings in practical, impactful settings as part of her civil rights activism, and hopes to publish a book of her African photographs in future.⁸⁸

Despite these different contexts and motivations, there are similarities between the anthropological work of these three women. All advocated for a diasporic connectivity in line with their Pan-Africanist beliefs. They sought to enrich the connection between African and African Americans. Although the manner in which they sought to do this differed, the emphasis on connection remained consistent. Furthermore, all women are in the African American middle-class, having received a high degree of education and the social capital to travel to another continent. The women also transitioned between genres and multiple occupational roles; sometimes missionary, tourist, anthropologist,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

ethnographer, autoethnographer, “native ethnographer,” and activist, these women shift between multiple spaces in order to create a powerful visual archive. As such, the women occupied both an “insider” identity as part of the Black diaspora, but also “outsider” identities as African Americans. Finally, their commitment to a spatio-symbolic reclamation is demonstrated in their occupation of physical and symbolic space as photographers and through their photographs. These women advocated for transatlantic connectivity which enhances our understanding of the role of Pan-Africanism and anthropology within the long Civil Rights Movement.

Chapter Three

“No Matter What It Takes To Get The Job Done”: African American Women Photographers in the Military from World War Two to Vietnam



Figure 44. Elise Forrest Harleston, *Old Man "Scout,"* date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 37.

Throughout periods of conflict, many African American women who worked as portraitists photographed soldiers. Men dressed in their uniforms entered their studio spaces in order to preserve their likeness both for themselves, and for their loved ones. Florestine Collins took countless photographs of soldiers during World War Two – her assistant Phenella DuPlessis Perez recalls how “the servicemen and the soldiers lined up; they came in droves and with their

girlfriends, too.”¹ For the soldiers, it was a mark of pride to be able to capture their image in their military uniform, in keeping with the everyday activistic of going to the studio and displaying the photograph. Other African American women photographers, such as Elise Forrest Harleston, also took images of soldiers in uniform.

Through this process, multiple acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation occurred: the occupying of physical space in the studio, in uniform, as soldiers; the physical claiming of space in the photograph to be displayed in the home; and a symbolic challenge to photographic histories that excluded Black soldiers, as well as the institution of the military itself. Within the photographs, space was further utilised to empower those in its frame: in *Old Man “Scout,”* the subject of the photograph is a man who is long past the battlefield, but seeks to be documented in his army uniform from the Civil War (Fig. 44). The Civil War marks the first conflict in which Americans documented themselves through the camera, as “photographic portraits became a necessary method for preserving a record of their service. The fight was personal, and the photograph’s ability to simultaneously democratize the process of memorialization and legitimize a man’s act of duty appealed to the soldiers’ sensibilities.”² These photographic “records” functioned simultaneously as sites of pride and sentimentality. The soldier’s image is framed such that, whilst his face is still clearly visible, the middle of the image is taken up by the medals on his jacket, making them the focal point of the photograph. Wearing a Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) uniform hat badge indicates that he was

¹ Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans*, 88.

² Isidora Stankovic, “Tintype Stares and Regal Airs: Civil War Portrait Photography and Soldier,” *Military Images* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 2015): 57.

a member of the postbellum organisation for Union army soldiers and sailors.³ This indicates that this man fought against rebellious slaveholders in the Civil War, with the sash suggesting that he fought in the Navy. The centrality of these symbols of honour serves to highlight their importance and the soldier's own heroism. Through the manipulation of space within the photograph, by focussing on his medals, and making them central to the image, Harleston highlighted his respectability as a war hero. In the act of posing for pictures in uniform, these men not only advocated for their own racial pride, but stood in defiance of racist notions by laying claim to the spaces which they occupied whilst wearing a uniform.⁴ In this way, these images function as artifacts of protest, as they declare that the Black soldier is a legitimate and dignified figure, extending our understanding of the connection between Black military service and the struggle for civil rights as far back as the Civil War.⁵ Yet Black women did not just take images of Black soldiers from within the confines of the studio space.

The history of African American women photographers in the US Military during the long Civil Rights Movement is extremely sparse, as the dual factors of low numbers of Black women photographers and government confidentiality combine to obscure their identities, experiences, and images.⁶

³ See collectable military veteran Americana. "POST-WAR, G.A.R. BRASS WREATH HAT BADGE," The Military Americana, accessed 10 June 2017, <http://www.horsesoldier.com/products/veteran-memorabilia/gar/8888>.

⁴ For the importance of being represented in photographs whilst wearing uniform, see: Christopher S. Parker, *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle Against White Supremacy in the Postwar South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁵ Jill Oglie Titus, "An Unfinished Struggle: Sesquicentennial Interpretations of Slavery and Emancipation," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 2 (June 2014): 338-347.

⁶ There are omissions and silences surrounding other women in the military, including Emma Alice Downs and Ann Elizabeth Jackson. These women were first profiled in Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe's *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (1985), yet the lack of surviving biographical information and photographic material hinders in-depth analysis in the context of this thesis.

As such, because there are less photographs produced by these women, elements of this chapter focus less on photographic analysis and more on biographical information and interviews. Nevertheless, the women in this chapter cultivated and claimed multiple “spaces of agency” in their careers as photographers and within their photographs. This chapter will interrogate the lives and works of two women during two different conflicts: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams in the Second World War, and Master Sergeant Grendel A. Howard in the Vietnam War. As photographers, these women occupied physical space in the military, and took self-portraits of themselves in uniform occupying said space. They also performed a symbolic role, as they challenged segregation in both the military and multiple photographic canons – including that of the long Civil Rights Movement through the everyday activism involved in taking pictures of themselves and others occupying space in their daily jobs.

African Americans in the Military and Defining “War Photography”

Williams and Howard asserted the dignity of African Americans through their photographs of Black men and women at work, and through their own self-representations in their everyday working lives. This body of photographic work challenges conventional understandings of protest photography of the Civil Rights Movement, which tend to focus on sites of highly visible marches and protests from the 1950s onwards – which in turn highlight violent clashes and charismatic male leaders. Although protests were photographed in the 1940s – by photographers such as Vera Jackson, who is discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis – photographic histories tend to neglect the 1940s in the

visual canon of the long Civil Rights Movement, and exclude the workplace photography exemplified in this chapter.⁷ Not only is photography taken by military personnel rarely considered, but it broadens definitions of activism to incorporate professionalism, and portraying one's colleagues with dignity. These images could be read as photographs of the Double V Campaign, which called for victory both at home against racism and abroad against fascism, and Hall has argued "generated a rights consciousness" that informed the long Civil Rights Movement. Photography evidences the strong links between patriotic military service and demands for civil rights, whilst advocating for a contribution of African Americans to war efforts, and of the desegregation of the military.⁸ For instance, when the military failed to acknowledge Dorie Miller's heroism during the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, his mother Henrietta Miller distributed her son's name and photograph to the press – demonstrating what historian Kimberley L. Phillips describes as proof of "the radical role images played in the Double V campaign."⁹ African Americans used military service to claim their rights, yet the regulation of images pertaining to military activity made it challenging for African Americans to assume a highly visible role.

The intersection of calls for racial justice and access to serving in the military was a common theme throughout American military history. The images and experiences of the women in this chapter also challenged the

⁷ For instance, Don Carleton's *Struggle for Justice* (2020) states that it includes photography from "four decades of Civil Rights photography," but the collection focuses overwhelmingly on photography from the 1950s and 1960s.

⁸ Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past," 1246.

⁹ Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 43.

conservative politics of respectability that was rigid about women's roles and labour before the 1940s; whilst these women advocated for professionalism, they did so without portraying women within a traditional kind of femininity that evoked the "promise of protection."¹⁰ Instead, they portrayed their subjects and themselves as empowered professionals. Furthermore, the women in this chapter departed from many of the women discussed in previous chapters, as they no longer blurred professional and personal networks in order to access and claim these spaces. Williams and Howard committed themselves entirely to their professional careers, making them "agents of change" both in the US military and in the history of Black women's photography.

Times of war have always been periods of significant social upheaval in the United States. From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War and the First World War, African American soldiers have always been present. George Washington spoke of his army as "a mixed multitude" of the Revolutionary War, wherein 15 percent of the continental army was Black.¹¹ During the Civil War, Black soldiers fought in the United States Coloured Troops, making up 10 to 12 percent of the Union army by the end of the war.¹² And during the First World War, the 369th Regiment became the most decorated American unit of the war, although they fought in French uniforms as President Woodrow Wilson did not want Black soldiers wearing American uniforms –

¹⁰ The "promise of protection" relates to the politics of respectability explored in the introduction, and refers to African American women being perceived as needing to be patriarchally protected by African American men. Griffin argues that this both "restores a sense of masculinity to black men while granting black women at least one of the privileges of femininity," yet relies on women assuming a "stance of victimization" with a lack of agency. Griffin, "Black Feminists and Du Bois," 35.

¹¹ Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), xvii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xix.

demonstrating the symbolic power that wearing and being photographed in a uniform held. Despite significant obstacles and discrimination, African American soldiers have been a constant presence in the history of American war and conflict. This intrinsically accompanies the demand for civil rights, as soldiers who fought for their country felt they should be treated with dignity, respect, and equality, which many scholars believed was a key milestone in the developing Civil Rights Movement after World War Two, as “African Americans, believing deeply in the nation’s founding principles, sought to demonstrate their worthiness to have full rights as US citizens.”¹³

Important to the history of conflict, too, has been the presence of photography. As soon as a camera could be transported outside, with short enough exposure times, it was used to record sites of war; Matthew Brady famously captured both the aftermath of battle and portraits of soldiers in uniform. Brady is widely credited as “the father of photojournalism.”¹⁴ Yet although the role of photography in military history has been the subject of much scholarship,¹⁵ as have the roles of African Americans in the military, far less attention has been paid to the contribution of African Americans to war photography.¹⁶ This is particularly the case with regard to African American women.

¹³ Parker, *Fighting for Democracy*, 7.

¹⁴ James D. Horan, *Mathew Brady : Historian with a Camera* (New York: Random House, 1988).

¹⁵ See: Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge 1997); David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish eyes: photography, war, and the Holocaust* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ See: Ron Field and Alexander Bielakowski, *Buffalo Soldiers: African American Troops in the US Forces 1866-1945* (Oxford: Ospery Publishing, 2008); Michael L. Cooper, *Hell Fighters: African American soldiers in World War I* (New York: Lodestar Books, 1997).

Defining “war photography” is a complicated endeavour, and the task raises multiple questions about the nature of war itself. For instance, when do we define a period of “war,” and how do we decide when wars begin and end, considering there is often a substantial escalation to conflict, and the aftermath would be likely felt for a significant period afterwards? What is the geographic scope of war photography: does it extend to the home front, or should it be focussed on sights of battle? Furthermore, calls for desegregation through the Double V campaign were partially motivated by the war, but do images of this time challenge our understanding of war photography? Just as a myriad of issues complicates a simple definition of Civil Rights Movement photography, this is also the case with war photography. Indeed, there is no one simple definition. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I am interested in African American women photographers who were employed by the American military during times of conflict. Whilst other kinds of photographers have covered war – photojournalists being a key example – considering wartime photography produced by African American women of the US military allows us to examine the power dynamics, networks, and aesthetics that emerged in the contexts of spatio-symbolic acts of reclamation during the long Civil Rights Movement. In terms of genre, war photography incorporates elements of photojournalism and documentary photography (documenting activities), portraiture (for ID cards), landscapes (for manoeuvres), and personal snapshots (everyday life). For this chapter, the category of ‘war photography’ enables discussion of the symbiotic nature of these categories, and allows a multifaceted approach when considering how the women who employed this medium created space to empower African American soldiers.

Few African American women photographed war, but women – mostly white women – have been documenting conflict for much of the twentieth century. As such, the symbolic space occupied by the women in this chapter as photographers in a wider history, or canon, has been diminished compared to other women. A photographic exhibition held in 2020, *Women War Photographers: From Lee Miller to Anja Niedringhaus*, sought to recover the role of women war photographers, with the foreword to the collection stating:

This show concentrates on women's essential contribution to war photography, which as of yet has received insufficient attention. Even though female photographers have been present at the front lines since the First World War, taking pictures that have influenced our image of worldwide conflicts, our understanding of war still has masculine connotations.¹⁷

Women have been shaping our understanding of conflict through photography for over one hundred years. Olive Edis became Britain's first official war photographer in 1919, alongside other women photographers such as Florence Farmborough, who took photographs whilst working as a nurse on the Russian front; Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm, British nurses on the Western Front who took countless images of themselves and soldiers; American Red Cross volunteer Margaret Hall, who took pictures of No Man's Land; and Nino Jorjadze a Georgian nurse and photographer. As war changed the nature of what a woman's role was, and as the Progressive Era asserted women's role in a more public realm of society, it became more acceptable to have a woman photographing a battlefield, as long as the role was treated as supplementary or secondary to other feminized roles, such as nursing. In later decades, more

¹⁷ Felix Krämer, "Foreword," in *Women War Photographers: From Lee Miller to Anja Niedringhaus*, eds. Anne-Marie Beckmann and Felicity Korn (Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2019), 9.

women took photographs of wartime and conflict as photojournalists: Gerda Taro covered the Spanish Civil War, and became the first female photojournalist to be killed on the frontline in a war. World War Two, furthermore, saw an increase in the number of women photographers, including Lee Miller, Faye Schulman, Constance Stuart Larrabee and, perhaps most famously, Margaret Bourke-White. This upward trend continued, as women such as Catherine Leroy, Dickey Chapelle and Felipa Schuyler went on to photograph the war in Vietnam – which was also deeply tied to the struggles of the long Civil Rights Movement, as will be discussed later in this chapter – and claim space as photographers in militarised spaces. However, to contextualise the role of women photographers in the conflict photography of the United States, we must understand the contribution of Dorothea Lange.

Dorothea Lange's photojournalism that captured the process of Japanese American internment during World War Two warrants specific consideration here. During this time, approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly relocated and interned in concentration camps, whilst Lange captured this process for the War Relocation Authority. A significant amount of her photography was censored by the government. Despite her documentary lens seemingly affording her photography an air of impartiality, and her position as an employee, the military nonetheless felt that Lange's images critiqued their actions. Furthermore, critics have argued that Lange's photographs were imbued with her own political views, despite the proffered impartiality of her style. Compared to that of her peers, Heather Fryer notes that "Lange's work evolved in a very different direction as her own portraiture techniques brought forth the emotional resonance of her subjects in an almost

uncanny way.”¹⁸ Yet this emotional resonance also enabled Lange’s work to take on activist qualities. Davidov notes that:

The qualities that had been the measure of Lange’s success as a champion of the poor – her sense of obligation and her ability to disclose and communicate the truth, her own particular combination of reporting and portraiture, of invisibility and sympathy in approaching people who were strangers to her – had also been the measure of her commitment to the way in which she understood that her own work could, through its ties to a project and sponsorship by a government in which she believed, effect change in the lives of her pictured subjects.¹⁹

Lange used the weapon of the camera within the context of a governmental commission to create emotional images that countered the government’s own policies. Some scholars have argued that Lange’s gender played an intrinsic role in her social concern, as Lange’s photographs of Japanese Americans were, according to A. D. Coleman, marked by, “maternal concern [... a] woman’s sense of care and tenderness.”²⁰ Although the tone of this is somewhat patronising, and although much of Lange’s work was censored at the time, it provides a vital window into acts of US atrocity, by inviting the viewer to dwell on the emotional depth of her imprisoned subjects. In this way, Lange creates space for Japanese American prisoners within her photographs, by claiming physical space in military sites. Lange’s images also broaden our understanding of war photography to one that does not solely rely on capturing the front lines of conflict, as it can occupy spaces on the home front.

¹⁸ Heather Fryer, “Review: Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of the Japanese American Internment,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 1 (2018): 315.

¹⁹ Judith Fryer Davidov, “The Color of My Skin, the Shape of My Eyes”: Photographs of the Japanese-American Internment by Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, and Toyo Miyatake,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 228.

²⁰ Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 213.

Lange's experiences were far from the norm, particularly when compared to the experience of African Americans. During the Second World War, there was an extremely limited number of Black war photographers, even as hundreds of thousands of African Americans served in segregated units.²¹ Although most of the war's photographers were white, one notable exception is Gordon Parks, who was arguably one of the most famous Black photographers of the twentieth century. Parks took documentary photographs during the Civil Rights Movement, created such iconic photographic works as *Sweet Flypaper of Life* (1955), and was the first African American to work for the Office of War Information. In 1944, Parks was assigned to accompany the 332nd Division, or Tuskegee Airmen, on a mission in Naples, but his papers were found to be "out of order" as "a Southern congressman had protested against publicizing black pilots at government expense."²² Although he captured their training at Selfridge Field, Parks was unable to join them abroad. His photographs of the Tuskegee Airmen show the men at leisure and men in action, often depicting them in or on front of the planes they piloted. Wearing their uniforms, they are figures to be admired and presented as heroes. That Parks would show these men on the battlefield was, the Southern congressmen believed, a threat to the racial status quo. In this way, despite their professional status and assumed impartiality, multiple figures, including Parks and Lange, imbued their wartime photography with their own agenda. For instance, images of women's involvement in the war overwhelmingly

²¹ Field and Bielakowski, *Buffalo Soldiers*, 158.

²² Buckley, *American Patriots*, 292.

focussed on white women, and largely overlooked the contributions of Black women.²³

Yet Black women were active in the Second World War, and claimed multiple symbolic and physical spaces throughout the conflict. The ‘double jeopardy’ of racism and sexism meant that African American women’s involvement in military action has been less frequent than both African American men and white women. In 1941 President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in defence industries and civil service jobs. There were also efforts made to incorporate women into the military, as the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) was founded in 1942. Through the WAC, 150,000 women served in World War Two, performing noncombat roles such as switchboard operators and mechanics. Gendered restrictions were in force: women were allowed to carry weapons as couriers, but not allowed to be photographed with them.²⁴ Yet when African American women were employed, they were often given the most menial, demeaning, and dangerous jobs. In her memoir of being the first African American to join the Women’s Army Corps, Charity Adams Earley mentions the common army practice of dividing the jobs WACs were given into “white” and “coloured.”²⁵ Yet the Second World War did mark a watershed moment in the long Civil Rights Movement. Despite limitations, Jacqueline Jones asserts that “if black women did not achieve any long-lasting economic gains as a

²³ Maureen Honey, “Introduction,” in *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War Two*, ed. Maureen Honey (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 2.

²⁴ Mattie Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps, United States Army in World War II: Special Studies* 8, no. 2 (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 14.

²⁵ Charity Adams Earley, *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (Texas A & M University Press, 2006), 24, 34.

result of the war, they did begin to test the limits of their own collective strength in ways that would reverberate into the future.”²⁶ The photography of the war added to this momentum, as it evidenced citizenship, conveyed racial pride, and adhered to a politics of respectability wherein Black military personnel were able to effectively and competently carry out their roles.

Although the increase of Black women in the military was slow – by the time of the Vietnam War only 700 WACs served in theatre, and approximately 75 of them were African American, mainly in intelligence roles – women such as Elizabeth “Tex” Williams and Master Sergeant Grendel A. Howard managed to navigate the dual challenges of racial segregation and sexism to open up the space of the military for other African American women photographers who came after them. Using her camera as a weapon, Williams, and the other women in this chapter in subsequent years, verify Maureen Honey’s assertion that “as a collective force African American women found an empowered voice during the war, one that anticipates the fruit of their wartime effort to break silence, to challenge limits, and to change forever the terms of their lives.”²⁷ Although the wars they fought in may have varied, their resolve to represent their Black colleagues with dignity by claiming and cultivating “spaces of agency” did not. For their pioneering challenge to segregation in the military, and for the photographic archive they accumulated, these women can be considered true “agents of change.”

²⁶ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 235.

²⁷ Honey, “Introduction,” 33.

“You Have To Be Good”: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams and the Second World War

Elizabeth “Tex” Williams was the first African American woman photographer in the US military, and utilised “spaces of agency” to challenge segregationist notions through her work in terms of both race and gender. Although the records of many Black women in the military are sparse, thanks to the work of Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe a biography of Williams can be formulated. As such, it is possible to discuss the physical and symbolic spaces Williams occupied, although due to the often confidential nature of her work the afterlives of her images remain obscure. Williams was frequently given the nickname “Tex” due to her birthplace of Houston, Texas, in 1924. Although Williams wanted to sign up for the WAC as soon as she turned eighteen, her protective grandmother refused to give her the permission she needed in order to enlist. Instead, Williams worked at the Stanley Reddick Art Studio in Houston for a year and a half learning photography. Eventually, she managed to convince her father to sign her up to the WACs in 1944.

Williams occupied multiple physical spaces during her career with the army, claiming them as “spaces of agency.” Williams received her basic training at Fort Des Moines in Iowa, which was an African American army base. However, Williams’s claims to the space were met with attempts to undermine her, as her experiences were marred with racism. During her WAC training, Williams and her other Black colleagues were “called ‘colored girls’ and told to stand on the other side of the room, away from the white girls, as

they were all sworn in.”²⁸ Furthermore she was unable to further train as a photographer in Iowa, as training was not offered to African American WACs. Williams was then assigned as a photographer at Fort Huachuca in Arizona on account of her previous experience in the Stanley Reddick Art Studio. From there, Williams was sent to several other posts around the country whilst working for the Public Information Office. Williams once flew from Fort Des Moines to Florida to photograph combat manoeuvres, where she was the only woman on the plane. She became an army photographer across multiple genres, as she captured army defence manoeuvres, ID pictures, autopsies, and her colleagues on their down time.²⁹ Following the end of the war, in 1949 Williams attended the Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, Photo Division School, “where she obtained the distinction of being the first black woman to attend and graduate from their photography programme.”³⁰ Before retiring in 1970, Williams became an intelligence photographer. The fact that Williams was able to carve out a career in such a hostile environment is remarkable, as Jacqueline Ellis notes, “Williams’s success was achieved despite the fact that African Americans were barred from army photo-schools and government training programmes.”³¹ That she was able to extend her “spaces of agency” around the country, and she gained multiple training and job opportunities, demonstrates Williams’s undeniable skill as a photographer, and her tenacity for challenging segregation in the military.

²⁸ “Meet the Hero: Elizabeth “Tex” Williams,” *Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes*, accessed 29 September 2020, <https://www.lowellmilkencenter.org/programs/projects/view/elizabeth-tex-williams/hero>.

²⁹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 99.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ellis, *Silent Witnesses*, 13.

As we have seen in other chapters, professional and personal networks governed which kinds of spaces Black women photographers were able to occupy and claim. In terms of networks, in a departure from many of the portraitists and anthropologists pre-1940s, Williams's professional life dominated her personal life. Williams considered herself "married" to the military, stating that "I could only handle one thing at a time, and I chose military life."³² Whilst many other women in this thesis intertwined their professional and personal networks, the military provided a working environment wherein Williams felt compelled to choose her work over her personal relationships. Whereas Black women portraitists and anthropologists had frequently taken advantage of familial networks in order to advance their careers, beyond initially needing her father's approval to join WAC, Williams's professional and personal networks remained separate. The military network was not one which yielded easy interpersonal romantic relationships; no doubt Williams's frequent travels and pressure of her intelligence work broke with convention for the time. Following her retirement Williams tried "to adjust to civilian life," but ultimately decided the attempt was "unsuccessful," and so bought a home close to where she had been stationed.³³ This demonstrates the central role that her identity as a military woman played throughout Williams's life, as even in her retirement she felt the need to occupy a physical space near the military. That Williams claimed space for herself so centrally in her photographs, and produced multiple self-

³² Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 98.

³³ *Ibid.*, 100.

representations with the camera, attest to the pride she felt in her job, and her role as a Black military photographer and “agent of change.”



Figure 45. Unknown Photographer, *The Photographer*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 100.

In part due to archival scarcity, and in part due to much of Williams’s photography relating to intelligence, there are few photographs taken by Williams which are readily accessible. As such, Williams’s place in photographic history is limited. In *Viewfinders*, it is noteworthy that of the ten photographs included in the section on Williams, five of them are self-portraits or photographs of Williams at work and claiming space in photography for herself. One notable example is *The Photographer* (Fig. 45). By asserting her own identity in the image, Williams demonstrates her racial pride. Just as Gordon Parks was accused of “glorifying” African Americans through the camera, Williams produced imagery detailing the achievements and efforts of African Americans in wartime. In this image, Williams sits with her hand on

her camera, implying ownership of and familiarity with the equipment. That she is wearing her uniform is also significant, as it lays claim to her identity as a representative of the military. She is clearly relaxed and comfortable smiling at the camera; the camera and its set up suggest both knowledge and expertise. This, coupled with her uniform and pose, creates an empowering image. Williams engages in the very kind of activism which the congressmen who banned Gordon Parks so feared – that of advocating for the humanity and dignity of her own race.

Scholars have long interpreted self-portraiture within the African American community as an empowering act. James Small argues that the self-portrait performs the function of “easing the burden of negotiating the mine field of modernity, bestowing upon the self-portraitist a sense of empowerment through expressive emanations of self.”³⁴ For many African Americans, the self-portrait was a performative act in which they could portray themselves as they wished to be seen. Considering that Williams is wearing her uniform, and conveying ownership of the space through her body language, we see that Williams is showcasing her own agency. Although it is unclear who took these portraits of Williams (although Moutoussamy-Ashe credits them to Williams herself, and I choose to read them as self-portraits), and for what purpose, Williams’s pose conveys her professionalism and dignity within the space of the photograph.

Williams herself spoke of her relationship to and understanding of the camera – it served as both a protection of the self, and a way to communicate

³⁴ James Small, “African-American Self-Portraiture: Repair, Reclamation, Redemption,” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (June 2008): 62.

this self to an audience. One of her assignments was to photograph autopsies, which sometimes included babies. Williams stated that this was her most difficult task, because “sometimes the camera is something you could hide behind in dealing with difficult situations and through the camera you can express yourself and how you feel. Difficulties strengthen the mind just as labour does the body.”³⁵ Williams used the camera for self-expression despite the restrictions of her job. Moutoussamy-Ashe states that Williams “also saw the camera as a mask but, more important, as a tool of human expression.”³⁶ I would further this analysis to proffer that for Williams the camera manifested her own agency, allowing her to occupy both physical and symbolic space. In describing both the “mind” and the “body” Williams speaks to this duality, as she poses both a physical and symbolic challenge to notions of white supremacy. As such, Williams struck a delicate balance between conducting her work for the WAC, and portraying herself and colleagues around her with dignity, effectively utilising her own agency to empower those around her.

³⁵ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 99.

³⁶ *Ibid.*



Fig. 46. Unknown photographer, "*Tex*" on assignment, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 98.

In the images of Williams, we see a shift in the politics of respectability evoked in previous decades, which impact the spatio-symbolic reclamation within the photographs. Whether photographed on a car, taking ID photos, or in the lab, there are rich similarities between these photographs.³⁷ In all of them Williams wears her uniform, using or holding her professional equipment. She is consistently engrossed in her work, either smiling to signify enjoyment or focused on the task at hand. In this way, she demonstrated her professionalism and engaged with some elements of the politics of respectability. This is evident in Williams' imagery, as her self-portraits display her hard-working, professional, and dutiful self (Fig. 46). However, although the focus on Black dignity and empowerment remains, these images also suggest a departure from a traditional understanding of the politics of

³⁷ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 98-104.

respectability rooted in nineteenth-century Victorian values, due to the masculine nature of Williams's pose defying any "politics of protection." By evoking traditionally feminine values and aesthetics, African American women asserted their humanity and their right to be protected by African American men, in a manner "reflective of the power struggle between black men and white men and black men and black women."³⁸ This often led to African American women being portrayed as victims deserving of sympathy, and so portraiture often displayed African American woman according to the aesthetic standards of white womanhood. The photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement often places African American women in secondary, or outright victimised, roles. Here, however, we see a rejection of this standard towards a more masculine interpretation: in the 1940s or 1950s, adopting a stance with a leg on the car, signifying ownership, would have been unusual for a Black woman. In this way, Williams bolsters her role in any "power struggle" that the politics of respectability may dictate; she engaged with the elements of the politics of respectability which evoke professionalism by wearing uniform, yet her pose rejects the feminised role her gender should have assigned her. E. Francis White stated that "to be positioned outside the 'protection' of womanhood was to be labelled unrespectable."³⁹ Yet here, Williams's stance and uniform assert her role as *protector*. By asserting her authority in the symbolic space of the photograph, with her self-representation, and in the physical space of the car whilst wearing uniform, Williams created "spaces of agency" which engage in spatio-symbolic reclamation.

³⁸ Ibid., 35.

³⁹ E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 33.



Figure 47. Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, *WAC Nurse*, “*Enemy Ears Are Listening*,” date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 102.

Williams did not just focus the lens on herself; her photographs of her colleagues conducting their daily work can be read as forms of everyday activism, as she reveals the inherent dignity and challenges to desegregated space that her colleagues pose. Among her images are those of WAC staff, demonstrating the skills of her colleagues in practice as they occupy professional space. One image shows a WAC nurse engrossed in reading a book, wearing her white uniform (Fig. 47). What is particularly of note is Williams’s use of space in this image, as the “Enemy Ears Are Listening” poster gives us a sense of timescale of this image as happening in the 1940s. The fact that this poster is displayed directly above a phone may be an act of purposeful framing on Williams’s part to emphasise her subject’s role as a loyal American citizen. The fact that the nurse is so engrossed in the book she

is reading signifies her dedication to her work and apparent disregard for Williams's presence.

Williams's photograph also highlights the role of nursing in World War Two, which fell into a long history of African American women attempting to claim space as nurses in the military. Women served as nurses in the United States during the Civil War, when 20,000 women volunteered to work in hospitals, and their role was subsequently professionalised in the late nineteenth century. This was partially due to an increase in hospitals. Women also served as nurses during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and World War One, although they were kept well away from the front lines, were required to be white, and not considered part of the US Army. The Second World War marked a substantial turning point in the relationship between the military and the nursing profession. More than 59,000 nurses served in the Army Nurse Corps, and many were stationed abroad at sites of conflict. Yet this did not extend to African American nurses.⁴⁰ Over the course of World War One, as they were unable to join the American Nursing Association (ANA), only a handful of Black nurses were allowed to work for the army after the 1918 Flu Epidemic left shortages. Only 500 Black nurses served in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during World War Two, and they were not allowed to treat white soldiers – only Black soldiers, or German prisoners of war.⁴¹ The discrimination these women faced in these spaces, alongside that of other African American soldiers during the war, had a galvanising effect.

⁴⁰ Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁴¹ Alexis Clark, "The Army's First Black Nurses Were Relegated to Caring for Nazi Prisoners of War," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 15 May 2018, accessed 2 October 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/armys-first-black-nurses-had-tend-to-german-prisoners-war-180969069/>.

Darlene Clark Hine states, “The pivotal transformation of physicians' and nurses' consciousness and activism, from advocacy of parallelism to a demand for full inclusion, occurred during World War II as they struggled to desegregate the medical agencies of the War Department.”⁴² Williams’s inclusion of a nurse, therefore, is particularly noteworthy.

Within this photograph, Williams presents a Black nurse occupying physical space in uniform and carrying out her work with pride, thus countering the discriminatory ideas that sought to limit them. Furthermore, this imagery challenges ideas about the long Civil Rights Movement: as Hine states, the Second World War escalated existing anxieties surrounding segregation, and brought the hypocrisy of the fight for freedom home for many African Americans. This was at a time when Black women’s consciousness and activism intensified as their growing national awareness and resistance to acts of racially motivated sexual abuse galvanised activism, alongside growing labour activism.⁴³ The lack of recognition of the contribution of Black soldiers to the war effort compounded this. By photographing the nurse in this space, we can understand her as an “agent of change,” as the act of conducting her job respectably and in uniform asserts her professionalism and right to fair treatment.

⁴² Darlene Clark Hine, “Black Professionals and Race Consciousness: Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, 1890-1950,” *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1280.

⁴³ McGuire, *Dark End of the Street*; Blain, ““We Want to Set the World on Fire,”” 194-212.



Figure 48. Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, *WAC Nursing Staff*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 103.

The same can also be said of this next photo, showing four WAC nursing staff tending to an African American man (Fig. 48). One woman holds a gas canister, another appears to change what may be a catheter bag, and another takes the man in the bed’s pulse. The only figure in the image who meets the camera’s gaze is the man in the bed; the rest are so engrossed in their task as to ignore Williams completely, highlighting the dedication to their work. What is absent in this image is the wartime narrative of the soldier – there is no sense of the danger he has faced. Rather, we grasp the sense of support and protection from those around him, as the women in the photograph stand attentively around the central figure. The multiple women occupying the professional space highlights the professionalism of African American women in the armed forces. It also demonstrates how Williams granted agency to Black women within her images, as they are pictured as a dynamic collective

carrying out their work with professional conduct as a single unit. Spatially, they present a united and organised front. It is telling that the few photographs of Williams's that are accessible display women in prominent roles – although it should be noted that these roles are still frequently gendered, as most women work as nurses, indicating the limitations of the time. Nonetheless, her photographs advocate for the role of Black women within the Armed Forces as “agents of change.”



Figure 49. Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, *Listening to the radio at the bamboo fence*, date unknown.

Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 99.

Williams did not just cultivate “spaces of agency” to photograph women as nurses during the war, nor did she reserve her lens solely for women. Williams’s image *Listening to the radio at the bamboo fence* shows two individuals – one male, one female – intently listening to a radio, occupying physical space on a military base (Fig. 49). The woman to the left of the frame is crouched down, which may be in order to listen better, or she may

be tinkering with the radio. The man to the right, dressed in full uniform, stands upright, hands in pockets, looking down at the woman and the radio. The image is dynamic despite its stationary subjects, as the two individuals assume different levels within the photograph. The woman's crouching position allows the viewer to see the length of the bamboo fence, lending a sense of impressive scale to their environment. Yet, crucially, Williams denies the viewer the gaze of her subjects. The two figures are engrossed in their task, and do not acknowledge the photographer, the camera, or the viewer. This conveys the sense that their work is of paramount importance. Hence, Williams conveys their professionalism, dedication, and dignity. As these two figures share physical space, Williams documents the presence of the two military personnel, whilst implying their commitment to the job at hand through their disregard of the viewer. In turn, this implies their patriotic devotion, and thus their claim to civil rights in line with the Double Victory campaign. Whereas wartime photography most famously encapsulates scenes of violence and drama, here we see the lived realities of Black servicemen and women during the Second World War, precisely because Williams produced images of this nature – images that paint her subjects as “agents of change.”

Williams's images of the home front during World War Two demonstrate the central role that African American women played in the war effort. Although she was unable to travel abroad during the war, and most of her service took place in America, Williams nevertheless created multiple physical and symbolic “spaces of agency.” Physically, Williams confidently occupied space as a Black woman photographer, and used her camera to represent her colleagues. Although the exact manner in which her photography

was used is unknown, the photographs advocate for an expanded understanding of the Civil Rights Movement and the photographic category of war photography. All of Williams's images demonstrate a politics of respectability, advocating for the space that African American women have taken up in professional spaces during wartime. In this way, Williams built on Parks's work to "glorify" the work of African Americans during the war, advocating for the respectability of both herself and her colleagues as "agents of change" through her self-representations and her images of others. When asked about the difficult nature of this task, Williams responded: "When you are so military-orientated and you know there is a job to be done, you are going to follow those orders to the end, no matter what it takes to get the job done. You have to be good."⁴⁴ Through her photography, Williams demonstrated exceptional acts that took place at the level of the everyday during her time in the military.

"I Enjoy Every Minute of It": Master Sergeant Grendel A. Howard and the Vietnam War

With the final segregated unit of the U.S. Army being abolished in 1953, the Vietnam War marked a potential turning point in the history of African Americans in the military, as it was the first American war with a desegregated army. The reality, however, was that de facto segregation greatly impacted African American experiences of the war. The history of the Vietnam War is complex, as it is commonly considered as starting in 1955 and ending in

⁴⁴ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 99.

1975.⁴⁵ However, American involvement in Vietnam escalated during President Kennedy's term, as the war became a proxy war between the United States and the USSR in the Cold War. President Johnson further escalated the war in August 1964, after North Vietnamese vessels enacted "aggression" on an American ship, although the details of this event are still debated.⁴⁶ By 1968 the number of American troops in Vietnam exceeded half a million.⁴⁷

During this time, opposition to the war became more and more vocal, with civil rights organisations such as SNCC and leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking out against it. In his 1967 "Beyond Vietnam" speech, King stated that the war effort was "taking the young black men who have been crippled by our society and sending them 13,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in South east Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem."⁴⁸ The Vietnam War had a disproportionate effect on Black soldiers, as John Willis found that "throughout the years of the Vietnam War the proportion of Blacks among Vietnam War casualties was always between 2 and 5 percent higher than [Caucasians in] the armed forces."⁴⁹ This was especially the case between 1965 and 1966, when African Americans made up a quarter of all combat deaths.⁵⁰ There was also a perceived injustice around the draft, as working-class and minority men were most likely to be conscripted. The mounting protest to the Vietnam War

⁴⁵ Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2005), 1002.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1003.

⁴⁸ Erin Cook and Stan Pesick, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Beyond Vietnam,"" *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 1 (January 2005): 41.

⁴⁹ Richard P. Talbot and Jon T. Oplinger, "Social Stratification and Ethnic Mobilization: U.S. Military Deaths in Southeast Asia," *Race, Gender & Class* 21, no. 1/2 (2014): 197.

⁵⁰ Gerald F. Goodwin, "Black and White in Vietnam," *The New York Times*, July 18 2017, 1 October 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/opinion/racism-vietnam-war.html>.

marked a watershed moment in the long Civil Rights Movement, as “the incendiary issue of the Vietnam War divided African-American and the civil rights movement more than any other issue in American history.”⁵¹ Protests such as the Harlem Peace March to End Racial Oppression in 1967 demonstrated the war’s increased prominence in Black activism. Wider dissent fuelled the fire of Black Power, which ended the nonviolent and interracial strands of activism, and shifted protest towards new forms of Black self-determination.⁵²

The visual culture of the Vietnam war frequently obscures the role that African Americans played in the war, and fails to dedicate space to Black military or veterans. Film portrayals tend to overlook the contribution of Black soldiers, as Brian J. Woodman notes that “despite the singular experiences of many black veterans, Hollywood Vietnam War films have tended to marginalize their stories, either through stock treatment or vast underrepresentation of their numbers.”⁵³ During the war itself, the prominence of both photography and television meant that images of the war were accessible to American people in private spaces, causing the conflict to be dubbed “the living room war.”⁵⁴ War correspondents were common in Vietnam, with over six hundred media representatives being present at its peak occupying space abroad.⁵⁵ This included both men and women, and was often an extremely dangerous task. One hundred and thirty-five photographers died

⁵¹ Daniel Lucks, “African American Soldiers and the Vietnam War: No More Vietnams,” *The Sixties* 10, no. 2 (2017): 197.

⁵² Lucks, *Selma to Saigon*.

⁵³ Brian J. Woodman, “Represented in the Margins: Images of African American Soldiers in Vietnam War Combat Films,” *Journal of Film and Video* 53, no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2001): 38.

⁵⁴ Brothers, *War and Photography*, 202.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 202.

on both sides of the conflict, including Dickey Chapelle, who was the first woman press photographer killed in Vietnam in 1965. In addition, during the war approximately seven-hundred WACs served in theatre, with seventy-five being African American.⁵⁶ Although the existence of a photo album of images taken by an unknown African American soldier suggests that there were African Americans taking images of the war, an exact number is unknown.⁵⁷

The Tet Offensive of 1968 marked a turning point in the war, as Communist forces caught South Vietnamese and American troops off-guard by launching a surprise attack on several key sites during a ceasefire in honour of Tet. Although the forces were eventually repelled, Jennifer Walton notes that “many historians consider the Tet Offensive a psychological victory for the Communist forces and a political defeat for the U.S.”⁵⁸ The idea that American forces could be subjected to such a large, coordinated, unexpected assault shocked the nation. The offensive also had a high rate of casualties, as NLF and North Vietnamese casualties may have been as high as 40,000, U.S. and South Vietnamese combined losses numbered about 3,500, and almost 12,500 civilians were killed.⁵⁹ It was in this environment, in January 1968, which Master Sergeant Grendel A. Howard arrived in Vietnam as a professional, African American, woman photographer.

⁵⁶ Bettie J. Morden, Colonel, US Army (Ret.), *The Women's Army Corps 1945-1978* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1992), 251-252.

⁵⁷ “African American soldier's Vietnam War photograph album,” *Duke University Libraries* <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/africanamericansoldiersvietnamwaralbum/afirst05001> Accessed 01 October 2020.

⁵⁸ Jennifer Walton, “The Tet Offensive: The Turning Point of the Vietnam War,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (October 2004): 45.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

A North Carolinian, Howard first entered the Army in 1956 following a short marriage, yet found the discrimination and racism in the armed forces overwhelming. She left six years later, and majored in elementary education at college, but had to drop out when she did not have the funds to meet her teaching requirements.⁶⁰ When she returned to the army in 1965, she found racial prejudices “still around,” but not as pronounced as before.⁶¹ There was an economic motivation for her return to the army, as she noted that “when I realised I’d have to work for my civilian company for 30 years before retirement, I decided to give the army another chance.”⁶² This is a view supported by her interview with *Ebony* in 1994, in which she states, “I wanted to go because I would make more money because of hazardous duty pay and I wouldn’t have to pay income taxes. I stayed there for three tours, saved \$17,000, got promoted twice and came back to the States.”⁶³

Once stationed in Vietnam, Howard had a remarkable career as a combat reporter. Howard was assigned to 1st Logistical Command Headquarters at Long Binh as the administrative assistant to the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge. One aspect of her job involved travelling to subordinate units, interviewing soldiers, and writing stories about them for publication. Howard was selected as “Outstanding WAC” during first assignment as editor of her installation newspaper. By the end of SPC Howard’s extended 34-month tour, she had been promoted to sergeant first class. She was awarded the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Army

⁶⁰ “Mother is a Sergeant,” *Ebony*, October 1974, 160.

⁶¹ “Everywoman – Army-style,” *Commanders Call*, Jul – Aug 1982, 7.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Karima A. Haynes, “Sisters-In-Arms,” *Ebony*, March 1994, 122.

Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster for her work in Vietnam and ended her military career as a sergeant major. Once she returned from Vietnam, she was “sent to videography school to film Soldiers for Army TV commercials and contributed to the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper.”⁶⁴ Howard’s skills as a communicator, therefore, governed her military career, and informed the kinds of spaces which she could occupy.



Figure 50. Photographer unknown, *The Photographer*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 118.

Due to the confidential nature of her work, Howard’s images are difficult to access. Whilst it is likely that her interviews with soldiers included a photographic element, no records of this archive are known to have survived. Consideration of Howard’s work, therefore, must rely on her own words and

⁶⁴ Crystal Bradshaw, “NCO Trailblazers,” *NCO Journal*, *Army University Press*, 2 March 2018, accessed 1 October 2020, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2018/March/NCO-Trailblazers/>.

experiences to fill the gaps left by the lack of an archive. However, as with the other figures in this chapter, one image of Howard that exists is an image of her with a camera, in her uniform, smiling – demonstrating how self-representation allowed Howard to claim physical and symbolic space as a member of the military (Fig. 50). This was taken shortly before she was sent to Vietnam. As with the images of Williams, her stance and holding of the camera implies ownership and comfort with this piece of technology. The aesthetic of the image remains similar, as we see a self-portrait that underlines her professionalism and expertise. However, the fact that Howard was sent abroad signals a significant shift in the role of African American women in the military. As with Williams, Howard embraced the respectability that professionalism entails, yet rejected traditional gender roles by being photographed in uniform and being present on the frontline of conflict. Her military insignia are visible on her left arm, indicating her status within the armed forces. Howard was vocal about the pride she felt in her role within the armed forces, and the spaces she was able to create for other servicemen and women in publications. In a 1982 edition of *Commanders Call*, an army publication aimed at leaders, an article which includes Howard remarks:

As far as she knows, she is the Army's only female sergeant major in the Pacific. When she travels about, she is likely to be observed with awe by enlisted soldiers and officers alike who, for the first time, are seeing a woman wearing the Army's highest enlisted rank. "I enjoy every minute of it," she said.⁶⁵

This account makes clear Howard's pride in her status and occupation of public, professional space, which is reflected in her photography. In addition,

⁶⁵ "Everywoman," *Commander's Call*, 7.

her presence in frontline conflict rejects the “promise of protection” that partially governed the respectability politics of the Civil Rights Movement.

This is not to say that Howard did not experience discrimination during her time in the armed forces. On the contrary, she frequently opposed discriminatory treatment, and sought to create space for other women in the military. Reflecting on her twenty-three year career, she commented that “I’ve had more of the kind of discrimination you couldn’t prove, if your life depended on it, as a woman than as a black.”⁶⁶ Howard commented that misogyny often tarnished her experiences in the army, as:

Sometimes women don’t even get an opportunity to prove their capability because, in the process, they run the risk of being labelled ‘pushy’ or ‘bitchy’[...] often when you go in as a female NCO with something you want to say, it’s dismissed. It’s not taken seriously, particularly if you’re meeting with all men and you’re the only woman.⁶⁷

Howard clearly developed a reputation for advocating for women’s rights in the armed forces, as on one occasion when she objected to the treatment of women, a male command sergeant major said: “Oh, Grendel, if it were left up to you, you’d have the whole Army changed just for women.”⁶⁸ During her time in Vietnam, sexist practices put women at increased risk. For instance, women had to be chaperoned by a male soldier because they were not allowed to drive or operate army vehicles, and women were forbidden from carrying weapons. Although the WAC company did have weapons, they were only supplied if the barracks were under attack, and Howard remarked that, “every time a rocket started coming in, I wanted [a weapon] right then. I wasn’t

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

waiting until we got attacked.”⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Howard was motivated to take action. She and her friend Doris “Lucki” Allen “convinced the bosses that when they didn’t let us do our jobs fully, that affected our chances for promotion. We did make that little breakthrough for women over there.”⁷⁰ As such, Howard advocated for physical and symbolic spaces for women during her time in Vietnam. Howard not only assisted in the fight against enemy forces, and not only fought against discriminatory practices within her own frontlines, but also used her communications skills to represent those around her in military publications.

Serving in the army opened up familial opportunities for Howard, indicating that the professional space impacted the personal. In 1972, Edith Efferson and Grendel Howard were the first two single Army women permitted to adopt children, as the Army provided housing, childcare, and medical benefits for her and her child. A 1974 interview with *Ebony* magazine revealed that Howard and her son Jason first met in April 1971, as Howard made moves to adopt a child as soon as restrictions were lifted, stating that:

Before that we weren’t allowed to have dependents like the men were. I wouldn’t even have been able to claim under-18 brothers and sisters as dependents if it had been necessary for me to support them. Though the military will never admit it, I think the influence of the women’s lib movement had something to do with the change.⁷¹

It is interesting here to compare Howard to Williams: whereas Williams had to choose between a career and a family, by 1972 Howard’s career had provided a gateway to family. A key component of this was the “women’s lib

⁶⁹ Bradshaw, “NCO Trailblazers.”

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Mother is a Sergeant,” *Ebony*, 157.

movement,” as Howard dubs it, which refers to the Women’s Liberation Movement that advocated for women’s rights, emerging in the late 1960s. This movement coincided with the Second Wave of feminism, and is defined as “the upsurge in feminist activism and other feminist practices, agency and organisation in Europe, North America and many other developed countries between the mid 1960s and the mid 1980s.”⁷² Yet African American were often excluded, as bell hooks asserts that “despite all the rhetoric about sisterhood and bonding, white women were not sincerely committed to bonding with black women,” and instead “chose to deny the existence of black women and to exclude them from the women’s movement” by routinely distinguishing between “Black” and “woman,” which inferred that the two identities could not co-exist.⁷³ Nevertheless, the movement challenged notions of motherhood, which had implications for the Black community. Benita Roth notes: “Black feminists did not reject the positive role for Black women as the mothers of future Black generations (accepting part of Black Liberation’s emphasis on the importance of producing Black children); instead, they argued for choice and control over motherhood, in the manner of the Mount Vernon/New Rochelle Group.”⁷⁴ This allowed Howard to forge her career and her different mode of family-making. Arguably, the military provided a surrogate family space which enabled Howard to adopt a child.

Another distinction is that whilst Williams struggled to adapt to civilian life, Grendel made a clear division between her personal and private life. When

⁷² Sue Bruley and Laurel Forster, “Historicising the Women’s Liberation Movement,” *Women’s History Review* 25, no. 5 (2016): 697.

⁷³ bell hooks, *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 142.

⁷⁴ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103.

asked if she would visit the memorial to honour women in Vietnam, Howard responded, “going to the memorial never appealed to me. Things like that generate bad feelings. There is no need to regurgitate bad memories. When I left the Army, I *left* the Army.”⁷⁵ Howard “refused to get emotionally involved in the military,” and viewed it first and foremost as a job and a means to reach her financial goals.⁷⁶ However, although Howard kept her professional and personal networks separate, her military career paved the way for a family. Furthermore, as noted in her 1994 interview with *Ebony* magazine, she also considered her years in Vietnam to be the best of her life, as “war creates an intense camaraderie among people – mostly because everyone is scared to death. And of course, Vietnam was a war with no battle lines. Everybody was subject to be blown up no matter where you were, so that kept the adrenaline pumping. You were on a constant high.”⁷⁷ This furthers the notion of the military as a surrogate family space for Howard.

Outside of service in Vietnam, Howard was recognised for her journalistic skills, as she worked in multiple print spaces wherein she represented servicemen and women. By October 1983, Howard was working at *The Stars and Stripes* – a daily newspaper circulated to the US armed forces stationed abroad. Stationed in Tokyo, Japan, Howard worked for the Pacific edition of the newspaper as the non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC). With a daily circulation of 44,000, Howard noted that:

The main difference between us and a civilian newspaper is that we have restrictions. We’re committed by charter not to print anything that would be detrimental to the welfare and morale of troops. We also cater to host countries’ sensitivities. Unlike a civilian newspaper that can write about

⁷⁵ Haynes, “Sisters-In-Arms,” *Ebony*, 120.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

anything, we have to check stories out to ensure we're not offending the host country.⁷⁸

By January 1985, Howard worked as an Associate Editor for *Soldiers*, the official magazine of the U.S. Army.⁷⁹ Throughout her military career, Howard was dedicated to communicating within the Armed Forces – from taking pictures of and interviewing soldiers on the front lines of Vietnam, to working on publications for soldiers and navigating local and military censorship. Furthermore, Howard's utilisation of professional networks allowed her to challenge discrimination on the frontline and both occupy and advocate for space for women. Her photograph is symbolic of her wider attitudes: professional, competent, and enjoying her role in uniform. In this way, Howard asserts herself as respectable, but without need of protection from men. Howard even managed to utilise these professional networks to benefit her personal life, as she adopted a son. In this way, Howard utilised multiple networks and spaces in order to advocate for equality and cultivate print space for soldiers in the military – challenging persisting segregations on the grounds of both racial and gender equality.

Conclusion

⁷⁸ SSgt. Victoria Mouze, "Stars and Stripes: The Newspaper By and For Soldiers," *Soldiers* 38, no. 10 (October 1983): 12.

⁷⁹ "Editorial Board," *Soldiers* 40, no. 1 (January 1985): 4.



Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 51. Jeffrey Rease, *Beatrice Muse Price, 96, of pell City, Ala.*, 2019.
Source: Jessica Contera, "One man's urgent mission: Photographing World War II veterans before they're gone," 11 November 2020, accessed 1 December 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/11/11/world-war-2-veterans-photographs/>.

In November 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the everyday lives of people in the United States and beyond, photographer Jeffrey Rease lamented the interruption to his project "WW2 Portraits of Honor." Since 2019, Rease had made it his mission to photograph and interview veterans who had served in World War Two, travelling around the country in order to do so. Yet with planned photographic shoots delayed due to the pandemic, time is running out for Rease to record the aging veterans; his 2020 trip to Tennessee was delayed, and as of January 2021 three veterans have since passed away. As Rease states: "It hurts that I wasn't able to get to them. The fact that I had planned to photograph them and I couldn't just emphasized

that I don't have much time. I wish I had started this years ago.”⁸⁰ This project demonstrates the power of veterans being photographed and commemorated, and occupying space in the photographic studio. It both empowers the sitter, and allows for their memory to persist. However, the project raises interesting issues racial and gendered representations.

In the dozens of portraits available on the project's website, there are only five of women, and only four of African Americans – in both categories including Beatrice Muse Price (Fig. 51). Price became an Army Nurse in 1945, caring for such figures as Gen. George Patton and the Tuskegee Airmen.⁸¹ Whilst many of the sitters utilise memorabilia in their photographs – including uniforms, medals, caps, or photographs – Price sits in normal clothing with no props. Although this may have been personal choice, it also represents how the wartime actions of Black women fail to be commemorated in the same way as those of white men. The project recognises the importance of recording veterans through photography, yet, thus far, cultivates minimal space for African American women. The fact that the photographer is a white man further demonstrates the limits to Black women's agency within the military in 2020, as they are consistently left out of the archive. Indeed, the military continues to overlook and underrepresent African Americans and other minorities at multiple levels – in May 2020, a photograph of President Trump and his top four-star generals and admirals was shared on Twitter, and widely criticised for consisting entirely of white men. As African American retired

⁸⁰ Jessica Contera, “One man's urgent mission: Photographing World War II veterans before they're gone,” 11 November 2020, accessed 13 February 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/11/11/world-war-2-veterans-photographs/>.

⁸¹ Lenore Vickrey, “Portraits of Honor: Photographer Memorializes WWII Veterans with Images,” *Alabama Living* (November 2020), 13.

major general Dana Pittard noted, “You would have thought it was 1950. It’s America’s military. Why doesn’t this photo look like America?”⁸² Whilst the women photographers in this thesis used their cameras to challenge segregationist practices in the military, the struggle for equality for and representation of Black women in the military continues to this day.

The women in this chapter worked at the intersection of multiple movements – from the Civil Rights Movement, to the Women’s Liberation Movement, to the anti-war protests. Yet by claiming and desegregating space their actions can be understood as part of the long Civil Rights Movement, as the photographers in this chapter claim previously segregated space in the U.S. Military both for themselves, as photographers and members of the military, and for their African American colleagues. Key to this reclamation was the cultivation of “spaces of agency”: Williams’s photographs show African American men and women in uniform carrying out their work with dignity, while Howard’s photography and publications recorded the experiences of soldiers. Furthermore, the self-portraits of the women in this chapter function as “spaces of agency,” as they demonstrate the women utilising photography to empower themselves through both demonstrating their expertise with the camera and their symbolic claiming of military uniform. Although the politics of respectability still dictated that the conduct of women in the military be professional in order to gain respect, this was less entrenched in gender norms of femininity and the “promise of protection” than in previous decades. Here, women occupied public space within the military, and rejected the traditional

⁸² Helene Cooper, “African-Americans Are Highly Visible in the Military, but Almost Invisible at the Top,” *The New York Times*, 25 May 2020, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/us/politics/military-minorities-leadership.html>.

gender roles that came to dominate the mainstream photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement by the 1950s and 1960s.

Furthermore, the networks which these women navigated in the occupation of military space shifted over time. Following her experiences during and after the Second World War, Williams considered herself “married to the military” and struggled to adapt to civilian life. Howard, on the other hand, made a clear divide between her personal and professional life, and even utilised her role in the armed forces to adopt a son. Unlike many women in the previous chapters, these women were unable to achieve their careers without, and perhaps because they did not have, a husband. Yet by the 1970s, Howard was able to channel the professional network of the army into one that helped her create a family space, which she claimed was in part due to the Women’s Liberation Movement’s advocacy for the rights of women in professional settings and as mothers. What is consistent between these women is that their racial pride and desegregation of space was consistent with the ideals of the long Civil Rights Movement, yet their rejection of traditional gender roles and the “promise of protection” was in many regards ahead of its time. In Williams’s own words: “Nothing was too difficult for me when I was young. I was brave, confident, and adventurous, more adventurous than anything.”⁸³

⁸³ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 98.

Chapter Four

“Let the World See What I See”: African American Women’s Photojournalism in the Long Civil Rights Movement

In the photographic canon of the long Civil Rights Movement, no mode of photography was more prolific than that of photojournalism. Media outlets of all types felt the high demand for dramatic images that would capture the public’s attention, and many activists recognised the power of such photographs. Figures such as Martin Luther King Jnr. perceived the key role of media exposure in the success of the movement, noting during the Birmingham Campaign that the media caught “the brutality” in “gigantic circling spotlights” so that it became “imprisoned in a luminous glare.”¹ As a result, the supply of and demand for evocative images that would draw emotional responses from the viewer increased. These photographs were taken by a range of photographers, with a range of different beliefs. Therefore, despite the power that photojournalism could wield, activists were sometimes frustrated by the biased depictions of them that appeared in the press.

In 1955, Clarissa T. Sligh was one of several children who sued the Arlington County School Board for integration. She found the photographs

¹ Martin Luther King Jnr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York: Signet, 1964), 39.

used by the white press manipulated her image. In one of the images, positioned alongside a picture of white mother and daughter Barbara and Ann Marx, “the angle of the shot of my dark-skinned face puts my blackness in opposition to their whiteness,” making her appear “threatening to those white people.”² Scholar Maurice Berger argues that Civil Rights activists often felt journalistic photography did not succeed in portraying their movement, and “while civil rights organisers were keenly aware of the potential of images to effect change, they were not always impressed with non-movement photographers – images that were ‘too sparse and too superficial’ to represent their interests.”³ The press could easily manipulate photographs in order to colour opinion of the Civil Rights Movement. As such, there were inherent power dynamics within the spaces which photojournalists claimed and occupied. Therefore, it is unwise for studies of Civil Rights Movement photography to focus too heavily on the work of seemingly impartial white photojournalists. Instead, studying the photojournalism of Black women photojournalists focuses on depictions of women, grassroots organisers, and the multiple ways in which African Americans expressed their agency during the long Civil Rights Movement.

The first African American women photojournalists emerged in the 1940s, following the changes to women’s labour ushered in by World War Two, although they remained scarce in number. These women transgressed many social boundaries by working as photojournalists photographing the long

² Clarissa T. Sligh, “The Plaintiff Speaks,” in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: New York Press, 1994), 97.

³ Maurice Berger, *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), 110.

Civil Rights Movement. As photographers, they occupied physical, public space with their cameras, and professional space within the papers they worked for, as they navigated male-dominated professional networks. Their work appeared in multiple news media, including Black-owned publications and national press, and today has been shared to an extent through publications and exhibitions. Within the photographs, the photographers showcased African American people, activists and protestors challenging segregationist notions – particularly women, who they represented as “agents of change.” The women in this chapter portrayed both overtly activist protest, such as attending protests, alongside everyday activism, including social gatherings and dancing. Although Vera Jackson, Louise Martin, and Mikki Ferrill operated across different decades, in different locations, their work captures a rich archive of imagery that is currently neglected by historians of the Civil Rights Movement. Whilst many of the most famous canonical photojournalistic images created by male photographers are violent in nature, speaking to the desire for sensational and dramatic images from the press, or the charismatic male leaders of the movement, Jackson, Martin and Ferrill all took images that emphasised women’s role in the grassroots, and everyday activism of the movement. They “imprisoned” both the high-profile events that were “gigantic circling spotlights,” alongside images of everyday and local activism.

American Photojournalism and the Long Civil Rights Movement

The “spaces of agency” which Jackson, Martin and Ferrill represented in their images advocated for a long Civil Rights Movement that persisted both before

and after the activism of such figures as Martin Luther King, Jr., and embraced a geographic scope outside of the American South. Although photojournalism relies on a documentary mode, and seemingly embraces the ideals of objectivity within its frame, in reality images will always represent the ideals of the person taking them. Speaking of the power of photography to generate empathy and understanding of a photographer's personal perspective, Jackson stated:

I believe that as in a painting, a photographer can create a mood and tell a story that will involve the viewer and cause him to feel, to understand, or to identify with the picture. A photographer's intent to bring greater understanding and appreciation for the human condition or the world about us, that's what I tried to do with my work; and that in a nutshell is what photography means to me. Learning to see and trying to let the world see what I see.⁴

In other words, by infusing her photography with an intent to inform the viewer of the world, Jackson advocated for making the personal political. In order to create these empathetic "spaces of agency," the photojournalists in this chapter navigated public space. By seeing what these women saw, we can gain a richer understanding of the everyday activism of the long Civil Rights Movement. It is important to note that there is no fixed definition for the term "everyday activism" – not just because it is rooted in individual experience, but also because it shifts across time. For instance, the everyday activism of Jackson in the 1940s was rooted in middle-class respectability politics, which became less relevant by the time of Ferrill in the 1970s. Nevertheless, certain factors remain consistent: the focus on African American empathy, dignity, and individualism, outside of violent moments.

⁴ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 88.

This is not to suggest that these women did not take images of charismatic male leadership, as both Ferrill and Martin photographed leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr.. Indeed, Martin was the only African American woman photojournalist present at King's funeral in 1968. As many of these women were employed by newspapers, reading photographic intent into these images is challenging, as these photographs blur the photographer's own intent with editorial influence, as well as photographers being placed on assignment determining what they could cover. Hence, I read their original images alongside their own analysis of their wider work to gain a sense of their own motivations and ideologies.

The "spaces of agency" presented by these women warrant discussion, not just as proponents of a new mode of seeing the Civil Rights Movement, but also because these women succeeded in forging careers despite powerful obstacles, including discrimination at the hands of their male colleagues. Vera Jackson revealed in interview how male colleagues often attempted to nudge her out of the way, and make snide comments.⁵ When Louise Martin was asked "did you have any difficulty working as a woman, or did you have any difficulty working as a black woman," she responded: "I would say both, because our state was about one of the last to accept you in the professional organizations, and I was so good, a lot of people from the other group sort of resented it."⁶ That the women in this chapter negotiated the dual factors of racism and sexism to generate their dynamic careers makes their work to

⁵ Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 188.

⁶ Louise Martin, interview by Jeanne-Moutoussamy-Ashe, "Interview," 12, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 12, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

counter white supremacy and celebrate the role of women all the more remarkable. Furthermore, from decades past where Black women photographers were limited to a studio setting, or only able to photograph within a framework linked to their husband, Jackson, Martin and Ferrill photographed their communities in a public space.

Black women photojournalists have long been denied space in the history of photojournalism, as photojournalism in the United States has long been dominated by white men. Historically, photojournalism as a medium first emerged out of coverage of conflict and wars in the late nineteenth century, although the technical inefficiency of the camera at this time limited the distribution of these images. The turning point in American photojournalism was the invention of flash powder in 1887, which allowed for quicker development times. This technological development led to arguably the first example of American photojournalism in Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (1890). This work documented the slums within which many of New York's poorest residents lived and is the earliest example of "muckraking" journalism which became prominent in the Progressive Era as a tool to call for reform. Yet this early example of photojournalism also reveals some of the problematic racial dynamics apparent in this mode of photography. In the body of his text, Riis states that the biggest challenges facing the "Negro" are "his passion for gambling" and the "moral depravity" of their saloons.⁷ Even Riis's positive statements about African Americans are loaded with stereotypical and

⁷ Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Hasia R. Diner, (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2010), 90.

paternalistic overtones, as he praises their “cleanliness,”⁸ “cheerfulness,”⁹ and “loyalty.”¹⁰ Although he identifies most of the challenges faced by African Americans as a consequence of white prejudice, which would have been a progressive attitude for a white man at this time, this nevertheless dedicates space to racist notions, and reveals the extent to which the prejudices and attitudes of the photojournalist seep into their work.

Although white men historically dominated the field of photojournalism, some women were able to carve out space for themselves in the early twentieth century. Margaret Bourke-White, for example, is remembered as “a crusader, seeking worthy causes.”¹¹ Bourke-White’s work has become iconic in the American photographic canon, Scott describing her famous image *At the Time of the Louisville Flood* as a “canonical” example of “irony” in photojournalism.¹² Yet many of Bourke-White’s images of African Americans are problematic in nature. Her 1937 pictorial survey and photojournalistic book *You Have Seen Their Faces*, in which she worked in collaboration with Erskine Caldwell, claimed to document the realities of rural life in the South through a racial lens. Judith Francis Davidov argues that the pictures denied African Americans their dignity, as “Bourke-White’s images of the black poor in physical postures of extreme dependency [...] a perspective that reinforces relationships between the powerful reader / viewer and the powerless victim.”¹³ Bourke-White’s early photographic depictions of African

⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Emily Keller, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Photographer’s Life* (New York: Lerner Publications, 1996), 75.

¹² Biljana Scott, “Picturing Irony: The Subversive Power of Photography,” *Visual Communication* 3, no.1 (February 2004): 33.

¹³ Davidov, *Women’s Camera*, 187.

Americans therefore reveal the personal biases that the photographer may shape their subjects with. Over the course of the twentieth century there were more and more white women photojournalists, including such famous photographers as Dorothea Lange and Eve Arnold, yet white men would continue to dominate the field. In *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U.S. Imperialism* (2000), historian Laura Wexler explores the role of the first American female photojournalists while underscoring the lack of African American women in her text, indicating the near impossibility of Black women accessing a camera in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Whilst some African American women worked as photographic portraitists in the subsequent decades, those who attained careers as photojournalists in the early twentieth century were highly uncommon.

This is not to say that African Americans were entirely excluded from photojournalism, as some African American men were able to claim space as photojournalists as the twentieth century progressed. Gordon Parks was the first African American man to work for LIFE magazine from 1948 to 1972. He was a committed humanitarian who documented the Civil Rights Movement with privileged access to many famous events, including the March on Washington in 1963. Parks stated that “I saw that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all sorts of social wrongs.”¹⁵ Deborah Willis asserts of Parks’s work: “The importance of Parks’s work to the genre of documentary photography lies in his ability to capture the plight

¹⁴ Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁵ “Biography – Gordon Parks Foundation,” *The Gordon Parks Foundation*, accessed 8 January 2020, <http://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/about-gordon-parks/biography>.

of his subjects, ranging from the dispossessed to the wealthy.”¹⁶ Gordon Parks paved the way for further African American photojournalists. During the Civil Rights Movement an unknown number of African American men photographers recorded events, including David Johnson, Ernest C. Withers, and Moneta Sleet Jr.. Sleet’s image of Coretta Scott King at Martin Luther King Jr.’s funeral won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography in 1969, making him the first African American to win the Pulitzer for photography. The work of African American women photojournalists in the Civil Rights Movement, on the other hand, occupies minimal space in photographic history. Yet examining the work of these women opens a new perspective on the movement.

In an idealised form of photojournalism, the identity of the photojournalist should not matter, because the photographer should be entirely impartial. One of the features of photojournalism that complicates the discussion of the identity of the photographer is the principle of objectivity. This is the core idea that photojournalism, particularly of a documentary mode, should resist being partisan, political, or biased in any way. This was described by historian Michael Schudson as “a moral ideal that guides journalists to separate facts from values” that emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century.¹⁷ Contemporary academics have noted that this is, in practice, impossible, as “no photograph is unmediated [...] a photograph is a representation and must never be confused with reality itself.”¹⁸ The identity of

¹⁶ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 89-90.

¹⁷ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 150

¹⁸ Claude Hubert Cookman, *American Photojournalism: Motivations and Meanings* (Northwestern University Press, 2009), 7.

the photographer, therefore, can have a significant impact on the kind of images that they produce. A photographer who is an African American woman will have access to different kinds of spaces than a white male photographer, as both operate within different communities. Furthermore, the subjects of the photographs are likely to alter their behaviour when being photographed depending on whether the photographer is Black or white. As such, to discuss the work of Black women photographers in the long Civil Rights Movement offers a perspective which would be lost if only the work of white men was considered: one that builds on conventional visual histories of the movement (which focus mainly on male leaders and sites of conflict) to encompass “spaces of agency” which showcase the activism of Black women and the grassroots organising that propelled the movement.

“To Put the Best Foot Forward in Every Picture”: Vera Jackson and *The California Eagle*

Of the three women in this chapter, Vera Jackson embarked on her career the earliest. As a photographer, Jackson navigated a rare female-led power structure at the African American-owned *California Eagle* after her educational training. However, Jackson occupies minimal space in public memory, the history of photojournalism, and the long Civil Rights Movement. Jackson’s work shows the African American community in line with a politics of respectability that emphasises everyday activism and women as “agents of change,” frequently focussing on the role of female celebrities such as Lena

Horne and Dorothy Dandridge. Key to this was the claiming of public space – both for Jackson as a photographer, and for her community in her images.

Jackson's father inspired her to start photography, stating: "I've always been interested in pictures because my father took pictures of the family. We have many of our pictures of the family and then I saw in the paper about a class, a neighborhood class that was starting out in photography. And I said, 'That's for me.'"¹⁹ This interest continued even as she moved to California and married in 1931, giving birth to two sons within the next four years. Unusually for the time, Jackson navigated both the networks of marriage and the network of photojournalism to be both a mother, and a successful journalist. Jackson even taught her husband Vernon how to operate a camera, leading to him also achieving a photographic career. In 1936, Jackson began her formal training in photography. Jackson enrolled in "a government-sponsored photography program and learned to use Speed Graphic and other types of cameras, as well as to print and enlarge."²⁰ In addition, Jackson also took a high school class, where she won several awards and began to make connections into the photojournalism world. In this way, Jackson utilised "spaces of agency" within educational networks to cultivate her career. Eventually, activist and editor Charlotta A. Bass, of *The California Eagle*, hired her in 1944.

Bass was a truly remarkable figure of the era, being one of the few female editors of a newspaper at the time. Bass used her platform in order to give positions to other African Americans, including Vera Jackson, in an era when hiring a Black woman as a photographic journalist was unprecedented.

¹⁹ Vera Jackson, "Vera Jackson Transcript," *PBS*, accessed 30 July 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/blackpress/film/transcripts/jackson.html>.

²⁰ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 85.

In this way, Bass used her newspaper as a “space of agency” for Black women. Bass was a figure who shaped much of Jackson’s attitudes to her photographic work. Jackson recounted how, after meeting Bass, “I was never quite the same. None of us were after coming under the influence of Mrs. Bass. She was way ahead of her time in civil rights. She was fighting first one cause then another before it was popular to do so.”²¹ Working with Bass, therefore, helped to shape the activist intent of her images, as Bass was an “agent of change” in their community.

Within Jackson’s work, the dual contexts of the politics of respectability and celebrity culture are prevalent. Over the decades that Jackson worked at *The California Eagle*, most of her work focused on photographing the Black elite, including notable celebrities such as Jackie Williams and Dorothy Dandridge, and activists such as Mary McLeod Bethune. These figures appeared in articles such as “The Best Dressed” and “First Achievements By Blacks.”²² Historian Emilie Raymond argued that the role of celebrities was crucial to the movement, as “without the involvement of the Stars for Freedom [a collective of celebrities], the civil rights movement [would have been] far more isolated, insolvent, and persecuted.”²³ Many celebrities provided both financial and moral support to the movement, and whilst they should not be privileged over tireless grassroots activists, they nevertheless performed a role that strengthened the movement in both practical and aspirational terms. In these images, Jackson emphasised making African

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 87.

²³ The Stars for Freedom collective included such figures as Harry Belafonte, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Signey Poitier. See: Emilie Raymond, *Stars for Freedom: Hollywood, Black Celebrities, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2015), xv.

Americans look “good,” stating that, “we constantly at that time were fighting for a certain image, a certain feeling, and we really worked hard at it to put the best foot forward in every picture.”²⁴ The middle and upper-class aspirations performed by many celebrities resonated with a desire to put the “best foot forward.” These aspirations were consistent with the politics of respectability, in advocating for the dignity of African Americans by presenting respectable images of individuals.

These images are testament to the everyday activism that appeared in these women’s photographs – that by presenting African Americans as worthy of celebrating, the act of dressing up and having a photograph taken became an act of defiance against white supremacy. Whilst considering the roles of celebrities may seem counterintuitive to considerations of everyday activism, in reality such celebrities were the subject of great interest to African American communities. Although being a celebrity is hardly an everyday act, the image of such celebrities presented to African American audiences in publications were consumed on a daily basis. For instance, the fashions worn by the celebrity elite – that often replicated the politics of respectability – were often replicated by the middle-class. Although we can now appreciate the problematic elements of this approach, such as the rejection of African American working-class cultures, in the 1940s many middle-class African Americans did not possess the social capital to challenge this ideological status quo, and Black celebrities risked jeopardising their careers in an already hostile industry.²⁵ Jackson believed that photography could shape people’s

²⁴ Jackson, “Vera Jackson Transcript.”

²⁵ The House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had previously targeted and blacklisted actor Paul Robeson for his political beliefs, tarnishing his career. The career

perceptions as she made the personal political. As Jackson explained of the medium:

I'd rather think I am helping to open up new horizons of the mind, rather than to just make beautiful photographs which, of course, I am also trying to do. If it is art, all is well and good, but I hope I am also bringing greater understanding of how we were in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁶

This quote clearly demonstrates how Jackson hoped that her images would not be regarded solely as “art,” but also as historical artifacts and tools which allow contemporary viewers to better understand the past. Jackson’s desire to have her images exist as more than just images, but as artifacts to be reckoned with, indicates how her photographs were imbued with a political agenda. Alongside her society images, she also photographed more dynamic images such as protests, and crime scene photographs, defying gender conventions and carving out space for herself in traditionally masculine, public photographic environments.

implications of activism, therefore, were heavily weighed by celebrities including Belafonte, Davis, and Poitier. Raymond, *Stars for Freedom*, 14.

²⁶ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 88.



Figure 52. Vera Jackson, *Charlotta Bass and other members attend a meeting*, ca. 1950s.

Source: University of South Carolina Digital Library, accessed 12 November 2020, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll102/id/640/rec/2>.

As the figure who generated an empowering journalistic “space of agency” for Jackson, as well as being an active member of the Los Angeles community, Charlotta Bass features heavily in the developing archive of Jackson’s journalistic practice. From images of Bass switching on the first stop lights, to attending meetings, there are many images that represent her as a prominent activist in the community. One such example demonstrates Jackson’s commitment to taking photographs of the radical woman who helped secure Jackson’s employment (Fig. 52). The description of the photograph reads, “Photograph of Charlotta Bass attending a meeting of an unidentified organization. Bass is standing on the far right, behind the sofa. Civil rights attorney Ben Margolis is seated on the sofa behind a woman with feathers in

her hat.”²⁷ Here, we see Bass deeply embedded in her community. Although the nature of the group is uncertain, the presence of a civil rights attorney, the prominent positioning of a paper pad with notes on it, and the presence of a photographer to record the “meeting” suggests that the group may be political in nature. Regardless, there are many signifiers of respectability in the image. All of the attendees are dressed highly formally, with the men in suits and ties, and the women in feminine suits and many also with hats. Of particular note is the interracial identity of the group, with white people and African Americans both in the image, indicating that this is a desegregated space. This indicates that the movement which Bass identified with was integrationist in nature, and interested in working alongside white people, rather than rejecting white support in favour of independence and self-determination. This was true of the Civil Rights Movement as articulated by figures such as Martin Luther King, Jnr. until the rise of Black Power in the mid to late 1960s. Nevertheless, for the 1950s, portraying Bass within this consortium of individuals creates a sense of an intertwined, progressive community, as Jackson allows the people to fill up almost all of the available space on the photograph. This photograph demonstrates that organising in Los Angeles in the 1950s was interracial, had women in key roles, and incorporated dress that adhered to the politics of respectability. As such, studying the photography of Vera Jackson allows us a perspective on the Civil Rights Movement that includes people who would otherwise be overlooked or omitted as “agents of change.”

²⁷ “Charlotta Bass and other members attend a meeting, circa 1951/1960, Los Angeles,” *University of Southern California Digital Libraries*, accessed 12 November 2020, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll1102/id/640/show/638>.



Figure 53. Vera Jackson, *Birthday Celebration for Mary McLeod Bethune*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders* , 89.

Nor was Bass the only African American activist who Jackson photographed; she took pictures of Mary McLeod Bethune when she came to visit California, and local activists threw a party for her birthday (Fig. 53). Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the most significant figures in advancing African American rights in the twentieth century, as she worked as an educator, leader and government official. Lena Horne, who was a famous actor and singer as well as a civil rights activist, is on the far left of this image. Considering Jackson's photography recovers Horne as an activist celebrity figure during the long Civil Rights Movement, as she is presented in a limited, supporting role to the core six figures in historian Emilie Raymond's analysis of the importance of celebrities in the long Civil Rights Movement.²⁸ The event fulfils an aspirational function to the average African American viewer

²⁸ Raymond, *Stars for Freedom*.

at the time, as the size of the cake and decorations indicate the significance of the celebration. Underscoring this is the wardrobe of the women in the photograph, as they are all dressed formally in clothes with vibrant-looking patterns. The lighting in this photograph is particularly intriguing, as the shadows are cast entirely over one woman's face, suggesting that Jackson had little control over the lighting in her environment and her priority was Bethune. In this photograph, Jackson provides another example of the kind of ideology she imparted onto her aspirational society images – that of showing the African American community with, as Jackson described, the “best foot forward.” That a birthday party became a site of meeting between activist celebrities such as Horne and Bethune, wherein a press photographer is able to take their photograph, reveals the extent to which these events occupy an intersection between public and private space, and how professional and personal networks were blurred. Through the presence of a press photographer, everyday events such as birthday parties became sites of activist engagement – an aspirational “space of agency” for photographer, attendees, and viewers.



Image removed for copyright purposes

Figure 54. Vera Jackson, *Dorothy Dandridge, Portrait*, date unknown.
Source: Emilee Prado, “Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe,” *Ours*, 5 July 2017, accessed 12 November 2020, <https://www.oursphotomag.com/blog/jeanne-moutoussamy-ashe-1970>.

The most frequent kind of images that Jackson produced were of African American celebrities, or other members of the elite. Jackson engaged in a symbiotic relationship with those celebrities she photographed – as she reinforced their identity as celebrities, and they in turn reinforced her identity as a professional photographer – through the act of photography. Celebrities such as Clayton Powell, Hazel Scott, and Hattie McDaniel were all photographed by Jackson. Perhaps the figure she photographed the most was the actress and singer Dorothy Dandridge, who was the first African American woman nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in *Carmen Jones* (1954). Historian Tiffany Gilbert advocates that Dandridge was an example of “Hollywood divadom, a mode of iconoclastic being that

daringly violates and transcends categorization.”²⁹ Jackson fed into this image of “Hollywood divadom” through her photography; Jackson said that Dandridge “was the most photogenic person. I couldn’t take a bad picture of her.”³⁰ Jackson either took photographs of Dandridge at parties, or she would be sent directly out on assignment. Jackson was skilled at photographing Dandridge in both conventional and unconventional spaces, and her photographs were extremely varied in terms of composition – in some she is in a traditional, seated portrait, in others she is riding on horseback; in some images, Jackson poses Dandridge and in others she is presented in a natural pose. For example, in one image, Dandridge appears sat on the floor, reading a bundle of papers (Fig. 54). Whereas some of Jackson’s photographs in inside spaces attempt to minimise the background of the photograph, and present it as plain as possible, here the image gains a sense of spontaneity by the unbalanced nature of the background – the viewer gets the sense that this image is not as posed as some others in Jackson’s repertoire. Nevertheless, Jackson still conveys Dandridge in line with the politics of respectability and as an “agent of change.” Her clothes and hair reflect the conservative fashion of the time, and the image of her reading suggests an air of education and refinement. Yet Jackson’s engagement with the idea of respectability expanded beyond the individual.

²⁹ Tiffany Gilbert, “American Iconclast: “Carmen Jones” and the Revolutionary Divadom of Dorothy Dandridge,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 3/4 (Fall – Winter, 2005): 238.

³⁰ Vera Jackson, interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, “Interview,” Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Folder 1, Box 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

For Jackson, photographing her community at its best was a form of activism, as it helped to infuse racial pride after the hardships of the Great Depression. Jackson states:

I firmly believe that our frenzied pursuit of the finest life had to offer was due to the hard times from which many of us had just emerged; we had just come out of these hard luck times of the 1930s. In order to forget these bad times and to look forward to the promise of prosperity and jobs and other opportunities, there was a showiness on the part of most of us. We were most impressed with elegance, richness, or opulence in our homes, and our dress and all activities which we pursued.³¹

In other words, Jackson produced her images in defiance of African American poverty and oppression. Her snapshots of Dandridge attest to this – Jackson encourages the viewer to enjoy Dandridge’s fine clothes and make up in these images in defiance of the segregation that attempted to limit it. Presenting Dandridge in this manner conveys her as a beautiful and desirable woman, yet also one who is relaxed in her pose and educated in her reading material. As such, Jackson’s celebrity portraits attest to the achievements of the African American community, inviting the viewer to celebrate their success. In this way, Jackson counters the “hard times” which her community had to endure in the past. Furthermore, Jackson was not limited to photographing celebrities and society events; Jackson also took dynamic images of protest.

³¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 87.



Figure 55. Vera Jackson, *Picketing in Los Angeles*, 1948.
Source: "Picketing In Los Angeles – Online Collection," *Akron Art Museum*, accessed 8 January 2020, <https://akronartmuseum.org/collection/Obj2422?sid=1&x=97227>.

Vera Jackson's photographs of protests can most easily be identified as part of a traditional canon of Civil Rights Movement photography, as they portray more recognisable kinds of activism, such as marching. One example of this kind of photography is *Picketing in Los Angeles* (Fig. 55), which was taken at 35th and Central Avenue, and captures a protest concerning discriminatory Jim Crow laws. Here, we see African Americans engaged acts of reclaiming space on the public streets to protest the wider inequalities and desegregation which they face. Alongside the image in the Akron Art Museum, Ohio, the catalogue notes that, "with its high contrasts and crisp patterning, this image suggests the energy and excitement felt by those engaged in civil rights activities in those days."³² This is evident in the high

³² "Picketing In Los Angeles – Online Collection," *Akron Art Museum*, accessed 8 January 2020, <https://akronartmuseum.org/collection/Obj2422?sid=1&x=97227>.

quality of the shadows on the pavement, with their dark, solid lines suggesting dynamic movement, and their overlapping shapes creating a closely linked pattern of protestors. The fact that signs obscure the faces of the men in the foreground, or that some of them are walking away, emphasises the dynamic nature and movement within the protest. There is also a symbolic interpretation, as the viewer's eyes move from the boy on the right to the protestors on the left, and the different spaces they occupy, which suggests a generational divide; that the middle-aged protestors are standing up for the rights of future generations to come, regardless of whether the youth are engaged in the act of protest or not.

As the exhibition note from the Akron Art Museum explains, "The young man at the right is the artist's son, who accompanied her on this assignment to cover a protest against discrimination in employment."³³ By choosing to have her son in the frame, Jackson underscores her family's presence at this protest, and the prominent role of her family in her working life. Jackson said in interview that, "I had my boys, I took them, well they were born in the thirties, but I took them everywhere with me and my little the older one he would hold my lights and everything."³⁴ As a woman photographer in the 1930s and 1940s, Jackson incorporated her family into her photography, blending domestic and professional space. This emphasis on the familiar, as well as on the individual level of protest, is a feature of the kind of everyday activism that emphasised the role of events (such as local marches) and people (such as local organisers) who do not feature heavily in existing

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Jackson, "Interview."

canons of the movement. Nor was this the only way her domestic and working life intersected; Jackson developed her photographs in a darkroom in her own home. As such, one of the key reasons Jackson was able to function as a photojournalist as early as she did was her willingness to adapt her domestic life to suit her professional life, and vice versa.

That this image was taken in 1948 bolsters the idea of a long Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, this image challenges the domination of the American South in the photography of the Civil Rights Movement. Such imagery echoes the work of Mark Speltz's *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South* (2016), which is dedicated to challenging the narrative that the Civil Rights Movement was limited entirely to the South, as "popular understanding of the movement, commonly derived from a narrative of nonviolence triumphing over racism in the South, rarely includes the important and widespread fight for freedom and justice that took place in the Northeast, Midwest, and West."³⁵ Jackson's work also captures a wide range of African American life. Having Bass as an editor encouraged Jackson to shape her own beliefs within her lens, and that became the everyday activist act of "put[ting] the best foot forward with every picture." From photographing elites in line with the politics of respectability as aspirational figures, to capturing the individual scale of protests and incorporating family, Jackson conveyed the everyday nature of the activism of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1940s, painting those around her as "agents of change."

³⁵ Speltz, *North of Dixie*, 2.

Eventually, Jackson left *The California Eagle* to become a schoolteacher in 1952, although she continued to take photographs both at home and during her travels around the world. Whilst working at the *Eagle*, Jackson used her camera to represent African American life in California in the 1930s and 1940s. Utilising the politics of respectability, Jackson took images of celebrities, gatherings, and protests in ways that assert the agency and aspirational qualities of her subjects, whilst maintaining her own identity as a photojournalist. This photography enhances a revisionist understanding of the movement that embraces its longevity, its geographic scope outside of the South, and the fundamental role of women. In so doing, she challenged notions of white supremacy by attempting to “put the best foot forward” and portray her subjects in line with the politics of respectability. In later interviews, Jackson continued to advocate for photography’s importance at generating empathy and understanding, as she stated:

I believe that as in a painting, a photographer can create a mood and tell a story that will involve the viewer and cause him to feel, to understand, or to identify with the picture. A photographer’s intent to bring a greater understanding and appreciation for the human condition or the world about us, that’s what I tried to do with my work; and that in a nutshell is what photography means to me. Learning to see and trying to let the world see what I see.³⁶

Jackson’s emphasis on letting “the world see what I see” clearly indicates that journalistic objectivity was secondary to presenting the photographer’s own perspective on events, and that Jackson’s identity was central to her occupation of photographic space. Jackson’s desire to “put the best foot forward in every

³⁶ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 88.

picture” empowered those within her lens. As such, those in her photographs are depicted as “agents of change.”

“I Made Them Look Good” - Louise Martin and Press Photography

As Louise Martin’s career spanned multiple photographic genres, as well as multiple cultural and occupational spaces, it is necessary to consider her work in two separate chapters of this thesis. As previously discussed in Chapter One, Louise Martin operated the Louise Martin Art Studio, where she took portraits of the men, women and children in her community, as well as visitors to the city. Through this medium, she became regarded as Houston’s “society photographer,” and took portraits of such key figures as Martin Luther King, Jnr. and Coretta Scott King. Martin entrenched herself as a key photographer in the Houston community, yet she would not be confined to a studio space. Martin also worked as a freelance photographer for the press, taking photographs for publications of such Black papers as the *Forward Times* and the *Informer*. As such, Martin both worked within and occupied multiple “spaces of agency” across her decades long career, and painted those in her community as “agents of change.”

During the 1960s it was still uncommon for a Black woman to enter into photojournalism, yet Martin stated of her association with the press:

I’ve always been associated with the press, and I had bona fide press cards. I even did national press coverage. I worked for insurance companies, and people who were in positions to help me obtain these particular things, plus I studied some journalism along with my photography. I was told by my professor one time that any good photographer will associate himself with good newspapers. I was a pretty smart woman, not just to make a good picture, but to involve myself and to make talks to children and the like. I did not graduate in

journalism, but I studied a good deal of it and I practiced in darkrooms at all the local newspapers, and I was able to help them a lot, and they were able to help me.³⁷

For Martin, photojournalism also served as a network through which to cultivate occupational connections, as she acquired contact with potential portrait clients, and access to training and darkroom space. Although Martin received an education in photography, she learnt the skills necessary to photojournalism as she went. Martin became a highly desirable photojournalist, as she comments that, “I excelled over the regular photojournalism person because I shot it, processed it, and got it to you on time.”³⁸ Although the two modes of photography in which Martin operated were both undoubtedly symbiotic – as both informed her status as a “society photographer” – considering Martin’s photojournalism separate to her portraiture allows consideration of the distinction between her work conducted in public and private space, the parallels between other Black women photojournalists, and the genre distinctions unique to photojournalism.

In some respects, Martin’s photography echoed that of the wider Civil Rights Movement’s photographic canon, as she focussed on high profile events that involved key figures of the movement in public space. In 1968, she was one of the national press cadre in Atlanta, Georgia, providing coverage of Martin Luther King Jnr.’s funeral for the Black-owned Houston newspapers *The Forward Times* and *The Informer*. She was the only African American woman photographer covering the event. Martin recounted the intensity of the experience: “We were asked to be at a press briefing in the gymnasium of

³⁷ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 218.

³⁸ Ibid.

Morehouse College at 6:00 a.m. in order [sic] to get our credentials so we would be admitted without incident although we were very nearly crushed.”³⁹

Martin was met with derision from some of her fellow photojournalists, as “They all laughed when I came up with my old Graflex [...but] my lenses were so good, I even got the cracks in the wagon.”⁴⁰ Martin found the experience extremely moving, and recounted that, “Somehow there was a feeling of warmth among Negroes and Whites. It was an experience I shall never forget.”⁴¹



Figure 56. Louise Martin, *The King family being escorted at funeral*, 1968.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 127.

³⁹ Louise Martin, “Special Coverage of Dr. Martin Luther King’s Funeral [Written Account],” 4, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985, Sc MG 343, Box 2, Folder 12, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁴⁰ “The Photography of Louise Ozelle Martin (1911–1995),” *The Life Well Considered*, accessed 24 October 2020, <http://www.thelifewellconsidered.com/the-photography-of-louise-ozelle-martin>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Martin's image of the King family being escorted through a crowd at the funeral is arguably the most striking image from Martin's collection, and it departs from those produced by her male counterparts, such as Moneta Sleet Jr., Bob Fitch, and the members of the Associated Press (Fig. 56). The image shows King's son in the foreground, yet the viewer's gaze is drawn to the figure of Coretta Scott King. Her eyes meet the gaze of the camera, and hence of the viewer, therefore creating the sensation of being directly looked at, giving King a sense of agency in her use of space. Her expression is powerful, as it is simultaneously blank and sad. It evokes numbness and its presence behind the veil gives her expression a ghostlike effect, made all the more dramatic as she is the only person looking at the camera whilst the male subjects look elsewhere. In addition, King's hand gestures of being held in front of her, open, yet empty, also evoke a sense of numbness. Although this image conveys a sense of scale, it also provides an intimate window into Coretta Scott King's grief as she makes direct eye contact with the viewer. The woman-to-woman positioning of this image – of photographer and subject gazing at each other in the same space – implies an intimate and human connection to this image. Martin's intimate images of the funeral depict a large event at a fundamentally human level, with images of Coretta Scott King looking directly into the camera, seemingly inviting the viewer to witness her grief. In other words, by focussing on the experience of women, Martin embedded a sense of intimacy in her photojournalism, and granted her subjects agency within the frame. Covering the funeral was incredibly beneficial to Martin's career, as it "yielded several significant photographs, which increased her notability and attracted major museum acquisitions. Some of the photos

appeared in *Life* magazine.”⁴² As such, Martin claimed the iconic funeral as a site wherein women had their own agency: for herself as photographer, and for Coretta Scott King in her moment of public grief.



Figure 57. Louise Martin, *Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral procession, Atlanta*, 1968.
Source: Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 220.

⁴² Trotty, "Martin, Louise Ozelle."



Figure 58. Louise Martin, *A Young Jesse Jackson at Dr. King's Funeral*, 1968.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 140.

Outside of her intimate images of Coretta Scott King, many of Martin's images of the day capture the scale of the event, and hence its significance and community impact. In Martin's photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s casket in a cart, the casket is surrounded by a sea of people, and in a simple wooden cart (Fig. 57). Most of them are dressed in black, as a sign of mourning. A couple of people hold cameras of their own. As the casket moves through the street, the people in the background fade into a mass of faces, indicating the sheer size of the crowd – having the line snake out of the viewer's sight further demonstrates how Martin manipulated space to convey the scale of the event. The cart itself is a very humble object, with worn wood and visible rivets, which belies the importance of its function. This somewhat contrasts with Martin's image of King's casket at Morehouse College, where it prominently occupies space on a raised platform surrounded by flags and flanked by men, including Jesse Jackson (Fig. 58). The latter image gives a

sense of grandeur, as the presence of the men standing around the casket implies them standing guard over it. The male figure at the forefront of the image compounds this, as he holds a flag and gazes off into the middle distance in a manner reminiscent of a soldier. The men in the background appear to be in the process of linking arms, giving a sense of unification. Although the optics of these images are different, there are several unifying features across these images, including a sense of scale and formality afforded by the clothing of those in the image. These images appear consistent with a more traditional Civil Rights Movement photographic canon, as these images of national leaders, mostly male, are distanced from the grassroots activity which many other Black women photographers sought to capture. Yet Martin's representations of the long Civil Rights Movement did not exclude high-profile marches and protests, nor did they exclude men. Rather, they challenge contemporary viewers to embrace a view of the movement that extends beyond these exceptional, male-dominated moments, whilst still acknowledging their importance and impact. Martin portrayed such a moment with nuance, focussing on both the mass of attendees and male figureheads, whilst also focussing on the personal grief of Coretta Scott King.



Figure 59. Louise Martin, *Group Portrait of the Matrons of the Mission Society of Antioch Baptist Church*, 1965.
Source: Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 219.

Martin's lens was not just reserved for large scale events. Martin frequently depicted images of the women in her community in less public spaces, blending her skills as a portraitist and photojournalist, stating that: "I also photographed social doings and sororities, such as Zeta Phi Beta and Gamma Phi Delta. Gamma Phi Delta is a business sorority for professional women. I photographed black women lawyers, the Houston League of Business and Professional Women, national and local chapters."⁴³ Many of Martin's images from the 1960s show groups of African American women organised and working together in organisations of collective action as "agents of change." One noteworthy example is Martin's image of the Matrons of the Mission Society of Antioch Baptist Church (Fig. 59). The Antioch Baptist

⁴³ Govenar, *Portraits of Community*, 218.

Church was dedicated to progressive values, which relied on advocating for middle-class, Christian values amongst the African American community in Houston, Texas, and beyond, creating day nurseries that employed a “modern methods of child education” which developed “a curriculum of Bible stories, recreation, music, and proper behaviour.”⁴⁴ As this photograph was taken in 1965, it would have been taken two years after the Reverend Cameron Madison Alexander was installed as pastor in August 1963, where the church grew “from a relatively small membership to more than eighteen hundred regular members.”⁴⁵ This photograph can, therefore, be understood in the context of a re-energised organisation, which was dependent on Black women’s activism and labour.

Victoria H. Cummins suggests that women of the Antioch Baptist Church were also clubwomen who turned to visual culture to both represent their organisations and to champion the achievements of the Black community in Houston, as they “promoted art appreciation in the African American community and introduced black artists and their work to the public in segregated Texas.”⁴⁶ The progressive ideology of these women, their focus on representation, and progressive child-rearing methods all adhere to the politics of respectability, as does their fashion in this photograph. With their pearls, conservative length dresses, and pinned back hair, these images show African American women proudly facing the camera, and dressed in line with the

⁴⁴ Thomas C. Henthorn, ““A Nation's Need—Good and Well Trained Mothers”: Gender, Charity, and the New Urban South,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 32, no. 1 (2011): 92.

⁴⁵ Roswell F. Jackson and Rosalyn M. Patterson, “A Brief History of Selected Black Churches in Atlanta, Georgia,” *The Journal of Negro History* 74, no. 1/4 (Winter - Autumn, 1989): 40.

⁴⁶ Victoria H. Cummins, “Black Clubwomen and the Promotion of the Visual Arts in Early Twentieth-Century Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (July 2015): 2.

middle-class signifiers of the politics of respectability of the time. The church afforded these women agency, and through this photograph, Martin celebrated the female-led organisations of Houston, Texas, and captured the contributions which African American women made to their communities.

Like other images in this thesis, this photograph blends photographic genres. This image employs the photographic modes of photojournalism and portraiture, as the subjects are posed like a portrait, yet Martin photographed in a space which is clearly not a studio. The women's role as "Matrons of the Mission Society" harkens back to the missionary photography of Emily Vernon in the 1920s, wherein the advocacy of Christian ideals are a way to advance the condition of African American people. However, the focus here remains on the women who are doing the work, rather than those receiving their aid, and the agency remains with the women in the frame. Furthermore, this kind of local, community-orientated activity was not the kind celebrated or recorded by most photojournalists in the long Civil Rights Movement, who were drawn to high profile marches or charismatic leaders. Yet within these images Martin focussed on the grassroots spaces and efforts of organising in her local community. Martin certainly was as a "society photographer," yet she ensured that the "society" she depicted through her lens featured women front and centre as powerful "agents of change."

The photography of Louise Martin demonstrates how the study of women photographers deepens our understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. It does not erase men's space in the canon of the movement, rather, it enhances our understanding of spaces of grassroots and women-centred

activism. Martin captured high-profile events in her lens, creating images which reflected the events that captured the media's attention of the time, such as Martin Luther King Jnr.'s funeral. However, her identity as an African American woman offered her a unique perspective on the events of the day: Martin's focus on the figure of Coretta Scott King, for example, painted an intimate window into her grief. Furthermore, much of her photojournalism focused on representing the women in her community, frequently within their activist organisations. In this way, Martin captured the everyday activism of the movement: the moments both exceptional, such as King's funeral, and commonplace, such as the grassroots organising of the women in her community. Martin did this through engaging with the politics of respectability, which persisted into the late 1960s. By occupying space as a photographer, and using her camera to capture moments both iconic and everyday, Martin's work demonstrates the importance of incorporating African American women's photography into study of the long Civil Rights Movement. Through her lens, we see King's funeral as a continuation of activism, and not an ending to it, and for the increased consideration of the role of women in the movement as "agents of change."

"They Called Me "The Picture-Taking Lady"": Mikki Ferrill and Freelance Photography

Valeria "Mikki" Ferrill, was a photographer who was born in Chicago, in May 1937. Ferrill worked as a freelance photographer, and had numerous photographs published in periodicals including *Jet* and *Ebony*, enabled by her

professional networks and educational training. Yet Ferrill is largely omitted as a photographer of the long Civil Rights Movement, despite her rich archive of photographs, which ranges from key leaders, to grassroots activists, to representations of African American culture. The photographs themselves diverge slightly from those elsewhere in this thesis, as they demonstrate that by the 1970s there is a marked shift away from merely desegregating space to claiming independent, Black spaces. Yet whilst the integrated intent of the Civil Rights Movement may have ended, the spatial element of Black protest persisted. Sites of Black self and cultural expression became increasingly important, incorporating elements of everyday activism that encompass seemingly apolitical activities such as dance. As such, Ferrill captured those within her lens as “agents of change.”

In order to carve out a name for herself as a photographer, Ferrill navigated numerous professional and educational networks. Ferrill attended the Art Institute of Chicago, where she majored in Design. During this period Chicago photographer Ted Williams introduced her to the medium of photography. She was the only woman in his class, again echoing the exceptionalism of Jackson and Martin in their chosen fields. After experimenting with multiple artistic forms such as making jewellery, Ferrill found the medium of photography to be the most artistically fulfilling, stating:

Photography was the medium that could give me all the aspects I wanted in an art form: the ability to record the situation as it truly appeared yet with a personal interpretation. But more importantly, photography involves the total spectrum from reality to abstract. There are many techniques that enhance one’s artistic endeavours. The range of photography is so vast that the involvement can be all-consuming.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 114.

Ferrill's desire to combine the objectivity of photojournalism with her personal identity and agenda is also evident in the works of Jackson and Martin. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe profiles Ferrill in her text *Viewfinders*, and identifies her photographic credits as, "Time, Ebony, and Jet, and in newspapers such as *The Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Defender*," as well as taking on assignments for *Mexico This Month*.⁴⁸ This thesis enhances Moutoussamy-Ashe's work on Ferrill by offering an analysis of her photography, placing her within a wider framework of the long Civil Rights Movement, and extending the original research with newly available sources.

Throughout all of her work Ferrill navigated her two ideological beliefs of portraying the truth, as is consistent with photojournalistic practice, and of representing her community with dignity. As Ferrill stated:

In my work I have always strived to capture the unveiled moments when one's defense or guard is down. That moment of truth. In recognizing my ability to reveal that truth, I've also accepted the responsibility to my subjects of making sure they are never depicted in a derogatory way. I must say that my concern for my subject matter has sometimes earned me the title of "being uncompromising" which at times has led to periods of hunger; however, hunger is a temporary condition. Compromising one's creative values can be a permanent state of dissatisfaction. Needless to say, my goal is to continue my work uncompromised.⁴⁹

These values – to portray the truth and protect her subject's dignity – can be seen in the wide range of Ferrill's work. Ferrill's varied and rich photography reflects both typical and atypical images of the Civil Rights Movement. On the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Deborah Willis, *On Freedom: The Art of Photojournalism, July 10 – September 28, 1986: an exhibition*, Exhibition Guides, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

one hand, we find images of prominent figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. in action. On the other hand, Ferrill took images of working-class African Americans pursuing leisure activities, rejected the politics of respectability, and engaged with figures outside of an American context. Ferrill also explored the importance of cultural modes of expressing racial pride, such as art and dance. Furthermore, Ferrill's work is part of a long Civil Rights Movement, that extended beyond the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.. As such, Ferrill's photography challenges when, where, and how the activism of the long Civil Rights Movement persisted into the 1970s, as well as who was involved.



Figure 60. Mikki Ferrill, *Dr King at the Freedom Festival*, 1966.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 115.

Two of Ferrill's images that are more consistent with traditional ideas of Civil Rights Movement photography are those taken of Martin Luther King, Jr.. Ferrill took the first of these images at the Chicago Freedom Festival in 1966 (Fig. 60). In this image, other notable celebrity activists join King at the

podium, including Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier. Their open mouths suggest that they are singing together, as they occupy the shared space onstage. Within the image, the text on the podium is clearly visible, stating: “CHICAGO FREEDOM FESTIVAL - TO END SLUMS AND SEGREGATION.” King clearly stands out in this image not only because Ferrill framed him at the centre, but also because his gaze is arresting. Whereas other figures on stage look in different directions, King looks directly ahead, his head bowed lower to meet the microphone. The angle of the photograph, which Ferrill shot from below, intensifies the sense of power and authority King has in this photograph. Within the photograph, the fact that the figures share the same, interconnected space paints them as united in the cause.



Figure 61. Mikki Ferrill, *Dr. King*, ca. 1966.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 115.

The second photograph of King reveals another side to the leader, as he is still at a podium but is smiling and looking up (Fig. 61). This image

encapsulates a charismatic side of King. King is illuminated from behind, creating a fine line of light around his silhouette. He looks up and to the right, smiling, and with a raised open hand. Ferrill also shoots this photograph from below, intensifying King's further power in the frame. Ferrill's use of space in this image gives an impression of a powerful, assured Civil Rights leader. The clothing in both photographs is also highly respectable, with all of the men in suits and ties, and the woman wearing a white dress and pearls. This clothing is consistent with the politics of respectability that King attempted to cultivate throughout the Civil Rights Movement.⁵⁰ Through her camera, Ferrill depicts the authority and control King exerts over the crowd. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe claims that Mikki Ferrill's work "brought the world closer to an understanding of what took place during the civil rights struggle."⁵¹ Yet this analysis does not go far enough. By recovering and collating Ferrill's photographs from a variety of publications, it is evident how Ferrill not only provides a unique perspective on large-scale events, such as speeches by King, but also turned her lens on her local community to attest to their everyday acts of resistance and record their spaces.

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, patterns of Black activism had changed significantly from earlier decades. The Black Power Movement, as well as the more artistically focused Black Arts Movement, were a central component of this developing Black consciousness, as Joseph suggests:

⁵⁰ Christopher D. Rounds suggests that King's nonviolent activism and emphasis on respectability have persisted in public memory, noting that "King wore a suit, and crisp white shirt, he had a serious, professional comportment." Civil Rights Movement activist Reverend Barbara Reynolds further comments: "trained in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr., we were nonviolent activists who won hearts by conveying respectability..." See: Rounds, "Dead Men Make Such Convenient Heroes," 326.

⁵¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 114.

At its core the black power movement, in contrast to the struggle for civil rights, privileged a view of black empowerment that was local, national, and international in scope, held political self-determination as sacrosanct, and called for a redefined black identity that connected black Americans to a national and global political project based on racial solidarity and a shared history of racial oppression.⁵²

There was increasing emphasis on communities in the urban north and Midwest, as well as an increasing politicisation of cultural expression.⁵³ As historian Danielle McGuire notes, by 1975 “respectability mattered, but not as much as it did in previous decades” as since 1955 there had “enormous social, political, and economic changes that permanently altered the American landscape.”⁵⁴ Whereas Jackson had photographed the Black elite in the 1930s to “put the best foot forward,” by the 1970s Ferrill was photographing sites of dancing and working-class self-expression as sites of racial pride. Everyday activism therefore still celebrated the individual and portrayed them with pride, but by the 1970s it incorporated a broader celebration of working-class American culture as understandings about protest and activism changed.⁵⁵ Yet in a way the ideology of the long Civil Rights Movement continued, as the documentation of spaces of racial pride persisted.

⁵² Peniel E. Joseph, “The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (Dec 2009): 753.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, 258.

⁵⁵ For sources that consider the increasing working-class focus of protest in the late 1960s and 1970s, see: Ashley D. Farmer, ““Abolition of Every Possibility of Oppression”: Black Women, Black Power, and the Black Women’s United Front,” *Journal of Women’s History* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 103; and Stephen Tuck, ““We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left off”: The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (October 2008): 637-654.



Figure 62. Mikki Ferrill, *Writing On The Wall*, 1972.
Source: "The Week's Best Photos," *Jet Magazine*, 13 July 1972, 36.

Ferrill did not shy away from portraying images of Chicago that did not adhere to a traditional politics of respectability. Ferrill created many images of street gang activity in Chicago; one of the most notable images defied many stereotypes and offered a powerful contrasting technique (Fig. 62). The photograph shows two young girls walking down a street past some graffiti on a wall. The presence of graffiti – of defacing public property – would directly contradict the politics of respectability of the Civil Rights Movement, which incorporated non-violence and high standards of behaviour. Where civil disobedience existed, it was conveyed through the trappings of respectability. The act of graffiti would not have encapsulated this.⁵⁶ Yet reading the graffiti reveals a deeper meaning. The caption reads: "Writing On The Wall: The anti-

⁵⁶ Although street art, tagging, and murals can be cultural forms and valid works of art, I would suggest that at the time less traditionally artistic forms of street art – such as writing on walls – were commonly not regarded as art, and more associated with gang culture.

dope message, sprayed on a wall in the heart of a Black Chicago ghetto, presents a striking difference to the usual negativisms found on the graffiti-laden walls of many large cities indicating the concern of Blacks over the infestation of drugs.”⁵⁷ The graffiti itself reads: “BEWARE, NO DOPE.” This image, therefore, counters established interpretations of Chicago gang crime and of civil disobedience that were dominant during the Civil Rights Movement, for both middle-class Black and white people. Here, graffiti is used as a form of protest, to intervene in a drug culture which disproportionality targeted Black communities. The graffiti complicates the good-versus-bad binary that so much of the photography of the Civil Rights Movement relied on, and counters the respectability politics that labelled an act of vandalism as “unrespectable.” This photograph marks a departure from protest rooted in middle-class ideals, and paints this graffitied street as a “space of agency” in which political ideas can be expressed.

The role of the children in the photograph also complicates simple readings of the photograph – the children can be interpreted as being protected by this warning, as they walk past the graffiti, one holding a stack of papers. The composition of the photograph is reminiscent of Norman Rockwell’s iconic painting *The Problem We All Live With* (1964), as the girls walk past graffiti on a white wall. However, their clothing and hair style suggests that the fashions of the time have changed, and the message on the wall is one that seeks to protect the community rather than attack it. As such, Ferrill presents a factual image of the gang situation in Chicago yet disrupts and complicates the

⁵⁷ “The Week’s Best Photos,” *Jet Magazine*, 12 Jul 1972, 36.

image within her composition, demonstrates the shifting nature of protest and relevant issues during this period.⁵⁸

Perhaps the images for which Ferrill is most celebrated are the photographs taken whilst she was a freelance journalist at the Garage, which was an improvised dance venue in the 1970s. Ferrill's photographs at the Garage represent a photographic transition away from images of African Americans that adhered to the politics of respectability and middle-class decorum; by the 1970s, forms of more working-class cultural expression such as dancing were seen as more valid cultural forms to be celebrated. Ferrill's photographs also demonstrate the increasing prominence of cultural expression, reminiscent of the Black Arts Movement.⁵⁹ Whilst it is unclear if the dancers at the Garage were actively participating in this movement, scholars have advocated for "the historical role of dance-and/as-politics" in both "formal and informal" spaces.⁶⁰ Outside of public protests, the dance floor had become a powerful "space of agency" for African Americans, and the Black-owned dancehall enabled this. Ferrill's images of the Garage

⁵⁸ The prominence of African American gangs in Chicago was particularly high in areas such as Englewood and Lawndale. Historian John M. Hagedorn suggests that this was partially due to racial discrimination, increased incarceration, and deindustrialisation in the city by the early 1970s. See: John M. Hagedorn, "Race Not Space: A Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago," *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 204.

⁵⁹ The Black Arts Movement was an arts movement through which African American artists and writers sought to both express Black pride and create new Black-centred artistic institutions. Pioneered by figures such as Amiri Baraka, it has been described by Larry Neal as the "aesthetic and spiritual sister of Black Power," as it took place from the 1960s and 1970s. I limit discussion of this Movement to Mikki Ferrill, due to both Ferrill's overt engagement with its cultural ideals in her 1970s photography and the centrality of Chicago in the movement. See: Larry Neal, *The Black Arts Movement* (New York: New York University, 1968); *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, eds. Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

⁶⁰ Angela Fatou Gittens, "Black Dance and the Fight For Flight: *Sabar* and the Transformation and the Cultural Significance of Dance from West Africa to Black America (1960-2010)," *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 1 (December 2011): 49-71. For more on the connection between dance, racial pride and activism, see: Allana C. Lindgren, "Civil Rights Strategies in the United States: Franziska Boas's Activistic Use of Dance, 1933-1965," *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 2 (August 2013): 25-62.

appeared in the heavily publicised Art Institute of Chicago 2018 exhibition “Never A Lovely So Real: Photography and Film in Chicago, 1950 – 1980.” Every Sunday, a car garage at 610 East 50th Street was transformed into a site of dancing and celebration. Ferrill attended these events on countless occasions between 1970 and 1980, and took pictures of everyone socialising. The space became “a safe haven for black music and culture.”⁶¹ This can be read as a space of pleasure activism, wherein the act of dancing performed a liberatory function for attendees, rooted in Black joy. These images of African Americans occupying space and enjoying their leisure time can be read as everyday activism alongside more conventional images of protest, as they portray a space of “uninhibited personal expression of black identity.”⁶²

⁶¹ Evangeline Reid, “Never A Lovely So Real: Photography and Film in Chicago, 1950 – 1980,” *New Art Examiner* 32, no. 6 (July/ August 2018), 22.

⁶² Michal Raz-Russo, “A Lovely So Real,” in *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now*, ed. Maggie Taft, & Robert Cozzolino (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 273.



Figure 63. Mikki Ferrill, *Untitled*, ca. 1970s.

Source: Communications Staff, "The Picture-Taking Lady: Mikki Ferrill at the Garage," *Art Institute Chicago*, 8 October 2018, accessed 30 July 2020, <https://www.artic.edu/articles/715/the-picture-taking-lady-mikki-ferrill-at-the-garage>.

For the African American community, the ability to express their culture freely through dance was an empowering act, and Ferrill herself spoke about the impact these events had on her: "The event was a word-of-mouth happening. The people, the music, and just the atmosphere became my spiritual inspiration. They called me 'The Picture-Taking Lady.' I covered the walls of the Garage with pictures of themselves."⁶³ The fact that not only did Ferrill take these pictures, but that she displayed them prominently in the dance hall, attests to their significance as powerful images of self- and community expression. These images can be seen in the background of one untitled photograph (Fig. 63). This photograph shows a man and a woman

⁶³ Communications Staff, "The Picture-Taking Lady: Mikki Ferrill at the Garage," *Art Institute Chicago*, 8 October 2018, accessed July 30 2020, <https://www.artic.edu/articles/715/the-picture-taking-lady-mikki-ferrill-at-the-garage>.

dancing together, with dozens of other people looking on. The viewer's eye is drawn to the dancing woman on the right of the frame, as the gaze of most of the people in the room – men and women – is on her. The unnamed dancer claims space on the dancefloor, getting low to the ground, with her eyes on her dance partner, seemingly beckoning him towards her with her hand. The contrast between the dancers' heights evokes a sense of spontaneity and momentum, as does the slight blurring of the photograph. By conveying this vibrant atmosphere, and drawing the viewer's gaze to the woman, Ferrill emphasises the agency that this woman embodies whilst she dances. These are candid images, and Reid notes that "when she was around, they danced as if no one was snapping photos. The exuberant, blurry images feel authentic in a way no perfect [Gordon] Parks photo could."⁶⁴ These images are testament to Ferrill's dedication to documenting the realities of Black life in Chicago, alongside her perspective that frequently emphasised women. By producing these vibrant, intimate photographs, Ferrill creates a sense of a lively community with its own identity. The fact that these images were displayed in the site of the Garage indicates their significance as symbols of racial pride and (both self and community) expression, as they take up physical space on the wall. As such, the act of dance becomes an act of self-actualisation and celebration of Black identity, as the dancers claim space for themselves. The "active visuality" apparent in this photograph through both the taking and prominent display of such images evokes Powell's idea of "cutting a figure" – of engaging in acts of self-agency by posing for a photograph.

⁶⁴ Reid, "Never A Lovely So Real," 22.

Another series within which one can see Ferrill cultivate a sense of agency and empowerment in her subjects is her series on Elizabeth Catlett in *Ebony* magazine. In 1970, Mikki Ferrill took a series of photographs of the African American artist, who is most famous for her sculpture, paintings and prints, in her own studio. Despite her distance from the United States whilst based in Mexico, often referred to as her “exile,” Catlett orientated her work within the Black Arts Movement, using her work to highlight the ongoing struggle of Black people.⁶⁵ Catlett also championed Mexican people who were facing injustice through labour exploitation such as sharecropping. Catlett recognised the activist impulse of her work, using it to call for a “worldwide drive for national liberation,” commenting that “I don’t think we [artists] can still keep going to Paris and Rome to see what the last word is in art and come back to our desperate nations and live in intellectual isolation from what’s going on in our countries and ghettos.”⁶⁶ Catlett’s view of art as activism, and artivism, is supported by the works of Black women photographers throughout this thesis. Women connecting with other women – be they as fellow artists, or as photographer and subject – demonstrates the centrality of women-centric networks within art, activism, and change. Catlett states of her work that, “I was working always with the black theme. I did a whole series on black women. Nobody was doing black women. I am a black woman. That’s what I know most about.”⁶⁷ Art historian and artist Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis labels her work as “Afro-female-centred”, or “Afrofemcentric.”⁶⁸ For Ferrill to

⁶⁵ Dalila Scruggs, “Activism in Exile: Elizabeth Catlett’s *Mask for Whites*,” *American Art* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 2-21.

⁶⁶ “My Art Speaks for Both my Peoples,” *Ebony*, January 1970, 95.

⁶⁷ Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 88.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

take her photograph, therefore, is for Ferrill to effectively further the “Afrofemcentric” focus of Catlett’s art.



Figure 64. Mikki Ferrill, *Elizabeth Catlett and Student Tiburcio Ortiz*, 1970.
Source: “My Art Speaks for Both my Peoples,” *Ebony*, January 1970, 96.

Ferrill painted Catlett as an empowered, confident artist, yet also one who extends her expertise to others. To photograph Catlett in the realm of her own studio underscores Catlett’s authority, agency and expertise as an artist, as Ferrill’s image shows the artist teaching young sculptors her craft (Fig. 64). In one image, Catlett watches on as one of her students chisels at a sculpture already in process, with her arm resting on another piece of nearby material. As Catlett watches the student, her pose, gaze, and demeanour suggest her authority in the space – the viewer sees both figures, but the student cannot see Catlett. Through this framing, Ferrill conveys a sense that Catlett is not just an artist, but an expert, and one who is shaping the next generation of artists in Mexico. As such, Ferrill platforms Catlett as an activist and an “agent of

change,” who advocates for international freedom through a Black, female centred mode of artistic practice.

Ferrill occupied numerous spaces as a photographer – both symbolic and physical – as she negotiated professional and educational networks in order to establish herself as a photographer. The photographs themselves possess an immersive quality, as Ferrill created the sense of herself as existing in the same space as those she photographed. Whether photographing speeches, streets, dance halls, or art studios, Ferrill sought to integrate herself within her subject’s space, to be as close to the action as possible. Whether in sites of active protest, or within a leisure space of the dance hall, Ferrill portrayed her subjects with agency. Her work steps outside of the boundaries of the politics of respectability which dominated both Black women’s photography and the ideology of the long Civil Rights Movement prior to the 1970s. Whereas images of King, and the images of other photographers in this chapter, evoked notions of respectability that were embedded in middle-class ideals, in her images of responsible street art and proud dancing Ferrill embraced a new kind of pride moving in to the 1970s – one that was less afraid to embrace the culture of working-class spaces of African Americans. Ferrill’s images of dance halls and Elizabeth Catlett demonstrate how modes of cultural expression were becoming increasingly important to Black consciousness by the 1970s. As Ferrill herself stated, “And now, as they always must, the pictures will speak for themselves.”⁶⁹ Ferrill’s images do speak for themselves,

⁶⁹ Joe Crawford, ed., *The Black Photographers Annual 1973* (New York: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1973), 127.

and they create a powerful alternative archive to conventional understandings of the Civil Rights Movement.

Conclusion

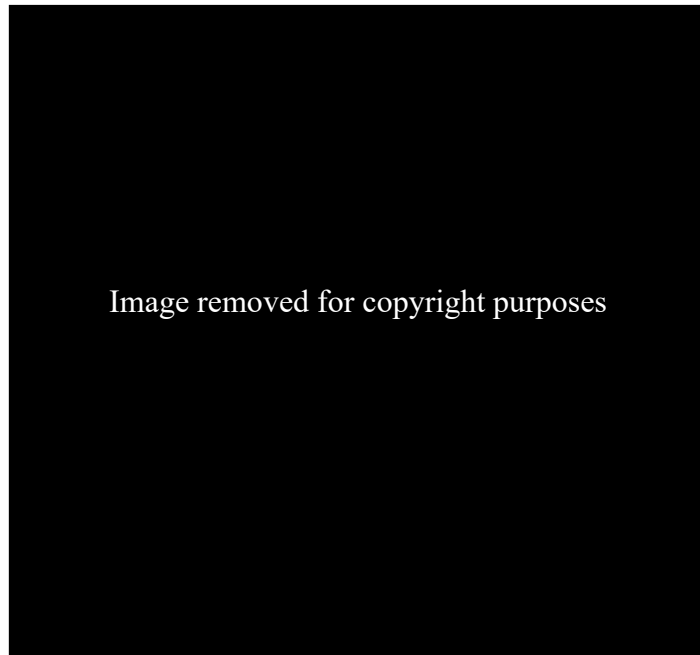


Figure 65. Lynsey Weatherspoon, *Protestors in Atlanta, Georgia, over African-Americans killed by police brutality*, 2020.

Source: Vogue, "10 Black Photojournalists Give Personal Accounts from the US Protests," *Vogue*, 4 June 2020, accessed 12 January 2021, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/photojournalists-protests>.

African American women photojournalists continue to occupy space and take pictures of social justice issues in the present day. The Black Lives Matter protests over the summer of 2020, galvanised by the police brutality faced by the African American community, swept across the globe, and Black women photojournalists were present to take pictures of the ongoing struggle.

Photojournalist Lynsey Wetherspoon writes:

Walking with everyone during the protest was an act of solidarity, though people were visibly unnerved by the inexplicable acts

committed by police all over the country. The palpable thump in everyone's pace was unimaginative, yet peace was our main goal. George Floyd's death, along with the killing of Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud Arbery, was the last straw as we experience a pandemic that is also affecting my community in disproportionate numbers. The fervour shown throughout the evening gave more hope, and a moment of clarity for those who wonder why black folks are continuously fighting for equality and a day we don't have to literally fight for our lives.⁷⁰

Describing the solidarity of marching with other people conveys the sense of agency and empowerment felt at this protest, by claiming public space and sharing it with other protestors. Within the photograph, Weatherspoon focuses her lens on a single woman with her fist raised in the centre of the frame (Fig. 65). This pose is indicative of the iconic Black Power action of raising a fist. Furthermore, the rejection of a politics of respectability that advocates for formal, modest clothing has been rejected, as the woman wears a cropped t-shirt with the words "Rock Rules" on it. Yet the emphasis on peaceful protest evokes the languages of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s, where much of the focus was on nonviolent direct action. The fact that the photograph is in black and white further creates a sense of looking back to the past, as it evokes the photographic styles of the Civil Rights Movement. Under the woman's upraised fist there is an American flag, with the words "Made in the USA," echoing the signs from marches of the past. The protestor is claiming space in the protest and on the public streets, in an act of spatio-symbolic reclamation reminiscent of the long Civil Rights Movement. Yet the Black Power fist suggests that this movement has emerged out of the long history of Black protest, evoking the iconography of the Black Power

⁷⁰ Vogue, "10 Black Photojournalists Give Personal Accounts from the US Protests," *Vogue*, 4 June 2020, accessed 10 December 2020, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/photojournalists-protests>.

Movement.⁷¹ Hence, this photograph suggests that the protestors today have learnt from the various movements that have shaped the ongoing struggle for African American equality.

Despite their different locations, decades of work, and relationships with the press, placing the lives and works of Jackson, Martin and Ferrill in conversation with each other reveals some clear parallels. Crucially, they all utilise the medium of the camera to empower their communities. As photographers, these women were somewhat exceptional figures in their organisations – each figure has at one point been described as “the only African American woman” in a professional space which she occupied, whether that be in receiving her training or on a particular assignment. Although there is a significant body of African American photographers working across similar decades in other capacities – indicating that these women worked within a national landscape shaped by Black women photographers – the number of photojournalists was few. Jackson, Martin and Ferrill’s work, therefore, offers a rare perspective on the long Civil Rights Movement, as most African American women were unable to access this career, and these women frequently found themselves the only African American women in their fields, organisations, and classes. These women moved within male-dominated networks, yet used their platform to capture their communities and, frequently, emphasise the role of women. All had a degree of social mobility afforded to them by their class; it is unlikely that

⁷¹ A raised fist was iconic of the Black Power Movement, as typified in photography by Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics. More on this iconography, and its continuing resonance, can be read here: Jarrett Bell, “Fist to Knee,” *The Crisis*, Fall 2018, 12-17.

during this time a working-class or rural-based African American woman could have achieved what these women did. All three women took advantage of some degree of photographic training in order to cultivate “spaces of agency” in vibrant urban cities. Therefore, the class dimensions of these photographs continues to inform the photography of African American women photographers during the long Civil Rights Movement.

The “spaces of agency” within these photographs reflected these class dynamics. Prior to the 1970s, African American women’s photography often reflected the politics of respectability. Whilst photojournalism aims for notions of objectivity and impartiality, these women navigated this in order to convey the realities of their communities. As such, they empower those within their lenses by delivering agency. Furthermore, when looking at the work of Ferrill, Jackson and Martin, it is important to consider not just the images these women took that we would recognise as being identifiable as part of the canon of Civil Rights Movement photography, including marches and speeches, but also their everyday assignments. Their focus on activism in their hometowns, and the societies in which they were immersed, reveals a new side to photographic depictions of the long Civil Rights Movement. Instead of seeking to meet a demand for violent, sensationalist imagery, which risks relegating the narrative of the Civil Rights Movement to a homogenous and simplistic narrative, these women encapsulated different “spaces of agency.” Frequently, the photojournalists in this chapter focus on the achievements of women, and portray them as active “agents of change” in their communities. Within these photographs we see activists, leaders, and everyday people engaged in everyday acts of resistance, fighting for both symbolic and physical space.

Chapter Five

“The struggle for equality and justice for all”:

Organisational Photography in the Long Civil Rights

Movement

During the Civil Rights Movement, those in positions of leadership and authority understood the power of images. A photograph had the power to document the truth, shape public opinion, and record forever the realities and hardships faced by African American communities and protestors during the movement. A photograph occupied physical space in newspapers and publications, demonstrating how protestors occupied and desegregated space, thus making them a powerful weapon in the fight for equality. Whilst the role of the press photographing events remained key, several key organisations within the Civil Rights Movement – including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) – took cameras into their own hands to capture the realities of the movement for themselves. No organisation embraced photography more than SNCC, perhaps because “for students scattered around the South, photography proved a more accessible, contemplative, and democratic medium than television.”¹ Leigh Raiford offers an in-depth analysis

¹ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 90.

of SNCC's relationship with photography in *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (2011), exploring both the development of photography within SNCC as an institution, alongside its methods of dissemination. An example of this is the poster *Come Let Us Build A New World Together*, which was a reproduction of a 1962 photograph by Danny Lyons that circulated between 1963 and 1965. Because of their accessibility and appeal to the youth, Raiford maintains that SNCC "posters in a sense were the ultimate use of photography as a key form of intervention."² Although SNCC had engaged heavily with photographic practice for years, a branch of the organisation called SNCC Photo was set up in 1964 to explicitly handle SNCC's "communication and propaganda needs."³ The fact that SNCC stated that their imagery was for "propaganda" distinguishes their images from more documentary modes of photography; these images were produced to meet the specific needs of the organisation, including advocating for and documenting the desegregation of space.

Although SNCC tends to dominate discussion of organisational activist photography, as they were the most overtly engaged with the practice, other organisations also recognised and engaged with the importance of photography and photographers. Kelen notes that "The documentation of SCLC and CORE carried out, respectively, by Bob Fitch and Bob Adelman do not, on the whole, shift focus away from SNCC so much as complement, deepen, and expand it."⁴ To consider work specifically orientated around Civil Rights Movement

² Ibid., 93.

³ Ibid., 105.

⁴ Leslie G. Kelen, "Preface and Acknowledgements," in *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Leslie G. Kelen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 10.

organisations – in what I call “organisational photography” – reveals how “spaces of agency” were cultivated in and by photographs and photographers. Crucial to this was Doris Derby in SNCC, and Elaine Tomlin in SCLC.

This chapter examines the role of African American women photographers who worked in civil rights organisations. These women engaged in multiple acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation of space – cultivating various physical and symbolic “spaces of agency” within their careers as photographers, and in the photographs themselves. As African American women photographers, they claimed public space when they took their photographs, enabled by the professional, activist networks which they navigated. Symbolically, the space they occupied as photographers challenges a Civil Rights Movement photographic canon which privileges the perspective of male photographers. The photography itself occupied multiple physical spaces – from publications to exhibitions – yet frequently lacked the wide distribution in national newspapers which made many images of the movement iconic. This was in part because of these photographers’ focus on unconventional aspects of the movement. For example, Doris Derby’s photography showcases traditional acts of protest, but also displays the everyday activism of hundreds of women engaged in grassroots, community-based activities in public spaces. The photography of Elaine Tomlin includes violent scenes of bloody protest, but also emphasises the role of women in SCLC, and broadens our understanding of the kinds of activities that protest can encapsulate. These photographs provide evidence of the tireless work of grassroots activists, creating space to document and champion the contributions of women as “agents of change.” Therefore, Derby and Tomlin

broaden our understanding of protest photography in the long Civil Rights Movement to encapsulate a more everyday activism than is seen in the dominant canon.

Organisational Photography, Black Women's Activism and the Long Civil Rights Movement

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that multiple genres of photography can be understood as “activist” photography, as the spatio-symbolic reclamation undertaken in these photographs can be understood as everyday activism. Portrait photographers captured men, women and children looking dignified in defiance of white supremacy; anthropologists advocated for diasporic connectivity to improve the global experience of Black people; government employees and war photographers took pictures that captured both their own lives and those of their African American colleagues with pride; and photojournalists wielded their documentary lens to portray celebrities, civil rights leaders, and everyday people with dignity. To an extent, all of the women discussed so far in this thesis were ‘activists,’ as they were engaged in the production of images that advocate for African American dignity, and countered racist stereotypes and notions of white supremacy. Therefore, this chapter adopts the term “organisational photography,” as I consider the women whose primary work within the Civil Rights Movement was with organisations dedicated to specifically advocating for the civil rights, or human rights, of African Americans.

Doris Derby and Elaine Tomlin both clearly fit this definition: Doris Derby was one of only a few female photographers for SNCC, and she also took photographs as part of Southern Media, while Elaine Tomlin was the staff photographer for SCLC from the late 1960s until at least the 1980s. The distinction of organisational photographers is an important one to make in this thesis as Derby and Tomlin made activism through these organisations their full-time occupations. This is a distinction that Leslie G. Kelen, editor of *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers in the Civil Rights Movement* (2011), underlines: “unlike the photojournalists who entered the movement on assignment for magazines and newspapers and left after completing their work, each of these photographers chose to live in and participate in the movement as an activist.”⁵ It is noteworthy that both Kelen and photographer Matt Heron distinguish the work of activist photographers specifically from photojournalists, as Heron states that, “unlike the photojournalists, who viewed a quite different civil rights movement through the lens of guaranteed assignments and comfortable expense accounts, we operated with meagre resources, sleeping on floors, living out of suitcases and the trunks of our cars.”⁶ Yet although ‘activist’ is a useful distinction to make, it risks diluting the activism inherent in the work of other women in this thesis. The term “organisational photography” not only allows for a network-centric approach, but it also further centralises the role of space within the thesis argument, as it

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ Matt Herron, “Photographing Civil Rights,” in *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Leslie G. Kelen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 19.

invites us to consider how women occupied and claimed space within these organisations.

Not only did organisational photographers operate within a distinct space compared to other types of photographers, but their images adopted specific spatio-symbolic functions. In particular, these images advocated explicitly for the Civil Rights Movement. Julian Bond, who was SNCC's Communications Director, asserts that, "SNCC's idea of photography was functional; it was to provide pictures for SNCC's propaganda. Our photographers took this function and made it art."⁷ These organisational images were explicitly created to document and record the Civil Rights Movement in a favourable manner, and created space to showcase the activism and desegregation efforts of the movement. However, the photographers who took these images had experiences shaped by race, class, organisational affiliation and, crucially, gender. It is also important to note that the organisational photographer, like many of the other women photographers in this thesis, may not have always viewed themselves as primarily a "photographer." The necessity of the movement meant that whilst photography formed a core component of their work, they likely viewed photography as supplementary to their many organisational responsibilities. Kelen states:

The majority of these photographers did not then and do not now see themselves primarily as photographers but as "activists" or "organizers" with cameras. And this self-definition is important to keep in mind when considering this book and what it represents; each of these people participated in the Southern Freedom Movement because it was what their lives, their deepest instincts, called for.⁸

⁷ Julian Bond, "Foreword," in *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Leslie G. Kelen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 15.

⁸ Kelen, "Preface and Acknowledgements," 9-10.

Although this definition applies to the personal experiences of the “activist” photographers in the book – of which only one, Maria Varela, is a woman – this fluidity of photographic purpose can be seen across the case studies of the many African American women in this thesis, as they occupied multiple symbolic spaces. For some women, photography was supplementary to other key roles in their lives: their role as a wife and mother within their husband’s portrait studios; their role in highlighting anthropological findings; and their job as a government employee or journalist. Yet the role of the organisational photographer is distinct because organisational photographers make the conscious choice to affiliate to and occupy space within an organisation and take images, not for their job, nor for their familial networks, but to be a part of the movement. Alongside photography, Elaine Tomlin and Doris Derby undertook multiple responsibilities that did not involve photographic work. Through occupying these organisational spaces, the women in this chapter offer a glimpse of the spaces on the front-line and behind-the-scenes of the Civil Rights Movement.

This multiplicity of roles speaks to the broader historiography of Black women’s activism in the long Civil Rights Movement. Historians note that women have frequently been overlooked in the histories of the long Civil Rights Movement; Lynne Olson highlighted in 2001 that the March on Washington in 1963, which is “remembered as the most glorious moment of the civil rights struggle,” denied women any agency on stage, as “none of them [...] was given a chance to speak.”⁹ Scholars such as Olson have contributed to

⁹ Lynne Olson, *Freedom’s Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970* (New York & London: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 13.

the revisionist inclusion of Black women in histories of the Civil Rights Movement, yet women are still rendered “invisible” in public memory.¹⁰ Women in the movement frequently occupied multiple spaces and roles yet were frequently denied the agency or platform to speak. This activism often existed in grassroots protest and organising and operated through networks with other African American women. Indeed, women “played a critical role in mobilizing grassroots activism even if they did not hold formal titles or positions within civil rights organization.”¹¹ Yet the frequently gendered labour which they undertook – such as teaching and volunteering – have been framed by historians such as Kristal Moore Clemons as acts of protest.¹² Increasingly demanding justice for acts of sexual violence among their local communities also galvanised activism among Black women.¹³ Figures such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, and Septima Clark have been reorientated as leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, as the role of women as leaders was long neglected in favour of notions of charismatic male leadership.¹⁴ Within this scholarship, the photography of Black women is a vital yet neglected facet of Black women’s activism, as the women in this thesis made these “invisible” women visible with their cameras.

Overwhelmingly, organisational photographers in the Civil Rights Movement were predominantly male. This echoes the trend throughout this

¹⁰ Martha Lott, “The Relationship Between the “Invisibility” of African American Women in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and Their Portrayal in Modern Film,” *Journal of Black Studies* 48, no. 4 (May 2017): 331.

¹¹ Sarah Bair, “The American Civil Rights Movement Reconsidered: Teaching the Role of Women,” *The Social Studies* 111, no. 4 (July 2020): 169.

¹² Kristal Moore Clemons, “I’ve Got to Do Something for My People: Black Women Teachers of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools,” *Western Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3, (Fall 2014): 141-154.

¹³ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*.

¹⁴ Olson, *Freedom’s Daughters*, 14.

thesis: that African American women were excluded from professional photographic spaces, and from male-dominated photographic networks. Despite photography's centrality to SNCC's mission, very few of its photographic spaces were attainable to women. Raiford states that "women staffers found themselves excluded from the formal SNCC Photo structure as photographers, though women almost exclusively carried out the detailed administrative work."¹⁵ She cites an example wherein two individuals – Tina Lawrence and Doug Harris, one female and one male – wanted to join the photo staff in late 1964, and only Harris was given the opportunity.¹⁶ Between SNCC and SCLC, the networks these women had access to were those with men prominently at the top.

Alongside these institutional factors, there were also practical considerations shaping the ability of African American women to become organisational photographers. In particular, African American women could have found themselves at increased risk of violent retaliation by white Southerners. As Raiford states, "Lyon, Charles Moore, Paul Good, and CBS cameraman Wendell Hoffman all recalled moments in which they specifically became targets because of their cameras, especially at night when flashes and lights exposed the operators in the act of exposure."¹⁷ The violence and personal risk that organisational photographers faced is recounted in *This Light of Ours* (2011) by several photographers, including Bob Adelman, as he recounts how he was arrested, and "we ended up in his office with him holding

¹⁵ Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 111.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 100.

a Saturday night special to my head, cocked and loaded.”¹⁸ Although some white photographers, such as Bob Adelman and Danny Lyons, were, on some occasions, able to utilise their status as white men to avoid suspicion and access spaces in which to take pictures of police and protests close up, they were still putting themselves at risk of violence, and the Black photographers of the movement had no such protection. The intimidation was also aimed at female photographers. Maria Varela recounts the terrifying incident in which she and her African American colleagues were followed one night:

I looked down at the speedometer. It hovered at 115. My 1957 Packard hunkered down and propelled the three of us down Mississippi interstate 55. Glancing to the side I saw the two-toned '67 Chevy with its white occupants trying to pass us [...] yet again. The barrel of a long gun poked up between the two men in the front seat.¹⁹

Although both Varela and Adelman’s experiences of violence are horrifying, for Black women their race and gender made them likely to face even more brutal retaliation due to existing patterns of racialised and sexualised violence. Sexual violence against Black women was rampant throughout the Civil Rights Movement, and women faced harassment, or even rape, for engaging with the movement.²⁰ As much at risk as most people who took part in the movement, and especially those who wielded a camera, for African American women the repercussions could be especially severe and violent. These dual factors – male-dominated networks in photographic practice, and increased risk of violence – partially explain the lack of African American organisational photographers in the Civil Rights Movement.

¹⁸ Herron, “Photographing Civil Rights,” 24.

¹⁹ Maria Varela, “If You Have Come to Help Us... Go Home!,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26, no. 1 (2008): 67.

²⁰ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, 1.

Maria Varela is arguably the most celebrated female organisational photographer in the movement. Her photography appears in several notable collections alongside *This Light of Ours*, including *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South* (2016) and *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History* (1996). Born in 1940, Varela joined SNCC and worked as a community organiser, educator and photographer.²¹ Many of Varela's images, such as *We Marched* (1966) record key events of the movement, such as the March Against Fear, in which African Americans occupied public space in order to protest segregation. Her identity as Latina caused some contention as SNCC transitioned towards Black Power in the later 1960s. Varela "envisioned those of us who were not black remaining in technical assistance roles where, to me, voting was not essential," and stated that "coming to terms with my Mexican American identity, I wasn't going to ask permission or seek approval from either black or white co-workers of what I knew I was inside."²² In contrast to earlier statements about violent retribution for photographers, Varela found that the camera could be a shield to protect protestors from violence: "as a SNCC photographer I also had the responsibility to attend marches on the theory that the presence of cameras might protect marchers."²³ As explored above, this ideal did not always work in practice, and would have been exceedingly dangerous for an African American woman. Raiford also uncovered evidence that many other women developed their photographs in SNCC's darkroom, including Mary King, Emmie Shrader, Joyce Barrett, and

²¹ Maria Varela, interview by David P. Cline, 29 June 2016, *Library of Congress*, accessed 6 September 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655434/>.

²² Maria Varela, "Time to Get Ready," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert et al (Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 568.

²³ Varela, "If You Have Come," 77.

Dorothy Teal.²⁴ Yet as women were marginalised in organisational photography, two African American women were able to cultivate space as photographers: Doris Derby and Elaine Tomlin.

Before interrogating the work of Doris Derby and Elaine Tomlin in depth, it is worth considering the contextual spaces within which they both operated. In particular, although these women worked for different organisations, both of these women's experiences advocate for the idea of a "long" Civil Rights Movement. Doris Derby was engaged in activism in New York before travelling to and remaining in the South in 1963, where she stayed until 1972. Derby herself critiques the idea of a short Civil Rights Movement, stating:

Some people say well civil rights movement was 1960 – 1964 or 1963. Some people say well SNCC or SCLC withdrew at a certain time – that was the end. No. The people that lived there continued on trying to finish what was started, or complete it, or keep it going, give it a good foundation. And so that's why I stayed beyond when most people left that came from somewhere else, and even some people who lived there left. But I stayed and I worked in several programmes.²⁵

Derby's activism challenges notions that persist in public memory that the Civil Rights Movement ended in 1968 with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., as her activism continued into the following decade. Elaine Tomlin's activism also challenges narrow definitions of the Civil Rights Movement. Tomlin worked within SCLC for decades following the 1960s, photographing such events as the Save Our Children Pilgrimage in 1981 and the Winn Dixie Boycott of the 1980s. This activism can be specifically understood as part of the long Civil Rights Movement due to its focus on

²⁴ Ibid., 111.

²⁵ Doris Derby, *Interview with the author*.

claiming, and reclaiming, physical and symbolic space. By closely examining the lives and works of these women, a new perspective on the Civil Rights Movement is revealed: one that challenges traditional notions of protest in new “spaces of agency” and advocates for the role of women within the Civil Rights Movement as “agents of change.”

“This is the moment I had been waiting for all my life”: Doris Derby, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Southern Media

Doris Derby, who has previously been discussed in this thesis through an anthropological framework, was an organisational photographer who cultivated various “spaces of agency” throughout her career. As a photographer, Derby claimed physical space in various sites of activism and negotiated networks as a Black woman. Symbolically, as a photographer Derby challenged the white, male dominated canon of Civil Rights Movement photography. The photographs themselves occupied physical space, as they were utilised in publicity material for organisations such as Co-Ops, and in contemporary exhibitions. Furthermore, within the photographs we see African Americans, and most frequently women, occupying and claiming space through grassroots activism, cementing their status as “agents of change.” Frequently, these “spaces of agency” were generated through everyday acts of resistance, including co-operatives and educational work.

In terms of space occupied by her photography, Derby is one of only a few women organisational photographers who has received wide recognition

for her photography and activism within the Civil rights movement. Derby has received increasing renown over the past few years, resulting in several international exhibitions featuring her work, including most recently *We Will Walk – Art and Resistance in the American South*, Turner Contemporary in Margate, UK (February 2020 – September 2020), and “*I Am A Man*”: *Photographs and Struggles for Civil Rights in the South of the United States, 1960-1970*, Paillon Populaire, France (October 2018 – January 2019). In addition, Derby’s experiences have been included in such books as *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearer, 1941-1965* (1993), and *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (2010), meaning Derby has achieved renown as an activist and a photographer. Yet Derby’s work has not received the recognition it deserves, particularly in academic settings. Derby’s photography is a powerful archive which depicts alternative “spaces of agency” to the existing canon of the long Civil Rights Movement’s photography by emphasising the role of women as activists, and the everyday activism that took place within the movement.

Although Derby’s biography was introduced in Chapter Two, where her work was discussed through the lens of anthropology, exploring Derby’s past further reveals that she affiliated with multiple civil rights organisations throughout her life. When Derby turned 16, she joined the Youth Chapter of the NAACP. During the late 1950s, Derby studied at the mostly white Hunter College where she joined the Christian Human Relations Club, the Northern Student Movement, and the Students for Democratic Action.²⁶ Because of her

²⁶ Doris A. Derby, “Sometimes in the Ground Troops, Sometimes in the Leadership,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert et al (Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 439.

student teaching requirements and focus on activism, Derby took an extra semester on her degree, and graduated in January 1962. She soon began teaching third grade in Yonkers, New York. However, she did not remain in New York for long. Peggy Dammond, who was a fellow Hunter College activist, was arrested in Albany, Georgia, and Derby decided to visit her en route to planned anthropological research in Mexico. As discussed in Chapter Two, Derby's skills were quickly recognised, and she was recruited into the movement. Derby stayed all summer and was involved in countless activities, including single-handedly integrating an Episcopal church. At the end of the summer, Derby resumed her teaching in New York. Although she raised awareness of the Albany Freedom Movement – Derby delivered a powerful speech at the National Committee for Rural Schools Conference in 1962 – Bob Moses was keen to recruit Derby to work on education programmes in the South. Although Derby was initially hesitant, she changed her mind after viewing the harrowing imagery of the Birmingham Campaign, stating that “the police get out the fire hoses and the police dogs and the billy clubs and all that, and it’s televised. And I say oh my god this is ridiculous!”²⁷ After attending the March on Washington in 1963, Derby moved to Jackson, Mississippi.

During her time in the South, Derby was engaged in a diverse range of activities with a number of organisations. To provide a full list of Derby's achievements would be an extensive endeavour, yet some of her more notable and relevant achievements can be summarised here. Firstly, Derby joined SNCC as a field-secretary, working to develop adult literacy programmes, preparing for Freedom Summer and working with the Mississippi Freedom

²⁷ Derby, *Interview with the author*.

Democratic Party. Secondly, Derby co-founded the Free Southern Theatre with John O'Neal and Gilbert Moses in 1963. Thirdly, from June 1965, Derby worked with the Head Start programme to provide education opportunities for local communities. Fourth, Derby worked with the Poor People's Corporation and its many factions, including: "Liberty House Handcrafts and Marketing Cooperative; Education and Training for Cooperatives; and Southern Media Inc."²⁸ Southern Media is especially noteworthy, as when Derby joined in 1966, this marked the start of her earnestly documenting the movement through her photography. Southern Media intended to both document the realities of the Civil Rights Movement and perform a service to local communities by producing visual material, such as photography, posters, and film-strips when requested. Derby returned to education in 1972, marking the end of her period of work in the South.

By the 1970s, following the rise of the Black Power Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement, the traditional Civil Rights Movement philosophies of non-violent integration were losing steam, yet as will be seen in consideration of Tomlin's work, the long Civil Rights Movement's preoccupation with space continued into the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, Derby pursued a career in higher education, getting her MA and PhD in cultural anthropology at the University of Illinois, and specialising in African and African American Studies. Derby worked as an academic at multiple institutions, including Georgia State University, and continued both her activism and advocacy for African American rights as the Founding Director of the Office of African-American Student Services and Programs. Derby's

²⁸ Derby, "Sometimes In the Ground Troops," 444.

biography, therefore, demonstrates the sheer range of activities that Derby's activism incorporated, and the number of spaces which she occupied. This resonates with the activism of many other women's lives as activists in the movement, as they adopted various forms of activism in a multiplicity of roles, on account of the numerous prejudices they faced on account of their race, gender, and class.²⁹ This multi-faceted and fluid approach to activism is also visible in Derby's photography. Derby's imagery defies simple analysis, as it incorporates a wide range of subjects, activities, and styles. Derby commented:

My history is long, and my life had a lot of paths always, so not just one path going one way. I always had a lot of streams coming together, which would be art, activism, scholarship and community. And I was gifted to have that kind of influences and ability to see the importance of them all coming together. A lot of times people like to just segment one aspect and that's it, but it's always been in my mind that it reveals the interconnectedness of our life and culture and history.³⁰

To adopt a singular analysis of Derby's photography, therefore, is to miss its inherent "interconnectedness."

As Derby's career rejects easy categorisation, so too does her photography. However, there are some factors that are apparent in Derby's photography that are relevant to this thesis and dictate her relationship to space within her work: Derby's focus on community activism, and Derby's emphasis on womanism. Although within the context of Derby's photography these terms are largely symbiotic, it is important to consider Derby's definition of womanism before interrogating her photography. Although the term womanism has been developed by many Black intellectuals, Derby cites Alice

²⁹ Premilla Nadasen, "Black Power, Gender, and Transformational Politics," *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 1, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015): 237.

³⁰ Derby, *Interview with the author*.

Walker's definition as the one that resonates with her beliefs, stating that: "I believe my work with the movement and indeed my life's journey fall into the womanist tradition as defined by Alice Walker, whom I knew and photographed when we were both doing civil rights work in Jackson."³¹ In her 1983 text *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker lyrically defines a womanist as "a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility [...] and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female."³² Derby defines her womanist politics as "someone who is responsible, in charge, and serious,"³³ and states that, "it was a black woman working alongside of and in conjunction with her family and her community to develop the community, to bring our people forward."³⁴

Importantly, Derby's definition of womanism is not one that excludes men, as she notes that, "it's not to say, 'Well, the women need to be doing this, and forget about the men. We're going to do it,' and so on. No, it's a group thing. It's a holistic approach, I think."³⁵ Derby's definition of womanism, therefore, is one rooted in women's empowerment, community development and racial pride. Whilst Derby cultivates and claims space for women in her work, she does not exclude men, who are also featured in this chapter. It is these ideas that resonate within the photography of Doris Derby, and

³¹ Derby, "Sometimes in the Ground Troops," 444.

³² Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Women's Press, 1984), xii.

³³ Derby, "Sometimes in the Ground Troops," 444-445.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 445.

³⁵ Doris Derby, *Civil Rights History Collection*, 44.

simultaneously challenge the male-dominated canon of the movement whilst illuminating forms of everyday activism. Derby spoke of this notion in a recent interview:

Outsiders often see those who are out there protesting, meeting with officials, or scenes from a tragedy—which all are very important. But not everybody was involved outwardly in that part. My focus was to document black people who were engaged in the struggle for equality and justice for all. To depict the life-giving force of the black community keeping on. Even though they face poverty and injustice, they're surviving, they're living.³⁶

Through Doris Derby's photography, and the "spaces of agency" she cultivates, we can see the everyday activism which shaped the lives of countless African Americans in the South.

³⁶ Abigail Bobrow, "Doris Derby: Activist, photographer, artist, professor," *Storied.*, 19 December 2019, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://storied.illinois.edu/doris-derby/>.



Figure 66. Doris Derby, *L. C. Dorsey, Civil Rights Worker from Shelby, Mississippi, at the Vegetable Cooperative*, 1968.
Source: Cox, *Road to Freedom*, 104.

A fitting first image to analyse is a photograph which typifies many of Doris Derby's aesthetic and activist choices when portraying "spaces of agency" (Fig. 66). The image shows two women sat down at a vegetable collective, alongside the standing figure of L.C. Dorsey, and is one of the most widely exhibited of Derby's work. The image appears in multiple exhibitions, including *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle* (2013), *We Will Walk – Art and Resistance in the American South* exhibition at Turner Contemporary in Margate, UK (February 2020 – September 2020), and *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle* (2013). The curator of the latter exhibition, Martin A. Berger, profiled this photograph, stating that:

From both narrative and visual standpoints, this is not a dramatic photograph. It does not illustrate a spectacular scene of confrontation or of lofty oration; instead, it shows Dorsey and two seated women

staffing a farm cooperative table, surrounded by baskets of produce. But this ordinary photograph, documenting the distribution of vegetables, points to an important aspect of black empowerment in the later 1960s. Given a shoestring budget, Dorsey and her coworkers put together an effective cooperative that employed hundreds of people, provided high-quality produce to thousands more, and served as a model of black self-sufficiency in a region where the opportunities for blacks were severely limited.³⁷

Berger makes several intriguing points here, both about the aesthetics of the image, and what its content tells us about the history of the Civil Rights Movement. For one, this image emphasises the role of cooperatives to the movement. Derby was a passionate advocate for the potential of farming cooperatives, even after she left the South in 1972. Derby wrote several studies on the topic, including “The Needs of Handicraft Cooperatives: A Field Study” (1974) and “Co-Operatives Have Something to Offer to Low Income and Impoverished Persons” (1975) as part of her higher education.³⁸ In her efforts to publicise the importance of cooperatives, Derby promoted them during a radio interview as “a unity thing where people are working not only for themselves but for the race.”³⁹ Yet, as Berger notes, vegetable cooperatives were not spaces of headline-grabbing, dynamic activism. Instead, vegetable cooperatives represented the spaces of everyday activism that people like Dorsey undertook.

³⁷ Berger, *Freedom Now!*, 112.

³⁸ Doris Derby, “Writings – Research / Course Papers on Liberty House Co-Ops (1968-1974),” Doris Adelaide Derby Papers, 1960-1992, Box 4, Folder 7, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁹ Jimmy the Early Bird interviewing Doris Derby (Side A only), Doris Adelaide Derby Papers, 1960-1992, AV1, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Vegetable cooperatives such as this one did have a positive impact on their communities. As a former sharecropper, Dorsey understood the importance of fair pay for work. She founded the North Bolivar Country Farm Cooperative, which “encourage[d] subsistence farming and vocational training for women who had been dismissed from their jobs (mostly as maids and housekeepers in white homes) because they registered to vote.”⁴⁰ The cooperative substantially improved the quality of life for those in her community: it provided work for five hundred impoverished families, resulted in the harvesting of more than a million pounds of vegetables in its first six months, and was featured in *Life* magazine for “more vegetables in its first year than the previous annual output of the entire Mississippi Delta region.”⁴¹ By taking this photograph, Derby created a space within the photograph to document these women, and the women themselves occupied the frame within the cooperative space they created. Derby utilised the grassroots, community-orientated networks she encountered, which were largely made up of women, to frame her imagery, rather than male-dominated photographic and activist networks. Rather than capturing images of hierarchical leadership, Derby portrayed women-centric networks of interconnected communal activity, making the communal networks function as artistic networks.

Derby constructed the space in this photograph to empower the individuals within her image. The tone in this image is observational, as the photographer stands at a distance from her subjects. The women do not acknowledge Derby, and instead are engrossed in their work. Dorsey is rifling

⁴⁰ Cox, *Road to Freedom*, 40.

⁴¹ Berger, *Freedom Now!*, 112.

through paper, and one of the unnamed women holds a pencil in her hand. None of the women's eyes meet the camera. This photograph demonstrates a recurring motif in Derby's photography: the disregard of the camera implying her subjects' dignity and dedication to the task at hand. The viewer is denied the gaze of the subject, as the women in the photograph privilege their task over any recognition of the camera. The frame is full, yet not cluttered, and we see multiple displays of vegetables, perhaps green beans, that take up space between the viewer and the subjects. This serves to further distance the viewer from the action. The composition of the image also speaks to the communal aspect of civil rights work: the women are close to each other, limbs overlapping and faces obscured, thus creating a sense that the three women are working as a team of one. Furthermore, the three women speak to Derby's emphasis on the activism of women in the community, as defined by Derby's womanist beliefs. In this way, Derby's photography portrays the spaces of everyday activism that improved the everyday living conditions of African Americans.



Figure 67. Doris Derby, *Children protest outside the YMCA, Jackson, Mississippi*, ca. 1960s.
Source: "Through the lens of civil rights photographer Doris Derby – in pictures,"
The Guardian, 1 February 2020, accessed 7 September 2020,
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2020/feb/01/civil-rights-photographer-doris-derby-we-will-walk-turner-contemporary>.

This is not to say that Derby did not photograph traditional protests, nor that she only took photographs of small-scale, community-based activities. Derby photographed marches, leaders, and countless other activists during her years in the movement as activists battled to desegregate space. Furthermore, Derby did not only photograph women; there are multiple occasions where men and children feature prominently in her photography. One image that fits a traditional mode of protest photography is her image of children protesting outside of the YMCA (Fig. 70). Derby has said of this photograph:

This is about segregation of the different facilities. The black YMCA in Jackson had no swimming pool, and these children were really mad about that, so they took it into their own hands to protest it. You found a lot of black kids, especially in the cities, couldn't go swimming. And many black children died because they didn't know how to swim.⁴²

⁴² "Through the lens of civil rights photographer Doris Derby."

With Derby's comments, the simple act of protesting a segregated pool becomes a matter of life and death. The power of this protest is further emphasised by Derby's framing, as the children walk in regimented lines, one after the other. Derby utilised space in the photograph to include the straight-lined pavement in the image, emphasising the line the boys have formed. The boy who is the focal point at the centre of the image is a dynamic figure, as he opens his mouth, seemingly speaking or chanting as part of the protest. The dynamism of the boys in the protest is contrasted with the figure of the adult man who is turned away from the protest to the left of the frame, which symbolically indicates that the children are the ones in charge. In so doing, Derby highlighted the role of children in the movement as orchestrators of their own resistance and protest. There are very few images of the Civil Rights Movement that show children leading protests, yet in reality "children were not only present during the Civil Rights Movement but were active leaders."⁴³ Derby's photograph offers a convention-breaking perspective on the movement. In this way, the children in Derby's photograph become "agents of change" as they advocate for the physical desegregation of public space.

⁴³ Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, "Activism," *Double Exposure: Picturing Children* (D Giles Ltd, 2016), 70.



Figure 68. Doris Derby, *Men working on the Wall of Truth Mural*, Chicago, IL, 1969.
Source: Mark Speltz, *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016), 112.

A further way in which Derby challenged preconceived notions about the Civil Rights Movement is through her geographic scope. Although her images are largely focussed on the American South, as that is where much of her work took place, Derby also illuminated the activism of the North with her camera. This can be seen in her photograph of the men painting the Wall of Truth Mural (Fig. 68). This is another one of Derby's images that explores a dynamic composition, which allows us to consider the subjects in relation to the space which they occupy. As the group is involved in their task, they take up many levels within the image. There are figures below, a figure rising on a ladder, and a figure looking down from a window. This gives the image a sense of movement and drive, focussing on the community action being undertaken across the scene. This community activism is exacerbated by the nature of the mural, which was part of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago,

specifically Bill Walker's "Chicago Walls." According to *Black View*, Walker, "says he tried to show scenes of Black folks involved in positive activity and unity."⁴⁴ To create art which is both freely available and literally painted on to the city streets emphasises the importance of local communities to this art form, and the importance of claiming accessible, artistic, urban space in the long Civil Rights Movement. The painting of murals involved Black artists physically and symbolically reclaiming space on the streets for their art, as well as for Black culture and expressions of identity. The figures form a kind of circle around the sign for "The Wall of Truth," inviting the viewer to return their gaze to the central words. As with previous images, the photograph is taken from a distance, with cars separating Derby from the group, but nevertheless a figure at the bottom of the image meets the camera's gaze, indicating Derby's involvement. This photograph, therefore, demonstrates the power of community organising and art, outside of the context of the South, and the significance of urban space. However, this image also demonstrates that Derby's womanist ideology did not lead her to exclude men from her work; far from it, they were an integral part of her experience in the Civil Rights Movement.

⁴⁴ Freida Jones, "Artists Hold Sixteenth Convention: A NEW ERA OF BLACK ART," *Black View* 2, no. 7 (1974): 15.



Figure 69. Doris Derby, *Fannie Lou Hamer*, date unknown.
Source: "The Photographs of Dr Doris Derby, 1963-1972," *Dashboard*, accessed 6 September 2020, <http://www.dashboard.us/women-change-agents>.

Nevertheless, although Doris Derby did photograph men, it is clear that her primary goal was to cultivate space to capture the grassroots experiences of women in the movement. Her images show women occupying space as they work in collectives, sit in meetings, and give speeches. These women were active "agents of change," and Derby portrayed them as empowered, respectable, and dynamic contributors to the Civil Rights Movement. Although Derby's definition of womanism is one that is inclusive of men, Derby's work celebrates the lives, works, and contributions of hundreds of women across the full spectrum of the Civil Rights Movement. Derby's image of Fannie Lou Hamer is indicative of her definition of womanism as tied to assuming leadership (or being "in charge") and an "agent of change." Fannie Lou Hamer was an "acclaimed freedom fighter," who famously stated that "a black woman's body was never hers alone," bravely calling out the sexualised

beatings she suffered in prison.⁴⁵ Hamer's grassroots activism and leadership of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, as well as the use of her gender in those roles, has led to scholars calling her a key leader "at the heart of the movement."⁴⁶ In Derby's image of Hamer (Fig. 69), this is the version of Hamer that is presented to the viewer, as Derby commemorates and celebrates Hamer. In this image, Hamer occupies prominent public space as a Black woman. Hamer stands to the right of the image, at a podium with several microphones, positioned closer to the viewer than the figures in the background. A giant sign, bearing the words "MISSISSIPPI DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONVENTION" is visible in the background, occupying the negative space to the left of Hamer. Below the sign sit three men, two of whom are white, and all of whom are looking at Hamer. The three seated men are in sharp contrast to Hamer, as they sit cross-legged and cross-armed, with their gaze focussed on her. Hamer is speaking dramatically, teeth gritted as she talks, with her arm raised pointing out to the audience. Compared to the passivity of the men, coupled with their rapt attention, this gives her famously dynamic speaking style even more power.⁴⁷ In addition, the fact that the words have been somewhat cropped to fit Hamer properly into the frame, indicates that Derby chose to prioritise her over both the sign and the African American man in the bottom left of the frame. Therefore, Derby captured Hamer as an engaging, dynamic speaker who is the most important figure in this image.

⁴⁵ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, xix.

⁴⁶ Vincent Harding, Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," in *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans*, eds. Robin D.G. Kelly and Earl Lewis (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 504.

⁴⁷ Janice D. Hamlet, "Fannie Lou Hamer: The Unquenchable Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (May 1996): 560.

It is unclear whether this image was taken during the iconic convention where Hamer called out the Democratic party and recounted her torturous beating in prison, but the vibrancy of her speech is apparent through the image. In this image, Derby cultivated space for the powerful oratory of a woman who called out sexual abuse by asking “Is this America? The land of the free and the home of the brave?” as she claims space on a stage surrounded by white men.⁴⁸ In so doing, Derby painted Hamer as a womanist figure, and challenged the male-dominated space of Civil Rights Movement photography. Whilst Derby photographed largely unrecognised grassroots activists, she did not ignore the pivotal role of women leaders of the movement. On the contrary, alongside Hamer, Derby also photographed activists and key figures as Alice Walker.⁴⁹ By taking pictures of the female leaders of the movement, Derby sought to assert their place in history, and platform their role as “agents of change.”

⁴⁸ Harding, Kelley and Lewis, “We Changed the World,” 516.

⁴⁹ Walker, from whom Derby drew her definition of womanism, worked alongside Derby in Jackson, and Derby went on to take her photograph. One of the images that Derby took of Walker became the cover of Rudolph Byrd’s book *The World Has Changed: Conversations with Alice Walker* (2010). Derby, “Sometimes In the Ground Troops,” 444.



Figure 70. Doris Derby, *June Johnson, Mississippi*, 1968.
Source: Gabbie Watts, "Airport Hosts Doris Derby's Photos of Women In Civil Rights," *WABE*, 7 February 2017, accessed 31 August 2020, <https://www.wabe.org/airport-hosts-doris-derbys-photos-women-civil-rights/>.

Another powerful image that illustrates Derby's desire to photograph African American women activists as "agents of change" is the photograph of June Johnson (Fig. 70). Johnson was another grassroots activist, who was only fourteen years old when she first joined the Civil Rights Movement in 1962. She was a keen organiser of voter drives, but experienced sexualised violence alongside Fannie Lou Hamer in 1963. Johnson's traumatic experience is recounted in Danielle L. McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance* (2011):

Everyone in the jail must have heard Johnson's screams and the thumps of fists and boots hitting flesh as policemen yelled, "We're going to teach you how to say 'yes, sir' to a Mississippi white man." According to Hamer, the officers "tore off most of her clothes" and then forced her to strip off as they watched. Johnson's co-workers gasped when they saw

her naked, bloody body and “bulging” eye as she stumbled back to her cell.⁵⁰

Although McGuire does valuable work drawing attention to the sexual abuse that women faced within the movement, she fails to acknowledge some of the women outside of the violence inflicted on them, which risks reducing them to victims with no agency within the movement. In particular, the above passage is the only reference to Johnson in the entire text, denying her any role that is not the subject of sexualised violence. Yet there was far more to Johnson’s experience within the movement than this one horrifying incident.

Laurence Guyot, former chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, states that despite the trauma of the event, “June Johnson remained active in voter registration [...] June, throughout her political career, was never bought and was never bossed. June was a free spirit who believed in the empowerment of people.”⁵¹ It is this version of Johnson that Derby presented in this photograph; Johnson exudes confidence and defiance. Johnson’s pose is powerful and self-assured: she stands with her hands on her waist, facing the camera directly, her knee cocked. Johnson does not smile in this image – her expression is serious, proud, and assured. Derby portrayed to us not a victim, but an empowered woman and activist. Given the empowered stance of Johnson in this image, it is no coincidence that this photograph became the main publicity image of the *Women, Agents of Change Exhibition*

⁵⁰ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, 102.

⁵¹ Patricia Sullivan, “Civil Rights Activist June Johnson,” *Washington Post*, 18 April 2007, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/17/AR2007041701988.html>.

that took place at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in 2017.⁵² In this image, Derby challenged the narrative of Johnson's victimisation, and painted her as a womanist figure confidently occupying space, "who is responsible, in charge, and serious." Rather than breaking Johnson down, her experience in prison served to galvanise her activism, as she stated that, "I made a commitment to myself from that day; I didn't care what happened to me, I was going to be free or continue to be a part of a struggle to fight for the freedom of people of this country."⁵³

Sexism was something that Derby also experienced, as Clarissa Myrick-Harris indicated that Doris Derby "clashed" with the co-founders of the Free South Theatre as O'Neal admitted that he and Moses expected Derby "to do the filing, the typing – because she's a woman."⁵⁴ However, Derby refused to let gendered oppression affect her activities and the spaces that she had access to. Derby's definition of womanism did not mean excluding men – it meant advocating for the whole community.⁵⁵ Derby made her gender a key part of her activism, rather than a limitation to be overcome. A fitting metaphor is that of Derby's dress. In 2017, upon seeing the yellow and black dress which Derby made when she first moved to the South, she stated: "that dress was specifically made for me as a photographer. I designed it and made two pockets at the top so I could put my camera lens and my film in it; that's

⁵² "Dr. Doris Derby's Dashboard Exhibition at Hartsfield Jackson," *Atlanta Celebrates Photography*, accessed 6 September 2020, <http://acpinfo.org/blog/2017/02/07/dr-doris-derbys-dashboard-exhibition-at-hartsfield-jackson/>.

⁵³ Derby, *Civil Rights History Collection*.

⁵⁴ Clarissa Myrick-Harris, "Behind the Scenes: Doris Derby, Denise Nicholas and the Free Southern Theatre," in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941 – 1965*, eds. Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1990), 219-233.

⁵⁵ Derby, *Civil Rights History Collection*.

why there's some little pockets at the top.”⁵⁶ Derby engaged in spatio-symbolic reclamation through her photography and through activism. Where her dress did not possess the space to hold her camera before, she made space. Derby’s gender was not a restriction – it allowed her a perspective on the movement which diverges from most of the photographic canon of the Civil Rights Movement.



Figure 71. Doris Derby, *A woman registers to vote, Mississippi*, ca. 1960s.
Source: “Through the lens of civil rights photographer Doris Derby.”

Yet Doris Derby’s definition of womanism is not reserved for people who have identified themselves as activists; those who seek to desegregate space in other ways are also identified as “agents of change.” One of the most powerful images in the 2020 *We Will Walk Exhibition* was an image of an

⁵⁶ Arielle Dreher, “Civil Rights Photographer Doris Derby Unveils Work at JSU Tonight,” *Jackson Free Press*, 28 September 2017, accessed 30 August 2020, <https://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2017/sep/28/civil-rights-photographer-doris-derby-unveils-work/>.

African American woman walking to register to vote (Fig. 71). The photograph shows an elderly African American woman walking away from the camera, her face hidden by the angle, as she treads the dirt path. The age of the woman emphasises the intergenerationality of the movement. At the centre of the frame, her hand grips a walking stick, with her wedding ring clearly visible on her finger. Yet despite these details, the power of this photograph comes from the woman's position and the photograph's composition. The framing means the woman covers the length of the photograph, to the extent that her feet and top of her head are cropped off. This gives her a sense of power and presence in the photograph. This is channelled into a sense of determination as she walks to the empty road to the right of the image. An additional dynamism is afforded by the position of a wooden stake in the ground in the background; as the woman walks to the right, slightly leaning forward, the stake in the ground leans in the opposite direction – to the left. The line of the woman and the stake are opposed to each other, creating a sense of resistance in the image, that the older woman is walking on despite the obstacles in her path.

In addition, this photograph gains more profundity by the anonymity of the woman at its centre. The image counters racist stereotypes of Black women; the woman wears an apron, as a stereotypical mammy is commonly pictured as doing, yet this woman is an active “agent of change” who, despite the apron's domestic implications, is openly politicised in going to cast a vote. This woman occupies physical space in the photograph, and symbolic space for African Americans in the ballot box.⁵⁷ Derby remarked that “This was a candid picture. I don't remember her name, but she was walking to register to

⁵⁷ Trodd, “A Negative Utopia,” 25.

vote. I think she was proud that she was going to be counted. There were many elderly people who felt: ‘This is the moment I had been waiting for all my life.’”⁵⁸ The lack of identity of the subject, and that her face is hidden from the viewer, allows her to become a symbolic figure. She, like many people of her generation, are changing their lives and the future of a nation by doing something as seemingly simple as walking down a dirt track to register to vote. The fact that this woman could be anyone means that she could be everyone – she is a symbol, walking towards progress in a symbolic space. The space of everyday activism that Derby captured in this image is shaped by moments both big and small, profound and seemingly non-political.

In 2019, Doris Derby self-published a text entitled *Poetagraphy: Artistic Reflections of a Mississippi Lifeline in Words and Images: 1963 – 1972*, which exemplifies Derby’s techniques for spatio-symbolic reclamation through highlighting everyday activism, whilst signifying the violent backlash the movement faced. This text combines Derby’s poetry and photography into one volume, both of which were developed or written during her time in the South. If few people were aware that Derby took pictures, even less were aware that she wrote poetry.⁵⁹ The text incorporates a range of poetic styles, from free verse to haiku. However, it possesses an even wider range of photographic styles – from landscapes to architecture, still life, group shots, candid snapshots, and documentary-style photographs of protests. This shows Derby’s experiences in the South as extremely varied, encompassing a wide range of symbolic and physical “spaces of agency.” Sometimes the text reflects

⁵⁸ “Through the lens of Civil Rights photographer Doris Derby.”

⁵⁹ In her interview with the author, Doris Derby stated that “A lot of people didn’t know I did poetry.” Derby, *Interview with the Author*.

joyously on the triumph of the movement, at other times it laments the struggle and sacrifices that have been made. Images of women, men and children are present in the text. This is also one of the few sources I have come across which features an image solely of white people, in the form of a photograph of white police officers, accompanied by the poem “Revelation.” At all times, however, Derby curates the meaning of her photographs through the medium of her own poetry. The combination of poetry and photography is reminiscent of *Sweet Flypaper of Life* (1955) by poet Langston Hughes and photographer Roy DeCarava, which pairs the two mediums to provide a glimpse of life in Harlem. Whilst this text has been praised by figures such as Arnold Rampersad, who feels the text “match[es] the images almost perfectly,” Derby’s text has the added singularity of providing a dual photographic and poetic perspective on a situation where the photographer and the poet are one and the same.⁶⁰

Within the text, Derby creates space to represent those in her community. Akin to her multidisciplinary activism, Derby’s multidisciplinary text presents alternative modes of activism and protest, as images of children playing and women washing clothes are given an increased sense of profundity through the accompanying text. As one of many potential examples, the poem “Earth Child” situates the titular child’s “beautiful / Blackness” alongside a photograph of a young African American boy crouching in a field.⁶¹ In this way, everyday moments of the African American experience are presented as

⁶⁰ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol. 2, 1941-1967: I Dream a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 244.

⁶¹ Doris Derby, *Poetagraphy: Artistic Reflections of a Mississippi Lifeline in Words and Images: 1963 – 1972* (Self-published by Dr Doris Derby, 2019), 10.

art, which can be additionally articulated through poetry, and given space in this artistic volume. As such, these photographs can be understood as sites of Black pride, imbuing the most everyday moments with articulations of beauty. Yet Derby also presents images in line with more recognisable modes of activism.



Figure 72. Doris Derby, *Untitled*, date unknown.
Source: Doris Derby, *Poetagraphy: Artistic Reflections of a Mississippi Lifeline in Words and Images: 1963 – 1972* (Self-published by Dr Doris Derby, 2019), 40.

One section that is of particular relevance is the double-page spread accompanying the poem *Signs of Spring*, alongside two photographs, wherein Derby cultivates space on the page to have maximum impact on the viewer. The first is the previously discussed image of the children protesting the segregated pool at the YMCA, although the lack of captions in the collection denies a casual viewer this knowledge.⁶² In the second, a man bends to look at a concrete block along the side of the road where someone has written “KKK,”

⁶² Derby, *Interview with the Author*.

his hands on either side of the block (Fig. 72). The photograph functions as an item of protest, recording the graffiti and the African American man's inspection of it. The poem alongside these two images speaks to the violence and danger which is implied in the images, with its talk of: "screams nighttime, daytime, all the time, growing louder" and "as die-hard racists normally bring forth the blood / Of black and brown children, / with all their might."⁶³ Yet even Derby's photography, which engages with more recognisable scenes of protest, counters the dominant photographic canon of the movement, as she chooses to imply violence rather than portray it.⁶⁴ The figures in the photographs are active, moving dynamically to engage in their activities, yet are framed both outside of victimhood and outside of their relationships to or conflicts with white people. Within the space that the subjects occupy, they are always the ones with agency, and Derby presents them as such. Derby's framing paints the subjects of her photography as heroic; even though they are risking violence, as asserted by the text, they are not victimised or objectified in her lens by being subjected to it. In this way, Derby skilfully blends poetry and photography to make violence in the Civil Rights Movement both implicit and explicit simultaneously, both present and absent in this space. Instead of portraying traumatising violence, Derby's visions of protest cultivate dynamic, defiant, and Black-led "spaces of agency."

⁶³ Derby, *Poetagraphy*, 40-41.

⁶⁴ In the introduction I posited that an overreliance on violent imagery risks deprioritising non-violent spaces, and assigning agency and power within images to violent whites. Furthermore, in recent decades there have also been voyeuristic concerns surrounding images that focus on violence inflicted on Black bodies. See: Jessie J. Ohl & Jennifer E. Potter, "United We Lynch: Post-Racism and the (Re)Membering of Racial Violence in Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America," *Southern Communication Journal* 78, no. 3 (June 2013): 185-201.

This is not to assert that Derby excluded violence from her images because it was not a part of her experience. Derby's assertion that she was in a "war zone" was well-founded, as the spaces she operated in and sought to desegregate were often violently contested. Derby spoke out about the violence faced by members of SNCC as early as 1962, where she spoke at the National Committee for Rural Schools Conference in New York, and detailed the "historically obsessive violence and intimidation" that both rural African Americans and SNCC members seeking to improve communities faced.⁶⁵ In a 2020 interview, Derby stated that "I had threats around me, I had situations," and on one occasion when she stopped at a gas station, she was threatened: "a guy came over to me and he put his hand on his waist and he had a gun there. And he told me which bathroom I'd better use."⁶⁶ Derby also faced arson attacks on the Head Start centre in Durany, Mississippi.⁶⁷ Indeed, staff members kept rifles on-site in case of an attack from the white population. Violence was a constant threat for activists in the South during the Civil Rights Movement, and one that Doris Derby was acutely aware of. Yet Derby refused to dwell on the violence she faced, stating in a 1997 interview: "That the negative that happened, I don't think about those, you know, really, that much. It's all the positive things. When I look back on what, how – we changed the world basically."⁶⁸ Subsequently, Derby refers to violence only indirectly in

⁶⁵ "National Committee for Rural Schools Conference, New York City, 1962," Sound recording, Sc Audio C-636, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁶⁶ Tim Lewis, "Civil Rights era photographer Doris Derby: 'If people were being so brave, it was the least I could do,'" *The Guardian*, 1 February 2020, accessed 31 August 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/feb/01/doris-derby-photographs-black-lives-mississippi-delta-civil-rights-era>.

⁶⁷ Derby, "Sometimes In the Ground Troops," 443.

⁶⁸ Doris Derby, interview with George King and Worth Long, "Interview Transcript," 18, Doris Adelaide Derby papers, 1960-1992, Box 7, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

her imagery, focussing instead on the everyday acts of heroism that African Americans engaged in. In her photographs, Derby portrayed people as active “agents of change,” granting agency to the activists and not the aggressors. The Civil Rights Movement was a complicated struggle that raised many conflicting emotions in those who participated, as Derby spoke of the community: “The work, commitment, joys, songs, battles, strategizing, gains, losses, and the horrors of violence and intimidation glued us together, kept the circle growing bigger.”⁶⁹ Whilst there is a wide range of imagery that portrays the horrors of violence and intimidation, Derby’s photography offers a nuanced perspective that encapsulates multiple perspectives on the struggle – one that was not always rooted in violence, nor always rooted in joy, yet always rooted in the activism of everyday people asserting their right to exist in public space.

By studying Derby’s organisational photography, the multiple “spaces of agency” which Derby cultivated and claimed in her work become apparent. As a photographer, Derby took photographs of the communities in which she immersed herself, utilising professional, organisational networks in order to do so. Derby also claimed symbolic space in the canon of the long Civil Rights Movement, intervening in a male-dominated field of photographic scholarship. Derby’s photographs have been displayed in publications and exhibitions, both past and contemporary, showcasing the efforts of those she photographed. Within these photographs, Derby painted her subjects as “agents of change” who engaged in acts of protest and everyday activism that shaped the movement. Derby’s womanist lens particularly emphasised the role of women

⁶⁹ Derby, “In the Ground Troops,” 442-443.

as grassroots activists and leaders, yet did not exclude men either. Derby's photography challenges both the popular understanding of the movement and its persisting dominant visual narrative: that a few charismatic male leaders single-handedly set the movement's agenda, whilst women were helpless victims of police brutality and segregation. Yet it also supports the ideas of the long Civil Rights Movement: protesting racist iconography, combating white supremacy, and, crucially, asserting the rights of African Americans to occupy both physical and symbolic space.

“My Life's Work”: Elaine Tomlin and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

Through her work with the SCLC, Elaine Tomlin painted women as “agents of change” and continued the photography of the long Civil Rights Movement beyond the 1970s. As a photographer, Tomlin operated in the mostly male-dominated organisation of the SCLC, yet occupied space as a female photographer. Although much of Tomlin's history and photography has fallen into obscurity when compared with Doris Derby – as aside from distributing them to the press, it is unclear how the SCLC engaged with and utilised her photography – Tomlin created a powerful archive of photography which has been unexplored and unexhibited for decades. The photographs themselves show the everyday activism of the shifting Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, which whilst erring more towards Black self-determination, was still preoccupied with the occupation of public space. As such, Tomlin

portrays those in her lens as “agents of change,” particularly the women of the movement.

Yet Elaine Tomlin is a largely obscure figure in the history of African American women photographers in the twentieth century, and occupies minimal space within the canon of the long Civil Rights Movement. Tomlin’s biography and photographic archive are difficult to locate, as little information is available on her life. Intriguingly, she is mentioned in several noteworthy texts which explore identity and American photography, including Deborah Willis’s *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 – Present* (2000),⁷⁰ Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe’s *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (1993),⁷¹ and Naomi Rosenblum’s *A History of Women Photographers* (2000).⁷² Yet in all of these texts, discussion of Tomlin is severely limited; she is often isolated to a single sentence, or included in a list alongside other photographers with no individual consideration. In addition, none of the above texts include any of her photographs. *Viewfinders* – a ground-breaking text which illuminates the lives and works of dozens of African American women photographers– was criticised by reviewer G. Craven for being a “pioneering but incomplete attempt to account for black women photographers,” especially with regard to Tomlin: “A curious omission, however, is the important works of Elaine Tomlin for the Southern Christian Leadership conference.”⁷³ Perhaps Tomlin’s fleeting appearances in these texts are due to the scant details which surround her life and work.

⁷⁰ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 111.

⁷¹ Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 111 141, 144.

⁷² Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 208.

⁷³ Craven, “Review of Moutoussamy-Ashe, Jeanne. *Viewfinders*,” 110.

Whilst the specifics of her biography remain, at present, shrouded in mystery, through primary archival research and a thorough review of secondary literature I have uncovered dozens of Tomlin's photographs.⁷⁴ This section will explore but a few of them, however, they demonstrate how Tomlin's imagery engages with "spaces of agency" to both advocate for the role of women in protest and extend representations of African Americans occupying symbolic and physical spaces.

In most accounts, Elaine Tomlin is recognised as the staff photographer for SCLC. Beyond that, few details of Tomlin's life are shared. However, a biography of Tomlin from 1980 within the Schomburg Centre states:

Elaine Tomlin, one of the few Black women professional photographers in the United States, is the official photographer for the Southern Christian Leadership (SCLC). Her images of urban riots, rural poverty, and determined marchers have been exhibited nationally and published in major magazines in the United States and abroad. Before coming to her position at SCLC in April 1968, Tomlin photographed for various publications including *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *LIFE* magazines. She was a gallery photographer for the Art Institute of Chicago and a biological science photographer for the University of Chicago Hospital. Between 1974 and 1977, Tomlin taught basic and advanced photography and photojournalism at the Atlanta Institute of Photography. In 1973, she received the Photographer of the Year award from the Atlanta Media Women and the Personalities of the South award, Newton, North Carolina, for outstanding ability and service to community and state. In 1979, Tomlin travelled with an SCLC delegation to the Middle East to photograph the devastated area of Beirut, southern Lebanon, and Palestine.⁷⁵

Although it is unclear where this biography comes from, its statements are consistent with findings from other sources. A few other details from Tomlin's

⁷⁴ Within the Vivian, C. T. and Southern Christian Leadership Conference collections at the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, I was able to positively identify 62 photographs as taken by Elaine Tomlin due to the identifying stamp on the back. There may be substantially more in this collection that are unidentified.

⁷⁵ "Biography of Elaine Tomlin," Deborah Willis Professional Files, 1944-2011, Sc MG 452, Box 10, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, New York, New York.

life are available elsewhere; Deborah Willis asserts in *Reflections in Black* that Elaine Tomlin worked for SNCC, listing her along other male photographers who were involved in “documenting the voter registration drives in the South.”⁷⁶ It is likely that this was prior to Tomlin’s employment with SCLC in April 1968, as she was active as a photographer before this date, first working as a freelance photographer for *Jet* magazine in 1965 to cover the riots in Cleveland.⁷⁷

What is noteworthy about Tomlin is that she was specifically employed as a photographer; it was not supplementary to other tasks. Tomlin is mentioned in account of SCLC primarily as a staff photographer. In the 1970s, Tomlin was engaged with SCLC’s support of Indigenous rights, as “In April [1973] members of the organization [SCLC] visited the Tuscarora people of North Carolina and printed their demands in the organization newsletter. SCLC photographer Elaine Tomlin gave a Black Power salute while riding on horseback with the Tuscarora.”⁷⁸ Therefore, Tomlin occupied space first and foremost as a photographer. This can further be seen on the SCLC’s report from their 1979 fact-finding mission to Lebanon, which refers to Tomlin as “SCLC Staff Photographer.”⁷⁹ Although the details of Tomlin’s employment with SCLC are largely unknown, she photographed numerous events for the organisation, including peace marches in the 1960s, the Winn Dixie Boycott of the 1980s, and countless other events.

⁷⁶ Willis, *Reflections in Black*, 111.

⁷⁷ “Free Lance Photog Who Worked for JET Has Her Life’s Work Stolen,” *Jet Magazine*, 14 September 1987, 22.

⁷⁸ Christopher P. Lehman, *Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement: A Fragile Coalition, 1967 – 1973* (ABA-CLIO, 2014), 296.

⁷⁹ “SCLC Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1981): 166.

It is surprising that Tomlin has not received as much as attention as other women in this thesis, or indeed other photographers in the movement. It certainly appears that she was well known to her contemporaries, and her photography featured in *The Black Photographer's Annual* (1973) and her work was described as “widely acclaimed and appearing in many movement publications, [which] has established her as one of the movement’s premier photojournalists.”⁸⁰ Why, then, has her work gone unrecognised today? Perhaps the fact that Tomlin operated outside the widely defined dates of the movement is a factor, alongside the heavy loss of photography that Tomlin faced in 1987. *Jet* magazine reported that Tomlin had “most of her life’s work stolen,” as “burglars broke into her Atlanta home and made away with thousands of pictures and negatives she considers ‘priceless.’”⁸¹ Tomlin said of the ordeal: “It really hurts. They took my life’s work. What good is that going to do anybody?”⁸² It is likely that the loss of her photographic archive has contributed to Tomlin’s lack of recognition in the contemporary moment. However, a substantial amount of her work remains. Not only do her images advocate for the idea of a long Civil Rights Movement, within which SCLC continued decades of active protest, but Tomlin’s work advocates spaces of agency for women. To achieve all of this whilst navigating the mostly male-dominated network of SCLC makes Tomlin’s work all the more remarkable.

⁸⁰ Crawford, *The Black Photographers Annual*.

⁸¹ “Free Lance Photog Who Worked for JET Has Her Life’s Work Stolen,” 22.

⁸² Ibid.



Figure 73. Elaine Tomlin, *Ralph Abernathy, Martin Luther King Jnr., and Paul Shuttlesworth*, date unknown.

Source: Jimmie Lewis Franklin, "Review: Autobiography, the Burden of Friendship, and Truth, Review of *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography* by Ralph David Abernathy" *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 88.

Of all the organisations involved in the Civil Rights Movement, none relied on the power of charismatic male leadership more than SCLC. As Martin Luther King Jnr. was the first President of the organisation, it is no surprise that Tomlin took an image of King (Fig. 73). However, it is unclear if this was whilst Tomlin worked for SCLC or whilst she was a freelancer, as Tomlin only joined SCLC in April 1968 and King was assassinated on the 4th of that month. This would leave a window of only a few days for Tomlin to take the photograph. Within this photograph, King stands shoulder to shoulder with Ralph Abernathy, his close friend and fellow colleague, and Paul Shuttlesworth, a civil rights activist from Birmingham, Alabama – all of whom were co-founders of SCLC. Their close positioning within the space, which is emphasised by the black and white photography blending their clothing

together, creates a sense of a single, united grouping of men. In particular, this image supports Abernathy's assertion that these men were like the "three musketeers."⁸³ Of note also is Abernathy's direct gaze into the camera whilst the other two men look away. This takes on a symbolic importance when we recognise that Ralph Abernathy became the President of SCLC until 1977, following King's assassination. As such, Abernathy is perhaps the most photographed individual by Tomlin, as dozens of images of the leader engaged in speeches, participating in marches, and meeting other key figureheads can be found in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference records collection at the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Abernathy therefore represents considerable physical and symbolic space in Tomlin's photographic archive. Tomlin also took images of other key Black men of the era, including John Lewis and Muhammad Ali. Due to SCLC's religious structure, men have dominated the organisation's leadership structure, and therefore take up much of its physical and symbolic space. The networks which Tomlin engaged with in SCLC were largely male-dominated, particularly in terms of leadership. Many of Tomlin's photographs reflect this, showing groupings of mostly men in the act of organising or protesting. However, Tomlin rejected a vision of the movement that was dominated entirely by men in male-dominated spaces.

⁸³ Jimmie Lewis Franklin, "Review: Autobiography, the Burden of Friendship, and Truth, Review of *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography* by Ralph David Abernathy" *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 88.



Figure 74: Elaine Tomlin, *Rosa Parks speaking into a microphone at an event*, ca. 1960s.
Source: *Library of Congress*, accessed 7 September 2020,
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2015647374/>.

One way in which Tomlin did this was by dedicating space to photographing key women within the movement, whether or not they were directly affiliated with SCLC. A powerful example of this is her photograph of Rosa Parks (Fig. 74). Parks is most famous for sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 when she refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus, making her an iconic figure within the Civil Rights Movement. However, for years she was largely relegated to a silent figurehead, especially within the public memory of the Civil Rights Movement. This was in no small part due to members of what would become SCLC, as Parks was largely silenced following her heroic act. On December 5, 1955, King, Abernathy, and fellow activist E. D. Nixon, alongside Reverend French, held a meeting at the Holt Street Baptist Church to discuss the boycott, where their decision not to have

Parks herself address the crowd relegated her to “the kind of woman she wasn’t: a quiet victim and solemn symbol.”⁸⁴ McGuire notes of this occasion:

We can only wonder what Rosa Parks might have said that night in front of throngs of supporters and fellow sufferers. Perhaps she would have spoken of the abuses suffered by Recy Taylor, Gertrude Perkins, Flossie Hardman, Claudette Colvin, and so many of the women present that night, conjuring up a collective spirit of defiance and self-defense [sic]. She might have called on her decades of experience defending ordinary black Alabamians from white terror and her long struggle of human rights to remind her of their long and continuing struggle for justice and to push for mass action. Her testimony could have changed the way she was received and forever remembered.⁸⁵

Subsequently, texts such as Jeanne Theoharis’s *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (2013) have worked to re-establish some of Parks’s agency, allowing her to reclaim space as an activist. Yet the image of Parks that Tomlin presents is not that of a “quiet victim,” nor a “solemn symbol.” Instead, Parks is presented speaking at an unknown event, her lips parted in speech. There are multiple microphones on her, both present in the image and implied by her shadow. In Tomlin’s lens, therefore, Parks is not a “quiet victim” nor a “solemn symbol”; she is an active “agent of change” and impassioned orator.

Parks’s clothing is also of note in this image. At the time of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Parks’s clothing was deliberately made to be in line with the politics of respectability. McGuire notes that “her conservative, Puritan-like clothing – and her memory of exactly what she wore forty years later – indicated a keen understanding of the importance of the politics of respectability.”⁸⁶ Tanisha C. Ford further notes that Parks’s clothing typified the clothing style that was favoured by the media, as she was one of many

⁸⁴ McGuire, *Dark End of the Street*, 107.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 102.

women “adorned in dresses, cardigans, pearls, pill-box hats, and gloves with their hair neatly straightened and styled.”⁸⁷ However, in this image Parks wears a roll neck jumper, a cardigan, and a leather cap. Instead of fashion that made Parks look older and more vulnerable, here Parks wears clothing that is fashionable and stylish, moving away from the frail and elderly image that was created around her. The visual similarity between this hat and the berets of the Black Panthers may be a coincidence, or it may be that Parks was intentionally evoking a call for Black Power in her dress. By presenting Parks as a speaker, and as a fashionable woman, Tomlin’s image delivers a unique perspective on Parks that defies the image of her in public memory. Nor was Parks the only prominent woman that Tomlin photographed in the movement, as figures such as Coretta Scott King also appeared in her lens. Although SCLC worked within networks that were mostly male, Tomlin ensured that within her photography Parks and other key women were given a voice. As such, the photograph captures multiple “spaces of agency” in both the space in which Parks speaks, and the space of the photograph itself in commemorating this act. As such, Tomlin empowers Parks as an active “agent of change” in her photograph, granting Parks the agency which was long denied her.

⁸⁷ Ford, *Liberated Threads*, 84.



Figure 75. Elaine Tomlin, *National Organization for Women Members Picket an Atlanta Winn Dixie Store in support of SCLC's Boycott of the 1260-store chain*, ca. 1980s. Source: Southern Christian Leadership Conference records collection, 1864-2012, SCLC / MSS 1083, Box 896, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Tomlin did not just focus her lens on iconic Civil Rights Movement women; she photographed grassroots activists as well. The above photograph shows a line of women marching to protest the supermarket chain Winn Dixie in the 1980s (Fig. 75). This is an integrated protest, as Black and white women march together, yet it is led by two Black women – speaking to the interracial nature of the Civil Rights Movement. There are multiple signs visible, however the one at the forefront of the image clearly reads: “Winn Dixie Supports RACISM in South Africa and... America. Don’t Shop At Winn Dixie. SCLC.” Winn Dixie continued to stock many South African products, especially fruit, including canned peaches and pears, throughout apartheid. SCLC called for a boycott of the supermarket chain in 1985, and it became one of their most publicised boycotts since the 1960s. A boycott is an act of protest

that can be understood in spatial terms, as it both contests what objects can occupy what spaces (on supermarket shelves), and what spaces are in turn occupied through protest in order to express these views (outside of the stores themselves, for example in parking lots). Furthermore, the SCLC created an extended diasporic space by linking the trials of African Americans at home with those of South Africans affected by the apartheid system, not only calling for a boycott on the grounds of anti-apartheid activism, but on poor employment practices. SCLC President Joseph Lowery stated that:

Winn Dixie has a dismal history of negative labor and racial policies and practices. Numerous complaints of racial discrimination have been filed with EEO and in the courts. Win-Dixie has no Black directors or executives that we know of. They say they have approximately 70 Black managers out of 1,262. We have not located them.⁸⁸

The boycott was called off in May 1986 after Winn Dixie agreed not to stock products from South Africa, although the concerns about labour practices went largely unaddressed.

Despite the continuing male-dominance of SCLC, this image shows an interracial crowd almost entirely of women marching down the street, bearing signs that assert their protest. The framing of the photograph speaks to the power of the protest, as the women stay mostly to the left of the image, the line behind the women at the front trailing around to the top right of the image and out of sight. This imbues the women with a sense of power, as “agents of change.” Tomlin’s use of space further empowers the women, as they march towards the camera, and it is unclear where the march is leading them. As in other organisational photographs, the two women at the front of the march are

⁸⁸ Herbert Denmark, “South African Fruit Cause of Boycott by SCLC,” *The Atlanta Daily Voice*, October 1985.

seemingly unaware of the camera. By denying the camera their gaze, their work is granted greater gravitas. This is also emphasised by the smiles on their faces; their activism is joyous, as well as woman-centred. These women occupy space proudly, testifying to the agency that Black women were able to cultivate for themselves within SCLC. However, Tomlin does not just capture marches within her lens.



Figure 76. Elaine Tomlin, *Unknown Title*, 1982.
Source: Southern Christian Leadership Conference records collection, 1864-2012, Box 896.

Tomlin's 1982 photograph of a man signing a document, perhaps a petition, during the Pilgrimage to Washington for Voting Rights, Peace, and Economic Justice is evocative of imagery of African Americans registering to vote in the 1960s, and shows how Tomlin used space to centre women as key organisers and mobilisers (Fig.

76).⁸⁹ This 1982 march was part of a major campaign to secure an extension to the Voting Rights Act (1965), and was sparked by the convictions of voter fraud against Maggie Bozeman and Julia Wilder in Alabama. The SCLC sought to raise the profile of this case, in which the two women were given disproportionately harsh prison sentences, through marches. In Tomlin's image of one such event, a man signs a document with "SCLC" at the top, the pen held in his hand. The woman at the centre of the image leans down to help him, her hand pressing down the top of the paper, so that their hands are almost touching. The fact that she is assisting him in this moment is further illustrated by her hat, which has "SCLC" written on it. There is a clear vertical line between the "SCLC" written on the page, and the "SCLC" written on the hat, between which the woman's arm offers a continuum of the line in the space. Again, both subjects deny the camera their gaze, as they are fully absorbed in the task at hand. Tomlin's image documents this space of cooperation, unity, and exchange between the two figures. They share physical space to complete the petition, which in turn seeks to grant them space in the symbolic space of the voting booth. This is reminiscent of Derby's image of the woman walking to vote. Although larger-scale marches were a significant mainstay of the protest culture of the time, these marches often incorporated quieter, more intimate, and individual-level moments, such as an African American man signing a piece of paper. This image, therefore, not only

⁸⁹ An example of this is Maria Varela's photograph *Voting in an MFDP Practice Election, Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1967*.

privileges the role of women in the long Civil Rights Movement, but offers a behind-the-scenes perspective on a march that is not commonly seen, within which Black women frequently worked. As Tomlin centred this woman in her frame, she also centred the perspective of women in the SCLC. Whereas Derby captured womanist networks, Tomlin navigated the predominantly male networks in which she worked to uncover the contributions of countless African American women.

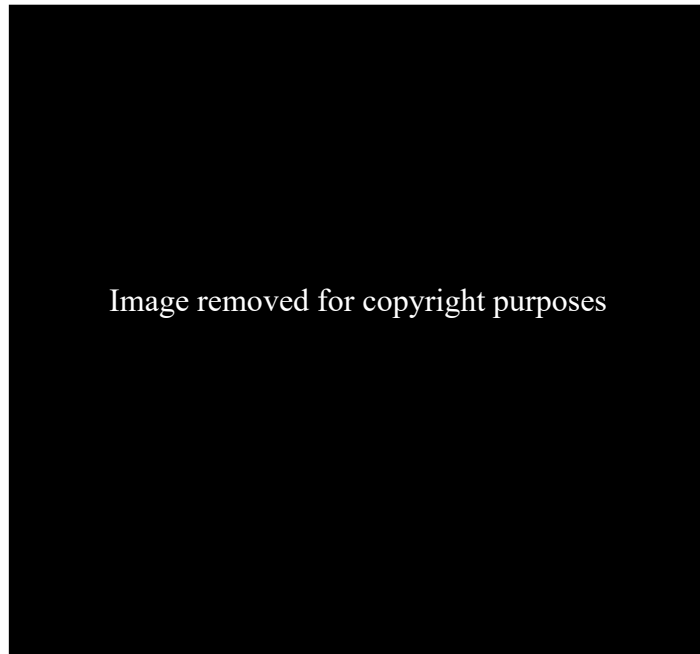


Figure 77. Elaine Tomlin, *Charleston, South Carolina*, 1968.
Source: Joe Crawford, ed., *The Black Photographers Annual 1973* (New York: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1973).

Unlike many of the other photographers in this thesis, Tomlin directly photographed acts of violence in public space with her camera. A series of four photographs that were featured in *The Black Photographers Annual, Vol. 1* (1973) shows an African American woman being beaten, carried, and arrested by police in 1968, assumingly following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Fig. 77). What is crucial when considering these images is the unflinching focus on the woman at the centre of the photographs, rather than focussing on a group or multiple people. By sharing the same space as the woman, and showing the protest at an individual scale, Tomlin strategically conveys the violence of the situation without making the victim appear helpless or without agency. The woman is not wearing the clothes that signified the traditional trappings of “respectability” as laid out by the SCLC of the past; instead, she wears a vest and shorts. Tomlin shows the viewer how the woman in the protest is at one point lifted, at one point held on the crowd, and otherwise physically restrained. The final image shows the woman with a bloody face with her arms raised, seemingly being put into a police patrol car. These dynamic images make no secret of the violence inflicted on this African American woman. These images stand in contrast to the implied violence of Derby’s *Poetagraphy*; here the viewer witnesses the harm inflicted first-hand.

In every photograph Tomlin centres the African American woman, and in so doing makes her experience the centre of the viewer’s understanding of the event. By reducing the violence to this singular level, and focussing on the acts committed against one person, Tomlin not only gives us a sense of the woman’s ordeal, but also a sense of her heroism as she retains her own agency within the sequence of events presented. By placing the image of the woman bloodied but still standing as the final image, Tomlin gives a sense of closure to the events that have transpired, yet the fact that it is implied she is being arrested indicates that her struggle will continue. This photograph suggests that where Black women assert their agency, white supremacy will seek to limit it. Within these photographs, therefore, Tomlin highlights the dangers which

African American women activists faced in occupying public space well into the 1970s. She places them at the centre of the movement, and invites the viewer to witness both their hardship and their heroism as “agents of change.”



Figure 78. Elaine Tomlin, *Today's Manchild, Tomorrow's Man*, 1970.
Source : “The Week’s Best Photos,” *Jet Magazine*, 13 August 1970, 35.

To close this section on Tomlin, it is fitting to consider a photograph which challenges notions about the Civil Rights Movement, but around which there is much confusion. The spaces in which this image is presented, and the spaces within the photograph itself, illuminates the complicated historical memory of the photography of Elaine Tomlin. The photograph shows three children at a protest, with the boy at the centre of the frame holding a sign which reads “I AM A MAN” (Fig. 78). This is a clear visual echo of photography of the Sanitation Strikes which took place in Memphis, 1968, where photographs of hundreds of African American men carrying the same

sign became an iconic staple of the Civil Rights photographic canon.⁹⁰ This photograph appears in a 1970 issue of *Jet*, and the caption suggests that the image is in Chicago. Two of the children in this image stare questioningly at the camera, whereas the boy in the centre of the frame looks down at the ground as he holds aloft the sign, which including the placard and stick is nearly double his size. Two of the children have bare feet, perhaps indicating their poverty. The caption which *Jet* offers suggests that the boy holding the sign is the brother of the other two children, and that he is “protecting” them “with the sign of his manhood.”⁹¹ That a child so young had to assume such a stance – and occupy a public space within a protest – is rendered a sign of the times in Tomlin’s lens. This image can be read alongside Derby’s image of the pool protest as emphasising the role that young children played in the movement and its spaces of protest – although these children are very young, they are nonetheless protesting white supremacy.

Yet uncertainty around this image emphasises the obscurity surrounding Elaine Tomlin’s life and work. The boy at the centre of this image was clearly replicated in a mural in 2013: street artist JR marked the 50th anniversary of King’s ‘I Have A Dream’ speech by creating three murals on the streets of Atlanta, including one of Tomlin’s photograph. The mural of the boy was at Edgewood Avenue and Jessie Hill drive in the Sweet Auburn district, where King spent his adolescence. Coverage of the production of this image universally states that this photograph originated from Tomlin’s

⁹⁰ Cecelia M. Hartsell, “I AM A MAN: A Civil Rights-Era Declaration with Roots in the 1700s,” *OAH Magazine of History* 20, no. 5 (October 2006): 46-47.

⁹¹ “The Week’s Best Photos,” 35.

coverage of the Million Man March in 1995.⁹² However, the image of this young boy was featured in *Jet* magazine in 1970, where it was named “picture of the week” – twenty-five years before the march in Washington. It therefore seems that, even in an attempt to celebrate Tomlin’s work, incorrect information has been distributed. For a figure who has such a dynamic visual archive, yet of whom so little is known, it is likely that attempts to celebrate her memory will be frustrated, or unwittingly lead to the distribution of inaccurate information. Nevertheless, Tomlin’s work demands to be acknowledged. Tomlin’s archive, whilst undoubtedly limited compared to what it would have been before the theft in 1985, offers a dynamic, empowering look at the long Civil Rights Movement.

Tomlin occupied physical space as a Black woman photographer in SCLC, using her camera to capture the activism of her organisation. Symbolically, although much of Tomlin’s story remains unknown, Tomlin created a powerful archive of photography that intervenes in a male-dominated photographic canon and emphasises the continuing activism of women in the SCLC following the death of King. Her work appeared in periodicals such as *Jet* and *The Black Photographers Annual*, further sharing the efforts of the SCLC around the country. Although Tomlin photographed charismatic male leaders, she also recorded the contributions of women to SCLC’s efforts and painted them as “agents of change.” Tomlin captured traditional “spaces of agency” with her camera, including marches, yet also recorded moments of

⁹² See: Ginger Rudolph, “JR Pays Tribute to Civil Rights Movement,” *HABA MAG*, accessed 26 June 2020, <http://hahamag.com/jr-pays-tribute-to-the-civil-rights-movement/>; Stephanie Cash, “News: International street-art star JR installs three monumental murals in the Old Fourth Ward,” *Arts Atl*, 1 August 2013, accessed 26 June 2020, <https://www.artsatl.org/news-international-street-art-star-jr-installing-monumental-murals-fourth-ward/>.

quiet organisational work. In this way, Tomlin defied the mostly male network in which she worked to cultivate space for the achievements and progress of women within the movement.

Conclusion



Figure 79. Lynn Marshall Linnemeier, with photography by Dr. Doris A. Derby, Shelia Turner and Susan Ross, *Journey to Freedom: Women of the Civil Rights Movement*, 2017. Source: "Dedication of New Public Art Installation "Journey to Freedom: Women of the Civil Rights Movement,"" *City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs*, accessed 30 December 2020, <https://www.oaatlanta.com/public-art-dedication-of-new-mural-journey-to-freedom-women-of-the-civil-rights-movement/>.

Although there are many distinctions between Derby and Tomlin – including their organisational affiliations, the time periods in which they were most active in photographing the movement, and their current fame – it is noteworthy that both women's works featured in murals in Atlanta during the 2010s. Murals mark an important act of spatio-symbolic reclamation, as they display African Americans' artwork in a highly accessible medium: scholars

María de Miguel Molina, Blanca de Miguel Molina and Virginia Santamaria Campos define murals as “large paintings whose environment is a public space. Muralism follows a traditional production process where the aim is to build a message or a political or social narrative of the place.”⁹³ Having their work reproduced in this way demonstrates how their photographic work continues to cultivate spaces in which to convey the activism of the long Civil Rights Movement.

Doris Derby’s photography inspired multiple murals in Atlanta, including “Journey to Freedom: Women of the Civil Rights Movement” on Freedom Park Pathway, Atlanta Beltline, and “Watch Me Learn” in the Historic King District of Edgewood Street, in Atlanta, Georgia. Charmaine Minniefield wrote of her decision to utilise Derby’s images: “The moment was right to counsel with my elders. I reached out and invited Civil Rights photographer, Dr. Doris Derby -an elder, mentor, and hero- to select the image.”⁹⁴ Derby’s role as an “elder” has allowed her to continue to cultivate “spaces of agency” which commemorate women and challenge the ways in which the Civil Rights is remembered today. Lynn Marshall Linnemeier’s mural provides a colourful collage, which incorporates twenty-one of Derby’s photographs into the frame, alongside images by Sheila Turner and Susan Ross (Fig. 79).⁹⁵ We see her images of Alice Walker, the unnamed woman walking to register to vote, and June Johnson alongside several other figures. By

⁹³ María de Miguel Molina, Blanca de Miguel Molina and Virginia Santamarina Campos, “Visiting African American Murals: A Content Analysis of Los Angeles, California,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 18, no. 2 (March 2020): 202.

⁹⁴ Audery Gamez, “Hatch(ed) – Charmaine Minniefield Discusses Black Land Matters,” *C4 Atlanta*, accessed 12 June 2020, <https://c4atlanta.org/tag/dr-doris-derby/>.

⁹⁵ “Art and Life with Doris Derby,” *Voyage ATL*, 2 July 2018, accessed 12 June 2020, <http://voyageatl.com/interview/art-life-doris-derby/>.

reproducing their likenesses in such a public space, on such a giant scale, Linnemeier consolidates their roles as “agents of change” in the long Civil Rights Movement. The mural is a colourful and spirited celebration of African American women’s activism, including figures both anonymous and celebrated, in silhouette and in focus. This allows the mural to evoke the symbolic importance of women in the movement, as it both acknowledges the women who have made a difference, and leaves space to be claimed by those who either have not been recognised for doing so, or who will in the future. As Derby acknowledges, “many people will be inspired, and I think there can be murals like this in other places.”⁹⁶ Whereas the “Watch Me Learn” mural focussed on an artist’s recreation of Derby’s photographs onto a wall, “Journey to Freedom” kept the photographic format, although cutting the backgrounds out, to copy the images directly on to the wall. The artist admits that she was inspired by JR’s work and Googled how he reproduced photographs in mural form – which is especially significant, given that JR had worked to reproduce one of Elaine Tomlin’s photographs as a mural three years prior.

⁹⁶ Zachary Hansen, “Atlanta honors women of civil rights movement with art dedication,” *AJC*, 22 February 2017, accessed 30 July 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/events/atlanta-honors-women-civil-rights-movement-with-art-dedication/iWw8y29TPg269Tix2Z8PtN/>.



Figure 80. Photographer unknown, *JR paints a mural*, 2013.
Source: Ginger Rudolph, "JR Pays Tribute to the Civil Rights Movement," *HAHA MAG*, accessed 12 July 2020, <http://hahamag.com/jr-pays-tribute-to-the-civil-rights-movement/>.

Elaine Tomlin's photograph that is credited as being from the 1995 Million Man March, but is more likely to be from 1970, was painted at Edgewood Avenue and Jessie Hill Drive. The first striking thing about JR's mural of Elaine Tomlin's photograph is the sheer space it occupies (Fig. 80). To see it alongside the artist, its full height extends to roughly four times his stature. In this way, the impact of the mural is significant, as it towers over the street. In addition, whilst the murals of Derby's work have bright, painted backgrounds, this image's background blends into the faded and cracked wall of the building. It appears more a part of the original identity of the building, integrating itself within the space. Issues surrounding the potential mislabelling of the photograph aside, Tomlin's photograph towering over the Atlanta streets near the place of King's childhood home and school reveals that her legacy does live on. For both of these works, it is fitting that they are

centred around a community, as both women sought to empower those around them through the medium of photography. Their presence within these murals highlights not just the continuing relevance of their work, but the power of their imagery, which still resonates today and continues to inspire the next generation of activist artists and activists.

Through considering these murals, the “spaces of agency” which Doris Derby and Elain Tomlin cultivated are reimagined on a larger, more public scale than ever before. However, acts of spatio-symbolic reclamation have always been key to their work and careers. As photographers, they navigated frequently male-dominated organisations, imbued with complex power dynamics, to create images that platform the activism in their communities. Symbolically, although both Derby and Tomlin are recognised as photographers of the long Civil Rights Movement to an extent, neither has received the due credit they deserve for their work. The photographs themselves functioned in a variety of spaces – from publications and newspapers to exhibitions and murals. Within the photographs, Derby and Tomlin emphasised the role of women in the movement as “agents of change,” and shift the dominant visual narrative of the long Civil Rights Movement to one that accommodates acts of everyday activism in unconventional spaces and times. Although there were few women in their photographic networks, they created the space for female networks to be seen within their imagery. Taken together, these women’s work creates a powerful counter-narrative of the photography of the Civil Rights Movement which centres both the role of women, and a new understanding of the meaning of protest, which is

orientated around acts of spatial reclamation on the part of both the photographer and the subject.

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century, African American women photographers were marginalised in mainstream media. Not only were their images and stories often overlooked, but depictions of what a “Black woman photographer” looked like in the twentieth century were rare, and when they did exist, often conformed to a male gaze. Advertisements downplayed Black women’s professionalism as photographers, and Black-owned publications more readily featured photographers as pin-ups rather than image-makers in their own right. Where images of African American women photographers themselves did appear in mainstream media, it was often on the terms of someone other than an African American photographer herself. Yet most of the women featured in this thesis engaged in some act of self-representation with their camera, cultivating space for themselves in their own image. The self-portraiture of African American women photographers, therefore, is a site of empowerment for the women.

The importance of self-representation for African American women photographers within their own photographs and photographic spaces has been acknowledged in this thesis: in Chapter One, Florestine Collins used a self-portrait in her advertisements to assert her feminised credentials as a family photographer; in Chapter Two Emily Vernon and Eslanda Goode Robeson appeared within their anthropological photography to advocate for transatlantic connectivity; and in Chapter Three, military photographers such as Elizabeth “Tex” Williams and Master Segreant Grendel A. Howard photographed themselves handling their equipment in uniform to assert their right to space

within the military. As such, the act of taking a self-portrait and then displaying it in a public setting can be understood as an act of spatio-symbolic reclamation for the self, as the photographer claimed space and became empowered as both photographer and subject. Not only did the women in this thesis cultivate “spaces of agency” for others; they also cultivated them for their own likenesses and for their own development as professional women photographers.



Figure 81. Photographer Unknown, “I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance,” 1864.

Source: Augusta Rohrbach, “Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White,” in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 89.

The creation of a photographic self-representation can be understood as a mode of activism, as articulated by African American abolitionists in the nineteenth century. In 1864, abolitionist and former slave Sojourner Truth

posed for her photographic portrait – one of many times that she would do so (Fig. 81). Truth’s carte de visites were branded with a recognisable slogan that identified them as hers, saying “I sell the shadow to support the substance.”¹ Rohrbach wrote of Truth that her “command of her image through her active use of iconography, legal protection, and marketing exposes Truth in her various roles as artful purveyor, producer, and product.”² Truth actively shaped the reproduction of her image and engaged with the photographic process at every stage. Her use of props, and the way she combined the “garb of Quaker womanhood”³ with a head wrap which “references an African past” set precedents which would be mirrored in the twentieth century.⁴ Hence, the studio and the subsequent photograph functioned as “spaces of agency” for Truth’s abolitionist agenda. Art historian Dawn M. Wilson asserts that, within self-portraiture “the artist’s conscious agency is depicted as the controlling influence in these self-portraits, rather than the camera mechanism.”⁵ As such, the photographers in this thesis frequently cultivated their own agency through their own self-representations. This occurred across multiple modes of photographic work – from conventional portraiture to photojournalism and governmental photography, to anthropology. By claiming space for themselves in their frames as photographers, they rejected stereotypical views, highlighted

¹ Mandy Reid, “Selling Shadows and Substance: Photographing Race in the United States, 1850-1870s,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, no. 3, (February 2007): 296.

² Augusta Rohrbach, “Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White,” in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 90.

³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵ Dawn M. Wilson, “Facing the Camera: Self-portraits of Photographers as Artists,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 1 (January 2012): 60.

their own respectability, and protested both the racism and sexism that kept them underrepresented in the field.

Yet self-representations of Black women photographers, or indeed acknowledgement of Black women photographers at all, were rare in most white and Black media until the 1960s. White representations of African American women photographers were practically non-existent. As is well-documented, and I explored briefly in the thesis introduction, stereotypical images of African American women as mammies, jezebels, or other groups were prominent in white culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁶ Advertising of the camera in particular is notable for its omission of African American women, as advertising tended to be produced by white men. The idea of an African American woman as an independent businesswoman in command of the images she took would directly combat racist notions of African American inferiority that dominated much of the early twentieth century.

⁶ Although I acknowledge the role of stereotypes in constructions of Black women in media, as I seek to orientate this thesis around modes of empowerment rather than modes of reductionism, I establish only the necessary context to these harmful portrayals.



Figure 82. *Kodak Advertisement*, 1964.
Source: *Ebony*, August 1964.

Within mainstream white advertising, whenever African American women did appear in the 1950s, they featured in “segregated” adverts and “glamorous” models were avoided.⁷ Instead, advertisers visited Black college campuses to seek out “Plain Janes” to appear.⁸ Within advertisements for cameras, such as Kodak, white women featured prominently, and African American women would not appear until the 1960s. In the August 1964 edition of *Ebony*, there is space dedicated to an advertisement for Kodak that utilises an African American model (Fig. 82). However, it is telling that the advertisement emphasises the ease of the Kodak camera, indicating that this is not a professional tool, but a hobby or leisure activity. Although some media

⁷ Brenna Wynn Greer, *Represented: The Black Imagemakers Who Reimagined American Citizenship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 233-241.

⁸ *Ibid.*

began to yield space to the idea of an African American woman as photographer, it was strictly within a hobbyist sphere.

Considering the representations of African American women photographers in the spaces of such Black-owned publications as *Jet* reveals the complicated relationship the Black media had to African American women photographers and underscores the importance of considering self-representations within this history. Until the late 1960s, magazines such as *Jet* did not contain many images by African American women photographers and dedicated minimal space to their work. Partially this is due to sheer lack of photographers, but what is interesting is that until the mid-1960s there were more images of African American women with cameras as models than actual images by them. *Jet's* efforts to portray African American women as desirable is not to be dismissed, as it is consistent with ideas of “Black is Beautiful” and speaks against a long history of Black women being discouraged from embracing their beauty by white supremacy. Nevertheless, the language used does raise interesting notions about the agency afforded to these women.



Figure 83. William P. Lanier, *Betty Harris Foxx*, 1960.
Source: *Jet Magazine*, 21 January 1960, 34-35.



Figure 84. Photographer Unknown, *Beverly*, 1960.
Source: "SIU 'Calendar Girl' Has Brains As Well As Beautiful," *Jet Magazine*, 21 January 1960, 14.



Figure 85. Tony Rhoden, *Comely Candidates*, 1962.
Source: "Words of the Week," *Jet Magazine*, 12 April 1962, 32.

In a January 1960 edition of *Jet Magazine*, there are two separate photographs of Black women modelling with cameras (Fig. 83 and Fig. 84). It is interesting that in both of these images, the caption explicitly states that the women in the photographs are not photographers and do not use the cameras: the photograph of Betty Harris Foxx states that she is "no shutterbug by profession,"⁹ and the photograph of Beverly Coleman asserts that the camera is "only a prop."¹⁰ The women in the 1962 magazine are referred to as "comely candidates" for a modelling competition, and are posing as though photographing the cameraman, whilst two of the organisers take their pictures (Fig. 85).¹¹ Perhaps the image of a woman with a camera conveyed a degree of confidence and independence, making them the subject of fantasised sexual desire, representing feminised ideals of beauty. The object of the camera and

⁹ *Jet Magazine*, 21 January 1960, 34-35.

¹⁰ "SIU 'Calendar Girl' Has Brains As Well As Beautiful," *Jet Magazine*, 21 January 1960, 14.

¹¹ "Words of the Week," *Jet Magazine*, 12 April 1962, 32.

the label ‘photographer’ had encoded ideas that linked it to feminine desirability and sexuality. It is therefore interesting to consider how African American women not only took images of themselves, but how they cultivated these “spaces of agency” for themselves as professional, empowered women.



Figure 86. Florestine Perrault Bertrand, *self-portrait*, ca. 1920s.
Source: Arthé A. Anthony, *Picturing Black New Orleans: A Creole Photographer's View of the Early Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 36.



Figure 87. Winifred Allen, *The Photographer*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 60.

Within the realm of portrait photography, multiple portraitists took self-portraits, fashioning themselves into empowering modes in a manner reminiscent of the self-representations of Sojourner Truth. Two examples of this are Winifred Hall Allen in New York, and Florestine Collins in New Orleans. Both started their career in the 1920s and were active into the 1950s. Their different geographic locales meant that their work took on different nuances: Collins was limited to the studio setting throughout her life, and her work consisted of portraits of women and children. Winifred Hall Allen, however, could be seen “marching into the streets” with her camera strapped to her back to take a wide variety of images of Harlem’s vibrant street life. Yet there are similarities in their self-portraiture. Both photographers cultivated space for themselves as fashionable, self-assured women. Both avoid the gaze of the camera in a classic sitting technique, which suggests an air of

impenetrability. Taking pictures within their own lenses, we can see their artful use of dark backgrounds and formal clothing with jewellery to signify their role as businesswomen. They engage in a politics of respectability, with a desire to convey themselves in line with the fashionable practice of the time. Images such as this became useful advertising tools, as Collins would use an image such as this to appeal to women for her photographic services. Within their camera lenses, therefore, these women cultivated “spaces of agency” for themselves to be seen as photographers and businesswomen.

As discussed in previous chapters, these acts of self-representation continue into other fields of photographic practice, such as military photography and anthropological photography, wherein African American women also used self-portraiture to advocate for themselves as photographers by including a camera in their image. The first African-American woman military photographer, Elizabeth “Tex” Williams, took multiple images posing with her camera and in her uniform to advocate racial pride. There are images of Williams in uniform with her camera on a car, taking ID photos, or in the lab. In all of them Williams is dressed in her uniform, using or holding her professional equipment. She is consistently engrossed in her work – either smiling to signify enjoyment, or focused on the task at hand, demonstrating her professionalism and control, and thereby cultivating “spaces of agency” for herself. This agency through self-representation is further exhibited by Eslanda Goode Robeson, who also positioned herself within her images. By creating a communal self-portrait with those she wrote about, and including her son in the frame, Robeson created symbolic ties between African and African American in her work. Her self-portrait becomes, in Mahon’s eyes, symbolic

of a wider diasporic connection, as she “recognizes, creates, and extends cultural and political connections among people of African descent.”¹² In so doing, Robeson used her own image to support her own political agenda. As such, her portrait functioned as a “space of agency” for herself as an anthropologist, alongside her subjects.



Figure 88. Vera Jackson, *The Photographer*, date unknown.
Source: Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders*, 85.

Within the realm of photojournalism, Vera Jackson’s self-portrait speaks to this inclination towards professionalism and self-empowerment in the 1940s and 1950s. In her photography of celebrities, Jackson demonstrated her emphasis on making African Americans look good, as she stated that she “worked hard at it to put the best foot forward in every picture.”¹³ Again, we see an image of Jackson holding her camera, conveying comfortable

¹² Mahon, “Eslanda Goode Robeson’s African Journey.”

¹³ Jackson, “Vera Jackson Transcript.”

familiarity with the object. Her hand rests underneath the camera with one hand, and she holds the flash bulb in her other. Like with other African American women's self-portraits, the cameras are props within the image, but ones with which the subject is intimately familiar. Their inclusion in this image indicates the importance of the camera to their identities. Compare this with the earlier pin ups from *Jet*, where the cameras function as ornaments; here they are tools, and possibly even weapons against white supremacy, which the African American women photographers use to cultivate “spaces of agency” to assert their professionalism.



Figure 89. Photographer Unknown, *Doris Derby, Mississippi*, ca. 1960s.
Source: Abigail Bobrow, “Doris Derby: Activist, Photographer, Artist, Professor,” *Storied.*, 19 December 2019, <https://storied.illinois.edu/doris-derby/>.

In terms of organisational photography, there is a curious lack of self-portraiture on the part of the women explored in this thesis – Doris Derby and Elaine Tomlin. Although the reasons for this are unclear, Derby has repeatedly stated the importance of photographing the community around her to record it

for posterity, stating, “I knew I was making historic photographs. I knew I was building this for the future.”¹⁴ It may be, therefore, that Tomlin and Derby felt it important to cultivate “spaces of agency” for others, rather than advocating for themselves as photographers within their lenses. This also tied into their self-identity as photographers, as there were many ways in which photography functioned for the women in this thesis; for some it was a primary role, and for others it was a secondary role which functioned alongside other professional work. For organisational photographers, their photography was in many ways supplementary to their activism. As their photography often occupied a documentary mode, it would be unlikely that they would turn the camera on themselves, particularly considering the multiplicity of roles which they occupied. Furthermore, it is likely that the organisations with which they affiliated were also actively seeking images which could be distributed to raise awareness of their organisation’s efforts, and as such they would have prioritised photographs that showcased community action over those that highlighted the photographers themselves.

Nevertheless, women such as Derby were photographed as photographers; in the late 1960s, an unknown photographer took a picture of Derby with her cameras. At a community event in Mississippi, Doris Derby is photographed holding two cameras, with film in her hand, whilst working with Southern Media, Inc. Within this photograph, we see Derby occupying space as a photographer, immersed in the local community, with other figures in the background of the image. This demonstrates organisational photography’s

¹⁴ Abigail Bobrow, “Doris Derby: Activist, Photographer, Artist, Professor,” *Storied.*, 19 December 2019, <https://storied.illinois.edu/doris-derby/>.

occupation with photographing the collective actors and grassroots organisers – who were frequently women – over individual acts of heroism, or charismatic male leadership. The fact that Derby chose to turn her lens to others, rather than herself, indicates how the camera functioned to cultivate “spaces of agency” within the community, painting women as “agents of change.”

Looking at the self-portraits by these African American women, we can see how they have used representations of themselves to both advocate for themselves as businesswomen, and to protest ideas of African American female inferiority. They cultivated “spaces of agency” for themselves and others: they combatted white supremacist ideas and responded to the use of the camera as purely an aesthetic prop. The various modes and genres within which they operated reflects the diversity of activism that existed in the long Civil Rights Movement, taking place in both public and private space. As photographers, these women claimed physical and symbolic space for themselves – in studios, in sites of anthropological research, in military bases, organisations, in public and private spaces of public interest, and in conventional and unconventional sites of activism. They utilised a variety of networks in order to claim these spaces, which would shift from private, domestic, familial networks in the early twentieth century to the public, professional, educational networks of the 1940s and 1950s onwards. Yet for all of the women in this thesis, they have not achieved the acclaim they deserve, as their work has been marginalised by the focus on male photographers.

The photographs themselves claim physical space in a variety of sites: from the private space of the home to public spaces such as publications,

advertisements for businesses, newspapers, and civil rights material. In a contemporary moment, some of these photographs have been exhibited – such as those by Doris Derby – but the overwhelming majority remain obscure. Within their photographs, the photographers in this thesis show African Americans occupying and cultivating space, carving “spaces of agency” in spheres that racism intended to deny them. In particular, the photographers show the women in their communities as “agents of change,” who are purposefully working to claim space through acts of everyday activism. The politics of respectability dictates both these photographic exchanges and the careers of the photographers. These respectability politics, rooted in the late nineteenth century, transitioned from conservative, middle-class dress and modesty, in line with white aesthetics, to a more Black-orientated aesthetic that embraces working-class cultures by the 1970s. By discussing the work of these African American women, new perspectives on the long Civil Rights Movement are illuminated that not only change the dominant photographic canon of the movement, but also highlight the importance of alternative “spaces of agency” within visual representations of the movement.

African American women were not just the backbone of the long Civil Rights Movement, they were space-makers who used their cameras to embolden the voiceless, reclaim space for their activism, and empower themselves and their communities. As evidenced by the twenty-first century examples at the end of each chapter in this thesis, artists today continue to grapple with the legacies of the past. The Black Lives Matter Movement continues to raise issues of representation and reclamation of space, as protestors tore down statues of Confederate soldiers and painted the streets

with “Black Lives Matter,” calling into question the public memory of key historical moments and movements.¹⁵ As such, illuminating the rich history of African American women photographers is a deeply timely issue. The power dynamics inherent in photography – of who is taking pictures, and what history they are creating – have new contemporary resonance as the camera is more accessible than ever before. There are many more examples of such women whose work demands consideration, and this thesis builds on the work of past scholars to bring this absent history one step closer to recovery.

¹⁵ See: Dewey M. Clayton, “Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement: A Comparative Analysis of Two Social Movements in the United States,” *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 5 (2018): 448-480.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archives and Manuscript Collections

Derby, Doris Adelaide Papers, 1960-1992. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Emory University. Atlanta, Georgia.

Exhibition Guides. Ryserson and Burnham Libraries. The Art Institute of Chicago. Chicago, Illinois.

Jefferson, Louise E. Papers, 1925-2001. Amistad Research Centre. Tulane University. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Moutoussamy-Ashe, Jeanne Manuscript and Research Collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Robeson, Paul Collection, 1925-1956. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Sc MG 170. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

South Christian Leadership Conference Records, 1864-2012. SCLC / MSS 1083. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Emory University. Atlanta, Georgia.

Vernon, Bishop William Tecumseh Collection, 1897-1999. RH MS 529. Kenneth Spencer Research Library. The University of Kansas Libraries. Lawrence, Kansas.

We'll Never Turn Back Collection, 1960-1987. Amistad Research Centre. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Willis, Deborah Professional Files, 1944-2011. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Sc MG 452. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Digital Archives

Akron Art Museum

Duke University Libraries: John Hope Franklin Research Center

International Center of Photography

Library of Congress

University of Southern California Digital Libraries

Interviews

Derby, Doris. Interview with the author. September 2018.

Derby, Doris. Interview with Joseph Mosnier, PhD. *Civil Rights History Collection, Library of Congress*. 26 April 2011.

Derby, Doris. Interview with George King and Worth Long. "Interview Transcript." Doris Adelaide Derby papers, 1960-1992. Box 7. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Emory University. Atlanta, Georgia.

Jackson, Vera. Interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. "Interview." Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Folder 1, Box 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Jackson, Vera. Interview with PBS. *PBS*. Date Unknown.

Martin, Louise. Interview by Jeanne-Moutoussamy-Ashe, "Interview." Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Box 2, Folder 12. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Robeson, Jnr., Paul. Interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Box 2, Folder 2. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Varela, Maria. Interview with David P. Cline. *Library of Congress*. 29 June 2016.

Wesley, Bernedice. Interview by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. "Interview with Bernedice Wesley." Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Box 2, Folder 2. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Wyn, Wilhelmina Roberts. Interview with Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe manuscript and research collection, 1984-1985. Sc MG 343. Box 2, Folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. New York, New York.

Newspapers and Magazines

The Crisis, Wilson's Photographic Magazine, The Pullman Porters' Review, The New York Times, Jet, Ebony, Commanders Call, Soldiers, AP News, Dashboard, Kolumn Magazine, Richmond Mag, The Guardian, Alternate Roots, Smithsonian Magazine, The New Yorker, Washington Post, Alabama Living, Vogue, Storied., Jackson Free Press, Emory News, HABA MAG, Arts Atlanta, C4 Atlanta, Voyage Atlanta, The Atlanta-Journal Constitution, The Church Woman.

Published Primary Sources

Berger, Martin A.. *Freedom Now! Forgotten Photographs of the Civil Rights Struggle*. Berkley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2013.

Carleton, Don. *Struggle for Justice: Four Decades of Civil Rights Photography*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020.

Cox, Julian. *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement 1956-1968*. Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2008.

Crawford, Joe, ed.. *The Black Photographers Annual 1973*. New York: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1973.

Derby, Doris. *Poetagraphy: Artistic Reflections of a Mississippi Lifeline in Words and Images: 1963 – 1972*. Self-published by Dr Doris Derby, 2019.

- Derby, Doris A.. "Sometimes in the Ground Troops, Sometimes in the Leadership." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert et al. Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Earley, Charity Adams. *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (Texas A & M University Press, 2006).
- Jefferson, Louise E.. *The Decorative Arts of Africa*. The Viking Press, 1973.
- Kasher, Steven. *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954 – 1968*. New York & London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996.
- Kelen, Leslie G., ed. *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
- King Jnr., Martin Luther. *Why We Can't Wait*. New York: Signet, 1964.
- Riis, Jacob. *How the Other Half Lives: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, edited by Hasia R. Diner. New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2010.
- Robeson, Eslanda. *African Journey*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1945.
- Rogers, Bernard E., ed.. *The 1957 Le Diable Bleu: The Yearbook of Dillard University*. Accessed 20 January 2021.
https://ia803007.us.archive.org/18/items/1957LeDiableBleu/1957_le_diable_bleu_complete_pdf.pdf
- Scott, Estelle Hill. *Occupational Changes Among Negroes in Chicago*. Work Projects Administration, 1939.

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.
Double Exposure: Through the African American Lens. DC: D Giles Ltd,
2015.

---. *Double Exposure: Picturing Children*. DC: D Giles Ltd, 2016.

Speltz, Mark. *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South*. Los
Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016.

Varela, Maria. "If You Have Come to Help Us... Go Home!." *U.S. Catholic
Historian* 26, no. 1 (2008): pp. 67–82.

Varela, Maria. "Time to Get Ready." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal
Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert et al. Urbana,
Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Secondary Sources

Books

Abel, Elizabeth. *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow*. Berkeley,
Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2010.

Adkins, Jan Batiste. *African Americans of Monterey County*. Charleston:
Arcadia Publishing, 2015.

Anthony, Arthé A.. *Picturing Black New Orleans: A Creole Photographer's
View of the Early Twentieth Century*. Gainesville: University Press of
Florida, 2012.

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds. *Africana: The Encyclopaedia of the African and African American Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Berger, Maurice. *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Blaine, Keisha N.. *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Freedom Struggle*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
- Blair, Sara. *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Brilliant, Richard. *Portraiture*. Islington: Reaktion Books Limited, 1991.
- Brothers, Caroline. *War and Photography: A Cultural History*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Buckley, Gail. *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm*. New York: Random House, 2001.
- Campbell, James T.. *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Collins, Lisa Gail and Margo Natalie Crawford, eds. *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2006.
- Collins, P. H.. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed. New York & London: Routledge, 2000.

- Cookman, Claude Hubert. *American Photojournalism: Motivations and Meanings*. Northwestern University Press, 2009.
- Cooper, Michael L.. *Hell Fighters: African American soldiers in World War I*. New York: Lodestar Books, 1997.
- Crawford, Vicki L., Jacqueline Anne Rouse and Barbara Woods, eds. *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965*. Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990.
- Davidov, Judith Fryer. *Women's Camera: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Ellis, Jacqueline. *Silent Witnesses: Representations of Working-Class Women in the United States*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1998.
- Field, Ron and Alexander Bielakowski. *Buffalo Soldiers: African American Troops in the US Forces 1866-1945*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008.
- Foner, Eric. *Give Me Liberty! An American History*. New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2005.
- Ford, Tanisha C.. *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeois*. Free Press, 1965.
- Fredrickson, George. *Black Liberation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

- Gershow, Yekutiel. *Africans on African-Americans: The Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth*. London: MacMillan Press, 1997.
- Gill, Tiffany M.. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Gilmore, Glenda. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.
- Govenar, Alan. *Portraits of Community: African American Photography in Texas*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996.
- Grant, Nicholas. *Winning Our Freedoms Together: African Americans and Apartheid, 1945 – 1960*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Green, Laurie B.. *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Greer, Brenna Wynn. *Represented: The Black Imagemakers Who Reimagined American Citizenship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Hakim, Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
- Harley, Sharon and The Black Women and Work Collective, eds. *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

- Harris-Perry, Melissa V.. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Hine, Darlene Clark. *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Holsaert, Faith S. et al, eds. *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*. Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Honey, Maureen, ed. *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War Two*. Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1999.
- hooks, bell. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press, 1982.
- *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. New York: The New Press, 1995.
- *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
- *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.
- Horan, James D.. *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera*. New York: Random House, 1988.
- Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to Present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1985.

- Keller, Emily. *Margaret Bourke-White: A Photographer's Life*. New York: Lerner Publications, 1996.
- Lamothe, Daphne. *Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991.
- Lehman, Christopher P.. *Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement: A Fragile Coalition, 1967 – 1973*. ABA-CLIO, 2014.
- Lucks, Daniel S.. *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War*. University Press of Kentucky, 2014.
- McGuire, Danielle L.. *At The Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 2010.
- McHenry, Elizabeth. *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Mickenberg, Julia L.. *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Morden, Bettie J.. *The Women's Army Corps 1945-1978*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1992.
- Moutoussamy-Ashe, Jeanne. *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers*. New York & London: Writers & Readers Publishing, Inc., 1985.

- Neal, Larry. *The Black Arts Movement*. New York: New York University, 1968.
- Neverdon-Morton, Cynthia. *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989.
- Olson, Lynne. *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970*. New York & London: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Omi, Michael and Harold Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Parker, Christopher S.. *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle Against White Supremacy in the Postwar South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Phillips, Kimberley L.. *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Pough, Gwendolyn D.. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Hanover & London: Northeastern University Press, 2004.
- Powell, Richard J.. *Cutting a Figure: Fashioning Black Portraiture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2008.
- Rabaka, Reiland. *Civil Rights Music: The Soundtracks of the Civil Rights Movement*. London: Lexington Books, 2016.

- Raiford, Leigh. *Imprisoned In A Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Rampersad, Arnold. *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol. 2, 1941-1967: I Dream a World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Ransby, Barbara. *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs Paul Robeson*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Romano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford, eds. *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*. Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Rosenblum, Naomi. *A History of Women Photographers*. London, New York & Paris: Abbeville Press, 1994.
- Roth, Benita. *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Schudson, Michael. *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Sherrard-Johnson, Cherene. *Portraits of the New Negro Woman: Visual and Literary Culture in the Harlem Renaissance*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Shneer, David. *Through Soviet Jewish eyes: photography, war, and the Holocaust*. Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Penguin, 1979.

- Stauffer, John, Zoe Trodd and Celeste-Marie Bernier. *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*. New York & London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015.
- Treadwell, Mattie. *The Women's Army Corps, United States Army in World War II: Special Studies*. Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954.
- Umoren, Imaobong D.. *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.
- Villa, Raul Homero. *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. London: Women's Press, 1984.
- Warf, Barney and Santa Arias, eds. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London & New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Wexler, Laura. *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- White, E. Frances. *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.
- Willis, Deborah. *Family History Memory: Recording African American Life*. New York: Hylas Publishing, 2005.

--- *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present.*

New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Willis, Deborah and Carla Williams. *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

Book Chapters

Bond, Julian. "Foreword." In *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Leslie G. Kelen, pp. 13-18. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.

Bowser, Pearl. "Pioneers of Black Documentary Film." In *Struggles for Representation: African American Documentary Film and Video*, edited by Phyllis R. Klotman and Janet K. Cutler. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.

brown, adrienne maree. "introduction." In *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, edited by adrienne maree brown. Chico & Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019.

Cosgrove, Denis. "Introduction: Mapping Meaning." In *Mappings*, edited by Denis Cosgrove. London: Reakiton Books, 1999.

Donaldson, Susan V.. "Charleston's Racial Politics of Historic Preservation: The Case of Edwin A. Harleston." In *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country, 1900-1940*, edited by James M. Hutchisson & Harlan Greene. University of Georgia Press, 2003.

- Ellis, C. and A. P. Bochner. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. California: Sage Publications, 2000.
- Gomez, Jewelle. "A Century of Black Women Photographed." In *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from the 1850s to the Present*, edited by Liz Heron & Val Williams. London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996.
- Harding, Vincent, Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. "We Changed the World: 1945-1970." In *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans*, edited by Robin D.G. Kelly and Earl Lewis. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Harrison, Faye V. and Ira E. Harrison. "Introduction: Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of a Subjugated Knowledge." In *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*, edited by Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Herron, Matt. "Photographing Civil Rights." In *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Leslie G. Kelen, pp. 19-27. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.
- Johns, Robert L.. "Louise E. Jefferson." In *Notable Black American Women II*, edited by Jessie Carney Smith. New York et al: Gale Research, 1996.
- Johnson, Thomas L.. "Afterword: The Odyssey of *A True Likeness*." In *A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts, 1920-1936*,

edited by Thomas L. Johnson and Phillip C. Dunn. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2019.

Kelen, Leslie G.. "Preface and Acknowledgements." In *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Leslie G. Kelen, pp. 9-13. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.

Krämer, Felix. "Foreword." In *Women War Photographers: From Lee Miller to Anja Niedringhaus*, edited by Anne-Marie Beckmann and Felicity Korn. Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2019.

Kuumba, Bahati. "Dismantling the Master's Narrative: Teaching Gender, Race, and Class in the Civil Rights Movement." In *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement: Freedom's Bittersweet Song*, edited by Julie Buckner Armstrong, Susan Hult Edwards, Houston Bryan Roberson, and Rhonda Y. Williams. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Mikell, Gwendolyn. "Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston." In *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*, edited by Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Morgan, Edward P.. "The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement." In *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, edited by Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford. Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2006.

Myrick-Harris, Clarissa. "Behind the Scenes: Doris Derby, Denise Nicholas and the Free Southern Theatre." In *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941 – 1965*, edited by Vicki L.

- Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, 219-233. New York: Carlson Publishing, 1990.
- Pile, Steve. "Opposition, Political Identities, and Spaces of Resistance." In *Geographies of Resistance*, edited by Steve Pile and Michael Keith, 1-32. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Raiford, Leigh. "Chapter 7: The Here and Now of Eslanda Robeson's *African Journey*." In *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture*, edited by Leigh Raiford and Heike Raphael-Hernandez. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2017.
- Raz-Russo, Michal. "A Lovely So Real." In *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now*, edited by Maggie Taft and Robert Cozzolino. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Rohrbach, Augusta. "Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White." In *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, edited by Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Sligh, Clarissa T., "The Plaintiff Speaks." In *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, edited by Deborah Willis. New York: New York Press, 1994.
- Smith, Shawn Michelle and Maurice O. Wallace. "Introduction: Pictures and Progress." In *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of Early African American Identity*, edited by Shawn Michelle Smith and Maurice O. Wallace. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Journal Articles

Abdur-Rahman, Samira. "Spaces of the Ancestor: Jacqueline Woodson and the Long Civil Rights Movement." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 42, no. 2 (April 2018): 180-197.

Adeleke, Tunde. "Black Americans and Africa: A Critique of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 3 (January 1998): 505-536.

Anthony, Arthé A.. "Florestine Perrault Collins and the Gendered Politics of Black Portraiture in 1920s New Orleans." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 167-188.

Bailey, Moya. "New Terms of Resistance: A Response to Zenzele Isoke." *Souls* 15, no. 14 (2013): 341-343.

Bair, Sarah. "The American Civil Rights Movement Reconsidered: Teaching the Role of Women." *The Social Studies* 111, no. 4 (July 2020): 165-173.

Beaupre, Lauren Elizabeth. "Saints and the 'Long Civil Rights Movement': Claiming Space in Memphis." *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 6 (2012): 971-1002.

Bergner, Gwen. "Black Children, White Preference: Brown v. Board, the Doll Tests, and the Politics of Self Esteem." *American Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (June 2009): 299-332.

- Biggs, Michael and Kenneth T. Andrews. "Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South in the Early 1960s." *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 2, (April 2015): 416-443.
- Blain, Keisha N.. "'We Want to Set the World on Fire': Black Nationalist Women and Diasporic Politics in the 'New Negro World', 1940-1944." *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 194-212.
- Bruley, Sue and Laurel Forster. "Historicising the Women's Liberation Movement." *Women's History Review* 25, no. 5 (2016): 697-700.
- Bruyneel, Kevin. "The King's Body: The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the Politics of Collective Memory." *History and Memory* 26, no. 1 (Spring / Summer 2014): 75-108.
- Cha-Jua, Sundiata Keita and Clarence Lang. "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies." *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 265-288.
- Chambers, Alice W.. "Of Interest to Women." *Camera* 24 (August 1920).
- Clayton, Dewey M.. "Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement: A Comparative Analysis of Two Social Movements in the United States." *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 5 (2018): 448-480.
- Clemons, Kristal Moore. "I've Got to Do Something for My People: Black Women Teachers of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 141-154.

- “Coretta Scott King: The First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement, (1927-2006).” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 50 (Winter 2005/2006): 60.
- Cook, Erin and Stan Pesick. “Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Beyond Vietnam.”” *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 1 (January 2005): 41-50.
- Crawford, Vicki. “Coretta Scott King and the Struggle for Civil and Human Rights: An Enduring Legacy.” *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 106-117.
- Cummins, Victoria H.. “Black Clubwomen and the Promotion of the Visual Arts in Early Twentieth-Century Texas.” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (July 2015): 1-22.
- Davidov, Judith Fryer. ““The Color of My Skin, the Shape of My Eyes”: Photographs of the Japanese-American Internment by Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, and Toyo Miyatake.” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 223-244.
- Dragulescu, Luminita M.. “Race Trauma at the End of the Millennium: (Narrative) Passing in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*.” *Philip Roth Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 91-108.
- Dubois, Sylvie and Megan Melançon. “Creole Is, Creole Ain't: Diachronic and Synchronic Attitudes toward Creole Identity in Southern Louisiana.” *Language in Society* 29, no. 2 (June 2000): 237-258.
- Dunbar, Paul Lawrence. “Hidden in Plain Sight: African American Secret Societies and Black Freemasonry.” *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 622-637.

- Engel, Elisabeth. "Southern Looks? A History of African American Missionary Photography of Africa, 1890s–1930s." *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 2 (May 2018): 390-417.
- Fackler, Katharina M.. "Ambivalent Frames: Rosa Parks and the Visual Grammar of Respectability." *Souls* 18, no. 2 (October 2016): 271-282.
- Farmer, Ashley D.. "'Abolition of Every Possibility of Oppression': Black Women, Black Power, and the Black Women's United Front." *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 89-114.
- Franklin, Jimmie Lewis. "Autobiography, the Burden of Friendship, and Truth." Review of *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography*, by Ralph David Abernathy. Review of *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 84-98.
- Frost, Mand Jennifer. "Using 'Master Narrative' to Teach History: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement." *The History Teacher* 45, no. 3 (May 2012): 437-446.
- Fryer, Heather. "Untitled Review." Review of *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of the Japanese American Internment* by Linda Gordon and Gary Y. Okihiro, eds. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 1 (2008): 313-315.
- Gaines, Kevin. "The Civil Rights Movement in World Perspective." *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 1 (January 2007): 57-64.
- Gilbert, Tiffany. "American Iconoclast: 'Carmen Jones' and the Revolutionary Divadom of Dorothy Dandridge." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33, no. ¾ (Fall – Winter 2005): 234-249.

Gittens, Angela Fatou. "Black Dance and the Fight For Flight: Sabar and the Transformation and the Cultural Significance of Dance from West Africa to Black America (1960-2010)." *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 1 (December 2011): 49-71.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and beyond." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 2000): 28-40.

Hagedorn, John M.. "Race Not Space: A Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago." *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 194-208.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

Hamlet, Janice D.. "Fannie Lou Hamer: The Unquenchable Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (May 1996): 560-576.

Harris, Paisley Jane. "Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women's History and Black Feminism." *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 212-22.

Hartsell, Cecelia M.. "I AM A MAN: A Civil Rights-Era Declaration with Roots in the 1700s." *OAH Magazine of History* 20, no. 5 (October 2006): 46-47.

- Henthorn, Thomas C.. ““A Nation's Need—Good and Well Trained Mothers”:
Gender, Charity, and the New Urban South.” *Frontiers: A Journal of
Women Studies* 32, no. 1 (2011): 71-101.
- Herbin-Triant, Elizabeth A.. “Southern Segregation South Africa-Style:
Maurice Evans, Clarence Poe, and the Ideology of Rural Segregation.”
Agricultural History 87, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 170-193.
- Hine, Darlene Clark. “Black Professionals and Race Consciousness: Origins of
the Civil Rights Movement, 1890-1950.” *The Journal of American
History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1279-1294.
- Inwood, Joshua F. J.. “Critical pedagogy and the fierce urgency of now: opening
up space for crucial reflections on the U.S. civil rights movement.”
Social and Cultural Geography 18, no. 4 (2007): 451-465.
- Istomina, Julia. “The Terror of Ahistoricity: Reading the Frame(-up) through
and against Film Noir in Richard Wright’s “The Man Who Lived
Underground.”” *African American Review* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2016):
111-127.
- Jackson, Roswell F. and Rosalyn M. Patterson. “A Brief History of Selected
Black Churches in Atlanta, Georgia.” *The Journal of Negro History* 74,
no. 1/4 (Winter - Autumn 1989): 31-52.
- Jones, Freida. “Artists Hold Sixteenth Convention: A NEW ERA OF BLACK
ART.” *Black View* 2, no. 7 (1974): 11-15.
- Jordan, Richard. “A Militant Crusade In Africa: The Great Commission And
Segregation.” *Church History* 83, no. 4 (December 2014): 957-987.

- Joseph, Peniel E.. "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field." *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (Dec 2009): 751-776.
- Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51, no. 3 (August 2004): 115-120.
- Levitt, Jeremy I.. "Beyond Borders: Martin Luther King, Jr., Africa, and Pan Africanism." *Temple International and Comparative Law Journal* 31, no. 1 (March 2017).
- Lewis, Diane. "Anthropology and Colonialism." *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 5 (December 1973): 581-602.
- Lindgren, Allana C.. "Civil Rights Strategies in the United States: Franziska Boas's Activistic Use of Dance, 1933-1965." *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 2 (August 2013): 25-62.
- Lott, Martha. "The Relationship Between the "Invisibility" of African American Women in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and Their Portrayal in Modern Film." *Journal of Black Studies* 48, no. 4 (May 2017): 331-354.
- Lowe, Maria. "Sowing the Seeds of Discontent": Tougaloo College's Social Science Forums as a Prefigurative Movement Free Space, 1952-1964." *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 6, (July 2009): 865-887.
- Lucks, Daniel. "African American soldiers and the Vietnam War: no more Vietnams." *The Sixties* 10, no. 2 (March 2017): 196-220.

- Mahon, Maureen. "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey: The Politics of Identification and Representation in the African Diaspora." *Souls* 8, no. 3 (September 2006): 101-118.
- Molina, María de Miguel, Blanca de Miguel Molina and Virginia Santamarina Campos. "Visiting African American Murals: A Content Analysis of Los Angeles, California." *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 18, no. 2 (March 2020): 201-217.
- Nadasen, Premilla. "Black Power, Gender, and Transformational Politics." *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 1, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015): 236 – 240.
- O'Connor, Jessica. "'Racism Anywhere Threatens Freedom Everywhere': The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Black America's Anti-Apartheid Activism." *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 2 (December 2015): 44-58.
- Ohl, Jessy J. and Jennifer E. Potter. "United We Lynch: Post-Racism and the (Re)Membering of Racial Violence in Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America." *Southern Communication Journal* 78, no. 3, (July 2013): 185-201.
- Oommen, T.K.. "The Pasts and Futures of Anthropology and Sociology: Implications of Shifting Locations." *Sociological Bulletin* 59, no. 3 (September- December 2010): 303-322.
- Patterson, A. N., A. Howard, and V Kinloch. "Black Feminism and Critical Media Literacy: Moving from the Margin to the Center." *Meridians* 15, no. 1 (2016): 40-64.

- Pitcan, Mikaela, Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd. "Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23, no. 3 (May 2018): 163-179.
- Reid, Evangeline. "Never A Lovely So Real: Photography and Film in Chicago, 1950 – 1980." *New Art Examiner* 32, no. 6, (July / August 2018): 21-23.
- Reid, Mandy. "Selling Shadows and Substance: Photographing Race in the United States, 1850-1870s." *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, no. 3 (February 2007): 285-305.
- Robnett, Belinda. "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization." *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (May 1996): 1661-1693.
- Rosenblum, Naomi. "Women in Photography: A Historical Overview." *Exposure* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 6-27.
- Rothschild, Mary Aickin. "The Volunteers and the Freedom Schools: Education for Social Change in Mississippi." *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 401-420.
- Rounds, Christopher D.. "'Dead Men Make Such Convenient Heroes': The Use and Misuse of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy as Political Propaganda." *Journal of Black Studies* 51, no. 4 (2020): 327-328.
- Salmond, John A.. "'The Long and Short of It': Some Reflections on the Recent Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement." *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 1 (July 2013): 53-61.

- Schueneman, Mary K.. "A Leavening Force: African American Women and Christian Mission in the Civil Rights Era." *Church History* 81, no. 4 (December 2012): 873-902.
- "SCLC Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 2 (Winter, 1981): 157-168.
- Scott, Biljana. "Picturing Irony: The Subversive Power of Photography." *Visual Communication* 3, no. 1 (February 2004): 31-59.
- Scruggs, Dalila. "Activism in Exile: Elizabeth Catlett's *Mask for Whites*." *American Art* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 2-21.
- Shaffer, Robert. "Out of the Shadows: The Political Writings of Eslanda Goode Robeson." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 66, no. 1 (1999): 47-64.
- Smalls, James. "African-American Self-Portraiture: Repair, Reclamation, Redemption." *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (June 2008): 47-62.
- Stankovic, Isidora. "Tintype Stares and Regal Airs: Civil War Portrait Photography and Soldier." *Military Images* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 2015): 53-57.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. and Haley Leuthart. "Northern Lights: The Black Freedom Struggle Outside the South." *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 1 (January 2012): 9-15.
- Talbot, Richard P. and Jon T. Oplinger. "Social Stratification and Ethnic Mobilization: U.S. Military Deaths in Southeast Asia." *Race, Gender & Class* 21, no. 1/2 (2014): 195-210.

- Titus, Jill Ogline. "An Unfinished Struggle: Sesquicentennial Interpretations of Slavery and Emancipation." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 2 (June 2014): 338-347.
- Trodd, Zoe. "A Negative Utopia: Protest Memory and the Spatio-Symbolism of Civil Rights Literature and Photography." *African American Review* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 25-40.
- Tuck, Stephen. "'We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left off': The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s." *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (October 2008): 637-654.
- Walton, Jennifer. "The Tet Offensive: The Turning Point of the Vietnam War." *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (October 2004): 45-51.
- Webb, Ross. "'I Am Voting For Myself, My Children, and My Race This Time': Black Labour, Community Mobilisation and Civil Rights Unionism: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920s." *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 31, no. 1 (July 2012): 42-52.
- Wilson, Dawn M.. "Facing the Camera: Self-portraits of Photographers as Artists." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 1 (January 2012): 55-66.
- Woodman, Brian J.. "Represented in the Margins: Images of African American Soldiers in Vietnam War Combat Films." *Journal of Film and Video* 53, no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2001): 38-60.

Online and Multimedia Sources

“Biography – Gordon Parks Foundation.” *The Gordon Parks Foundation*.

Accessed 8 January 2020.

<http://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/about-gordon-parks/biography>.

Bradshaw, Crystal. “NCO Trailblazers.” *NCO Journal*, Army University Press.

2 March 2018. Accessed 1 October 2020.

<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2018/March/NCO-Trailblazers/>.

“Dr. Derby Bio.” *Boabab Flowers*. Accessed 25 May 2020.

<https://www.baobabflowersfilm.com/dr-derby-bio>.

“Edwin Harleston 1882-1931.” *Gibbes Museum*. Accessed 12 April 2017.

<http://www.qivmg.com/gibbes/html/harlest/harlestf.htm>.

“Edwin Harleston: 1882-1931.” *The Johnson Collection*. Accessed 25 April

2017. <http://thejohnsoncollection.org/edwin-harleston/>.

“Everything Dovetails: Louise E. Jefferson.” *Sketch People*. March 2011.

Accessed 20 August 2020.

<http://tjbanks927.blogspot.com/2011/03/everything-dovetails-louise-e-jefferson.html>.

Gentry, Mae Whitlock. “Elise Forrest Harleston.” *African-Americans and South Carolina*. Accessed 24 May 2017.

<http://polisci.usca.edu/aasc/EliseForrestHarleston.htm>.

- Harris, Thomas Allen, dir. *Through A Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*. 1990; Sundance: Chimpanzee Productions, 2014. DVD.
- King, Jana. "Louise E. Jefferson." *Design Journeys, AIGA Diversity and Inclusion*. Accessed 30 December 2020. <https://www.aiga.org/design-journeys-louise-e-jefferson>.
- Lyons, Danny. "Time Will Tell, Part Two." *Bleak Beauty Blog*. 14 June 2008. Accessed 30 August 2020. <https://bleakbeauty.com/2008/06/14/time-will-tell-part-two/>.
- "Martin, Louise Ozelle." *Texas State Historical Association*. Accessed 9 January 2020. <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmara>.
- "Meet the Hero: Elizabeth "Tex" Williams." *Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes*. Accessed 29 September 2020. <https://www.lowellmilkencenter.org/programs/projects/view/elizabeth-tex-williams/hero>.
- Norwood, Arlisha R.. "Coretta Scott King, 1927-2006." *National Women's History Museum*. 2017. Accessed 29 October 2020. www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/coretta-scott-king.
- "POST-WAR, G.A.R. BRASS WREATH HAT BADGE." *The Military Americana*. Accessed 10 June 2017. <http://www.horsesoldier.com/products/veteran-memorabilia/gar/8888>.
- "The Photography of Louise Ozelle Martin (1911–1995)." *The Life Well Considered*. Accessed 3 April 2020.

<http://www.thelifewellconsidered.com/the-photography-of-louise-ozelle-martin>.

“The Photography of Louise Ozelle Martin.” *Arts Brookfield*. Accessed 24 October 2020. <https://www.artsbrookfield.com/event/photography-louise-ozelle-martin/>.

Siegal, Nina. “‘My Intention Was to Change the Gaze’: Artist Delphine Diallo Wants to Change the Way Photographers Depict Black Women.” *Artnet*, 28 November 2019. Accessed 30 July 2020. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/delphine-diallo-profile-1709460>.

We, Women. Accessed 24 February 2021. <https://www.wewomenphoto.com>.

“What is Anthropology?.” *American Anthropological Association*. Accessed 24 February 2021. <https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2150&navItemNumber=740>