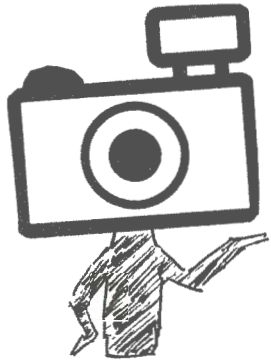


What ways can you
envision
photography also
being used as a form
of social justice?



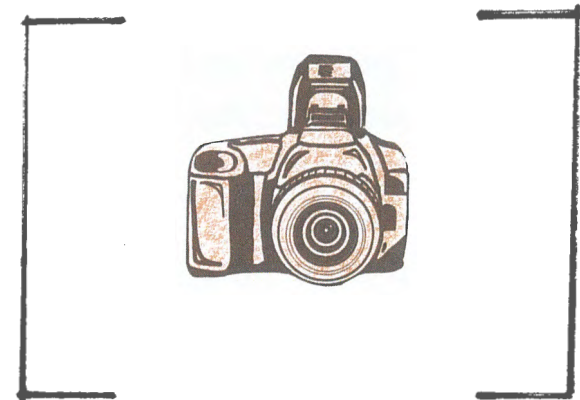
Don't forget
to leave your
final thoughts!

The Camera and the Stranger: Image and Race

By Ethan Chan

Key Terms

1. The Stranger
2. Good Citizenship
3. Constitutive Rhetoric
4. Wounds
5. Racism
6. White Racial Frame
7. Colonialism
8. Criminalization
9. Folk Devils
10. Deviants/deviancy
11. Death
12. Security

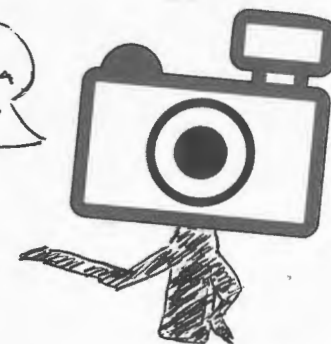


Dear readers, thank you for taking the time to read my zine. I have spent a lot of time tackling the difficult subject of photographic representation of people of color and other marginalized peoples. Throughout my studies of violent images, I have been faced with the question: Is it ethical to display bodies in pain/peril? Scholars have argued for both sides. For some, the showing of bodies in pain illuminates the circumstances that allowed for such violence to occur. On the other hand, there are those that see the display of violent images as problematic, as it allows a voyeuristic viewing of a non-consenting person's body. I tend to side with the latter opinion. To show the body is to strip the subject of their agency, to subject their body to the constant gaze of viewers. It is because of this that I have chosen not to display certain images mentioned within my zine. Ultimately, I can't stop you, the viewer, from looking them up on your own time, but I hope you understand my decisions.

Sincerely, Ethan

How has the camera impacted your own life?

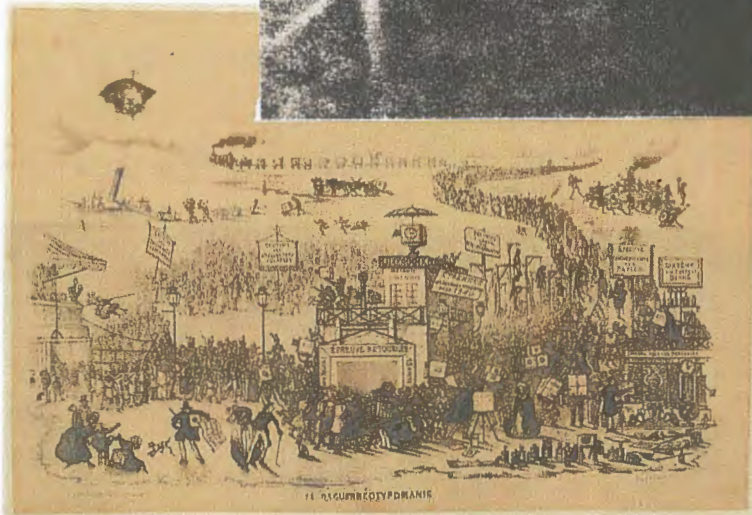
Share your thoughts on a sticky note



CaMeRA

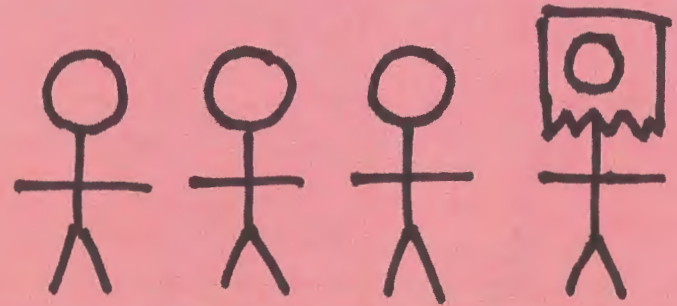
In 1822, Nicéphore Niépce successfully produced the first photographic image. Four years later, he would take the earliest surviving photograph, titled, "View From the Window at Le Gras," (1826). Niépce began collaborating with Louis Daguerre to shorten exposure time, which later culminated to one of the first popular commercial methods of photography: the Daguerreotype. The technology of the camera continued to be explored, with photographic methods continuously improving, becoming more and more accessible to the masses.

Niépce, "View From the Window at Le Gras," 1826



Cartoon commentary on the daguerreotype's cultural impact

Stranger



"Strangers are not just 'not like us,' as enemies are, but may 'pretend' to be like us. In fact, the more the stranger attempts to become 'like us' the more threatening [they] become, and the greater the potential for betrayal as relevant boundaries are seemingly crossed." (138) - Chavez

In her piece, "Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse," Karma R. Chavez defines the term of **the Stranger** as subaltern Others that do not fulfill the mold of the **good citizen**: those that are White, heterosexual, middle-class men (138)

The construction of the Stranger is juxtaposed by hegemonic structures that establish cultural belonging within the borders of the state. Those that deviate from this become branded as enemies that must either be assimilated into the hegemonic fold, lest they face discriminatory consequences, ranging from economic/opportunistic to physical/verbal abuse.

Through methods of **constitutive rhetoric**, Whiteness has been constructed. Whiteness exists through the creation of difference, forming an us/them paradigm. As Edward Said wrote on Orientalism, Whiteness constructs itself based on what it is not.

Whiteness is constructed through methods of constitutive rhetoric that rally White people behind a banner of "us, not them." However, constitutive rhetoric should not be limited to solely words and language. The image is another powerful form of hegemonic control, and the camera has become a weaponized tool for strengthening this social control.

THE CAMERA

The Stranger has long been made the subject of the Camera. While the camera may have originally been used moreso as an artistic device, those with power (able-bodied White men) utilized the power of photography as a method of controlling the other. The image became a form of powerful Truth that could be used to maintain subordination of the Stranger.

AND

Throughout history, photography has been used to justify racial hierarchy and superiority through multiple lenses as visual "proof." The camera becomes a weaponized device that bolsters White supremacist ideology.

THE STRANGER

Wounds have remained, as the Other's body has been forcibly weaponized against them to promote their own damnation in society. **Racism** and oppression is an adaptable system that finds ways to evolve to suit its situation and context. The **White racial frame** shrouds itself over the camera, pointing itself at oppressed bodies. The veil distorts the image, as it envisions the body of the Stranger beneath the "superior, virtuous, morally [good]" White body (Flores-Yeffal, 4).

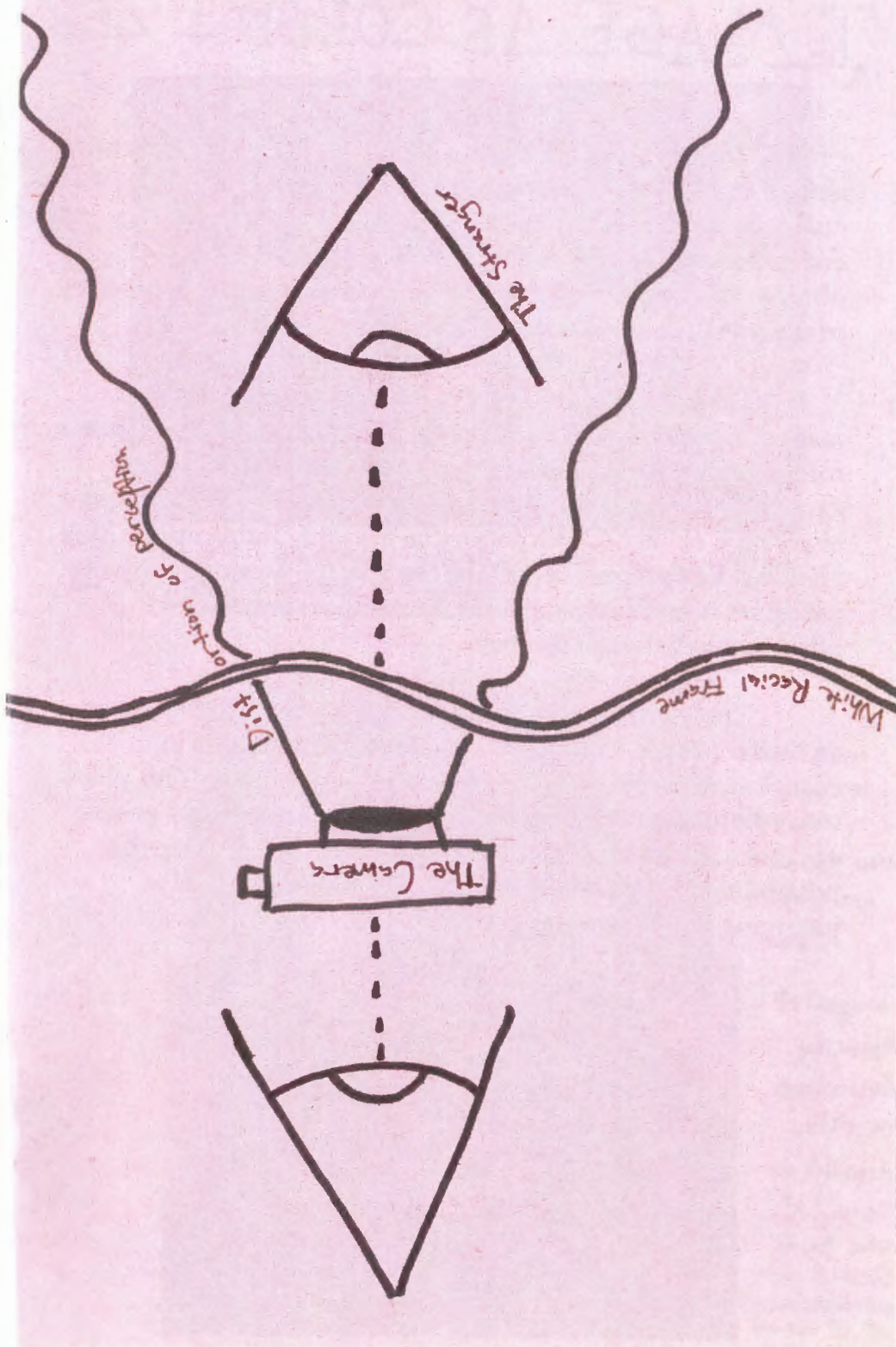


IMAGE AS COLONIZER

Through framing of the camera lens, photographs are able to fortify racist ideologies. Racism is not exclusively enacted through verbal and physical threat. It can also be enacted through depiction of the Other. In the case of photography, this can be seen when comparing photos images of the the West versus non-Western peoples.

Take anthropological photos for example. In magazine publications like National Geographic, non-White foreigners were portrayed in ways that presented them as exotic, "frequently unclothed, happy hunters, noble savages – every type of cliché," (Goldburg & Mason). Publications like National Geographic can shape the way its Western audience perceives non-Western people, creating an imbalanced relationship between the two.

These racialized caricatures display the Brown Other as "lesser people," being less developed and savages in comparison to the advanced Western perspective. This plays into **colonialism**, which promotes ideology that views people of color as culturally inferior, which, in turn, opens up the possibility to dominate and erase said culture, as well as justifying a White savior complex.



1962, Nat.Geo. depicted "uncivilized" natives as intrigued by "civilized" Western technology



1944, image of cotton workers, described with slavery-era slurs

Images of Aboriginal Australians in 1916, described as "savages" who rank lowest in intelligence of all human beings



Ex.1 Agassiz's Daguerreotypes

During the 1840's, Swiss Scientist Louis Agassiz immigrated to the US and soon became interested in the study of racial difference. To do his "research" he chose photography as a method of proving White racial hierarchy over Black people. Traveling to multiple prominent plantations in South Carolina, Agassiz handpicked his slave subjects, who he placed under the scrutiny of the lens. His slave daguerreotype series consisted of fifteen photographs that rendered the Black bodies as near "animal"-like, as they were forced to stand still, completely naked, as Agassiz and his assistant took pictures for later study and research.

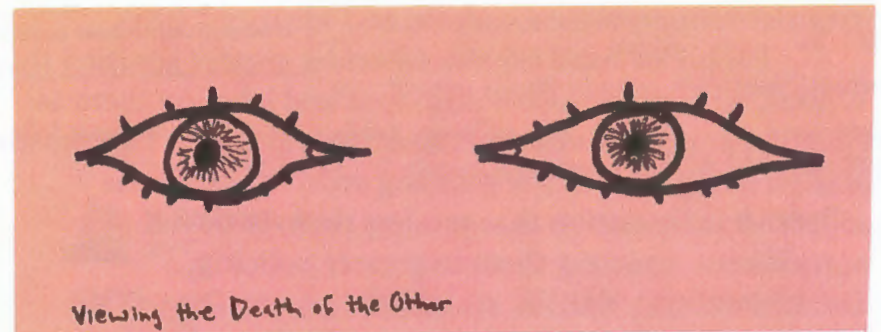
• Alfred • Jack
• Delia • Jem
• Drana • Renty
• Fassena

List of names of Agassiz's subjects

By representing the Black slaves through the lens of anthropological study, the photographs gained factual authority that "proved" racial difference down to the anatomical level. While presented as unbiased work, in reality the Agassiz's daguerreotypes solidified racist frames that allowed for continued justification for slavery. Inherently violent, Black bodies are stripped of their humanity, forced to relinquish themselves to the gaze of their masters.

Ex.2 Production/Distribution of lynching photos

During the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War, the lynching of Black men, women, and children at the hands of White Southerners ran rampant. This epidemic of violence became a method of criminalizing Black people, a tool of fear of oppression that ensured their second-class citizenship. The lynching of Blacks became a spectacle for White Southerners, as their communities began gathering to entertain themselves with a "Negro Barbecue" as they termed it.



At the lynching gatherings, there would be profiteers with their cameras that would take photographs of the lynching victims, which they would then reproduce and sell to attendees. The images of the lynching victim would be turned into postcards that could be sent across the country, allowing for voyeuristic viewing of Black death on a large (and profitable) scale. The wounds of Black bodies are laid bare for the world to see, their now lifeless corpses becoming charges for the racist White to revel in.

CRIMINALIZATION

The photograph has facilitated greater **criminalization** of the Stranger, rendering them as threats to societal order. The visual construction of "**folk devils**" that walk among us allows for the justification of greater policing and harassment of marginalized communities.

Examples of this can be seen with the portrayal of Black and Brown men and women within the mainstream media, as they are presented to the greater public as **deviants**. As Cacho writes, "racialized and classed discourses of 'deviance' legitimate the systematic exploitation, abuse, and neglect of Latino/as and other marginalized communities by identifying communities and cultures of color as 'undeserving' of jobs and resources or as 'threats' to US national culture, values, morals, and security," (183).

People of color are placed under greater scrutiny than Whites, with their photos displayed and labeling them as violent, dangerous, criminal, and non-valuable. This erasure of their being adds to the growing archive within the collective imagination that renders them as deviant non-citizens, opening them to greater policing, discrimination, violence, and **death**.



White People "FIND"

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.
(AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Black People "LOOT"

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it
Associated Press

These stories and pictures both appeared in
YAHOO! NEWS August 30, 2005
<http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/480/1adm10208301530>
http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/photos_ts_afp/050830071810_shwaoma_photo1

Image Comparing media rep. of Whites vs. Black people during Hurricane Katrina.
The #IfTheyGunnedMeDown hashtag provides an example of how imagery facilitates criminalization. Relates to depictions of Michael Brown.

V. Coleman, Jr. @VOC_Jr Follow

#IfTheyGunnedMeDown Which pic would they use pic.twitter.com/qvL75kU8QF

Reply Retweeted Favorite More



SECURITY THROUGH THE LENS

Following the 9/11 terror attacks and the US's declaration of the Global War on Terror, the United States became enthralled with transforming itself into a nation of surveillance and **security**. This has direct ties to criminalization, as Ono explains, "9/11 serve[d] as the rationale for widespread surveillance of the general population of US Americans, and, conspicuously, of all migrants, not to mention difference generally," (25).

Post-9/11 America constructed a system built on paranoia, encouraging its citizens to remain vigilance, reporting those that seem "suspicious," which directly relates to those classified as "deviants." In this case, deviants are often read as those that appear Middle Eastern, as well as migrants attempting to cross the US/Mexico border. Through the lens of a security cam to a person's phone, the US weaponized the camera as a tool for discipline and control.



The troubled relationship between the Camera and the Stranger exists even within our most contemporary and cutting edge technologies. The interest in facial recognition software has been on the rise, especially so in the past few years (evidenced with the latest smartphones). Yet this growing interest has brought attention to algorithmic biases as well.

Algorithmic biases within facial recognition software can be seen with examples such as:

- The camera failing to recognize individuals with dark skin
- The camera's inability to differentiate between Asian individuals, confusing them as being the same person

What this has demonstrated is that not a diverse enough range of faces are recognized within existing code archives. This brings into question who is visible within these frames? People of color are not afforded the same utilization of new technologies, stemming in-part from a lack of diversity within the industry. As the Algorithmic Justice League (AJL), an activist organization fighting tech bias, writes on their website, there is a need to ensure that social justice within the tech industry is not left as an afterthought as new technologies are being developed.



✗ The photo you want to upload does not meet our criteria because:
• Subject eyes are closed

Please refer to the technical requirements.
You have 9 attempts left.

Check the photo [requirements](#).

Read more about [common photo problems and how to resolve them](#).

After your tenth attempt you will need to start again and re-enter the CAPTCHA security check.

Reference number: 20161206-81

Filename: Untitled.jpg

If you wish to [contact us](#) about the photo, you must provide us with the reference number given above.



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