



Installation view of *Colin Quashie: Linked*

About this Teaching Resource:

This packet features artwork from the exhibition *Colin Quashie: Linked* which was featured at the Halsey Contemporary Institute of Art at the College of Charleston from August 23 to December 7, 2019. It is intended as a tool to help you look at art with your children/students. You can prepare for your inquiry-based discussions by reviewing the background information provided. Then use the Questions for Viewing below and full-page reproductions to look closely, think critically, and respond to the art together. Extend your investigations with one or more of the suggested activity ideas. In general, questions for younger audiences are listed first followed by progressively more complex ideas. Feel free to adapt the suggested activities according to the age group you are working with.

Share your teaching stories with us! If you use these materials, let us know by email at halsey@cofc.edu

About the Artist:

Colin Quashie was born in London, England in 1963 and raised in the West Indies. At age six, his parents immigrated to the United States and settled in Daytona Beach. He briefly attended the University of Florida on a full academic scholarship, but felt ill at ease in academia and left, eventually joining the Navy as a submarine Sonarman. It was there that his lifelong love for art re-emerged. After his discharge in 1987, he made the decision to pursue an art career.

Showing steady growth, his art career ended abruptly in 1995 after an exhibition was censored. Frustrated with the art world, he abandoned art, moved West and landed a job as a comedy sketch writer on MADtv. His love for art re-emerged two years later and since then, in between writing gigs (he has written for six comedy series, associate produced an independent feature film, and in 2001 received an Emmy Award for documentary writing), he continues to produce his unique brand of art. He lives in Charleston, South Carolina where he paints while developing work for television and freelancing as a graphic artist.



Check out [this video](#) of Colin Quashie and his work.

About the Exhibition:

Colin Quashie creates images that comment on contemporary racial stereotypes. Combining historical relics and artifacts with icons from past and present popular culture, Quashie sharply critiques the way people of color are portrayed in modern visual culture. Using his signature caustic wit, he blends images to allow viewers to more fully explore how images of African Americans and Black culture are constructed today. In his latest series, called *Linked*, Quashie juxtaposes images of well-known Black figures with other representations of artifacts to comment on stereotypes as they exist today. In *Gabriel*, Quashie tweaks an image of Louie Armstrong, updating his signature trumpet with a set of slave shackles. Similarly, in *Rose Colored*, he creates an image of Harriet Tubman donning a pair of rose-colored glasses, referencing the abolitionist's view of slaveholders, for whom she still held a level of empathy. With these works, Quashie teases out underlying stereotypes, exposing them for all to see more plainly.

Using witty, scathing sarcasm intended to spark popular debate and discussion among his viewing audience, Quashie's art faces off against hard issues of culture, politics and race with a self-conscious awareness that often offends (or disturbs) black, white and other; he discriminates with equality and equanimity. Quashie is equal to the hard questions he raises, but often the issues are camouflaged in pop-culture imagery that confounds as well as derides the spectator. Quashie uses media-based methods to dissect and deconstruct stereotypical views of cultural relationships. This is precisely what makes his work so challenging not only to the average viewer, but to many art insiders as well. The imagery is very accessible, luring the viewer into a dialogue that then turns their preconceptions upside down.

You can see images of the exhibition in the galleries [here!](#)

Questions for Viewing:

Note about Scaffolding:

Each example of work presented here is meant to propagate an idea or message (be mass-circulated). This type of art can also depict or recall images or realities that reflect a painful past and present. We encourage you to talk with your students about justice and emotional triggers before starting a conversation with them about the art.

Look at each of the works. A symbol is an object used to stand for an idea or belief. Which items do you see that may represent symbols? Why do you think the artist might have chosen to include these particular symbols?

Looking closely at Colin Quashie's work, can you identify the historical figures in this series? Can you identify the artifacts he superimposes on the image? Why would he select these well know images and combine them with artifacts? Does it change your opinion of the figure represented? If so, how?

Take a moment to look at *Blactose Intolerant*. What do you see? Take a moment to read the extended caption. What information does the caption provide?

Think about people in your communities (neighborhood, school, borough, and city). Are there issues that your communities face as a whole? What are some issues that people of color are facing today?

Look at *Servant*. Pay attention to the photograph and the juxtaposed image. In your opinion, what is the artist trying to capture in this photograph?

If you were going to choose a public figure to pair with a historical artifact, who and what would you choose?

Suggested Activities:

Collage:

Make a collage that shows something about your spirit, beliefs, or hopes for the future using images torn or cut from magazines or other sources. What surprises you about your collage? What do your choices about colors, objects, and details say about you? Did you discover something new about yourself because you made this collage?

Poster Parade:

Identify an issue that interests you. Possible topics include racial profiling, immigration, housing, climate change, gun control, or access to health care. Find at least three resources. For useful links to articles and campaigns, look [here](#).

Use the following questions to guide your research: What conflict is at the center of your social issue? Define the multiple political positions around this issue. What laws or systems are in place in connection with this issue? Who is affected by these laws/systems? What is your position on this issue? What change would you like to see, both politically and socially? How might this change impact your life? Write a statement summarizing your research and your perspective. Think about the message you want to share and what visual approach will best motivate others to join your way of thinking, or act alongside you. Create a poster that clearly makes your argument with carefully

considered images, text, color, and composition. What are ways to share your art and its message to motivate others?

Lyrical Justice:

Think of a social injustice that you feel personally impacted by. For example, you might have experienced street harassment, poor living conditions in your neighborhood, or discrimination based on your age. What are some of the tools you can use to channel or share your feelings about this experience? Write a song or poem responding to that social injustice. Have a family member or partner illustrate your words.

Performance Art/Theatre:

Are there issues in your school or community that are important but that no one seems to notice or talk much about? Think of an “intervention” or “scene” that you might create to get people talking and thinking about this issue. Think about how you might grab people’s attention in a way that makes them curious and engaged, as opposed to just shocked. How can you use costumes, interesting objects, and your own body to bring attention to this issue in a way that creates an opportunity for change?

Your True Colors:

Find three to five photographs of yourself taken by someone else, and then use a camera or camera phone to create a series of three to five self-portraits. When creating your selfies, think about how they might reflect or challenge the way you have been seen by others. Choose your pose, facial expression, background, props, and clothing with intention. Each is an important element that reflects aspects of your identity. Compare and contrast the two series of photographs. Which series is a more accurate portrayal of your true self? Write an artist statement that explores this topic. Be sure to include visual evidence from the photographs.

Related Readings available through the Overdrive Application (browser and smartphone) with Charleston County Public Library:

Finding Langston by Lesa Cline-Ransome

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History by Vashti Harrison

Attucks! Oscar Robertson and the Basketball Team That Awakened a City by Phillip Hoose

March: Book One by John Lewis

Darius & Twig by Walter Dean Myers

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia

Red at the Bone by Jacqueline Woodson

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

Social Justice Teaching Resources:

[Teaching Tolerance](#) is an extensive online resource and blog for educators that includes classroom activities, professional development, and publications supporting diversity, equity, and justice in the classroom.

[Teaching for Change](#) is an online resource for teachers and parents. It includes lessons for teaching social justice topics, professional development, and publications in support of preparing young people to become active global citizens.

[Rethinking Schools](#) is a nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism. They have a range of online, print, and subscription publications aimed at promoting equity and racial justice in the classroom.

[Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility](#) works with educators to help young people develop the values, personal qualities, and skills they need to thrive and contribute to their communities. Their website has an ongoing list of lesson plans and classroom resources related to addressing current events and social and emotional learning.

Article by Marcia Chatelain: "[How to Teach Kids About What's Happening in Ferguson](#)"
[#FergusonSyllabus](#) is a crowdsourced syllabus about race, African American history, civil rights, and policing that was put together in response to the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and surrounding events of 2014.

EXTENDED CAPTIONS FOR *LINKED*

Written by Colin Quashie

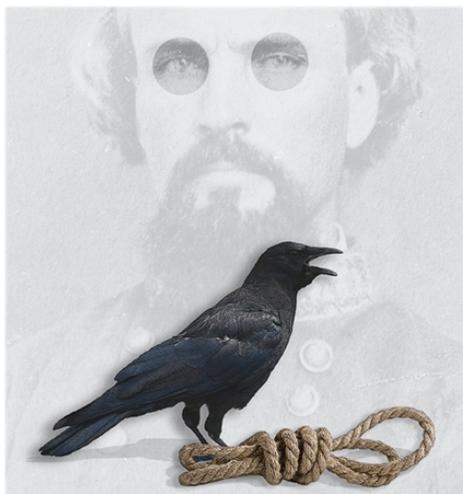


BLACTOSE TOLERANT

Assistant Professor of History, Stephanie Jones-Rogers of UC Berkeley, argues that white women were complicit in expanding slavery by creating a “niche sector of the slave market” dedicated to providing them with maternal labor sought from bondswomen. By studying advertisements in Southern newspapers, Jones-Rogers’ uncovered a disturbing story—white women timed their pregnancies with that of their Black wet nurses, forcing Black mothers to dedicate the majority of their milk to white children. Nurses were judged by the health of white children under their care and whether or not their milk was “fresh” as determined by the age of the enslaved person’s infant. Wet nurses whose infant died in, or after childbirth, were extremely valuable since white

women knew more time and resources would be spent on white children (Garcia, 2018).

Wet nursing had detrimental effects on Black women. Daily use of bodily resources with no regard for their personal or nutritional well-being, as well as separation from family and an inability to bond with their children often lead to mental and physical decline. Rather than improving conditions, white women used their despair as an excuse to sell them, noting in advertisements that they were prone to “the sulks” or “madness” (Garcia, 2018).



PREMEDITATED

Known as the “Wizard of the Saddle,” Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest rose from the rank of private to lieutenant general with no previous military training. In addition to his ingenious cavalry tactics, Forrest is also remembered for his involvement in the Battle of Fort Pillow in April 1864, when his troops massacred unarmed Black soldiers following a Union surrender. After the Civil War, he would serve as the first Grand Wizard of the newly formed Ku Klux Klan and further terrorize Blacks and block Reconstruction efforts (*History*, 2019).

Reconstruction would prove a pivotal time for Blacks.

Amendments intended to protect them and extend the rights of citizenship (13th abolished slavery; 14th offered equal protection; 15th the right to vote), were abandoned by most white politicians by the late 1870s in the name of healing the wounds between North and South. Former Confederate governments constructed legal systems aimed at re-establishing a society based on white supremacy. Blacks were largely barred from voting, Jim Crow laws ushered in segregation, and lynching became a terrorist method of social and racial control throughout the South. (Smithsonian).



FROM SELL TO CELL

“The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.” - W.E.B. DuBois

The Civil War ended slavery and decimated the Southern economy. To rebuild, white leaders and politicians exploited 13th amendment provisions allowing “slavery” and “involuntary servitude” to continue as “a punishment for crime.” Black men were arrested and convicted for petty offenses such as vagrancy, which brought large fines few could pay. They were then leased to private and state companies where the opportunities for profit were enormous. 90% of leased convicts were Black. Today’s prison systems are increasingly privatized, subsidized by

government contracts to pay a certain amount of money per day, per prisoner. “Tough on crime” politics with racist undertones and mandatory sentencing laws applied in racially disparate ways has quadrupled incarceration rates since the 1970s with the U.S. leading the world. Blacks comprise 13% of the population, yet they make up 37% of the prison population. 40% of police killings of unarmed people are Black men, who make up only 6% of the population (Ford & Bowman, 2017).



MY LORD AND SLAVIOR

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr, noted that at 11:00 on Sunday morning, we stand in the most segregated institution in America...the Christian church.

Religion played a crucial role and etched a deeply hypocritical line in its approach toward slavery. Some “Christian” slave owners held as their belief that Africans were “lesser” creations, and slavery—a necessary evil to control, tame and bestow God’s grace upon the godless race. Others justified bondage through Old and New Testament sourcing. Regardless of the rationalizations, the contradiction between Christ’s compassion and their master’s cruelty was not lost on enslaved people,

however, Christ’s suffering and the glorious afterlife it promised resonated greatly. What religion did offer was organizational opportunity. Starting in the 1830s, enslaved people were allowed to gather and attend services led by Black plantation preachers who delivered “approved” sermons under the watchful eyes of whites who were wary of any sign of revolt (University of Richmond, 2008). After slavery, the Black church would continue to grow as a communal nexus and see Black clergy emerge as “leaders” and become essential players in the struggle for political and civil rights.



GLORY

A member of the first volunteer force to answer Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops to defend Washington, 65-year-old Nicholas Biddle—an escaped slave—wearing the uniform of the Washington Artillery to which he was a member, was attacked by a mob of Southern sympathizers shouting, “Nigger in uniform!” Though many others were wounded, his bloodied skull was the most serious injury from a barrage of bricks ripped from the streets, and thus, he was recognized as the first man wounded in the Civil War.

African Americans, enslaved and free, have a long tradition of illustrious service in America's armed forces. Dating back to before the nation's birth—from the Revolutionary War through the Korean War—Black soldiers were awarded the military's highest honors. Individuals, such as Doris Miller, the brave seaman awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic stand at Pearl Harbor, and segregated units such as the Buffalo Soldiers, Massachusetts 54th, the Harlem Hellfighters, and the Tuskegee Airmen, would achieve legendary status for their courage and commitment in defense of a country that refused to accept them as citizens and denied them their basic rights (Hopta, 2008).



GABRIEL

The story of jazz is rooted in the story of slavery. All of the Black musicians who contributed to the early days of jazz, to its formation, were the children or grandchildren of enslaved people.

Field hollers and work songs came to characterize the music of the enslaved. Work songs made the repetitive work of digging and hoeing less arduous. Improvised rhyming field hollers and the steady beat of the work songs developed spirituals and from them in turn, the blues. The blues was generally played slow and sad and characterized by its chord progression, the use of flattened or “blue notes” and melancholy lyrics (McGregor, 2016). From the perspective of musical structure, jazz would not exist without the

blues. The twelve-bar blues chorus, with its familiar harmonic structure and narrative form, was the single most popular template for early jazz improvisation. The interaction between those considered blues and jazz musicians, respectively, has also been a constant (*The Influence of the Blues on Jazz*, 2019). The spiritual, *Blow Your Trumpet, Gabriel*, was in reference to the biblical passage that Jesus would send forth his angels with a great trumpet, signifying the call to judgement and the end to an enslaved person's suffering.



ROSE COLORED

Harriett Tubman (Araminta Ross, aka “Minty”) was born into slavery circa 1820 and escaped in 1849. Having witnessed slavery’s horrors firsthand—“I’ve heard *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* read, and I tell you Mrs. Stowe’s pen hasn’t begun to paint what slavery is as I have seen it at the far South,”—her empathy for her oppressors was praiseworthy. “I was always praying for poor ole’ master, for the dear Lord to change his heart. I think many a slaveholder will get to Heaven. They don’t know better and act to the light they have.”

Such “rose colored” optimism—the ability to see something in a positive way—in no way detracted from the resoluteness of Harriett Tubman’s cause. Carrying a pistol for her safety, she made 19 trips and guided nearly 300 people from slavery to freedom on the Underground Railroad, which earned her the nickname “Moses” as well as a published bounty by slaveholders for her capture. During the Civil War she acted as an armed Union scout and spy and led raids to free enslaved people. Her enduring legacy will hopefully be honored with her image replacing that of slaveholder President Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill within the next decade (Biography, 2019).



SMILE

George Washington, America’s default founder, earned the nickname “Father of our Country” for his military ingenuity and citizenship. A savvy politician who understood the power of self-esteem and the importance of projecting dignity as the “face” of a new nation, he was very wise about the message an image can send and knew that he had to look the part of a leader, which meant at least having teeth (Beschlos, 2014).

George Washington had a long history of dental issues, which may have started at the age of 19 during a stay in Barbados, where he contracted small pox. The usual medical regimen contained mercury, and by all accounts induced heavy salivation, bleeding gums, mouth sores and tooth loss (Cunningham, 2017). By the time he was inaugurated, he possessed only a single original tooth. Contrary to mythology, his dentures were not carved of wood, but instead, were made from animal teeth (ivory, horse, cow, hippopotamus) and those of his slaves (records show that nine were “purchased” from his slaves at the cost of six pounds). There is strong confidence among historians that George Washington gave the first inaugural address of his presidency to the nation using dentures containing teeth from the mouths of his slaves.

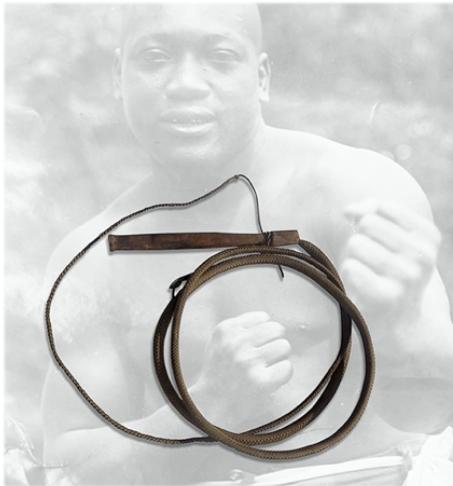


CALL ME, GEORGE

“The most influential black [sic] man in America for the hundred years following the Civil War appeared in more movies than Sidney Poitier, helped give birth to the blues, launched the Montgomery bus boycott and the civil rights movement. The most influential black man in America was the Pullman Porter” (Tye, 2004).

In 1867, Industrialist George Pullman staffed his Pullman Cars with freed enslaved people whom he judged to be skilled in service and willing to work for low wages. He would become the largest employer of Blacks in the country. The job offered steady income but subjected them to countless indignities. Called by their

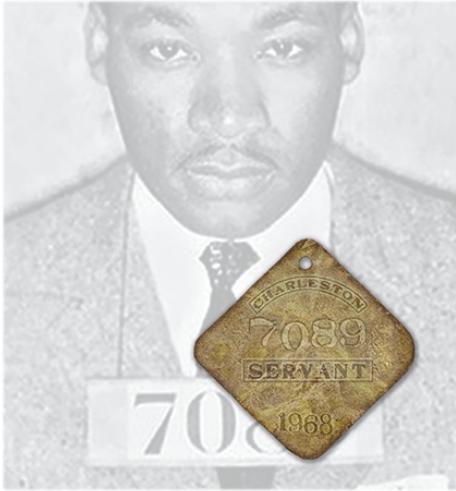
employer’s first name, “George”—just as an enslaved person would be identified by his master’s name—Pullman demanded they pay for their own meals and supply their own uniforms. Their wages earned working 400 hours a month were so low that they had to make a living on tips. In 1925, disgruntled porters formed a union led by Black activist A. Philip Randolph that forced the powerful corporation to the negotiating table after a twelve-year struggle (Museum of the American Railroad, 2016). The same legal tactics would be employed in the Civil Rights Movement.



WHUPPED HIM!

When asked by a reporter why white women were attracted to Black men, Jack Johnson, —“the Galveston Giant,”—replied, “we eat cold eels and think distant thoughts.” At a time when whites would lynch Blacks for looking at white women, Jack Johnson was married to three, and knocking white men out in the ring. Such was the social and racial conundrum created by the first black heavyweight boxing champion.

For nearly a decade, Jack Johnson was considered the most notorious Black man in America. Displaying an absolute disregard for social taboos and bolstered by victories against “great white hopes,” his escapades would incite riots across the nation between resentful whites and jubilant Blacks. His brand of unapologetic hubris in the face of organized efforts to defeat and subjugate him made him a living legend and a template for many athletes to follow, including Muhammad Ali. His legacy would be immortalized in music, and by the play and ensuing movie, *The Great White Hope*, starring James Earl Jones. Ken Burns’s 2005 two-part documentary series, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*, is based on the 2004 book by Geoffrey C. Ward (Biography, 2019).



SERVANT

Slave tags were worn by skilled enslaved people leased out by their master and identified the type of work they were permitted to do. These “urban” slaves were required by law to be licensed and to display the badge at all times. The only city known to have implemented this regulatory system is Charleston, South Carolina.

Excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s last sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church, entitled “The Drum Major Instinct”:

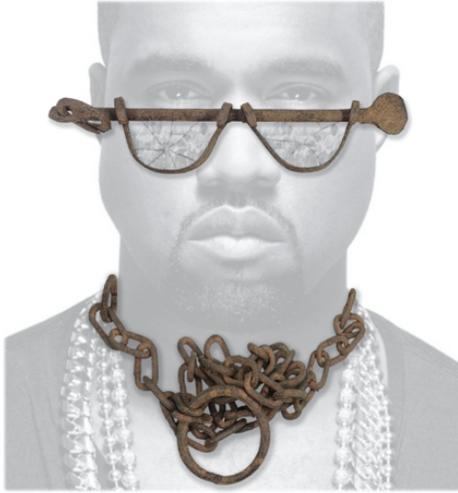
And so Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness. By giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love...and you can be that servant.



REPARATIONS

According to historian Ed Baptist, by 1836, half of America’s economic activity was related to slavery, and by 1865, slaves were its largest asset. A recent study by the United Nations concluded that the history of slavery justified reparations and pointed to the continuing link between slavery’s dark past and present injustices. It also summarized that the legacy of segregation, racial terrorism, and inequality in America remain serious issues since there has been no commitment to reparations or truth and reconciliation (Paschal & Carlisle, 2019).

There has been renewed debate about reparations, with the first congressional hearings taking place in 2019, three decades after the initial call for a reparation commission (1989). Presidential candidates have been pressed on the issue of reparations; however, specifics will remain outside of Black America’s grasp as long as Congress’s ambivalence to the notion of amends for Black Americans continues. Detractors immediately question and scoff at the amount and means of disbursement. The study suggests that reparations could come in a variety of forms, including health initiatives, financial support, and debt cancellation (Paschal & Carlisle, 2019).



CRACKED REAR VIEW

“When you hear about slavery for 400 years. For 400 years?! That sounds like a choice.”

“We build factories here in America and create jobs. We will provide jobs for all who are free from prisons as we abolish the 13th amendment.”

Kanye West’s series of uninformed tweets and subsequent clarifications highlight his cursory knowledge on the subject of slavery and places his failings on par with many educated Americans.

Slavery is hard history. To talk honestly about it as well as teach it presents a huge challenge. A report, entitled *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)*, is a resource for teachers to help students understand slavery as America’s blood-soaked bedrock. According to the report, states and textbook-makers deserve considerable blame. Approaches to slavery often looked for silver linings such as a preference for coverage of the abolitionist movement rather than talk of white supremacy. According to Maureen Costello, the director of Teaching Tolerance, “We celebrate the heroes who escaped slavery long before we explain to children what slavery was. One of the reasons that schools don’t teach the civil rights movement effectively is because we don’t teach the history that made it necessary, which is our long history of slavery.” (Turner, 2018).



SHHHHHACKLED

Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback, Colin Kaepernick, sat on the bench during the national anthem as a way to protest the atrocities Black Americans have endured at the hands of law enforcement. Former player and Army veteran, Nate Boyer, concerned that the act was disrespectful, suggested he take a knee in an open letter. “Taking a knee is a sign of reverence. People take a knee to pray. Soldiers take a knee to pay respects. It showed he’s paying attention and not just sitting it out” (Mills, 2017).

Kaepernick listened, but many politicians refused to and aligned his actions with attacks on the flag and veterans. Criticism begat racial tropes. The NFL’s all white ownership was quickly portrayed as slave owners (70% of the league’s players are Black) and Kaepernick—a defiant slave. Many bristled at the concept of a million-dollar athlete being called a slave, but in the words of Curt Flood, “a well-paid slave is nonetheless a slave,” especially if the ability to openly speak one’s mind without repercussions and control your own destiny is threatened (Rogers, 2017).

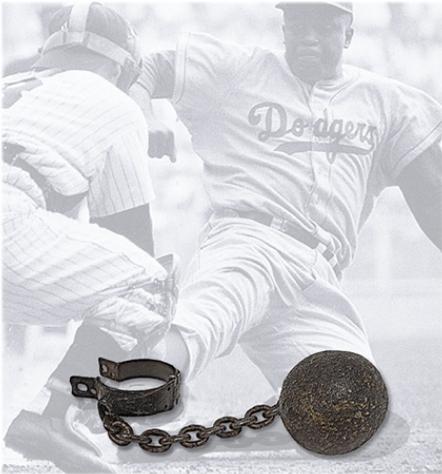


ALL. FALL. DOWN.

In June 2015, the white supremacist, Dylann Roof, killed nine African Americans at The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Mother Emanuel) in Charleston, South Carolina. Afterwards, photos of Roof posing with the Confederate flag incited a nation-wide movement intent on removing public tributes to the Confederacy.

At least 110 Confederate memorials in 22 states have been removed since the massacre, suggesting that the myths and revisionist history surrounding the Confederacy might be weakening their hold over the South. But that argument is countered by the fact that 1,728 symbols remain standing. Some

state legislators have acted quickly to make the removal process more difficult. In 2017, Alabama passed the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act, which prohibits the removal, renaming, or alteration of public monuments more than 40 years old without state permission. South Carolina's "Heritage Act" requires a legislative super majority to alter or remove a Confederate monument. Some believe that removing Confederate symbols is tantamount to erasing history. This belief, however, ignores the heritage of those whose ancestors were enslaved. Communities across the country are encouraged to reflect on the true meaning of these symbols and ask the question: *Whose heritage do they truly represent?* (Katz, 2018)

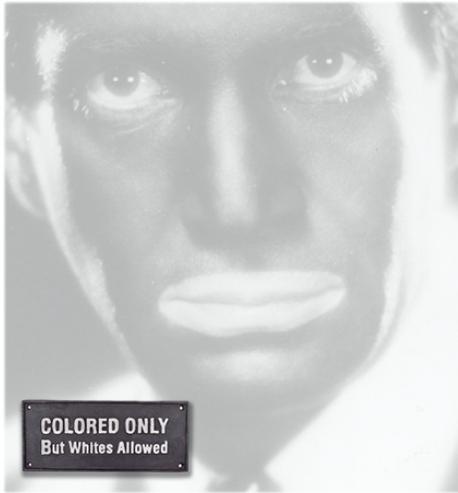


STEAL AWAY HOME

Jackie Roosevelt Robinson is perhaps the most historically significant baseball player ever. Babe Ruth may have changed the way baseball was played; Jackie Robinson changed the way Americans thought. Jackie was a versatile player, but it was running the bases where he shined brightest. He revived the art of stealing home, successfully making it 19 times in his career, and one of only 12 men to steal home in the World Series (Swaine, 2006).

The quote, "As American as baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet," underscores the esteem held by America's pastime.

Therefore, Jackie Robinson's inclusion cannot be understated. The movement against segregation began earnestly in 1947 when he broke baseball's color barrier. In 1948, President Truman ordered the armed forces to desegregate. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawed "separate but equal" schools. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s successfully employed the same "non-violent" strategy used by Jackie to integrate baseball. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 opened public facilities to all races, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 overcame legal barriers to voting. In 1997, Jackie's number, "42," was retired throughout the majors. Beginning in 2004, April 15 has been dedicated as Jackie Robinson Day. Starting in 2009, on that day, every on-field personnel wears No. 42 to celebrate his life, values, and accomplishments.



PRIVILEGE

“Privilege” is defined as “a special right, advantage or immunity granted or available only to a particular individual or group.” Though lacking applied specificity—privilege, the noun—has found a home as a racially dynamic interloper proudly displaying its comfort level through the continued application of “blackface.”

The portrayal of blackface is steeped in centuries of racism. Thomas Dartmouth Rice, a northern actor mimicking enslaved people, created the character “Jim Crow” in 1830. The embellished vernacular and buffoonish behavior became central in a new genre—blackface minstrel shows. Whites in blackface promoted negative stereotypes about Blacks, which included

being lazy, superstitious, hypersexual, criminal, and cowardly.

The rationale for the current slate of “mischievous” displays of blackface is as relevant today as it was then—like privilege, whether intentional or arbitrary, it’s an assertion of power. It was done by whites to authenticate their whiteness by saying that they can become others, and mock others, and assert their superiority by dehumanizing others (Clark, 2019).



OBSERVE AND REJECT

When Black men walked or drove through his largely white neighborhood, Watch Captain George Zimmerman alerted police, but grew exasperated because “they always” got away. Armed with a gun and the “Stand Your Ground” law, he encountered an unarmed Black teenager, Trayvon Martin, who was visiting his father’s fiancée, and killed him. The tragic tale of Trayvon Martin and the epidemic of killings of unarmed Black men has exacerbated the historically tortuous relationship between Blacks and law enforcement.

Policing is a relatively modern invention with the first organization being created in Boston in 1838. Slave patrols were created in the Carolina colonies in 1704 and were centered on the preservation of slavery. In many states it became required duty for white men to serve. Patrollers traveled through the countryside looking for Blacks who were “not where they belonged.” During Reconstruction and thereafter, many local sheriffs functioned in ways analogous to slave patrols by disenfranchising freed slaves and through the application of Jim Crow and segregation. Many Black communities face high crime rates and want good relationships with law enforcement, but the distrust is historic. Black Americans continue to see police as the enforcers of systemic inequality and their policing methodology, “the most enduring aspect of the struggle for civil rights” (Waxman, 2017).

THE WEDDING PARTY

For some, the award-winning film, *12 Years a Slave*, offered a glimpse into the searing interior of a plantation. For others, it was a well-produced feature-length wedding video.

The sentimentalizing of plantations engenders a dangerous and selective nostalgia, which omits the

crimes of rape, abuse, and dehumanization of Blacks and replaces them with the commercial gloss of a big white wedding. The severely edited narration also underscores the continued devaluation of an entire people and the systematic erasure of a part of history that needs to be recognized. Many plantation wedding venues have replaced terms like “slaves” with “workers” and shuttered slave quarters have become “private residences.” Most choose not to mention the “S-word”...slavery. The proliferation of plantation weddings is being fueled in part by the increasing popularity of social media sites such as Pinterest, which hosts a swollen archive of affluent affairs on historic landmarks entirely divorced from the atrocities of slavery. According to wedding industry analysts, one in three engaged couples used Pinterest to plan their weddings (Beck, 2014).

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