

Walk on By: How We Know an Era Is Over

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David J. Dennis Jr., in collaboration with David J. Dennis Sr. (2022). *The Movement Made Us: A Father, a Son, and the Legacy of a Freedom Ride*. New York: Harper. 288 pp., archival material, \$27.99 cloth, \$18.99 paperback, \$12.49 e-book.

Gordon K. Mantler (2023). *The Multiracial Promise: Harold Washington's Chicago and the Democratic Struggle in Reagan's America*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press. 353 pp., illustrations, bibliography, notes, index, \$99.00 cloth, \$29.95 paperback, \$22.99 e-book.

Victoria W. Wolcott (2022). *Living in the Future: Utopianism and the Long Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 272 pp., illustrations, table, map, bibliography, notes, index, \$30 cloth, \$29.99 e-book, \$9.99 mp3.

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Deciding on what might be the proverbial bookends of an era helps to figure out what an event means. Is the March on Washington and Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech in 1963 merely a defining moment of the Classic civil rights era (1954-1965)? Is it a key firearm in the Cold War (1947-1990)? Does it make the most sense as the best articulation of the American dream in the nation's history (1776-present)? Is it a supremely eloquent crowbar, prying the fangs of white supremacy out of the global body politic (1400s-now)?

Let's start with a simple fact: we are used to filmmakers, historians and journalists centering wars and revolutions, or technological and economic innovation as origin and end points that define a period. This is far more difficult with social movements, and particularly with their birthdates. It's not just filmmakers and journalists who almost always "start" a movement too late. Scholars do, too.

Periodization of the U.S. civil rights movement is a typical example. For decades, its "Classic" period opened with the *Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* decision of 1954, ending in triumph with passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Bayard Rustin first popularized this frame, in the essay "From Protest to Politics," in *Commentary* magazine (1965).

A second major periodization emerged in 1987 when *Eyes on the Prize's* first six hours (1954-1965) aired on PBS. On the surface, *Eyes* followed the Classic chronology. Yet it permanently altered the general public's perception of *who* did the moving. Rather than focus on lawyers, the Supreme Court, and Congress, *Eyes* provided rich detail showing how everyday people—especially young Black people like Dave Dennis and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, and Black women such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Victoria Gray—organized the movement behind the headlines.

Making that work visible was a heavy lift for film researchers, such as Civil Rights Movement veteran Judy Richardson. As a Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizer during the 1962-1966 period, Richardson had served as grassroots organizer in Alabama and Georgia. Yet in the 1980s, many of those high up on the *Eyes* team wanted the series to be King-centric. She resisted, for it would've been bad history. "It's important to understand that King is going into an already organized Black community," she told writer Steve Fayer. He replied: "We have nothing to substantiate that." As those who are familiar with Richardson know, she makes the Energizer Bunny look deflated. With indefatigable energy she set out to show through a long series of 127 interviews, with the help of her network of SNCC and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) organizers and a range of local people, how much local people had already accomplished long before King ever arrived. The *Eyes* team documented how previously unknown activists had organized small towns, counties, and cities (interviews now available online via Washington University in St. Louis). The interviews proved so powerful that the team at Blackside—*Eyes*' production company—officially shifted direction: To be on camera, you couldn't be a scholar, or a journalist, or a writer. Everyone interviewed had to have been part of the history itself.¹ Many in the leadership of the *Eyes* team wanted to stop there. "We've told the whole story," one said. "No, no we haven't!" Richardson replied, and kept pushing, along with Black women media pioneers at Boston's WGBH station like Marita Rivero. Three years later, after 183 additional interviews with history-makers, the second season aired, covering 1964 to 1985.

Eyes II altered the Classic chronology not only for scholars, but for the general public. And more than the time period shifted—so too did the geography. *Eyes* showed that this was not just a Southern movement. Generations of school children now had access to first-person interviews with those who worked alongside Malcolm X in New York, or in the Chicago Freedom Movement. They saw what happened in Detroit's uprising against police murder, and how an armada of white rage fired across all of Boston in response to busing. In the South, the *Eyes* team illuminated the all-Black political party organized in Lowndes County. The instantly iconic award-winning series became the most detailed and complex film documentary series about the civil rights-Black Power movements, South and North, covering 1954 through 1985.

In 2005, then-OHA president Jacqueline Dowd Hall introduced a third chronological interpretation, sweeping back to incorporate the 1930s labor movements as an origin point, and closing out with the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan. All periodization is political, she observed, and made a robust case for a "Long Civil Rights Movement." This was a "truer" frame than the Classic, for it "took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s," was intimately tied to the "rise and fall of the New Deal Order," accelerated during World War II, stretched far beyond the South, was continuously and ferociously contested, and in the 1960s and 1970s inspired a "movement of movements" that "def[ies] any narrative of collapse." She noted that while Black Americans are often the first to experience the brunt of economic disfranchisement, the "Classic" frame cut economics out of the story. "Brought in rooms by the seductive new medium of television and replayed ever since," she noted in 2005, "such scenes seem to come out of nowhere, to have no precedents." White journalists in particular tended to frame Black uprisings in the urban North after 1965 as something distinct, she wrote, "ignoring the southern region's evolving goals" and refusing to acknowledge similar policing, housing, education, employment, and healthcare patterns across the whole country.²

Hall recognized that even as historians began to tell increasingly complex stories about the movement in the 1990s, the popular narrative seemed to cement around the "Classic" phase. Why? Hall suggested the Classic frame suited the propaganda purposes of "other storytellers—the architects of the New Right" like "corporate power brokers, old-style conservative intellectuals, and 'neoconservatives.'" They enshrined the 'Classic' frame to blur 'the complexity and dynamism of the movement, its growing focus on structural inequality, and its 'radical reconstruction' goals."

Hall identified a process critical to understanding larger features of American history. By reducing the Civil Rights Movement to a short, regional phenomenon run by a few leaders, confining it to the South, severing its links to class exploitation, denying the vital roles of women, ignoring its long and deep roots in country-wide activism dating back centuries, and downplaying its continued relevance as racism and white privilege have continued largely unabated—all of that prevents the public from seeing the Reagan-Bush years as not just a backlash. Hall's frame makes visible the ways the Civil Rights Movement challenged a long-term historical phenomenon Jefferson Cowie has since defined as some whites' "freedom to dominate" others.³ More than 1,750 scholars have cited Hall's article since 2005, including many, like Victoria Wolcott, who use "long civil rights" in their book titles.

We are nearing the twenty-year anniversary of Hall's work, the fortieth anniversary of *Eyes on the Prize*, and the sixty-year marker of Rustin's essay. All publications on the civil rights movement since 2005 can be seen as responses these three models: the Classic (1954-1966), the *Eyes on the Prize* (1954-1985), or the Long (1930s-1980). How well do each hold up?

I

Historian Victoria Wolcott, in *Living in the Future*, finds the Long periodization helpful. She shows ways the 1930s Southern Tenant Farmers Union's egalitarian ethos, religious and socialist foundations, and embrace of nonviolence connect directly to the Classic civil rights era (pp. 60-61). At the same time, she hints at the limits of the "Long" periodization: labor interracialism failed when Black and white could not live together on the Delta Cooperative Farm, its board of trustees was "entirely white" until 1938, and in 1939, white socialists split from the largely Black group affiliating with the CIO (pp. 75-76, 83). Wolcott appreciates the Long era's "geographic expansion" of the field of civil rights' history to include the North and West. Her work adds resuscitating, fascinating detail on the Harlem Ashram, Father Divine's Peace Mission, the Fellowship Houses, and Brookwood Labor College to our archipelago of civil rights incubators. At the same time, Wolcott recognizes "something distinctive about the scale and success of the classical phase of the movement" (pp. 174-175).

Wolcott's work focuses on utopian interracial communities and the future/s they imagined for the rest of us. Reading it hard on the heels of Donald Trump's presidency, many times I felt grateful for the way her prose read like icy tequila lemonade on an August day in North Carolina. Its graceful way of pointing to other possible paths. Its reminder of people making sustained, profound attempts to live with one another in the terrible wake of enslavement and Jim Crow. In this careful, precise scholarship, she makes clear how diverse and divergent these intentional communities were. If I have one lament, it is outside of the scope of the work she sets out to do. I wish she not only lifted up, but explicitly explored, a vigorous, destructive pattern she shows that emerges in freedom movement history: in interracial organizing, whites *inside* the movement rarely accept Black leadership. At the Harlem Ashram for example, whites enforced an "'ascetic impulse' inherent in Christian nonviolence." Pauli Murray, when told she couldn't smoke, reflected that "If the ashram is to become a convent or a monastery, then I have no place there." Similar prohibitions against Black cultural expression in dance and song "limited the possibilities of utopian interracialism." The lack of a Black co-leader meant that "inflexible" Jay Holmes Smith's white-only leadership contributed to the Ashram's collapse in 1947. It was not merely the "tension around daily practices, economics, and leadership" which, Wolcott noted, so often felled utopian communal settlements (pp. 158-159). Her work invites us to examine this profound, persistent, and continuing pattern among white progressives from colonial rebellion through abolition, labor, civil rights, and movements to the present day: whites often do not seem to be able to give up a *drive* to lead. This is true when their leadership is obviously ineffective, or explicitly disastrous. And it remains a fact despite

the reality that Black people innovate individual and collective tactics and strategies driving the four hundred years' worth of freedom movement forward.

Gordon Mantler's *Multiracial Promise: Harold Washington's Chicago and the Democratic Struggle in America* explicitly engages the Long periodization on the page itself (pp. 6-7, 270-271). Yet conceptually, his frame hews closest to *Eyes II*. For him, the "multiracial coalition led by African Americans" brought to life by Harold Washington (p. 160) can best be understood as part of a winding road where Black Power, civil rights, and electoral politics link, crash one another, or work together in ways "far more complex" than most scholars suggest, and with more potholes and obstacles "than traditional narratives of Black and Latino politics in the 1960s normally allow" (p. 16).

Mantler sets himself a herculean task: how real is the multiracial promise evident in Washington's 1983 Chicago mayoral win? Is it a clear playbook for national politics in the post-Trump era, even for "Chicagoans trained to be clear-eyes, perhaps cynical," and ten years' post-President Obama? (p. 263). Mantler's final chapter on the fragile, situational, nature of coalition election politics provides numerous lessons for those seeking to form and sustain such coalitions in the future:

Puerto Ricans had favored [Jesse] Jackson nearly two to one, while Mexican Americans voted about 60 percent for his white counterpart. . . . many Latinos could not be expected to automatically vote for the Black candidate, even if they had largely favored [Harold] Washington, especially to white Democratic alternatives. (p. 247)

Carrying the exploration of Black-Brown organizing in Chicago throughout the last half of the book is a major strength; I wish he had been as attentive to the ways cultural expressions of gender, and the centering of male politicians to the exclusion of networks of behind-the-scenes Black women and Latina bridge leaders in particular, may have limited the coalition's effectiveness (pp. 17, 104, 140, 175, 196).⁴ Like Wolcott, he documents the stunning level of white physical and structural violence against Black people and small-d democrats. The Chicago version is distinct from KKK-style viciousness, but carries the same level of ferocity when deployed by police, city and state administrators, or autocratic Democrats. Even "sheltered white Americans sitting in their living rooms" could not fail to see it, but decided "that police violence could be acceptable to combat rising crime and gang violence" (pp. 37, 51). And violence is hardly white Chicago's only failed democracy test: despite "polling show[ing] that a majority of whites on the Northwest Side deemed the Mayor [Harold Washington's] job performance either good or excellent . . . most whites ultimately did not pull the lever for him" (p. 221).

Two years after Hall published the "Long" framework, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang responded to Hall's framework. In their interpretation, the "Long" frame "collapses periodization schemas, erases conceptual differences between waves of the [Black Liberation Movement], and blurs regional distinctions in the African American experience." For them,

the characteristics of the Long Movement thesis [were] analogous to those of the mythical vampire. This metaphor is apt because the vampire's distinguishing feature is *not* its predatory blood drinking. Rather, its distinctive trait is its *undead* status; that is, it exists outside of time and history, beyond the processes of life and death, and change and development. The vampire is thoroughly rootless and without place—it makes its home everywhere and nowhere.

The period matters: for them, it sat at 1954-1975.⁵ Freedom movement scholar Nishani Frazier added that that the "Long" frame loses sight of the key changes of World War II on Black veterans and their families: it "fails to make clear the transformative process of Black resistance which takes place over a period of time and circumstances." Her sophisticated essay makes the case for origins of the civil rights movement in the World War II years. She charts four factors for this

origin point: the particular way movement people begin to use nonviolent direct action, the energy shift provided by returning Black veterans, the emerging Cold War frame, and the ways Black women shifted to incorporate these changes into their long-term investment and expertise in networking and community organization.⁶

Mantler repeatedly rises to the challenge of periodization: Harold Washington's mayoral campaign fits best into *Eyes II*, but *Multiracial Promise* hews to the Long call for regional specifics: Mantler takes us into the 70+ neighborhoods in 1970s and 1980s Chicago that impact Washington's rise as a political leader. Wolcott adapts more of the Long frame but pushes its end even further: she finds echoes of the utopian interracial intentional communities of the 1930s and 1940s in both the founding of SNCC in 1960 (p. 178) and in her home city, Buffalo, New York, in the 2020s: "Today Buffalo is home to myriad of social movements organizations that reflect many of King's priorities and the utopian socialists he admired," she writes in an Afterword (p. 186). Mantler's focus on Black-led resistance, and building of political power, aligns with *Eyes II*. Yet Cha-Jua and Lang's—as well as Frazier's—focus on the different eras of Black-led resistance is a challenge neither book takes up.

II

What are the stakes in these questions about periodization? Cha-Jua and Lang warn that if we fail to adequately historicize different eras of the Black freedom struggle, scholar-activists "avoid the hard work of crafting and implementing relevant political agendas relevant to mobilizing concrete consistencies at specific moments."⁷

I agree that these are the stakes, and simply add that not everyone has the same skin in the game. We can review the salient arguments about one's physical body and social position impacting the ability to see periodization, or anything else. To conceptualize. To understand. Reams of books in libraries across the land make and contest these identity-based arguments. But it feels hard to deny that how others see me has always impacted what I can know, see, and experience. In Philadelphia in the 1970s, while my snooty WASP cousins saw me as Poor Irish, my Irish uncles raised me to believe police would protect me. So who am I to question, reflect, or weigh in on how to periodize the Black freedom struggle? I have been raised white in a white supremacist land. As the BYP100 founding director, Charlene Carruthers, asserted in 2018, one must be able to answer the following questions to be trustworthy. *Who am I? Who are my people? What do we want? What are we building? Are we ready to win?*⁸

As I co-wrote with my SNCC colleagues in 2020, I run against the contested standard of "scholarly detachment." It is still prevalent in large sectors of the university world, but I am not objective about the history of U.S. racial terror and resistance to it. What we said then holds for me now: I do not think anyone who lays claim to civilized discourse and democracy should be objective, if objective means noting the "merits of all sides." I've learned to allow the viewer to see my bias as a movement historian who works openly and collaboratively with movement veterans to create more accurate narratives. We open up areas of movement work previously invisible, silent, and ignored.⁹

In this everyday work, it is obvious that the stakes are not existential for my white body as they are for my Black comrades. As a child, I grew up in an all-white Philadelphia neighborhood, went to an all-white church, and my all-white elementary school was desegregated by a single Black family. I lived inside what Grace Hale has recently called the "bigger lies that served as the foundation of post-Reconstruction American life—that segregation and discriminatory voting requirements did not violate the Constitution."¹⁰ I grew up denied civil rights history, and I wasn't taught how Black families paid property taxes that supported high-quality education for Philadelphia's white children, while their kids got subpar "sharecropper" education and thus had to supplement with parochial or private school tuition. How can you prepare a child to function

well in a world they cannot possibly understand? Lying by commission (the history I got in elementary and high school) and lying by omission seems to have been a national white tradition in the 1970s and 1980s. It made me suspicious, and curious. I understood race to be a limit on me when white adults commented negatively on me being friends with Black kids. As James Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (1995) so deftly shows through its two million copies sold, nothing is more enticing to a young person than the sense that adults are hiding something.

I was looking for patterns to discern the truth of the land I stood on. It seemed then and still seems today that understanding freedom movement history could get me there faster than anything else. I jumped into the deep end with both feet. I remain an outsider—one who's nonetheless been in relationship to SNCC and CORE people who have poured into me for three decades.¹¹ I stayed in the work because these freedom movement people are the nation's modern founders, those who used their power to turn the country into a passable democracy *for the first time* in 1965. As Dave Dennis Jr. writes about his father and other movement veterans: "I wanted everyone fighting to see what Black people in America are capable of no matter what weapons are used against us." He "wanted people on the streets in Minneapolis to know how Mississippi sharecroppers could rewrite the Constitution or how college kids from New Orleans could stand in front of gun barrels and refuse to back down." He intended the stories in *The Movement Made Us* explicitly to be "a lighthouse" (p. 8).

Black-led movements for self-determination form the core of the country's democratic political tradition. They are not a side-hustle, a picturesque example, or an impractical ideal. *All* the strategies are the tradition, from the Stono Rebellion in 1739, to Gabriel marching on Richmond enslavers in 1800, to sharecropper unions, the economic boycotts and door-to-door organizing of civil rights' activists, the clinics and exhibits and schools of the Black Arts and Black Power eras. Black-led movements continue to innovate today through the Movement for Black Lives and abolitionism.

So it must be said as well that where we as scholars sit in skin, in time, and in space always shapes our sense of periodization, of "bookends." I grew up thinking *Brown v. Board* and the Voting Rights Act would always be the law of the land. I didn't realize the *Brown* justices had broken with nearly two hundred years of white supremacist jurisprudence. I was ten years into my career as those white justices and one Black one in 2013 went back to upholding the lie of Constitutional neutrality with *Shelby v. Holder* (2013). When I published a book on SNCC in 2007, I thought the struggle for voting rights was largely behind us—it was a war in which I situated SNCC youth climbing the last part of the "everyone in a democracy can vote" mountain. The students at Virginia State tried to warn me, asking in 2005, "Isn't the Voting Rights Act about to be overturned, and we're going to lose the right to vote?" "No," I assured them. "That's all in the past. The grainy photos of black and white civil rights era. People in your grandparents' generation solved that problem." Judge for yourself who was the teacher in this encounter.

Like many non-Black and non-Indigenous people, the way I think about the Classic, Eyes, Long, and Vampire frames, and the country's trajectory itself, has shifted dramatically in the last fifteen years. The authors in this review essay reflect not only their reaction to the various periodizations. They also reflect their divergent stakes, and their perceptions of the current moment—whether they address these factors explicitly, or not.

III

Frederick Douglass's brilliant frame remains useful today. What if we look at the specific tools that movement participants at any given time invented to "limit [the] tyrants," rather than endure their injustice?¹² Can we measure eras by the "self-determination" tools Black communities generate—in education, housing, jobs, safety, religious practices, and health care—in different historic eras as perhaps a useful frame?

For it seems obvious that periodization is never just about dates, or wars, or economic eras. It is, at core, about power: the power to define. The power to protect. The power to vote. The power to determine the conditions of one's life, and that of the people we love. As SNCC Legacy Project chair Courtland Cox is apt to note, SNCC worked to "educate. Everyone should be educated, not just a few. Everyone should vote, not just a few. *What* we did was not revolutionary in this country; *who* we did it with is."¹³

And here is where *The Movement Made Us* shines brighter than any recent scholarship or memoir on the movement's innovations. It shows not only what works, but it makes clear, in hauntingly clear and relentlessly candid prose, their *cost*. Dennis takes us into the center of the Harlem uprising in 1964, just a few weeks after the three workers went missing in Mississippi. A young Black boy, with blood on his shirt, rushes into a Black-owned restaurant where Dennis and David Baldwin, James Baldwin's brother, are sitting. The young boy sees white police, and yells at them: "Why are you here?! What are you doing here?" A white policewoman,

her hands shaking inches away from her nightstick, said "Look, kid, we're just trying to help you all. We're out here to protect you." Dennis watches the young boy look her straight in the eye. Without raising his voice, the boy asked, "You're here to protect me? Then why did you shoot my brother?"

With that,

all the Black men in the restaurant began to stand up, one by one. No words were spoken. It was dead silent, but suddenly the air was beginning to drain out of the room. My pulse quickened. We watched the officers watching us, surveying the volatile situation they were in. Sometimes stillness is just as scary as movement when you know that every single person is a split second away from acting on their most basic, emotionally raw instincts. The entire country was in that restaurant. Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner. Powell. Vietnam. Emmett Till. Each person in that room had a personal story of death and persecution, and all our ghosts were in attendance, our pain ready to be unleashed. A room full of silently detonating warheads.

Baldwin, without saying a word, "walked to a tiny jukebox at the corner of the restaurant. He put a nickel in. And pressed play on 'Blues for Mister Charlie.' The police left" (pp. 236-237). Dennis shows us the era's tools as they emerge: a specific form of urban uprising. The public challenge to police. A communal protective response. A specific kind of song used as a shield, a weapon, a truth teller.

Ever since I started working with him in 2005, Dave Dennis Sr. repeated that most people join movement based on a personal connections. In particular, he joked that young people joined the freedom movement because they wanted to date other young people in the movement. He was recruited by Doris Castle, who responded to his early advances with some tough love: "Look, I only go on dates with men. Real men. And a real man fights for Black people. You want to go on a date? Here. Take this pamphlet. Meet us for a CORE meeting and we'll talk there" (p. 14).

He reported to his son: "Doris's words gnawed at the tender parts of my flesh. They kept me up at night. They spoke to me louder than my professors in class and ate through my stomach in the cafeteria." And then his friend from Tanganyika, Sammy Sepeku, tried to worship in a white Louisiana church:

It wasn't about the Movement or lunch counters or Doris or meetings. It was about standing at God's doorstep and watching my friend's heart break because he was made to feel lesser than . . . I was willing to face any consequence for Sammy's stand.

Dennis Sr. joined the movement with his full heart, all his body, and his mind. For a time, he lost them all.

Many people have asked SNCC and CORE veterans how they managed to come up with so many creative tactics. How they innovated so many new strategies. How they faced the fear: of Klan, of murderous policemen, of sheriffs who wielded electrified cow prods. For Dennis, as for so many others, the answer was relational: he didn't want to betray Doris. Or Sammy. Or especially, his grandmother. "Don't you ever be more scared of them than you are of me, you hear me?!" she had told him. "Her words left a stone in my stomach that hurt more than her slap." He never wanted "my grandmother to feel that I let my fear take up the space that belonged to her" (p. 45).

An ongoing struggle for basic dignity; a continuous war in the heart of America over who belongs. This is the tremendous strength of Dennis' book—learning the vital tools of struggle with one's movement comrades, passing them with love and clarity to the next generation. "Growing up with these people taught me that to be Black in America and part of the Movement was to have fought a war on American soil," Dave Dennis Jr. reflected at the end of hearing his father's life stories during Trump's white supremacist present. "A war where the United States government, state legislators, white vigilantes, and terrorists alike collaborated to bomb churches, murder workers, hide bodies, misinform the public, spy on freedom organizations, creating a treacherous and deadly path to liberation." In a country with racists as violent as that, "the freedom fighters aren't just Civil Rights veterans. They're heroes who saved this country as a by-product of simply trying to save themselves." (p. 6).

Perhaps, then, such tools can serve as period-markers: How much power and self-determination are Black-led movements able to knit together, in any given era, to protect those in the circle of love and belonging?

Notes

1. Judy Richardson, 7 Sept. 2023, Durham, NC, video recording, SNCC Collection, John Hope Franklin Research Center, Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC. The interviews are available online here: <https://digitalexhibits.library.wustl.edu/s/eyes-1-interviews/page/landing-page> and Eyes II are here: <http://repository.wustl.edu/spotlight/eyes-on-the-prize-america-at-the-racial-crossroads-1965-1985>.
2. Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (2005): 1235.
3. Hall, "Long Civil Rights," 1240. Jefferson Cowie notes that for George Wallace, and later New Righters, "land dispossession, slavery, power, and oppression do not stand in contrast to freedom—they are expressions of it." Jefferson Cowie, *Freedom's Dominion: A Saga of White Resistance to Federal Power* (NY: Basic Books, 2022), 17.
4. "Bridge leaders" as a form of women's leadership within the Civil Rights Movement is developed by Belinda Robnett in "African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (1996): 1661-93; The idea of women of color as essential bridge leaders emerges earlier in Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981).
5. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The Long Movement as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007): 265.
6. Nishani Frazier, "When Negroes March: Framing a Period for a Long History Civil Rights Movement," unpublished paper, 2-6, https://www.academia.edu/36836911/When_Negroes_March_Framing_a_Period_for_a_Long_History_Civil_Rights_Movement_1. Frazier's work is foundational to my own, and I am grateful for her rigorous exploration of the intersection of historians' and sociologists' approach to periodization.
7. Cha-Jua and Long, "The Long Movement as Vampire," 284.
8. Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 92.

9. Courtland Cox, Karlyn Forner, John Gartrell, Wesley Hogan, Jennifer Lawson, Isabell Moore, and Naomi Nelson, "Building and Transferring Movement Informational Wealth: The SNCC Digital Gateway," *The Journal of African American History* 105, no. 4 (2020): 640.
10. Grace Hale, *In the Pines: A Lynching, a Lie, and a Reckoning* (NY: Little Brown, 2023), 223.
11. The long nature of the oral history project I began by interviewing SNCC people in the 1990s is a real strength, but an invisible one, an illegible marker. Why me? No idea, still. But the principle of reciprocity their lives embody is one I embrace. One result of their long-term sharing of experience with me and others has been that I can now see things that I was raised to ignore, avoid, and "be innocent" of. I can no longer believe in the inevitability of progress. Or that police or lawmakers want what's best for everyone. I can't even share Dr. King's belief in the long arc of the universe inevitably bending toward justice. Instead, I hold close with Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon's belief system, shared at the 50th SNCC anniversary in Raleigh in 2010. "Every generation has to take on as responsible people that there are some progressive concepts in this land. And there is evil in this land. The evil has to always be answered, the evil has to be faced. You have to face it with your very life and every resource you have." Meaning comes not from the certainty that we will ultimately triumph, she shared. It's impossible to know. The meaning, instead, is that we fight for these values alongside others who share them. Her assertion is that the intergenerational community created as a result of that struggle provides the meaning for one's life.
12. Frederick Douglass: "The struggle may be a moral one or it may be a physical one, or it may both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will. Find out just what a people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress." Douglass speech 4 Aug. 1957, accessed March 4, 2024, <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4398#:~:text=The%20limits%20of%20tyrants%20are,resistance%2C%20either%20moral%20or%20physical>.
13. Courtland Cox, "Critical Oral History," 9 July 2016, Duke University, Durham, NC, available in the SNCC Collection, John Hope Franklin Research Center, Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC. The power to define question might also apply to historians of white supremacy. It is curious. Why don't more scholars in the United States—not just those studying the Black-led freedom movement—follow the work of sociologists WEB DuBois ("Souls of White Folk"), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (*Racism without Racists*), historian Jefferson Cowie (*Freedom's Dominion*), and journalist John Biewen (*Seeing White*): to ask why some consistent percentage of white people on Turtle Island believe their liberty can only be rooted in the freedom to dominate, rather than the freedom to become? This question haunts the history of medicine, sport, intellectual life, the arts, and more.

Author Biography

Wesley Hogan's most recent book, *On the Freedom Side*, draws a portrait of young people organizing in the spirit of Ella Baker since 1960. She co-facilitates a partnership between the SNCC Legacy Project and Duke which has created The SNCC Digital Gateway, whose purpose is to bring the grassroots stories of the civil rights movement to a much wider public through a web portal, K12 initiative, and set of critical oral histories. Her current team project centers the oral histories of reproductive health care providers in the post-*Roe* era.