

Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

For immediate release

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Documenting Discrimination: Marion Palfi Photographs **honors 50th anniversary of landmark Supreme Court ruling**

April 17—June 13, 2004

South Balcony Gallery

MEDIA CONTACT

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IMAGE INFORMATION

Marion Palfi

United States, born Germany, 1907-1978

School boycott, Chicago, 1964

Gelatin-silver print from *That May Affect Their Hearts and Minds*

Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas: Gift of Marion Palfi, 1973.0162

Lawrence, KS—In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*, which brought an end to racial segregation in public schools, the Spencer is pleased to present the exhibition *Documenting Discrimination: Marion Palfi Photographs*, which opens April 17 in the South Balcony Gallery and will remain on view through June 13.

Organized from the Spencer's collection by Sean Barker, KU doctoral student and the museum's curatorial intern in photography, *Documenting Discrimination: Marion Palfi Photographs* features 26 images by Palfi, a self-described "social researcher" whose powerful pictures document the poor, the lonely, and the victims of prejudice and discrimination in America from the late 1940s through the late 1960s.

Palfi, born in Berlin, Germany, was active as a socially concerned photographer in the United States from the 1940s until a few years before her death in 1978. This small exhibition will include her photographs that show instances of racial segregation enforced by Jim Crow laws during the late 1940s. Palfi referred to these as *Signs of Discrimination*; in keeping with that title, many of the images document signs in public places such as restaurants and bus stations that reflect a racial prejudice supported by law.

The exhibition also includes several works from a 1960s project titled *That May Effect Their Hearts and Minds* that examine the state of the civil rights movement ten years after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Justice Earl Warren had used the words “that may affect their hearts and minds” during his 1954 opinion on the case. These images, funded in part by the Taconic Foundation, an organization concerned with improving race relations, concern a 1964 voter registration drive in Greenwood, Miss., as well the 1963 march on Washington, D.C. The photographs emphasize African-Americans’ continuing struggle for civil rights.

As well, the exhibition includes examples from Palfi’s 1967-69 project . . . *First I Liked the Whites* . . . To title her project, Palfi borrowed words from an American Indian prayer that explores the abuse that followed Europeans’ arrival on American shores: “My children, first I liked the whites, I gave them fruits, I gave them fruits . . .” The project comprised photographs documenting the lives of Native Americans in the 1960s as well as their relationship with dominant white society. The images contrast the peaceful lives of the Hopi, the Papago, and the Navajo on their own sacred lands with the injustice invoked by a US government interested in their “relocation” and “acculturation.”

Programming for *Documenting Discrimination: Marion Palfi Photographs*

- Tour du Jour: Sean Barker, curatorial intern, photography, April 22, 12:15 p.m., South Balcony Gallery.
- Film: “Ten Years After Brown’: The Court and the Schools—1964,” May 6, 7 p.m., SMA Auditorium.