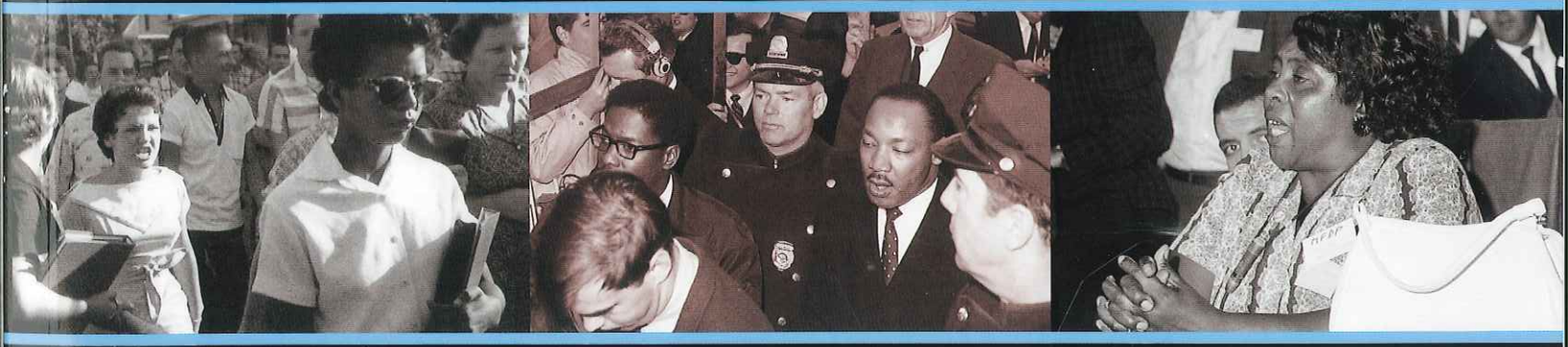
EYES ON THE PRIZE

America's Civil Rights Movement 1954-1985

A Study Guide to the Television Series



Written by Facing History and Ourselves

BLACKSIDE

A Blackside Publication

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FOREWORD

REP. JOHN LEWIS
5th Congressional District, Georgia

> *"If you will protest courageously and yet with dignity and …. love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, 'There lies a great people, a black people, who injected new meaning and dignity into the very veins of civilization.' This is our challenge and our responsibility."*
>
> ***Martin Luther King, Jr., Dec. 31, 1955 Montgomery, Alabama.***

The documentary series you are about to view is the story of how ordinary people with extraordinary vision redeemed democracy in America. It is a testament to nonviolent passive resistance and its power to reshape the destiny of a nation and the world. And it is the chronicle of a people who challenged one nation's government to meet its moral obligation to humanity.

We, the men, women, and children of the civil rights movement, truly believed that if we adhered to the discipline and philosophy of nonviolence, we could help transform America. We wanted to realize what I like to call, the Beloved Community, an all-inclusive, truly interracial democracy based on simple justice, which respects the dignity and worth of every human being.

Central to our philosophical concept of the Beloved Community was the willingness to believe that every human being has the moral capacity to respect each other. We were determined to rise above the internal injuries exacted by discriminatory laws and the traditions of an unjust society meant to degrade us, and we looked to a higher authority. We believed in our own inalienable right to the respect due any human being, and we believed that government has more than a political responsibility, but a moral responsibility to defend the human rights of all of its citizens.

When we suffered violence and abuse, our concern was not for retaliation. We sought to redeem the humanity of our attackers from the jaws of hatred and to accept our suffering in the right spirit. While nonviolence was, for some, merely a tactic for social change, for many of us it became a way of life. We believed that if we, as an American people, as a nation, and as a world community, are to emerge from our struggles unscarred by hate, we have to learn to understand and forgive those who have been most hostile and violent toward us.

We must find a way to live together, to make peace with each other. And we were willing to put our bodies on the line, to die if necessary, to make that dream of peaceful reconciliation a reality. Because of the fortitude and conviction of thousands and millions of ordinary people imbued with a dream of liberation, this nation witnessed a nonviolent revolution under the rule of law, a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas.

Fifty years have passed since the first days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the lynching of Emmett Till. Forty years have passed since that "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Gone are the legal barriers of segregation, but our freedom as a nation has not yet been won. We have come a great distance, but we still have much further to go before we lay down the burden of race in America. And if we are to fulfill the true destiny of this nation, then that struggle must continue. In the civil rights movement we used to say that our struggle was not for a month, a season, or a year. We knew that ours was the struggle of a lifetime and that each generation had to do its part to build the Beloved Community, a nation at peace with itself.

Consider those two words: Beloved and Community. "Beloved" means not hateful, not violent, not uncaring, not unkind. And "Community" means not separated, not polarized, not locked in struggle. The most pressing challenge in our society today is defined by the methods we use to defend the dignity of humankind. But too often we are focused on accumulating the trappings of a comfortable life.

The men, women and children you witness in this documentary put aside the comfort of their own lives to get involved with the problems of others. They knew that if they wanted a free and just society, they could not wait for someone else to create that society. They knew they had to be the change that they were seeking. They knew they had to do their part, to get out there and push and pull to move this society forward.

As American citizens and citizens of the world community, we must be maladjusted to the problems and conditions of today. We have to find a way to make our voices heard. We have an obligation, a mission and a mandate to do our part. We have a mandate from the Spirit of History to follow in the footsteps of those brave and courageous men and women who fought to make a difference.

This study guide for *Eyes on the Prize* reminds us of our legacy and our commitment. These readings will help you examine the power you have as an individual citizen to make a difference in our society, and they will help you examine the tools of democracy that can create lasting change.

Eyes on the Prize serves as an important reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices one generation made for the cause of civil rights. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices we may have to make again, if we do not value the freedom we have already won. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices it takes to answer the call of justice.

Let this study of history inspire you to make some contribution to humanity. You have a mission and a mandate from the founders of this nation and all of those who came before who struggled and died for your freedom. Go out and win some victory for humanity, and may the Spirit of History and the spirit of the modern-day civil rights movement be your guide.

Rep. John Lewis, 5th Congressional District, Georgia

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JUDI HAMPTON
President, Blackside

When I read through the *Eyes on the Prize* study guide, it evokes emotional memories of my experiences as a young civil rights worker in Mississippi in the mid-1960's.

I remember the fear I felt about leaving my comfortable college life in New York and going down South to become a civil rights worker. I went down to Mississippi to work on the voter registration campaign and to build a Freedom School to provide remedial help to youngsters. It was shortly after the three civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner, had disappeared and tensions were high. Resentment was focused on us and there was an underlying threat of violence, but at the same time, community support was unparalleled.

I remember staying with an elderly couple who volunteered to have me in their home because they believed in the cause. The local police retaliated by sitting outside all night with their patrol car high beams glaring into the couple's house. This was, of course, terrifying for the volunteers—yet despite their fear they still wanted to shelter me.

I remember the day I felt I had truly made a contribution. A young black man with cataracts was going blind because he was afraid to go into Jackson to the "white" hospital to get his surgery. I went with him and together we met this challenge. He came by the Freedom House one day to hug me and say thanks. What a privilege for me!

I remember creating a Freedom School from a burned-out building. Members of the community came to help and together we cleaned up the site, got donations of books—and suddenly I was teaching. I loved it, and have continued to find innovative ways to educate and mentor throughout my career.

Learning, teaching, and giving back to the community have always been very important in our family. Our father, Henry Hampton, Sr., was the first black surgeon to become a Chief Hospital Administrator in St. Louis, Missouri. After the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, my parents decided it would be in our best educational interest if my brother, Henry, my sister Veva, and I were to attend a previously all-white school. Later, in high school (which I integrated with a few other students), my classmates elected me class president, but the restaurant where the reception in my honor was to be held turned me away at the door because of my color. It was one of many experiences that strengthened our family's commitment to civil rights—and to spreading the message through education.

Although Henry Hampton was widely known and acclaimed as a brilliant filmmaker, he was also an educator at heart. Now, with this new study guide written by Facing History and Ourselves, the educational influence of *Eyes on the Prize* will be extended through many generations. This thorough and

balanced guide will teach young people the history and significance of the civil rights epoch. But beyond the historical value, the study guide and film series have another purpose: to provoke discussion about *today's* pressing human rights concerns. When Henry first made *Eyes*, his goal was to spark a national dialogue. This guide will help to rekindle it.

I would like to thank Margot Stern Strom, Adam Strom, Brooke Harvey and the staff and interns at Facing History and Ourselves for their excellent work on this study guide. Thanks also to Robert Lavelle and James Jennings for their careful reading and editorial guidance.

My deep thanks to Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release, who took on the many challenges involved with bringing *Eyes* back before the public after a long absence. She raised funds, managed all aspects of the project, and was the driving force behind the return of *Eyes on the Prize* to public television and educational distribution.

Many thanks to the other dedicated and hard-working people on the re-release team, without whom the return of *Eyes* would not have been possible. I am also grateful to all the talented people who worked to create the *Eyes on the Prize* films and books in the 1980's and '90's.

Thanks to the Zimmermans: my sister Veva, David, Tobias and Jacob, and to the memory of our dear parents, who would expect nothing less than for us to continue to fight for what we believe in.

Since my brother's death in 1998, it has been my primary goal to preserve his legacy. In particular, I have struggled to make *Eyes on the Prize* available to a wide audience. With the rebroadcast and this superb study guide to accompany the educational distribution of *Eyes*, I feel assured that this monumental series will be a permanent resource for all generations.

Much love and gratitude to my big brother and soul mate, Henry Hampton, for giving me an opportunity to extend his great gifts to the world.

JUDI HAMPTON

PRESIDENT, BLACKSIDE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST, 2006

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MARGOT STERN STROM

President and Executive Director, Facing History and Ourselves

A black-and-white photograph of Henry Hampton sits perched on a shelf overlooking the table where the Facing History and Ourselves writing team assembled to create these educational materials to accompany the film *Eyes on the Prize*, Henry's magnificent, truly groundbreaking documentary series on the history of the civil rights movement in the United States. I knew Henry; he was my friend and understood Facing History's mission. We both believed education must help citizens confront controversial and difficult aspects of our history if we are ever to understand the responsibility of living in a just society. He demanded the highest standards and would have been pleased with the process that Adam Strom and Brooke Harvey have led for the "*Eyes on the Prize*" team at Facing History.

We are grateful for the trust and support of Judi Hampton, President of Blackside, the production company founded by Henry in 1968, and Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release project, and are honored to have spent this collaborative year together. Facing History's partnership with Blackside will enable us to deliver workshops for teachers and the community and continue to offer timely and relevant resources online for students and teachers.

As stacks of books, videos, and computers invaded our writing table, the conversations deepened. The learning community that emerged from this project included Facing History staff who had assembled from our offices worldwide, both face-to-face and virtually. This team included Dan Eshet, a historian and writer; photo and archival researcher Jennifer Gray; Dadjie Saintus, who interned as a researcher; Aliza Landes, who interned as an editor; the editorial team of Phredd Matthews-Wall, Howard Lurie, Jennifer Jones Clark, Jimmie Jones, Tracy Garrison-Feinberg, Marty Sleeper, Marc Skvirsky, and myself. We met regularly to read aloud drafts—often many drafts—for each of the fourteen parts of this series. We searched memoirs, biographies, and histories of the movement and considered the viewpoints of the advisors Adam had consulted. The comments of historian and activist Vincent Harding, Robert Lavelle, former head of publishing at Blackside, and James Jennings, Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, helped us interpret our perspectives and evoked memories of the events depicted in the series. Congressman John Lewis, our friend who accompanied the staff and board of Facing History and Ourselves on a trip to the South in 2001 to learn more about the civil rights movement, agreed to pen the introduction to these materials.

Together we meditated in a group setting—black and white, young and old—marveling at the beautiful principles of freedom exemplified by the moral dilemmas that faced not only the leaders, but also the ordinary men, women, and children who, dedicated to nonviolence, struggled to force a nation to reckon with brutal injustice and to transform itself. Indeed, we were all students. For the younger

among us this was "ancient" history—it happened before they were born. For others of us, we were rediscovering new meaning for the history we had come of age in. For me the work was personal.

I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, before the civil rights movement began—at a time when separate meant never equal. For it was in Memphis that simple childhood notions of logic and fairness were shattered. It was there that water fountains for "colored only" didn't spout water which reflected the colors of the rainbow as the child might expect but instead, as one learned later, stood as symbols of the unchallenged dogmas and practices of racism—dogmas that attempted to instill indignity, shame, and humiliation in some and false pride and authority in others, and practices that reflected centuries of unchallenged myth and hate.

I grew up in Memphis at a time when black libraries housed books discarded from the white library; when there were empty seats in the front of the bus for young white girls on a shopping trip downtown, while those of darker skin color crowded the back of the bus on their way to work; when Thursdays were "colored day" at the zoo and a rear entrance led to a colored section in the movie theatre balcony—if admission was allowed at all.

I remember an officer of the law in that Memphis explaining to me that I shouldn't ride in the front seat of the family car with a colored man—a man who had worked for my family and with whom I had ridden in the front since I was very young, but was suddenly suspect now that I was an adolescent. (I felt his discomfort—part shame, part anger, part humiliation—as the policeman righteously walked away from the car.) Later I listened when the phone call came from family friends in Mississippi warning my parents to keep my brother, then a Justice Department lawyer working on voting rights legislation, out of Mississippi (They, like Judge Cox of the Circuit Court, questioned why a white Southerner and a Jew would be causing such "trouble.") Later, I read the letters sent to our home declaring that my brother's work for Negroes must be inspired by the Jewish-communist conspiracy and that he would have to be cremated, for his body, if buried, would contaminate the earth just as fluoridation had done.

All this and more I brought to our writing table. Each of the other team members brought their own experiences, and the sum of these experiences—and more—can be felt in these educational resources.

At our editing sessions we all found a renewed appreciation for the contribution—the gift—of "Eyes." Our appreciation grew as we saw how carefully and honestly Henry and Blackside had prepared their teaching tool—their documentary of history for a new generation of students of all ages who, in classroom, home, and community settings, will use their work to confront the fundamental reality that a strong democracy depends on the education of its youth to the meaning and responsibility of freedom. This is the "Prize" Henry left us. Facing History and Ourselves is dedicated to bringing important and challenging history to the teachers who will tap the next generation of moral philosophers ready to be engaged in the hard work of thinking and acting with head and heart.

That is the promise we make to Henry and to the future.

Margot Stern Strom
President and Executive Director
Facing History and Ourselves

USING THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide serves as a classroom companion to the acclaimed *Eyes on the Prize* film series, the most comprehensive television documentary ever produced on the American civil rights movement. The series was created and executive produced by Emmy award-winning filmmaker and historian Henry Hampton, who endeavored to honor the voices and perspectives of those who shaped the civil rights movement in the United States.[1] The guide focuses on the individuals and groups that over three decades fought to dismantle the laws and customs used to discriminate against black Americans. Often at great personal risk, these civil rights activists forced America to face its entrenched culture of racial injustice and extend its promise of equal rights to all its citizens.

Each episode in the series has a corresponding chapter in the study guide. Each chapter includes a brief overview of the episode and a series of questions designed to stimulate a discussion on its basic themes. A timeline in each chapter identifies the episode's key events and dates.

The documents were selected to reflect themes and events in the episode. A brief introduction frames the documents, each of which is followed by "connections"—a list of questions that underline the broader themes within the episodes. These questions are also designed to promote personal engagement with particular aspects of the events described in the episodes and to encourage viewers to explore their own perspectives, as well as the national and international context of these developments.

The readings were selected from memoirs, oral histories, public documents, declarations, and news stories. In addition to a number of recent reflections and commentaries, many documents came directly from the interviews and other materials produced for the series.[2] Others were selected from earlier *Eyes on the Prize* study guides edited by Steve Cohen.

Most episodes cover two stories. In an effort to update the stories, we elected in some cases to include materials produced after the series was originally aired. In a few cases, we highlighted aspects we deemed especially important for contemporary viewers. Sample lesson plans using the film and the guide are available on the Facing History and Ourselves website: www.facinghistory.org.

The introduction to the study guide was written by Congressman John Lewis, who, like the individuals discussed in the series, aspired to compel America to fulfill its promises of equality and justice for all its citizens. By shattering stereotypes, opening public dialogue, and striving to empower black citizens politically and economically, Lewis and other activists in the civil rights movement transformed the attitudes of both black and white Americans and inspired other

groups around the world to explore their ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage.

Over 50 years ago, civil rights movement leaders articulated a vision for social change in America. Embedded in their vision was the belief that voting is the primary engine for nonviolent change in a democracy. We hope that the series and the new study guide will inspire a new generation of students to explore this idea, to become informed citizens, and to aspire to fulfill the movement's commitment to a diverse and tolerant democracy.

In addition to this study guide and to *The Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (published by Bantam Books), educators will find the first series' companion book quite useful. That book, *Eyes on the Prize*: *America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, by Juan Williams with the *Eyes on the Prize* Production Team (published by Penguin Books) is now in its twenty-third printing and has been a resource to countless secondary and post-secondary students.

[1] Blackside, Inc., founded by the late Henry Hampton in 1968, is a production company devoted to raising awareness about America's social issues and history through documentary films and other educational materials.

[2] Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991); Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).

EPISODE 1:
AWAKENINGS *(1954–1956)*

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, American society was sharply segregated along color lines. Supported by both law and custom, the Jim Crow system—late nineteenth-century rules and regulations that codified a long tradition of prejudice, dehumanization, and discrimination—created separate and unequal services, employment, and housing for blacks and whites. The first episode traces events that brought this discrimination and violence to public awareness and the awakening of the nascent civil rights movement.

1954	
May 17	In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court declares that segregated schools are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional
1955	
Aug. 28	Emmett Till, a black boy from Chicago visiting his uncle Moses Wright in Mississippi, is murdered for inappropriately addressing a white woman
Sep. 23	Two white men are tried in the murder of Emmett Till but are quickly acquitted
Dec. 1	Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to relinquish her seat in the front of the bus to a white person
Dec. 5	King leads the blacks of Montgomery in a rally to boycott city buses. In response to the blacks' bus boycott, many whites join White Citizens' Councils to uphold segregation and white control of the region
1956	
Nov. 13	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on buses in Montgomery is against the law
Dec. 21	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on Montgomery buses is illegal and the boycott ends

By the early 1950s, change was in the air. Thousands of black soldiers who had fought to liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi fascism and racism in World War II, returned home determined to fight bigotry and injustice. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP)* legal victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* helped to legitimize the emerging struggle: this decision overturned an 1896 Supreme Court ruling known as *Plessy v. Ferguson* which legalized "separate but equal" facilities and services for blacks and whites. The 1954 ruling, in effect, challenged all Americans to live up to the Constitutional vision of a society that promised "liberty and justice for all."

Many white Southerners felt that the tide was turning, that their culture and traditions were under attack, and many responded with violence. The episode's first segment relates the story of one such reaction: the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black Northerner from Chicago who, during a visit to Money, Mississippi in 1955, was accused of talking to a white woman "disrespectfully."** The allegation suggested that Till had crossed the racial lines in the South—an act of transgression that many segregationists often used to justify terror and violence against black citizens and maintain the Jim Crow system. Episode 1 traces the trial of the two suspects in the lynching, their rapid acquittal, and the public outcry that followed, due in large part to the courageous protest of Emmett Till's family in court and in the media. Their actions stirred a deep sense of outrage among blacks and some whites, and inspired them to organize for a comprehensive struggle for freedom and justice.

The second segment of this episode begins with Rosa Parks's historic 1955 bus ride. Parks, an

* Under the leadership of Harvard University scholar W. E. B. DuBois and the antilynching advocate Ida B. Wells, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. The NAACP's goals include the promotion of equality and justice in America and the eradication of prejudices among all its citizens. Its charter calls for the protection of the interests and opportunities of citizens of color and for the promotion of progressive policies in the fields of education, housing, and employment. For more information see "NAACP," at Britannica.com, http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372942 (accessed on April 18, 2006).

** Lynching may be defined as an execution without legal sanction. In this case, however, as in others associated with racial violence, lynching describes ritualized murder, often by hanging, intended to enforce the social domination of one group over another.

NAACP activist and secretary in the Montgomery, Alabama chapter, boarded a segregated bus and, in defiance of the law, refused to give up her seat to a white man. Parks's quiet protest sparked a citywide boycott of the bus system that lasted twelve-and-a-half months. During that time, the young Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as the movement's most eloquent leader; together with Montgomery's Baptist clergy and the Women's Political Council he led a successful battle that ended segregation on buses in Montgomery.

Although some historians point to the origins of the civil rights movement in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, many others trace the "awakening" of the civil rights movement to the murder of Emmett Till, the arrest of Rosa Parks, and the successful Montgomery bus boycott. These events in Mississippi and Alabama galvanized civil rights activists to begin articulating an alternative vision for America and lay plans to implement it. In the years that followed, the struggle to achieve black freedom would alter the very foundations of the social order in the United States.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Segregation, a social system based on a long history of prejudices and discrimination, was deeply entrenched in people's minds as well as in the culture. How did segregation manifest itself in daily life in the South? How did segregation disenfranchise black Americans?***
2. Why do you think the lynching of Emmett Till became a catalyst in the national movement for civil rights?
3. What choices did the family of Emmett Till and their supporters make in exposing the brutality of his murder? How did these choices shape public reaction to the murder?
4. In what ways did the media educate the nation about the events in Mississippi and Montgomery?
5. What means were available to disenfranchised blacks in America to fight segregation?
6. How did people summon the courage to confront the intimidation, brutality, and injustice they faced under the Jim Crow system?
7. This series is called "*Eyes on the Prize*." What is the prize being sought in this episode?

Document 1: BLACK BOYS FROM CHICAGO

In the South, terror and violence were used to enforce segregation and white power. On August 20, 1955, fourteen-year-old Emmett Till boarded a train in Chicago. Till, nicknamed Bo (or Bobo), traveled to Money, Mississippi with his cousin Curtis Jones to visit relatives who stayed in the South when the rest of the family migrated North. When he arrived with Jones on August 21, 1955, racial tensions were reaching a boiling point. Till, who grew up in the North, did not appreciate the strictness of racial mores in the South, nor did he recognize the risks involved in violating them. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Jones recalled:

> We was going to Money, Mississippi, to have a good time. I'd never picked cotton before and I was looking forward to that. I had told my mother that I could pick two hundred pounds, and she told me I couldn't. Emmett Till was fourteen years old, had just graduated out of the grammar school.
>
> My grandfather in Mississippi was a preacher. He had a church and he had a little raggedy

*** Disenfranchised persons are deprived of voting rights, and therefore, political power. The term is also used more broadly to describe groups that are denied access to the political process, regardless of their formal voting rights.

'41 Ford, if I'm not mistaken. And he took all of us to church that day, including my grandmother, my three uncles, myself, my cousin Emmett, and my cousin Willa Parker. While he was in the pulpit preaching, we get the car and drive to Money. Anyway, we went into this store to buy some candy. Before Emmett went in, he had shown the boys round his age some picture of some white kids that he had graduated from school with, female and male. He told the boys who had gathered round this store—there must have been maybe ten to twelve youngsters there—that one of the girls was his girlfriend. So one of the local boys said, "Hey, there's a white girl in that store there. I bet you won't go in there and talk to her." So Emmett went in there. When he was leaving out the store, after buying some candy, he told her, "Bye, baby."

I was sitting out there playing checkers with this older man. Next thing I know, one of the boys came up to me and said, "Say, man, you got a crazy cousin. He just went in there and said 'Bye, baby' to that white woman." This man I was playing checkers with jumped straight up and said, "Boy, you better get out of here. That lady'll come out of that store and blow your brains off."

It was kind of funny to us. We hopped in the car and drove back to the church. My grandfather was just about completing his sermon.

The next day, we was telling some youngsters what had happened, but they had heard about it. One girl was telling us that we better get out of there 'cause when that lady's husband come back gonna be big trouble. We didn't tell our grandfather. If we had told our grandfather, I'm sure he would have gotten us out of there. That was Wednesday. So that Thursday passed, nothing happened. Friday passed, nothing happened. Saturday, nothing happened. So we forgot about it.

Saturday night we went to town. The closest town was Greenwood. We must have stayed there till approximately three o'clock that morning. We returned and—my grandfather didn't have but three rooms, the kitchen and two bedrooms—it must have been about three-thirty, I was awakened by a group of men in the house. I didn't wake completely, youngsters, they sleep hard, you know. When they came, my grandfather answered the door and they asked him did he have three boys in there from Chicago? And he stated yes. He said I got my two grandsons and a nephew. So they told him get the one who did the talking. My grandmother was scared to death. She was trying to protect Bo. They told her get back in bed. One of the guys struck her with a shotgun side of the head. When I woke up the next morning, I thought it was a dream.

I went to the porch and my grandfather was sitting on the porch. I asked him, "Poppa, did they bring Bo back?" He said, "No." He said, "I hope they didn't kill that boy." And that's when I got kind of scared.

I asked him, "Ain't you going to call the police?" He said, "No, I can't call the police. They told me that if I call the sheriff they was going to kill everybody in this house." So I told him, I say, "*I'll* call."

That happened Sunday.[1]

CONNECTIONS

1. What did the reactions to the brief interaction between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant, the white woman in the store, expose about the social system that supported segregation? Why do you think Till's actions sparked such violence?
2. Curtis Jones was playing checkers with an older man who warned him that Bryant was likely to react violently to Till's innocent comments. What did he know that the two boys did not? How do people learn the rules and customs of a society? How are these rules and customs enforced?
3. What is the role of intimidation, lynching, and fear in a segregated society?
4. Till's uncle, Mose Wright, would not go to the police. In a democracy, what institutions are responsible for protecting the vulnerable? What options do individuals and groups have when these institutions cannot be trusted?

Document 2: MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY GOES PUBLIC

In an interview with CBS News, Mamie Till-Mobley recalled her first response to the sight of her son's mutilated corpse: "instead of fainting, I realized that here's a job that I got to do now and I don't have time to faint; I don't have time to cry […] I've got to make a decision and my decision was that there is no way I can tell the world what I see. The world is going to have to look at this. They're going to have to help me tell the story."[2] In her grief, Till-Mobley made two choices that changed the course of American history: first, she insisted on an open casket funeral for her son, and second, a week later, she had *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender* publish the grisly images of her son's tortured body. These photographs quickly became a symbol of the violence that simmered just under the surface of segregated communities in the South.

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December 1955. Mamie Till-Mobley weeping over Emmett Till's casket. Her courageous decision to publish the images of her son's tortured body made Emmett Till a powerful symbol of racial violence in the South.

Charles Diggs, one of the first black congressmen after Reconstruction,**** argued that "the picture in the *Jet* magazine […] was probably one of the greatest media products in the last forty or fifty years, because that picture stimulated a lot of interest and a lot of anger on the part of blacks all over the country. And the fact that the Till boy was just a child also added to this mat-

**** In US history, Reconstruction is the period during and after the American Civil War in which attempts were made to solve the political, social, and economic problems arising from the readmission to the Union of the eleven Confederate states that had seceded at or before the outbreak of war. For more information see "Reconstruction" at Britannica.com, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062908 (accessed on August 1, 2006).

ter."[3] Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Halberstam, who spent much of his earlier career as a journalist covering the civil rights movement, argues that the sensation caused by the Till photographs was the first great media event of the civil rights movement.[4]

Julian Bond, a civil rights activist and chairman of the NAACP, remembers the impact reading about Till's death had upon him as a young man growing up in Pennsylvania:

> My memories are exact—and parallel those of many others my age—I felt vulnerable for the first time in my life—Till was a year younger—and [I] recall believing that this could easily happen to me—for no reason at all.[5]

In a *New York Times* article about the notorious photographs, Chris Metress, the editor of "The Lynching of Emmett Till," notes: "You get testimony from white people coming of age at the time about how the case affected them, but you don't get them testifying, like countless blacks, that the *Jet* photo had this transformative effect on them, altering the way they felt about themselves and their vulnerabilities and the dangers they would be facing in the civil rights movement. Because white people didn't read *Jet*."[6]

CONNECTIONS

1. Why do you think Mamie Till-Mobley decided to show the public her son's mutilated body?
2. What was the role of the black press in exposing the violence of the Jim Crow system? Why do you think the mainstream press was initially reluctant to publish the photographs of Emmett Till?
3. What role can the press play in exposing injustice? Are there news stories that have led you to express outrage or influenced you to take action?

Document 3: MOSE WRIGHT STANDS UP

James Hicks, a black journalist, was sent by the National News Association to cover the Till trial. He recalled the courageous decision of Mose Wright to identify his nephew's murderers at the trial. Hicks points out that in doing so, Wright defied Southern tradition that not only treated blacks as inferior citizens, but also forced them to accept blatant violations of their basic rights.

> Somebody had said that Mose Wright had told them from the git-go that he wanted to testify. He wanted to tell how these people got Emmett Till out of his house that night. All the people in Mound Bayou were saying, "Look, this is it. This man gets up there and identifies J. W. Milam and this other man, Bryant, we don't know what's going to happen. His life won't be worth a dime if he testifies against these two white men." We had been told that this was going to happen, this was a point when the stuff would hit the fan. We black reporters devised our own plan. We were seated in this Jim Crow setup, near a window. On this particular day, every able-bodied white man you saw in the courtroom had a .45 or a .38 strung on him. They were expecting something to happen. One of these young deputies who was wearing a gun, there was only an aisle between us. I said the first thing I will do is grab that .45. Snatch that safety off and then battle as far as we could, because it was almost hopeless. I didn't know if it would come out too well, but if you blasted a few of them, then

somebody might think you meant business.

When Uncle Mose testified, electricity came over the courtroom. This elderly, gray-haired man sitting up there. The prosecutor said, "Now, Uncle Mose, I am going to ask you, is it a fact that two men came to your house? Now what did they say?"

"They asked, 'You have a nigger here from Chicago?'" And he told them, "My little nephew is here from Chicago."

"And what did they say then?"

"He ask me where he was, and I said he was in there in the bed 'cause it was nighttime, and so they said get him up. I got him up and then he, they took him away and they said, 'I'm going to take this nigger with us.' I couldn't do anything."

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Mose Wright identifying his nephew's murderers. Wright defied Southern tradition that forced blacks to accept silently violations of their rights.

The key point came when they said to him, "I'm going to ask you to look around in the courtroom and see if you see any man here that came to you and knocked on your door that night." And so this old man—I mean, talk about courage—he looked around and in his broken English he said, "Dar he," and he pointed so straight at J. W. Milam. It was like history in that courtroom. It was like electricity in that courtroom. The judge, he was pounding on his gavel and he was saying "Order, order," like that. There was a terrific tension in the courtroom but nothing happened. I mean, no outbreak came. I think that was because of the judge.[7]

The defendants were acquitted at the trial. Later, in a story they sold to *Look* magazine, they proudly confessed to the murder.

CONNECTIONS

1. Why were black Americans afraid to testify against whites in the South? What does their fear reveal about justice in the South at that time?
2. What, in your opinion, compelled Wright, who knew the dangers of speaking out, to step up and testify against the murderers?
3. How did Wright's actions and testimony make him a symbol of the emerging civil rights movement?

Document 4: ROSA PARKS REMEMBERS

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-109643

December 1, 1955. Rosa Parks cited the murder of Emmett Till as a motivation for her refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger.

Black citizens in Alabama endured daily legal and physical abuse under the degrading Jim Crow system. In schools, restaurants, theaters, public transportation, and almost every other area they were segregated from whites and treated as second-class citizens. In the interview below, Rosa Parks—who often referred to the Emmett Till lynching as a catalyst for her actions—tells the story of her decision to challenge the regulations that segregated public transportation. Parks, an experienced civil rights activist who worked for years with the NAACP, was well aware of the potential consequences of her actions. Nevertheless, she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man.

Having to take a certain section [on a bus] because of your race was humiliating, but having to stand up because a particular driver wanted to keep a white person from having to stand was, to my mind, most inhumane.

More than seventy-five, between eighty-five and I think ninety, percent of the patronage of the buses were black people, because more white people could own and drive their own cars than blacks.

I happened to be the secretary of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP as well as the NAACP Youth Council adviser. Many cases did come to my attention that nothing came out of 'cause the person that was abused would be too intimidated to sign an affidavit, or to make a statement. Over the years, I had had my own problems with the bus drivers. In fact, some did tell me not to ride their buses if I felt that I was too important to go to the back door to get on. One had evicted me from the bus in 1943, which did not cause anything more than just a passing glance.

On December l, 1955, I had finished my day's work as a tailor's assistant in the Montgomery Fair department store and I was on my way home. There was one vacant seat on the Cleveland Avenue bus, which I took, alongside a man and two women across the aisle. There were still a few vacant seats in the white section in the front, of course. We went to the next stop without being disturbed. On the third, the front seats were occupied and this one man, a white man, was standing. The driver asked us to stand up and let him have those seats, and when none of us moved at his first words, he said, "You all make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats." And the man who was sitting next to the window stood up, and I made room for him to pass by me. The two women

across the aisle stood up and moved out.

When the driver saw me still sitting, he asked if I was going to stand up and I said, "No, I'm not."

And he said, "Well, if you don't stand up, I'm going to call the police and have you arrested."

I said, "You may do that."

He did get off the bus, and I still stayed where I was. Two policemen came on the bus. One of the policemen asked me if the bus driver had asked me to stand and I said yes.

He said, "Why don't you stand up?"

And I asked him, "Why do you push us around?"

He said, "I do not know, but the law is the law and you're under arrest."[8]

CONNECTIONS

1. Often Rosa Parks's motivation for her refusal to relinquish her seat has been trivialized as "Rosa Parks was tired." How did she explain her decision?
2. Why did the early struggle against segregation focus on buses and other forms of public accommodations? What leverage were protesters in Montgomery able to use against the bus company?
3. Why do you think Parks became a symbol of the civil rights movement? Why did so many people identify with her cause? How did that identification build support for the emerging movement?

Document 5: A NEW LEADER EMERGES

Four days after Rosa Parks was arrested for her defiant bus ride, local activists recruited a young minister to lead their struggle against segregation in Montgomery. Twenty-six-year-old Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. hesitated but finally accepted their invitation to lead the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. Word of Parks's arrest spread. On December 5, 1955, more than 5,000 people showed up at the Holt Street Baptist Church to hear King give the keynote speech where he laid out the plan for the Montgomery bus boycott and a new vision for American democracy:

We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens, and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its means. We are here because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth. But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected.

This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fear on buses in our community. On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and oppressed because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. I don't have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. [...] But at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions. Just the other day, just

last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—not one of the finest Negro citizens but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—was taken from a bus and carried to jail and arrested because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person. [...] Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. And since it had to happen I'm happy it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. Nobody can doubt the height of her character, nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. [...]

And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.[...] You know my friends there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time my friends when people get tired of being flung across the abyss of humiliation where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amidst the piercing chill of an Alpine November.

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. Now let us say that we are not here advocating violence. We have overcome that. I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation that we are Christian people. We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. And secondly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic [sic] nation we couldn't do this. If we were trapped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right.

My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we ought to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens' Councils. There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out to some distant road and murdered. There will be nobody among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist.

My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and firm determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, then the Supreme Court of this Nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer and never came down to earth. If we are wrong, justice is a lie. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I want to say that with all of our actions we must stick together. Unity is the great need of the hour. And if we are united, we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. And don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we

are doing, because we are doing it within the law. There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. We reserve that right. [...]

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [...] In all of our doings, in all of our deliberations [...] whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. Let us be Christian in all of our action. And I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love. Love is one of the pinnacle parts of the Christian faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in [application]. Justice is love correcting that which would work against love. [...] Standing beside love is always justice. And we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion but we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education but it is also a process of legislation.

And as we stand and sit here this evening, and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. We are going to work together. Right here in Montgomery when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, black people, fleecy locks and black complexion, of people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights." And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization. And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it's too late.[9]

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-135428

February 1956. Audience at Montgomery's First Baptist Church, cheering leaders of the bus boycott. The Montgomery boycott marked King's emergence as a leader of the civil rights movement.

CONNECTIONS

1. What words, phrases, or images stand out in King's speech? What did King mean by a transformation from "thin paper to thick action"?
2. What kind of struggle did King propose? What principles did King cite as a foundation for the struggle?
3. Why was the church so central to the struggle for black freedom?
4. What was the role of religion and faith in the arguments King presented? To what religious values and democratic principles did he appeal in his speech?
5. Lillian Smith, the author of *Killers of the Dream* and an outspoken white supporter of civil rights, wrote to King in the early months of the Montgomery boycott. In her letter, she shared her thoughts about the role of religion in the struggle for black freedom:

Dear Dr. King:

I have with a profound sense of fellowship and admiration been watching your work in Montgomery. I cannot begin to tell you how effective it seems to me, although I must confess I have watched it only at long distance.

It is the right way. Only through persuasion, love, goodwill, and firm nonviolent resistance can the change take place in our South. Perhaps in a northern city this kind of nonviolent, persuasive resistance would either be totally misinterpreted or else find nothing in the whites which could be appealed to. But in our South, the whites, too, share the profoundly religious symbols you are using and respond to them on a deep level of their hearts and minds. Their imaginations are stirred: the waters are troubled.

You seem to be going at it in such a wise way. I want to come down as soon as I can and talk quietly with you about it. For I have nothing to go on except television reports and newspaper reports. But these have been surprisingly sympathetic to the 40,000 Negroes in Montgomery who are taking part in this resistance movement. But I have been in India twice; I followed the Gandhian movement long before it became popular in this country. I, myself, being a Deep South white, reared in a religious home and the Methodist church, realize the deep ties of common songs, common prayer, common symbols that bind our two races together on a religio-mystical level, even as another brutally mythic idea, the concept of White Supremacy, tears our two people apart.[10]

6. Why does Smith believe that religion and nonviolence would be useful strategies for change? What impact did she suggest that King's religious symbolism would have on white Southerners?

7. What ideology did the White Supremacists espouse? Who were they? Why did Smith and many others believe that this ideology tears blacks and whites apart?

Document 6: WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER

The long bus boycott in Montgomery took a heavy toll on black citizens, yet they chose to walk the many miles to and from work rather than succumb to continued humiliation. Some white women who relied on black domestic help supported the boycott. While the police attempted to crack down on people who provided transportation for the marchers, a system of carpooling quickly developed to offset some of the effects of the boycott. Virginia Durr and her husband Clifford bailed Rosa Parks out of jail after her arrest and were among the most public white supporters of the boycott. In this interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Virginia Durr described the strange interplay between blacks and whites in the boycott:

The strange thing that happened was a kind of a play between white women and black women, in that none of the white women wanted to lose their help. The mayor of the town issued an order that all the black maids had to be dismissed to break the boycott. Well, their reply was, "Tell the mayor to come and do my work for me, then." So the white women went and got the black women in the car. They said they did it because the bus had broken down, or any excuse you could possibly think of. And then the black women, if you picked one of them up who was walking, they'll tell you that they were walking because the lady that brought them to work, her child was sick. So here was this absurd sort of dance going on. I saw a woman that worked for my mother-in-law, and they were asking her, "Do any of your family take part in the boycott?" She said, "No ma'am, they don't have anything to do with the boycott at all." She said, "My brother-in-law, he has a ride every morning and my sister-in-law, she comes home with somebody else, and they

just stay off the bus and don't have nothing to do with it." And so when we got out of the room, I said to Mary, "You know, you had been really the biggest storyteller in the world. You know everybody in your family's involved in the boycott." And she says, "Well, you know, when you have your hand in the lion's mouth, the best thing to do is pat it on the head." Always thought that was a wonderful phrase.

The boycott took off some of the terrible load of guilt that white southerners have lived under for so many generations, such a terrible load of shame and guilt that we won't acknowledge. But you can't do things like that to people and pretend to love them too. It's created such a terrible schizophrenia, because when you're a child, particularly if you have blacks in the house, you have devotion to them. Then when you get grown, people tell you that they're not worthy of you, they're different. And then you're torn apart, because here are the people you've loved and depended on. It's a terrible schizophrenia. That's why I think so much of the literature of the South is full of conflict and madness, because you can't do that to people. You can't do that to children. At least under the Nazis they never even pretended to like the Jews, but in the South it was always that terrible hypocrisy. You know, we love the blacks and we understand them and they love us. Both sides were playing roles which were pure hypocrisy. So I thought the boycott was absolutely marvelous.[11]

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Durr, what tensions in the white community did the bus boycott expose? Why did some whites choose to help the boycotters?
2. Durr argued that as children, Southern whites were encouraged to develop loving relationships with blacks who cared for them. As adults, however, they were told to refrain from interacting with blacks because, it was argued, blacks were inferior. What conflicts and tensions did this message create? What does this message tell us about whites in the South at that time?
3. What did Durr mean by the "pure hypocrisy" that ruled relationships between blacks and whites?

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[1] Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 3–4.
[2] Malcolm West, "Mamie Till-Mobley, Civil Rights Heroine, Eulogized in Chicago," *Jet*, January 27, 2003.
[3] Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 7.
[4] Shaila Dewan, "How Photos Became Icon of Civil Rights Movement," *New York Times*, August 28, 2005.
[5] "Do You Remember?," *The American Experience*, PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_remember.html (accessed on April 25, 2006).
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[10] Margaret Rose Gladney, *How Am I to Be Heard? Letters of Lillian Smith* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1993), 193.
[11] Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 27–28.