

HEROISM IN ELIZABETH CATLETT'S *THE NEGRO WOMAN*, 1945-1946

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ABSTRACT

Julie Riegel: Heroism In Elizabeth Catlett's *The Negro Woman*, 1945-1946
(Under the direction of John P. Bowles)

Elizabeth Catlett (April 15, 1915 -April 2, 2012) created *The Negro Woman* with a unique artistic approach that reflected her circulation among multiple artist groups, including the Popular Front in the United States, the New Negro Movement, and regionalism. Most notably, she borrowed the visual language and medium of the Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP), an artist collective based in Mexico, where she travelled to complete the *Negro Woman Series* in 1946. The TGP created art “for the people,” and its members held Marxist sympathies. The fifteen linocuts in *The Negro Woman*, which work together to describe the spectrum of experiences of African American women, show the complexities of the black female hero. Catlett wanted African American women to be able to see themselves through her art, since a majority of art that Catlett encountered in museums in the United States overwhelmingly marginalized or occluded black women. By creating images of heroic black females in the visual language popularized by the TGP, Catlett fuses the struggles and accomplishments of African American female protagonists with Marxist political sympathies. Catlett utilized the titles of her prints in *The Negro Woman* to develop the narrative through a singular African American female narrator. The titles and the images work together create a sense of dissonance, which allows the viewer to create his or her own unique interpretation of *The Negro Woman*.

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INTRODUCTION

Is it possible for an artist to convey political sympathies through the material qualities of his or her artwork? How can one's artistic process—or the way an artist chooses to create and distribute his or her work—influence a viewer's ability to understand or to even access art? I investigate these questions in Elizabeth Catlett's linocut series *The Negro Woman* (ca. 1946-47). My approach to Catlett's work involves first visually analyzing *The Negro Woman* in relation to the work of Catlett's peers and predecessors. I then consider her work from the perspective of feminist and critical race studies, tackling ideas of black female heroism, regionalism, and internationalism.

Catlett created the *The Negro Woman* by developing her own artistic approach by circulating between many different artistic groups, including the New Negro Movement, regionalism (the practice of focusing on local subject matter), which she studied with Grant Wood, and her work with the Popular Front. Most notably, she borrowed the visual language and medium of the Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP), an artist collective based in Mexico, where she travelled to complete the *Negro Woman Series* in 1946.¹ The TGP created art for ordinary Mexican people, and its members held Marxist sympathies.² There was an important relationship between African American artists and Mexican social realist artists between the 1930s and the late 1940s,

¹ Melanie Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett : an American Artist in Mexico* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

² Herzog, 54.

and this exchange worked both ways, as Mexican artists were influenced by African American culture and arts when they travelled to the United States.³

By including fifteen linocuts, which work together to describe the spectrum of experiences of African American women, *The Negro Woman* shows the complexities of the black female hero. She shows Harriet Tubman leading a group of escaped slaves freedom, the intellectual and creative capability of Phillis Wheatley, the and the fear and sorrow felt by women who endure living in the segregated south. Catlett wanted black women to be able to see themselves through her art, since a majority of art that Catlett encountered in museums in the United States overwhelmingly marginalized or occluded black women. Catlett utilized the titles of her prints in *The Negro Woman* to develop the narrative through a singular black female narrator. The titles encourage the viewer to employ a black female gaze while encountering *The Negro Woman*.

Though much has been written about Catlett, few scholars have considered *The Negro Woman* series in detail. In fact, much scholarship on Catlett focuses on her biography instead of her artwork. Samella Lewis, who was a former student and friend Catlett's, wrote the most trusted biography in 1984.⁴ Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis wrote an article in 1987 that explains a female Afrocentric focus, using Catlett's work as her example.⁵ Richard J. Powell's 1993 essay "Face to Face: Elizabeth Catlett's Graphic Work" provides an approach to understanding the "call and response" relationship between the title and the image in *The Negro Woman* series.⁶

³ Herzog, 52.

⁴ Samella S. Lewis, *The art of Elizabeth Catlett* (Claremont, CA: Hancraft Studios, 1984).

⁵ Freida High Tesfagiorgis, "Afrofemcentrism in the Art of Elizabeth Catlett and Faith Ringgold," *Sage* 4 (1): 25.

⁶ Richard Powell, "Face to Face: Elizabeth Catlett's Graphic Work," *Elizabeth Catlett: Works on Paper, 1944-1992*, (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton University Museum, 1993), 49-53.

Melanie Herzog's 2000 *Elizabeth Catlett: American Artist in Mexico* offers an in depth analysis of Catlett's work, interwoven with Catlett's biography. Herzog's insightful work is foundational for my study, as she provides a framework for understanding *The Negro Woman* series as it relates to Catlett's experience working in the style of the TGP.⁷ My analysis offers a new interpretation of Catlett's work that draws on African American Studies scholar Celeste-Marie Bernier's theories of the black heroic. Establishing the black female heroic is important in understanding *The Negro Woman* series because it shows that Catlett consciously tried to remedy the gap in art which occluded complex black female protagonists. Catlett used her art as a form of social activism, and *The Negro Woman* taught black women to see their image represented in art heroically. I also look more in depth to the way Catlett utilized her titles to create dissonance between word and image. Catlett established a feminist practice in her work by encouraging the viewer, regardless of his or her race or gender, to imagine *The Negro Woman* through a black female gaze. When creating images of oppression or violence against black bodies, Catlett titles the panels using sardonic humor or sarcasm, which creates a sense of dissonance between the title and the image to which it is paired. This dissonance asks the viewer to critically consider his or her own place of privilege when looking at the series.

In my first chapter, I contextualize how Catlett developed her artistic approach by working with multiple artist groups. Catlett worked a generation after the artists known as the New Negro movement or the Harlem Renaissance. Though many artists of Catlett's milieu departed from the African aesthetic encouraged by their predecessors in the New Negro Movement, only a few decided to create work in the style of the Mexican Social Realists. I explain the stylistic influences that inspired Catlett's work by visually analyzing Catlett's *The Negro Woman* series, paying special attention to the materiality and the medium of Catlett's prints.

⁷ Herzog.

My second chapter will investigate how Catlett's work explores the themes of black female heroism. Protagonists in *The Negro Woman* include famous heroes like Harriet Tubman and Phillis Wheatley, as well as unnamed women, such as domestic workers who support their families and women in the south who endure segregation. Catlett's work crosses the boundaries of time, as she captures experiences from the past and aligns them with women living in the United States and Mexico in the mid-1940s. To analyze black female heroism, I borrow from Celeste-Marie Bernier's book *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination*. Bernier argues that specific qualities of black female heroism are either overlooked entirely or rewritten to fit paradigms of masculine heroism, and asserts that black female heroes are complex figures who should get credit for being self-emancipated, radical, multifaceted, and independent of masculine interpretations of heroism.⁸

In my third chapter, I explain how Catlett displays ideas of fear, bravery, and heroism from the perspective of a black woman. Catlett creates a sense of dissonance between the title and the image, especially in scenes of trauma or oppression, in which Catlett titles the panels using sardonic humor or sarcasm. I also compare the way Catlett titles each panel of her work with the way Jacob Lawrence titles his work in *The Migration of the Negro* series (ca. 1940-1941). Lawrence and Catlett both create a distinct narrative pattern through their titling conventions which share similarities. The titles of both series create a sense of dissonance with the image, which encourages the viewer to interpret the work. Though both artists updated the titles of *The Negro Woman* and *The Migration* in 1989 and 1993 respectively to reflect different language, I will focus primarily on the way the artists chose to title their work in the 1940s.

⁸ Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood : Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

CHAPTER 1: CATLETT'S ARTISTIC STYLE AND WORKING WITH MULTIPLE ARTIST GROUPS

Elizabeth Catlett developed her own artistic approach by circulating between multiple artist groups. I explore her experiences working with her first husband Charles White, her time at Howard University, her time studying with Grant Wood, and finally, her time in Mexico working with the TGP, where she met her second husband Francisco Mora. By working with the groups, Catlett was able to deeply think about her own work, and she drew from her experiences with each group to develop her own unique artistic approach that she used to create *The Negro Woman*.

The ideas that were popularized and debated during the New Negro Movement influenced the African American artists and intellectuals of Elizabeth Catlett's artistic milieu, and these themes show up in *The Negro Woman*. By portraying African American protagonists in the panels of *The Negro Woman* in a positive light, and the prints in the series could certainly be understood as socially uplifting. Additionally, Catlett's artistic style embraced modernity as a way to make a cultural contribution. She created *The Negro Woman* through a regionalist approach, which she practiced while studying with Grant Wood. Catlett situates the series through a specific perspective, but she explores themes like heroism, tragedy, and labor, which would be understood broadly. *The Negro Woman* reflects practices put forth by the Popular Front most notably in the print *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized* (figure 5), which shows a group of workers protesting labor conditions in front of a

factory. Finally, *The Negro Woman* bears stylistic and contextual similarities to the work of the Mexican Social Muralists, as well as to the Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP). Catlett uses the visual language of Mexican social realism to create the prints in her series. As a way to make her work accessible to a wide audience, she made multiples of her prints using the linocut printing method.⁹

The connection between politics and art were heightened in the 1930s and 1940s, and artists and critics alike were thinking about the way graphic forms determined the ideology which art embodies. Materials used to create art carried political importance connected to the meaning of the work. For example, a large oil history painting is a singular piece of art, therefore it could only go to one owner, whether it be a private collector or a public cultural institution. That purchaser determined who could see the work, and at which times. Thinking about the way this capitalist system influenced the art market, the Mexican Muralists chose to make their works in open air and on public buildings. Since the work was fixed to a specific location, the murals could not be bought and sold as a commodity. The murals were expressed as a revolution of Mexican people, who fought against the domination of a small foreign elite ruling class.¹⁰ In a similar way, the TGP and Catlett wanted to make graphic work accessible to the public. Both intended to reach people who did not go to cultural institutions like museums to look at art, or who would not necessarily buy pieces of art for themselves. They wanted to reach people where they lived and worked, and making multiple copies using inexpensive materials was one way to

⁹ Few newspaper or magazine articles were published on the reception of Catlett's work between 1946 and 1950, so it is unknown how many prints circulated, and where they exhibited. Howard University, a Historically Black University, ran a show of *The Negro Woman* in 1947 in the Barnett-Aden Gallery. "'The Negro Woman' Art Show, Opens," *Philadelphia Tribune* (Philadelphia), Dec. 9, 1947.

¹⁰ Ronald Paulson, *Figure and abstraction in contemporary painting* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 16-18.

make that happen.¹¹ Artists also developed a distinct stylistic approach to communicate larger political message. The Mexican Muralists created an art form that merged the figurative with international cubism. They did not want to simply make art for art's sake, but to merge trends of cubism with figurative work to make the meaning of their work understandable.¹² The visual language of the TGP grew from the Mexican Muralists, sharing many stylistic similarities. The artists of the TGP frequently enlarged hands, as a visual cue to evoke practices of labor and the working class. Their work was frequently figurative, showing scenes from the perspective of oppressed people. By discussing a few of the major influences to Catlett's career, I will show the important political and aesthetic issues which Catlett contemplated to give a better sense of the political issues which impacted her as she created *The Negro Woman*.

The New Negro Movement

In *The Negro Woman* series, Catlett both utilizes and builds upon ideas popularized by the New Negro Movement. Her series shows positive and uplifting images of black women, and she uses art as a way to contribute to American culture. The imagery that Catlett created in *The Negro Woman* series displays the struggles and triumphs of African American women throughout history. The print titled *In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery* (figure 1) exemplifies the ability of black women to influence culture through their artistic accomplishments. Wheatley was the first black writer to publish a book of poetry in America. Catlett shows Wheatley, seated at her writing table, gesturing towards her head as a way to show Wheatley's intelligence, in the process putting pen to paper. Three women in chains stand behind Wheatley. It is possible that these women represent those who could have

¹¹ Herzog, 56.

¹² Herzog, 54.

been as successful as Wheatley creatively, if they had the means to learn to read and write as Wheatley did.¹³ In addition to showing social uplift through creative accomplishments, *The Negro Woman* also shows black heroic social uplift through radical self-emancipation. In the print *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom*, (figure 2) a group of slaves are walking in a procession grouped behind Harriet Tubman. This group could represent the slaves who imagined themselves as freed people, and then acted with agency to escape through Tubman's guidance. Though the state did not recognize slaves as freed people, the slaves decided to grant themselves freedom by escaping. Instead of focusing solely on famous historical figures, Catlett includes images of African American women laboring in the house and fields.

Born in 1915, Catlett worked a generation after the artists of the New Negro Movement, now commonly known as the Harlem Renaissance. The New Negro Movement was a groundbreaking philosophical and cultural change for African American visual artists.¹⁴ The two major philosophers behind the movement were W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. Both Locke and Du Bois considered visual art to be a powerful tool to beckon social change. Promoting the public image of African Americans as industrious, cultured, and independent, the New Negro Movement opposed images of the deferential and uneducated "Old Negro" of the rural South.¹⁵ The momentum of the New Negro Movement encouraged African Americans to demand legal rights as citizens, and to claim access to higher education, political power, and to make cultural contributions to American society. An emerging middle class of African Americans established

¹³ Herzog, 61.

¹⁴ Amy Helene Kirschke, *Women Artists of the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 1.

¹⁵ Locke, Alain. "The New Negro." In *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, edited by David Levering Lewis, 46-51. New York: Viking, 1994, 47.

themselves as collectors of art, and black artists claimed their spot as significant contributors to American national culture, specifically through the use of modernism in their artwork.¹⁶

Social uplift of African Americans was an important platform that W.E.B. Du Bois popularized. In an essay titled *Criteria of Negro Art* published in *The Crisis* in 1926, Du Bois wrote that he considered all art to be “propaganda” that could either uplift the image African Americans, or degrade them.¹⁷ Du Bois encouraged visual artists to take control of the way African Americans were portrayed in art, and to create images that would uplift the race. *The Crisis*, which was the magazine he published, circulated a range of these images. One such example is Laura Wheeler Waring’s illustration *Egypt Spring*, (figure 3) which decorated the cover of the magazine in April 1923. Waring used Egyptian iconography to represent Africa, which was not unusual in the 1920s, as interest in Egypt escalated because of the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb 1922. Egypt, and Africa, by extension, was the “home of western civilization,” and Du Bois included images in *The Crisis* which reiterated the connection between Egypt and African Americans as a way to show that Africans had a hand in the creation of civilization.¹⁸ *Egypt Spring* shows a young woman playing a harp-like instrument, and harpists were frequently subjects in Egyptian tomb painting. The base of the instrument comes forth, becoming a bust in profile, wearing a deshret, or crown, of Lower Egypt.¹⁹ An Egyptian-inspired decoration borders Waring’s composition, and the artist blends Egyptian and art nouveau imagery. Instead of showing the harpist’s face in profile, which would be closer to the

¹⁶ Mary Ann Calo, “African American Art and Critical Discourse between World Wars,” *American Quarterly* 51, No. 3 (Sep., 1999), 599.

¹⁷ Du Bois, W. E. B. “Criteria of Negro Art.” In *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, edited by David Levering Lewis, 100-5. New York: Viking, 1994. 103.

¹⁸ Kirschke, 95.

¹⁹ Kirschke, 97.

style of Egyptian hieroglyphics, Waring turns the figure's face toward the viewer at an angle. Waring includes imagery which references spring, including a willow tree, birds, and flowers. *Egypt Spring* is especially indicative of the emerging African American middle class, as the figure is in a leisurely setting, and her clothing calls to ancient Egypt which was stylish.²⁰ Though Du Bois's politics changed later in his life, in the early 1920s he was invested in the creation of the image of middle class African Americans, whom he referred to as the "talented tenth."²¹ Du Bois considered this social class to be the leaders of social uplift.

Similarly to Waring's illustration, Catlett's *The Negro Woman* portrays African American women in a positive light, and the prints in the series could certainly be understood as socially uplifting. As I will discuss in depth in the second chapter, Catlett's work displays black female heroism in *The Negro Woman* series by showing historical figures like Harriet Tubman and Phillis Wheatley. The differences between Waring's image and Catlett's show how artistic trends were developing from the New Negro movement of the 1920s to the mid-1940s. Unlike Waring's image, Catlett focuses on both middle class and working class women acting with agency, like women taking the initiative to educate themselves by attending classes (figure 4) and leading labor protests for the betterment of their community (figure 5). Catlett communicates social uplift in visual language remarkably different from Waring's work. Catlett's style shares more similarities to the Mexican social realist style than with African or Egyptian imagery. Catlett's adopts this visual language through the scenes she chooses to focus on, which includes heroic images of slaves, housecleaners, and manual laborers in addition to people in the middle class. She creates her work using linocuts, in which she uses textural hatch

²⁰ Kirschke, 105.

²¹ Kirschke, 88-89.

marks. Artists of Waring's generation were allured by Egyptian imagery as it evokes a history of self-governance, in which Africans ruled as kings and queens.²² By showing African American women in the visual language of the TGP, *The Negro Woman* shifts to adopt a Marxist model, in which she focuses on the lives of the working class rather than the upper class, like in Waring's illustration.

The Negro Woman also engages with philosophy espoused by Alain Locke, though indirectly. In Locke's popular book *The New Negro*, published in 1925, he proclaimed the importance of African art as the influence of "modern" art movements. Locke mentored several of the major writers and artists of the movement, including Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston. Disagreeing with Du Bois on the role and responsibility of the African American artist, Locke argued that the artist should express his own individuality through his work as a way to communicate universal ideas of humanity, instead of using art as "propaganda." Locke reasoned that African American's cultural contributions of music and folk art were "unconsciously" absorbed by the South. He encouraged artists to focus on creating meaningful artistic contributions, and take their position as collaborators in American Civilization. Locke said that once African American artists made notable contributions to those fields, then they would be "initiated into American democracy."²³ His views about aesthetics developed throughout his career, and his writings in the 1930s put less emphasis on "tribal antecedents" as he started to see the way "native black folk culture" influenced artists.²⁴ However, he never fully abandoned his argument that "African art worked as a powerful

²² Kirshke, 98-99.

²³ Locke, 50.

²⁴ Calo, 601.

facilitator for black expression.”²⁵ By employing the visual language of the TGP, Catlett creates her series through a modernist style. Additionally, Catlett references the importance of black artistic labor in her panel *In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery* (figure 1). The print valorizes Wheatley, who was a slave and the first black woman to publish a book of poetry. She shows Wheatley at an oval writing table, gesturing to her head in a pensive pose, while penning words on paper.

The ideas that were popularized and debated during the New Negro Movement profoundly influenced the African American artists and intellectuals of Elizabeth Catlett’s artistic milieu, including Charles White and Jacob Lawrence. These artists were the first generation trained by the artists and theorists of the Harlem Renaissance who Locke advocated for. The debates and conversations during the New Negro Movement solidified the importance of art to African American communities. From 1931 to 1935, Catlett attended Howard, a historically black university, where Locke worked as a professor. In addition to Locke, James Herring and James Porter taught at Howard, and they were considered the founding scholars of African American art history.²⁶ Published literature on Catlett erroneously states that she studied with Locke, though Catlett asserts that she got nothing from his work, and she regarded Porter as her biggest influence at Howard.²⁷ Herzog asserts that Locke’s ideas on aesthetics were ubiquitous at Howard, so the traces of Locke’s ideas in Catlett’s work more likely had to do with the influence of her classmates and her contemporaries rather than Locke’s work itself.²⁸

²⁵ Calo, 601.

²⁶ Herzog, 16.

²⁷ Visionaryproject, “Elizabeth Catlett: Legends at Howard University.” Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ew5QmH184o. April 26, 2010. (Accessed November 3, 2015).

²⁸ Herzog, 17.

Porter and Locke disliked each other, and engaged in debates on issues of aesthetics.²⁹ Calling Locke's approach "racialist," Porter disagreed with Locke encouraging African American artists to express themselves through the imagery of their African past, which was so distant from their actual experience.³⁰ In *The New Negro*, Locke argued that the influence of African tribal art significantly changed European painting and sculpture, and helped release art from rigid academic practices. He reasoned that African tribal influences could potentially inspire the African American artist.³¹ Porter claimed that capitalizing on race was part of the same problem which led to racial subjugation in the United States. Most important, Porter believed that Locke's approach limited African American artists. Howard was a leader for teaching and exhibiting African American art in the United States. Her time at Howard, and Porter's encouragement, exposed Catlett not only to the work of important black artists, but also to the concept of "cross cultural modernism," which interwove studies of America, South America, Africa, and the Caribbean.³² Porter notably introduced Catlett to the work of the Mexican Muralists.³³ This approach must have influenced Catlett's creation of *The Negro Woman* series, as the style moves away from African influences, and bears more similarities with the Mexican Social Realist style.

Regionalism: Working with Grant Wood

²⁹ Herzog, 16.

³⁰ Calo, 601.

³¹ Calo, 601.

³² Keith Morrison, *Art in Washington and its Afro-American presence: 1940-1970* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Project for the Arts, 1985), 12.

³³ Herzog, 53.

Catlett used a regionalist approach when she created *The Negro Woman* series, in that she regarded her own experiences within a larger national context, and explored themes like heroism, tragedy, and labor, by showing scenes to which she was familiar. She titles each print through a first person African American female narrator. Catlett chooses to make her works in a figurative style, instead of abstract. She shows the race of her protagonists by illustrating their physiognomy, and using shading techniques and color. In *The Negro Woman* series, Catlett includes a closely cropped portrait of an African American woman's face, which is printed in both black and brown ink to call attention the woman's race (figure 24). Catlett wanted African American women to be able to see at least part of themselves reflected in her work.³⁴ By choosing to create her series in the linocut print media, Catlett positions her prints to be circulated to a wide audience in places like libraries, schools, hospitals, and other public spaces. Her own experiences as an African American woman trying to access art in segregated spaces surely influenced her artistic approach.³⁵ In a 1975 essay, Catlett lauded the work of black artists to bring art to the public. She wrote,

Because art needs to be public to reach the majority of blacks, regardless of class, the artists are taking art to the streets in mural painting, to the churches and other meeting places. They are working in cultural centers with both children and adults; some are bringing a chance for artistic expression into the prisons. We must go where black people are.³⁶

Catlett preferred the print media because she intended to ensure that a black audience could access her work, regardless of social boundaries.

Catlett attended Iowa State College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts and completed her MFA in 1940, where she was one of two black students in the art department. She decided to go

³⁴ Herzog, 38.

³⁵ Herzog, 38-39.

³⁶ Elizabeth Catlett, "Role of the Black Artist," *Black Scholar* 6:9 (June 1975), 12.

to Iowa on the recommendation of her colleagues at the North Carolina College for Negroes, where she was teaching at the time, and she wanted to study painting with Grant Wood (1891-1942).³⁷ Wood was a “regionalist,” which was a school of American art popularized in the 1930s and 1940s focused on local, representational subject matter. The major regionalists, Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, were Midwesterners, and tended to focus on rural scenes as opposed to city life because that was the subject matter in which they were most familiar. Wood gave the advice to Catlett to create what she knew.³⁸ This artistic practice influenced her thought process when she made *The Negro Woman* series, and her career as an artist.

Regionalists tried to use experiences from their surroundings as a way to convey themes which crossed boundaries. Wood’s *Spring Turning* (figure 7) is one example of an idyllic farm landscape set in the Midwest, likely Iowa, which connects to the more universal theme of the fertility of the earth, and the changing of seasons. As a native of Iowa, Wood would have been familiar with how farmers altered the land on their farms throughout the year by tilling, hoeing, and harvesting.³⁹ Wood’s work is nostalgic, as he shows a farmer at the bottom of the field plowing with horses instead of tractors and machinery used in the 1930s.⁴⁰ Wood used the approach of regionalism as a way to communicate universal themes through his specific point of view. By painting a farm in Iowa, Wood also communicated the union of man to earth. He included curved hills, which are a rich green color with brown geometric patterns which show

³⁷ Herzog, 19.

³⁸ Herzog, 22.

³⁹Wanda Corn, *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 90.

⁴⁰ Corn, 90.

diagonal movement throughout the composition. The landscape is overwhelmingly larger than the farmer and his horses. Alluding to the fertility of the land, Wood anthropomorphizes the contours of the hills or creating the landscape to be suggestive of a person's body.

Through Wood's example, Catlett learned to make her work about what she knew, and what Catlett knew was her own sense of her African American identity larger national context, which is shown through *The Negro Woman* series.⁴¹ For regionalists working in the mid-west like Wood, the process of focusing on what he knew de-privileged the urban centers as the forefront of art production, and redefined what it meant to be an American artist.⁴² Using a similar model, Catlett focuses on African American figures in her work to embody themes of maternity, heroism, and sorrow. In doing so, Catlett's work attempted to de-privilege white figures in art as signifiers of those themes. Even though Catlett had seen African art at Howard, she saw themes of maternity in Iowa predominantly focused on the dominant Eurocentric tradition. The Eurocentric focus also extended into social realist and regionalist art.⁴³ Museums were thus white spaces, and as a person of African descent, she did not see herself represented in the art tradition, which was why it was so important for her to create works of art in which black women could see themselves.⁴⁴ In 1940, Catlett was the chair of the Art Department at Dillard in New Orleans. She wanted to take her students to the Delgado Museum to see a large Picasso exhibition. Many of her students had never been to a museum. The entrance to the Delgado Museum was located in a segregated park, which barred her students' entrance. She organized

⁴¹ Herzog, 21.

⁴² Calo, 599.

⁴³ Herzog, 23.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

for her students to be bussed directly to the entrance of the museum to see the exhibition.⁴⁵

Catlett was thinking about black audiences, and their ability to enter museums when she created *The Negro Woman*. The multiple prints could circulate in schools, libraries, and other public spaces, instead of a single work placed in a museum setting, which would be difficult for African Americans to access. Catlett used her knowledge from her experiences at museums to readjust the way she circulated her work, and to de-privileged the institution of the museum as the only space to show artwork.

In addition to learning about regionalism, her work with Wood helped her develop a systematic approach to creating a composition. Wood favored diagonal lines, which he termed “dynamic symmetry.” When remembering the way Wood worked, Catlett said, “He made diagonal lines from one point to another point all over this piece of paper. And then he did his drawing on that...it gave his work a lot of dynamic movement.”⁴⁶ She learned from his method, but she also developed a method of her own. She says,

When I was married, my husband used an Italian way. It's called the golden system or something like that which is a way of dividing the canvas up, that the renaissance Italians used. But I use--I learned from him (Wood), you have to know what your materials are. You have to know what the paper's like. You have to know all of these technical things and what you can do with color.⁴⁷

Working with Wood not only allowed Catlett to think about her specific perspective in the larger world of art, but he also taught her a framework which she developed to thinking about materials and composition.

⁴⁵ Herzog, 24.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Catlett, Interview by Shawn Wilson, *The HistoryMakers*®, July 25, 2005.

⁴⁷Ibid.

The Political Front

The Negro Woman's content reflects the practices put forth by the Popular Front. The print *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized* (figure 5) exemplifies the union between the importance of visual art and protest. A group of workers of different ethnicities protest unfair labor conditions in front of a factory. A woman stands in the middle of a group of four workers, with a hand raised clenched in a fist. A factory with smoking towers is located on the right side of the page, a distance away from the workers, directly below the woman's fist. The factory and the woman's clenched fist are roughly the same size. The hands of the figures are enlarged and expressive, showing emotion even though the backs of the figures are turned to the viewer. One worker uses his hand comforts a coworker, while another holds a paper with his head bent. Yet another man on the far left gestures outside of the confines of the page. The hatch marks that Catlett uses create a circular movement, which go around the woman at the center. The female figure is in a position of leadership. Like the Popular Front, which attempted to create a platform which united disparate groups together to improve the rights of workers, this print shows the same goal of promoting equality for the working class.

In the 1930s, some artists turned to communism as a viable political model. Communism was a way to challenge authoritative practices of cultural expression connected to the American scene. By 1935, progressive groups with similar interests organized under the Popular Front. They were interested in developing proletarian culture in America in the interest of furthering international communism.⁴⁸ Though each group within the Popular Front maintained their unique differences, they collectively agreed that culture should advance the interests of American nationalists, and defend the proletariat against the threat of fascist tyranny. Sentiment

⁴⁸ Calo, 602.

purported by the Popular Front de-emphasized racial and ethnic differences as a means to both celebrate American collective identity.⁴⁹ Catlett stressed the importance of uniting with people of different nationalities and ethnicities to fight subjugation throughout her career. In 1975, she stated:

Today it is difficult to wrap ourselves in "Blackness," ignoring the rest of exploited humanity for we are an integral part of it. Blackness is important as a part of the struggle- it is our part-not only of blacks in the U.S., Africa and the Carribean, but of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans in the U.S., and the peoples of Asia and Latin America exemplified at the moment by the Chileans and Vietnamese. Through art we can bring understanding to Black America, Chicano America, Puerto Rican America, etc. of the character of racism, the need for its elimination, our mutual problems and our differences. The graphic and plastic image is invaluable, more so because of the extended illiteracy and semi-illiteracy among us.⁵⁰

In *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized*, Catlett shows a group of interracial members united to protest working conditions. Her print emphasizes the importance of black women's participation in the struggle by calling attention to the black woman in the middle of the group.

During the summer of 1941, Catlett visited Chicago to stay with her friend Margaret Burroughs, whom Catlett had met when she visited Chicago to see a Picasso exhibit.⁵¹ Burroughs was one of the founders of the South Side Community Art Center, which followed the model of the Harlem Community Art Center.⁵² She met many artists that summer while taking classes in ceramics and lithography, including the artist Charles White (1918-1979), whom she married later that year.⁵³ White was a painter and a printmaker, and much of his work during the

⁴⁹ Calo, 602.

⁵⁰ Catlett, 14.

⁵¹ Herzog, 25.

⁵² Herzog, 25.

⁵³ Herzog, 26.

early 1940s was in the social realist style, and he centered the content of his work on African American subjects in moments of struggle and heroism. Like many artists in Chicago, White was a member of the Communist Party, and he considered his work to be a political tool. In an interview in 1940 for *Opportunity*, White said, “Paint is the only weapon I have with which to fight what I resent. If I could write, I would write about it. If I could talk, I would talk about it. Since I paint, I must paint about it.”⁵⁴ Art could be used as a weapon, in that it turned identification into a political stance, and shows solidarity with a group of people or a cause.⁵⁵ Art can be a way for unsatisfied citizens to critique politics publically, and to bring attention to ignored issues. Visual art also had the ability to communicate messages to people who were illiterate. Artists created work for the Popular Front in the 1940s, which was integral for the Popular Front’s success.

Catlett and White worked together, inspiring each other. They both enjoyed creating work in a group setting. Stylistically, their print work was similar. For example, Catlett’s 1944 lithograph *War Worker* (figure 8) shared similar stylistic characteristics as White’s 1949 ink and graphite drawing *Trenton Six* (figure 9). Both works show the way both Catlett and White found a firm grasp of the cubist approach, mixed with natural forms, while also being able to communicate emotional complexity. In *War Worker*, the man looks downward, with a furrowed brow and a sorrowful look on his face. Catlett and White both employ figural distortion, and show African American working and poor. Both artists work with black audiences in mind.

Catlett puts special emphasis on the experiences of black women in her work, as shown through *The Negro Woman*. Several prints in the series focus on labor practices, and African American people resisting unfair labor practices. The print *In Harriet Tubman I helped*

⁵⁴ Willard F. Motley, “Negro Art in Chicago,” *Opportunity*, 1940, 21.

⁵⁵ Herzog, 85.

hundreds to freedom shares themes with *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized*, as both prints show African Americans leading revolts against unfair labor practices. The slaves escape from servitude, while the protestors resist unfair labor practices in the factory. Including both of these prints allows Catlett to show the participation of African American communities in labor practices throughout American history.

Mexico and the Taller de Grafica Popular

The Negro Woman bears stylistic and contextual similarities to the work of the Mexican Social Muralists, as well as to the Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP). At the beginning of the 1920s, the revolutionary government of Mexico was promoting a new nationalist culture, which conveyed both the historical roots and the contemporary struggles of the people of Mexico.⁵⁶ Artists, who were sponsored by Mexican leaders to work on public commissions, grappled with ideological conflicts of the twentieth century, including land reform, labor rights, economic nationalism, and creating a secular society. Involved with international issues, leaders in the Mexican government were concerned about the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan, and felt sympathy toward the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ These issues reached an apex in Mexico during Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency, from 1934 to 1940. Cárdenas distributed more land to peasant families than any of his predecessors, and also supported organized labor. The TGP was loosely affiliated with Cárdenas's administration, though some artists were sympathetic to the Mexican Communist Party.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Linda Frickman, *Mexican Prints from the Calle Collection: The Taller de Gráfica Popular and Graphic Commitment* (Fort Collins, CO: University Art Museum, Colorado State University, 2011), 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Frickman, 8.

Mexican Social Realists believed that art could and should engage directly with social, economic, and political conditions. Encouraging communal interaction toward the mutual goals of celebrating cultural heritage and fighting oppression, the work of the Mexican Social Realists became a model for African-American artists in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁹ The New Negro Movement and the work of the Mexican Social Realists ran parallel to one another. David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974) lived in a neighborhood in Harlem from 1919-1920, and painted African Americans in his murals.⁶⁰ In 1930, José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) created a series of lithographs that criticized racial discrimination.⁶¹ Many U.S. artists looked to the work of the Mexican Muralists as an example of modern and socially engaged art.⁶²

Both White and Catlett applied for and received the Rosenwald grant in 1945 and moved to Mexico together to work with the TGP as visitors, and Catlett adopted both stylistic conventions and content which the TGP made influential in *The Negro Woman* series. Founded in 1937 in Mexico, the Taller de Grafica Popular (TGP) was an artist collective who worked together to create graphic work, like posters, prints, and pamphlets which supported trade unions and denounced fascism on a local and international level.⁶³ The artists of the TGP worked as a collective and enacted an open, anti-elitist policy, manifested in both the material quality of the work as well as in the methodological practice of the group. They welcomed women, poor, indigenous, and artists of color to partake in the collective, and they encouraged broad

⁵⁹ Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Shifra M. Goldman, *In the spirit of resistance: African-American modernists and the Mexican muralist school = En el espíritu de la resistencia : Los modernistas africanoamericanos y la escuela muralista Mexicana*, (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1996), 33.

⁶⁰ LeFalle-Collins and Goldman, 11.

⁶¹ LeFalle-Collins and Goldman, 11-12.

⁶² LeFalle-Collins and Goldman, 12.

⁶³ Herzog, 82.

acceptance of stylistic differences.⁶⁴ The collective created socially relevant and stylistically interesting works. By holding meetings every week, the TGP invited organizations from their community to come and request graphic work. Catlett says, “Somebody would come in and say this is the situation in our organization, or in our school, or in our union, or whatever, and this is the problem we have...Mexico at that time was something like 49 percent illiterate, [so] graphic art was very important.”⁶⁵ Not only was the TGP working as an artist group, they were working with the community to create their work.

The members of the TGP chose to make their work accessible to their intended audience, who were working class people, which is reflected stylistically in their prints, and through medium.⁶⁶ The collective preferred figurative, as opposed to abstract, depictions of people and scenes. This choice made the political messages of their work transparent and understandable. The images that the collective created are representational of real objects and people as their source material. The artists of the TGP frequently used a cross-hatching method, which created expressive and dynamic lines of varying widths. Catlett, too, used a similar method to create the linocuts for *The Negro Woman*. For example, in the print *In the Fields* (figure 10), which shows a barefoot woman using a hoe to till a patch of plants, Catlett varies the width of the line to make the path between the foliage recede, which guides the eye to a structure in the background. She uses very thin lines to create the features of the woman’s face, yet she digs deeper to create thicker lines for the pathways and leafy crops.

⁶⁴ Frickman, 13.

⁶⁵ Herzog, 56.

⁶⁶ Herzog, 54.

The collective frequently used linocuts and lithography to create their work, and occasionally created woodcuts. Linocuts were much faster to produce than woodcuts, so artists could quickly respond to current events in politics. The artists of the collective printed their work on *papel chino*, which is a thin, newsprint quality paper, with an ephemeral quality. However, they also used a heavier stock and quality of paper to make works for exhibition prints. By making multiples using inexpensive material, their work could circulate, and reach a wide audience of ordinary Mexican people.⁶⁷ Following the same model, Catlett intended for *The Negro Woman* series to be seen by many people in communal spaces and schools in the United States.⁶⁸ Catlett thought that black printmakers could learn a great deal from the “social and political injection of art in the lives of Mexicans.” She critiqued the way artists in the United States emphasized limited editions of prints, which could be sold to an exclusive class of buyers. The TGP, however, stressed the use of art as a way to benefit Mexican people. Catlett stressed that could be a “weapon against fascism and imperialism, as well as technical excellence.”⁶⁹ The class character of prints could be eliminated completely if artists stopped restricting editions in linoleum engravings, and instead printed thousands of copies. Then, the art could be sold cheaply, and its class character would be eliminated.⁷⁰ Favoring the linocut medium, she was able to make multiple prints of *The Negro Woman* which could circulate and be purchased by multiple patrons.

⁶⁷ Herzog, 54.

⁶⁸ Herzog, 54.

⁶⁹ Catlett, 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

One of the collective projects of the TGP was the *Estampas de la Revolucion Mexicana*, a portfolio of eighty-five linocuts published in 1947. *Estampas* shows revolutionary zeal, daring acts, and the suffering of workers as heroes.⁷¹ Herzog argues that Catlett was inspired by the TGP's *Estampas de la Revolucion Mexicana* as a way to "envision her epic celebration of the historic oppression, resistance, and survival of African American women."⁷² Indeed, through media and style, Catlett puts a distinct twist on the work of the artists of the TGP. *Estampas* is an epic historical narrative that shows the Mexican Revolution from the point of view of the people who were engaged with the struggle. A woodcut print from the *Estampas* series by Catlett's second husband Francisco Mora titled *Los indígenas de México son despojados de su tierra*, or *The Indians of Mexico are Stripped of their Land* (figure 11), shows a light-skinned well-dressed landlord on the right side of the page strikes a whip in the direction of the darker skinned indigenous people walking in a procession across the page. *Los indígenas* calls attention to the creation of Mexico at the expense of indigenous populations.

In *The Negro Woman*, Catlett focuses on the acts of heroism and oppression faced by African Americans. In her print titled *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom* (figure 2), Catlett shows Harriet Tubman as much larger than the rest of her party, pointing decidedly to a location off of the page. Tubman firmly plants her shoed feet on the ground, while the escapees are in motion. Placed in the foreground, Tubman's body takes up half of the left side of the composition. Extending her muscular arm forward and pointing with her index finger, Tubman gestures to a location beyond the right edge of the print. The posture of Tubman's body is confident and knowing, and her facial features read as stern. Like *Los indigenas*, Catlett's print shows oppressed people walking in a line towards a location outside the picture plane.

⁷¹ Herzog, 57.

⁷² Herzog, 58-59.

Both Mora's and Catlett's prints show a woman at the front of the crowd, protectively embracing her infant child close to her body in a gesture of maternal love and protection as she walks in the procession. In Catlett's print, the man beside Tubman carries a large bag, suggesting he is carrying all his worldly belongings, or perhaps supplies for the road. Other prints in *The Negro Woman* show scenes of oppression. For example, in the print *And a special fear for my loved ones* (figure 12), Catlett creates a composition which shows a lynched African American man lying on the ground, with the feet of his three attackers standing behind him. The man's hands are large and accentuated, and the figure is large, taking up a lot of the space.

Catlett briefly returned to the United States in 1947 to process a divorce to her first husband Charles White. She married Francisco Mora, who was a member of the TGP, and lived in Mexico with him until her death. Though these different stages shared common themes, each group had a specific political and stylistic perspective that influenced *The Negro Woman*. In my second chapter, I will build upon the information presented in this chapter, and show how the complexities of heroism displayed in *The Negro Woman* pull from Catlett's experience working in artist groups.

CHAPTER 2: *THE NEGRO WOMAN* AND ESTABLISHING THE BLACK FEMALE HEROIC

In *The Negro Woman* series, Elizabeth Catlett creates the black female heroic in all its multiplicities by simultaneously depicting famous heroes like Harriet Tubman and Phillis Wheatley and unnamed protagonists, like domestic workers who support their families. Catlett's work crosses the boundaries of time, bringing the past and the present together into a singular narrative, and she uses the heroic figures of the past as a way to reflect on her present. Celeste-Marie Bernier's 2012 *Characters of the Blood* offers a thorough definition of the black female heroic that helps illuminate Catlett's *The Negro Woman* series. To fully understand black female heroism, it is important to complicate the idea of the black female hero by considering the array of roles that the person embodies. By interpreting the ways in which political, historical, and popular discourse frames black female heroism, Bernier creates a revision of the black female heroic, and she offers an alternative framework for understanding the past. She shows black female historical figures as self-emancipated, politically radical, and not confined by the ideals of black male heroism. Moreover, Bernier's work demonstrates that historical figures acted as multidimensional individuals who were the creators of their own image.

Too often the labor of black women is ignored, and instead of interpreting a black woman as a hero in her own right, her accomplishments are relegated to function only as catalysts to heroic black male heroes. Bernier uses the example of the freedom fighter Madison Washington from Frederick Douglass's novella *The Heroic Slave*. Madison's wife, Susan Washington, dies at the hands of white slave owners. She is the martyr who inspires Madison, the black male

hero, to fight for liberty and death to avenge Susan's life.⁷³ Bernier argues that both Tubman and Truth offered "powerful and alternative" ways which challenge the concept of the 'heroic slave' or 'black hero,' which was overwhelmingly constructed as male.⁷⁴ Bernier says, "As freedom fighters working across stereotypically feminized and masculine domains, Truth and Tubman worked to reposition the black female figure, not solely as a self-sacrificing martyr or catalyst to black male heroism, but as a revolutionary and quintessential liberator in her own right."⁷⁵ Bernier explains the importance of understanding black female heroism as "radical" and "self-emancipatory."⁷⁶ Before the slaves freed themselves, they imagined themselves as freed people, which was the first step to breaking from the captivity of the national status-quo.⁷⁷ This self-imagination manifested itself in the way freed slaves like Tubman and Sojourner Truth chose to portray themselves in photographs, images, writing, and speeches.⁷⁸ In *The Negro Woman* series, Catlett includes historical figures like Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Tubman as radical and self-emancipated, which certainly overlaps with Bernier's argument. Catlett shows Tubman and radical and self-emancipated by showing her in a scene in which she is helping a group of slaves escape. Under Tubman's lead, the slaves are challenging law and the national status-quo by asserting their humanity, and freeing themselves by escaping from the south. Phillis Wheatley, too, proved that slaves and black women were capable of creative excellence by being the first

⁷³ Bernier, 8.

⁷⁴ Bernier, 13-14.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Bernier, 12.

⁷⁷ Ariella Azoulay, *Civil imagination: a political ontology of photography* (London: Verso, 2012), 3.

⁷⁸ Bernier, 19-20.

black woman to publish a book of poetry. Wheatley showed agency by expressing herself through her writing.

In the linocut *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom* (figure 2), Catlett constructs Harriet Tubman as a radical and self-emancipated “heroic” figure who leads a group of escaped slaves towards liberation. Tubman was perhaps the most famous of the “conductors” of the Underground Railroad. She led nineteen successful trips into the south, helping over 300 slaves.⁷⁹ Catlett’s image borrows imagery from a widely circulated woodblock frontispiece of Tubman made by J.C. Darby (figure 13), which accompanied Sarah H. Bradford’s *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* published in 1869. Said to have been styled after a daguerreotype, though the original has yet to be found, the portrait was one in which Tubman took pride.⁸⁰ If it is true that the photograph was inspired by a daguerreotype, then Tubman, as an agent in the photographic exchange, would have worked with a photographer to fashion her portrait. The sartorial choices, stance, and facial expression describe her identity as a person, as well as her role as a freedom fighter. Darby’s woodcut captures Tubman’s militancy. She poses outside of a camp, creating a strong triangular composition, wearing a striped skirt, head-wrap, trench coat, and bag on her hip. Most importantly, she holds the barrel of a long rifle in front of her. The portrait of Tubman starkly differs from those of Phillis Wheatley or Sojourner Truth, who are typically portrayed in genteel interior settings.

In Catlett’s print, like several other portrayals of Tubman created in the early and mid-1940s, the artist surely references the clothing choices and demeanor captured by Darby’s woodcut. Catlett dresses Tubman in clothing similar to that in the Darby, including a head scarf, trench coat, large bag hanging to her side, and distinctive striped skirt. The distinct patten of the

⁷⁹ PBS, “Harriet Tubman,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html> (Accessed November 3, 2015).

⁸⁰ Bernier, 320.

skirt repeats in several other likenesses of Tubman, including the seventh panel of Jacob Lawrence's *Harriet Tubman* series (ca. 1939-1940, figure 14), as well as in William H. Johnson's *Harriet Tubman* (1945, figure 15). Catlett returns to the subject of Harriet Tubman two more times during her career and in these works she more explicitly refers to Darby's print. In her 1953-54 linocut (figure 16), Catlett mimics the triangular composition of Darby's woodcut, while also including a similar gesture pointing outward that she includes in her 1945 linocut. Her 1975 linocut of Tubman (figure 17) shows a similar composition to her 1945 linocut, but also includes the rifle. Though the print from *The Negro Woman* series does not include a rifle, Catlett still portrays Tubman with an air of radical militancy. By rendering her print in the visual language of the TGP, Catlett aligns Tubman's work with anti-fascist social struggles pertinent to the mid-1940s. This print focuses on escaped slaves, who were part of the oppressed working class. Tubman is the largest figure of the group, and Catlett accentuates her muscular physique, confidently pointing onward to an unknown location off of the page. Tubman's feet and hands are enlarged. Catlett uses expressive hatch marks and lines to create a sense of depth and movement. By referencing Darby's woodcut, which was an image in which Tubman took pride, Catlett's work nods to Tubman's agency to creating her own image.

To fully understand black female heroism, it is important to complicate the idea of the black female hero. Instead of thinking of the black female hero as symbolic of an idea, one should instead consider the array of roles that the person embodies. Bernier confronts one-dimensional interpretations of black female heroism, calling for the reader to think of the historical figure not as a symbol, but as a complex person.⁸¹ When talking about Sojourner Truth, Bernier explains how First Lady Michelle Obama used Truth as a "touchstone for black

⁸¹ Bernier, 200.

female spiritual, political, social, and cultural emancipation... Truth functions as an archetypal embodiment of the ongoing fight for black female equality.”⁸² By problematizing Obama’s use of Truth, Bernier argues that Truth herself was “perpetually at war against static, one-dimensional and mythologized representations of black womanhood.”⁸³ Bernier continues, “Truth’s life and works testify to her fight to elude fixity and defy definition as she engaged in diverse signifying practices... African. Legend. Prophet. Orator. Fugitive. Feminist. Performer. Trickster. Mother. Wife. Symbol. Daughter. Heroine.”⁸⁴ Bernier complicates the idea of the hero by emphasizing the way the people who are understood as heroes asserted their agency by portraying themselves in photographs, through performances, and through writings.

As a way to show the multiplicity of experiences of African American women, Catlett chooses a single narrator reflecting on herself through the stories of multiple protagonists, who show an array of responses and complexities that no single figure could encompass. Catlett depicts Tubman as a strong and militant leader, though she also portrays heroism in her Phillis Wheatley print, *In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery* (figure 1). Wheatley’s heroism stemmed from her writerly talent. In this print, Catlett shows Wheatley in the process of thinking and writing. Wheatley holds a feather quill, writing on a sheet of blank paper, and gestures her hand towards her face in a pensive pose. Wheatley (1753-1784) proved the creative talent of African American women, as she was the first black poet in America to publish a book. She worked as a household slave, and her masters educated her. She read and wrote in English by the age of nine, and she wrote poetry at the age of thirteen. She published

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

her book of poetry, titled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* in London in 1773 at the age of 20.⁸⁵

Catlett borrows imagery from an engraving on Wheatley's cover page, which is attributed to Scipio Moorhead (figure 18), to create Wheatley's likeness. Moorhead is popularly believed to have been the African American engraver who created Wheatley's image, though Gwendolyn Shaw points out that little evidence proves he actually made the image.⁸⁶ Since Catlett's choice to borrow from this imagery could perhaps also be a nod to black visual artistic creativity, in addition to Wheatley's writing capability. As Shaw points out, Wheatley is shown as "completely self-possessed" and "fully clothed" which was vastly different from the images of black women being tortured and humiliated circulated decades before Wheatley's frontispiece was created.⁸⁷ Seated in profile, Wheatley wears clothing with embellishments, including a bonnet and a ribbon around her neck, which a servant would not wear. The artist includes visual indications of Wheatley's creativity and intelligence by accentuating her forehead. She sits at an oval writing table with a pen in her hand, contemplating her work. Shaw suggests the possibility that since Wheatley's book reached a wide audience, her frontispiece inspired the writers who posed for portraits.⁸⁸ This shows the importance not just of Wheatley's writing, but of Moorhead's contribution to portraiture as a visual artist.

Catlett follows this model not by creating autobiographical images, but by reframing the way she chooses to pass down history through her artwork. Catlett highlights the participation of

⁸⁵ Gwendolyn Shaw, *Portraits of People: picturing African Americans in the nineteenth century* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2006), 26.

⁸⁶ Shaw, 27.

⁸⁷ For a thorough explanation of these images, see Shaw, 31-32.

⁸⁸ Shaw, 38-39.

black women as creative and self-emancipatory figures. As in the print attributed to Moorhead, Wheatley sits in profile, writing with a quill pen on an oval table. But Catlett diverges from this depiction by including three slaves chained together in the background. In addition to thinking of Wheatley's artistic creativity, including the slaves in the background could refer to the creativity of the slaves who did not have the means to express themselves through writing or art due to restrictions in education and resources. As Herzog observes, the three women in the back are "visual manifestations of (Wheatley's) experience as a slave."⁸⁹ Moreover, the three slaves "suggest Catlett's understanding that this poet represents the creative potential for other women who did not have the means to express themselves in a like manner."⁹⁰ Catlett intends for both Wheatley's and Tubman's heroism to be interpreted as an extension of the unnamed black woman who bookends the series. She is the narrator, and the audience reads the titles of the prints through her perspective. When speaking about herself, the titular Negro Woman narrates, *In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery*, and Tubman's print entitled *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom* (emphasis mine). The exceptional heroism of Wheatley and Tubman is represented as also available to all black women. The narrative of the series comes from the first-person perspective of a black woman, who is the stand-in for the viewer to imagine himself or herself.

Catlett takes this idea of heroism even further by showing the bravery not just of famous historical figures but of unnamed women enduring the struggles of the 1940s. In a set of four images, Catlett describes oppression faced due to Jim Crow laws and norms in the South and red-lining in the North. The titles are as follows: *My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land* (figure 19)...*I have special reservations* (figure 20)...*Special Houses* (figure

⁸⁹ Herzog, 61.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

21)...*And a special fear for my loved ones* (figure 12) Though I will more depth about this set of four in my third chapter, it is worth noting that Catlett nuances the definition of the heroic figure by showing the bravery of people who must endure racism. Going beyond Bernier's model of heroism, Catlett shows women who were not well-known historical figures are self-emancipated heroes. Bernier's model focuses on well-known people who would have had a platform and an audience to circulate their work. Catlett, however, shows that people were fashioning a radical self-emancipated identity who were not historical heroes.

By portraying Tubman as a powerful leader of a group of escapees in her own right, not a catalyst for a man's achievements, Catlett establishes the black female heroic outside of the constrictions which Bernier critiques. As a self-emancipated leader, Tubman helps a group of escaped slaves dismantle a system of oppression and free themselves. As the creator of the print and an African American woman, Catlett also acts as an agent, creating a version of the black female heroic with her work.

CHAPTER 3: DISSONANCE BETWEEN TITLE AND IMAGE IN *THE NEGRO WOMAN*

Catlett created *The Negro Woman* from the perspective of a black female narrator, using titles to guide the viewer from one scene to the next. Sometimes descriptive, sometimes bitterly ironic, the titles in *The Negro Woman* series do not simply explain the scene at hand. Paired with the imagery, the titles create a sense of dissonance, in which there is a disconnect between the title and the image. This slippage prompts the viewer to establish his or her own interpretation of the meaning of the panels and the series as a whole. The disconnect between word and image appears most noticeably when Catlett uses sardonic humor to describe scenes of trauma and oppression experienced by African American people, specifically women. By comparing the way Catlett titled *The Negro Woman* to the way Jacob Lawrence titled the prints in *The Migration* series, I will show that both artists utilized the titles to create a sense of ambiguity in each respective series. Both Lawrence and Catlett establish a narrative device through a specific voice which guides the viewer through each series, and the narration complicates the way the viewer understands the images.

A title of a work of art can offer insight into the intentions or inspirations of the artist. The artwork's name has a practical function, as it serves as a tool for organization in galleries and museums. Some artists choose non-descriptive names, like "Untitled." For example, the abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) favored titles like *Number 1A, 1948*, (ca. 1948) or *Number 32* (ca. 1950). Pollock's titling schema influenced the meaning of his

work, and the way viewers engaged with his paintings. In Pollock's own words, he wanted viewers to "look passively and try to receive what the painting has to offer and not bring a subject matter or preconceived idea of what they are to be looking for."⁹¹ The purpose of the non-descriptive titles, thus, was to sidestep contextual suggestions. When talking about photographs, art historian Shawn Michelle Smith states that images that "depend entirely on titles for effect are generally not compelling."⁹² She continues, "The harnessing of image to word is almost always an attempt to contain and constrain the many possible meanings a photograph might generate, to curtail its essential excess."⁹³ A title has the potential to raise questions, or to shut questions down entirely. I agree with Smith that titles or captions that open the image up to "messy ambiguity," rather than merely explaining the image are generally more compelling.⁹⁴ Additionally, a title that raises questions allows viewers to interpret the image for themselves. As shown through Catlett's *The Negro Woman*, a title of a piece of art may work with the image it accompanies to raise questions and encourage ambiguity, without necessarily being as minimal as Pollock's.

The lengthy titles that Catlett crafts for the panels in *The Negro Woman* encourage the viewer to understand the narrative through a specific perspective, but the words and images also allow the viewer to interpret the meaning of the work from his or her individual point of view. Catlett established the series from the first-person perspective of a black female narrator by using the word "I." Together the titles read:

⁹¹ Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, *Theories and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artists' writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 23.

⁹² Shawn Michelle Smith, "The Afterimages of Emmett Till." Special issue on "Photography and History," ed. Martin A. Berger, *American Art* 29.1 (Spring 2015), 22.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Smith, 22.

I am the Negro Woman...I have always worked hard in America...In other folks' homes...I have given the world my song...In Sojourner Truth I fought for the rights of women as well as Negroes...In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom...In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery...My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized...I have studied in ever increasing numbers...My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land...I have special reservations...Special houses...And a special fear for my loved ones...My right is a future of equality with other Americans.

Though the “I” of the narrator is singular, it also implies a shared consciousness, or a set of collective ideas operating as a unifying force, felt between African American women. This is because the “I” connects multiple women, including Harriet Tubman, students, and women leading protests through a singular narrator. The “I” is also incongruent with time periods, as it extends to historical figures, exemplified in the print of Harriet Tubman *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom*. The “I” encompasses middle class people of the 1940s getting an education, as well as people escaping slavery in the 1800s. The title *I have always worked hard in America* covers the labor of African American women overlooked in the past, present, and extending into the future. For example, the title *I have studied in ever increasing numbers* does not necessarily allude to a specific time or place. Yet the imagery that Catlett creates dates the scene. The schoolteacher wears a blouse with an embellished collar. The students, too, wear a style of dress evocative of the 1940s.

The titling schema in *The Negro Woman* allows African American women to read the titles through a black female voice, which could possibly reflect at least a part of their own voice. The titles also undermine the normative perspective of a white male. The first panel of *The Negro Woman* negates that implied perspective by boldly stating “I am the Negro Woman.” Catlett was committed to creating a black female audience throughout her lifetime.⁹⁵ Though Catlett was interested in creating art in which African American women could see themselves reflected, her

⁹⁵ Herzog, 6-7.

work also encouraged viewers of different genders and ethnicities to imagine *The Negro Woman* series from the perspective of an African American woman. As Richard Powell points out, Catlett creates a “call and response” performative action via the titles of her prints. Powell says, “As articulated in the titular, first person reference for each print in the series, Catlett invites everyone—women, men, blacks, whites, whomever—to act as surrogate ‘Negro Woman,’ if only via stating of each title.”⁹⁶ Herzog argues that “through naming, (Catlett) transformed the artist/object relationship into one of profound identification.”⁹⁷ In other words, Catlett complicated the subject/object relationship, and the titling device invites viewers of different backgrounds to participate in the narrative through the perspective of the African American woman as a way to experience the work.

The titles used in *The Negro Woman* bear similarities to Jacob Lawrence’s 1940-1941 *Migration of the Negro* series, as both tell a singular story by following the lives of several different protagonists. They both use lengthy titles narrated through a specific voice, which creates a sense of slippage between the title and image. Catlett would have been aware of Lawrence’s work, as the two were friends at that time he created *The Migration* series.⁹⁸ Both artists use titles as a narrative device which connects each individual panel with the series as a whole. Comparing the similarities between Catlett and Lawrence’s work will show the way both artists use ambiguity in the titles to emphasize the emotional power of the image. The act of oral storytelling inspired Lawrence’s *The Migration* series, since he grew up hearing stories and histories of African Americans at the 135th Street Branch New York Public Library, which

⁹⁶ Herzog, 59.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Herzog, 65.

functioned as a gathering place.⁹⁹ Patricia Hills explains, “It was not just the subject matter of African American history that linked him to his community's storytelling traditions, but his approach to his subject and the way he spun out the story the sequencing and grouping of the panels as he constructed each series.”¹⁰⁰ Lawrence acted as a story teller, as he gathered and retold the stories that he heard from the library in his *Migration* series through visual language working with lengthy titles.¹⁰¹ For Lawrence, using multiple protagonists allowed him to tell a variety of stories that no one person could encapsulate. *The Negro Woman*, too, collects a variety of stories and Catlett tells these stories through each panel.

The titles in both *The Negro Woman* and Lawrence's *Migration* series offer information that at first seems to contextualize the image. However, upon closer examination, the titles actually create dissonance between word and image. The viewer is thus asked to make sense of the messy ambiguity between text and image. In *The Negro Woman* series, this ambiguity is most noticeable in the way Catlett employs sardonic humor to title images of oppression and violence against black bodies. The spectacle of violence against black bodies for the consumption of the public has been common in American history for centuries, and continues to this day. Though she does not discuss Catlett or Lawrence's work, Elizabeth Alexander argues, “This history moves from public rapes, beatings, and lynchings to the gladiatorial arenas of basketball and boxing.”¹⁰² She states that black bodies in lynching scenes have been primarily staged and

⁹⁹ Patricia Hills, "Jacob Lawrence as Pictorial Griot: The 'Harriet Tubman' Series." *American Art*. 7.1 (Winter 1993), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Hills, 42.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Elizabeth Alexander, “Can you be BLACK and look at this?": Reading the Rodney King Video(s), in *Black male: representations of masculinity in contemporary American art*, ed. Thelma Golden (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992), 92.

consumed by white men and women, though black people look at those images as well.¹⁰³

Alexander suggests that the lived experience of a person due to their race may influence the way that person looks upon scenes or images of violence against black bodies. She uses an example from Harriet Jacob's *Incidents of the Life of a Slave Girl*, in which the response of protagonist Linda Brent contrasts with that of white spectators. Mrs. Flint, a white woman, was able to "sit in her easy chair, and see a woman whipped, till the blood trickled from every stroke of the lash." Brent, however, was deeply troubled by seeing a fellow slave whipped, remembering the slave's groans and the sound of the whip hitting his flesh.¹⁰⁴ Alexander argues that African American viewers do not simply watch the violence, they bear "witness" to it.¹⁰⁵ The experience of seeing violence against black bodies differs depending on one's individual moral code, and one's lived experience. Black viewers would see the torture, and feel bodily sensations from muscular memory and fear for the victim, while some white viewers did not think of the victim as a human, or see the possibility of the their own bodies becoming victimized by the same acts.¹⁰⁶ Alexander argues that Brent's comparison asks white female readers to reject the position that Mrs. Flint assumes, and to instead be witnesses instead of simply watchers. The distinction between a "witness" and a "watcher" is that a witness sees the humanity of the slave being beaten, and feels sympathy for the slave as a human. A person who "watches" feels no such sympathy, as they do not consider the pain of the slave, because they do not consider the slave as a person. Both Catlett and Lawrence pair violent imagery of lynching, and sorrow for the

¹⁰³ Alexander, 94-95.

¹⁰⁴ Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), eds, L. Maria Child (1861) and Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 12.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander, 96-100.

¹⁰⁶ Jacobs, 12.

aftermath of lynching, with titles that read as sarcastic or apathetic, respectively. The imagery that the two artists use, however, is extremely graphic, showing the psychic trauma and physical trauma that lynching causes. The dissonance between the titles and the imagery creates ambiguity in both pieces, which ask the viewer to take an ethical position without necessarily assigning that stance.

In *The Negro Woman* series, Catlett creates a sense of dissonance when she employs sardonic humor in the titles of scenes of oppression. A set of four prints work together, and the section reads: *My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land* (figure 19)...*I have special reservations* (figure 20)...*Special Houses* (figure 21)...*And a special fear for my loved ones* (figure 16). The words say something contrary to what the images show. The term “my reward” has a positive connotation, though the image accompanying the title shows a woman trapped behind a barbed wire fence, longingly looking outward. Barbed wire, which is meant to harm those who try to pass, could reference the harm that will come for those who go beyond existing racial boundaries. The ambiguity between word and image is one way of criticizing policies which benefit certain people, while harming others. The print titled *Special reservations* shows a group of African American women sitting behind a “colored only” sign on a bus, an example of segregation indicative of experiences in the south under the Jim Crow system. This system barred African Americans from political life, jobs, recreational activities, and public accommodations in addition to transportation. The laws were enforced violently and often times arbitrarily.¹⁰⁷ *Special Houses* displays two figures looking in different directions, with northern urban tenement houses in the background. Many African Americans migrated north to find jobs that paid better wages and to escape segregation. Political and economic forces limited the

¹⁰⁷ Leah Dickerman, Elsa Smithgall, et. al., *Jacob Lawrence: the Migration series* (The Museum of Modern Art: New York, and the Phillips Collection: Washington, D.C., 2015), 140-142.

options of African American residents to particular areas. African American neighborhoods in New York and Chicago were more densely populated and expensive compared to white neighborhoods owing to “redlining,” which was a policy of either denying or overcharging for housing services based on race.¹⁰⁸

The final print in the set of four, titled *And a Special Fear for My Loved Ones*, shows an African American male figure who has been lynched, lying dead on the ground. The feet of three people stand behind him, though the Catlett does not include visual indicators of who the people are. The figures could perhaps be the man’s killers, as the grouping suggests that the event was staged by a mob. Another possibility is that the figures are family or friends of the victim, collecting the body after the attack. This is the only panel from the series lacking a visual figure of a black woman, though the title suggests the intangible idea of “fear” through the perspective of a black woman. It is possible that we look upon the body through the perspective of the mother or friend of the victim, as the title suggests. Lynching, and the fear of lynching, functioned as a method to assert control over African Americans primarily in the south.¹⁰⁹ Catlett frames this traumatic scene through the use of dark humor, which creates a jarring juxtaposition of word and image. This encourages the viewer to choose an ethical position when regarding the act of lynching. Though the title frames the scene through the perspective of a black woman, the interpretation is also dependent on the viewer’s position to racial hierarchy.

Both Lawrence and Catlett create a sense of dissonance between the emotional trauma of the image paired with the blunt, and almost apathetic, titles. Lawrence includes two panels in the *Migration* series that focus on lynching. They read,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Another cause was lynching. It was found that where there had been a lynching, the people who were reluctant to leave at first left immediately after this... Although the Negro was used to lynching, he found this an opportune time for him to leave where one had occurred.

In the first panel (figure 22) , Lawrence shows a noose hanging on a tree, with an African American form hunched on a rock with his or her back to the viewer in grief. The figure withdraws into himself or herself in misery. Lawrence chooses to portray the noose at the center of the composition without the body of the victim. This calls attention to the sorrow caused by lynching. In the second panel (figure 23), a figure wearing red is curled over in grief at a table. Lawrence creates tilted surfaces which give the composition a sense of unease. A bowl and spoon uneasily balance on the edge of the table, almost falling to the ground. The person grieving mourns at the table alone. His abstraction was inspired by Cubist painters like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The way Lawrence creates a formal composition heightens the sense of suffering of the figure and the absence left by the lynching.

The title of the print does not match the imagery it depicts. The neutral tone of the title, compared to the heartbreaking contortion of the grieving woman featured in the print, creates a sense of shock similar to that in Catlett's print *And A Special Fear for Our Loved Ones* (figure 16). The image shows the desolation of the aftermath of the death of a loved one. The words, however, do not go as far as the images. They are monotone, and they merely explain that lynching was a catalyst that encouraged African American people to move north. The title uses a voice that is neither black nor white, but a "descriptive, clinical, journalistic" voice. This voice has no stakes in issues of racism, and is detached from black suffering.¹¹⁰

Through the use of the first-person narrator, Catlett's work exemplifies the radical self-imagination and self-fashioning I discussed in chapter 2. However, unlike the argument that

¹¹⁰ Nathan Grant, "Image and Text in Jacob Lawrence," *Black American Literature Forum* 23, no. 3 (Autumn, 1989): 523-537.

Bernier put forth about historical figures like Truth and Tubman, *The Negro Woman* should not simply be understood as an autobiographical account of Catlett's life, even though she does collect ideas from her life and from the lives of the people around her to inform her work. Both Lawrence and Catlett created a sense of ambiguity when they titled their works, especially in images pertaining to the emotional trauma of lynching or oppression due to economic and political models. Because the titles are not proscriptive, they allow for the viewer to interpret the piece based on his or her moral code.

CONCLUSION

In 1989, Catlett re-released *The Negro Woman* series under the updated name *The Black Woman*. She started using the term “black” in the late 1960s as a way to convey a radical political message. Though the word was less politicized in the late 1980s, it still carried a nuance that distinguished it from “Afro-American” or “African American.” Perhaps the use of the word “black” made the work accessible to audiences across national boundaries. The removal of the antiquated word “negro” was intended to make the work more relatable to people of the 1990s. Changing the word in the title displaces its historical specificity as a work of the 1940s, bringing the image into the 1990s. The choice to update the names reiterates Catlett’s lifelong commitment to telling stories in which her audience can see themselves reflected.

On the basis of what she learned through multiple artist groups, including the New Negro Movement, the Popular Front, regionalism, and the Taller de Grafica Popular, Catlett formed her own artistic style, which she used to create *The Negro Woman* series. By going deeper into the idea of black female heroism, I explained how the protagonists of Catlett’s linocuts in *The Negro Woman* include famous heroes like Harriet Tubman and Phillis Wheatley, as well as unnamed women, such as domestic workers who support their families and women in the south who endure segregation. At the time the series was re-released in 1989, the artist called attention to the fact that specific qualities of black female heroism were still marginalized. *The Negro Woman* series and *The Black Woman* series iterate black female heroes as self-emancipated, radical, multifaceted, and independent of masculine interpretations of heroism. Catlett’s art was

a form of social activism, and *The Negro Woman* taught black women to see their image represented in art heroically.

Through her titling devices, Catlett encouraged the viewer, regardless of his or her race or gender, to imagine *The Negro Woman* through a black female gaze. Her prints display ideas of fear, bravery, and heroism from the perspective of a black woman, and Catlett creates the black female heroic through the perspective of the black female gaze. When creating images of oppression or violence against black bodies, Catlett titles the panels using sardonic humor or sarcasm, which creates a sense of dissonance between the title and the image to which it is paired. Through her artwork, Catlett fused imagery with media to convey Marxist political sympathies, and to find a way to create work which would be accessible to her target audience. Of her work, Catlett said, “I have always wanted my art to service my people — to reflect us, to relate to us, to stimulate us, to make us aware of our potential.”¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Samella Lewis, *African American art and artists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 134.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Elizabeth Catlett, *In Phillis Wheatley I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery*, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 2. Elizabeth Catlett, *In Harriet Tubman I helped hundreds to freedom*, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 3. Laura Wheeler Waring, *Egypt Spring*, from the cover of *The Crisis*, April 1923.



Figure 4. Elizabeth Catlett, *I have studied in ever increasing numbers*, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 5. Elizabeth Catlett, *My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized*, from the Negro Woman series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 6. Elizabeth Catlett, *I have always worked hard in America*, from *The Negro Woman* series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 7. Grant Wood, *Spring Turning*, 1936, oil on Masonite, Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

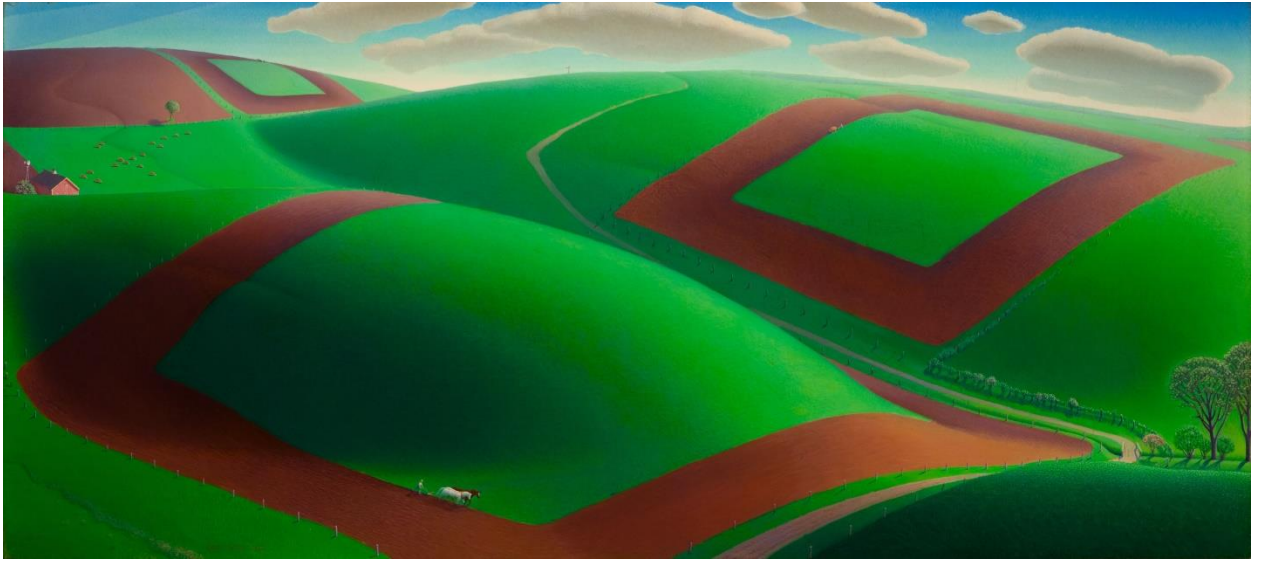


Figure 8. Elizabeth Catlett, *War Worker*, 1944, lithograph.

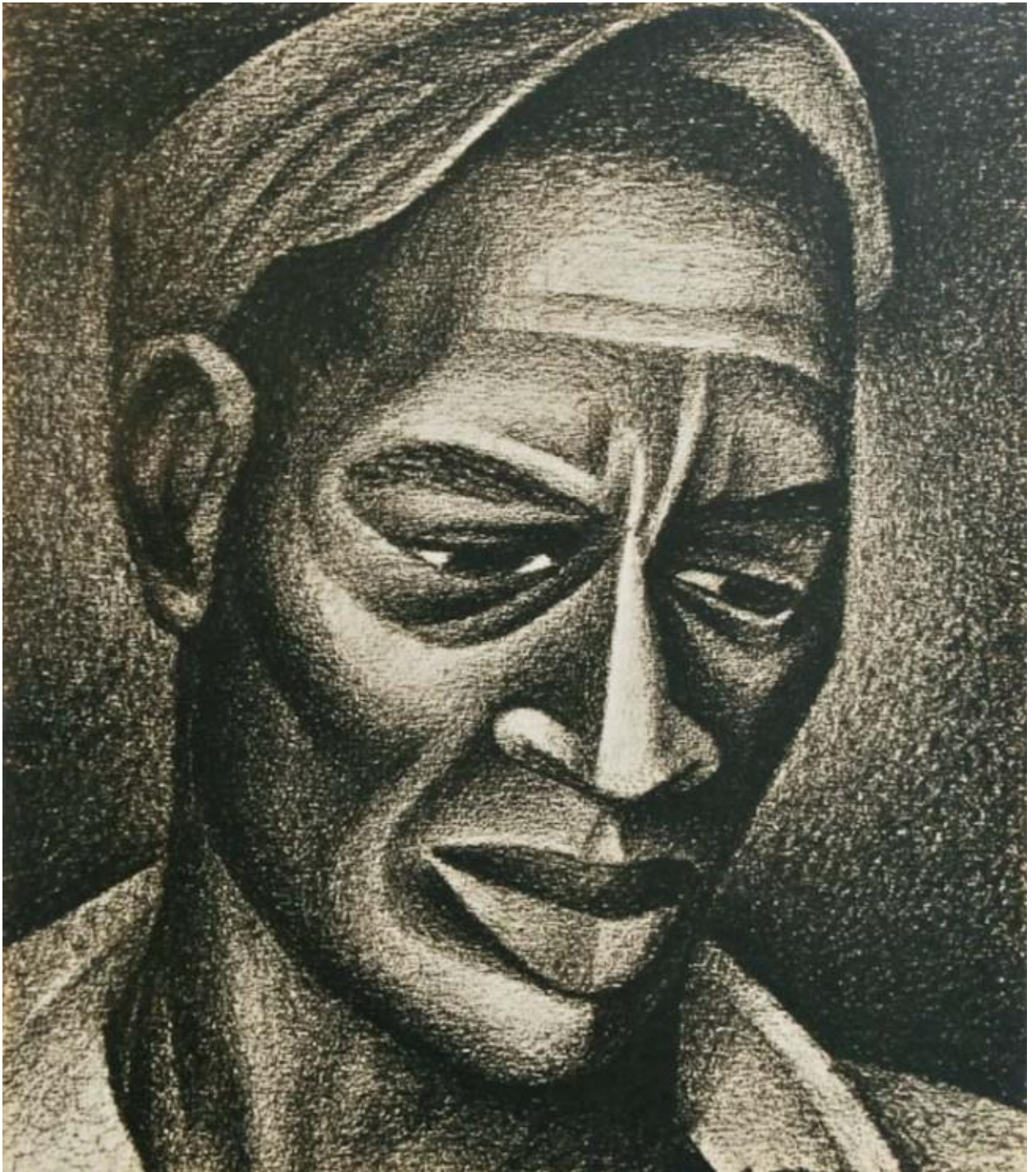


Figure 9. Charles White, *The Trenton Six*, 1949, graphite and ink on paperboard, 22" X 30"
Private Collection.



Figure 10. Elizabeth Catlett, *In the fields*, from the Negro Woman series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 11. Francisco Mora, *Los indígenas de México son despojados de su tierra*, from *Estapmas de la Revolución Mexicana*, 1947, woodcut print, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

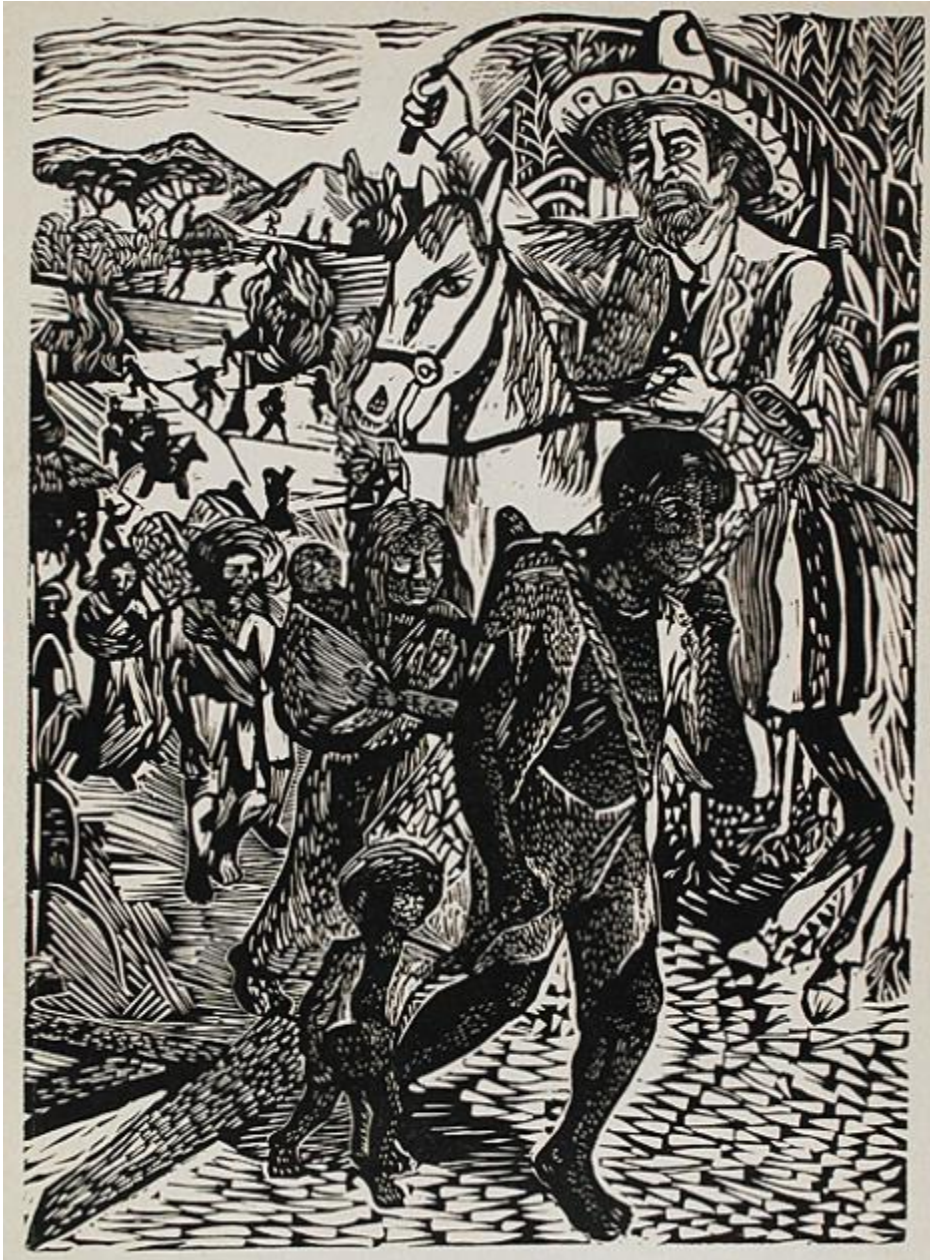


Figure 12. Elizabeth Catlett, *And a special fear for my loved ones*, from *The Negro Woman* series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

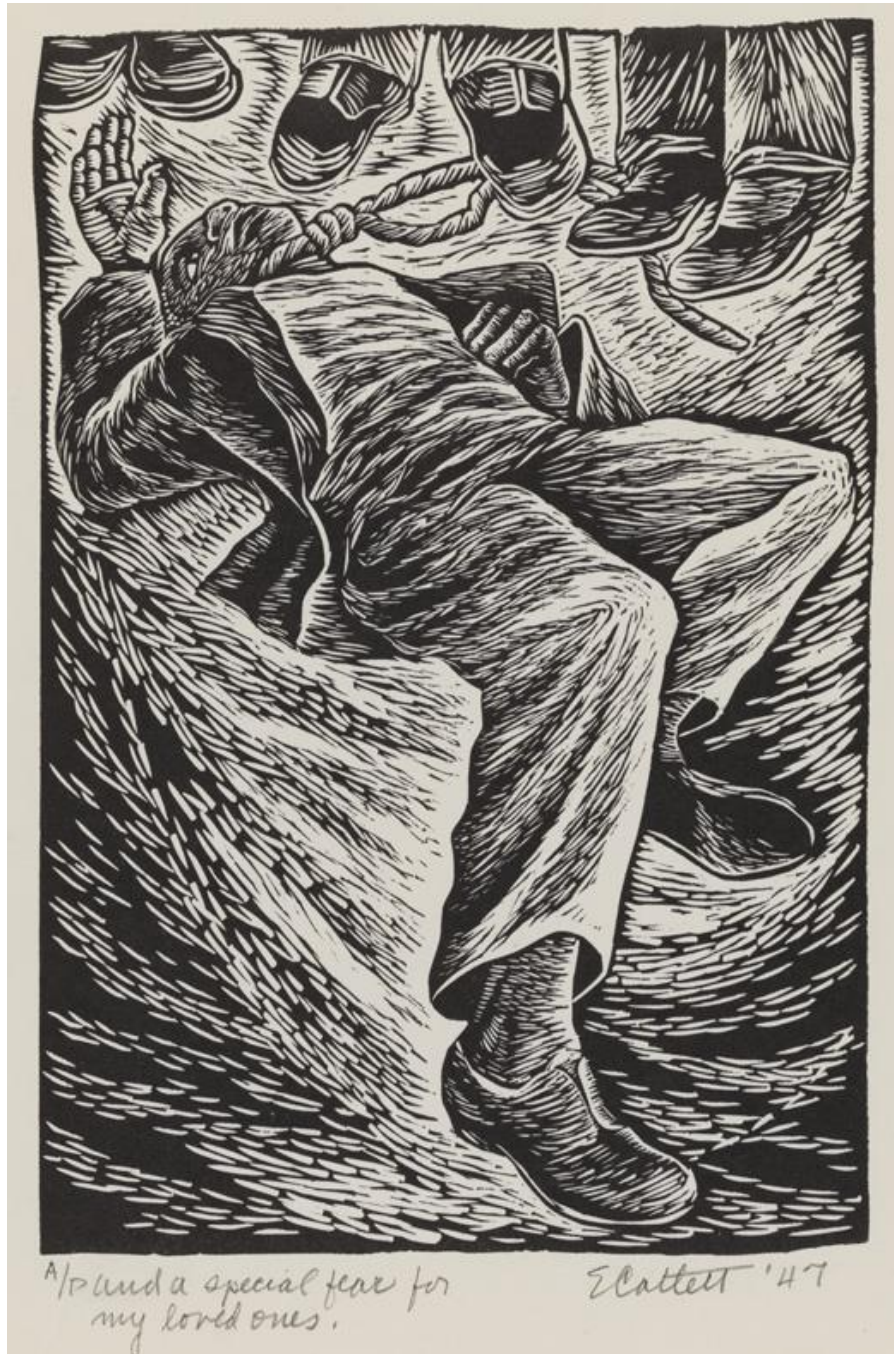


Figure 13. J.C. Darby, *Harriet, in her costume as scout*, prior to 1869, woodcut print from *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* by Sarah Bradford.



Figure 14. Jacob Lawrence, from the *Harriet and the Promised Land* series.



Figure 15. William H. Johnson, *Harriet Tubman*, 1945, oil on paperboard, 28 7/8 x 23 3/8 in. (73.5 x 59.3 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Figure 16. Elizabeth Catlett, *Harriet Tubman*, linocut print, 1953, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

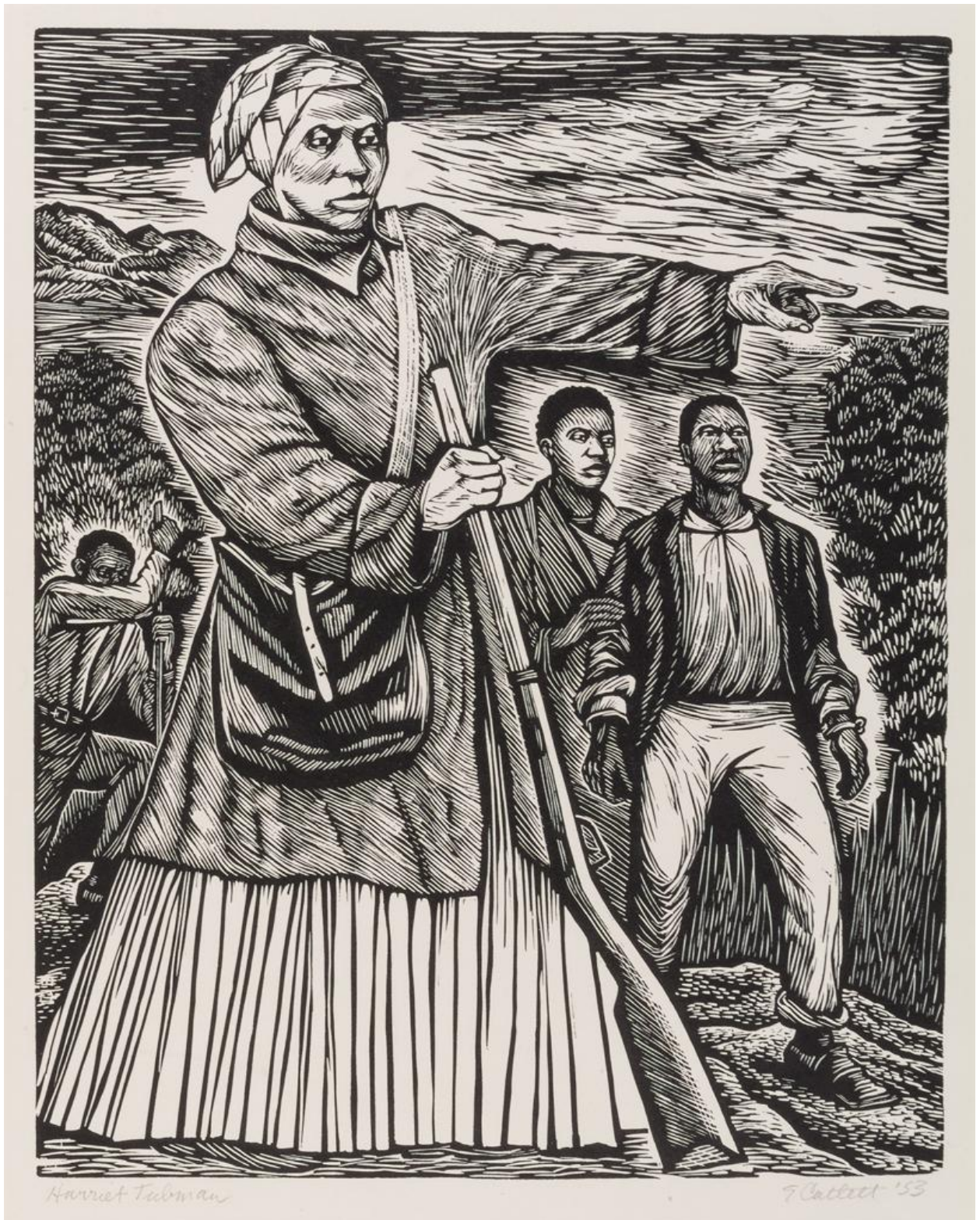


Figure 17. Elizabeth Catlett, *Harriet*, linoleum cut, 1975, Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 18. Scipio Moorhead, frontispiece of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley.



Figure 19. Elizabeth Catlett, *My reward has been bars between me and the rest of the land*, from *The Negro Woman* series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 20. Elizabeth Catlett, *I have special reservations*, from the Negro Woman series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

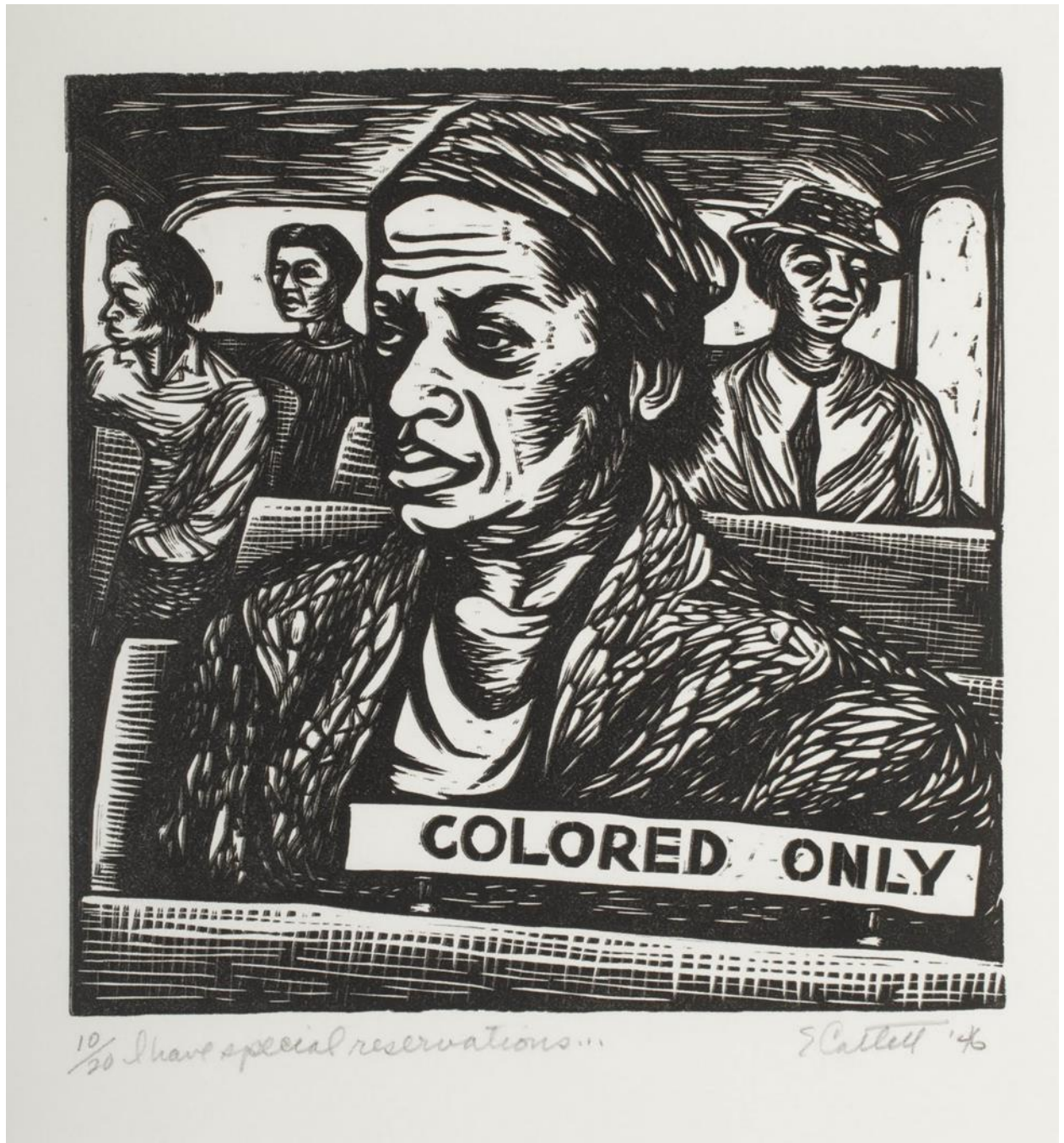


Figure 21. Elizabeth Catlett, *Special Houses*, from *The Negro Woman* series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

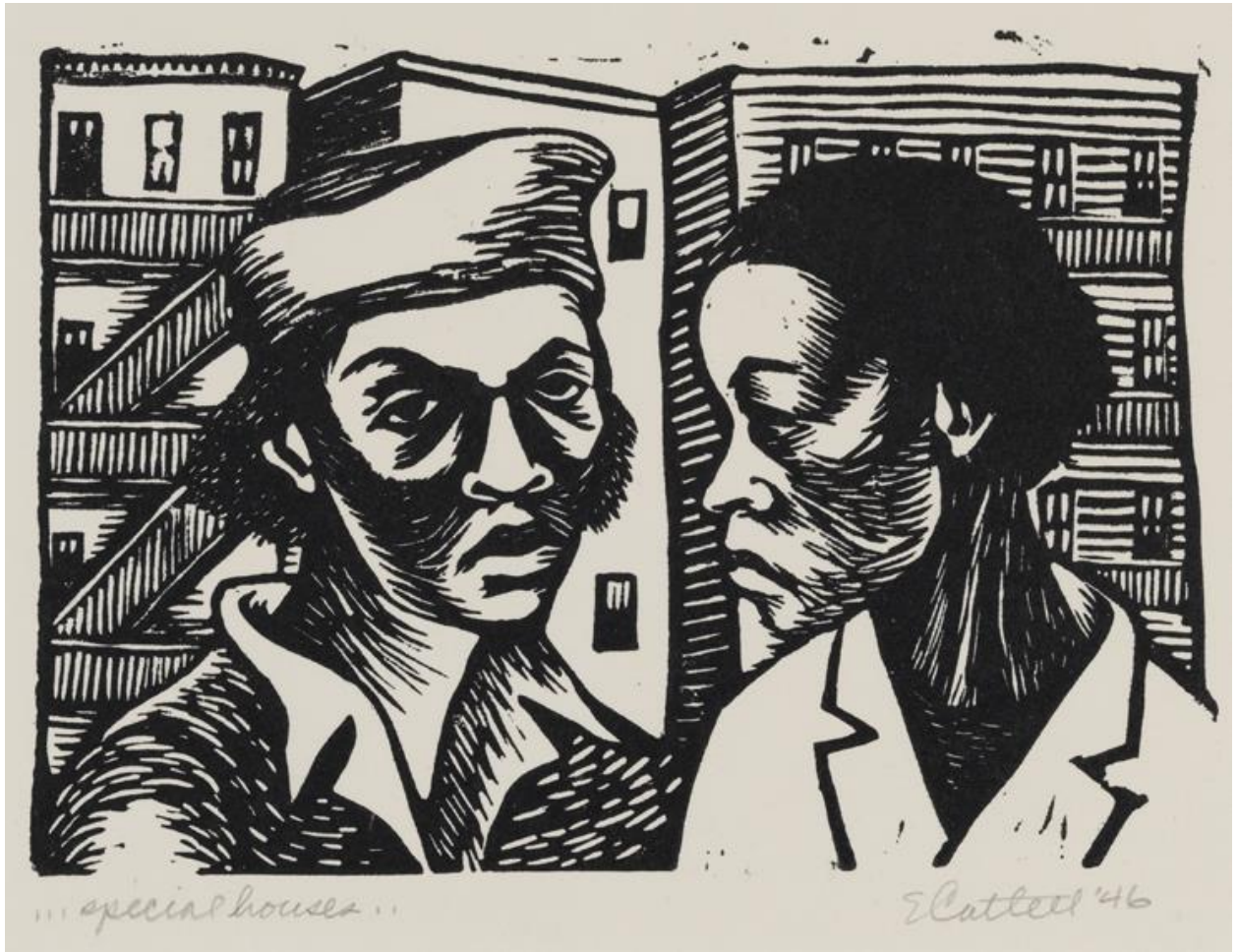


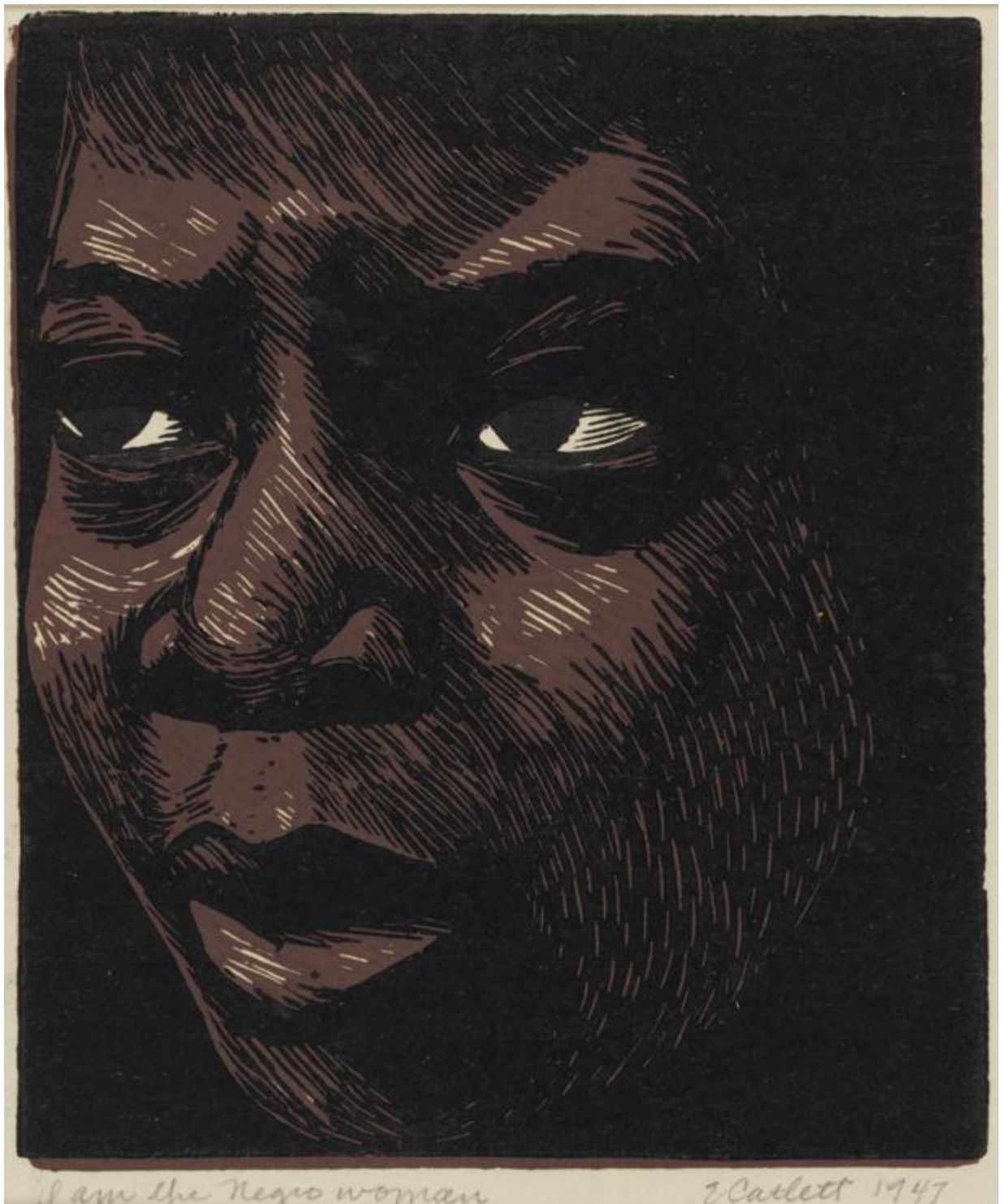
Figure 22. Jacob Lawrence, *Another cause was lynching. It was found that where there had been a lynching, the people who were reluctant to leave at first left immediately after this*, from the *Migration* series, 1940-1941, Casein tempera on hardboard, Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.



Figure 23. Jacob Lawrence, *Although the Negro was used to lynching, he found this an opportune time for him to leave where one had occurred*, from the *Migration* series, 1940-1941, Casein tempera on hardboard, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.



Figure 24. Elizabeth Catlett, *I am the Negro Woman*, from the Negro Woman series, 1946-1947, linocut print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Art © Catlett Mora Family Trust/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



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