

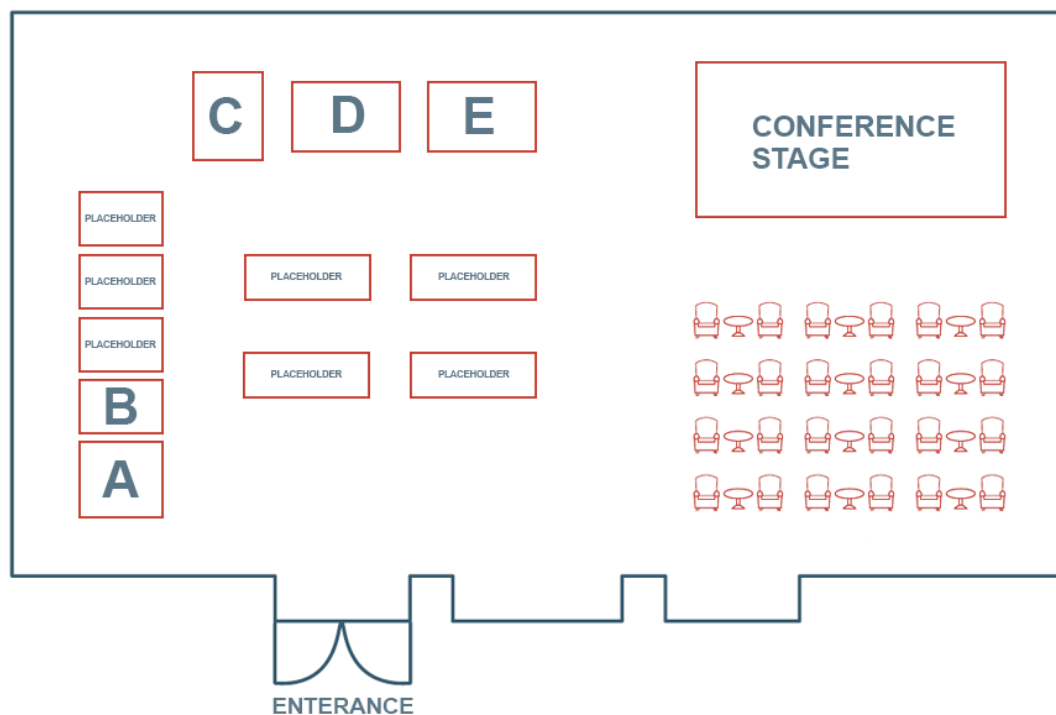
Ways of Perceiving – Writing Task and Assessment

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BA Course Title: Ways of Perceiving

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Tutor's Name: Martin Bush



A - Multigenerational family
from Alabama (1956)

B - Elizabeth Eckford Entering
Little Rock High School (1957)

C - March on Washington DC
(1963)

D - Martin Luther King Nobel
Peace Prize (1964)

E - Coretta King and Family
around the Open Casket (1968)

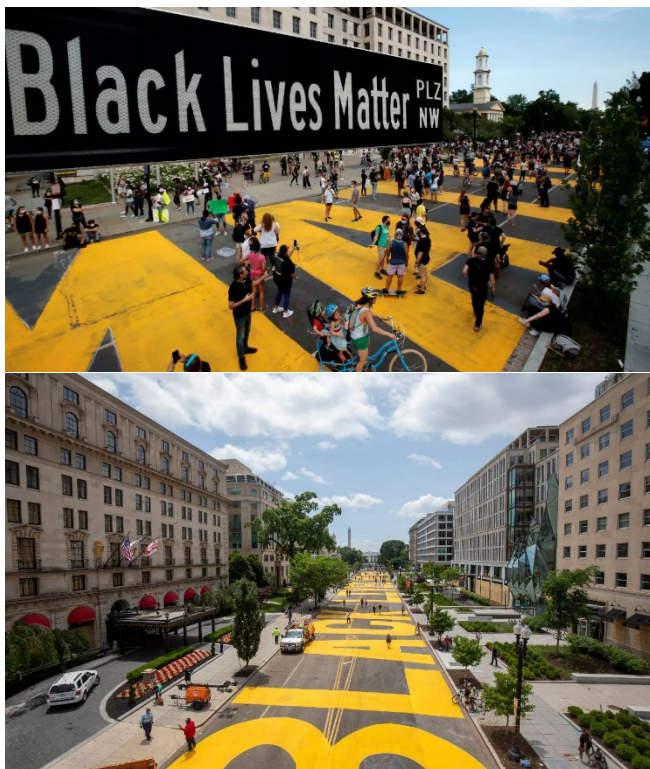
Fig.1 – “The Right Direction” Exhibition Diagram plan

‘Curation’, as defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary*, is “the selection and care of objects to be shown in a museum or to form part of a collection of art, an exhibition, etc.”. In connections with the traditional role of the curator, curators’ primary job was to preserve, oversee and archive an object. This was also supported by the Latin origins of the word

“curate” or to “look after”, according to *Jalees Rehman* (2013). I have played as the role of the curator while carefully selecting pieces suitable for an Exhibition that focuses on the events during the *Civil Rights Movement*. *The Right Direction* exhibition will be held in Washington DC, United States of America. Washington DC is a very significant place for the reason being the capital of the US and most importantly, where the *March on Washington* political peaceful demonstration was held by civil rights leaders to protest racial discrimination and show support for the pending civil rights legislation in 1963.

Fig. Two – Image taken of Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington DC, USA (2020)

Fig. Three - Image taken of Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington DC, USA (2020)



Similarly like the recent changes made by African American mayor, Muriel Bowser, to a street in Washington DC now called *Black Lives Matter Plaza* which also features huge letters spread across the street’s tarmac surface ‘emblazoned’ in the colour yellow and spelling the words *Black Lives Matter*, the exhibition will be open to show awareness for the events that took

place during the time of the *Civil Rights Movement* (CRM) and leading up to the death of Martin Luther King, a popular freedom rights activist and leader of peaceful protests.

Five photographs have been brought together for the exhibition to document the *Civil Rights Movement* through almost a decade of events. The artwork shows progression of the *Civil Rights Movement* in chronological order and a clockwise layout (as seen in figure 1), which works effectively as a guide for the audience to view the timeline of events. Amongst these five pieces, there are placeholders which represent other elements of the exhibition followed by a seated area supported by a conference stage.

Fig. Four - Gordon Parks 'Outside Looking In', Mobile, Alabama, 1956 Archival Pigment Print.



Figure 4, or exhibition piece A, is a photograph taken by photographer, Gordon Parks, from the year 1956 - for *Life Magazine*.

In this photograph, we see a group of black children behind a wired gate looking into an amusement park filled with white families.

Gordon Parks documented inequalities that black families

specifically from Alabama faced daily (Frank, 2015), and compiled them into a photo essay named 'Segregation Story' to show the public the discrimination that black families face in comparison to whites living in the same areas. Forced into the *Jim Crow Law*, black families were 'demoted to second class citizens' (Frank, 2015), and were labelled *separate* but not equal. There is an obvious reason as to why we do not see the children inside the park considering during the 1950s segregation laws were still in place. According to Victoria Wolcott (2019), both swimming pools and beaches were the most segregated and fought

over public spaces specifically in the North and Southern areas of America. 'Racial separation for them equalled racial peace'. (Wolcott, 2019).

Fig. Five – Unknown Photographer, Elizabeth Eckford Entering Little Rock High School (1957)



Exhibition piece B is a photograph captured by an unknown photographer in 1957 of a young girl named Elizabeth Eckford.

Described by M'Balia Singley (2007) as a 'symbolic image of the quiet, dignified determination of the Little Rock Nine' (p.4)., the photograph also shows the anti-violence beliefs of the Civil Rights activists. Eckford was a member of the *Little Rock Nine* and this photograph captures her walking into

Central High School alone due to the miscommunication between her and her peers, whilst being taunted by a mob of people that opposed school integration, chanting 'Two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate'. (Mai, 2017).

In 1954, 'the Jim Crow era of racial segregation' (Smith, 2017), the landmark supreme court ruling, *Brown vs. Board of Education* deemed segregated schools were unconstitutional.

Although this ruling meant that schools could no longer be segregated, according to David Smith (2017) of Arkansas' Governor, Orval Faubus, 'remained defiant' and used the force of the national guard to stop the *Little Rock Nine* from enrolling, leaving them in limbo for three weeks (Smith, 2017). The nine students then attempted to enter Central High a second time, barricades were set up and according to M'Balia Singley (2007), over 1,000

people showed up in protest. The *Little Rock Nine* were assaulted throughout their time at Central high, and in consequence of the repeated bomb threats, twenty-six janitors were hired and instructed to go through all lockers to check for bombs every night.

Fig. Six – Builder Levy, March on Washington DC photograph (1963)



This is exhibition piece C, a photograph taken by Builder Levy of a black woman that attended the *March on Washington DC* in 1963. Dyson, et al. (2013)

described the March on Washington as “...one of the greatest gatherings of American citizens since the republic’s birth” (p.1)

The march on Washington was held during a nationwide civil rights movement where Black Americans were

fighting for equal rights. According to Elizabeth Hilfrank (2021), around 190,000 black people and 60,000 white people attended the demonstration and not a patch of grass could be seen as the marchers ‘squeezed together’ to hear the speeches in front of the Lincoln memorial.

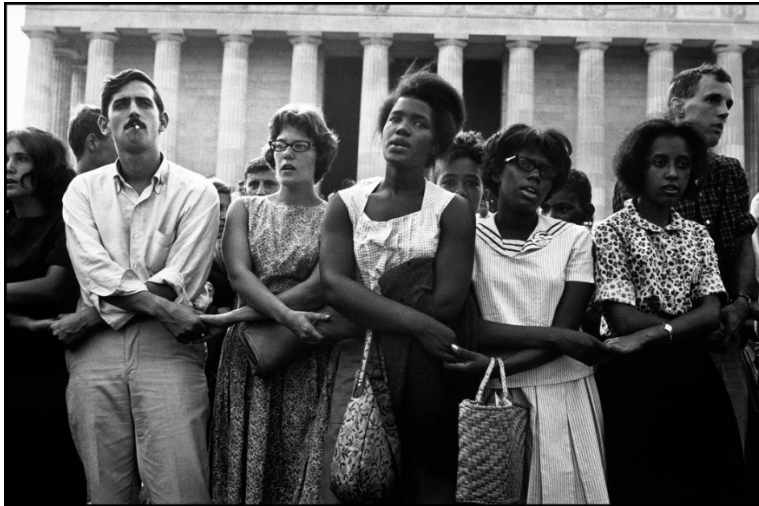


Fig. Seven - Leonard Freed - The March on Washington. Washington, DC, USA. August 28, 1963.

At the same time and event, Leonard Freed; a very well-known and respected photographer and book author,

became a documentarist of African Americans' experiences during the 1950s and 60s.

(Hopkinson, 2006). This photograph gives us a much clearer view of what stage the *Civil Rights Movement* was at by the 1960s. Michael O'Donnell (2014) argued that *the* 'era's real hero' is Lyndon Johnson, the 36th U.S. President, and not the Supreme Court. "The civil-rights movement had the extraordinary figure of Lyndon Johnson." (O'Donnell, 2014).

Michael O'Donnell heavily backs Lyndon Johnson as days after J F Kennedy's murder, Johnson showed the type of leadership that previous lacked, and that Johnson had the urgency to have the *Civil Rights Legislation* 1964 passed as soon as possible. (2014).

Fig. Eight - Leonard Freed - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. being greeted upon his return to the United States after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize October 31, 1964



“When Americans marched in Washington, D.C., their voices were heard around the world.”

(Dudziak, 2006). After the passing of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, the act which ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, Martin Luther King won the *Nobel Peace Prize*. This photograph, exhibition piece D, was taken by Leonard Freed during MLK’s return to the US after receiving the prize and shows him greeting his supporters from Baltimore. According



to the History.com Editors (2010), MLK donated all prize money, around \$54,600, to the *Civil Rights Movement*. Despite these successions and what had seemed to be an evidently

successful period for African Americans living in the US through the eyes of the media, Alan Taylor (2014), writer for *The Atlantic*, openly expresses that 'segregation remained the norm in many establishments'. In 1964 there were multiple sit-in protests taking place, and as schools in predominantly white areas were required to integrate, segregationists 'took to the streets' to attack African American demonstrations taking place in the South. (Taylor, 2014). *Fig. Nine - A police officer carrying a young girl walks past three civil rights demonstrators on the ground next to the Tulsa, Oklahoma, police station on April 2, 1964. The demonstrators were part of 54 arrested at a Tulsa restaurant.*



Fig. Ten - J.B. Stoner, segregationist from Atlanta, Georgia, holds a confederate flag as he addresses a large crowd of whites at a slave market in St. Augustine, Florida, on June 13, 1964

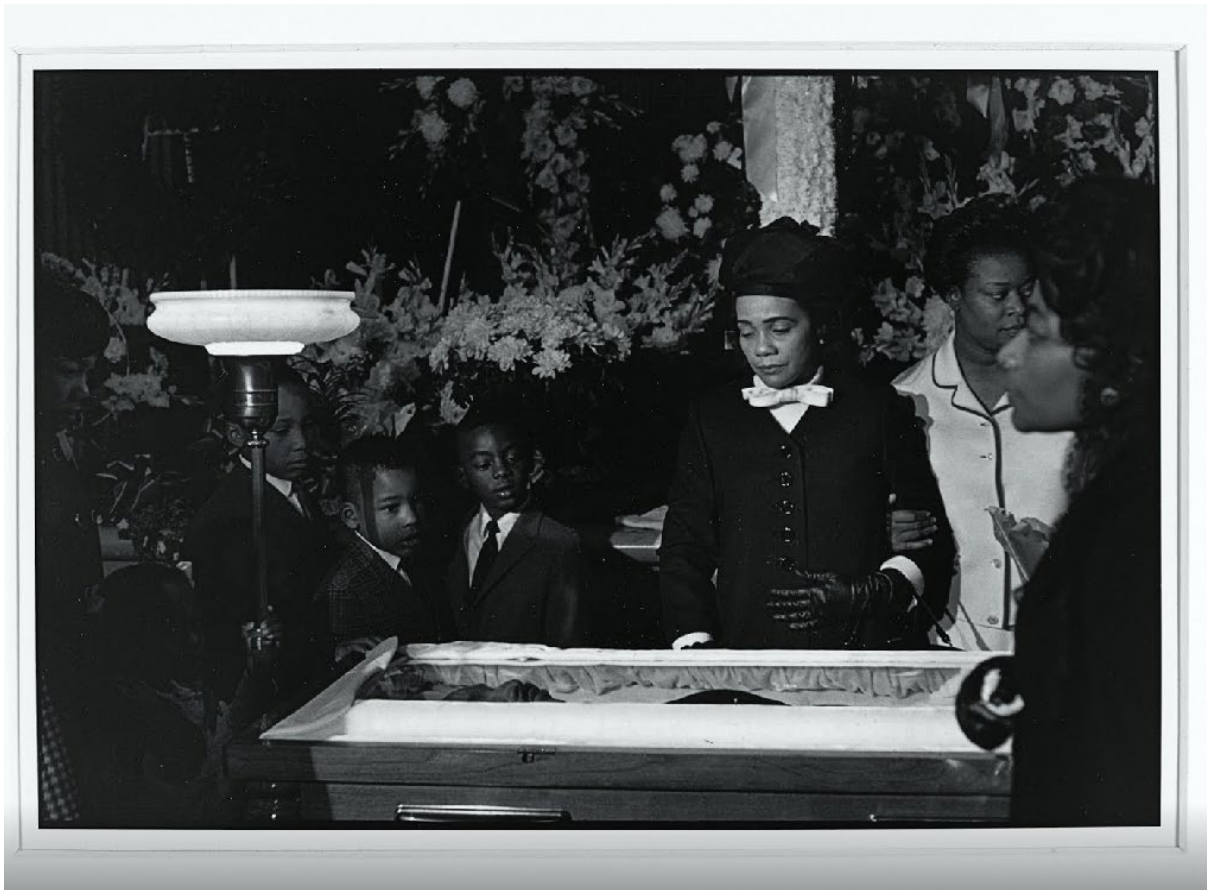


Fig. Eleven – Constantine Manos: Coretta King and Family around the Open Casket at the Funeral of Martin Luther King Jr., Atlanta (1968)

This is exhibition piece E, the last photograph that the audience will see from this series.

This photograph shows MLK's wife and family surrounding his casket at his funeral and was taken by Constantine Manos, a Greek American photographer known for his images in Boston and Greece. Martin Luther King, or, 'America's most prestigious purveyors of peace' as described by Vona Weiss (2019) was assassinated just weeks before the poor worker demonstration would take place, and after a demonstration King attended became violent. Peniel E. Joseph (2018), writer for *The Washington Post*, stated that 'in many ways' America is still trying to 'recover' from the assassination of King and opportunity for 'racial equality, economic justice and peace'. Joseph (2018) also explained that after the death of MLK, over one hundred and twenty American cities had erupted in violence, President Johnson had to

call in and order four thousand troops from the Army and National Guard to cordon off the White House and nationally, around seventy thousand troops were sent and spread out between twenty-nine states.

A photographic exhibition is a very effective way to showcase memories and display the stories of others, which is why as the curator the specific media; photography, has been chosen. 'Photography is a vision and art' (Em, 2019), photographs act as frozen memories and lead an audience to feel the moments in present time. As David Em says, pictures are very powerful and help us learn past history and teach others (2019).

Figures

Fig. One: Exhibition Diagram plan (2021) *The Right Direction*. Washington DC, USA

Fig. Two: Unknown Photographer. Image taken of Black Lives Matter Plaza (2020). Washington DC, USA

Fig. Three: Getty. Image taken of Black Lives Matter Plaza (2020). Washington DC, USA

Fig. Four: Parks, G. (1956) *Outside Looking In*. Mobile, Alabama. Archival Pigment Print.

Fig. Five: Unknown Photographer (1957). *Elizabeth Eckford Entering Little Rock High School*. Arkansas, USA

Fig. Six: Levy, B. (1963) *March on Washington DC*. Washington DC, USA

Fig. Seven: Freed, L. *The March on Washington*. Washington, DC, USA. August 28, 1963.

Fig. Eight: Freed, L. (1964) *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. being greeted upon his return to the United States after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize*. Baltimore, USA.

Fig. Nine: Unknown Photographer (1964) Untitled [A police officer carrying a young girl] Tulsa, Oklahoma, police station. USA.

Fig. Ten: Unknown Photographer (1964) Untitled. [J.B. Stoner, segregationist from Atlanta, Georgia, holds a confederate flag as he addresses a large crowd of whites at a slave market] St. Augustine, Florida.

Fig. Eleven: Manos, C. (1968) *Coretta King and Family around the Open Casket at the Funeral of Martin Luther King Jr.*, Atlanta. USA.

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