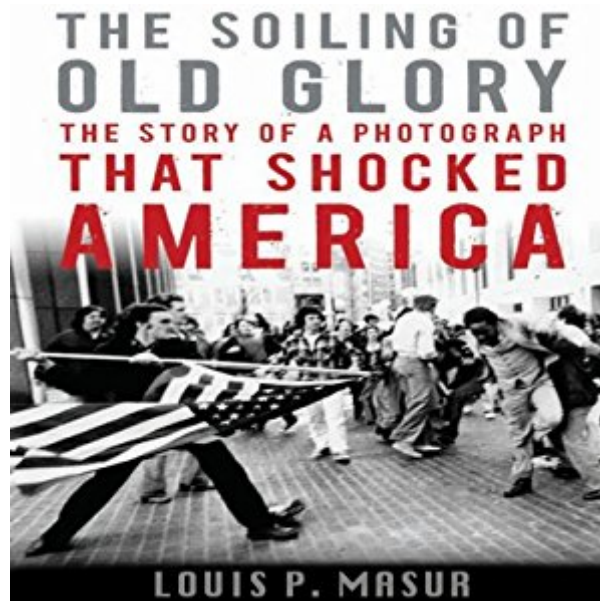




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The Soiling Of Old Glory: The Story Of A Photograph That Shocked America



Synopsis

Sometimes a moment can change history. This one took 1/250th of a second. The photograph strikes us with visceral force, even years after the instant it captured. A white man, rage written on his face, lunges to spear a black man who is being held by another white. The assailant's weapon is the American flag. Boston, April 5, 1976: As the city simmered with racial tension over forced school busing, newsman Stanley Forman hurried to City Hall to photograph that day's protest, arriving just in time to snap the image that his editor would title "The Soiling of Old Glory". The photo made headlines across the U.S. and won Forman his second Pulitzer Prize. It shocked Boston, and America: Racial strife had not only not ended with the 1960s, it was alive and well in the cradle of liberty. Louis P. Masur's evocative "biography of a photograph" unpacks this arresting image in a tour de force of historical writing. He examines the power of photography and the meaning of the flag, asking why this one picture had so much impact. Most poignantly, Masur recreates the moment and its aftermath, drawing on extensive interviews with Forman and the figures in the photo to reveal not just how the incident happened, but how it changed the lives of the men in it. The Soiling of Old Glory, like the photograph it is named for, offers a dramatic window onto the turbulence of the 1970s and race relations in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Though described as the biography of a photograph, the author covers so much more in helping the reader see what happened that April morning when Stanley Forman took the indelible shot. The

book has really made me think deeply about race, class, education, politics, protest, and progress in Boston, as well as the way images of our flag have been used in paintings and photographs.

Anyone who was living in Boston in 1976 and had any interest in the news will remember this photograph all too well. It certainly shocked the City of Boston, and had reverberations around the world. Although the author states he cannot remember where he was when he first saw the photo, I can recall clearly where I was and what I was doing. The author does a wonderful job of looking at all aspects of the photo, as well as what led up to the incident where the photo was taken. Included is analysis of what happened during the incident, who the players in the photo were, how they came to be where they were when the incident occurred, and probably most importantly, the back story of school bussing in Boston at that time. In addition, the author looks at how a city that is considered as progressive could be so racist in its attitudes towards various ethnic groups. Finally, after dissecting the photograph and the various players, the author looks at the reverberations caused by the picture and where the City is now on the issue. That, in many ways, was the most important aspect of the book. The book is well written and contains all of the pertinent information needed to understand the issue of bussing and what caused these young men to be in City Hall Plaza at the time of the incident. It will certainly be a book of interest to historians and those with an interest in Boston's politics.

Masur has put together a very comprehensive discussion of Stanley Forman's famous Pulitzer Prize-winning image from 1976 Boston, and creates an interesting balance among several relevant elements: the actual event we see (or think we see) in the photo; the forced busing fiasco that infuriated both blacks and whites at the time; controversies surrounding the proper and improper display/desecration of our flag; and a look at where the important players involved in the photo and controversy are today (Forman, Rakes, Landmark, and others). The book is very well-illustrated and contains many other images taken by Forman on that day in 1976. I found the book fully engaging and impeccably researched, and would highly recommend it to serious students of both photojournalism and the history of racial unrest in America.

A+

I was old enough to have been aware of this picture and the results and somehow, it didn't enter into my radar. This was a very interesting piece about a picture that shook up a lot of people and the

author really throws you for a loop at the end. Great read and makes you think about how conclusions are reached.

I did not get the correct book

I liked this book. It is, first, reasonably well-written. I did encounter several parts that read a bit awkwardly, as to lend an air of disorganization to certain chapters; however, this was merely a nuisance, failing to detract from the book as a whole. Content-wise, I found 'Soiling' to be rich and pleasing, as well as multidimensional. Besides offering a sound, comprehensive account of Stanley Forman's famous/infamous 1976 photograph, the book includes much historical and biographical background, too, along with sociological commentaries; in effect, the text serves as a profound psychological and human study, rather than just the story of a politically- and racially charged assault. What's more, the author goes on to make some very perceptive and relevant observations on photography and its often illusive nature, and the many profound effects that it has on the mind and the world at large (which, in today's image-centric society, we'd do well to consider, I believe). I also appreciated reading of the after-effects of the Boston incident, and how, for many of those involved, it worked as a catalyst for personal growth and development (as to be a gift in strange wrapping, as it were). However, the book's most interesting point is, for me, that which lies hidden between its lines. Namely: we are shown the incredible complexity that precedes even the simplest of photographed events, from the reasoning of the participants, to the tangle of perspectives and perceptions regarding the very nature of the depicted actions. In this sense, the book's takeaway lesson is that nothing is simple (and is probably not as it appears), and, thus, we should not be quick to judge, given the massive number of deciding factors and other contextual elements which bear on the actuality of any situation (and the choices and behavior which gave way to it). With this in mind, 'Soiling of Old Glory' is as much a cautionary tale, regarding the judgment of racism and violence as much as those things themselves. All in all: much food for thought here. I learned plenty from this book, while being periodically entertained (or heartbroken). My sincere thanks goes out to this book's author, subjects, and publisher. I am grateful for, and have benefited from, your work and service.

The book came on time and in good condition except for one thing that was ridiculous. The company placed a pricing label on the FRONT COVER that destroyed the photo (the book is about the photo featured on the front cover). It was difficult to peel off and messed up the cover.

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