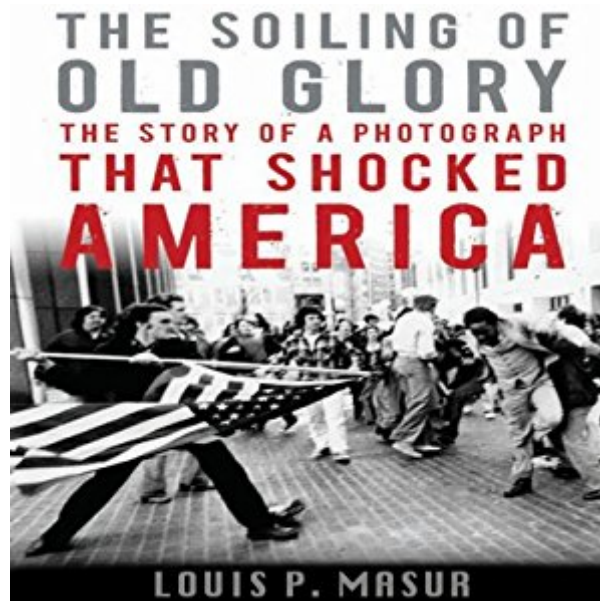




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The Soiling Of Old Glory: The Story Of A Photograph That Shocked America



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

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.

Louis Masur does an excellent job taking a single act of racism and hatred captured in one of the most shameful photographs in American history and shaping it into the proper context and providing the background which not only led to the actual event, but was responsible for the deep feelings that the terrible action had not only on the American people but on people around the world. Mr. Masur gives a great background on the meaning of the flag in the American psyche but does a wonderful job of how very succinctly using other resources to explain the impact that busing had in Boston and how due to political mismanagement was the ultimate cause of this terrible racist act. I also think Mr. Masur deserves credit for not beating up on the individual who committed this terrible act while at the same time not forgiving him for his act of racism caught forever. Mr. Masur does a great job of painting the picture of the news photographers whom he does not let off the hook very easily. All in all this is a well rounded and complete book much deeper than one might expect.

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.

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.

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