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The modern civil rights movement in America continues to captivate the lives, minds, and imaginations of filmmakers, documentarians, artists, and contemporary freedom fighters struggling around the world. The black-and-white newscasts, interviews, homemade films, and footage chronicle the long arc of the African American fight for full, unfettered citizenship in their home country. *We Shall Overcome: Press Photographs of Nashville during the Civil Rights Era*, through searing images of Nashville residents (often youth and young adults), documents the excesses of law enforcement, the dignity of respectable civil disobedience, and the destruction wrought throughout the community during moments of backlash. The images expand our collective understanding of the “who” and the “how” as the civil rights movement stretched across southern states impacting daily life. This publication served as an accompaniment to an exhibition installed by the Frist Art Museum from March 30 through October 14, 2018. According to curator Kathryn E. Delmez, the exhibition sought to foreground the important role Nashville played in the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s, including and beyond the campus of Fisk University. “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. [remarked], I came to Nashville not to bring inspiration, but to gain inspiration from the great movement that has taken place in this community” (p. x). The one hundred photographs, taken from 1957 to 1968, were culled from the archives of two Nashville daily newspapers, *The Tennessean*, and the *Nashville Banner*.

*We Shall Overcome Press Photographs* is organized with a foreword, preface, acknowledgments, historiographical essay, and captioned photographs, followed by a time line and further reading. Of note is the brief and insightful foreword by the late congressman John Lewis. Lewis opens by stating, “Truth is sometimes hard to face. But we must face it. We must examine it. We must remember it. The truth will set us free. And the truth of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement is right here between the pages of *We Shall Overcome: Press Photographs of Nashville during the Civil Rights Era*....Perhaps the greatest gift of Nashville’s civil rights history is that it reminds us we can make a difference. No matter how fierce
the adversary, no matter how organized the opposition, no matter how powerful the resistance, nothing can stop the movement of a disciplined, determined people motivated by justice. So, let's keep moving” (p. ix). Lewis’s prophetic voice and legacy lend great credibility to understanding all areas and aspects of the modern civil rights movement.

These collected photographs capture the images of national and regional notables such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, John Lewis, Coretta Scott King, Z. Alexander Looby, Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, Diane Nash, Reverend C. T. Vivian, Wilma Rudolph, and Bernard Lafayette. There are images of students from Fisk, Tennessee A&I, and Vanderbilt Universities. The images of local folks—black and white men, women, and children—on opposite sides of the issue depict stark polarization. Plate 1, dated September 9, 1957, shows Grace McKinley, her daughter Linda McKinley, and Rita Buchanan being taunted by a jeering trail of white men, women, and youth as they made their way to school. Stoic and undaunted, Mrs. McKinley continues to move toward the schoolhouse. Linda and Rita are mildly bewildered, but rely on the strength of Mrs. McKinley. Plate 3 shows Errol Groves with his mother, Iridell Groves, and two other African American women approaching the Buena Vista School on the first day of desegregation. The school’s steps are dotted by a white woman with arms crossed and three young white children glaring at the black delegation approaching the school. Plate 4 shows first-grader Marvin Moore escorted by both his mother and father on his way to becoming one of four African American students to integrate the all-white Jones School. Of note is Mr. Moore wearing a camera to possibly document the momentous occasion. The countless white men, women, and children are frozen in time with looks of apprehension, disdain, displeasure, and outright hatred. Plates 53 to 55 form a triptych depicting an assault on Wharton Junior High School student Ewingella Bigham, who was knocked unconscious during a near riot between black and white youth. Bigham’s sister informed the reporters that her sister was struck by a policeman’s billy club. The last image shows Bigham being lift and carried away by companion Joe Goldthreate while completely surrounded by a jeering, majority white male crowd. There are images of white and Asian women participating in civil disobedience and protests and of older white Americans who experienced purported physical assaults from black assailants. The images of fires, violence, shattered windows, bandaged and bloodied persons are shocking. These images draw you in and make your cringe when you consider the mortal and moral sacrifice others experienced in simply seeking their full constitutional citizenship rights.

Images in a later section of the book document the increasing student response to their demands for justice in 1967. The action of hundreds of students under the leadership of John Lewis and Diane Nash resulted in mass arrests. The photographs chronicle the multitude of young people from Fisk, Vanderbilt, and area high schools who willingly inserted themselves physically in harm’s way in support of a principle. The images suggest the power of the masses to effect change and, collectively, make a record of the shift America had taken during the 1960s. The book ends with photographs taken around the time of the assassination of Dr. King and Nashville’s response to that devastating event.

In closing, *We Shall Overcome Press Photographs* is an excellent example of why responsible journalism matters. The photojournalists, archivists, curators, and journalists chronicled and preserved those moments in time for all of us. The exhibition allowed for the city of Nashville to see how the civil rights movement was experienced by all residents. Elementary school students, parents, clergy, college students, city officials, civil rights activists, and military personnel all walked into an unknown future at their own pace and with their individual perceptions of justice. The
definition of an American citizen expanded during the 1950s-60s and will continue to be reimagined for succeeding generations of new Americans. This book is of value to scholars, students, citizens, and persons interested in knowing about the human sacrifices that paid for our collective freedom and the cost apathy exacts for indifference.

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