

HASAN KWAME JEFFRIES

Remaking History

Barack Obama, Political Cartoons, and the Civil Rights Movement

On the forty-fifth anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, which he delivered on August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington, Barack Obama accepted the Democratic Party's nomination for president of the United States. In doing so, he became the first African American to earn the top spot on a major political party's presidential ticket. This historical twist of fate was not lost on Obama, but in keeping with his campaign strategy, which called for him to avoid discussing race, he downplayed the happenstance, alluding to it only with a passing reference to "a young preacher from Georgia."¹ The media, however, did not hesitate to point out the coincidence, freely invoking the spirit of King and the March on Washington. Political cartoonists reflected this tendency in their work. While covering Obama's nomination, they made frequent reference to that historic day nearly half a century earlier. Cartoonist R. J. Matson, for example, published a piece the day before Obama's acceptance speech that featured King, standing on steps not unlike those of the Lincoln Memorial (from which King delivered his most famous speech), holding an oversized replica of Obama's campaign emblem high above his head.²

Allusions to King and the March on Washington made by those covering Obama's campaign neither began nor ended with the Democratic National Convention. Instead, they spanned the full length of Obama's run for the White House, starting in earnest the day he announced his candidacy in February 2007 and continuing through his electoral victory in November 2008.

The author would like to thank the College of Arts and Humanities at The Ohio State University for generous financial assistance that made it possible to include the images that appear in this chapter.



Figure 11 R. J. Matson, "The Mountain Top," *Roll Call* (Aug. 27, 2008).

This affinity for the past was a part of a larger trend of remembering the civil rights movement and reflecting on its legacy that was sparked by Obama's emergence as a viable African American presidential candidate. Looking back at the movement in this way was unprecedented. At no other time had so many people tried so publicly for such a sustained period of time to draw meaning from the African American freedom struggle. Unfortunately, much of what they derived was incorrect, owing to the innumerable myths about the movement that abound.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which popular misconceptions about the civil rights movement have served to remake history, altering everything from the freedom struggle's leadership, goals, strategies, tactics, and guiding philosophies, to the depth and breadth of the white opposition, including the form and function of racial terror. I use political cartoons, composed by award-winning artists from across the political spectrum and published dur-

ing Obama's campaign, to identify leading movement myths. The cartoons also serve as a starting point for discussing the origin of key myths, for clarifying the truths that these fabrications conceal, and for illuminating the ways these stories shape contemporary discourse on racial inequality and African American activism.

The dominant view of the civil rights movement holds that Martin Luther King Jr., who was thrust into the nation's consciousness in 1955 during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, was the movement's singular voice, chief strategist, and principal decision maker. The *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, for instance, describes King as the person who "led the civil rights movement in the United States."³ It is hardly surprising, then, that throughout Obama's run for the White House, cartoonists used images of King to invoke the civil rights movement. Cartoonist Peter Lewis, for example, conjured the movement in a sketch published the day after Obama won the presidency by depicting a young Obama watching a televised broadcast of King's "I Have a Dream" speech.⁴



Figure 12 Peter Lewis, "American Dream," *The Herald* (Australia) (Nov. 5, 2008).

This King-centric view of the movement, however, obscures far more than it reveals. Among other things, it marginalizes the movement activists with whom King worked, frequently overlooking leaders of national organizations such as John Lewis, the chairperson of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and his successor Stokely Carmichael, except on those occasions when they said or did something that challenged King. In a similar way, it ignores local leaders such as John Hulet, the chairperson of the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom Organization (LCOFO), apart from when they crossed paths with King or were affiliated with his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In a like manner, it pushes aside women such as Ella Baker, who helped bring both SCLC and SNCC into being. The King-centric perspective also overemphasizes mass mobilizing events such as marches and demonstrations, and deemphasizes the importance of grass-roots organizing, the slow and hard work of getting ordinary people to act on their deeply held desire to change the status quo. The sustained canvassing activities of SNCC organizers in Mississippi, for example, is given short shrift compared to marches led by King in Alabama, regardless of outcome.⁵

The King-centric view of the movement also misrepresents the movement's goals. The infatuation with King inevitably leads to a fixation on color blindness—the absence of racial acknowledgment in any way.⁶ Cartoonists, for example, frequently point to color blindness as the movement's main objective, and like Peter Lewis, typically use King to buttress their point. King famously gave voice to color blindness as a movement aim during the March on Washington when he spoke eloquently about his desire—his “Dream”—that his children would “one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”⁷ King's version of color blindness, however, differed substantially from present-day notions. Above all else, he believed that it was necessary to consider race when devising solutions to racial inequality. “A society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years,” wrote King in 1967, “must now do something special for him, in order to equip him to compete on a just and equal basis.”⁸

Lost in the contemporary discourse surrounding color blindness is the movement's diverse array of goals. Among other things, civil rights activists fought relentlessly for fair employment practices. In New York City during the 1940s, they organized for the creation of city and state committees, mod-

eled after the federal Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), to enforce nondiscrimination in hiring, promotions, and wages. They also fought for decent housing. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during the late 1960s, they secured open housing legislation to help end housing discrimination. They agitated for quality education. In Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1950s, some lobbied for improving segregated black schools; in the 1960s, others petitioned for desegregating white schools; and in the 1970s, still others worked for community control of neighborhood schools. Civil rights activists also organized to participate fully in the political process. In Lowndes County, Alabama, in the mid-1960s, African Americans formed their own political party—the first Black Panther party—in order to gain control of the county government. These activities reflected the movement's broadly configured agenda, which sought to bring about an equal society with equal opportunities and equal outcomes regardless of race. Movement activists had little interest in a society that purported to ignore race yet maintained the systems and structures that created and reproduced racial inequality.⁹

While King tends to dominate popular understandings of the civil rights movement, President Abraham Lincoln looms large in the conventional narrative of the broader African American freedom struggle. Cartoonists, drawn to the notion that Lincoln's vision of a nation without slavery embodied America's democratic promise, used images of the former president to connect Obama to the African American past almost as often as they used images of King. David Fitzsimmons, for example, in a cartoon published just ahead of Election Day, portrays the statue of Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial with its arms raised in celebration of Obama's victory while a park ranger explains to a tour group that “[h]e's been like that ever since Election Day 2008.”¹⁰ The insinuation, of course, is that Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, would have been overjoyed to witness an African American elected president. Lincoln, however, was not a racial egalitarian. A product of his times, he believed unfailingly in white supremacy, a position that was compatible with abolition. In fact, Lincoln was slow to embrace abolition, and when he finally came around to the idea, he did so out of military necessity and political expediency rather than moral obligation. He worked to save the Union, not to make it “more perfect” through racial equality. The thought of an African American occupying the Oval Office would have caused him distress and dismay, not delight.

Emancipated African Americans, however, would have been ecstatic

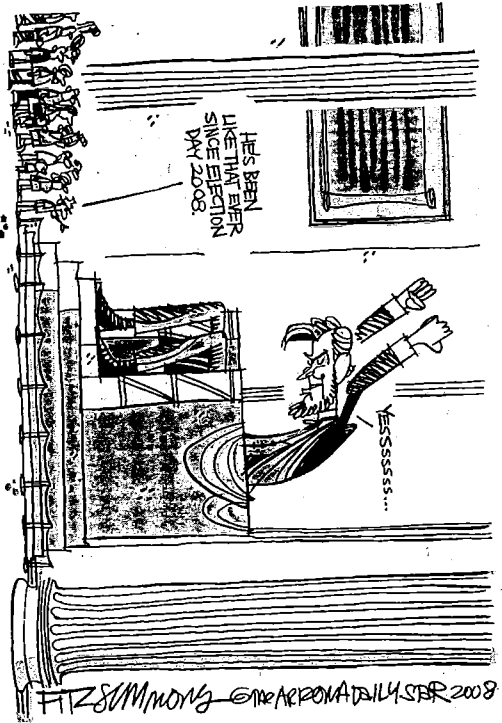


Figure 13 David Fitzsimmons, "Obama Wins," *The Arizona Star* (Nov. 2, 2008).

about Obama's election. Unlike Lincoln, their vision of post-emancipation America was truly democratic. They imagined a nation incorporating them into the body politic, allowing them equal and unfettered access to the ballot box so that they could participate in political decision making and hold public office. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, following the enfranchisement of African American men pursuant to the Fifteenth Amendment, freed people mobilized to register black men to vote and to elect black candidates to office.¹¹ Obama's election, therefore, exemplified their political beliefs. Cartoons depicting freed people, or their enslaved predecessors, however, were practically nonexistent.

By overlooking freed people, the origins of the freedom struggle's objectives, along with the depth and breadth of civil rights era aims, are lost. When freedom dawned, African Americans immediately began to organize for freedom rights, the combination of basic civil rights and fundamental human rights that they had been denied during slavery. In Lowndes County, Alabama, for instance, freed people worked tirelessly not only for the ballot but also for economic independence by acquiring their own land, for cultural integrity by establishing their own churches, and for social autonomy by securing legal recognition of their marriage and kinship bonds. Their determined

efforts created a blueprint for future agitation and laid the groundwork for civil rights era victories.¹²

Misinterpretations of what African Americans were fighting for stem from misunderstandings about what African Americans were fighting against. In the minds of many, the principal, if not the sole obstacle to racial equality before the civil rights era was Jim Crow, the system of de jure segregation that touched every aspect of southern life. Jim Crow, however, is often misconstrued as a benign form of racial discrimination, a kind of bigotry that inconvenienced black people by prohibiting them from enjoying life's simple amenities, from eating at restaurants to sitting in the front of buses. Cartoonist Dwayne Booth captures this sentiment in "Water under the Bridge," which appeared shortly after Obama's election. Booth tweaks a familiar image of Jim Crow—a black man drinking from a public water fountain designated for African Americans while standing next to a fountain reserved for whites—by replacing the "Colored" label above the fountain the man is drinking from with "House," so that the combined Jim Crow signage reads "White House."¹³ Jim Crow, however, was much more than the denial of public conveniences. It was an institutionalized system of racial discrimination—designed to control black labor by regulating black behavior—that was sanctioned by the federal government and enforced locally through vicious forms of racial

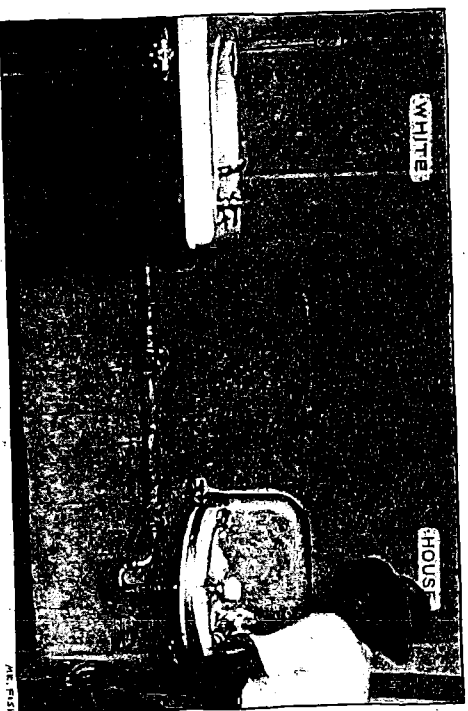


Figure 14 Dwayne Booth, "Water under the Bridge," *Mr. Fish* (Nov. 6, 2008).

terrorism. No election, presidential or otherwise, can wipe away the vestiges of Jim Crow.

Alongside the idea that the chief impediment to racial equality was the inconvenient nature of Jim Crow is the mistaken notion that white supremacy was essentially a matter of personal prejudice, a product of anachronistic attitudes that led to atypical individual behavior. It is also widely held that white supremacy was embraced by only a handful of racial demagogues who spoke mainly for themselves. Late in the presidential campaign season, during the dustup surrounding Congressman John Lewis's likening of Republican campaign events (at which racist catcalls could be heard) to the campaign rallies of arch segregationist George Wallace, J. D. Crowe drew a cartoon featuring Wallace seated between Obama and John McCain. Wallace, appearing old and decrepit, asks, "How the [expletive] did I get dragged into this?"¹⁴ Crowe's depiction of Wallace as aged and infirm captures Wallace's physical essence late in life, but not during his heyday. When Wallace was winning gubernatorial races in Alabama and presidential primaries nationwide, he was not a geriatric jester—some southern hayseed embraced only by a racist fringe—but a multiterm governor whose rhetoric and policies, including his "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" at the University of Alabama in 1963, were in keep-



Figure 15 J. D. Crowe, "Obama, McCain, and Wallace," *Mobile Register* (Oct. 15, 2008).

ing with the beliefs of white conservatives throughout the South and beyond Dixie's borders.

Reducing the causes of racial inequality to the deviant behavior of a couple of supposedly "out-of-control crackers" ignores how deeply embedded white supremacy was in the framework of American society. It also obscures the fact that movement activists, with the important exception of the minority who embraced nonviolence as a way of life, worried less about personal prejudice—changing white hearts and minds—and more about the ways systems and institutions perpetuated the status quo. SNCC organizer Stokely Carmichael, who viewed the movement as a political struggle rather than a moral crusade explained, "I never saw my responsibility to be the moral and spiritual reclamation of some racist thug. I would settle for changing his behavior, period. Moral suasion, legal proscription, or even force of arms, whatever ultimately it took, that's what I'd be for."¹⁵ In addition, the focus on personal prejudice treats white supremacy strictly as a southern issue, confined to the states of the former Confederacy, rather than as a national problem that touched every corner of the country.¹⁶

In keeping with the notion that white supremacy was the province of a small number of "out-of-control crackers," it is commonly asserted that racial violence, which undergirded Jim Crow, was the exclusive domain of terror groups, specifically the Ku Klux Klan. Riber Hansson, a Swedish cartoonist, uses Klan imagery to explain the transformative implications of Obama's victory. In a cartoon published immediately after the election, Hansson shows a victorious Obama walking past a dejected Klansman dressed in full Klan regalia, complete with a cross ready for burning and a container of kerosene, as the president-elect makes his way to the White House.¹⁷ The inference about the future is clear—Klansmen have little choice but to accept the new racial order, one based on racial equality rather than racial hierarchy. The suggestion about the civil rights past is equally apparent—Klansmen, the archetypal "out-of-control crackers" were the principal practitioners of racial intimidation, as symbolized by the fictional Klansman's cross and the kerosene. Blaming Klansmen for America's long and brutal history of racial terror, however, conceals much more than it brings to light. It hides the array of perpetrators of racial violence who were bound neither by class nor gender. On August 7, 1930, white men and women, of great and limited means, assembled in the streets of Marion, Indiana, and lynched African Americans Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith.¹⁸ Blaming Klansmen blurs the causes of racial



Figure 16 Riber Hansson, "Obama and Resigned kkk Member" *Svenska Dagbladet* (Nov. 6, 2008).

violence, which transcended racial hatred and included a range of economic and political factors. On December 4, 1947, in Lowndesboro, Alabama, local white resident Clarke Lucille murdered African American entrepreneur Elmore Bolling. According to an NAACP investigative report, Bolling's body was "riddled with shotgun and pistol shots" simply because he was "too prosperous as a Negro farmer."²⁰ Holding Klansmen solely responsible for racial terror also glosses over the widespread social acceptability of racial violence, as well as the complicity of the state. In October 1919, in Elaine, Arkansas, nearly six hundred federal troops, along with one thousand area whites, terrorized local African Americans, killing several hundred, in an effort to prevent black sharecroppers from organizing a union. Following the massacre, county sheriffs, judges, and justices of the peace, together with the governor of Arkansas, conspired to prevent the victims of the violence from receiving justice.²¹ Racial terror was not an American anomaly; it was an American tradition.

Unlike contemporary political commentators, movement activists were

fully aware of the nature of racial violence. They were also cognizant of the extent to which American society accepted white supremacy and of the ways in which white supremacy operated systemically and institutionally. These understandings framed their critique of the nation, which for increasing numbers of civil rights activists revolved around structural analyses that refuted personal prejudice as the chief obstacle to racial equality.

Liberal white friends of the movement, however, tended to hold on to the idea that personal prejudice was the problem, flatly rejecting structural critiques. What's more, they often argued their point by disparaging those who advocated the contrasting position. During the late 1960s, as structural analyses gained popularity under the rubric of Black Power, critics of the structural point of view became more vociferous in their denunciations. Editors and journalists at the *Chicago Tribune*, for example, variously referred to proponents of structural analyses as "rabid spokesmen," "civil rioters," "wild men," "fanatics," "angry young men," "Negro extremists," and "hotheads."²² And they singled out for special ridicule Stokely Carmichael, who introduced the nation to the Black Power slogan in 1966, mocking him as a "rabid evangelist" and as the chief "apostle of Black Power."²³

Critics of structural analyses intentionally chose demeaning language to describe radical black activists in order to depict them as senseless and impractical. From the perspective of those who were convinced that personal prejudice was the issue, it was insane to suggest that the nation's most basic systems and institutions were fundamentally flawed and should be completely overhauled in order to create a just, humane, and equitable society. It was equally insane to suggest that well-meaning whites were somehow complicit in the perpetuation of racial inequality. Falling back on a default analysis of black radicalism that had been used over the centuries to dismiss black freedom fighters from Nat Turner to Marcus Garvey, they wrote off proponents of structural analyses as unstable. By portraying black radicals as "crazy Negroes," they were able to reject without consideration or deliberation everything they said and did, from the pragmatic solutions they offered to the organizing projects and community programs they developed.

The "crazy Negro" mischaracterization of radical black activists has endured. Its persistence became abundantly clear during the presidential campaign when media outlets broadcast snippets of sermons by black theologian Rev. Jeremiah Wright in which he criticized American foreign policy lead-

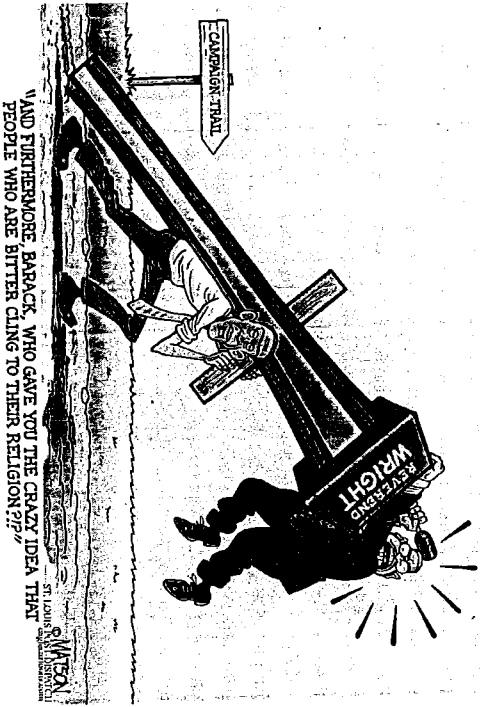


Figure 17 R. J. Matson, "Obama's Cross to Bear," *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (April 29, 2008).

ing up to 9/11. The endlessly looping sound bites of his passionate homilies prompted widespread condemnation of his remarks and denunciations of him as traitorous, nonsensical, and even fanatical. Cartoonist R. J. Matson captured these sentiments in "Obama's Cross to Bear," in which he depicts Wright as a Bible thumping, pulpit banging, bug-eyed rabble-rouser who is as bitter about his place in America, and is clinging as tightly to his black liberation Christianity, as the white conservative evangelicals whom Obama accused of doing the same.²³

The persistence of the "crazy Negro" mischaracterization also shapes the ways in which black radicalism during the civil rights era is typically understood. Few cartoons illustrate this better than the one of Barack and Michelle Obama that appeared on the cover of *The New Yorker* during the height of the campaign. Satirizing conservative portrayals of Barack as a closeted Muslim and Michelle as unpatriotic, the cartoon depicts him in traditional Islamic garb and her in the imaginary fashion of a 1960s black radical, complete with fatigues, Afro, automatic weapon, and bandolier.²⁴ Michelle's appearance is meant to bring to mind the urban riots and "crazy Negro" politics of the late sixties, from the Watts and Newark uprisings to the revolution-

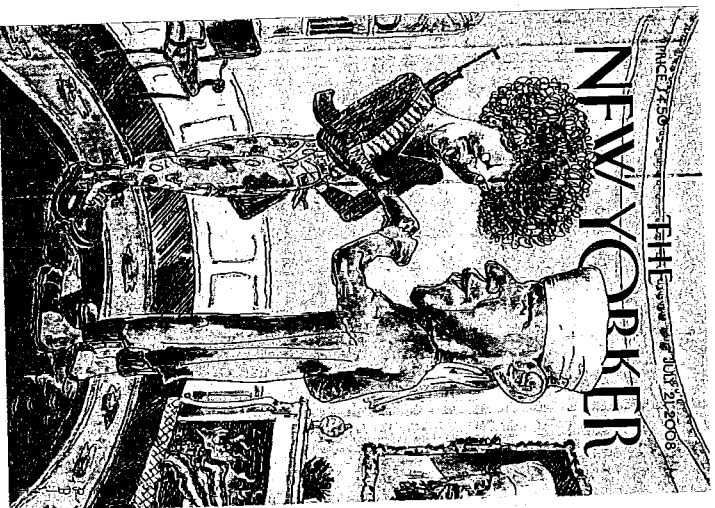


Figure 18 *The New Yorker* (July 21, 2008). Blitt/*The New Yorker*/Condé Nast Archive, copyright © Condé Nast.

ary black nationalism of Huey Newton and the cultural black nationalism of Amiri Baraka.

Lingering stereotypes of black radicals perpetuate many of the misconceptions about the black freedom struggle in general, and about the Black Power movement in particular. They harden the fictitious line separating civil rights protest and Black Power politics, which at best minimizes and at worst overlooks important linkages between the two, making it nearly impossible to see the ways in which civil rights breathed life into Black Power. They reinforce the false notion that Black Power activism was responsible for waning interest in grass-roots organizing and for alienating whites, the combination of which is blamed for movement ineffectiveness near the end of the 1960s.

They strip Black Power ideologies of real meaning, reducing them to violent, anti-white philosophies. And they misconstrue black radicals' understanding of racial inequality, which revolved around structural analyses, robbing the black radical critique of real meaning and lasting value.

The failure to take black radicals and their structural analyses seriously has made it more difficult to make sense of racial inequality in the post-civil rights era. It has prompted many people to fall back on personal prejudice as the major cause of race-based disparities, and in the wake of the declining social acceptability of public displays of racism, to suggest increasingly that African Americans bear primary responsibility for their inability to get ahead in life. Following Rev. Jesse Jackson's crass, off-camera criticism of Obama for repeatedly calling on African Americans to assume more responsibility for their families and communities, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a Pat Bagley cartoon featuring Jackson with his arms wrapped around Obama's ankle saying, "We're always bein' held back by 'The Man'..."²⁵ For Bagley, Jackson's tactless censure of Obama underscored that racial discrimination today is a figment of African Americans' imagination, the product of race-card profiteers, the heirs to the "crazy Negroes" of the sixties.

Bagley's take on Jackson's remarks hints at the dominant way of interpreting racial divisions, which holds that racialized views of the present are shaped wholly by emotional baggage from the past. For African Americans, it is rage held over from the distant Jim Crow era, the apex of de jure segregation. For whites, it is animosity born during the immediate post-civil rights era, the period of affirmative action, which many whites point to as the start of reverse racism. Cartoonist J. D. Crowe's interpretation of Obama's Philadelphia race speech speaks directly to this point of view. Crowe depicts Obama as a Moses-like figure with the power to heal the racial divide, the parameters of which he suggests are defined by black anger and white resentment.²⁶ Framing the present as an emotional conflict, however, ignores the historic and persistent causes of racial inequality and disregards the social value and economic legacy of white privilege.

Viewing racial divisions as a simple misunderstanding born of oversensitivity about the past has led to premature declarations of the triumph of racial equality. Across the political spectrum, Obama's victory has been heralded as the dawn of a post-racial age, one in which all things are possible for people of color, particularly children of color, who unlike their parents, are

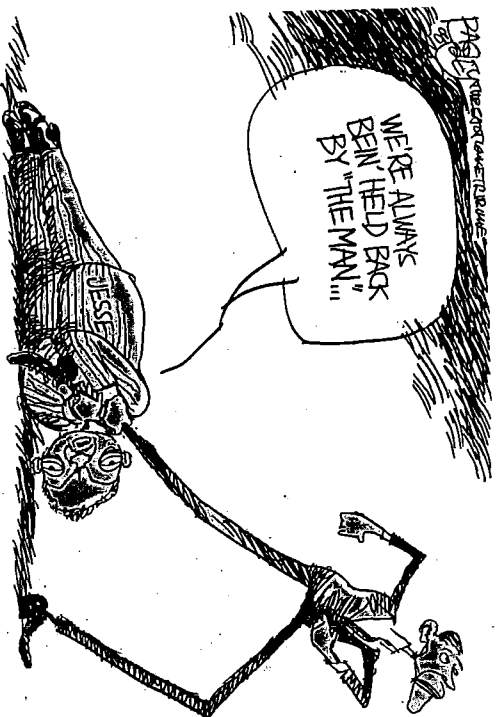


Figure 19 Pat Bagley, "Jesse Jackson," *Salt Lake Tribune* (July 10, 2008).

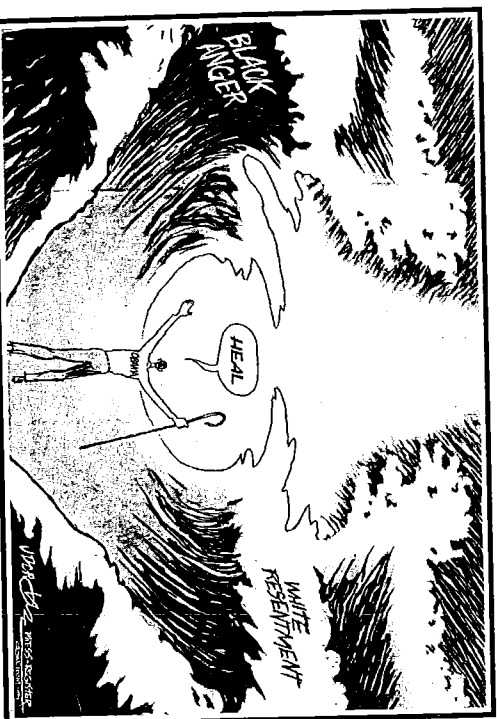


Figure 20 J. D. Crowe, "Obama Race Speech," *Mobile Register* (March 19, 2008).

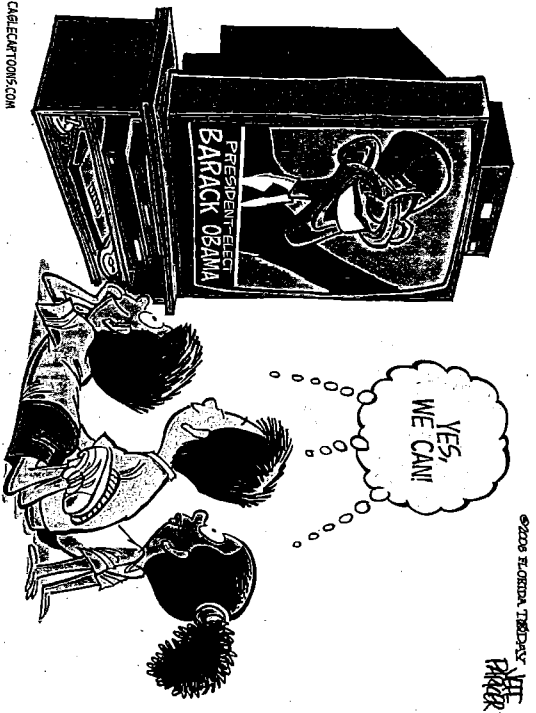


Figure 21 Jeff Parker, "Yes We Can," *Florida Today* (Nov. 11, 2008).

unburdened by memories of bygone eras. Cartoonist Jeff Parker depicts this point of view in his cartoon "Yes We Can," which appeared the day after the general election, and features children of Latino, Asian, and African American descent watching Obama celebrate his victory while thinking, "Yes, we can," or that they too can now achieve their dreams.²⁷ The willingness of whites to vote for an African American presidential candidate is taken as *prima facie* evidence that racial egalitarianism has supplanted personal prejudice as the dominant mode of thinking, eliminating racism as a barrier to success, and making simple positive thinking the key to achieving one's goals.

Obama's historic run for the White House created a unique opportunity for public reflection on the civil rights movement. Political cartoonists were among the many who looked back at the past and found meaning in the movement. Unfortunately, their understanding of the movement as expressed in their illustrations reveals the persistence of innumerable myths about the struggle, from the alleged predominance of King's leadership to the

supposed aberrant behavior of "out-of-control crackers." These myths have remade history, altering everything from the movement's internal dynamics to the nature of the opposition. As a result, critical aspects of the movement are consistently overlooked, including its freedom rights goals, and important lessons are routinely disregarded, including insights pertaining to the structural causes of racial inequality. These myths also continue to shape the public discourse on race, limiting the usefulness of these conversations. Although deeply ingrained in the public consciousness, these myths are not indelible. Dispelling them, however, requires recentring those aspects of the movement that have been pushed to the margins of history.

NOTES

1. For details of Barack Obama's race-avoidance campaign strategy see Adam Nagourney, Jim Rutenberg, and Jeff Zeleny, "Near-flawless run is credited in victory," *New York Times*, November 5, 2008. For the complete text of Barack Obama's presidential nomination acceptance speech go to http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/us/politics/28text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1.
2. R. J. Matson, "The Mountain Top," *Roll Call*, August 27, 2008.
3. "Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2010). Available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/338311/Martin-Luther-King-Jr>.
4. Peter Lewis, "American Dream," *The Herald (Australia)*, November 5, 2008.
5. For an example of how the King-centric view obscures more than it reveals about the civil rights movement, see Robert Weisbrod, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989).
6. For examples of works that reduce the aim of the movement to color blindness see Tamar Jacoby, *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), and Paul M. Sniderman and Edward G. Carmine, *Reaching Beyond Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).
7. For the full text of King's "I Have a Dream" speech see Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 75–88.
8. Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King, and Vincent Harding, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 95. For an excellent essay on how King's view of color blindness has been misinterpreted see Tim Wise, "Misreading the Dream: The Truth about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Affirmative Action," *LeftMagazine.org* (2003). Available at http://www.leftmagazine.org/articles/featwise_mlk.shtml.

9. For more on the diverse array of movement goals see Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Charles Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
10. David Fitzsimmons, "Obama Wins," *The Arizona Star*, November 2, 2008.
11. For an example of African American political mobilization after emancipation see Elsa Barkley Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," in *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 111-50.
12. For a detailed explanation of freedom rights and for a close look at the fight for freedom rights in Lowndes County, Alabama, during the post-emancipation and Reconstruction eras, see Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*, 7-38.
13. Dwayne Booth, "Water under the Bridge," *Mr. Fish*, November 6, 2008.
14. J. D. Crowe, "Obama, McCain, and Wallace," *Mobile Register*, October 15, 2008.
15. Stokely Carmichael with Ekwunne Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 172.
16. In recent years, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the African American freedom struggle outside the South. For overviews of black activism and white supremacy in regions other than the South see Jeanne F. Theoharis and Konzo Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).
17. Riber Hansson, "Obama and Resigned KKK Member," *Svenska Dagbladet* (Swedish newspaper), November 6, 2008.
18. For details of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith see James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
19. Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*, 32.
20. For the full story of the Elaine massacre see Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).
21. "Who Stands to Profit from Riots?" *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1967; "Backing Away from the Consequences," *Chicago Tribune*, October 7, 1966; "A Few 'Theories' about Revolution," *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 1967; "Photog, Delegate Beaten during New Pol Parley" *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1967; "Riots Are Subsidized as Well as Organized," *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1967; "Plain Talk about Hatred and Violence," *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1968; "Ominous Talk from the Hotheads," *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1966.
22. "Black Power' Again," *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1966.
23. R. J. Matson, "Obama's Cross to Bear," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, April 29, 2008.
24. *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2008.
25. Pat Bagley, "Jesse Jackson," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 10, 2008.
26. J. D. Crowe, "Obama Race Speech," *Mobile Register*, March 19, 2008.
27. Jeff Parker, "Yes We Can," *Florida Today*, November 11, 2008.