

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WOOLWORTH'S
LUNCH COUNTER CIVIL RIGHTS
DEMONSTRATION

by
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ABSTRACT

May 28, 1963—a lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi became a battle ground for fundamental human rights.

The act of sitting silently at a lunch counter where people of color would not be served purely because of their race, became a statement. White supremacists, and the majority of Mississippian's raised in a racist climate, feared a world where black and white people coexisted.

This thesis will chronicle the events of the Woolworth's sit in of 1963, the power of the imagery captured by a young photographer, and the journalistic effects of this photograph amidst the Civil Rights Movement.

Freddie Blackwell, a twenty- two-year-old rookie, straddled the laminate countertop carefully maneuvering around glasses and plates in order to catch the best possible angle of the unexpected action that was rapidly unfolding at the sit in.

The black and white photograph embodies all the elements of good old-fashioned 1950's diner. A banner in the upper left-hand corner of the photograph advertises the hot donut department in bold lettering. Another banner to the right of it says "May Sale." There is no visible act of violence depicted in the photo- but the remnants of such violence are obvious. The three individuals sitting at the forefront of the counter, a white man, a white woman, and an African-American woman are all looking away from the lens. They have been doused with condiments-- cane sugar, catsup, and mustard stain their clothing, stream from their heads, and cover the countertop.

The flash of the camera makes the silver lemonade machine dispenser gleam, behind it, a photographer sits briefly, perhaps to rest in the midst of the action. Surrounding the activists,

young white men. Their hair is slicked neatly back, some of them sporting cigarettes, others have pencils behind their ear. Most display looks of intrigue and entertainment -- almost encouraging more violence, as one man is still holding a glass sugar dispenser above the white woman's head. In the back of the photograph, two FBI agents look on, but take no action. The majority of onlookers are not catalysts for the violence, or are they? This photograph, despite the lack of violence, illustrates the discord in the South and the fear of the protesters as well as that of the activists.

FRAMING, COMPASSION, AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

This photograph became one that in many ways symbolized the movement as a whole, it is an image that imbued people around the United States with a newfound sense of empathy. Photojournalism seems to have the power to tell a story, and by extension has “assumed an ethical function to bear witness to the suffering or degradation of others,”¹ ultimately arousing concern and provoking action.

The ability of a photograph to shift someone from apathy to compassion is explained by the concept of “framing.” Framing, which has roots in both sociology and psychology, is understood as a technique that explains the influence of news reporting based on the way it is presented to an audience. Sociologist Erving Goffman found in his research that information resonates with people when they can “classify information and interpret it meaningfully.”²

¹ Kennedy, Liam. "Framing Compassion." *History Of Photography* 36, no. 3 (August 2012): 306-314. America: History and Life with Full Text, EBSCOhost.

² Scheufele, Dietram A., and David Tewksbury. "Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models." *Journal Of Communication* 57, no. 1 (March 2007): 9-20. PsycINFO, EBSCOhost

Framing describes how people use information as they form impressions of an issue, therefore impacting *how* someone ultimately thinks about an issue.

Photojournalism has been able to sustain a humanistic perspective of news coverage, meaning compassion oftentimes becomes the default frame with which people begin to view certain images. The underlying terror of a captured moment remains at a distance but viewers are still able to engage in the suffering of others, emoting empathy and compassion.³

This background sets a foundation for the argument that photographs like the one taken by Blackwell *needed* to be seen to wake people up from their nation-wide ignorance. Even to tell a story in such detail as the Woolworth's sit-in of 1968, the true effects of what the people in that photograph experienced would be lost on many. Perhaps the only sliver of hope for national empathy, or at least to shift from national *apathy* would have to begin with startling images like Freddie Blackwell's.

Without photos or videos of the sit-in, people in the North would have no idea the atrocity the demonstrators were faced with that day. It was this photo, along with thousands of others captured by journalists brought down to the South, that people were exposed to this alternate universe.

Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal explained this in more detail, "The Northerner does not have his social conscience and all his political thinking permeated with the Negro problem as the Southerner does." Because of this, Myrdal claimed Northerners, "succeed in forgetting about it most of the time."

Myrdal explained that whites, in the North and South, if left to their own devices would choose to ignore the plight of African Americans and their problems saying, "There are any

³ Kennedy, Liam. "Framing Compassion." *History Of Photography* 36, no. 3 (August 2012): 306-314. America: History and Life with Full Text, EBSCOhost.

educated Northerners who are well informed about foreign problems but almost absolutely ignorant about Negro conditions both in their own city and in the nation as a whole.” Myrdal figured that while the First Amendment kept the government accountable, so too should the press hold America accountable for the terrible treatment of people of color that was being so easily ignored in the North. Despite the white liberal editors speaking out against racism and the black editors of black papers churning out controversial content, Myrdal felt that the press would eventually need to start “force feeding the rest of the nation a diet so loaded with stories about the cruelty of racism that it would have to rise up in protest.”⁴

MAY 28th - MORNING

In 1963, a cup of coffee was 10 cents. The emerging English rock band, The Beatles, released their debut album, and audiences cringed in theaters watching Alfred Hitchcock’s release of “The Birds.”

Given the hectic and violently chaos of the events that ensued on this day of the sit in, it is complete chance that they were somehow captured together in the moment. In order to illustrate in detail the context of the photo itself, the chronology will begin in the morning.

It was 9:30 on May 28th, Medgar Wiley Evers sat in his small office tucked into the second floor of the Masonic Temple, awaiting the events he knew were soon going to unfold. Evers, a Mississippi Native, was the field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Jackson. He also happened to be common thread connecting all the participants in the Woolworth’s sit-in taking place that day. It had only been about a year since the NAACP activists in Jackson had been mobilizing. The Jackson NAACP youth council

⁴ Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006) 5.

started boycotting merchants downtown in 1962, “charging them with a broad pattern of discrimination against black workers and consumers.”⁵

In the summer of 1963, the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in was prompted when Jackson Mississippi’s mayor, Allen Thompson, continuously denied the demands set forth by a delegated committee of people speaking on behalf of the Jackson community that was asking for integration and fair employment practices.⁶

John Salter, a Midwestern professor at Tougaloo, was assisting Evers at the office before driving picketers down to Capitol Street. Salter had relatively low expectations for the sit-in, as this was one of several events meant to gradually escalate in order to put pressure on the mayor in the hopes of starting negotiations. “We decided to start with smaller things that were symbolically important, then move onto bigger things like mass marches,” Salter said. “Instant arrest was expected. No violence.”⁷

Salter, who was only in his mid-twenties himself, was more interested in surprising the opposition than promoting violence. Part of the surprise that day included plans for another demonstration near a downtown intersection, in which integrated picketers would drive downtown separately, only to pull out their signs at the perfect moment to ensure they had visibility for as long as possible.

⁵ Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 157.

⁶ Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 161.

⁷ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 51.

A twenty-one-year-old college student with porcelain skin walked downtown in her floral cap-sleeved dress, a few blocks from Capital Street, as she was instructed by Salter. Her tight bun and slicked back hair would later require more than three washes to remove the catsup and sugar doused on her during the sit -in. Joan Trumpauer, the first white female to attend the predominantly—if not entirely – black Tougaloo College, was a rare find. As a white Christian female, her work as a Civil Rights activist made her a valuable asset in terms of working “under cover.” Her role on that 28th of May started as a responsibility to watch out for counter protestors and report back to Evers.⁸

Anne Moody was one of three students from Tougaloo faced with actually participating in the sit-in. Moody had developed a close relationship with Salter, as he was her social science professor. It was Salter who recruited Moody to participate in the sit-in, and to be a spokesperson. Moody who had “nothing to lose one way or the other,” agreed to help. The summer before, Moody met Trumpauer when they lived across the hall from one another. The two grew closer in their work with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Almost a year after their meeting, Moody would be posted up against the gleaming lemonade machine, joking with Trumpauer to endure the sit-in.⁹

In addition to Moody, Pearlina Lewis was a participant in the sit-in. Lewis had been inspired by Evers since high school and she was later asked by him to partake in the events that occurred on the 28th. Lewis, according to Lillian Louie, Evers’ secretary, Lewis was “Miss

⁸ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 32-33.

⁹ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 251.

Everything. Just cream of the crop.”¹⁰ The night before the sit in, Lewis, a member of the NAACP’s North Jackson Youth Council, did not sleep well, but according to her, Lewis dressed nicely. “I wasn’t frightened,” Lewis said. “It was just a matter of not knowing what would happen.”¹¹

Memphis Norman—his name may not be as familiar as some of the other prominent figures from that day in May, he was beaten so badly that he was gone by the time Blackwell took the lunch counter photo. When Norman started college, he had no intention of volunteering with the movement. It seemed to him that, “People who were most active in the Civil Rights movement were somewhat radical. Different. Some sort of wild-eyed, crazy people.” according to Norman. A trip to University of Minnesota with his mentor at Tougaloo, Dr. Ernst Borinski, showed him a racially integrated world. Norman’s “journey north” planted a seed that began to grow his interest in the movement. He became more intrigued by the boycotts occurring once he was back in Mississippi, in large part because he knew the world outside of such segregation thanks to Borinski. “Dr. Borinski had a very profound influence on my life in terms of race relations,” Norman said. It was Anne Moody who asked Norman to participate in the sit-in. Though he said he was nervous, he thought they would be arrested almost immediately and figured, “Why not?”¹²

¹⁰ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 57.

¹¹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 51.

¹² O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 54-56.

Pearlena Lewis, Anne Moody and Memphis Norman, all African-American, gathered at the NAACP office on Lynch Street to review the plan for that muggy, cloudy day¹³. They agreed that by 11:00, the trio would enter Woolworth's, purchase small items (making them paying customers), and at 11:30 they would take their seats at the counter.¹⁴

TAKING ACTION

By mid-morning, the three Tougaloo students climbed into a green station wagon belonging to NAACP member James Wells. They made their way from Lynch Street down closer to Capitol Street, where Salter was already dropping students off for the 11:30 picketing. One of those students was George Raymond, who acted as one of the decoys along Capitol Street along with Trumpauer, so that police would not catch on too quickly.¹⁵

According to Moody, "to divert attention from the sit in at Woolworth's, the picketing started at J.C. Penney's a good 15 minutes before."¹⁶ Moody entered the store from the rear entrance. As soon as they entered, they went in separate directions, making small purchases. Norman bought a fountain pen and some batteries, and Lewis gave him her watch to keep the time so they knew when to take their seats.

By 11:15 the three students sat down at the 52-seat lunch counter. Lewis and Norman sat together, Moody placed her purse and sweater next to the lemonade maker, and sat one seat over. Initially, they were ignored. They took the forms lying on the counter and filled out their orders.

¹³ Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 161.

¹⁴ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 119.

¹⁵ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 120.

¹⁶ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 264.

Norman wanted a hamburger and a cup of coffee, in the order was also written for a slice of pie and a soda. "They even wrote down prices, figured the tax, and computed the totals."¹⁷

Moody said when the waitress saw them writing down their orders she realized they wanted service. She asked them what they wanted, and as they began to read their slips, she said she would serve them at the back counter.¹⁸ The waitress informed them that they needed to go sit at the, "Negro counter," as if the three were unaware that they wouldn't be served where they were sitting. Memphis Normal recalled that the waitress didn't seem angry but rather that, "It was just as if we had sat in the wrong place and we didn't know what we were doing."¹⁹

"We would like to be served here," Moody remembered saying politely. The waitress looked around at the surrounding white customers sitting at the counter, Moody recalled five or six eating nearby. The waitress, ignoring Moody's request, turned off the lights behind the counter, she and the rest of the waitresses quickly dissipated to the back of the store leaving everyone at the counter. "I guess they thought that violence would start immediately after the whites of the counter realized what was going on," Moody said. "A couple of them just got up and walked away. A girl sitting next to me finished her banana split before leaving. A middle-aged white woman who had not yet been served rose from her seat and came over to us." The students all shared similar recollections of this moment as the woman approached them. "I'd like to stay here with you, but my husband is waiting," the woman said to them.²⁰ As she left, Jackson daily news reporter Dub Shoemaker entered. While the woman would not give her name, she divulged that she was a Vicksburg native who moved to California and had "recently

¹⁷ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 120-123.

¹⁸ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 264.

¹⁹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 120.

²⁰ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 264-265.

relocated to Jackson." The woman said she was in sympathy with the Negro movement. Lewis, who still sat calmly at the counter, recalled being amazed that they had been approached, "I didn't think any of them would talk to us," she said.²¹

Once all the other customers left, the three activists remained. Howard Braun, the store manager, roped off the counter so no one else would expect service. By this time media started pouring into Woolworth's. When reporters asked who they were, where they were from, and why they were taking this action, they responded by saying they were Tougaloo students and residents of Mississippi. While Mayor Thompson claimed that the cities black population was satisfied with their treatment, Lewis made a point of challenging this "myth," as a "native Jacksonian" herself, sitting at the counter to make a point about the lack of equal treatment.²²

The more time passed, at this point about 15 minutes, Norman, Lewis, and Moody were not only surprised that they hadn't been arrested, but worried about what would come next. "I was just sure they would come in, say we didn't belong, and take us right on out,"²³ Lewis said later on. At one point, a black busboy came out to replace glasses under the counter, ignoring Moody's effort to make conversation with him. Moody thought the observing reporters were becoming disinterested, but the students remained seated, until they were served or until the store closed for the night.

In the meantime, Wells had parked his car a few blocks away and had called Evers from the phone booth in the back of the store to keep him updated around 11:30, and letting him know the students had not been arrested and there were no police in the store. At this time Salter had

²¹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 120-123.

²² O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 120-123.

²³ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 121.

returned to the office after taking a carload of pickets downtown. What could have been considered an uneventful sit-in was one Salter considered at this point to be, "fatally ominous." Salter thought it eerie that there was such a lack of opposition, "it was a departure from the norm in Mississippi. That's when you start wondering."²⁴

Salter was not the only one who felt danger looming. Ken Toler of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* was asked by Ed King, an activist and Methodist minister, to accompany him up the street where the picketing was taking place. King felt that eventually the students at the counter would just get arrested, and he was eagerly waiting to join his wife, who was participating in the picketing. Toler refused, "This isn't over yet, we can't have a sit in this quiet in Jackson. I'd better stay here."²⁵

By the time King went to check on his wife Jeannette she (along with Tougaloo student body president Eddie O'Neal, Doris Bracey of Jackson State College, waitress Eddie Jean Thomas, and Margrit Garner, wife of a Tougaloo professor), were all being hauled off to jail.²⁶

The end of the picketing on Capitol street caused everyone to redirect their attention to the events unfolding at Woolworth's. Just before noon, back at the counter, students began pouring in from Central High School. The only light is a flickering "Roast Turkey Dinner, 70 Cents." Upon first glance, Moody said the students looked surprised and did not know how to act. It did not take long before they began shouting racial slurs and using the rope Braun put up as a makeshift noose.²⁷

²⁴ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 122.

²⁵ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 122.

²⁶ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 122.

²⁷ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 264-265.

More than fifty people started to crown the counter, in the outskirts were members of the white supremacy group of Citizen's Council members, as well as sovereignty commission spies and FBI agents. Despite an order from the Supreme Court that police were advised to stay out of stores where sit-in activities were taking place, Jackson police detective Jim Black, dressed in normal clothes, went down to Capitol Street to offer some protection to the demonstrators.²⁸

As Black entered the store, he could tell Braun and the rest of the Woolworth employees were hoping business would carry on as long as they ignored the demonstrators. Lewis, Moody, and Norman sat silently in observation, seemingly serene, "if they were scared, they weren't showing it."²⁹

Moody said she kept her eyes straight forward until she recognized a man from the bus-station sit-in where she has previously participated, "my eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other," she said. He was drunk at the bus-station sit-in, and again on this day. At one point the man pulled out a knife, put it into his pocket, and began pacing the floor. Trumpauer kept her eyes on him, "I told Memphis and Pearlina what was going on. Memphis suggested that we pray. We bowed our heads and all hell broke loose."³⁰

VIOLENCE STRIKES

At approximately 12:15, twenty-six-year-old Bennie Oliver, a former Jackson policeman, punched Memphis Norman in the face. Oliver and his friend Red Hydrick were what detective Black would refer to as "hatemongers." Perhaps this could be attributed to Oliver's upbringing as

²⁸O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 123.

²⁹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 123.

³⁰ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 265.

a “raised-up river rat,” according to Black, having been raised off the Mississippi river, he was known for picking fights and was “tough as a lighter knot.”³¹

Black said Oliver hit Norman, “right in the spot that would knock him out.” On impact, Norman felt he had been hit with a baseball bat. He remained in his seat but felt himself losing consciousness as we fell backward off the stool where he received blow after blow from Oliver and his friend until Norman was covered in his own blood—bursting from his nose, ears, mouth³². Norman, curled into a fetal position, was a dark mass on the floor of Woolworth’s, being brutally beaten because he had wanted to eat a hamburger and drink a cup of coffee like a human being.

There was a photo captured in this moment by Jack Thornell of the *Jackson Daily News*. In this photo, a young adolescent is watching with fascination as Oliver kicks Norman’s lifeless body on the floor.

State senator Hugh Bailey barely stopped what Ed King would later refer to as Oliver’s “dance macabre,” yelling at Oliver, to him, “Bennie” telling him to come to his senses.

Norman remembered focusing on the stainless steel footrest of the counter where he was being beaten. Black forced his way through the crowd past the journalists to help Norman up, he was now covered in blood. “I could taste it in my mouth. And I was very afraid,” Norman said. The crowd of onlookers, yelling, “Commie!” and “Nigger!” were out of control according to Norman. The crowd parted as Black led Norman out of Woolworth’s, Oliver not far behind.

³¹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 125.

³² O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 125.

Norman and Oliver were put in separate cars and escorted to the police station.³³ At one point, Lewis remembered being the sole demonstrator on a stool, Norman had been on the ground and Moody was no longer in her seat. A picture published by the African American news outlet, *The Pittsburgh Courier* depicted Moody being hurled into a shelf by Oliver before he was escorted out by Black.

Back inside, the chaos of events became a blur. Moody and Lewis were slapped around and thrown off their stools. The Tougaloo professors asked them if they wanted to leave before things got more violent. Lewis was scared, but she kept reminding herself, “We’re here for a purpose, and it must be accomplished.”³⁴

Louis Chaffee, a white westerner who had been teaching freshman at Tougaloo after graduating from Oberlin College in Ohio, had been immersed in the movement for less than a year. She recounted that on the day of the sit-in, she and Trumpauer had finished up on Capitol Street after some were arrested, and like many others, made their way down to Woolworth’s. “It wasn’t a planned thing,” Chaffee remembered. I didn’t want to leave, I thought I should stay.” From Chaffee’s perspective, she could see Pearlana and Anne sitting at the counter, the crowd shouting behind them. Chaffee and Trumpauer entered just in time to see Norman fall off his stool onto the ground, Trumpauer watched as he was, “kicked, and kicked, and kicked.” Trumpauer slowly made her way to the counter, as a white female she blended in to the crowd but it was only a matter of time before they realized who she was empathizing with. She knew the only thing worse than being a ‘nigger’ was being a ‘nigger lover,’ and she felt that when the

³³ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 127.

³⁴ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 127.

crown turned against her, she would want to be sitting with her friends. “My feeling is that [King] told us we’d be safer sitting down with the other kids,” Trumpauer said. “They needed us there with them.”³⁵

The crowd continued to roar, Lewis and Moody were joined by Joan, who was the first white demonstrator to sit at the counter that day. She was picked up and carried out of the store by one of the boys in the crowd, James Glenn Sparkman, who was taking orders from an older man, perhaps a member of the Citizens Council.

“There were those in that group who could have done anything to us and not felt any remorse about it,” Lewis recalled. The noise of the crowd was distinct— “White ladies in the crowd sometimes joined the men cursing, sometimes just screamed out their hatred in high pitched shrieks,” Ed King coined this is an “insane southern symphony.”³⁶

Lewis, now sitting alone, was quickly joined by Chaffee. Trumpauer and Moody were not far behind. Fighting their way back to the counter in a show of remarkable resilience. “There were four of us,” Moody said. “Two whites, and two negroes, all women.”³⁷

12:45—the crowd of James Dean look-a-likes were in full effect. Moody remembered being covered in ketchup, sugar, mustard, pies, and everything on the countertop. Wells, who had dropped the students off that morning, had quietly been observing from the back of the crowd. Like Evers, he was a WWII Veteran and understood the gravity of keeping a weapon on

³⁵ Trumpauer Mulholland, Joan. Personal interview. 04 May 2016.

³⁶ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 129.

³⁷ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 267.

hand in case “something really treacherous happened.” Though Evers himself had fought in war he never knew that Wells brought a gun that day, neither did Salter or Norman.

Unlike Wells, Salter took a different approach to confrontation and faced it head on by sitting down at the counter, he was hit in the jaw with brass knuckles just moments later, only to sit back up resiliently and remain calm.

“Sometimes I’m not sure if I really remember it from the moment or I’ve heard it so much that I know it,” Trumpauer said. “But I know that we did sort of hung together and supported each other, we made jokes, teasing Professor Salter that some of the questions on his exams were not fair, there was joking back and forth.” But Trumpauer said the jokes kept things light hearted for a while, but “other times we were virtually praying, basically trying to ignore the crowd behind us, to the extent we could, saying you can kill the body but not the soul, we were just going to hang in there and whatever happens happens.”³⁸

It was not long after that Salter endured blows to the head and cigarette burns to the back of the neck. “I was the chairman of the strategy committee. I was the advisor to the youth council. I was the person who more than anything else had got this thing going. If I belonged anywhere, I belonged right here,” Salter explained in his reasoning for staying and enduring the torture. While he was willing to expose himself to the violence, he worried for Evers, as he was already one of the most targeted men in Jackson—possibly all of Mississippi. So, Salter made sure Evers stayed back at the office, looking through his windows that had already been adorned with bullets and shattered on multiple occasions by the people in Mississippi who wanted him dead.

³⁸ Trumpauer Mulholland, Joan. Personal interview. 04 May 2016.

JOURNALISTIC REPRESENTATION

The crowd was made up of one other group that day: the documenting journalists who stood by in shock and awe, weighing their journalistic obligation against their humanity. Bob Bullock felt an obligation to film what he saw that day—working for JWLA-TV, despite being hit by a man when he would not release his camera. “People think that if they do damage to the camera, then [the news] will never get out.” The man was unsuccessful in taking Bullock’s camera. Bullock was one of many reporting on May 28th in the five-n-dime. Bill Minor, Mississippi correspondent of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* was there, along with Dub Shoemaker, Ken Toler, Karl Flemming of *Newsweek*, Jack Langguth of the New York Times. There was no shortage of journalists and camera men there to capture the scene. A twenty-two-year-old Freddie Blackwell was determined to impress *Jackson Daily News* with his shots.³⁹

THE PHOTOGRAPH

There were many photos taken that day: the one Blackwell took was unique for a few reasons. For one, Blackwell took it. Trumpauer recalled that he was not much older than many of the kids from Central, in fact he was friendly with many of their older brothers and sisters, as Central was his Alma Mater.⁴⁰ “He literally stood on the lunch counter for close to three hours, sometimes he had one foot over where the food was being passed out,” Trumpauer said.

In the photograph, John Salter, Joan Trumpauer, and Anne Moody are covered in condiments. Salter had a mixture of pepper and water cast into his eyes just moments before, catsup or blood (or both) can be seen dribbling down the back of his head. Moody, still seated by

³⁹ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 133.

⁴⁰ Trumpauer Mulholland, Joan. Personal interview. 04 May 2016.

the lemonade maker—gleaming from the flash of the camera—looks discouraged. The onlookers are of mixed expression, some more excited than others. Nonetheless they all watched as the demonstrators were brutally hit, kicked, punched, poked, prodded and painted on for the sake of amusement.

This photo became considered by many to be the quintessential sit-in photograph, transcending Thornell's photograph of Oliver brutalizing Norman. Perhaps because of the physical lack of violence, Trumpauer believes, it can be shown to younger generations because it depicted hatred without graphic violence. "The picture is so widely used because there is so much violence in the air—but there was no violence in that moment, it's good for children," Trumpauer said.⁴¹ It captures, "the essence of an era," featuring the countertop, the demonstrators, the wild crowd, press, FBI agents hiding behind their sunglasses, and the American Dream, almost as shiny as the lemonade dispenser. It illustrates a type of "human drama" and "pathos," that other images from that day do not convey. The lack of violence allows a person to focus on other aspects of the photograph—the lack of action, the crowd's apathy toward the demonstrators.

APPEARANCES

The photograph was originally printed in *Paris Match*, an international large format news magazine. *Paris Match* gave Blackwell five-thousand dollars for his negatives from the sit-in. It is featured in Atlanta, Georgia at the Martin Luther King Museum, as well as the Memphis Civil Rights Museum where a life size cut out of the print is displayed along with an actual lunch counter where people can sit, put on headphones of the crowd yelling, and experience what the demonstrators heard that day. The photo has been included on *Life Magazine's*: 100 Photographs

⁴¹ Trumpauer Mulholland, Joan. Personal interview. 04 May 2016.

that changed the world. It can also be found in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the JFK Library in Boston, and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History along with the actual Woolworth's counter where the first sit in occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina.⁴²

Now revered as a symbol of American history, many papers like the *Jackson Daily News* reluctantly published it at the time. *Newsweek* published a four-page spread using an aggregation of photos taken that day. Blackwell's photo of Salter, Trumpauer, and Moody was used by *The Daily News*, deeming Salter, "The Mustard Man."⁴³

Jackson Daily News feared the photo, which they knew would infuriate the majority of their white readers in Mississippi. They certainly did not want Blackwell's photograph to be in contention for the Pulitzer. In 1963 Robert Jackson received the Pulitzer for his shot of Jack Ruby killing Lee Harvey Oswald. A year of horrific images from sit-ins, to people being attacked by police dogs, to President Kennedy's assassination.

Back at the Masonic Temple around mid-afternoon, Evers was anxious to get down to Woolworth's, especially after receiving so many phone calls from Ed King, who had been pleading Dr. Beittel, president of Tougaloo, to come down and diffuse the situation with Braun and the Tougaloo faculty and students. King suggested Beittel call Woolworth's headquarters and force a shut down, considering Braun refused to do so, and ninety police officers watched from outside the five-n-dime.

⁴² O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 284.

⁴³ Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006) 339.

“They brought it on themselves,” Braun said when confronted by Beittel. “There’s nothing I can do about it.” It took a regional Woolworth’s representative to go up into the office of Braun, who had been hiding, away from the riot downstairs, seemingly separating himself from any responsibility he might possess. Shortly after their encounter, Braun announced that the counter was officially closed and what remained was the aftermath of soiled clothes—caked on blood, mustard, goopy sugar clumped together with catsup. The last three hours had shown the best and worst parts of humanity—people stepping up in silent bravery, and people tearing them down out of cruelty, but also fear. Fear that lunch counters like Woolworth’s would one day desegregate—a process that was already underway nationwide according to the department store. In a letter to NAACP’s Roy Wilkins encouraging a national integration of their lunch counters, Woolworth’s responded saying, “Since the ‘sit-in’ demonstrations in the South began... it has been our policy to desegregate, under local leadership and without violence, our lunch counters there, along with those of other local and department variety stores.”⁴⁴

AFTERMATH

The hours after the sit in required a great amount of cleaning and processing the events the demonstrators had endured that day. Moody looked down at the ground as the crowd filtered out of Woolworth’s. She was barefoot, her shoes had gone missing after she was dragged across the floor. She and Trumpauer both distinctly remembered their stockings sticking to them after the sit-in, their legs covered in mustard.

⁴⁴ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi, 2013) 143.

“I wanted to get my hair washed. It was stiff with dried mustard, ketchup, and sugar,” Moody remembered. “The hairdresser took one look at me and said, ‘my land, you were in the sit-in, huh?’”⁴⁵

Trumpauer remembered that after the sit-in was over, it was the support from the group that kept her going. “Cars came and picked us up, took us back down to Medgar’s office, I remember there was this hairdresser across the street, this beauty parlor, and she took the girls over there and gave us a nice shampoo and did our hair up and all. And there were other women who came and washed our arms and rinsed stuff off our clothes as they could --back then we wore nylon stockings everywhere—people cleaned us up at much as they could. John Salters wife, Eldry, her role, whenever she heard things were going on, was to start cooking spaghetti because she knew we would need to eat when we get back.”

Perhaps what made the sit-ins bearable was the love that the students found in each other, the support was what Trumpauer compared to family. “The movement became like family, if you backed out, you’re letting down your friends,”⁴⁶ Trumpauer Mulholland said. The group supported each other until they closed down the counter that day, and the continued to support each other in the coming months.

Although Blackwell earned points with the *Jackson Daily News* for his photos that day—Trumpauer said he gained something much more valuable that night, “By the time the demonstration was over, Fred’s sympathy has shifted from his friends to the demonstrators...and I say that’s the power of non-violence.”

⁴⁵ Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Inc, 1968), 286.

⁴⁶ Trumpauer Mulholland, Joan. Personal interview. 04 May 2016.

“It hit me when I was photographing,” Blackwell said, “That they were right and we were wrong.”⁴⁷

It would not be until the late 1960’s that Southern chain-owned hotels, motels, movie theaters and restaurants welcomed black customers.⁴⁸ The sit-ins were just one of several efforts to escalate. It took many lives, and the loss of lives, including that of beloved Medgar Evers, for lasting change to take root. Although because of its journalistic impact in terms of the papers that published it, the places it reached, the people who saw it, it was arguably “force fed” as Myrdal would say, to a group of people that were lacking knowledge of the African American struggle. The Woolworth lunch counter photograph is a prime example of framing as a vehicle to ignite compassion in photojournalism. In retrospect, Blackwell’s 1963 Woolworth lunch counter snapshot has proven to be a catalytic moment for the movement and the media.

⁴⁷ O'Brien, M. J. *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement It Inspired*. Jackson: (University Press of Mississippi 2013) 286.

⁴⁸ Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 406.