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**LECTURE**

**A Future Worth Remembering:**  
*A Rhetorical Reading of the Civil Rights Memorial*

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# A Future Worth Remembering: A Rhetorical Reading of the Civil Rights Memorial

by  
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The Civil Rights Memorial was dedicated November 5, 1989, in Montgomery, Alabama. It was designed by Maya Lin, the architect widely known for her design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Unlike its predecessor, though, the Civil Rights Memorial has no affiliation with any government entity, nor does it occupy public land; it was privately commissioned by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization I will comment on more later.<sup>1</sup>

My general purposes are to offer a part of Neil Michel's and my reading of the Civil Rights Memorial, as well as to invite you to construct your own readings of the site.<sup>2</sup>

Our own work on the Memorial argues for a number of positions, but the most important, and the one I'll emphasize here, is that the Civil Rights Memorial disrupts our expectations of what a commemorative artwork should do. Like any other such work, it addresses the present and future as well as the past.<sup>3</sup> But unlike most works of its kind, it eschews the standard commemorative invitation to emulate or repeat the past. Traditional memorials, of course, do precisely that; they reference events or persons of the past as worthy not only of memory, but also of imitation. The Civil Rights Memorial honors the past, but its principal message is that we should change our ways and pursue a different course vis-à-vis racial politics in the future.<sup>4</sup>

The Civil Rights Memorial was the first major work commemorating the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. It certainly is not as well

known as many national monuments, for example, those on the Mall in Washington, DC, or even perhaps as some of its successors in larger cities, like the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the King Center in Atlanta, or the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.<sup>5</sup> But it has received a fair amount of attention, especially because of the Academy Award-winning documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Also, the prominent legal activities of its patron, the SPLC, has brought some attention to the physical space of the Center in Montgomery and to the Memorial.<sup>6</sup> In any case, while it seems fair to say that most U.S.

citizens and residents haven't visited the Civil Rights Memorial, it is not exactly unfamiliar either.

The Memorial is situated on a plaza in front of the SPLC's office in downtown Montgomery (Figure 1). The Memorial consists of two black granite structures—a table and a wall backgrounding it. The wall is about 40 feet long and nine feet high, with waterfall speed water and this single inscription from Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech: ". . . UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN LIKE WATERS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM." This passage, not insignificantly, is a slight revision of a line from the King James Version of the Bible—Amos 5:24—which I will return to toward the end. The table is an off-balance structure, 31 inches high and twelve feet in diameter. The tabletop features softly flowing water covering inscriptions carved around its perimeter that mark events of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s and 1960s; the inscriptions are arranged as a chronology (Figure 2).

Although the Memorial's inscriptions focus on the past, the principal message of the Memorial, we believe, is not about the 1950s and 1960s but about the present and future of race issues in the U.S. And we think that message operates by means of the rather standard rhetorical strategy of creating dissatisfaction with the past and present in order to motivate change in the future. That may be a standard rhetorical strategy, but, again, it is quite unusual for most commemorative art.

If we turn to the inscriptions on the tabletop, representing the past, we begin to see how that dissatisfaction is evoked. The inscribed timeline

announces important events and advances effected by the Civil Rights Movement, for example:

- 5 DEC 1960 SUPREME COURT OUTLAW SEGREGATION IN BUS TERMINALS
- 1 APR 1962 CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS JOIN FORCES TO LAUNCH VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE
- 23 JAN 1964 POLL TAX OUTLAWED IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

It also names white supremacists' efforts to obstruct the work of the Movement:

- 30 SEP 1962 RIOTS ERUPT WHEN JAMES MEREDITH, A BLACK STUDENT, ENROLLS AT OLE MISS
- 11 JUN 1963 ALABAMA GOVERNOR STANDS IN SCHOOLROOM DOOR TO STOP UNIVERSITY INTEGRATION
- 7 MAR 1965 STATE TROOPERS BEAT BACK MARCHERS AT EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE SELMA, AL

The large majority of the inscriptions, however, mark the murders of forty men, women, and children—victims of racially-motivated violence:

- 7 MAY 1955 REV. GEORGE LEE KILLED FOR LEADING VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE BELZONI, MS
- 9 APR 1962 CPL. ROMAN DUCKSWORTH

JR. TAKEN FROM BUS AND KILLED BY POLICE TAYLORSVILLE, MS  
 3 JAN 1966 SAMUEL YOUNGE JR. STUDENT CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST KILLED IN DISPUTE OVER WHITES-ONLY RESTROOM TUSKEGEE, AL

The sheer weight of evidence in the chronology is about violent death, not advances or successes of the Movement. Although the chronology begins with *Brown v. Board of Education*, regarded at the time as the most important civil rights advance to date, it ends with the assassination of Martin Luther

King, Jr. Had the Memorial been intended to posit a story of progress, it could have punctuated the Movement differently. King himself remarked after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that "There is no more civil rights movement" (qtd. in Chong 194). Of the eleven events the table records after that landmark legislation, ten name racially-inspired murders. The dull repetitiveness of the verbs throughout the chronology—"slain," "killed," "taken from jail and lynched," "killed," "killed," "killed," "slain," "assassinated," "killed," "beaten to death"—codes a depressing sequence, hardly one from which we could draw satisfaction. As chilling is the frequency with which people in positions of institutional authority committed murders or engaged in hostile obstruction. Although most of the inscriptions name "the Klan" or "nightriders" as perpetrators, others identify: a white legislator, a governor, the police, state troopers, highway patrolmen, and a deputy. The profile of white authority appears disturbed and disturbing.

In general, the Memorial's representation of the past is violent, incomplete, and highly unsatisfying, with only a few successes interspersed among the wrenching conflict and killing spree. The few successes, all predicated in federal government action or intervention, are overwhelmed by the dominance of the mur-

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ders and oppositional actions of white supremacists. This cannot be a past we would wish to imitate. Even the successes are suspect in this timeline, for they are always followed by more violence, and because those who would have to abide by and enforce the enacted legislative actions are represented as oppositional or undermining forces.

Marking a symbolic move to the present is a noticeable gap in the circular timeline between the first and last inscriptions; it suggests that we shift our attention from the 1950s and 1960s to our own time. Because of the temporal sequence inscribed between 1954 and 1968, though, that gap presumably could be filled symbolically by either positive or negative actions; in fact, the narrative momentum established in the timeline would not lead us to be particularly sanguine about what might be inscribed in that space. The gap at least suggests that the time of racial conflict is not over; the circle is not closed, and so we must consider our own time and how it is characterized racially. Reinforcing the shift of attention to the present is the quotation on the wall that projects justice and righteousness but leaves those objectives hovering on the edge of the preposition "Until."

Just as the tabletop focuses on the past, we may read the face of the wall as representing the present. The wall bears only that single inscription from "I Have A Dream." But the remainder of the wall is not merely blank space. The wall is as visionary as the King quotation, its "vision" one of refractive light (Figure 3). The convex curve of the wall, with the water that rushes down its sheer frontage, appropriates images from all around the memorial plaza and even from outside the space of the Memorial. It functions as a refractive screen upon which are projected various moving, and always changing, images of the present as it is performed in Montgomery (and presumably beyond). The wall refers us to its own context; it asks us to look back, not only at ourselves and what we bring to the Memorial,

but also at what is happening around us in the here and now.

What "we" may bring, of course, is highly variable and personal. Our own projected images in the wall, however, invite self reflection on our experiences, confusions, and memory encounters with issues of race. Whether we summon news items--the LA riots, Howard Beach, the South Carolina flag controversy, the Jasper, Texas murder of James Bird--or less public moments of witnessing, perpetrating, or simply failing to notice racism in our everyday lives, the wall projects us as part of its uncertain present. The images it projects from near-

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by are less clear than those at a greater distance, as if to suggest the haziness of our own stances, and as if to invite us further afield to those sharper images.

If we follow the wall's visual reference to a greater distance, we see a space of symbolic tension. The Memorial is situated in downtown Montgomery, which is the city's principal tourist zone.<sup>7</sup> And although Montgomery, or, indeed, arguably the entire nation, is referenced by the wall's vectoral vision, I will limit this directed exploration to just the tourist context.<sup>8</sup> About two blocks away from the Civil Rights Memorial, and anchoring Dexter Avenue, is the most popular of Montgomery's visitors' sites, the state Capitol, an attractive Greek revival structure. More than a working statehouse, it is also a preserved historic site, as the location where delegates of the Southern states debated and finally voted for secession. On the front steps, a bronze star is embedded, marking the spot where Jefferson Davis stood when he was inaugurated president of the Confederate States of America. Most visitors seem insistent about being photographed standing on or near the star. An impressive statue of Davis guards the front of the entry walk to the main entrance of the Capitol.

The most prominent sculpture on the Capitol grounds, and in all of Montgomery if

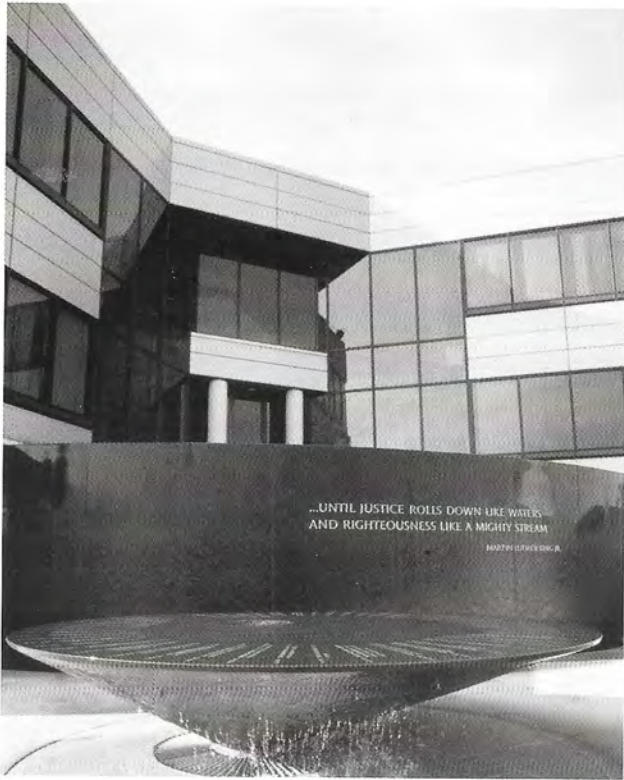


Figure 1

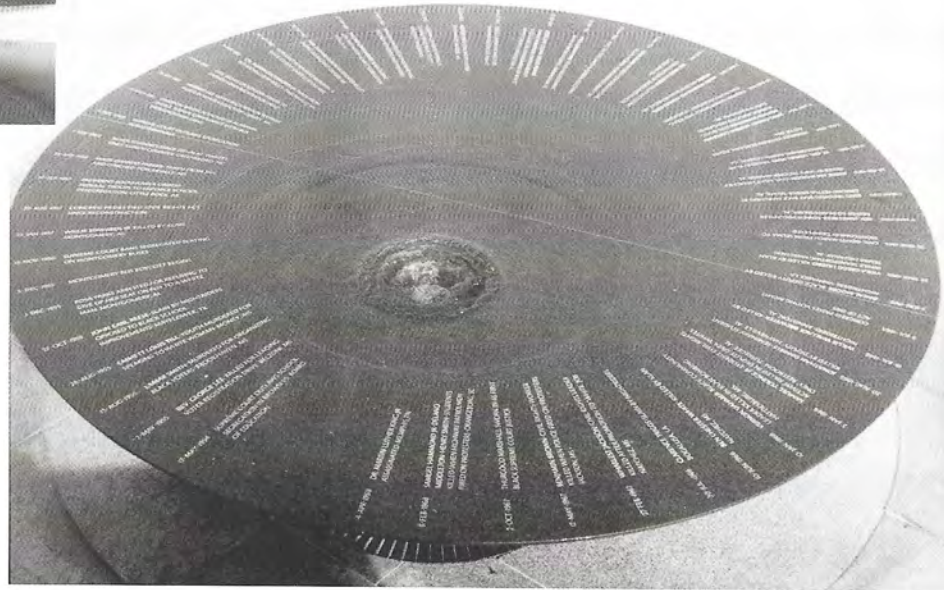


Figure 2

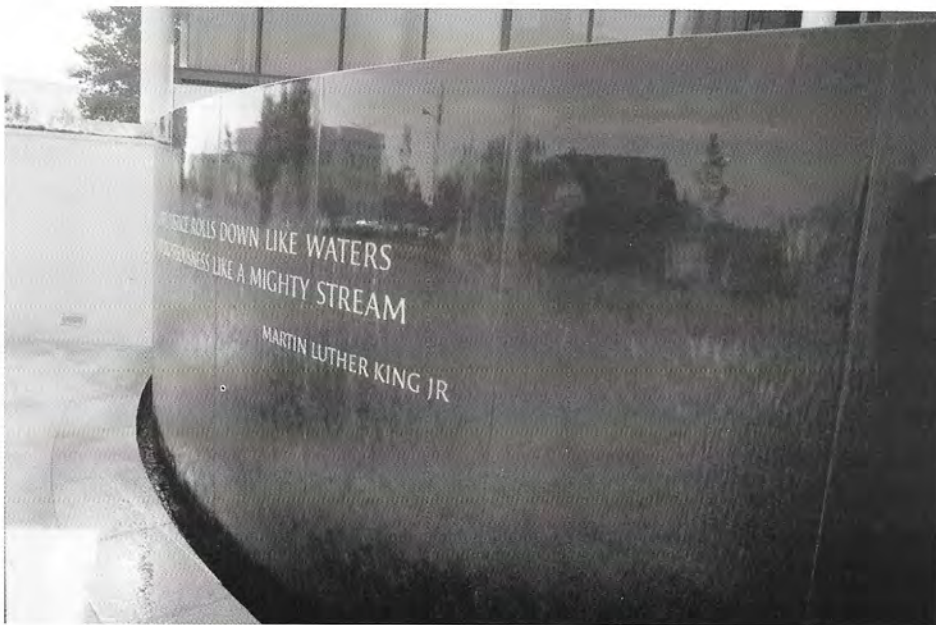


Figure 3

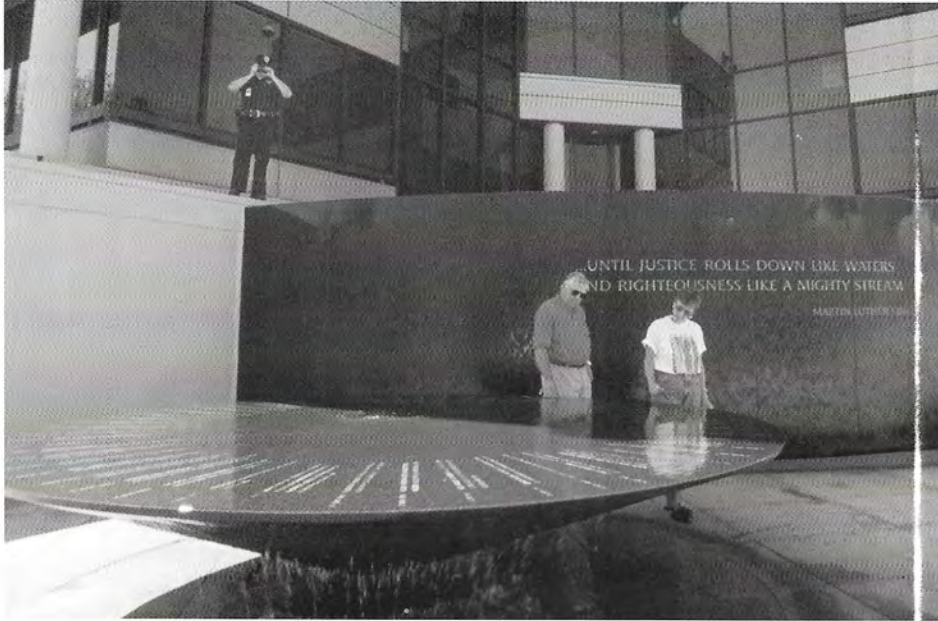


Figure 4

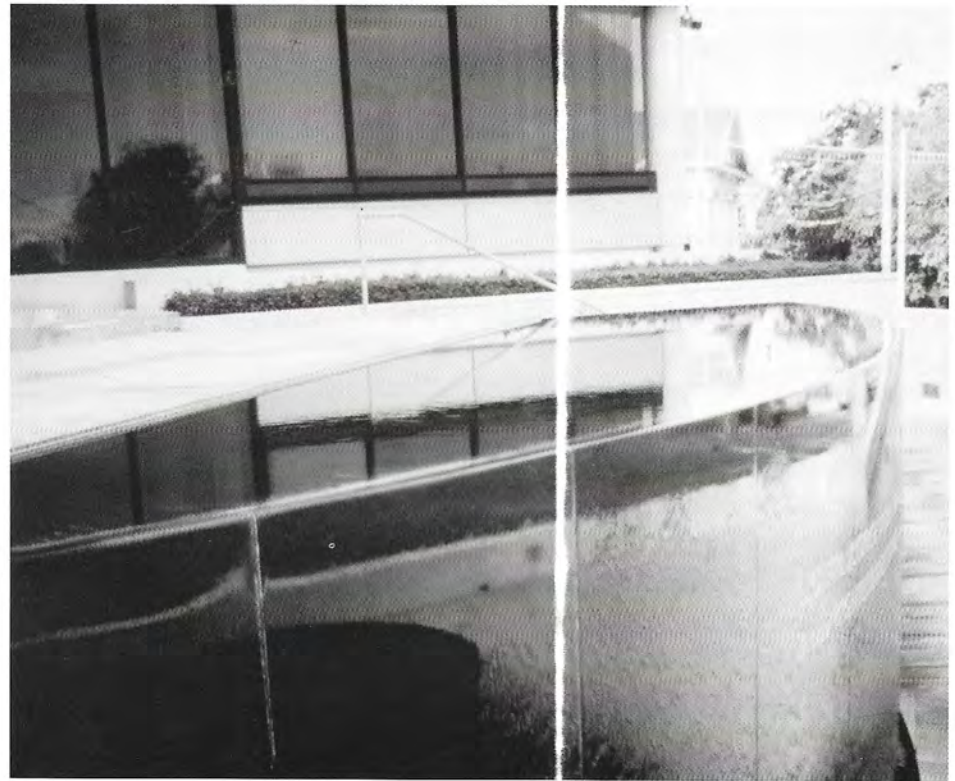


Figure 5

Photos by:  
Neil Michel/Axiom

we assess prominence by vertical scale, is the Confederate Monument. Dedicated, or in its words "consecrated," to the "memory of the Confederate Soldiers and Seamen, 1861-1865," its cornerstone was laid at an 1886 ceremony in which Jefferson Davis was the featured speaker (Foster 95). Since its recent restoration, its inscriptions are again plainly legible, allowing us to read, for example, of the "knightliest of the knightly race," of the "patriot" of the Confederacy, and of the stars and bars: "fairer flag was never furled." Across the street from the Capitol grounds, and sharing Washington Street with the Civil Rights Memorial, is the first "White House" of the Confederacy, a beautifully restored and lovingly tended, antebellum mansion occupied for the first six weeks after secession by Jefferson Davis and his wife.

***There is little secret of the preferred symbolism in Montgomery.***

There is little secret of the preferred symbolism in Montgomery. Beyond the Civil Rights Memorial and the King Memorial Baptist Church, located near the Capitol on Dexter Avenue (and in a display of unintended irony, across the street from the Alabama Department of Justice building), some other sites relevant to the Civil Rights Movement are identifiable because of historical markers. But visitors must look for them, because they are scattered and not mapped by the city's tourist literature. The city's dominant historical imaginary is clearly situated in the Confederacy, not the Montgomery bus boycott, the Selma to Montgomery march, or the former residences of the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr. or Ralph Abernathy. Certainly, Montgomery is not unique in foregrounding its Confederate history, but the effects of perpetuating the symbolic distinction of the Civil War in the South is at least questionable. As Foster argues, celebrations and commemorative art in memory of the Confederate States "did not so much sacralize the memory of the war as it sanitized and trivialized it" (196). The two radically different

kinds of memory sites create a symbolic tension, if not outright conflict, in their bids to interpret the past. But the tension is not simply contained in the city's symbolism.<sup>9</sup>

Returning to the immediate space of the Civil Rights Memorial, but still attending to its projected context, it is nearly impossible to overlook the presence of the armed security detail, employed by the SPLC (Figure 4). The guards are unfailingly courteous, even helpful, to visitors to the Memorial. But they are also unforgivingly alert to anything or anyone that might pose a threat to the Center. Even a casual glance around the building suggests that it is a tightly secured compound and under surveillance; there is a guardhouse, and multiple cameras are fixed on areas around the perimeter. If a visitor lingers "too long" or displays anything readable as suspicious behavior, a guard will ask him/her to produce identification and snap a still photo of that person. These activities are overt, intended to serve as a display of readiness and force against terrorist action, which is threatened against the SPLC on a regular and frequent basis (Brinkman). The activities also function on a rhetorical register; the need for such vigilance, of course, is another sign that strong tensions remain and that the imagined moment of the "Until" in the King quotation has not yet arrived.

The Memorial's wall, thus, does some interesting symbolic work, though less verbally than the table. It shifts tenses very explicitly to the present, but in its only utterance reinforces the unsatisfying, unresolved tensions of the moment. The remainder shows a welter of chaotic scenes that change and shift but that leave no resolution of tension. Because of the way light comes off of the stone and sheets of water, the projected images are vague, suggesting perhaps that the present harbors less overt tensions, ones that are more subtle and difficult to discern. One final observation about the wall and its representation of the present is in order. As we gaze at the wall or look around at

its context, we are standing on the same ground as when we read the representations of the past in the tabletop inscriptions. In order to view "the future," we have to shift ground.

What we read as the future symbolized by the Memorial is to be found by climbing the steps to the upper level plaza formed by the meeting of the wall and the building's main entrance. It seems a special irony that the security presence, at present, forbids visitors access to that upper level and its view of the future.<sup>10</sup> If they were permitted upstairs, they would see above the wall a still pool of water on black granite, completely absent of any inscription (Figure 5). I will address the symbolism of the water at more length shortly, but suffice it to say here that this still water contrasts with the flowing water of the table and the waterfall below. Still water, in almost all Western representations, marks peace, calm, security, and serenity, one of a number of indications that we have "transcended" the past and present and moved on to a different, less tense space. Another is that we have had to remove ourselves from the lower level, put a distance between the symbolized past and present, to reach this place. And there is effort involved; we must climb the steps, for this still pool of water is not visible from the level below.

Once on the second level, though, we see not only the still water, reflecting our images against the sky, but we also have a clear and encompassing view of the history inscribed below. The face of the wall disappears from this vantage point, as the space of the future becomes the visitor's present. The un-inscribed granite tablet under the water suggests several possibilities, most simply perhaps that the future is still to be written. Another, more symbolically potent possibility is that a future worth remembering won't have to be inscribed at all. If the future is pure of any explicit representations like those below, it may be because it shouldn't have to be marked.

Still, the silent granite leaves something of

an aporia. If the table below tells us how we arrived at the present moment, and the wall suggests that the present is as unsatisfactory as the past, the Memorial's representation of the future offers little explicit about what that future will (or should) look like or how to achieve it. There is a clear sense of putting the past behind us to reach an elevated goal of tranquility. We might even see the reflection of the sky in the water and stone as offering an outcome reflecting the heavens or a cosmic state. Even then, however, the character of the future remains vague and agency unaddressed. This aporia is intensified because of the

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Memorial's clear assignment of agency to the individual (Blair and Michel).

Up to this point, I've said little about the water and almost nothing about the Memorial's appropriation of religious imagery. Those, taken together, might give us at least one set of possibilities to elaborate the Memorial's representation of the future. In many respects, this memorial is all about water, and while the hermeneutic here relies little, if at all, on designer intention, that *was* the intent (Lin 4:27). The King quotation—"until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream"—is essentially the title of the Memorial in terms of visual prominence. Not only is it likely the first thing that any viewer will see, but it is also the connective between past and future, representing the present and disappearing from view only when the visitor has reached the upper level of the Memorial and rendered the future as time present.

The King quotation also fills the image of water with religious entailments, quoting (actually paraphrasing) the words of an Old Testament prophet. Both old and new testaments are rife with water imagery, which can easily be brought to bear in reading this piece. Most obvious, of course, is the entitling passage paraphrased from Amos that warns of a



fearsome judgment rendered by God against sin. Amos' word, by the way, was "judgment" rather than justice. King secularized and arguably softened it for his intended effect in "I Have A Dream," and so does this memorial. But even passing familiarity with the source suggests the grave danger of not changing our ways, and the authority comes from no less a figure than a prophetic messenger of God.

For those who read the water imagery together with other relevant biblical passages, the possibilities are nearly endless. One of the best suggestions I have heard so far is one from Karlyn Campbell, who referred me to the book of Exodus.

There, as the Israelites wander through the desert, they are no longer slaves, of course, but their suffering is still hideous. In one of the narratives of travail, in Exodus 17:6, they are without water. They question and complain, and their complaints seem warranted, since their survival is at stake. They wonder why they have been released from slavery only to die of thirst. God tells Moses to smite a stone with his rod, and water pours forth from the stone to save the former slaves. So, rather than understanding water as a *threat* in the Amos passage, here water—and notably water flowing from stone—is symbolized as salvation.

But biblical water imagery seems to be elaborated most thoroughly in the rite of baptism, and of course, King, the Baptist minister, is featured so prominently in the Memorial that credulity is hardly stretched to consider it. Not only does the baptismal imagery take up both the messages of danger and salvation, but it offers a fully formed narrative resolution of both. In addition, it retains a strong symbolic tradition of the connection of baptism to manumission, particularly in the Black church (Raboteau 99, 123).

The water covering the table structure is what most commentators remark on. And we

***The waterfall suggests a dangerous passage, but one that holds out the possibility of change.***

think it's important too, but I'll skip that here to focus on the representation of the present and future. In the fast moving water of the waterfall, we see the potential destructiveness of water implied in King's adaptation of Amos. The danger of water is a frequent biblical theme and often associated with baptism. As Schama suggests, "The whole epic of Hebraic deliverance as described in Exodus, an idolatrous and enslaved past drowned with Pharaoh's chariots, probably supplied the rudimentary rituals of cleansing and redemption that evolved into baptism" (264). Barth claims that it is "impossible to understand the meaning of baptism, unless one keeps in mind that it implies a threat of death and a deliverance to life" (11).

Theologians seem to agree that baptism's meaning arises as a result of its performative dimension, the willingness to submit oneself to the dangers of the water and to be delivered from the risk (see Hamilton 49).

The performative fractures time and enacts what is referenced in baptismal theology as *metanoia*—"a radical change of mind" (Hamilton 38), or "the turning to face a new direction" (49). Certainly water can destroy, but it also can be transformative: As Hamilton argues, "Through the waters wrong can be put right, righteousness vindicated, the wicked punished, and God's faithful ones borne to safety" (47). The waterfall suggests a dangerous passage, but one that holds out the possibility of change. The waterfall and the choice to encounter its danger points us, as Cullmann argues that baptism does, toward the future (49). The new life that baptism offers cuts across social divisions and differences, to create a community of equals—equal by virtue of the ritual itself (Hamilton 56).

What is represented, we argue, by the serenity and calm of the pool of water above the plaza at the Civil Rights Memorial is bonded to a variety of referential associations with baptism, among them: regeneration, belonging, and celebration.<sup>11</sup> The baptized community

represents a "reintegration of what belongs together but that had been divided" (Hamilton 36). Although most Christian theology recognizes that baptism binds the baptized to a *transcendent* community of all those who have accepted the sacrament historically, the ritual is very much concerned with the here and now of the material world ("Sacrament" 607). Bonds of fellowship are emphasized too (Schlink 7). So, the ritual of the sacrament is present, visible, material, and fundamentally communitarian.

The Memorial's representation of the future on its second level is the only one of its components left uninscribed. Although it offers no easy or explicit solutions to the racial disharmony it codes below, we believe the implications of the baptismal imagery speak in the space of that aporia. Baptismal theology emphasizes the *urgency* of the imperative in baptism to change and to live differently (Schlink 56, 69), an imperative we believe is one of the fundamental messages as well of the Civil Rights Memorial. If this new life articulates with the representations of the future in the Civil Rights Memorial, we must acknowledge, though, that what Schlink calls the "admonitions" of baptism are *only* that; they are not guarantees (35). There is no protection against lapses after baptism, and there is nothing on the second level of the Memorial that would prevent a fall to the floor of the plaza below where the representations of the past become tangible and proximate again. In fact, the visitor to the Memorial, were s/he allowed to the second level at all, would still have to descend back to the first level to leave the memorial site. In other words, when we leave that top level, we move back into the realm of the uncertain and unstable and unsatisfying present, only having been led to *imagine* a different and better future. If there is hope expressed here, there is still the final reminder that it remains only a hope. If we descend the steps and turn to glance back at the Memorial as we leave, that relentless preposition, "Until" comes back into view.

The Civil Rights Memorial is not one that will leave us with a smug satisfaction about our present based on the achievements and successes of the past. It recognizes achievements but overwhelms them with the remainder of its symbolism, which urges us to understand the strategies of the Civil Rights Movement as partial, incomplete, and ultimately unsuccessful in producing the harmonious racial relations of the beloved community that King often characterized as its objective (King 18). The dissatisfaction the Memorial builds urges us to leave the strategies of the Movement behind us and to find a new way. Government and institutional action are set aside,

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remains only a hope.***

or at least set alongside, the imperative of individual agency. This memorial

implies that change in the racial climate of the nation will happen one person at a time, and it will happen only with *radical* changes of heart and habit. The result, though undercoded, is a community characterized as a beautiful, serene, and elevated space of racial cohesion and accord.

Whether we find the racial politics of the Civil Rights Memorial compelling, of course, remains at issue. There certainly are troubling questions that might be raised if we understand its symbolism the way we have read it here. This may not be the image of the future or the way of getting there that would prove out in the end or that we would prefer. Still, and this is not an insignificant contribution, the Memorial does something traditional public commemorative art does not—it invites us to think critically about our past, present and future, without any implicature that they were, are or will be what we seek. Even those public commemorative pieces that are now borrowing heavily from this one in terms of design elements don't seem to offer that same critical edge. What seems to be missing is what appears most prominent in the Civil Rights Memorial—the challenge to reflect critically and to contemplate change seriously—in an effort to imagine and enact a future worth remembering.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was not initiated as a government project, nor was it funded by the U.S. government. The Memorial was planned and funded by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. However, it obviously occupies a space in the most revered of national areas—the monumental core of Washington. And, because the VVMF made a gift of it to the federal government, it is now administered by the National Park Service.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Michel and I are working on a book on the Civil Rights Memorial as well as a larger project on national public commemorative art of the twentieth century. It is impossible at this point to separate out whose thoughts are whose, or what insights "belong" to me or to Neil. The photographs are to his credit certainly, and many of the ideas here, I'm sure, are his as well. We have published an essay on the Civil Rights Memorial too (Blair and Michel), that bears some resemblance to this lecture, although the emphasis is different. In any case, he should share in any credit, and accept no blame, for anything I say here.

We, like other critics, are gratified when others adopt our reading as their own. However, we are more pleased if our critique stimulates others to engage with this (or any) memorial sufficiently to build their own readings.

Following Amelia Jones, we consent willingly to alternative interpretations, and we warrant our own as on the grounds of hermeneutic and political responsibility within its own, limited and limiting situation. Jones suggests:

[T]he escape of "Meaning" from our grasp—its excess and heterogeneity—would be understood as part of the limiting structure of our analysis, with its inevitable attempt to convince *our* interpreters that we have something to say that is valuable . . . at this moment in time . . . Rather than being labeled "right" or "wrong," interpretations themselves would be held responsible for their participation in a circuit of desires and meanings that might or might not change how our subsequent readers understand the objects at hand as well as the processes that shape their significance" (51).

<sup>3</sup> As Heathcote maintains, "Visions of the past are inevitably tainted with the attitudes and concerns of the present. The memorial contains within it not only the superficial gesture toward remembrance and the dead but a wealth of information about the priorities, politics, and sensibilities of those who built it. A memorial will tell us more about its builders than about those to whom it is dedicated" (68).

<sup>4</sup> The Civil Rights Memorial does also advocate some continuities with the past, tactical continuities of resistance and engagement, but we believe these are trumped by the discontinuity it seems to favor. See Blair and Michel.

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent rhetorical analysis of these other Civil Rights memory sites, see: Armada; Gallagher, "Memory"; and Gallagher, "Remembering."

<sup>6</sup> The SPLC, with lead counsel, Morris Dees, has become a focal figure in shutting down hate groups by filing civil suits against those organizations and their leadership for the violent actions of their members. The most recent was a successful \$6.3 million jury award against Aryan Nations, its leader, and three members. For additional information about the SPLC, see its website: *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

<sup>7</sup> That is not to suggest that Montgomery is a major tourism destination but its officialdom certainly attempts to promote it that way. According to Andy Britton, of the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery attracts 2.4 million visitors each year. He added that the Civil Rights Memorial is among the top four or five "attractions."

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that, even in the city's large glossy, self advertisement (Lewis), the tensions are evident. Granted, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Dees, and the Memorial receive a fair amount of attention. But there are also telling statements throughout that suggest an ongoing tension. For example, it seems relatively amazing to find a statement like this in a book published in the 1990s: "In those days in the South, including Montgomery, there was a feeling that the slave owner was good to his slaves, providing them with security and looking to their needs" (26). This, of course, is precisely the kind of statement that Southerners used to demand be included in history textbooks that dealt with the Civil War, so as to be "fair" to the point of view of slave owners in the nineteenth century. There are other hints of the tension as well, not the least of which is the statement by a spokeswoman for the Montgomery Police Department, averring that "There are more police officers per capita in Montgomery than most cities the same size" (80). Or consider Alabama State University's president, who remarks that "Alabama State University "has not yet been appreciated for all it can do in the community," and "We [ASU and the city of Montgomery] should work together to build a mutual relationship" (114). ASU is a traditionally black institution, and Harris's statements suggest that it and the city still have not really come to terms.

<sup>9</sup> For additional detail on the Memorial's context in Montgomery, see Blair and Michel 40, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Presumably, when the SPLC builds its new office building and moves from its current quarters, there will be less need for caution and visitors will be allowed back up to the upper elevation. One possible plan is to turn the current office into a visitor center for the Memorial (Dees).

<sup>11</sup> What Hamilton describes as "images" represented by the ritual (e.g., belongingness, regeneration, etc.) make sense as a totality, except in the case of celebration. Here, we believe Hamilton confuses the performative character of the sacrament with its referential resources.

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## B. Aubrey Fisher

B. Aubrey Fisher served as a faculty member in the Department of Communication at the University of Utah from 1971 to 1986. He began his professional career as a high school teacher and radio announcer in South Dakota. After receiving his Master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Minnesota, he spent four years on the faculty at the University of Missouri.

Professor Fisher was a prominent scholar in interpersonal communication and communication theory. His published work includes three books and more than thirty-five articles and book chapters. He was considered one of the most notable and influential communication scholars of his time. He held numerous offices in professional organizations, including president of the Western Speech Communication Association, president of the International Communication Association, and editor of the *Western Speech Communication Journal*.

The B. Aubrey Fisher Memorial Lecture was established by the Department of Communication in 1986 to recognize Professor Fisher's outstanding achievements and to provide a forum for presenting original research and theory in communication.

## Carole Blair

Carole Blair is Professor of American Studies at the University of California, Davis. She joined the faculty there in 1989 and currently serves as Director of the UCD Washington Center. Professor Blair received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Iowa, and the Ph.D. degree from The Pennsylvania State University. She has served on the faculties of the University of Maryland and the California State University at both Hayward and Sacramento.

Professor Blair is well known within the academic community for her outstanding work as a rhetorical critic. She has authored or coauthored over twenty-five scholarly journal articles and book chapters, and has coedited/translated two books. She has received numerous awards, including the National Communication Association's Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award and the Golden Anniversary Monograph Award, the University of California's Outstanding Mentor Award, and the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender's Outstanding Article Award. She has served on the editorial boards of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *Women's Studies in Communication*, and *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, among others.

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