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## The Celebration in 1964 Freedom Summer Art: The Role of Visual Rhetoric in Uncovering the Lost Voice

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The Celebration in 1964 Freedom Summer Art:  
The Role of Visual Rhetoric in Uncovering the Lost Voice

Abstract

The pictures of conflict and struggle, and not words alone, were the driving force behind the Civil Rights movement (Kathleen Hall Jamieson, 1988). However, though these pictures provided the visual and rhetorical force for public to acknowledge the injustices of segregation (Gallagher & Zagacki, 2007) these pictures were not the source of the movement but rather its culmination. In dramatic and visual contrast to the violence inflicted on the Movement, the artwork created within the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project depicts a community centered on harmony and respect. This artwork, therefore, provides a glimpse into often neglected positive communication that motivated and sustained the Civil Rights Movement itself. This article examines the community art from Freedom Summer, it demonstrate the rhetorical significance the art had within the Civil Rights Movement itself, and argues that this art has potential in creating constructive Civil Rights discussions today.

Keywords: Visual Rhetoric; Herbert Randall; Freedom Summer; Civil Rights.

## The Celebration in 1964 Freedom Summer Art:

### The Role of Visual Rhetoric in Uncovering the Lost Voice

American history books tell students that the Civil Rights Movement occurred in the 1960s, and because of it the United States is no longer a segregated nation. The texts often focus on “big name” leaders and events in the movement, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Kennedy, the Selma Marches, and the March on Washington. Unfortunately, many of the key points that people remember about these leaders or events pertain to violent or hostile atmospheres. Furthermore, the Civil Rights movement accounts in history books often reflect outsiders’ perspectives. However, the efforts of countless others, including Ella Baker and Bob Moses, and impactful grassroots events, such as the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, are mostly left out of the textbooks. Those who are vaguely familiar with the Freedom Summer are often only familiar with one violent aspect of it; the murders of three young civil rights activists whose bodies were found in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Tragic memories alone however are not enough to sustain the memory of the movement today. What will sustain the power and the spirit of the Freedom Summer in current society is a balanced history, one in which the negative does not overshadow the positive. The art of the Freedom Summer as positive communication provides an excellent outlook for bringing forth the neglected positive aspects.

Similar to the focus in the textbooks, rhetorical analysis of civil rights artwork often looks to famous artists and artworks. In *Visibility & Rhetoric: The power of Visual Images in Norman Rockwell’s Depiction of Civil Rights*, and *Visibility & Rhetoric: Epiphanies and Transformations in the Life Photographs of the Selma Marches of 1965* Victoria J. Gallagher and Kenneth S. Zagacki analyzed iconic paintings and photographs to uncover the significance of visual rhetoric in creating common humanity. Their research argues that iconic Civil Rights

Movement art helped to create public response that propelled the Movement. Today their research provides realistic visuals and insight into the turmoil of 1950s and 1960s. Their research does not cover the grassroots level artwork that produced and sustained the Movement until the large-scale growth spurred by the iconic mainstream imagery. Nor, do the samples considered by Gallagher and Zagacki proclaim the positive forces that motivated people and communities to endure the violence and risks, seen in the Rockwell paintings and Selma March photographs, that stood in their way of their hopes.

The positive forces of grassroots level artwork can be found in remembrance of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. One aspect of the Freedom Project, the Mississippi Freedom Schools focused on giving voice to young African Americans in an educational environment where black and white people worked united together. The voice and unity of the Freedom Schools are captured through the art produced during the program; including poetry, painting and photography. A photographer that particularly exemplifies the positive ideals of the Freedom Summer is Herbert Randall; as seen through his photography and through his interview for this project.

This paper follows the theoretical and methodical framework Gallagher and Zagacki used to illustrate the rhetorical significance of the Civil Rights Movements from outsiders and often tensioned filled perspective to explore the celebratory and rarely heard perspective of 1964 Freedom School art. It begins with a brief history of the 1964 Freedom Summer and the Freedom Schools. Next, there is a description of the Freedom School artwork samples, along with a discussion on the limitations of the samples. The sections on the history and the artwork samples are necessary in order to inform the reader about the elements so often left unshared to the public. With a clearer understanding of the history of the movement, the reader can better

appreciate the deep significance of both Freedom Summer and the art that sustained it. After the descriptions the paper continues with the literature and methodological review, followed by analysis of the artwork. In conclusion, the paper summarizes both the past and present implications of the research and discusses questions on further research of the topic.

### Freedom Summer and Freedom Schools

In the summer of 1964, in the heat of the Civil Rights Movement, over 1000 volunteers gathered in Mississippi to fight for civil rights. The program was organized by leaders from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the United Council of Churches. Initiatives of the program included sending the mostly white, upper-middle class, college student volunteers out to promote voter registration, educate adults and children in community centers and at Freedom Schools, and develop the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (Rothschild, 1982). Throughout all of their endeavors, the Project group remained loyal to their beliefs of nonviolent activism. Additionally, with special thanks to the values of Ella Baker the project was not mandated by glamorous leaders, but rather ran by the mobilization of hard working people united by a common cause (Orr, 1994).

The fight against political injustices was a strong focus of the Mississippi Freedom Project. Likewise though, the Project leaders and volunteers were motivated to fight social injustices. The plan for Freedom Schools came about from the ideas of Charles Cobb, a field secretary for SNCC, who hoped a special school for black students could breakdown academic poverty. Cobb among others recognized that black students were not receiving education that encouraged intellectual and creative growth in segregated public schools. In an article discussing the importance of dialogue in learning, Chilcoat and Ligon (1998) revealed that “Teachers can create learning contexts and practices in which students are able to empower themselves. The

way that teachers translate theory into practice can either maintain the status quo or implement humanizing, democratic learning environments where all students become accustomed to being treated as competent and able individuals” (p. 167). Through empowering practices the schools aimed to educate students about the Civil Rights movement and encourage student participation in the reshaping of America. Through diverse studies of African American history and the humanities, Freedom School students gained a sense of individual importance that had often been neglected by education systems up to this point in time.

To draw attention to one specific area of the Mississippi Freedom Schools, teachers used the arts to build students’ confidence and provide education that would encourage students to become productive and insightful members of society. Like the arts in the Civil Rights Movement on a whole, the arts in Freedom Schools played a significant role in unifying people and giving previously silenced people a voice. The arts guided Freedom School students in expressing individual and community identity and by doing so aided teachers in facilitating discussions on topics such as human diversity and social responsibility (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1994). Charles M. Payne (1997) articulated that black students were more willing to participate in learning that involved the arts, versus traditional academics, because they viewed subjects such as art, drama, and the foreign languages as more embracing of diversity. Payne stated that “publically-supported Black schools tended not to offer typing, foreign languages, art, drama, or college preparatory mathematics. Apart from whatever intrinsic interest they held these subjects were popular with students partly because they symbolized equality” (Payne, 1997, p. 6-7). Art was beneficial in the Schools to create a sense of equality and to develop the students’ characters.

All six art samples chosen reflect the calmness and unity that allowed the Freedom Schools to prosper, despite the tensions and risks that constantly encroached upon the Freedom Summer participants. The Freedom School photographs by Herbert Randall depict scenes of students and volunteer teachers creating art, forming individual identity, and/or building relationships. The photographs all come from *The Faces of Freedom Summer* which Randall published in 2001. Randall's visual documentation captures the triumphs, the shortcomings, and everything in between during the Freedom Summer Project. His pictures help the viewers understand the motives and actions of the volunteers and leaders because the photographs do not just tell the viewer what happened, but rather share a glimpse into the emotions of the photographed subjects. In this way, the photographs humanize the volunteers and the project, versus many of the written articles that placed emphasis on numbers and factual statements.

In the photograph, "Boy and Singer" (see Figure 1) a black boy observes a white man playing an instrument. Both look down to a sheet of music, lost together in the melodic moment. Another photograph, "Cynthia Beard sitting on the shoulders of volunteers Jacob Blum (Yale University)" (see Figure 2) shows a young black girl resting on the shoulders of a white male college student with another white male standing closely behind. The little girl grasps hands with both the young men. An additional photograph by Randall, "Freedom School students and their works of art" (see Figure 3), captures two sources of artistic value; the artwork of the children shown in the photograph and the photograph as art itself. In the photograph, four young students gather around a student artwork display all portraying different emotions. The left side of the photo is flanked by a banner that reads "Freedom" and is decorated with hand prints. In a photograph of a human a viewer can visually analyze the emotions and thoughts of the photographed subject through his or her gestures and actions.

In addition, The Freedom School Artwork by Freedom School students includes paintings and poetry created by students that reflect their thoughts about themselves and/or the world around them. The painting “Tree+Bird” (see Figure 4), by Geraldine, age 5, abstractly displays a bird perched upon a tree. Furthermore, the painting “Freedom Flowers” (see Figure 5), by another Freedom School student, portrays a horizontal scene that has a dark band across the top and the word Freedom written below it in a child’s manuscript. Five different flowers stud the bottom of the page. Looking at these images, like looking at the photographs, challenges the viewer to think about not only what the piece actually shows, but their context, and their deeper significances. Poetry also has the ability to influence a reader or listener through the words actually written in the poem, and the messages conveyed between the lines. The poem “I am negro”, by 11-year-old Rosalyn Waterhouse, though short and concise, convey the essence of what it means to be a young black girl during the Civil Rights Movement and her aspirations for the future. Together, the samples represent the different benefits of art throughout the Freedom Schools from multiple vantage points.

While the samples all come from insider’s perspectives, African Americans who actually partook in the movement, inevitably the research is influenced by my outsider perspective, a Caucasian separated from the Movement by multiple decades. This limitation however is addressed through analysis that does not make any over presumed remarks about what the artist meant in his or her work and/or what the artist was feeling when he or she created her artwork. Rather the analysis focuses on elements that can be drawn visually from the artwork itself, regardless of the intended message or specific emotions of the artist. Furthermore, the artwork’s visual rhetoric of common humanity allows it to comfortably pass and hold meaning form generation to generation.

### Visual Rhetoric and the Civil Rights Movement

According to Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope (2008) humans have always utilized visual rhetoric, but since the development of photography in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, US society has become completely enthralled in visual communication (p.1). In their book *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, the scholars explore the complexity of public persuasion beyond words and “understand that visual rhetoric occupies a central place within the interconnected dynamics of civil, cultural, and social discourse” (Olson et al., 2008, p.3). In a study of visual rhetoric in advertisements, Paul Messaris (1997) noted that visual persuasion is able to capture human responses because it alludes to reality in a way that elicits human emotion (p. 4). Therefore, emotional draw is a vehicle from which Olson, Finnegan, and Hope (2008) recognized visual rhetoric’s significance as an agent of change, especially in calls to civic duty (p. 4).

In *Eloquence in an Electronic Age* Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1988) explored the transformation of eloquence in political speechmaking and mentions how visual technology completely changed the presentation of political speeches. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century “theorist assumed that sight was the most powerful sense” and believed verbal “rhetoric should paint a picture” (Jamieson, 1988, p.56). While verbal imagery still remained popular in speech in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and continues to be popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need and effect for it has diminished because of visual aids, including picture and film show through television. Thus, she claimed that visuals allowed millions, who once only thought about the Civil Rights movement in abstraction, to empathize with the movement (Jamieson, 1998, p.59).

In *Visibility & Rhetoric: The power of Visual Images in Norman Rockwell’s Depiction of Civil Rights*, Victoria Gallagher & Kenneth S. Zagacki (2005) analyzed three iconic Norman

Rockwell Civil Rights Movement paintings printed in *Look* magazine to address the issue of the lack of rhetorical critique of Civil Rights movement visual images. The Norman Rockwell works are “The Problem We All Live With” (1964) a close up of young Ruby Bridges walking to her first day of class at a formally all-white school, “Murder in Mississippi” a sketch of the killings of the Freedom Summer volunteers, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, and “New Kids in the Neighborhood”, a stare down between a pair of white children and a pair of black children standing in front of a moving van. All of the pieces highlight the persuasive power of visual images in molding public perspectives. Gallagher and Zagacki argued that the Rockwell paintings make a rhetorical impact and evoke common humanity through analysis of the form and composition of the works. They focused their paper around arguments which support that “Rockwell’s pictures remain rhetorically powerful in that they are representations of historically significant events that activated and have the potential to activate strong responses” (Gallagher & Zagacki, 2005, p.196). However, they also realized the limitations in their work since the mainstream images they analyze were created by a white agent and therefore are reflections of a white perspective.

In *Visibility & Rhetoric: Epiphanies and Transformations in the Life Photographs of the Selma Marches of 1965* Victoria Gallagher & Kenneth S. Zagacki (2007) continued their analysis of rhetorical significance of civil rights visual imagery, this time looking to Selma March photographs in *Life* magazine for support. The scholars observed the same three themes that evoke common humanity in analysis of the form and composition of the paintings by Norman Rockwell, to emerge in the analysis of “the formal characteristics, relationships, and contexts” in the *Life* Photographs (Gallagher & Zagacki, 2007, p.115). In both works by

Gallagher and Zagacki the visual samples are from mainstream publications from an outsider's perspective. Furthermore, both pieces analyze samples grounded in tension and violence.

Likewise, in her essay about SNCC photojournalist in *The Civil Rights Movement Revisited*, Iris Schmeisser brought to light the terrors of civil rights situations captured in photography which lead to change. She argued the success of the SNCC photographs in “unsettling the moral travesty of glossy magazine page America with uncomfortable images of racism, violence and injustice, they provided a rather unpleasant and shocking look behind the commercial veil” that finally registered the civil rights crisis across the nation (Schmeisser, 2001, p.123). SNCC images that Schmeisser evaluated show the importance of insider perspectives often forgotten by mainstream press. However, her samples still revolve around mayhem.

The importance of visuals in the progression of the Civil Rights movement written about by Jamieson and realized by other scholars, gained a new level of legitimacy when Gallagher and Zagacki critically analyzed well known Civil Rights paintings and photographs to support this claim. The work by Gallagher and Zagacki addressed a gap in literature regarding visual arts' rhetorical ability in context of Civil Rights movement. However, their research could benefit by recognizing the importance of portraying Civil Rights movement art from multiple perspectives. The research of Schmeisser addressed one aspect of the perspective, SNCC “insider” photographers, which Gallagher and Zagacki do not touch on, but also did not recognize the importance of nonviolent imagery in motivation of the Civil Rights Movement.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Extension of the work of Gallagher and Zagacki**

This paper will continue the research of visual rhetoric's role in the development and continued dialogue of the Civil Rights Movement by making a theoretical and methodological extension of the work of Gallagher and Zagacki. It includes the insider nonviolent perspective

that was not addressed in these scholars work or the work of Iris Schmeisser. Theoretically, Freedom Summer samples have rhetorical power in promoting common humanity, but do so in a way that highlights the insiders' perspectives and joyful unity that rooted the movement vs. outsiders' perspectives and visuals of hostility. As a form of rhetorical analysis, Gallagher and Zagacki (2005) applied three central themes to showcase how the Norman Rockwell paintings and Selma March photographs visually provoked common humanity;

by visually disregarding established caricatures,...by creating recognition of others through particularity,... and depict(ing) racial disharmony as a material aspect of American society, remind(ing) viewers that abstract political concepts were always relative to the individuals or groups whose lives where most directly influenced by their presence or absence. (p.180)

Utilizing the themes Gallagher and Zagacki developed to analyze their samples, the Freedom Summer artwork disregards established caricatures elsewhere found in stereotypes through photography that provides snapshots of actual occurrences that do not typecast their subjects. Examples of artwork and poetry show the creation of recognition of others through particularity by giving voice to the previously silenced through creative means. Thirdly, a common saying states that "seeing is believing". The photography samples make the abstract understandable and obtainable by acting as visual reassurance, to concepts that might otherwise be less convincing without visual confirmation.

### Rhetorical Analysis

#### *Disregarding Established Caricatures and Stereotypes*

The Freedom School photographs "Boy and Singer", "Cynthia Bird", and "Freedom Summer Students and Their Art" break established caricatures by showing real life scenes of

black students and white volunteers acting and interacting outside of stereotyped ways. Gallagher and Zagacki (2007) argued that the *Life* photographs and Norman Rockwell paintings formed common humanity by “overturning inferior, threatening, or otherwise demeaning character tropes” of African Americans (p. 121). The Rockwell works, “The Problem” and “New Kids” depict African Americans as “everyday Americans”, going to school and moving into a new house which overturns demeaning character tropes of African American’s as completely different and uneducated people. Additionally, “Murder in Mississippi” and the *Life* photographs show black and white Americans feeling common emotions and struggling together, uniting them on the same sentimental level. However, while these artworks break established caricatures, they do not completely squash the caricatures. All of the iconic samples give off a sense of tension and/or victimization by showing fear, desperation or apprehension in the gestures of the “other”; the “other” defined by the viewer. Therefore, the Rockwell and *Life* art embrace common humanity, but still struggle to move far away from demeaning character tropes. Freedom School Art on the other hand, especially “Boy and Singer”, “Cynthia Bird”, and “Freedom Summer Students”, do not straddle the stereotype line, rather they depict scenes where demeaning caricatures are not present, nor does the viewer feel the need to negatively reference such caricatures.

The two subjects in “Boy and Singer” disregard established caricature in a precious moment of musical unity; where race and age are irrelevant. The photograph feels intimate because the two figures look at the instrument and sheet music and create a downward pointing triangle which draws the focus inward. The inward focus and the fact that the two figure’s gazes meet at the same axis point connects the boy and man, even though they are not physically touching. The composition of the photograph communicates the visual relationship of the figures and the idea that the white man and the black boy are fascinated by the same interest, music.

Some white people stereotyped black people as unusual, so unusual that the white people could not relate to black people or enjoy their company. Here however, the boy and singer both take relaxed postures and no signs appear to persuade the viewer that this scene is unpleasant for the participants. As a pair the figures break caricature of young black students as uncivilized and undisciplined, by showing the two in harmony. Similarly, the boy as an individual entity, disregard the established caricatures of young black children as lazy menaces to society.

The boy in “Boy and Singer” strays from negative caricature by looking nonthreatening, respectful, and curious about music education. In “The Problem We All Live With”, Rockwell shows a scene directly related to and iconic Civil Rights moment. While “Boy and Singer” took place during the Freedom Summer, it is not a scene directly pertaining to a historical moment in the Civil Rights Movement. However, “Boy and Singer” fractures stereotypes of a black boy’s interest, demeanor, and relationship with a white man, and in doing so a huge racial barrier is broken. The difference in the approach to persuading common humanity of the two images lies in the context that “The Problem” addresses the problem of discrimination in the United States, while “Boy and Singer” provides a solution to that problem through artistic integration. Art in the Freedom Schools allowed caricatures to be broken in a natural, unforced manner.

Akin to “Boy and Singer”, “Cynthia Beard Sitting on the Shoulders of Volunteer Jacob Blum (Yale University)”, generates common humanity by breaking stereotypes about interracial relationships. First off, young Cynthia Beard stares directly toward the viewer. Although the viewer cannot know exactly what Beard felt in this moment, her face does not appear frightened and her body looks relaxed into a comfortable posture. The photograph changes preconceived notions of black/white interaction then when the viewer takes into account that comfortable Cynthia Beard sits on the shoulders of Jacob Blum, a white male college student and clasps hands

with Blum and another college student. Blum and the other student appear comfortable as well in their facial expressions and stances. Blum and Beard were not the typical pair one would see together in 1964. The Freedom Summer however, allowed for such a magnificent relationship to bloom and photography allows for that relationship to be seen, understood, and integrated into the lives of viewers.

Moreover, “Cynthia Beard” breaks caricatures of black people as the “other” through its context and composition. In “New Kids in the Neighborhood” the black and white children stand firmly on opposite sides of the sidewalk and gaze at one another as complete strangers. Although the children are dressed similarly and share other commonalities of pets and baseball, they remain divided by unfamiliarity of the other. Contrary to the division in “New Kids”, in “Cynthia Beard” the figures are all united together. Even though the subjects are of different races, there is not clear presence of who is the “other”. Additionally, the composition on “Cynthia Beard” does not showcase any overarching domination of one subject over another. The picture dismisses any caricatures of power and/or submission due to larger size, physically or symbolically because the photograph is cropped so that all the figures appear relatively the same size. Therefore, the subjects and the way those subjects are displayed in Freedom School Art have the rhetorical ability to eliminate stereotypes of the lesser other and create concept of equality.

“Freedom Summer Students and Their Art” continues in the tradition of other Herbert Randall Freedom School photographs of eliminating stereotypes by showing real life examples that prove fallacy to those stereotypes. In 1964, and unfortunately some people still today, thought that people with different color skin than their own were not only different, but of lesser intellect or character than them. The photo, “Freedom Summer Students” shows kids being kids. In the photo one boy looks timid, another enjoys the attention, and all of them move about, as

most children prefer not to stay still. While all of the children are black, the viewer could easily picture any group of children, no matter their skin color in this same scene and acting in similar fashion. This photo allows the Freedom School students to be seen as human beings; human beings no different from white children and human beings, who if given the opportunity have the ability to shine. Additionally, the children stand surrounded by artwork and one small boy cradles a book under his arm. These children are not delinquents, they are eager students, craving the opportunity to learn and express themselves. The artwork within the photograph also visually promotes common humanity and the establishment of equality. The banner on the left side of the image reads "FREEDOM" and is surrounded by handprints of all different sizes, colors, and hands. The vibrant handprint arrangement on the banner does not just promote diversity; it shares diversity as a colorful celebration.

"Boy and Singer", "Cynthia Beard", and "Freedom Summer Students" evoke common humanity by finding common traits among people of different colored skin and how people can use those similarities to form whole interactions like Beard and Blum, and the boy and singer. Additionally the images, especially "Freedom Summer Students", convey the idea that shared humanity includes embracing that which is similar among humans, as well as that which makes each and every one unique. Ideas formed around caricatures and stereotypes disadvantage society with ambiguous and often false claims. The Freedom School photographs break away from false claims and steer the viewer to see positive scenes of people of black and white skin working and playing peacefully together. Gallagher and Zagacki (2007) mentioned that "the Civil Rights movement was a coherent entity, an eclectic but "healthy" group of individuals who were strengthened and comforted in the face of racism by the common goals they shared (p.123). Many of the iconic images of the Civil Rights Movement brought together the groups of

individuals Gallagher and Zagacki mention through visually showing the atrocities and uncomfortable situations, the faces of racism” that were occurring and would continue to occur if changes were not made in the US regarding Civil Rights. The messages displayed in famous Civil Rights imagery played and continue to play a vital role in shaping the values of American society. American society could benefit even more from also viewing Freedom School art along with the well known Civil Rights movement imagery. Freedom School art focuses more on the moments of shared common goals and less on the face of racism. In doing so, Freedom School art portrays scenes of comfort and celebration that complement and ease some of the tension caused by trying Civil Rights imagery. The Freedom School art does not ease the viewer in the sense that it makes the viewer care less about the movement. Rather, Freedom School art eases the viewer into changing negative perspectives toward people of different races by showing Freedom School students as human beings in harmonious scenarios. Freedom School Art also adds a valuable element to historical and contemporary perspectives of Civil Rights by giving recognition to others through particularity.

*Recognition of Others through Particularity and Establishing Voice*

Stated differently, by giving voice to a previously silenced group, Freedom Summer Students, Freedom Summer art transformed how people interacted during the Civil Rights Movement. Plus, if shared with more people today Freedom School art and its ideals could transform how society interacts in the future. The artworks “Tree+Bird” and “Freedom Flowers” and the poem “I am negro” by Rosalyn Waterhouse, communicate they hopes and desires of that lost voice and in doing so are recognition of the particular. As stated earlier, up until the 1964 Freedom Schools and Freedom Summer many advocates of Civil Rights did not have the liberty of speaking their minds. Luckily, Freedom Summer heaped many previously silenced voices be

heard and helped many people find a voice they did not even know they had within them. Now that these voices have been found, it is important that they are not forgotten, nor our new voices hidden away from the public.

At first glance, “Tree+Bird” takes form as an abstract art piece. However, after the viewer realizes that the organic shapes represent a tree and a bird and the artwork was created by Geraldine, at the time of completion a 5-year-old Freedom School student, the picture begins to take on new meaning. Like the other arts and participatory activities, the visual arts were put in the Freedom School curriculum as means of opening up discussion and making sure that students absorbed the material they learned, not just memorize it for a test and forget it a moment later (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1994). Chilcoat and Ligon (1994) further emphasized “these schools focused on the minds and abilities of students, encouraged them to think, to express, to participate, and offered them a chance to make a difference in their world” (p. 128-129). The subject and the positioning of bird in Geraldine’s work lead the viewer to assume that the bird is surrounded by a vast amount of open space and can fly away at anytime. Geraldine’s artwork gives her a voice and she uses that voice to discuss freedom, freedom of a bird that has the opportunity to fly away. Although the viewer can not physically see the artist, nor is the artist represented as a figure in her artwork the viewer can still connect to Geraldine through the message of freedom in her artwork. Geraldine, the artist, becomes a distinctive individual in the mind of the viewer through his or her emotional exchanged through her visual. Geraldine’s artwork is tangible to a moment and therefore can put Geraldine in a tangible place in historical reference. Geraldine, like other Freedom Summer students, most likely repeated the personal benefits of feeling important and discovering her personal identity through the creative Freedom School curriculum.

Equally important to her formation of her own voice is the power of her voice when shared with other people in creating common ground. Whether it is a feeling that people endure daily or only on rare occasions, most people can relate to feeling captive, whether physically or mentally, and want to escape their imprisonment. In her art Geraldine craves freedom, however it is interesting that her image does not illustrate the place she is trying to escape from, but the freedom she is trying to get to and share with her voice. The level of optimism in Freedom School art never seems to perish, not even at the summer's roughest times. The optimistic voices of many individuals, including Geraldine, work to gather to share the Freedom Summer story and encourage people to believe in and practice Civil Rights. While the collective voice of the Freedom Summer grew loud enough to make a statement in the Movement, it was each individual voice that gave the collective voice legitimacy. In addition, the arts often acted as the vehicle of the voice. While the Freedom School students' art was mostly used for their own personal development, on occasion it was also used for the development and sustainability of the program. One such endeavor that utilized the children's art was an Art Show and Sale at the Georgetown Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The show which displayed and sold student pieces and contributing artist pieces, raised money for supplies, books, and other costs of the Freedom Schools (Art Show, 1964). The student artwork printed in the Show pamphlet, including "Tree+Bird" represents the student's desire for freedom. It is also interesting to note that all the freedom works shown also depict nature in some peaceful form; perhaps alluding to the tranquility they would like to find when they overcome their adversity. The visual arts of the Freedom Schools provide remarkable insight into the student's experiences because through their art student's had the ability to express themselves in ways that did not exist or they did not know

how to communicate through words. The visual communication of individual students then connected to multiple different onlookers.

“Freedom Flowers” another student artwork from the Georgetown Gallery Show expresses Freedom and Diversity, and gives a student an individual artistic voice. As mentioned in relation to all of the Freedom School art for the Art Show and Sale, “Freedom Flowers” depicts an outdoor scene. Theoretically, when one is outside he or she is free. Additionally, each flower in the artwork has a unique design. All the flowers are beautiful as individuals and together, just as a diverse group of people can live together as a beautiful group of individuals. “Freedom Flowers” is significant for the release that it provided for the artist and the symbolic themes of freedom and diversity that emerge from the work. Analyzing the artwork from another angle, “Freedom Flowers” is significant for the voice and recognition that it gave to a particular individual. In photographs of individuals, viewers can relate to those individuals through facial recognition and sometimes even through a name provided in a caption, or if a famous scene through past recollection of that person. Since it is not actually necessary for a person to see another person to form a bond with him or her, viewers can define the artist of “Bird+Tree” and “Freedom Flowers” as individuals by connecting to their ideals of freedom and diversity. When people humanize other people, it is harder for them to abuse them. Thus, during the Civil Rights movement, when the white public began to see the black public as particular individuals, the USA began to see changes in attitudes and laws regarding Civil Rights. Art does not have to be strictly visual for people to give recognition to others and change their ways. Verbal art, such as poetry, can also transform the way people view themselves, others, and the world around them.

In the early 1960s the United States was a segregated nation and therefore it was essential for people to identify other people as individuals and on a human level in order to see beyond the

limitations set up around them. In her poem “I am a negro”, Rosalyn Waterhouse confronts segregation and proclaims

I am a Negro and proud of its color too,  
If you were a Negro wouldn't you?  
I am glad of just what I am now  
To be and do things I know how,  
I am glad to be a Negro so happy and gay  
To grow stronger day by day.  
I am a Negro and I want to be free as any other child,  
To wander about the house and woods and be wild.  
I want to be Free, Free, Free (Cooper, 1966, p.25).

The words of Waterhouse, an 11 year-old Freedom School Student in 1964, demonstrate how poetry allowed Freedom School students to not only explore and praise their heritage, but also release their desires and emotions. When children are given the opportunity to express and create, it is always astonishing to see their intellectual and thoughtful finished products. Poetry, along with the other humanities subjects, assisted the Freedom School teachers in encouraging themes of self discovery, equality, and emancipation (Perlstein, 1990). Most the students had been silenced their entire lives until they came to Freedom School and where given a voice through activities, such as writing poetry. In her poem Waterhouse shows her pride and courage, “I am a Negro and proud of its color too,” and her desire for an improved life, a life with freedom, “Free, Free, Free”. Waterhouse uses pathos to draw in the reader and/or listener of her poem because she is just a child and wants to do what children are suppose to do, run around free and explore the world. Reading the open it is difficult to not picture little Rosalyn in ones head and not want freedom for her too. The imagery created by the poem in turn becomes visual rhetoric which emotionally draws the reader to Rosalyn and makes him or her question why Rosalyn is not free and what can be done to grant her the same freedoms as other children.

In famous, iconic images, people usually know right away what they are seeing because they have already seen a reproduction of the image or have already heard about the image. Therefore, in artwork such as “The Problem,” people recognize Ruby Bridges as an individual because of her well-known story. Lesser known works such as “Tree+Bird”, “Freedom Flowers”, and “I am negro” are no less important because they are not well known by the public. Lesser known works that draw connection through recognitions of others through particularity are equally, if not more important than the “big name” images because they truly give voice to silenced; not only the silenced in the past of racial barriers, but the silence of the present by credibility and popularity barriers. In order to shape public knowledge of the Civil Rights movement and shape civil rights discussions in the present, society must look to all the perspectives of the past, including the perspectives of the Freedom School participants.

*Making the Abstract Understandable and Obtainable*

Lastly, Gallagher and Zagacki argue that Rockwell’s civil rights paintings and the Selma March photographs force people to form and reform the way in which they shape their realities by bringing to light in an understandable way abstract political concepts. Visuals function rhetorically to challenge people to face moral issues, such as civil rights issues, that although many people are familiar with, they often push to the side because they are not moral issues that affect them on a personal everyday basis. To change the atmosphere in which people thought about Civil Rights, Rockwell and the *Life* photographers presented the viewer with “unsettling and gritty” visions (Gallagher & Zagacki, 2005, p. 190). While scenes that produced change by making the viewer feel uncomfortable about the situation helped the movement progress, scenes of joy and community also existed to progress the movement. The Freedom School photographs “Boy and Singer” and “Cynthia Beard”, which drew common humanity by disregarding

established caricatures, also function rhetorically to make abstract concepts understandable to the public. Moreover, the Freedom School pieces highlight scenes of unity that not only show positive outcomes of civil rights effort, but also do so in a comfortable matter that makes the viewer think that similar situations are obtainable for the rest of the public too.

In the early 1960s the United States of America was a segregated nation. Therefore, the majority of the population was not accustomed to seeing positive and non-dominating interracial relationships. Additionally, it is sometimes hard to visual a concept in which someone is not familiar with that concept. “Boy and Singer” and “Cynthia Beard” function successfully as visual rhetoric because they provide viewers with a clear example of what a positive interracial relationship can look like; giving people the opportunity to better comprehend the concept and move forward with the ideals behind that concept.

In “Boy and Singer” common ground is established between two people of different backgrounds because both the white man and the black boy are drawn to the same music. The two figures co-produce the music and they co-produce a visual of equality. Furthermore, their comfortable postures and gestures make their co-produced equality flow effortlessly. The singer sits and the boy bends down with his hands to his knees which put both figures at the same level. The subjects do not dominate over one another because of the balanced heights of their positions. The picture does not share an extraordinary event in that it is just a photo of a man playing an instrument for a curious observer. The picture however does share an extraordinary event in that the scene is created between two subjects of different races and yet the scene is harmonious. Similarly, the scene does not show the violence of the civil rights movement. The scene does show the co-produced synchronization of the movement. “Boy and Singer” lets the viewer know that positive interracial relationships are possible and do exist if people work together to form

them. Furthermore, since the scene between the man and boy is a relatively common situation that most people can relate to, the experience is plausible to the viewer and encourages him or to co-produce similar encounters.

In order to understand the Civil Rights movement it is important that people recognize the violence that people endured, such as seen in “Murder and Mississippi” and many of the Selma March photos, in order to make the movement a reality. From this violence people grew and continue to grow closer to the movement through feelings of guilt and compassion that connect onlookers to the participants of the movement. However, guilt and compassion for other people’s pain alone does not change a society. A group must also have hope and optimism in order to change a society. The photograph “Cynthia Beard” not only makes an abstract concept understandable, but also makes the concept understandable through themes of goodwill and friendship. Cynthia Beard and Jacob Blum are touching, blended together not because of physical struggle, violence, or abuse, but out of companionship of the human spirit. Again, their scene is not a scene of a victim and a hero. Their scene is a scene of trust established between two humans with different backgrounds, but with common beliefs on how to treat another human being. Fear tactics are a means for persuading people to take action to change the brutal reality. At the same time, images that touch the sentiments of an individual, such as “Cynthia Beard” can also persuade people to change reality, so that more moments like the moment shared between Beard and Blum occur on a regular basis. Freedom Summer played a fundamental role in the development of the Civil Rights movement, and the artwork of the summer gives viewers an understandable glimpse into the magic of the movement. “Cynthia Beard”, “Boy and Singer” and other Freedom School art depict scenes that are relative to the movement and the viewer because they portray scenes that speak of civil rights and human rights in general.

### Implications and Conclusions

The poetry, pictures, and photographs analyzed in this article function by giving voice to an often forgotten perspective and add positive communication to the Civil Rights Movement story that is often overshadowed by struggles. The Freedom School art visually brings people together inside the art and outside of the art by overturning stereotypes, allowing individuals to share their stories, and bringing those individual's stories to the public in a comprehensible manner. Whether the artists and the subjects in the Freedom School art strived to make a public statement at the time or were focused more on using art as a personal release, the art captures people's attention and encourages them to think about the subjects at bay. During the Freedom Summer, art and the moments captured by art propelled the group to achieve their goals by acting as continual visual encouragement of the movements smaller achievements. Today, that same art acts as a reminder of the small victories that join together to create a movement and can be used as a guide for continuing constructive race dialogue to improve society.

Since by nature art is subject to critique and interpretation from multiple different perspectives, the analyzed artwork has some limitations as a rhetorical device. Any artwork of the Civil Rights movement is limited because a piece of artwork frames a moment, not an entire movement. Therefore, while the Freedom School art overall has a warm and united presence, many risks had to be taken and lives sacrificed for that presence. In order to create scenes of happiness and security, concurrent scenes of devastation had to be left for other artists. The insider voices nor the moments of celebration alone did not fully sustain the movement, nor can they fully tell the history of the Civil Rights movement. Likewise they outsider perspective and moments of trauma alone did not fully sustain the movement, nor do they tell the full history of the movement. When learning about the Civil Rights movement many students celebrate the

triumphs of iconic figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King along with studies of the tragedies that humans committed toward other humans. However, the voice of not famous individuals needs to be shared because it is the voice that the viewer can relate to on multiple human levels. The artwork of the insider and the outsider, of the good and ugly, perspective, alone is limited by the board of its frame, but together has the opportunity to tell a complete story and the complete story of the civil rights movement; complex as it might be needs to be heard by the United States.

In their conclusion about the rhetorical significance of the Rockwell paintings, Gallagher and Zagacki propose that because of their visual content and discursive context the paintings “create an inclusive historical memory-to extend beyond the mere vantage point of the ‘white homogenous self...These images make parts of history visible both practically and emotionally, and therefore attempt to outline the enormity of “The Problem” for both whites and blacks” (Gallagher & Zagacki, 2005, p. 196). The examples and claims made by Gallagher and Zagacki are defended by strong support and make a very sound argument. Yet, as strong an argument as they make and as much feelings as Rockwell’s paintings stir up in both the black and the white viewer, should not the insiders, Freedom Summer participants especially young black Americans, also be heard? Regardless of whether Rockwell’s vantage point streamlines with white homogenous viewpoint or not, others viewpoints need to be heard in order to better understand the movement.

Society, for better or worse is constantly developing and redeveloping itself. With the development of society more and more people with many differences and similarities come into contact with one another daily. Moreover issues regarding civil rights are just as important, if not more important as they were in the past. The efforts of the Freedom Summer participants and

countless others successfully changed the way the United States embraces Civil Rights from a legal standpoint. There is still much to be done regarding Civil Rights from a social standpoint in the United States. In the Freedom Schools art brought black and white people together and allowed them to express their ideas and feelings in a comfortable and accepting environment. Freedom School art and Freedom School art curriculum could be used in current society to encourage people to comfortably talk about race and civil rights. Before entering the Freedom Schools some students were too afraid or timid to share their thoughts and emotions. On multiple occasions however, art allowed these students to open up and develop individually and as a group. Many of the violent tactics of the Civil Rights history should not be repeated in the future. Constructive tactics, as seen through the Freedom School art, should not be thrown out with the violent tactic in history, but rather embraced and re-evaluated in order to apply to the future.

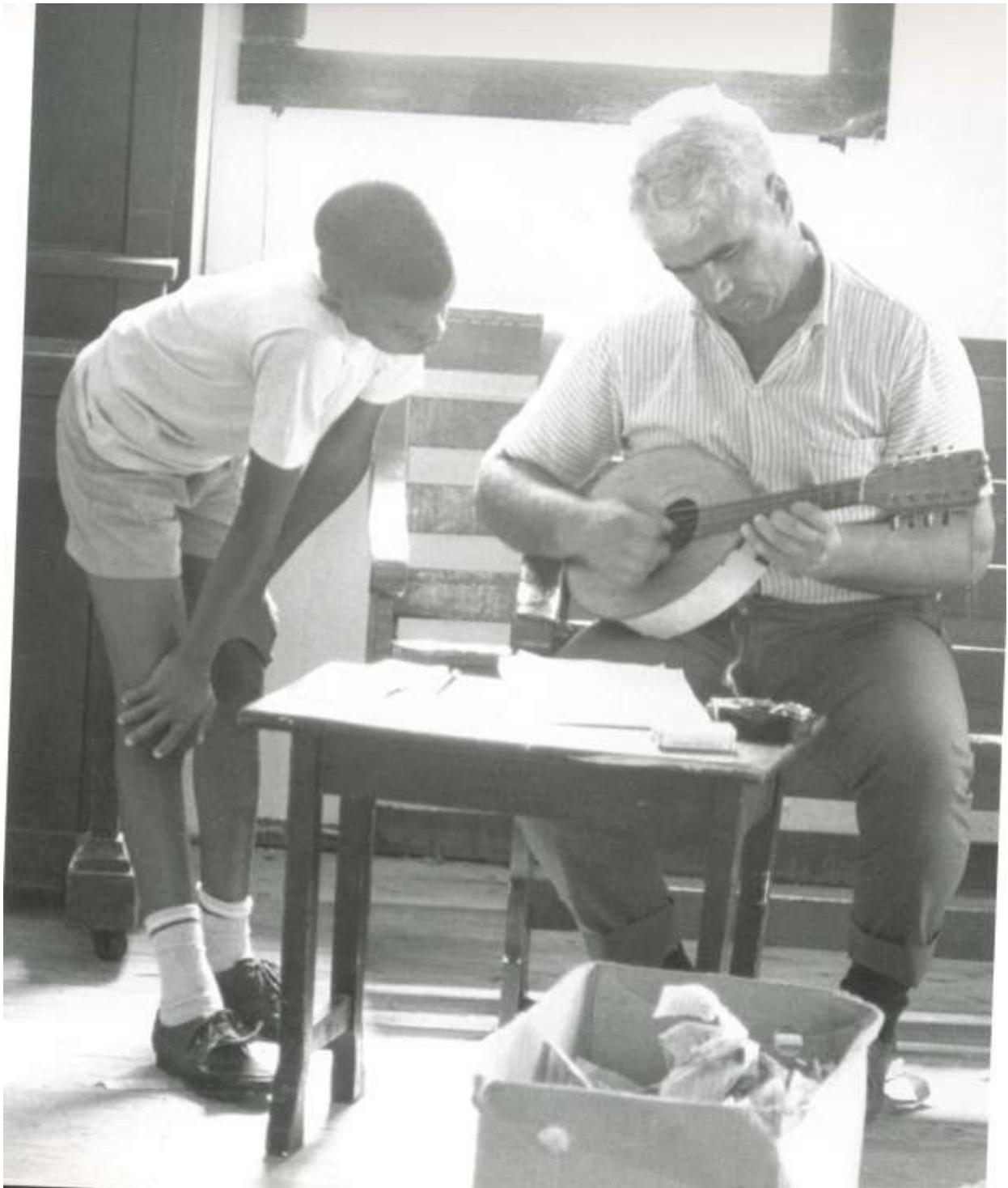
The Freedom Schools created arts curriculums that encouraged communication between teachers and students. The communication allowed for the establishment of a conducive environment for teaching of civil rights, sharing of ideas, and creating of empowered young adults. The US today could benefit from similar co-produced empowering communication. More research is needed on the rhetorical significance of visuals from insider and positive perspectives of the Civil Rights Movement, including the Freedom Summer, and how the rhetoric of the past can still benefit society today. Continued analysis and application of Freedom School art presents society with a great opportunity to re-discover the Civil Rights movement and re-evaluated the way current society discusses racial issues. Together, through shared identity in the arts and in life the United States as the opportunity to become a land closer to its ideals of equality legally and socially. United through the visual rhetoric of common humanity in art the forgotten point of view shall no longer be forgotten.

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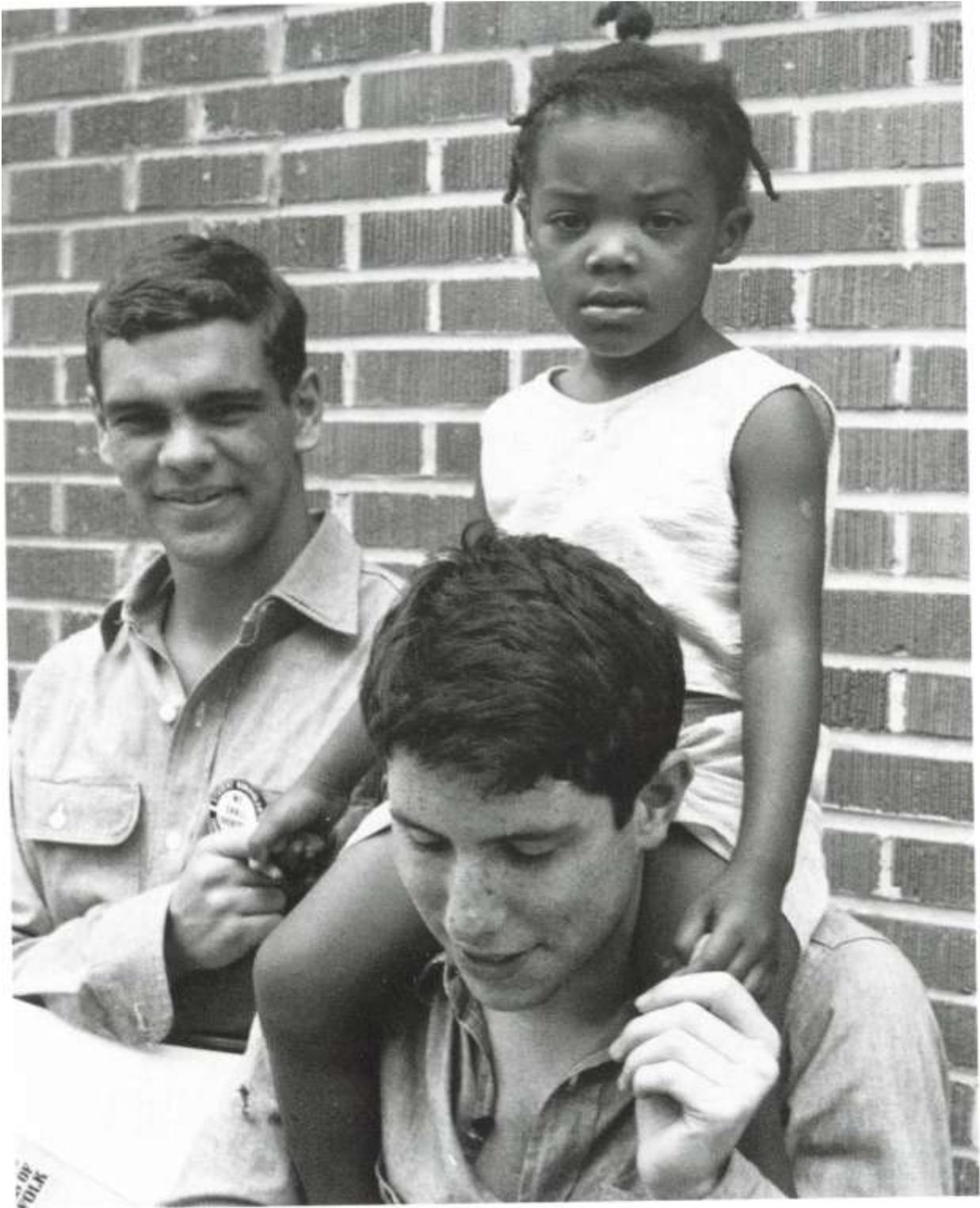
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Figure 1. Boy & Singer



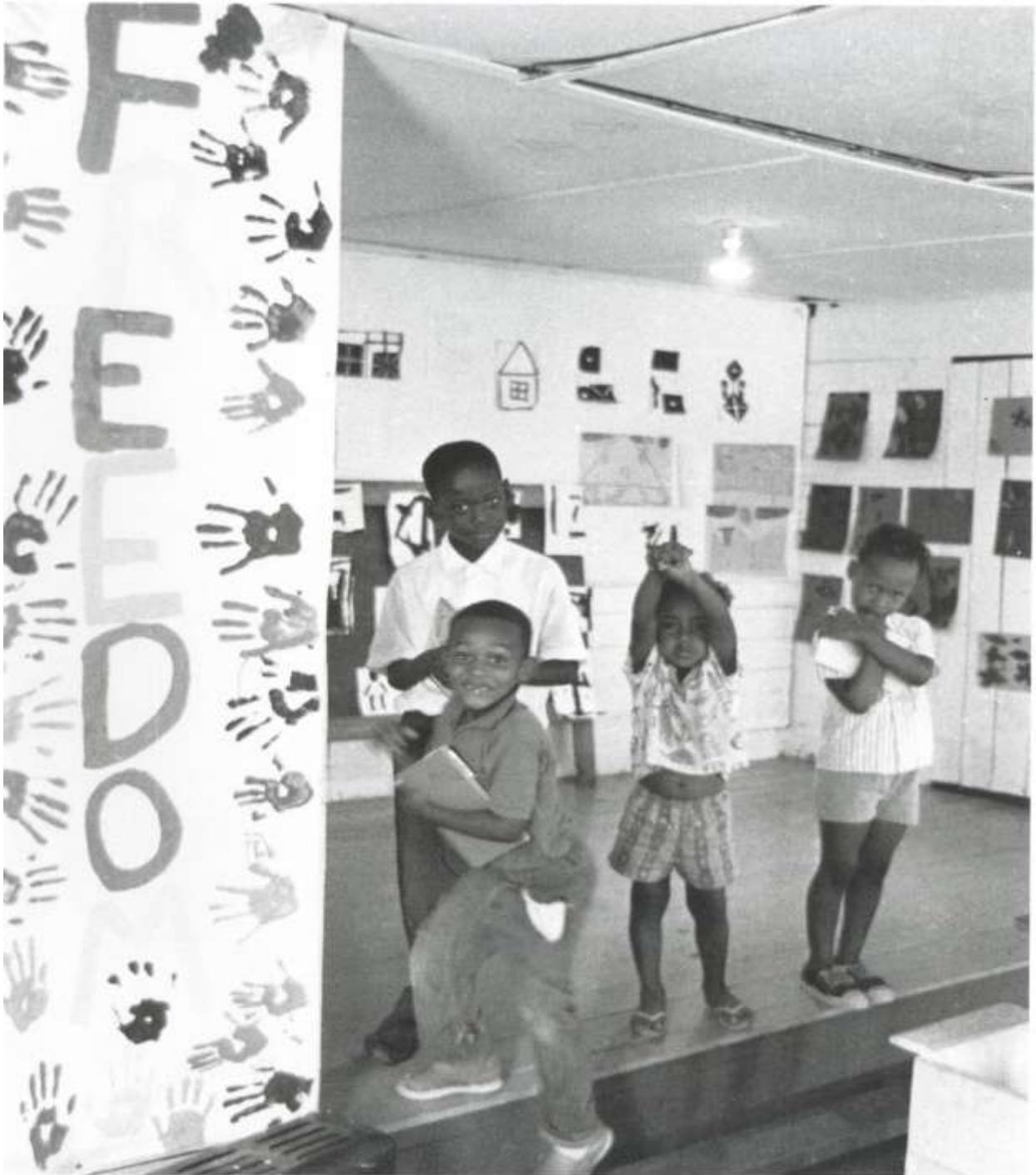
Source: H. Randall, 1964, *Faces of the freedom summer*, p. 111.

Figure 2. . Cynthia Beard sitting on the shoulders of volunteers Jacob Blum.



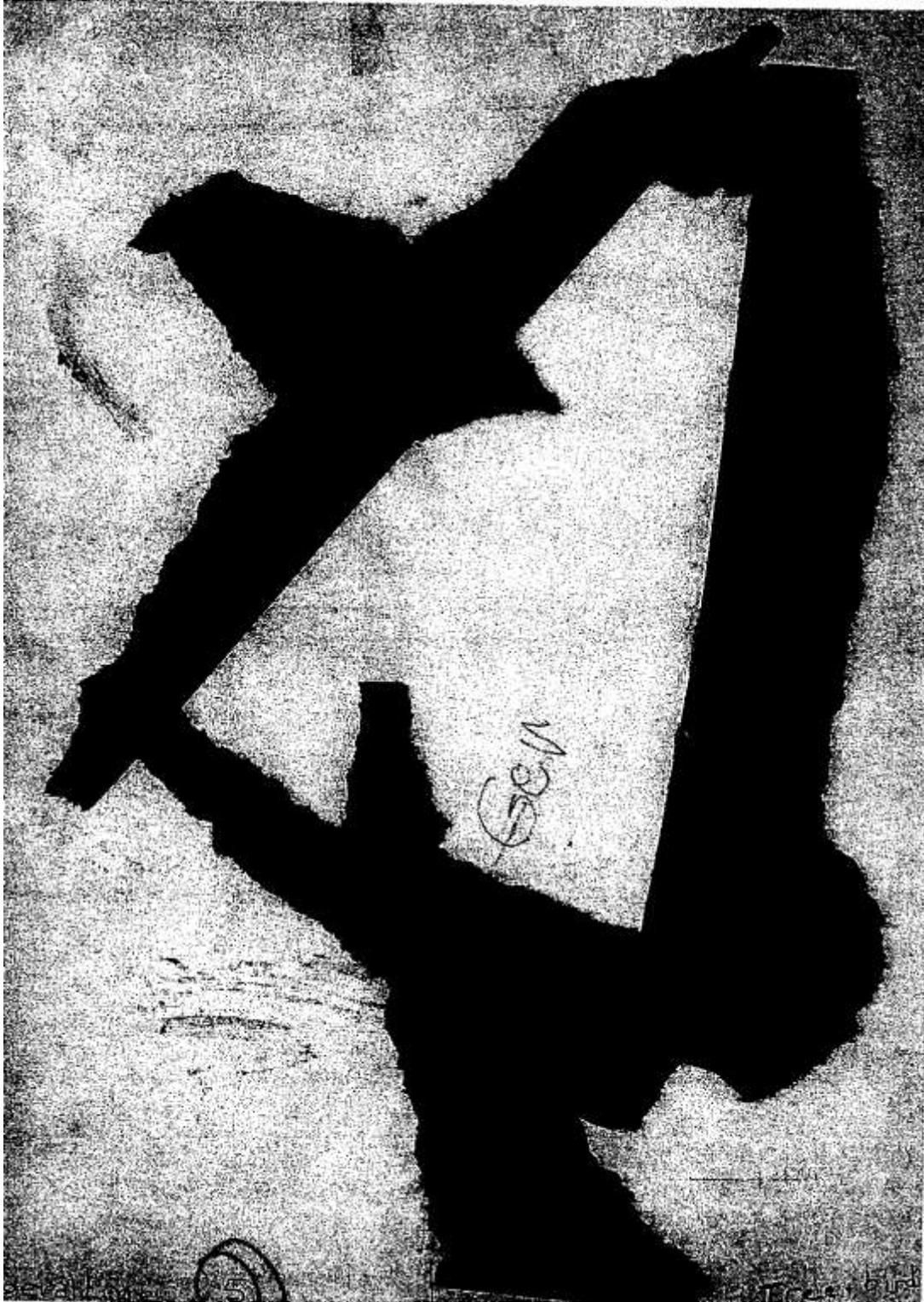
Source: H. Randall, 1964, *Faces of the freedom summer*, p. 73.

Figure 3. Freedom School students and their works of art.



Source: H. Randall, 1964, *Faces of the freedom summer*, p. 94.

Figure 4. Tree+Bird.



Source: 1964 Show and Sale for the Mississippi Freedom Schools. In Erenrich, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Freedom is a constant struggle: An anthology of the Mississippi civil rights movement* (p. 262). Montgomery: Black Belt Press.

Figure 5. Freedom Flowers.



Source: 1964 Show and Sale for the Mississippi Freedom Schools. In Erenrich, S.(Ed.). (1999). *Freedom is a constant struggle: An anthology of the Mississippi civil rights movement* (p. 263). Montgomery: Black Belt Press.