



# On Racial Icons: Blackness and the Public Imagination (Pinpoints)

*Nicole R. Fleetwood*

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What meaning does the American public attach to images of key black political, social, and cultural figures? Considering photography's role as a means of documenting historical progress, what is the representational currency of these images? How do racial icons "signify"?

Nicole R. Fleetwood's answers to these questions will change the way you think about the next photograph that you see depicting a racial event, black celebrity, or public figure. In *On Racial Icons*, Fleetwood focuses a sustained look on photography in documenting black public life, exploring the ways in which iconic images function as celebrations of national and racial progress at times or as a gauge of collective racial wounds in moments of crisis.

Offering an overview of photography's ability to capture shifting race relations, Fleetwood spotlights in each chapter a different set of iconic images in key sectors of public life. She considers flash points of racialized violence in photographs of Trayvon Martin and Emmett Till; the political, aesthetic, and cultural shifts marked by the rise of pop stars such as Diana Ross; and the power and precarity of such black sports icons as Serena Williams and LeBron James; and she does not miss Barack Obama and his family along the way. *On Racial Icons* is an eye-opener in every sense of the phrase.

Images from the book. (<http://rutgerspress.rutgers.edu/pages/Fleetwood.aspx>)

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