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media release



Ernest C. Withers, *Sanitation Workers Assemble in Front of Clayborn Temple for a Solidarity March, Memphis, TN, March 28, 1968*  
© Ernest C. Withers, Courtesy Panopticon Gallery, Boston, MA, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

## For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights

On view from  
May 21  
through  
September 12, 2010

Media Preview  
May 20, 2010  
11:30 am–1:00 pm

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A new exhibition at the International Center of Photography will offer an innovative view of the Civil Rights Movement and the catalytic social role played by changing portrayals of African Americans in the 1950s and '60s. Through a rich juxtaposition of visual images—including photographs, television and film clips, magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets and posters—the exhibition shows how strategic interventions in these mediums of visual culture helped to transform prevailing attitudes toward race in America. The exhibition, organized by guest curator Maurice Berger, is titled *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, and will be on view from May 21 to September 12, 2010.

The exhibition demonstrates the extent to which the rise of the modern civil rights movement paralleled the birth of television and the popularity of picture magazines and other forms of visual mass media, and traces the gradual introduction of African American faces into those contexts. These images were ever-present and diverse: the startling footage of southern white aggression and black suffering that appeared night after night on television news programs; the photographs of achievers and martyrs in black periodicals, which roused pride or activism in the African American community; the humble snapshot, no less powerful in its ability to edify and motivate.

Efforts to combat racism and segregation were waged not only with fiery speeches and nonviolent protests but also, significantly, with pictures, forever changing the way political movements fought for visibility and recognition. Nonetheless, the role of visual media in combating racism is rarely included in standard histories of the movement. *For All the World to See* will include approximately 230 objects and television and film clips, ranging from the late-1940s to the mid-1970s. The exhibition is divided into five sections: *It Keeps on Rollin' Along: The Status Quo* looks at the world of visual culture into which the modern civil rights movement was born and the power of these images to perpetuate stereotypes, prejudice, and complacency. *The Culture of Positive Images* investigates the role of images in fostering a sense of black pride and accomplishment as well as improving the habitually negative view of African Americans in the culture at large. *“Let the World See What I’ve Seen”*: *Evidence and Persuasion* considers the use of pictures to report,

document, or offer proof, depictions powerful enough to alter public opinion, perceptions, or attitudes about race in America. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Broadcasting Race* examines the role of entertainment television in supporting black performers and exploring controversial racial issues. *In Our Lives We Are Whole: Snapshots of Everyday Life, 1935–1975* studies the roles played by the visual artifacts of daily life—from family snapshots to the visual campaign of the Black Panther Party—in emboldening black pride, maintaining the status quo, or countering mainstream values and points of view.

Exhibition highlights include: materials relating to the Emmett Till case, such as a rare pamphlet by the photographer Ernest C. Withers recounting the murder and its aftermath; historic footage of Jackie Robinson's first game in the major leagues and other sports memorabilia; an examination of the Negro pictorial magazine, from the widely-read (*Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Tan*) to the short-lived (*Hue, Say, and Sepia*); photographs documenting the civil rights movement and its leaders by Roy DeCarava, Elliot Erwitt, Benedict Fernandez, Joseph Louw, Francis Miller, Gordon Parks, Robert Sengstack, Moneta Sleet, Carl Van Vechten, and Dan Weiner; clips from groundbreaking television documentaries, most not seen in decades, such as *The Weapons of Gordon Parks*, *Ku Klux Klan: The Invisible Empire*, and *Take This Hammer*; and excerpts from nationally broadcast (*The Beulah Show*, *East Side, West Side*, *All in the Family*, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*) and local African American TV programs (*Soul*, *Say Brother*, and *Colored People's Time*). *For All the World to See* looks at images from a range of cultural outlets and formats, tracking the ways they represented race in order to alter beliefs and attitudes.

### **Exhibition Organization/Tour**

*For All The World To See* was co-organized by the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture, University of Maryland, Baltimore County and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C. Following its debut at the International Center of Photography, the exhibition will travel to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (June to October 2011, tentative); and the Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture, UMBC (September 2012 to January 2013).

### **Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by the fully illustrated book *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, by Maurice Berger with a foreword by Thulani Davis (Yale University Press, 2010). Additionally, an online version of the exhibition will launch in May 2010 ([www.foralltheworldtosee.org](http://www.foralltheworldtosee.org)).

### **Curator Biography**

Maurice Berger is senior research scholar at the Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture, University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He is the author of *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999)—which was named as a finalist for the 2000 Horace Mann Bond Book Award of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute, Harvard University—and ten other books. Berger has organized numerous exhibitions, including retrospectives of the artists Adrian Piper (1999) and Fred Wilson (2001), and *White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art* (2003).

### **Funding**

This project has been funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Trellis Fund, James A. Macdonald Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, St. Paul Travelers Corporation, Communities Foundation of Texas, and Maryland State Arts Council. Additional support has come from CBS News Archives, Ed Sullivan/SOFA Entertainment, Sullmark Corporation, and Sony Pictures Entertainment, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

*For All the World to See* was designated a “We the People” project by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The goal of the “We the People” initiative is to “encourage and strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture through the support of projects that explore significant events and themes in our nation’s history and culture and that advance knowledge of the principles that define America.”

