

## **An Absent Presence**

Racial Exclusion from Photographic Representations of the American Dream as Portrayed in LIFE Magazine During the 1950s and 1960s.

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## 1. Introduction

*Nach Afrika kommt Santa Claus, und vor Paris steht Mickey Maus,*

*We're all living in America, America is wunderbar,*

*We're all living in America, Coca-Cola, sometimes war.*

- Amerika by Rammstein.

Although the song quoted above may not be for the faint-hearted, its lyrics illustrate quite accurately the fact that the United States of America is one of the most influential countries in the world. The United States of America has an enormous economic and military power, but that is not all. American culture has spread its customs, traditions and ideals around the globe and Americanized many cultures. For example, the lyrics above point out the presence of Santa Claus in Africa and Mickey Mouse in Paris. Furthermore, the song points The United States of America is also well known for Coca-Cola and its occasional warfare. An example of a well-known cultural element that represents an American ideal is the American Dream. It is a cultural narrative that ties the American people together and unites the nation with a common mindset<sup>1</sup>. Its concept can be seen throughout history, and could be regarded as heavily influential on shaping American society. After a decade of economic depression and war, Americans finally enjoyed the benefits of industrialization during the 1950s and 1960s. This resulted in a reinforced desire to achieve the American Dream<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand, many argue the issue of race played a significant role in shaping American society. For example, Gerstle<sup>3</sup> claims American society during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was defined by a 'war' between Civic Nationalism<sup>4</sup> and Racial Nationalism<sup>5</sup>. In addition, Myrdal describes this as "an American dilemma"<sup>6</sup>. The 1950s and 1960s were seminal for the struggle for racial equality and marked the peak years of the Civil Rights Movement. Considering the influence of the American Dream and the Civil Rights struggle on American society during the 1950s and

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003) p.5.

<sup>2</sup> E. Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*. (New York 2012) p.916.

<sup>3</sup> Gerstle G., *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. (Princeton 2001)

<sup>4</sup> Civic Nationalism is the belief in the American Creed, which preaches equality and freedom to all. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Racial Nationalism is the belief in racial superiority and inferiority based on inherited race traits. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> E. Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, p. 895.

1960s, this thesis focuses on this specific period of time. Kozol<sup>7</sup> points out the influence of visuals on the concept of the American Dream, while Anderson<sup>8</sup> and Goldberg<sup>9</sup> stress the impact of photography on the struggle for Civil Rights. However, the question arises whether the race issue becomes apparent in representations of the American Dream. Furthermore, Grady<sup>10</sup> and Burke<sup>11</sup> argue in favor of conducting visual research. Therefore, this thesis seeks to find appearances of the race issue in photographic representations of the American Dream. By considering the influence of the American Dream as well as the race issue on shaping 20<sup>th</sup> century American society, this thesis combines both subjects in order to provide new insights. Furthermore, this thesis focuses on LIFE Magazine. Kozol concludes her study of LIFE Magazine's portrayal of the United States of America with the finding that LIFE Magazine has influenced the design of the American identity<sup>12</sup>, which will be further discussed in the section below.

### 1.1. LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s

LIFE Magazine was first issued in 1936. Its “distinctive visual style, dramatic use of the photo-essay, and mandate to show readers the world”<sup>13</sup> ascertained its instant success. LIFE's content was not limited to political news but comprehensively addressed sports, science, global news and entertainment<sup>14</sup>. LIFE Magazine was aimed to address the American middle-class and its content was easy to digest. Full-page photographs with catchy captions were alternated with advertisements. LIFE Magazine's signature feature was photojournalism. Centanni<sup>15</sup> argues that LIFE Magazine had two key influences on the average American. Firstly, “it had the potential to influence the spending patterns of a large portion of society”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> W. Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia 1994)

<sup>8</sup> C. Anderson, *Enduring Moments: Civil Rights Photography in Time, Life, and Newsweek*. In: *Notre Dame Journal of Undergraduate Research* 2008. (Notre Dame 2008).

<sup>9</sup> V. Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (Ann Arbor 1991).

<sup>10</sup> J. Grady, 'Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine', *Visual Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3. (2007) 211-239.

<sup>11</sup> P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London 2001).

<sup>12</sup> W. Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1994).

<sup>13</sup> E. Doss, *Looking at LIFE Magazine* (Washington 2001).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> R. Centanni, 'Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals', *Advertising & Society Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (2011) p.1-13.

<sup>16</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.2.

Secondly, “it could bring suburban desires to non-suburban readers”<sup>17</sup>. Consequently, LIFE Magazine’s content influenced the shaping of the American identity. Centanni<sup>18</sup> maintains that during the 1950s LIFE Magazine already had a regular reach of almost 40% of all American families. Furthermore, LIFE had “an extremely high pass-along rate, in the early 1950s over one half of Americans had seen a particular issue of LIFE”<sup>19</sup>. By 1955 it was the United States of America’s best-selling weekly magazine<sup>20</sup>. As LIFE Magazine held an influential position in American mass culture during the 1950s and 1960s, Grady argues it can be considered a “prism that reflects shared social values, which is especially useful for providing insight into what the general population values”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, LIFE Magazine may be regarded as heavily influential on American society during the 1950s and 1960s as it will be in this thesis.

This thesis seeks to answer the question “To what extent does racial exclusion from photographic representations of the American Dream manifest itself in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?” Firstly, a thorough understanding of the concept of the American Dream is needed. Therefore, the first sub-question is “What is the American Dream and what are its characteristics?” Furthermore, a historical context of the race issue will be given in the second sub-question, “How did racial exclusion manifest itself in the United States of America during the 1950s and 1960s?” The third sub-question “How was the American Dream represented in photography during the 1950s and 1960s?” provides some general insight about visual representations of the American Dream. The fourth sub-question seeks an answer to the question “How was the American Dream portrayed in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?” Lastly, the final sub-question “How is the race issue addressed in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?” seeks to provide even more topic-specific information. Finally, this thesis’ research question will be answered in the conclusion.

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<sup>17</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> E. Thornton ‘The Murder of Emmett Till. Myth, Memory and National Magazine Response’, *Journalism History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2010) p.101.

<sup>21</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.211.

## 1.2. Methodology

Prior to writing this thesis, a thorough analysis of literature has been conducted, during which both primary and secondary sources have been studied. The literature research has been complemented by a visual analysis of photographs from various media sources, though the emphasis will lie on LIFE Magazine. Grady argues that visual analysis can provide insights to research questions that “more conventional, non-visual methods” using quantitative data cannot<sup>22</sup>. After all, a picture says more than a thousand words. Burke’s *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* has served as a guideline for the visual analysis that has been conducted. However, since visual analysis could be considered subjective, it will be used to complement the literary research. Although the articles in LIFE Magazine are written from the supposedly neutral stance they said to hold, several things must be considered for a proper analysis. For example, the spirit of the time in which the articles were written should be considered because the content could be interpreted differently nowadays. For example, using the word ‘negro’ to refer to someone of color is considered offensive nowadays. However, during the 1950s and 1960s this was not unusual. Burke argues the spirit of time should be considered although it does not have to be defining<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, Burke stresses that photographs should be placed in a historical and social context for a better understanding<sup>24</sup>.

After conducting interpretive research of literature and visuals the sub-questions and ultimately the research question of this thesis have been answered. LIFE Magazine’s content has been studied thoroughly and context, uses of language and cultural cues have been considered in the interpretive research conducted. While the first two sub-questions mainly seek to provide a historical context of this thesis’ subject, the last three sub-questions provide more detailed insights. Therefore, the questions raised in this thesis have been answered based on the thorough interpretive research of primary and secondary sources, LIFE Magazine’s contents and visuals that has been conducted.

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<sup>22</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.211.

<sup>23</sup> Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p.33.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p.189.

## 2. Life, Liberty & The Pursuit of Happiness

This chapter seeks to answer the question “What is the American Dream and what are its characteristics?” Firstly, the American Dream will be discussed in its historical context for a better understanding of the concept of this national ideal. On July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776 the United States of America was founded when Congress adopted Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence. It justified independence from Great Britain for the first thirteen states represented in Congress. The core principle of the Declaration of Independence is its second line, “*we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*”. Furthermore, Jefferson imagined that the United States of America was to be the ‘Empire of Liberty’ and its duty was to spread and defend freedom worldwide. This idea can also be referred to as democratic universalism and the American creed<sup>25</sup>.

Another ‘foundation myth’ that was commonly believed was that “*America is God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! ... Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American*”<sup>26</sup>. Forged by war, one superior American race would emerge from the crucible. With a mindset for greatness the Americans were ready to build their Empire of Liberty. They have proven to be an idealistic force, driven by their shared dream of being part of the greatest nation on earth. A commonly believed Puritan sermon said that the United States of America “*should be “a city upon a hill” with the eyes of all people directed towards it*”<sup>27</sup>, upon which American exceptionalism is based. Although that shared dream was established in 1776 along with the Declaration of Independence, the term ‘American Dream’ was not coined until 1931. In *The Epic of America*, James Adams described it as a “*dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. ... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for*

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<sup>25</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p.193.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p.51.

<sup>27</sup> D. Stiuliuc, ‘The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity’, *Philologica Jassyensia*, An. VII, Nr. 2, (2011) p.365.

*what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position*<sup>28</sup>. In other words, Americans who work hard and abide by the law will be rewarded with a prosperous life. This is the definition of the American Dream, as it will be understood in this thesis. This concept lies deeply embedded in the hearts, souls and minds of the American people, and is “enshrined as national motto”<sup>29</sup>. This could be explained by the fact that striving for the Dream is the unalienable right of the American people, namely the right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness as stated in the Declaration of Independence<sup>30</sup>. It is a cultural narrative that ties the American people together and unites the nation with a common mindset and “the charm of anticipated success” as De Tocqueville, described in *Democracy in America*<sup>31</sup>. Thus, the American dream is a cultural narrative of American identity and a motivating force for Americans. The right to the pursuit of happiness implies it is not a given thing, but one has to work to achieve happiness. Furthermore, the dream displays American exceptionalism because America is the ‘land of opportunity’ where such a dream can be achieved. According to Cullen, the American Dream is a Lingua Franca. Everyone understands the concept of it, regardless of your background (“from corporate executives to hip-hop artists” as Cullen puts it<sup>32</sup>). This could explain the magnet-like-effect that America as ‘land of opportunities’ has had on immigrants throughout the centuries, attracting millions looking for a better living although they did not even speak English. People want to be part of the American Dream in order to live their own dream. The American Dream lies deep within the collective memory of the American people and develops a common understanding. Stiuliuc argues that so-called cultural narratives constitute ‘truth’ in a particular country, and “shapes beliefs, values and concepts of self and other for its inhabitants”<sup>33</sup>.

At the root of American history lies the mythic Frontier. America’s first citizens were opportunistic individuals. This mindset can be easily explained; only a tiny part of America was yet discovered and it was still inhabited by Native Americans. Immigrants were welcome to explore the inlands and claim a piece as their own to settle down<sup>34</sup>. It was a very competitive and individualistic time. Only

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<sup>28</sup> J. Adams, *The Epic of America*. (Boston, 1931) p.214.

<sup>29</sup> Cullen, *The American Dream*, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> Cullen, *The American Dream*, p.5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p.17.

<sup>33</sup> Stiuliuc, *The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity*, p.364.

<sup>34</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p.19.



true and ‘manly men’ would survive the wilderness of the ‘Wild West’, with its rough landscape and threatening indigenous inhabitants. Folk myths about the Frontier and its backwoodsmen are still deeply enshrined in American culture nowadays, and also shape the so-called Historical American Dream. “It is intimately linked with the individualistic sense that one’s future and success are one’s own responsibility, and therefore that anyone can get ahead”, says Krenzer<sup>35</sup>. Stiuliuc explains the core of the Historical Dream with the words “a sense of destiny was an important part in the self-consciousness of a people who tried to define itself through the re-invention of history”<sup>36</sup>. Characteristics of the Historical Dream are references to the frontier, such as the cowboy. Signs of patriotism are also characteristic for the Historical Dream, such as the proud featuring of the American flag.

However, the aftermath of World War II resulted in a new understanding of the American Dream. The world had changed and so did the American people’s mindset. After a decade of economic depression followed by a war, the American economy was finally thriving because of industrialization<sup>37</sup>. People slowly began to reject the image of the constant hard working life and leisure was the new focus. The new interest in leisure went hand in hand with family life and the middle-class nuclear family was often considered desirable. Homeownership was right at the heart of the new American Dream, which will be referred to as the Contemporary American Dream. The war had changed gender roles because many men were in military service and women fulfilled their jobs meanwhile. Photo campaigns of suburban homes filled with luxury goods accompanied with messages that the woman is the heart of a happy home, were meant to restore traditional gender roles wherein the man is the breadwinner<sup>38</sup>. Mass-produced suburbs such as Levittown offered affordable homes with built-in appliances and a lawn surrounded by a white picket fence. These were advertised as visual representation of the Contemporary American Dream and can thus be considered characteristic. Because the economy was growing and loans were given out easily, striving for ‘material prosperity’ was on many American’s minds. ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’ described a need that many inhabitants of the suburbs felt. It meant that one felt the need to keep up with their neighbors in social, economic and cultural terms.

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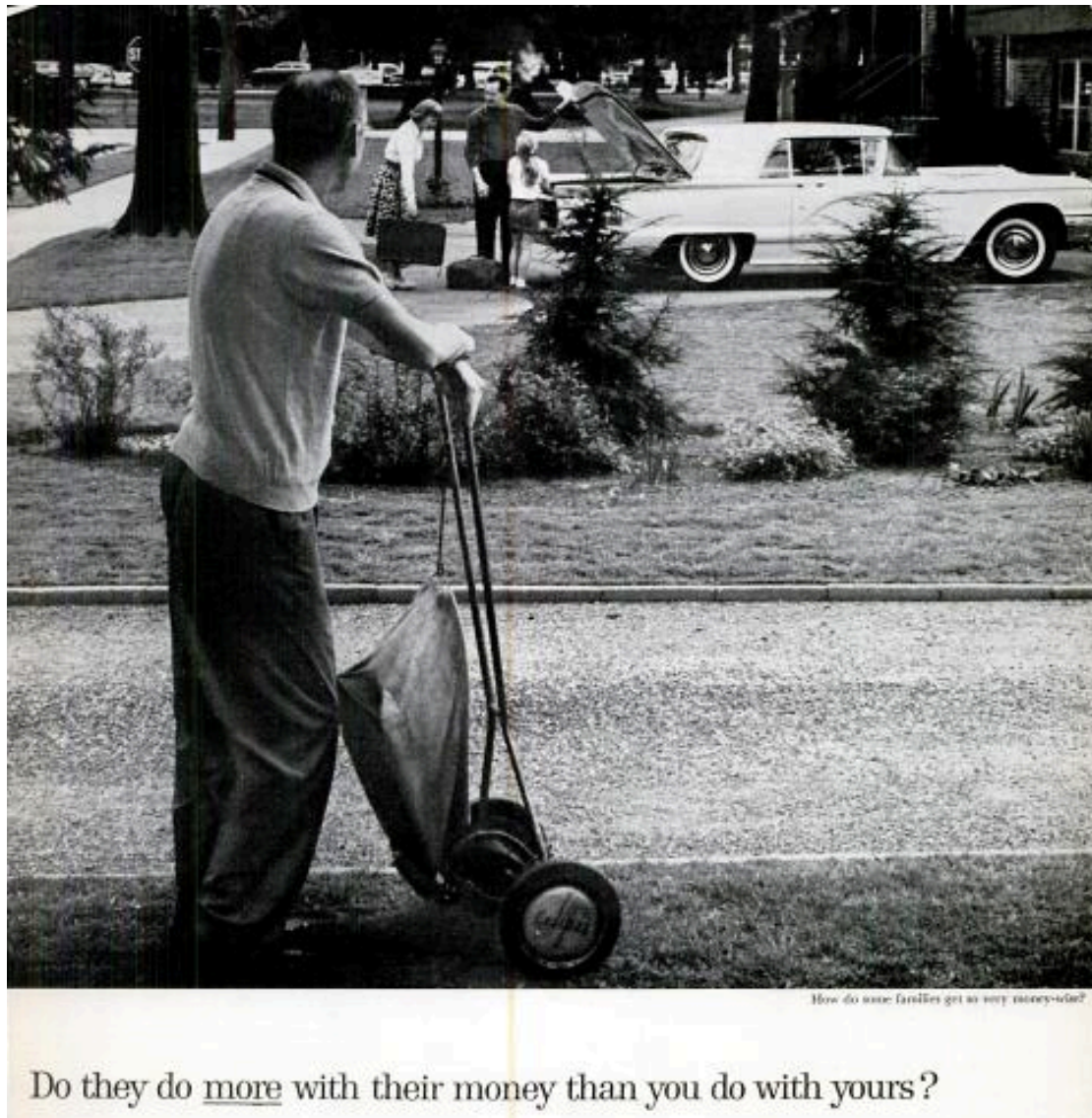
<sup>35</sup> Krenzer, J., *Fly me to the Moon: Space, Race and the American Dream* (University of Puget Sound, Tacoma 2011) p.3.

<sup>36</sup> Stiuliuc, *The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity*, p.365.

<sup>37</sup> Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* p.916.

<sup>38</sup> D. Kearns Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir* (New York 1997) p.73.

The advertisement of the U.S. credit bank displayed on the following page depicts 'Keeping up with the Joneses'.



The advertisement for the U.S. credit bank displayed above picks up on the expression 'Keeping up with the Joneses'. In: LIFE Magazine.

Jackson<sup>39</sup> describes suburban life as "Suburbia...is a manifestation of such fundamental characteristics of American society as conspicuous consumption, a reliance upon the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family nuclear units, the widening division between work and leisure, and the tendency toward racial and economic exclusiveness"<sup>40</sup>. People of color were barred from the

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<sup>39</sup> K. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1985)

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p.4.

suburbs. As much as the concept of the American Dream lies embedded in American culture, so does what Myrdal calls “an American dilemma”<sup>41</sup>. On the one hand stood the belief in the American Creed that preaches equality and freedom to all. On the other hand, reality was not anything like the American Creed. Gerstle argues the ‘war’ between Civic Nationalism (the American Creed) versus Racial Nationalism (reality) defined American society during the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>. “There is bound to be a redefinition of the Negro’s status as a result of this War,” Myrdal argues<sup>43</sup>. This issue will be discussed in the next sub-question of this thesis.

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<sup>41</sup> Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* p.895.

<sup>42</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* p.895.

### 3. A Nation Divided Against Itself



This chapter seeks to answer the question “How did racial exclusion manifest itself in America during 1950s and 1960s?” By the beginning of the 1950s, people of color had long endured the terror that supporters of white supremacy had been carrying out against them. It was deeply embedded in society and was displayed in all forms of racial restriction and violence. So-called Jim Crow laws and black codes enacted after the Civil War in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, allowed Southern whites to deprive blacks of their civil rights<sup>44</sup>. These laws were meant to oppress people of color economically, politically, legally, socially and personally<sup>45</sup>. White rage such as urban riots and lynching often claimed random black victims. For example, blacks would be accused of harming whites and be convicted without a fair trial. Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* describes such an event<sup>46</sup>. Although Jim Crow laws only existed in the South, racial discrimination and segregation was a nationwide phenomenon throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. “Separate but equal” provided both whites and people of color with equal yet segregated public facilities such as public transport and schools.

One of the first milestones for the Civil Rights Movement was the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which outlawed segregation of public schools<sup>47</sup>. In 1955 another milestone for the Civil Rights Movement was achieved after Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Parks’ act sparked a national resistance to racial inequality. By holding non-violent protests such as marches and sit-ins and displaying civil resistance, the Civil Rights movement challenged the racial exclusion that held American society under its spell<sup>48</sup>. As discussed in the first chapter, homeownership and suburban life was right at the

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<sup>44</sup> R. Davis, ‘From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview’ (2009 version), [http://www.foothill.edu/attach/bss/22\\_Jim%20Crow\\_EC.pdf](http://www.foothill.edu/attach/bss/22_Jim%20Crow_EC.pdf) (18 May 2014) p.1.

<sup>45</sup> R. Brooker, ‘The Five Pillars of Jim Crow’ (2013 version), <http://abhmuseum.org/2012/10/the-five-pillars-of-jim-crow/> (18 May 2014) p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Davis, *From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview*, p.1.

<sup>47</sup> Dibari, *Advancing the Civil Rights Movement: Race and Geography of Life Magazine’s Visual Representation, 1954-1965* (Athens, OH 2011), p.48.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p.4.

heart of the contemporary American Dream. Therefore, it is interesting for this research to look at how racial exclusion manifested itself in suburbia. Wiese<sup>49</sup> argues that suburbia was a hotbed for racial exclusion in postwar United States of America. White suburbians projected their fear of all sorts of calamities such as crime, health and status on their colored scapegoat. "Among their greatest concerns was that property values would experience a severe drop with the arrival of black neighbors"<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, people of color were barred from suburban areas by for example arson and a "county wide system of barring Negro home builders in suburban areas by irregular building regulations"<sup>51</sup>. Finally, Wiese argues that white immigrants felt threatened by people of color because it "threatened their efforts to rise in status and stability in white American society"<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, Wiese argues that people of color were referred to as "forbidden neighbors"<sup>53</sup>.

Although the economic boom benefited many Americans at the time, many people of color did not benefit from it. They would often be denied the same rights as white Americans or would not be hired at all<sup>54</sup>. White Americans were generally making more money and were living a life more luxurious than their parents had. However, this excluded people of color from increasing consumerism in American society. If people of color did have the money to buy a suburban home, they would often face the irregular building regulations mentioned above. In the highly segregated American society of the 1950s and early 1960s, people of color generally lived in an all-black community. Galyean's research is focused on racial exclusion from Levittown<sup>55</sup>. This suburb is considered characteristic for the American Dream in the previous chapter. Cohen's findings point out that in 1953, Levittown was the largest all-white community in the United States<sup>56</sup>. In spite of housing segregation being declared as unconstitutional in 1917, the example of

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<sup>49</sup> A. Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p.98.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p.97.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p.98.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p.98.

<sup>54</sup> S. Turner & J. Bound, 'Closing the Gap or Widening the Divide: the Effects of the G.I. Bill and World War II on the Educational Outcomes of Black Americans', *NBER Working Paper 9044* (2002) p.1.

<sup>55</sup> C. Galyean, 'Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs' (2012 version), <http://www.ushistoryscene.com/uncategorized/levittown/> (14 May 2014) p.1.

<sup>56</sup> Cohen, L., 'A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar American', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2004) p. 237.

Levittown shows its occurrence in reality<sup>57</sup>. In the heat of the Cold War, Galyean further argues that people who supported racial integration were often deemed Communist<sup>58</sup>. Although the Civil Rights Movement achieved several victories during the 1950s, their struggle for equality still had a long way to go. In the early 1960s several actions were taken, such as more sit-ins to protest against segregated policies and the so-called Freedom Rides of 1961. The image below displays places in the South where sit-ins were held in 1960.



From: "Sit-ins Successful Strategy" in: LIFE Magazine, 19 September 1960, p.40.

It shows that although violence against people of color was most intense in the South, protest against racial inequality took place there too instead of only in the safer North. People of color would ride interstate buses to test the Supreme Court's decision that outlawed segregated interstate travel<sup>59</sup>. Often they would be attacked by white mobs, for example Ku Klux Klan members. Many people of color were heavily beaten; others were imprisoned for disrupting the public order<sup>60</sup>. Many Americans, especially in the North, took notice of the Freedom Rides, which resulted in public support for their cause. President Kennedy thus reinforced the

<sup>57</sup> Galyean, *Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs*, p.1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> Dibari, *Advancing the Civil Rights Movement*, p.110.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p.111.

Supreme Court's decision mentioned earlier. In the Southern States, the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) aided people of color to register for voting with their so-called voter registration project<sup>61</sup>. They faced an enormous opposition from whites such as the Ku Klux Klan. Many SNCC members and voters were tortured and murdered<sup>62</sup>. The media and American society increasingly picked up the cause that the Civil Rights Movement was fighting for. Photography showed the public the violence that people of color faced when fighting for their cause<sup>63</sup>. This often led to public support and debates, for example after the March 1963 Birmingham campaign. Policemen with fire hoses and dogs attacked non-violent protestors, to which the American public reacted with outrage<sup>64</sup>.

On August 28, 1963 public attention for the Civil Rights Movement reached its peak during the march on Washington. Here, Martin Luther King Jr. held his "I Have a Dream" speech. President Kennedy was somewhat praised for his efforts to better the social position of people of color, there was still much to be done. However, Kennedy was assassinated not much later and could not continue passing new legislations. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, continued what Kennedy had started. The following years would bring upon a whirlwind of change to American society. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed and outlawed all forms of discrimination and exclusion based on race, color, religion, or origin<sup>65</sup>. However, many people of color in the South were still barred from voting. Non-violent marches were held, for example the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches led by Luther King Jr. The first march, "Bloody Sunday", sparked anger nationwide because state troopers attacked the non-violent protestors<sup>66</sup>. The second and third march gained a lot of support and even protection from the army after wave of critique on "Bloody Sunday"<sup>67</sup>. The Selma to Montgomery marches will be further discussed in the last sub-question. The 1965 Voting Rights Act ensured the right to

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<sup>61</sup> D. Baldwin, 'The Civil Rights Movement' (2011 version), The Africana Age, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-civil-rights.html>, (27 May 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, p.1.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, *Enduring Moments: Civil Rights Photography in Time, LIFE and Newsweek*, p.21.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, p.6.

<sup>65</sup> Dibari, *Advancing the Civil Rights Movement*, p.3.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, *Enduring Moments: Civil Rights Photography in Time, LIFE and Newsweek*, p.15.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, p.16.

vote for all Americans<sup>68</sup>. Finally, in 1968 the Immigration and Nationality Services Act made immigration for non-Europeans easier. Lastly, the 1968 Fair Housing Act outlawed discrimination or exclusion based on race in real estate<sup>69</sup>.

Many have argued that photography was the ‘weapon of choice’ of the non-violent Civil Rights Movement<sup>70</sup>. Photographs had the American people face the violence carried out against people of color, which raised awareness of racial violence amongst the American public. Capa calls this the concerned photographer<sup>71</sup>. He argues many photographers were motivated to capture photographs that could evoke a reaction from the American public. This slowly led to an increasing support for ‘the Negro’s cause’<sup>72</sup>. For example, Goldberg stresses the impact of photography on society, illustrated by the Birmingham Campaign<sup>73</sup>. This particular event will be further discussed in the last sub-question. Dibari argues LIFE Magazine helped to put the Civil Rights struggle on the American public agenda by publishing photographs of Civil Rights events<sup>74</sup>. Furthermore, Dibari points out that leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were very much aware of the powerful impact of the media<sup>75</sup>. Martin Luther King Jr. once told LIFE photographer Flip Schulke, “The world doesn’t know this happened, because you didn’t photograph it. I’m not being cold-blooded about it, but it is so much more important for you to take a picture of us getting beaten up than for you to be another person joining in the fray”<sup>76</sup>. This will be further discussed in the last sub-question.

In conclusion, racial exclusion manifested itself throughout the nation during the 1950s and early 1960s. However, due to the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, more than one hundred years after issuing the Emancipation Proclamation change was finally upon American Society. By the end of the 1960s most reforming legislations had been enacted. Also, the importance of photography in the struggle the Civil Rights Movement has been addressed. Photographs had

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<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p.22.

<sup>69</sup> Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* p.960.

<sup>70</sup> G. Parks, *A Choice of Weapons* (New York 1966).

<sup>71</sup> C. Capa, *The Concerned Photographer* (New York 1968).

<sup>72</sup> Gonzalez ‘Civil Rights Battles, in Black and White’ (2010 version), The New York Times Blog, [http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/26/archive-14/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/26/archive-14/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0) (18 May 2014).

<sup>73</sup> Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, p.203-212.

<sup>74</sup> Dibari, *Advancing the Civil Rights Movement*, p.iii.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, p.11.

<sup>76</sup> G. Roberts & H. Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York, 2006), p.383.



American society face the violence against people of color. This will be further discussed in the last sub-question. Finally, of specific interest to this research is racial exclusion from the suburban areas, as those have been identified as core characteristic of the Contemporary American Dream. Hence, by excluding people of color from suburban life, they were consequently excluded from achieving the American Dream. Kushner describes racial exclusion from suburbs as following: “it epitomizes how systematically people can be shut out of a dream”<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> D. Kushner, *Levittown. Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb* (New York 2009) p.xv.

#### 4. Suburbia

This chapter seeks to answer the question “How was the American Dream represented in photography during the 1950s and 1960s?” As discussed in the first sub-question, the characteristics of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s were a nuclear family with traditional gender roles, homeownership, luxury consumer goods and leisure. The media quickly picked this up and presented photographs of the newly desired life of the post-war Contemporary American Dream. The famous home- and garden photographer Maynard Parker provided the media with photographs of such scenes, as the one displayed below.



“Family Barbecue in Lakewood Plaza, Long Beach, CA.” in: House & Home Magazine, 1950. Photograph by Maynard Parker.

The photograph displays the Contemporary Dream of homeownership and free time spent with the family. The photograph above thus contains all characteristics of the photographic representation of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the photograph’s soft-light setting gives it a somewhat romantic and dreamy feeling, which fits its representation of a national ideal well. Photographs like

these were often published in the media and sustained the dream of many Americans that their dreams were attainable if they worked hard. The widespread photographs of 'suburbia' thus established a stronger desire for the Contemporary Dream. Besides Parker, another famous photographer of the American suburbs is Bill Owens, who published his book *Suburbia* in 1973. His book contains photographs of residents of Livermore, California, accompanied by their comments. Owens' work is of a "neutral journalistic stance" and his photographs are accompanied by "the dry, terse, deadpan commentary of the residents themselves"<sup>78</sup>. This can easily be seen in his photographs, as Frank's subjects are often not aware of the camera while Owens' subjects are posing. Owen's photographs are somewhat like testimonies of how wonderful suburban life is, such as in the photographs displayed below.



"We're really happy. Our kids are healthy, we eat good food and we have a really nice home" in: *Suburbia*, 1973. Photographs by Bill Owens.

In the second sub-question it has become apparent that people of color were generally barred from suburban life. Wiese argues that many white suburbanians were afraid that people of color would bring crime to their neighborhoods<sup>79</sup>. Furthermore, they believed that house prices would drop in neighborhoods with a high rate of colored inhabitants. As the desirable image of the American Dream in popular culture was set in an all white suburbia, this was also reflected in photography. Although people of color were considered "forbidden neighbors", many white

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<sup>78</sup> Morril, C. *Suburbia* (2000 version), <http://www.cmp.ucr.edu/exhibitions/suburbia/> (4 May 2014).

<sup>79</sup> Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*, p.98.

families had colored staff<sup>80</sup>. As such, Grady refers to the portrayal of people of color in a suburban setting as “the iconography of segregation”<sup>81</sup>. This means that people of color were portrayed in the “intimate social sphere of whites”, but only as subordinate servants of white needs<sup>82</sup>. In other words, the “iconography of segregation” typically reflects that a white man’s personal sphere is a colored man’s workplace. In conclusion, photographic representations of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s contain all of the characteristics identified in the first sub-question. However, only white Americans are actually living the American Dream. People of color are either completely excluded from photographic representations of the American Dream, or are depicted as subordinate servants fulfilling the wants and needs of whites. The latter is referred to as “the iconography of segregation”<sup>83</sup>. Since this thesis is focused on LIFE Magazine, research must now point out whether “the iconography of segregation”<sup>84</sup> also becomes apparent in LIFE Magazine’s content.

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<sup>80</sup> Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, p.99.

<sup>81</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, p.234.

<sup>83</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, p.225.

## 5. A Safe Haven Amidst Turmoil

This chapter seeks to answer the question “How was the American Dream portrayed in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?” During the 1950s and 1960s LIFE Magazine played a significant role in shaping a national image of the United States of America and the American people with its photographs of middle-class nuclear families that “signify a national identity”<sup>85</sup>. Centanni’s research shows that the world as portrayed in LIFE Magazine often displayed a desired lifestyle rather than the life the American people were actually living<sup>86</sup>. The American Dream was thus presented as an ideal worth striving for. This desired image encompassed previously addressed characteristics of the American Dream, such as a middle-class nuclear family, homeownership and the possession of luxury household goods. As discussed in the first sub-question, the Contemporary American Dream came into being during the postwar period that had changed the American people’s mindset about what is most important in life. Although the economy was thriving and people were enjoying their newly acquired purchasing power, the ongoing McCarthyism held fear on the back of the minds of Americans until the mid 1950s<sup>87</sup>. LIFE Magazine efficiently anticipated this fear by presenting “an image of the safe haven of suburbia amidst social turmoil”<sup>88</sup>.

Taking the sociological Fear-Then-Relief and Fear Appeal theories into account, it is likely that LIFE’s Magazine’s strategy resulted in the instant nationwide embracement of LIFE Magazine. The theories argue that addressing fear followed up by a solution is very likely to be accepted by the reader<sup>89</sup>. In LIFE Magazine’s case this would be a combination of reporting about McCarthyism while simultaneously presenting an image of an ideal life in the suburbs in photographs and advertisements. This analysis is confirmed by Centanni’s findings that LIFE “presented the safe traditions and family values which many sought in the postwar adjustment period”<sup>90</sup>. Additionally, she argues “as it was predominantly a picture magazine, LIFE was the perfect mechanism for advertising since the most efficient

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<sup>85</sup> Kozol, *Life’s America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism*, p.22.

<sup>86</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.1.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, p.1.

<sup>89</sup> R. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion* (Oxford 2010) p.268.

<sup>90</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.1.

way to sell a product was to show it<sup>91</sup>. Both advertisements and photographs in LIFE Magazine showed the American public images of the Contemporary American Dream: delighted nuclear families, their homes filled with luxury goods and leisure. The latter is well displayed in the advertisement for Wheaties Cereal below.



Wheaties Cereal (1958) Vintage Advertisement, published in LIFE Magazine.

The portrayed nuclear family has traditional gender roles because the man is preparing the boat while his wife is cooking and keeping her eyes on the children. They are enjoying their free time together with their luxury consumer goods that are neatly displayed as if it were a shop window. Advertisements for consumer luxury goods in LIFE Magazine were generally aimed to address all family members<sup>92</sup>.

For example, if the father were to buy a brand new high-end stove for his family, they would all benefit from more nutritious food. The mother would have to spend

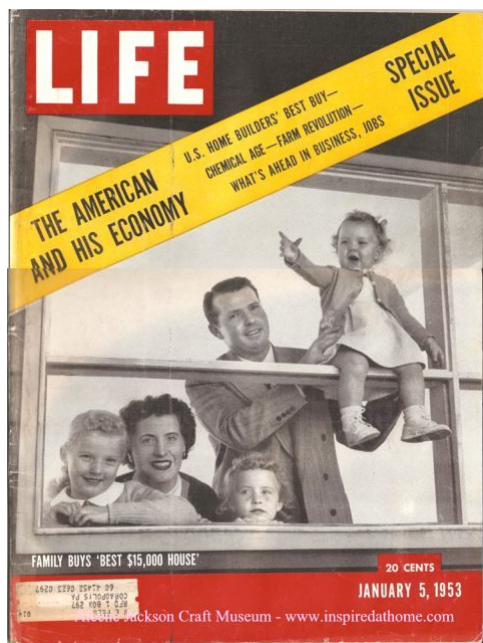


less time cooking which would leave her more time for leisure with the family, such as in the advertisements displayed above. After work the family could then engage in all-American activities such as playing baseball or enjoying their luxury consumer

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, p.1.

possessions. As Centanni's research pointed out, the depicted life in LIFE Magazine was not reality for many Americans but rather a desired image that was worth striving for<sup>93</sup>. Since advertisements are meant to sell a product they may easily display a utopian world. Hence, this research will now further analyze photographic and written content in LIFE Magazine from the 1950s and 1960s.



For example, this January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1953 special issue of LIFE Magazine displayed left is centered on the American economy. Featured items on the cover include “U.S. Home Owner’s Best Buy”, “What’s Ahead in Business, Jobs” and “Family Buys ‘Best \$15,000 House’”. The January 5<sup>th</sup> 1953 special issue of LIFE Magazine warmly endorses the thriving American ‘bull economy’. This term is used to describe a financial market trend of a recovering economy with positive prospects for the future. The article about the “Best \$15,000

House” discusses the advantages of the new ‘trade secrets house’. In the new suburbs, contractors and building companies worked together and shared knowledge in order to build affordable yet standard-setting luxury family homes from preassembled parts in six weeks time. Furthermore, the article boasts about the features of the home, of which the most basic version has a starting price of \$15,000. An open kitchen with built-in appliances, a separate laundry room and a fenced-off garden were all included in this price. As the article points out multiple times, such an offer had never been seen before. Since homeownership was right at the heart of the American Dream, such articles published in LIFE Magazine further cultivated the desirable image of the American Dream among the American people<sup>94</sup>. Moreover, Kozol argues that readers of LIFE Magazine developed their identity from the image of the American Dream as presented by LIFE Magazine<sup>95</sup>. Centanni’s study shows similar results when she argues, “many also adopted the

<sup>93</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.11.

<sup>94</sup> Kozol, *Life’s America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism*, p.22.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p.22.

suburban mindset, which could then transform into the suburban lifestyle through emulation of the illustrated scenarios”<sup>96</sup>.

In conclusion, LIFE Magazine’s representation of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s shows similarity to the previously discussed photographic representations of the American Dream at that time. Generally, the representations encompass the characteristics of the American Dream as identified in the first sub-question. For example, the emphasis lies on a nuclear family and home-ownership. However, the advertisements in LIFE Magazine display a slightly exaggerated reality. Centanni argues that instead of mirroring the actual experience of the American people, LIFE Magazine rather presented them a desired lifestyle set in “safe haven suburbia”<sup>97</sup>. Both Kozol’s and Centanni’s findings show that the American Dream as portrayed by LIFE Magazine helped to shape the consumer identity of the American people. Furthermore, it can be argued the American people adopted LIFE Magazine’s visual representation of the American Dream by mirroring that image onto their own lives. In other words, LIFE’s visual representation of the American Dream set a desirable standard of living in the United States of America. However, similarly to the findings of the previous sub-question, LIFE Magazine’s portrayal of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s also depicts the “iconography of segregation”<sup>98</sup>. People of color are either completely excluded from LIFE Magazine’s representation of the American Dream, or are depicted as subordinate servants



fulfilling the wants and needs of whites, such as in the photograph displayed below. The African-American woman is serving the needs of the white family, who are meanwhile spending free time together.

“An African-American maid prepares a white family's supper in Greenville, SC”. Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White for LIFE Magazine, 1956.

<sup>96</sup> Centanni, *Advertising in LIFE Magazine and the Encouragement of Suburban Ideals*, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem, p.1.

<sup>98</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.



## 6. From Word-Minded to Visually-Minded

This chapter seeks to answer the question “How is the race issue addressed in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?” As the previous sub-questions have pointed out, visual representations of the American Dream display the “iconography of segregation”, which places people of color in a subordinate position as a servant of white needs<sup>99</sup>. But how does LIFE Magazine address people of color outside the American Dream? As discussed in the methodology of this thesis, research is conducted from a selection of several LIFE Magazine issues from the 1950s and 1960s. Although not all coverage on the race issue can be discussed, the examples provided in this chapter give numerous insights about the race issue and American society from the 1950s and 1960s. Thornton argues that LIFE Magazine held an exceptional position in American media at the time because it “violated the norm of many white, general-interest magazines” that refrained from publishing stories of people of color<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, he argues this was not often seen at the time for a major magazine with a largely white audience<sup>101</sup>. For example, Thornton points out that LIFE Magazine intensively covered the 1955 murder of fourteen-year old African-American Emmett Till. Till was a victim of racial violence because he was murdered before he could be questioned about possibly whistling to a white woman. LIFE Magazine published about Till in multiple issues and the news articles were complemented by LIFE Magazine’s signature visuals. One editorial contained a photograph of Till’s mangled body. “Its stark and powerful pictures, helped transform Americans from being word-minded to visually-minded people,” argues Kaplan<sup>102</sup> on LIFE Magazine’s influence.

On September 3rd 1956 LIFE Magazine began publishing “A Major ‘LIFE’ Series” called “The Background of Segregation”. Published in five consecutive issues of LIFE Magazine, the articles and photographs were “designed to give useful perspective” to the reader<sup>103</sup>. The editors argue this was much needed after the

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<sup>99</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.

<sup>100</sup> Thornton, *The Murder of Emmett Till. Myth, Memory and National Magazine Response*, p.97.

<sup>101</sup> Thornton, *The Murder of Emmett Till. Myth, Memory and National Magazine Response*, p.101.

<sup>102</sup> J. Kaplan, ‘The LIFE Magazine Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore’, *Journalism History*, Vol. 25, No.2 (1999) p.126.

<sup>103</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 3 September 1956, p.43.

outcome of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case. The preface of the series claims all sides of the issue would be shown.

The first part of the series is called “How the Negro Came to Slavery in America” and describes the historical course of slavery. The second part “Freedom to Jim Crow”, in which life for people of color after the abolition of slavery is described. Furthermore, the article describes the Civil War and the increasing violence against people of color. It is written fairly upfront and contains rather graphic photographs such as the one displayed below.



**A NEGRO IS CREMATED** by a grinning lynch mob in Omaha, Neb. in 1919. The outrage began on a Sunday evening, when 5,000 people stormed a courthouse where the Negro, accused of assaulting a white girl, was held. Omaha's mayor tried to intervene, was hanged on a trolley pole and rescued in critical condition

by police. Meanwhile the mob seized the Negro, hanged him to a pole, riddled him with shots, cut him down, dragged him through the streets, then burned his body. In 1919 some 25 large and small race riots occurred in the U.S., the worst of them in Chicago where 23 Negroes and 15 whites were killed, 537 injured.

From: “Peaceful Proposal, Bloody Aftermath” in *LIFE Magazine*, 10 September 1956, p.102.

Further on in the article, the “typical U.S. Negro” is identified based on genetics and the anthropological findings<sup>104</sup>. Several photographs of facial features of “the typical U.S. Negro” are compared to whites<sup>105</sup>. Although this part of the article is not

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<sup>104</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 10 September 1956, p.106.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*, p.107.

necessarily racist, it could be slightly offensive and more subjective than the historical background discussed earlier.

The third part of “The Background of Segregation” is called “The Voices of the White South” and tells the stories of White Southerners and their attitudes towards people of color. For example, one Southerner fears the end of segregation will mean amalgamation, which he dreads. Furthermore, the article states millions of Southerners fear people of color could potentially “put the white man out of work”<sup>106</sup>. This resembles the fear of white immigrants towards people of color as discussed in the second sub-question. They believed an increasing acceptance of people of color “threatened their efforts to rise in status and stability in white American society”<sup>107</sup>. However, the third part of “The Background of Segregation” on the one hand also features an article about a white-collar “respectful, thoughtful citizen” in favor of equality. “They are half of us, their progress is our progress,” he argues<sup>108</sup>. On the other hand, he does believe progress must take place “within the separate but equal formula”<sup>109</sup>.



From: “They’re Half of Us” in LIFE Magazine, 17 September 1956, p.106. Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White.

<sup>106</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 17 September 1956, p.104.

<sup>107</sup> Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, p.98.

<sup>108</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 17 September 1956, p.106.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*, p.106.

Another article published in the third part of “The Background of Segregation” describes a Southerner’s opinion. “Negroes should be treated like children” because they lack “moral standards and basic sensitivities that would make integration work,” he argues<sup>110</sup>. The article is followed up by “They Just Don’t Care”, the firsthand account of a Southern sharecropper who works amongst a majority of colored people. He sums up that ‘Negroes’ bathe only once a month and do not tend their crops very well. “If our landlord came down here and saw my daughter playing with a colored boy, he wouldn’t respect us. Only poor class whites do that. We’re trying to keep our self-respect and keep the highest level socially we can,” he elaborates his point of view<sup>111</sup>.

Finally, the third part of “The Background of Segregation” displays several Southern politicians’ opinion towards segregation. Mississippi Senator Eastland argues, “The Supreme Court of the United States of America, in the false name of law and justice, has perpetrated a monstrous crime. The anti-segregation decisions are dishonest decisions. The judges who rendered them violated their oaths of office. The Court has responded to a radical pro-Communist movement in this country”<sup>112</sup>. Once again, such an opinion resembles the fear that whites projected onto people of color as discussed in the second sub-question.

The fourth part of “The Background of Segregation” is called “The Negro and His Life of Restraint” and deals with the effect of restraints “in job, pride, education, job, opportunity, recreation and housing”<sup>113</sup>. Contrary to the previous part of the series, this article focuses on the experiences of colored people. However, the biggest difference between the third and fourth part is the visual representation of whites and people of color. White people in the third part of the series are portrayed in their suburban homes accompanied by consumer goods and other features of modernity. People of color in the fourth part of the series are framed in a completely different looking world, as displayed on the following page.

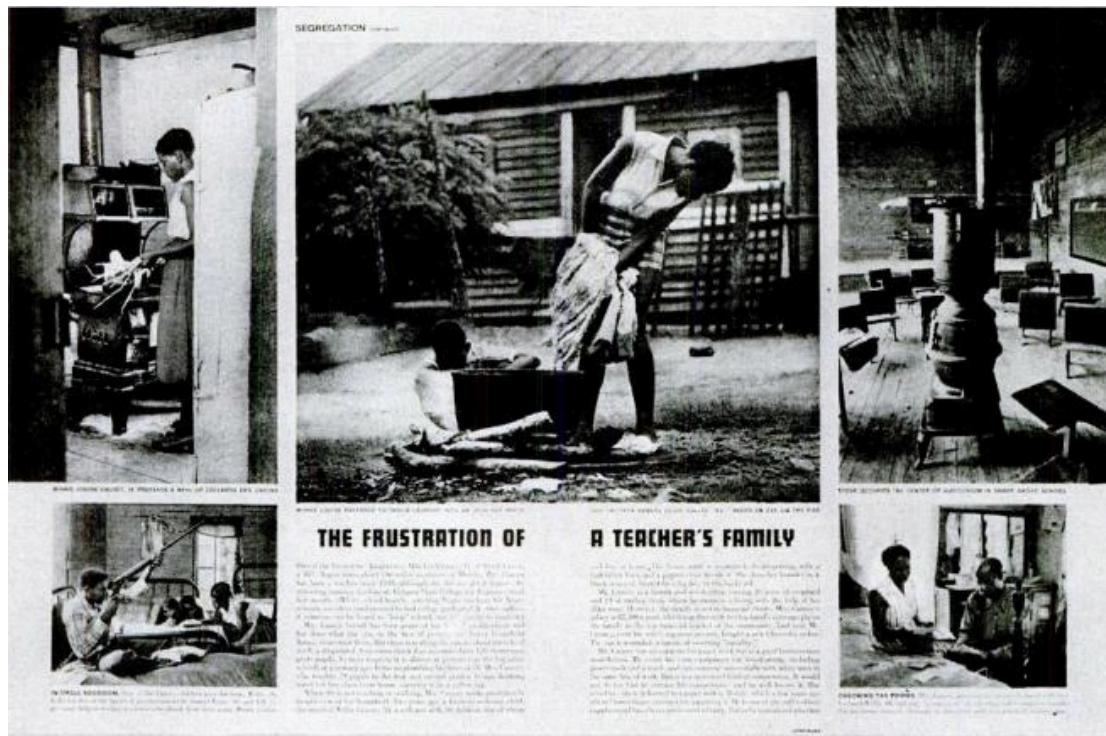
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<sup>110</sup> Ibidem, p.112.

<sup>111</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 17 September 1956, p.115.

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem, p.120.

<sup>113</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 24 September 1956, p.99.



From: "The Frustration of a Teacher's Family" in LIFE Magazine, 24 September 1956, p.103. Photographs by Gordon Parks.

Photographed around their "disintegrating shack" home the Causey family is portrayed. The center photograph displayed above is captioned "Minnie Louise prepares to throw the laundry into an iron pot while her brother Samuel Louis, called "S.L.," keeps an eye on the fire"<sup>114</sup>. As previously addressed, people of color generally did not benefit equally from the increasing wealth the industrialization had brought forth. Therefore, they did not share the newly acquired purchasing power white people enjoyed while engaging in consumerism. The article does say Mr. Causey recently purchased a brand new car but there is no photograph of such a thing. By only displaying photographs of really poor people of color, it could be argued that LIFE Magazine is framing. As a result, LIFE Magazine could have shaped a biased image of 'a Negro's life' amongst its readers. Framing is a phenomena studied in social sciences. It means to show something from a certain perspective only, which could leave the viewer with a biased perception<sup>115</sup>.

Rather than attempting to display a balanced image, it could be argued that LIFE Magazine frames an image. In that image people of color only look up to what white people disallow them. An example would be the photograph on the left, which

<sup>114</sup> LIFE Magazine, 24 September 1956, p.103.

<sup>115</sup> Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion*, p.218.

displays colored girls whom cannot visit a white-only segregated playground. Secondly, the photograph on the right displays a grandma and her granddaughter whom have to remain window-shoppers because they cannot afford to purchase anything.



From: "Way of Life" in LIFE Magazine, 24 September 1956, p.107. Photographs by Gordon Parks.

The concluding fifth part of the "The Background of Segregation" is called "Morals and Segregation". The evangelist Billy Graham seeks to find an answer to questions such as "Does the bible condone segregation?" and "How should a Christian act on the issue?"<sup>116</sup> Prior to writing the article in LIFE Magazine, Graham had been contacted by president Eisenhower, whom expressed his concern about the race issue. Eisenhower believed race relations could be bettered through the church<sup>117</sup>. An answer to the race issue is sought in religion because "the spiritual and moral responsibilities involved in it far outweigh the political aspects of it," elaborates Graham<sup>118</sup>. Graham argues that according to the bible one should treat as one wants to be treated and that it preaches justice and mercy. "When men are standing at the foot of the Cross, there are no racial barriers," argues Graham in favor of bettering race relations through church because it brings forth community integration<sup>119</sup>. Furthermore, Graham compares the role Christians should take on towards the race issue to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Graham is in favor of improving race relations and uses the Bible numerous times to support his

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<sup>116</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 1 October 1956, p.2.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*, p.138.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, p.143.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*, p.140-143.

argumentation. However, when discussing people using the Bible to support their argumentation against improving race relations, Graham quotes “All right, if you want to believe in enforced segregation, you may do so. But do not use the Bible to support your arguments. Such use is misuse”<sup>120</sup>.

The December 10<sup>th</sup> 1956 issue of LIFE Magazine contains the article “A Sequel to Segregation”. It is a follow up to the article “The Frustration of a Teacher’s Family”, which appeared in the fourth part of “The Background of Segregation” series and featured the life of the Causey family. After their story was published in LIFE Magazine, the Causey family faced great difficulties with the white population of Choctaw County, Alabama. The latter argued they were put down as harsh people while they actually had been supporting the Causeys, for example by lending them money. Accusing the Causeys of lying, they denied them any sort of service such as groceries and gas. Mrs. Causey was fired from her job as a teacher and Mr. Causey was fired from his woodcutting job. Eventually, the Causeys were forced to move out of state because of their reputation after appearing in LIFE Magazine. Representatives of LIFE Magazine investigated the issue and eventually helped the Causeys move out of Alabama where they started a new life that was forced upon them. It is debatable whether the original article was slightly exaggerated by LIFE Magazine in order to be sensational, or if the intention was to truly represent the Causeys. In 1957, the first black family moved into the previously discussed Levittown, PA. When moving in, the Myers family faced a mob throwing rocks at their home and shouting insults. After a while, state troopers banned all further assembly. Several Levittown residents whom hoped to legally evict the Myers family formed the “Levittown Betterment Committee” as displayed on the following page<sup>121</sup>.

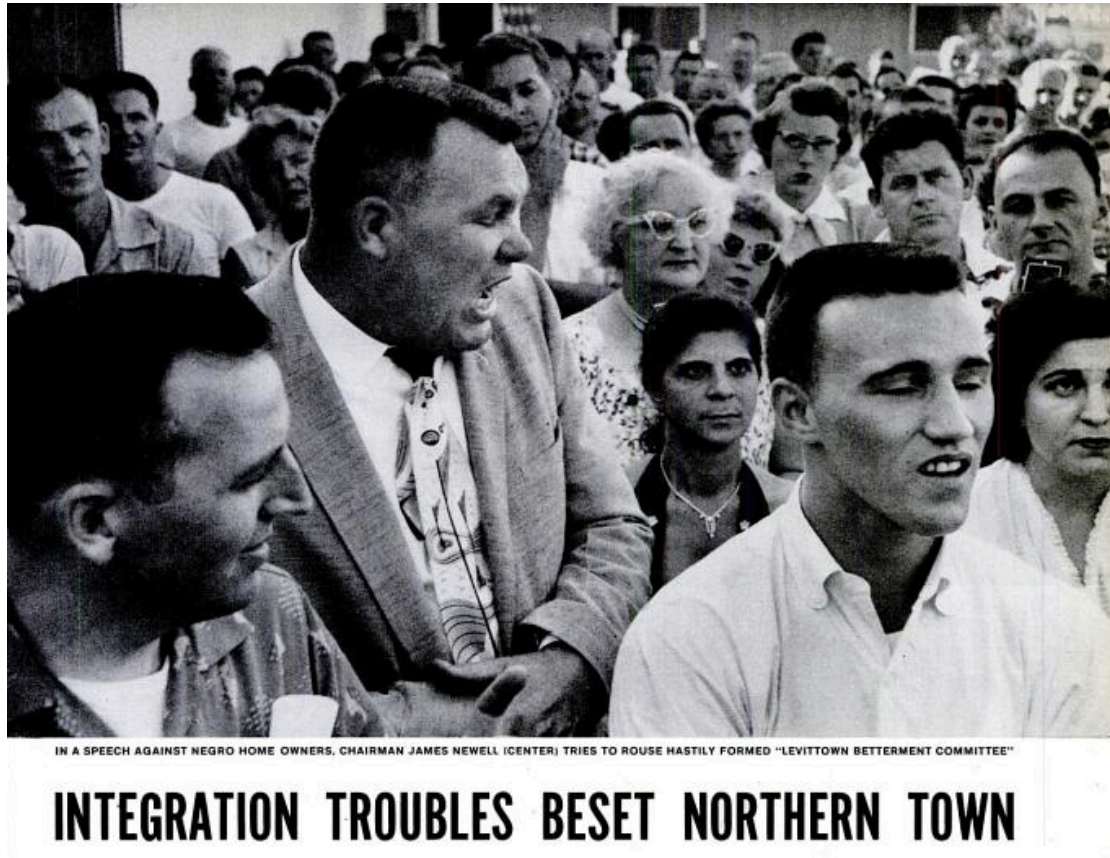
“He’s probably a nice guy, but every time I look at him I see \$2.000 drop off the value of my house” is the first sentence of the article “Integration Troubles Beset Northern Town,” says a neighbor of the Myers family<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 1 October 1956, p.140.

<sup>121</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 10 December 1957, p.43.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibidem*, p.43.



From: "Integration Troubles Beset Northern Town" in LIFE Magazine, 2 September 1957, p.43.

However, the article also states that there were some neighbors that supported the Myers family. A neighbor expresses his feelings towards the issue in LIFE Magazine. He believes it is part of a "transitional period in racial integration" and hopes it "will be settled peaceably"<sup>123</sup>.

On the contrary, the article "They Fight a Fire That Won't Go Out" that appeared in the May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1963 issue of LIFE Magazine is far less peaceable. It reports the racial violence displayed at the so-called Birmingham campaign in Alabama. Police answered the non-violent protest with fire hoses and police dogs. Photographer Charles Moore captured the racial violence on camera, as displayed below. The photographs are nowadays considered iconic for struggle of the Civil Rights Movement<sup>124</sup>. For example, Goldberg uses Moore's photographs to illustrate the power of photography<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> LIFE Magazine, 10 December 1957, p.44.

<sup>124</sup> Anderson, *Enduring Moments*, p.14.

<sup>125</sup> Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, p.203-212.



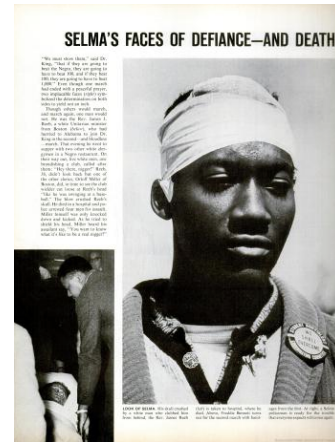


From: "They Fight a Fire That Won't Go Out" in LIFE Magazine, 1963, p.26-36. Photographs by Charles Moore.

Anderson argues that although several media sources reported about the events in Birmingham, LIFE Magazine stood out by showing confronting photographs of violence against non-violent protestors<sup>126</sup>. The photographs caused a stir across the nation and even globally. United States of America Government officials felt urged to react to the critique. The United States of America was profiling itself worldwide as the protector of freedom, for example in Vietnam. That was not very credible with events such as the Birmingham campaign going on back home because American citizens were obviously living a life of restraint. As discussed in the second sub-question, people of color still faced inequality after the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The previously addressed Voting Rights marches in Selma, AL. featured on the cover of the March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965 issue of LIFE Magazine. The six-page piece "Selma: Beatings Start the Savage Season" consists of captioned photographs and a small text about Martin Luther King's leading role in the marches and in the Civil Rights Movement in general<sup>127</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> Anderson, *Enduring Moments*, p.11.

<sup>127</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 19 March 1965, p.30-36.



From: "Selma: Beatings Start the Savage Season" in LIFE Magazine, 19 March 1965, p.30-36.

The photographs published display the violence that took place. The photograph displayed above left is captioned "Troopers slam into the front ranks. As teargas is fired, the troopers laying about them with their billy clubs, battering Negroes to the ground. Dazed and wounded Negroes helplessly await aid"<sup>128</sup>. The reaction of the American public towards this article resembled reactions to the reports of the 1963 Birmingham campaign<sup>129</sup>. Anderson argues the general reaction to the article amongst the American public was outrage. Such violence used against a non-violent protest was inhuman<sup>130</sup>. The event shook up the American people, whom massively started supporting 'the Negro's cause'. President Johnson held a speech praising African-Americans for their brave efforts<sup>131</sup>. However, it does not become apparent that LIFE Magazine necessarily changed its use of language about people of color after the event.

In conclusion, there are two sides to the way LIFE Magazine addresses the race issue. On the one hand, LIFE Magazine remains to report from a seemingly neutral stance, although displaying subtle support towards people of color. Furthermore, Thornton's research pointed out LIFE Magazine had an unprecedented coverage of race-related subjects<sup>132</sup>. On the other hand, it has only become apparent in this sub-question that LIFE Magazine seems to be in favor of equal rights. However, people of color are only displayed as victims, for example of violence or poverty as pointed at in the analysis of the September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1956 issue. As such, the emphasis lies on what people of color cannot have and are only

<sup>128</sup> *LIFE Magazine*, 19 March 1965, p.31.

<sup>129</sup> Anderson, *Enduring Moments*, p.22.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem*, p.21.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, p.22.

<sup>132</sup> Thornton, *The Murder of Emmett Till*, p.99.

portrayed looking up to whites. It does not become apparent whether LIFE Magazine only supports equal rights or is also in favor of for example interracial marriage and fully integrated neighborhoods. No such evidence can be conducted from LIFE Magazine's content. Moreover, it could be argued LIFE Magazine's representation of people of color is framed because it displays a single image, namely looking up to whatever white people have excluded people of color from. This could be explained by the nature of LIFE Magazine's readership, which predominantly consists of middle-class whites. Their general opinion towards people of color was not very welcoming, as pointed out in the second sub-question. Therefore, LIFE Magazine probably did not want to put its sales at stake by making bold statements in favor of people of color and thus rather played safe by holding a neutral stance.

## 7. Conclusion

This thesis sought to contribute to the current knowledge about the visual representation of the American Dream as well as the race issue that both defined American society during the 1950s and 1960s. After answering the five sub-questions, an answer can be sought to this thesis' research question "To what extent does racial exclusion from photographic representations of the American Dream manifest itself in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s?" The cultural narrative of the American Dream defined the desired standard of living during the 1950s and 1960s. Set during the peak years of the struggle for Civil Rights, the racial exclusion that manifested itself throughout American society was mirrored in photographic representations of the American Dream.

LIFE Magazine, one of the leading magazines at the time, was no exception. As such, photographic representations of the American Dream during the 1950s and 1960s contain what Grady calls "the iconography of segregation"<sup>133</sup>. This means people of color are either completely excluded from LIFE Magazine's representation of the American Dream, or are depicted as subordinate servants fulfilling the wants and needs of whites. As such, people of color are restraint from living the American Dream themselves. Furthermore, LIFE Magazine was unique for a well-read magazine with a predominantly white middle-class readership, because it published an unprecedented number of articles concerning people of color. However, coverage about people of color generally depicted them as victims, which resembles their subordinate role the "iconography of segregation" points out<sup>134</sup>. Furthermore, people of color are depicted looking up to white people, desiring what the latter have. Lastly, it could be argued that LIFE Magazine's representation of people of color is framed because it only depicts people of color within the subordinate roles discussed above. Proven to be heavily influential in American society, it could be argued LIFE Magazine therefore reinforced the "iconography of segregation".

In conclusion, this thesis argues that photographic representations of the American Dream in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s are characterized by

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<sup>133</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p.225.

the “iconography of segregation”<sup>135</sup>. Through the “iconography of segregation” racial exclusion from photographic representations of the American Dream manifests itself in LIFE Magazine during the 1950s and 1960s<sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> Grady, *Advertising Images as Social Indicators Depictions of Blacks in LIFE Magazine*, p.225.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibidem*, p.225.

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## LIFE Magazine Issues

### 1950

19	June	"Race prejudice is dying" p.34.
16	October	"West Memphis ends a disgrace" p.61-64.

### 1954

1	February	"Dynamite Arrow" p.25.
31	May	"A historic decision for equality" p.11-16.
11	October	"A young mob tests a city" p.45-46.

### 1955

25	July	"A 'morally right' decision" p.29-31.
3	October	"Emmett Till's day in court" p.36-39.

### 1956

6	February	"South rises again in campaign to delay integration" p.22-27.
20	February	"South worries over Miss Lucy" p.28-33.
5	March	"Bold boycott goes on" p.40-43.
7	May	"A mix-up over bus mixing" p.38-39.
28	May	"The law and the schools" p.47.
11	June	"Passive bus protest spreads" p.48.
9	July	"Divided South searches its soul" p.98-114.
3	September	"How the Negro Came to Slavery in America" p.43-64.

10	September	“Freedom to Jim Crow” p.96-108.
17	September	“The Voices of the White South” p.104-120. <i>Photography by Margaret Bourke-White</i>
24	September	“Lonely hostages of a South in strife” p.46-49. “The Negro and His Life of Restraint” p.99-112. <i>Photography by Gordon Parks</i>
1	October	“Morals and Segregation” p. 139-162
10	December	“Sequel to Segregation” Follow up 24 Sept. p.77-90.

### 1957

7	January	“Blows against segregation” p.34-35.
3	June	“Fervent faces amid a gathering of pilgrims” p.
2	September	“Integration Troubles Beset Northern Town” p.
16	September	“Troubles beset school opening” p.25-30.
23	September	“Faubus defiance of federal rule” p.

### 1958

8	September	“Supreme Court justices hurry to a historic special summer session” p.22-27.
22	September	“Integrate! The justices stand firm” p.23-27.
10	November	“Strategist-in-chief for desegregation” p.121-135.
8	December	“Springhill survivors on segregated spree” p.49-50.

### 1959

9	February	“Segregationist surrender” p.24-25.
16	February	“Calm and hopeful integration start” p.30-32.
8	June	“Aroused citizens strike at Faubus” p.22-26.

### 1960

12	September	“Racial fury over sit-ins” p.37.
19	September	“Claimants of Civil Equality help fight” p.36-39. “Sit-ins successful strategy ” p.40-43.
7	November	“Martyr of the sit-ins” p.123-134.

### 1961

2	June	“The ride for rights” p.46-55. <i>Photography by Paul Schutzer</i>
25	August	“Back-to-school forecast: in the South, less violent” p.42-43.

15	September	“With the Police on an Integration Job” p.35-36.
22	September	“The fight for principle. Our salute to the South” p.4.
17	November	“Halfway House to Equality on Highway 40” p.6.
6	December	“The Anger That Inflamed Route 40 Yields to Common Sense. Big Step Ahead on a High Road” p.30-39.

**1963**

8	February	“Quiet Progress in the South” p.6.
14	June	“More Law- Plus Leadership” p.6. “Nation’s Crisis Crowds in on One Man” p.77-80.
28	June	“Martyr to an immoral system” p.6. “Martyr – and the Negro presses on” p.35-37.
6	September	“The Washington march” p.20-29.

**1965**

8	October	“The Child Seller” p. 109-116.
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**1966**

6	May	“Integration vendetta in a Northern town” p.95-109.
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**1968**

12	April	“Martin Luther King Jr.” p.74-80.
14	June	“Making prejudice impossible” p.107-110.
13	December	“A separate path to equality” p.82-93.