It has been half a century since Dr. King delivered his monumental “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. Many Americans laud the improvements in race relations that have occurred in the United States since then. Many Americans proclaim that we now live in a post-racial, color-blind society, where race is no longer significant. After all, these individuals claim, for the first time in our nation’s history, we elected a Black man to the U.S. presidency.

Of course the hatred that many Americans and even members of Congress have lashed against President Obama clearly shows that racism is alive and well today. Certainly, South Carolina Republican Representative Joe Wilson’s “You lie!” bellow, which interrupted President Obama’s health care reform speech to Congress on September 9, 2009, not only was cloaked in racism but showed a disrespect for the office (see Dowd, 2009). Many other current events and indicators evince the continued significance of race.

This chapter provides an overview of the injustice concerning the deaths of African Americans Hattie Carroll and Trayvon Martin that occurred half a century apart. The similar outcomes of the two trials associated with these deaths serve as reminders that despite some improvements that have occurred in race relations, much has also not changed since Dr. King revealed his dream on that eventful day.

THE DEATH OF HATTIE CARROLL

On the evening of February 8, 1963, many of Maryland’s prominent citizens turned out for the Spinsters’ Ball, a white-tie affair, held at the Emerson Hotel in Baltimore (Frazier, 2005). One of these guests was William Zantzinger, a rich white 24-year-old tobacco farmer, accompanied by his wife, Jane.

Prior to their arrival at the ball, they had started drinking at a restaurant where they were eventually refused more drinks due to disorderly behavior (Douglas, 2009). They subsequently arrived at the ball where the couple continued to drink heavily with the husband exhibiting obnoxious behavior, which included striking women and workers with his cane. In the wee hours of the morning at approximately 1:30 a.m.,
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Zantzinger approached Hattie Carroll, a Black 51-year-old barmaid and mother of 11 children, and loudly demanded a drink as she was serving another customer (Slade, 2013). He became increasingly agitated and began yelling racial epithets at her when she did not serve him immediately. As she was getting his drink, he lifted his cane and struck Carroll on her right shoulder (Goshko, 1963, p. 3). Witness reports indicated that instantly after being struck, Carroll became unsteady and said, “This man has upset me so that I feel deathly ill,” (Goshko, 1963, p. 3). Her condition worsened with her speech becoming “thick, slurred and incoherent” (Goshko, 1963, p. 3). After being transported by ambulance to Baltimore’s Mercy Hospital, she died there several hours later from a brain hemorrhage (Goshko, 1963).

Zantzinger was apprehended as Carroll was taken to the hospital and homicide charges were added after her death. Specifically, the second-degree murder charge was complicated because Carroll suffered from atherosclerosis, hypertension, and an enlarged heart (Slade, 2013). The three-judge panel that would try Zantzinger acquitted him of the second-degree murder charge and charged him, instead, with manslaughter along with three assault charges. Zantzinger’s request to have his trial moved from Baltimore was granted. The trial was set to take place in Hagerstown, Maryland, on June 19, 1963. Eight days later, on June 27, the panel of three judges found Zantzinger guilty of manslaughter in the death of Carroll. The sentencing stage of the trial was postponed.

On the same historic day of the March on Washington when Dr. King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, approximately 70 miles northwest in Hagerstown, Maryland, the three-judge panel announced the sentence of Zantzinger for manslaughter in the death of Carroll. The panel delivered a mere slap on the wrist of Zantzinger—six months in jail along with fees summing to $625. To add insult to injury, Zantzinger was allowed to harvest his tobacco crop before reporting to jail (Slade, 2013).

This event was overshadowed by the March on Washington and the electrifying orator describing his dream. Sociologists of the time did not call attention to the case and for the most part have overlooked it. Nonetheless, Bob Dylan wrote a song titled “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” which brought the case to the national consciousness. In the conclusion of the song, Dylan chides Lady Liberty for the miscarriage of fairness in the case. Dylan (1964) wrote:

> Oh, but you who philosophize disgrace  
> And criticize all fears  
> Bury the rag deep in your face  
> For now’s the time for your tears

Dylan used poetic license in the song including dropping the letter “t” from “Zantzinger,” among other exaggerations and inaccuracies (see Frazier, 2005; Slade, 2013).

As an epilogue, Zantzinger had another run-in with the law involving race. In 1991, he was convicted for charging poor African American tenants rent for