PAST BLEEDS PRESENT:
A DESIGNED RETROSPECTIVE OF MASS RACIAL VIOLENCE INVOLVING AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

by

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Abstract

Past Bleeds Present, presents a typographic installation that unpacks and recontextualizes America's recurring history of racially charged violence. Particularly frequent during the 20th century, these "race riots" included instances of state-sanctioned violence against African-American populations, as well as civil unrest sparked by a combination of racial and socioeconomic tensions. Despite their prevalence and the lasting impact that they have had on our country, cities, and populace, very few of these events are taught in classrooms or discussed. This work utilizes the language of archived newspaper coverage of these events and collected headlines from media outlets across the country. In directly co-opting this archaic language and dialogue, *Past Bleeds Present* confronts and reintroduces a history of violent racial conflict into modern conversation. In doing so, this work provides a lens through which a thorough understanding of present day issues can be formed.

The United States of America has a history of violent aggression against people of color. It is a legacy overrun with blood, and more often than not swept under the proverbial rug. Few in our country recollect the alarming frequency in which mass, state sanctioned violence against African American populations in particular has occurred. From slavery to Reconstruction, through the Progressive era and the World Wars, to the fight for Civil Rights all the way into modernity, mass racial violence has been an ongoing recurrence. It is a pathological disease from which our country cannot and will not recover from unless candid discussion is had. In *Past Bleeds Present* I use visual design to unpack and recontextualize this history, as well as to inform and educate a modern audience as to its existence. In this paper that accompanies my creative thesis, I present the research that went into the production of the creative body of work, as well as articulate the rationale behind the project, and the role that design has to play in such matters. Unified, the writing and creative components of *Past Bleeds Present* present a cultural study that is equal parts historical analysis and artistic interpretation.

Nationwide, extrajudicial killings of Black men by law enforcement have been greeted with increasingly consistent outrage. A youthful generation has become embroiled in a conflict that was presumed to have been fought and won by our forebears decades ago. In this battle, the opponent is not the overtly racist institutions of segregationism, or the withholding of voting rights based on racial categorization. It is a fight against the prejudiced machinations of institutions whose origins lie in an undeniably racist history. For the first time since the Civil Rights Movement, activists—under the banner "Black Lives Matter"—have fronted a consistent resistance in opposition of these machinations. Despite being critiqued as unorganized, Black Lives Matter has succeeded in seizing attention and

prompting national discussion as to the murders of these Black citizens and the subsequent lack of accountability. For many, recent events have marked the first time that issues around race have received this much attention, yet the conditions under which these protests occur should be strikingly familiar. These instances of state sanctioned violence against Black citizenry, despite their relatively small scale, are hardly a 21st century invention. Rather, they are the natural progression of a disease from which this country has suffered since conception, though many are loath to admit it.

Indeed, racial strife has long been considered by even the most progressive of political officials to be a thing of the past, yet seldom is this past actually discussed in any fashion beyond platitudes on the horrors of slavery, and adulations of the Civil Rights Movement. As asserted in a dissertation by Dr. Brandy Bryson, anti-racist scholars and Black students frequently express concern that school curriculums are overly infused with white history, with little in the way of race discussion outside of Black History month in February (133). It appears to be a contentious thing, even in a classroom setting, to discuss slavery beyond a surface level, let alone its immediate aftermath or far reaching consequences. Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era have almost entirely faded from the American collective memory. Chief among our nation's tragic case of historical amnesia are the hundreds of racially motivated massacres, conflicts, and instances of civil unrest that have swept through our nation for its entire existence: Over 50 major white-on-Black race riots erupted in the United States between 1898 and 1945 alone (Collins 5). Most of these events could only truly be described as pogroms, or the wholescale massacres of Black populations. So widespread were these riot-pogroms, it is a wonder they are not termed collectively by history as genocide. Meanwhile, the riots of the late 20th century, the origins of which

disturbingly reflect more recent events, were overwhelming in their number. The most intense decade being the 1960s, during which more than 329 instances of mass racial unrest occurred in 257 different cities across the country (Button 10). For the sake of cohesion and brevity, I focused my efforts on eight events in particular, each of which exemplify the social climate of their respective periods. In each of these occasions, I identify key incidents, individuals, and organizations, along with underlying societal conditions. I also address the subsequent responses of local newspapers, law enforcement agencies, and the government institutions that were associated with these acts.

Race Riots: Summary and Analysis

New York City, 1900

The first prominent riot-pogrom of the 20th century occurred in New York City. On August 15 in a Manhattan neighborhood known as "The Tenderloin," an atmosphere borne of socioeconomic tension and white prejudice erupted into two days of bloodshed. The situation escalated shortly after a white police officer by the name of Robert Thorpe died in the hospital of stab wounds delivered unto him by a Black man, Arthur Harris. Officer Thorpe was off-duty and out of uniform when he attempted to arrest Harris' girlfriend on a fallacious charge of solicitation. In the officer's prejudiced mind, a Black woman lingering alone at night could only be a prostitute. In reality, May Enoch was merely waiting for her companion, who was inside a nearby saloon. When Harris eventually emerged, the first thing he saw was a white man assaulting his girlfriend. Harris immediately intervened, not realizing that this man was an officer in plainclothes. When Thorpe attacked him with a club, Harris retaliated with a knife, delivering wounds that would later result in death (Collins

475). It didn't take much time for word of Thorpe's death to spread, and a crowd of white people quickly gathered outside his home.

The death of a white police officer at the hand of an African American man could not go unanswered. Outrage quickly spread through the crowd, and then through the district. In the subsequent two days of chaos; angry mobs of white citizens, with the active aid of the police, relentlessly sought out and beat African Americans en masse. Though reports differ drastically on the exact number of casualties, it is clear that there were a large number of injuries. An account by *The New York Tribune* listed as many as twenty-four, all of which were sustained by the Black citizens of the district ("Quieter on the West Side" 3).

In the following days, the direct participation of the police in the violence was established and generally known as fact, with as many as eighty African-Americans submitting official affidavits affirming the collusion of police officers in the attacks. Cultural framing and news reports at the time generally took the side of white populations and law enforcement during the constant racial turbulence that was commonplace in this era. That being said, the fact that prominent and respected newspapers such as *The New York Tribune, The Evening World,* and *The Times,* each published several stories confirming and detailing unlawful police involvement speaks to the moral clarity of the situation. Many of these stories depicted reporter-witnessed incidents of officers either partaking in the violence, or standing idly as it happened ("Police Brutality During Race Riots"). The numerous accusations of police involvement and the brutality depicted therein prompted city officials to announce a full investigation, one that was clearly not taken seriously, given that many of these officials were responsible for goading the mob into their frenzy. In the following week

the police force was declared "not guilty," and not a single member of the force suffered any ramifications, legal or otherwise (Collins 475).

The conditions that led to this riot are strikingly similar to those that preceded it, as well as those that would follow. That is to say, it was characterized by the sharp increase of the city's African American population, a phenomenon that would grow exponentially as the Great Migration went into full swing by the end of the decade. The influx of African Americans amplified animosities between Black residents and the white working class, particularly those residents of the neighboring Irish-American neighborhood. This intersection of labor interests and white hatred in New York is indicative of conditions that existed nationwide. Additionally, the acquiescence and active participation of police in the violent acts of this riot-pogrom is a common strain that unites the events in New York with a large number of riots that coincided with and would follow it. This is especially true of the riot that would occur in East St. Louis more than a decade later.

East St. Louis, 1917

Considered by most accounts to be among the bloodiest riot-pogroms of its time, the East St. Louis Massacre of 1917 occurred in the eponymous industrial city, located in the state of Illinois. At the time, East St. Louis had become a city consumed by "severe racial strife," owing to political issues and an amplified version of the labor competition that occurred in New York more than a decade prior. Overtones of racism were at the forefront of both matters, as the local press made a point of intentionally sensationalizing Black-on-white crime, prominently featuring stories which were often entirely imagined (Collins 55). In this way, the *East St. Louis Daily Journal* and its fellows played the role of mouthpiece for white fear and anxieties, on which they capitalized by running numerous articles about the influx of

Black migrants. The Black populace frequently fell victim to slanderous news, being falsely accused of everything from organized crime to mass voter fraud. This cultural framing contributed to a situation already made virulent by implicit racism and economic competition, it was only a matter of time until things came to a head.

By the summer of 1917, violence against African Americans had become a daily occurrence in the city. Tensions had already exploded once on May 28th, in a widespread but short lived riot in which whites rampaged the town brutalizing African American citizens, prompted by the news of a white man having been robbed by an armed Black man. The month that followed was one of sustained bloodshed that culminated in the singularly widespread massacre that would come to be known as the East St. Louis Race Riot of 1917.

False rumors had been circulating for weeks about impending attacks that both the Black and white communities had planned on each other, but by the evening of July 1, several accounts of white-on-Black attacks spread through the city's African American community. Acutely aware of the unbridled hatred that surrounded them, and hearing of the violence occurring in other parts of the country, the community feared the worst and promptly armed themselves. That night, whites drove through the Black community, firing with abandon into homes as they sped by. On the car's second pass, a group of Black men shot back at the car, which quickly left the scene. Word of this incident reached local police, who decided to investigate the account of armed Blacks rather than pursuing the offending vehicle. The patrol car that set off from the precinct that night, accompanied by a local reporter, bore an unfortunate similarity to the car driven by the white assailants. As it entered the neighborhood, a group of Black men opened fire on the vehicle. Two policemen had been killed.

On the morning of July 2, 1917, residents woke to a *St. Louis Repbulic* headline that read: “Policeman Killed, 5 Shot in E. St. Louis Riot; Negroes, Called Out by Ringing of Church Bell, Fire When Police Appear.” The article told an outlandish version of the night’s events wherein “more than 200 rioting negroes…without a word of warning opened fire.” (Collins 58). This story proved to the white population that the Blacks stood poised to perform a hostile takeover of the city, in spite of the fact that nearly all accounts of racial violence up to this point had been perpetrated by whites against Blacks rather than the other way around. The response to this perceived threat was swift and vicious (Boskin 24).

A large crowd of white citizens—the demeanor of which was described by non-participants as cool and calculated—gathered downtown and then fanned out in different directions. Over the next 12 hours, the white residents of East St. Louis tormented, tortured and murdered any Black person that they could find. Men, women, and children were beaten and shot to death; and at around six o’ clock that evening, white mobs began to set fire to the Black district, the residents of which had to choose between burning alive, or fleeing the burning houses only to be gunned down. The local police proved entirely apathetic to the murder of Black citizens, in most cases joining in the wanton slaughter (Rucker 188). The Mayor sent for the national guard, but the arrival of troops did little to end the bloodshed, with many of the guardsmen following the example set by the police and joining forces with the rioters. By the time the massacre ended on July 3, the Black district had been entirely destroyed (Rucker 189). Official reports at the time put the death toll at 39 Blacks and 9 whites, but unofficial reports—including the white residents of the city—as well as historical accounts put Black fatalities well into the hundreds (Rucker 189).

In the days following the riot, the city's whites exhibited no regret over the massacre which had just taken place. In fact, there was a pervading air of jubilation (Collins 60). City officials denounced the violence, but blamed it on the Black victims, citing the influx of migrants to the city. The reaction nationwide appeared to be one of shock and confusion; Black leaders and communities united in grief, calling for President Woodrow Wilson to take federal action. Though Wilson did nothing, The Special Committee Authorized by Congress to Investigate the East St. Louis Riots was formed. In its reports, the committee was especially vindictive in condemning the role that law enforcement and the national guard played in the violence. The committee's stance on this matter is included in Anthony Platt's *The Politics of Riot Commissions*:

> The conduct of the soldiers who were sent to East St. Louis to protect life and property puts a blot on that part of the Illinois…In only a few cases did they do their duty. They seemed moved by the same spirit of indifference or cowardice that marked the conduct of the police force. As a rule, they fraternized with the mob, joked with them, and made no serious effort to restrain them…The police shot into a crowd of negroes who were huddled together, making no resistance… (78)

The committee went on to list an abundance of eyewitness accounts, all of which tell shocking tales of degeneracy on both the parts of the rioters and the supposed peacekeepers. In spite of this outright condemnation by an official body in which authority was vested by Congress itself, the eventual indictments handed down by a grand jury would number a mere 134, a third of those being to Blacks. Almost all of the accused whites paid a small fine and spent a few days in jail. When the matter was settled, nine whites and twelve Blacks served time in prison.

Regardless of the official condemnations, state officials and forces saw no consequences for their monstrous actions, and no effective steps were taken to ensure that such atrocities wouldn't happen again. Similar instances of mass violence continued from state to state, year after year. The most notable cases were riots and race clashes that occurred in Chester, Pennsylvania; Longview, Texas; Coatesville, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.; and Norfolk, Virginia. All of these conflicts led up to the summer of 1919, when Chicago would become the staging ground for a riot of similar magnitude to its neighbor in East St. Louis.

Chicago, 1919

On a South Side beach, a young Black boy named Eugene Williams was murdered, struck by a rock as he floated across segregated waters. According to an article published in the *Chicago Defender* a few days after the fact, the white police officer on the scene, Daniel Callahan, refused to arrest the killer, a man identified immediately as George Stauber. The officer instead prevented swimmers from reaching the fatally injured boy, even arresting a Black man on complaints from the gathering white crowd. ("Riot Sweeps Chicago" 1). Objections by Black observers were met with violence from the white crowd in an attack that would escalate into nearly a week of violence. Throughout the city, gangs of whites who had previously been responsible for attacks on the African American community snatched the opportunity by beating and shooting Black people on sight. The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 held little in common with events in East St. Louis. However, it is worth noting that in both instances the involved Black communities actively tried to defend themselves, an effort that ultimately proved in vain. In the *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots'* modern analysis of

the riot, Claudia Matherly Stolz paints a particularly striking image of the violence typical throughout the city during these days:

> The gangs seized the moment after the Twenty-ninth street beach confrontation by attacking at least twenty-seven blacks; some were beaten; some were shot. Ragen's Colts took the credit. Urban warfare raged as blacks armed themselves with bricks, knives, and guns to protect themselves within the black Belt, as they feared invasion by the gangs. The gangs, on the other hand, waited for black stockyard workers to exit from the plant the day after the riot began. As the workers exited they were attacked by gang members armed with clubs, pipes, and hammers. Those who got away from the mob by jumping on streetcars were not safe. The roving gangs, cheered on by crowds, overtook them at other locations and beat to death those they caught. (103)

The bloodshed ended only with the intervention of federal troops. By the time the smoke had settled, 38 people were confirmed dead, while another 537 were injured. The overwhelming majority of deaths, injuries, and property damages were suffered by African-Americans. Though the violence devastated parts of the city and stunned its populace, the Chicago Riot of 1919 was merely one of many such cases occurring all over the nation in the cacophony of racially motivated mass-violence known as "The Red Summer." This was a season marked by hundreds of casualties as race riots reigned across the United States. The brutality of this particular year—though not unusual in America's troubled history of racial violence—was such that it earned itself a place in the history books, whereas its fellows have been neglected in modern classrooms.

Though the murder of young Eugene Williams was the precipitated event that triggered physical hostilities, there were several causative, societal factors that helped lead to the festering racial tension that exploded into five days of violence. One such factor, this riot shares with its predecessor in East St. Louis: The mass migration of African-Americans from the rural south to the north created a tense combination of racial hatred and economic competition. Irish and Polish immigrants were especially hostile towards Black migrants, as all three groups competed for jobs during the recession that followed WWI. The post-riot study drafted by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot,* declared labor relations a minor cause of the riot, but modern historians generally do not agree (Rucker 103).

What did undoubtedly play a role was the abysmal living conditions of the "Black Belt" area in which African American residents of the city were relegated. Organized white gangs, many of which were supported by the Detroit political machine, promoted segregation by way of violent attacks that resulted in dozens of deaths as many as two years before the riot (Platt 99). This enforced segregation, combined with the exponentially increasing numbers of the Black population presented an incredibly dire housing shortage. As the Black Belt's population rose, a lack of space with little room and no funds for expansion gave way to homelessness, abysmal living conditions, and rampant disease.

These conditions, in combination with white violence and unequal job opportunities, would have been enough to create the necessary conditions for discontent in the Black community, as well as an acute awareness of the hatred and violence of the city that surrounded them. Yet cultural forces were at play as well, namely those of the local media and national leaders. The Chicago Federation of Labor, for example, used its major

publication *The New Majority* to push a narrative that Black migrants were in league with the meat packing industry which they posited had brought the African Americans from the south in order to thwart the predominately white unions. Meanwhile the *Chicago Tribune*, another prominent white publication, repeatedly ran stories that slandered the Chicago Black community. Such narratives served to further incite violence (Collins 97).

Indeed, in this riot and many others, cultural attitudes and framing would play a pronounced role in both the onset of violence, and the actions taken by African American communities to protect themselves from such violence. The conclusion of World War I in 1918 had ushered in a marked shift in the cultural attitude of African American communities across the nation, especially with respect to how these communities perceived their standing in American society. It was the beginning of a new African American voice, as publications, editors and poets began to push a "New Negro" mentality (Rucker 104). As a result of this new cultural frame, something significant and profound had happened: Nationwide, Black communities found a new resolve to defend themselves against the repeated, barbaric attacks that had been visited on them by white supremacist America. In reference to the unbearably bloody and frequent lynchings, massacres and pogroms, African American leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey began to urge their people to defend themselves, and publications such as *The Chicago Defender* pushed their message of self-defense and solidarity forward (Rucker 105).

So it was that both white and Black press played a role in increasing the racial tensions that preceded the riots. This effect was deliberate on the part of white newspapers; Black newspapers on the other hand, were pushing a new nationwide narrative that encouraged Black self-defense. It is because of this narrative, and the role that African

Americans played on the international stage in service to their country, that Black Americans gained a new sense of purpose and worth, both spiritually and philosophically. Unfortunately, this new determination to defend Black livelihood from the constant onslaughts of white hatred would do little to stem the tide of depravity that would continue to ensue, as evidenced by the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.

Tulsa, 1921

The city of Tulsa, Oklahoma had a sterling reputation. Known by locals as "The Magic City," Tulsa was a scarcely populated rural area that saw incredibly rapid growth as the result of nearby oil discoveries. Even before this development, Tulsa had long been the home of a Black population, originally brought as slaves. Following emancipation, the newly freed Black population was kept at arms length by their white neighbors, who allowed them to work in labor sectors but excluded them from frequenting businesses. As a result, the African Americans gradually built their own community called Greenwood, and eventually began to reach impressive levels of economic success. Over the years, Greenwood became known nationwide as the "Negro Wall Street," owing to its reputation as one of the wealthiest communities in the country. In spite of the overt and violent white supremacy, its population enjoyed a level of prosperity that was unprecedented for African Americans at the time.

In following with the nationwide emergence of the "New Negro," no community was more secure in its self-respect and sense of justice than the Black Tulsans of Greenwood. This is a community that had, by 1920, consistently begun to take up arms in defense against extrajudicial lynchings and other attacks. One prominent Black-owned newspaper, the *Tulsa Star,* actively urged aggressive action to combat white violence (Rucker 649). Yet this new

attitude would not go unnoticed or unanswered. Almost as though in direct counter to the new African American drive, racism and white supremacy nationwide had become more dangerous than it already was. The Ku Klux Klan had reemerged into new heights of prominence by 1915, with a thriving chapter in Tulsa by 1921. White Tulsans, comfortable with the stature afforded them in society by virtue of their skin, and alarmed by the success and supposed "radicalism" of their Greenwood neighbors, were particularly willing to absorb increasingly aggressive racist ideology. Local newspapers such as the Tulsa *Democrat* pushed the narrative that the town would be overtaken by Negro enterprise. Other local newspapers bestowed upon the Greenwood district such derogatory names as "Niggertown" and "Little Africa" (Collins 63). Generally, the white press united in pushing the racist ideology that already permeated Tulsa's white population. The strong cultural attitude of the Tulsan African American community, combined with the increasingly vindictive racism of the Tulsan whites, was sufficient to prompt an increasing number of racial clashes, all of which culminated in the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, when a mob of whites attacked Greenwood.

The violence was prompted on May 31, when an African American man, Dick Rowland, was imprisoned for allegedly assaulting an elevator operator, a white woman. Several accounts tell inconsistent and drastically different versions of what transpired in the elevator of the Drexel Building, but the local white press published their own version before the police even pieced an initial story together. According to locals, the Tulsa *Tribune* ran the headlines "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator," and "To Lynch Negro Tonight," both of which openly encouraged extrajudicial action on the part of white citizens (Collins 64). Prompted by these incendiary words, a mob of white Tulsans began to assemble outside of

the courthouse where Rowland was being held, bent on lynching him. A smaller, armed Black crowd arrived to ensure that Rowland was not killed before he was given the chance to undergo a lawful trial. They spoke to a local sheriff, who assured the black crowd that there would be no lynching. Satisfied, the African Americans began to withdraw, but the situation escalated quickly when a member of the white mob attempted to disarm one of the Black men.

In the immediate aftermath of this initial violence that followed, Tulsa police met with the local contingent of the National Guard. Acting under the false belief that the Negros of Greenwood were planning an uprising, they devised a plan in which they would deputize and arm several hundreds of White Tulsans (Rucker 651). The intention was for the deputized men to take the entire black population into "protective custody," yet by dawn the next day, the once prosperous Greenwood lay in smoldering ruins. The mob of hundreds of white men, armed by the state, invaded the African American community, murdering residents and burning homes and businesses. Limited resistance by armed Black residents was quickly overtaken by the superior numbers of the white mob. This atrocity, the only adequate descriptor of which is massacre, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Black residents, along with thousands of dollars in damage. In following with the trends we've observed in previous riots, the institutions of the Tulsan police force and National Guard aided and abetted the inhuman violence that occurred, with individuals of both organizations actively participating in the rampant slaughter of Black citizens.

The conditions that led to the riots in New York, East St. Louis, Chicago and Tulsa are all characterized by a common strain. They feature what is essentially one sided aggression, as murderous white mobs enacted violence time and again on Black populations.

Though it is true that African American communities militarized to a certain extent, this was entirely in reaction to past instances of white violence. It was self-defense, and though it served to further incite the white mobs against them, these armed Black citizens were entirely within their rights. The same cannot be said of the white perpetrators. Each of these cases, in their severity, prove the term “riot” to be a misnomer, they were nothing less than massacres. Efforts on the part of Black communities to defend themselves were proved to be in vain.

In spite of these organized attempts at self-defense having failed, the Black determination to seize justice and equality continued to rise, owing in no small part to international events. The period leading up to and during World War II saw something of a shift in the nature of mass racial violence. In spite of wartime rhetoric that pushed a battle against racism, African Americans continued to suffer daily discrimination, hatred and violence at the hands of white America. Those who laid down their lives in the war suffered the indignity of segregation and discrimination, while on the home front, African American communities continued to chafe against violently enforced segregation that relegated them to cramped city districts rife with poor housing conditions. The flagrant contradiction between the nation’s objectives abroad, and the treatment of Black citizens at home, prompted frustration in Black communities across the nation. Increasingly, these communities began to assert themselves against systematic prejudice, as well as physical racism (Boskin 40). The Detroit Race Riot of 1943 is one of the first examples of African Americans partaking in retaliatory action against systematic white supremacy and violence. In contrast to previous cases, this riot saw Blacks acting out of frustration, as the initial violence was equally enacted by both black and white populations. Predictably, the police vastly favored the whites, turning a blind eye to white instigated violence, while cracking down hard on Black

mobs. Detroit closely resembles the white-on-black violence of the preceding decades, while also providing a slight foreshadowing of events that would occur nearly two decades later (Collins 116).

Detroit, 1943

The Detroit Race Riot of 1943 was considered by accounts at the time to be the most severe manifestation of urban unrest in America since the preceding Tulsa Riot of 1921. Nevertheless, it was just one in a large wave of civil disorder that enveloped the country in the summer of 1943. Detroit shared much in common with its predecessors, but chief among these similarities were the underlying structural and socioeconomic conditions that played a central role in building up to the conflict. Eventually, a single precipitating incident was all that was needed to bring things to a boiling point. The three days of vicious rioting concluded to reveal a ruined city and a devastated Black populace: There were 34 confirmed deaths, 760 injuries, and an estimated $2 million in property damage (Collins 117).

Like most of the cases of racial mass violence preceding it, the Detroit riot of 1943 did not occur in a vacuum: War mobilization had brought new waves of Black and Hispanic migrants in contact and competition with previous generations of white migrants and European immigrants, as a result, much of the conflict occurred between working-class white immigrants from Europe and Black migrants from the rural south. Like Chicago in 1919, the Black population in Detroit was confined, both through societal pressures and the promise of violence, to a district known as Paradise Valley, or more commonly “Black Bottom.” Detroit also bore similarities to Chicago in that the precipitating incident of the Detroit conflict in 1943 involved contested access to recreational space.

In a city already rife with tensions borne of longstanding inequality, a scuffle between Black and white youths over a game of dice is what would provoke three days of tumultuous rioting. The Black youths in question had, just a few days prior, been physically forced to leave a local amusement park by whites. Seeking an escape from the heat, the group walked three miles to Belle Isle, a public park located on the Detroit river on the eastern side of the city (Rucker 161). It was there that the group began a friendly game of dice with some white youths, though it didn't stay friendly for long. Once allegations of cheating developed, a fight broke out between the two groups. It didn't take long for this seemingly simple communal dispute to evolve into widespread violence as other parties, including a group of white military men on leave, joined the fray. Meanwhile, false rumors played a pivotal role in further inciting the conflict, as individuals on both sides spread hearsay of murders and brutalities enacted by members of the opposing group (Rucker 161).

By the time the sun rose the next day, opposing mobs of Black and white assembled on their respective sides of Woodward Avenue, the dividing line between communities, determined to exact revenge upon one another for imaginary transgressions. The white mob, numbering in the hundreds, vastly outnumbered the Black, and quickly grew violent. They stopped streetcars, puling Black passengers off and brutally beating them. Black civilians who strayed across the, boundaries of their neighborhoods into white space were severely punished. Matters only grew worse once the police arrived (Rucker 163).

The Detroit Police Department was undermanned and unprepared for such widespread violence and unrest. They focused on restoring the informal physical boundaries between white and Black neighborhoods, patrolling fringes where much of the violence was taking place.

Yet for Black citizens, police presence or escort rarely meant safety. Ostensibly, police would escort Black civilians back to their own neighborhoods, but in most cases police officers would stand idly by as white mobs assaulted Black individuals. In many cases, police officers employed violence against suspected Black looters, but rarely arrested whites, who would brutally beat Black citizens as they looked on. Most historical accounts say that officers were given explicit orders against the use of deadly force, yet sixteen of the thirty-four riot victims were shot by the police. In the overwhelming majority of those cases, officers had not been fired upon. As a result of the actions of the police, twenty-five of the confirmed 34 deaths were Blacks, and of the latter, seventeen were killed by police (Boskin, Marshall 41).

As the violence spread throughout the city, ineffectual city officials delayed the arrival of federal troops. When said troops did arrive, they promptly dispersed the white mobs. Within four hours of federal intervention, order had been restored on July 22. As the smoke cleared, an overwhelming number of official narratives laid the blame squarely on the Black population of the city (Rucker 164).

By this point, summer race riots could be considered something of an American tradition, with tensions boiling on a routine basis across the country each successive year. The 1960s became a particularly charged decade: The steady progress of the civil rights movement had been chiefly dominated by nonviolent demonstrations in which Blacks protested against a white establishment that acted with near-constant violence in return; however, 1963, and the decade that followed, marked the beginning of a series of summertime race riots in which a burgeoning Black youth changed that dynamic. These new

riots saw Black youth return the favor, turning violent in the face of overwhelmingly oppressive conditions created by white supremacy (Upchurch 35). The riot-protests that followed marked an important paradigm shift, a transition that connects the riot-pogroms of the early 19th century to the racial civil disorders that we see in modernity. (Upchurch 35).

In a number of ways, the Watts riot of 1965 exemplified the most extreme case of this new strain of civil resistance. But its successors, the Newark and Detroit riots of 1967, also encompass the rage that captured inner-city Black neighborhoods.

Los Angeles, 1965

The Los Angeles Riots of 1965 began on Wednesday, August 11, and lasted until Sunday, August 15th. Also known as the Watts Riot or Watts Rebellion, it was one of the major racially motivated urban insurrections of the 1960s. By the time the five days of rioting ended, 34 lives were lost, with injuries numbering in the thousands. The city sustained millions of dollars in property damage and hundreds of buildings were razed to the ground.

At the time, Los Angeles was the single most segregated city in the United States, and so was rife with the typical tensions and conditions that develop when minoritized groups are forced into specific districts of a city on threat of violence. The primary stage for the Watts riot was the eponymous district, one of the few areas in Los Angeles where African Americans were permitted to rent, and sometimes even purchase, property. Disenfranchisement was widespread, as the schools of the Black community had a pronounced lack of the resources that were afforded their white counterparts. Meanwhile, extreme levels of exclusion were achieved elsewhere, for example the neighboring Florence, where an African American caught walking or driving through was subject to harassment both verbal and physical (Rucker 372). In addition to violent segregationism, a lack of

opportunities for advancement, and a housing shortage, the Watts district was also subject to an excess of police brutality. The overwhelmingly white policing became, in the eyes of residents, the physical representation of white oppression.

The incident that set off events in Los Angeles began as a routine traffic stop, in which white police officer Lee Minikus pulled over young Marquette Frye, who was accompanied by his brother Ronald. As Minikus began to administer a sobriety test, Ronald ran the remaining two blocks to their home. By the time Ronald returned with their mother, Rena Frye, a sizable crowd had gathered. Animosity for the police was strong among the predominately African American population of the neighborhood; and it didn't take long for officer Minikus to call for backup, fearing trouble. However, the increased police presence caused tensions to run even higher. When officer Minikus clubbed Marquette over the head with his nightstick, Ronald and Rena Frye intervened, attacking the officer. By the time the other officers helped subdue and arrest the family, the crowd was in uproar, and became increasingly belligerent as the patrol cars drove away. Later that night, the police began receiving reports of scattered violence (Rucker 373).

The crowd from the initial arrest had split off into several groups, many of whom began throwing rocks and bottles at white motorists. Black pedestrians, who had not witnessed the original incident, but had heard rumors that white police officers had beaten and brutalized an African American woman, began to attack patrol cars as they drove through the community. The initial riot engulfed eight blocks before the LAPD dispatched officers to contain the unrest. Yet the majority of the officers were white, a fact that served to infuriate the crowd even further. The crowd, now numbering in the thousands, wasn't dispersed until 1:00 AM the following morning. Authorities felt initial relief, and the Los

Angeles County Human Relations Commission held an emergency meeting with community leaders in Athens Park. In a show of goodwill, and a desperate attempt to derail future violence, officials gave Watts residents an opportunity to air grievances. In response to repeated complaints of the brutality of white police, a proposal was made to place more Black officers in the predominately Black community. The proposal was immediately rejected by Deputy Chief of Police Roger Murdock, who asserted that the use of African-American officers in Black communities ran counter to Police Department Policy. The crowd in attendance at the event, numbering around 2,000, began rioting again, and when word of National Guard involvement reached them, they became even more incensed. Chants of "Get Whitey" became a mantra that accompanied the violence, and this time, the rioters exchanged rocks and bricks for Molotov cocktails and crude gasoline bombs (Rucker 374).

As the rioting spread throughout the city, looting became prevalent and a pattern of escalation emerged. Every action undertaken by police leading up to, and during the unrest, had served to intensify the anger of the riots. It took five days for the violence to finally come to an end. According to the commission report that followed, the riot claimed 34 lives and caused 1,032 injuries. Among the deaths, sixteen were directly caused by the LAPD and seven by the National Guard.

The events in Los Angeles were termed by the subsequently formed Governor's Commission on The Los Angeles Riots as a backlash against rampant systemic inequality, "an explosion—a formless, quite senseless, all but hopeless violent protest—engaged in by a few but bringing great distress to all" (Platt 267). The Watts Rebellion would not be the last of such instances, the following years would go on to be considered the most turbulent of all previous years in terms of racial unrest. This is especially true of the summer of 1967, in

which more than 150 riot-protests erupted in cities across the country. Of these, the Newark Race Riot of 1967 was particularly intense, rivaling the Watts riots that occurred two years prior.

Newark, 1967

The litany of civil unrest in the summer of 1967 had created a tense mood in urban Black neighborhoods throughout the nation. The prevailing school of thought in these neighborhoods followed that rioting was the only way to lash out against a violent, dehumanizing system. At the time, the Civil Rights Movement had suffered a number of setbacks, the most recent being the Chicago Freedom Movement in 1966, which achieved little in the face of violence from white mobs. Inner-city Black youth may have considered rioting the only method available to them that would demand, and keep, the attention of a nation that so often spurned them. Considering President Lyndon Johnson's formation of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in response, they may have been right (Upchurch 35).

Johnson's commission would later find that a severe housing shortage and a lack of opportunity in education and jobs led African American residents to feel powerless and disenfranchised. Newark in particular had a large, poverty-stricken Black underclass with an extremely high public school drop-out rate, an impending housing shortage in an already under housed ghetto, and a severe unemployment problem. In addition, though Newark had a majority Black population, Black people held little to no political power, and zero representation in city government. This was evident in the police force, which was overwhelmingly white and excessively brutal in its dealings with the Black community. Complaints had been lodged against the methods of local police regularly for years, but white

city officials largely ignored them (Upchurch 36) In short, the socioeconomic conditions of Newark were strikingly similar to those in neighborhoods where riot-protests had occurred for up to a decade prior. There were, however, a few unique elements to Newark's dilemma. For instance, the lack of any significant presence of the larger Civil Rights Movement. A small branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) served as the only local proponent for nonviolent resistance. In contrast, Newark was a bulwark of the Black Power movement, with the most prominent presence being the increasingly militant Black Muslims group, the precursor to the Nation of Islam.

To summarize, matters in Newark grew to a breaking point owing to police brutality, a lack of opportunity and political representation, a dire housing shortage, and an increasingly militant Black power presence (Rucker 448). All of these factors combined to create a veritable powder keg, that merely needed a spark to explode. What would come was actually a series of sparks, the first of which came on June 20: The city Planning board made it known that they planned to confiscate a 150-acre tract of land right in the center of the Black community, diverting essential housing to be used as the site for a new medical school. The Black community, chafing under the increasingly dire housing shortage, complained vehemently through official channels, following proper protocol, but the white city planners refused to hear their complaints. The second blow came on June 27, when the mayor appointed a white friend as the Secretary of the Newark Board of Education. There were several college-educated Blacks that were vying for the position, all of whom were more qualified than the white man, who had a high school education (Upchurch 37). Still, things remained civil, but July 8 saw another flare in agitation when white police broke up a street-corner rally of Black Muslims, many of whom fought back against the police in the ensuing

brawl. This proved to be the priming event, as the final straw fell on the following Wednesday evening of July 12, when the police pulled over a cab driver for tailgating. The driver was a 40-year-old Black veteran from Georgia named John Smith. Upon discovering that his license was revoked, the police made an arrest during which, according to the officers, the veteran became belligerent and resistant. They used force to subdue him, as onlookers shouted "Police brutality!" As they brought the veteran to the station, word traveled quickly through the community. The local civil rights leaders from CORE arrived at the station within the hour and were allowed to speak to the victim. After an appraisal of his injuries, the Black leaders demanded that the police take John to a hospital, a proposition to which the police agreed. There was a surprising level of cooperation between police and Black leaders, but an angry crowd had been growing outside of the station as a result of the widely witnessed violent arrest. Still, things remained peaceful as Civil Rights leaders from CORE calmed the crowd and channeled their energy in to a nonviolent march on City Hall, which was initially successful. Things exploded the moment police showed up to disperse the march. There was a small amount of initial looting as the crowd scattered in all directions, but the true riot wouldn't begin until the next day. Thursday morning a rumor began circulating that John Smith had died as a result of the beating from police.

The more militant factor of the community began to congregate outside of the police station in an expression of the growing hatred for police, throwing rocks and assorted objects at the building while chanting "Black Power!" (Upchurch 38). The police appeared to disperse the crowd, which promptly split into several groups who dispersed, setting fires and looting stores. In response, Governor Richard Hughes deployed state police and the National Guard. The coordination between local police, the state troopers, and soldiers was poor, and

many of the police personnel were not properly trained to deal with this situation, which quickly became evident as they shot at unarmed bystanders, occasionally hitting innocent children inside their own homes. There are well-documented instances of these supposed peace keepers shooting at each other, thinking that the rioters were firing on them from a distance. This sorry state of affairs continued until Monday, the death toll climbing all the while.

By the time the riot ended on Monday, the final death toll was 23, of whom 21 victims were Black and two were white. Just as many innocent bystanders—including women and children—had been killed by police as actual rioters, something the the Newark conflict shares in common with its predecessor in Watts. Also shared with Watts, is the Newark riots erstwhile title of "rebellion," owing to the fact that the vast majority of fatalities and injuries were directly caused by police and military action rather than civilians of the opposite race (Rucker 447).

Watts and Newark both represent a vast number of significant conflicts that, unlike their progenitors, were incited by Black outrage rather than white hatred. Yet even these two events would pale in comparison to those that occurred on April 4, 1968, the day that revered Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Washington, 1968

News of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s death spread quickly throughout the country, as African-Americans nationwide gathered in anguish and, in many cases, outrage. The death of King proved to be the spark that lit the very same volatile mixture present in Watts and Newark, but it did so on a national scale: On that very same day, a reactionary

wave of civil disorder spanned the entire country. Over a hundred cities were completely engulfed in various riots, the worst of which occurred in Washington D.C.

The capitol city was brought to a standstill rife with tension as four days of intense civil unrest brought the city to its knees. By the time the smoke had cleared, 1,097 people were injured, and 12 had lost their lives. City wide, the damages exceeded $27 million, and over 1,000 buildings had been reduced to rubble.

Most accounts state that the rioting began at Fourteenth and U Streets—the northwest quadrant of the city in the heart of one of its Black neighborhoods—where the offices for civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). When news of the assassination reached Washington, it was received with stunned silence and utter disbelief. On Fourteenth and U, a small band of mostly Black young people were gathering. Under the influence of prominent Black activist and—in the eyes of the government—volatile agitator Stokely Carmichael, the crowd decided that they would visit neighborhood businesses and ask that they close out of respect for the late Dr. King (Gilbert 19). Yet the seemingly benign intent of the crowd didn't last long. As the mood changed from somber to angry, the crowd no longer asked that stores close, but demanded it. In spite of Carmichael's urges for calm, the crowd began breaking windows and throwing rocks at motorists, as limited looting occurred. Eventually, D.C. police quelled this riot, but by the next morning, trouble began erupting throughout the city (Gilbert 23).

On the second day, Carmichael reemerged and held a conference in which he exclaimed that "America killed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." He went on to call for a full fledged revolution (Rucker 684). At a commemoration service at Howard University,

Carmichael drew a pistol over his head and stated that King's death would be avenged as a Black nationalist flag was raised. A reporter from the *Washington Post* called the tone of the rally "vehemently anti-white." Those in attendance at the rally proceeded en masse down Georgia Avenue, where they were confronted by local police. As has been made clear by past cases of racial violence, police presence serves to further exacerbate hostilities, eventually the situation escalated, and a violent confrontation ensued. By this point, the rioting, looting and violence had erupted and spread to other parts of the city, mostly in Black neighborhoods where stores, businesses, and a few homes were burned and looted. This chaos reigned in the city's most troubled neighborhoods for nearly three days.

In what would be remembered as the largest domestic deployment of troops in the capitol since the Civil War, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued an executive order to deploy 13,600 military personnel and national guardsmen, setting them to protect the Capitol, the White House, and various locations around the city. The massive presence of military forces brought the rioting to a prompt end on Sunday, April 8 (Rucker 683).

Common Threads

At first glance, the differences between the early riot-pogroms and the riot-protests of the late 20th century appear overwhelming. Indeed, those racial conflicts occurring before the midpoint of the century were characterized primarily by an excess of white violence against Black populations. In contrast, the conflicts of the 20th century would see Black populations partaking in active revolt, lashing out against white oppression by way of property damage and looting; the conflict that occurred in these riots were between these populations and forces of the state. Yet, these events share a number of things in common, chief among them are four common threads: The role that state enforcers, law enforcement

and the national guard, played in these riots; the inaction of government bureaucracy at both state and national levels to address these instances of mass violence in any meaningful way; the recurring role of newspapers as communicators of cultural values and framing, that exacerbated and/or delivered accounts of these events; and finally, the fact that these events and the legacy that they leave behind are all but forgotten in a modern context. Together, these four threads stretch through time, connecting our modern day to a past that many would prefer to consider archaic. They loom overhead as the bloody loose threads that our nation, in its forgetfulness, refuses to weave.

The dubious roles of law enforcement and other militarized state forces is an overarching theme shared by all instances of mass racial violence that have been listed in this essay. The outright complicity and participation of the police—and occasionally the national guard—in the violence of white mobs unite cases like New York City, East St. Louis, Tulsa and Chicago, as nothing less than the state sanctioned mass murders of Black populations. Similarly, disproportionate, brutal and occasionally incompetent policing leading up to, and in the response to, the riot-protests of Los Angeles, Newark, and Washington D.C. prove to be a commonality throughout similar instances spanning the late 20th century.

The second of these threads is the government sanction under which the barbaric riot-pogroms were committed. In these cases, local, and state governments openly supported or condoned these atrocities while the national government looked on in silence (Collins XVII). In a similar vein, government, during the riot-protests of the 1900s, adopted a policy of inaction in which they patently refused to address the terrible systematic conditions that enabled these riots to occur time and again. In their neglect, city and state governments were complicit in the suffering and repeated outrage of Black populations. This is true, in spite of

the repeated formation of riot commissions to study the nature of these events. Oftentimes, as was the case in the riot-pogroms of East St. Louis and especially the riot-protests like Watts and Newark, these commissions would level substantial blame on victimized Black communities. In the case of President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the commission did indeed attempt to reveal systematic conditions that brokered these events. Yet the recognition of these conditions—namely widespread segregation, unequal protection under law, and a lack of opportunity built into white supremacist societal structures—did not lead to any lasting governmental action whatsoever. Time and again this commissions would dole out recommendations, only for them to go largely ignored and for events to repeat. This speaks to both the ineffectual nature of these commissions, and the overwhelming sense of white apathy as to the problems facing Black communities. Regarding these commissions, Anthony M. Platt had this much to say in his book *The Politics of Riot Commissions*:

> It [the riot commission] is a failure as an intellectual resource because its analysis is too often inconsistent, uncritical and undermined by ideological imperatives. It is a failure as a political institution because its impact on the political process has been negligible. It has symbolized the hope and impression of major social and political change while affirming the strength of established institutions. It typifies the paradox and essential bankruptcy of modern liberalism. (526)

The third of the threads by which these conflicts are connected is one of cultural significance. As demonstrated in East St. Louis, Tulsa, Detroit, and later Newark, cultural attitudes and framing played a significant role in providing tinder to the growing fires of racial strife. Throughout each of these events, the consistent chief agent of cultural framing

has been the media, namely newspapers. Newspapers were the vehicle in which stories true, false, or sensationalized were communicated and spread. These stories gave birth to ideas, and these ideas are what historian and political scientist Ann V. Collins, PhD, refers to as "cultural frames" in her modern analysis on race riots titled *All Hell Breaks Loose.* In many cases, these cultural frames contributed to events by "building a consensus and a motivation for action" (6). A powerful example of this is the idealistic shift that occurred in African American populations throughout the country, which saw the emergence of a new determination on the part of Blacks to secure the equal rights and protection under the law that was reserved exclusively for whites. This new attitude was both spurred on by Black owned newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, and encouraged by Black leaders and intellectuals. It was also directly opposed by the advent of an opposing, increasingly brutal white supremacist frame that actively spurred whites to commit racial violence by sensationalizing racial conflict, the *St. Louis Dispatch* being a prime example. As Collins states "newspapers served as the medium for spreading this white fear and paranoia" (7). Not all of these frames were created by the media, some, especially those within the Black community, occurred naturally and gradually as a cultural bulwark against violent oppression.

Take, for example, the cultural frame through which African American communities view police: It is entirely possible that police participation in the wanton bloodshed of early riot-pogroms is the origin of the prevailing thought of the policeman as an oppressor: The symbol of white hatred and the control that it has exercised over Black communities throughout American history. Scholars contend that these cultural frames pass through generations in gradually altered forms (Collins 6). In following, this particular perception of

police would have been proven true ad nauseam, reinforced with every instance of bloodshed and no doubt passed along from generation to generation until the very sight of a policeman in a Black neighborhood became sufficient to instill fear, trepidation, and anger in most residents. It is certainly not an unfounded cultural phenomenon, this mistrust of agents of the state who have historically, actively contributed to the suffering of one's people: Whether participating in bloodshed, unknowingly killing innocents, partaking in singular cases of brutality, or simply having presence in Black communities, these policemen played an active role in both inciting and inflaming racially motivated conflict.

The fourth and final of these threads has to do with how these instances of mass racial violence are forgotten in modernity. Public education routinely ignores the depth and gravity of these events, as well as their brutality and the overwhelming frequency which they occurred. Indeed, speaking to public education's willful ignorance of culture and history, scholars Tamba O. Jackson and Gloria S. Boutte assert that "The vast invisibility and lack of affirmation of the worldviews of African Americans in book collections and in classroom content is both overt and implicit" (108). The violent history recounted in this essay is seldom mentioned in primary education systems across the country, or even in mainstream discourse centered around justice for Black lives. There are a number of reasons why this might be, chief among them is a simple lack of awareness: The American public has generally adopted what Princeton analyst James W. Button referred to as the "myth of peaceful progress." This cultural ideal purports that most internal conflict in American history has been resolved peacefully through the means of political compromise, with no need for violent, revolutionary struggles. When collective domestic violence did occur in American history, it was usually perceived as apolitical, unnecessary, aberrant, and

counterproductive in terms of achieving the goals of its practitioners. This interpretation of the past as almost completely pacifistic and devoid of internal turmoil poise America as a benevolent beacon of civility, establishing its fitness to lead the world (Button 157).

The overwhelming amount of protest and riots in the 1960s alone would shatter this illusion, not to mention the massacres that preceded them. The existence of these conflicts would fly directly in the faith of this great American myth, so it follows that there is little contemporary discussion surrounding them. Yet how can the present day battle against injustice be adequately fought when it is confronted with the willful ignorance of the racial violence that has pathologically recurred for the entirety of our nation's history? The answer is clear: education. These cases need to be brought to light and discussed. As an artist and designer, I have a unique platform with which to do just that.

Design for Social Change: The Rationale of *Past Bleeds Present*

From crowds of protestors who heft crudely written signs, to Rosie the Riveter, visual design has been used to facilitate the sharing of ideas for most of its history. In modern day, strong design work has been a central, unifying feature in presidential elections, grassroots movements, and entire campaigns that promote awareness and action. It has certainly been a vital tool in prompting awareness of issues concerning social justice, and for much of history has been the primary vehicle through which mass information is distributed. Typography and graphic design play vital roles in the distribution of news media, ensuring that information is digestible to a wide audience. In doing so, it plays an influential role in the *modern* framing and cultural attitudes that surround racially motivated unrest. As established by Collins, newspapers literature and rhetoric played a powerful role in creating an atmosphere ripe for the violence of race riots.

It is this particular legacy that I have channeled in the design conventions used throughout *Past Bleeds Present.* Throughout the creative process of this project, I researched archived newspaper coverage of these events and collected headlines from media outlets across the country. In the proliferation of these headlines, I deconstruct and piece together narratives of the events that delineate the cultural framing of the period. In directly co-opting the archaic language and discourse that I discovered, I confront and reintroduce a history of violent racial conflict into modern conversation. In doing so, I provide my audience with a lens through which a more thorough understanding of present day issues can be formed. Fostering such an understanding is the only way to reveal just how insidious these issues are, in need of answers to problems that exist at the very foundational level of how our society and its institutions are built.

Conclusion

Less than a century ago, we had government forces on both the local and state level actively participating in the widespread murder of Black citizenry. Less than three decades ago, we had these same forces, however unknowingly, kill Blacks whether they were rioters or not. Most alarmingly, we witness the extrajudicial murders of unarmed African American citizens by police in the present day, on a seemingly bi-weekly basis. The unifying theme in *Past Bleeds Present*, is that we, as a society, are seeing the residual effects of a bloody legacy reflected in modernized fashion in the present day. This becomes painfully clearer every time a police officer walks free having carried out the execution of an African American citizen: A recent example of which can be found in the case of South Carolina officer Michael Slager, who was filmed shooting the unarmed and fleeing Walter Scott in the back three times. This trial was declared a mistrial by a South Carolina judge, as a jury of whites could

not decide whether this execution was in lawful proximity to Officer Slager's role in enforcing law. This occurred in the same week that I have submitted this project, and cases just like it are prevalent in our modern American era. Yet the legacy from which these instances are derived is entirely unknown to many, including those participants in the fight against it.

So it is that these unresolved atrocities linger, like so many bloody loose ends, the strands of which continue to touch Black lives, Black neighborhoods, and Black communities to this day. Time and again, white prejudice and oppression lead to Black suffering and outrage. Time and again the story has repeated itself, even to this day. Yet no action is taken and no effort is made to ensure that these lingering animosities are resolved. If those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it, what becomes of a nation in which this repetition has become the status quo?

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