



# No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy

By Robert Hariman, John Louis Lucaites



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Arguing against the conventional belief that visual images short-circuit rational deliberation and radical critique, Hariman and Lucaites make a bold case for the value of visual imagery in a liberal-democratic society. *No Caption Needed* is a compelling demonstration of photojournalism's vital contribution to public life.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“This authoritative, thought-provoking book analyzes the genesis and reception of key American images from Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother' to pictures of the Challenger disaster and 9/11. Drawing extensively on the recent scholarly literature, it demonstrates the pivotal position of the still photograph in modern visual culture. It will be essential reading for students of 20th-century photojournalism, propaganda and mass media. Highly recommended.”

(Robin Lenman, general editor, *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*)

“I was truly astounded by the intelligence of the analyses in *No Caption Needed*, and the authors' refusal to either over- or underestimate the power of these iconic images. Beyond that, Hariman and Lucaites engage in a profound reflection on the role of iconic journalistic photographs in modern democratic societies, the way they become ideological totems, or provocatives to further controversy. This book will be the starting point for any future attempt to deal with the problem of the iconic photograph and its social uses.”--W. J. T. Mitchell, author of *What Do Pictures Want?*

(W. J. T. Mitchell)

“*No Caption Needed* is a fascinating study of why a photograph is successful and what happens to that image once it enters America's collective conscious as an icon. Hariman and Lucaites's exhaustively researched book provides thoughtful insight into how some photographs have helped shape America's cultural identity, and explains how one image can be used by different parties to fulfill different agendas. I recommend this book to anybody interested in the history and development of visual culture in the United States.”

(Ashley Gilbertson, photojournalist and author of *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*)

“A penetrating and provocative analysis. . . . The authors' analytical achievement is enabled by an extraordinary feat of research and reporting.”--James Rosen, *The American Interest*

(James Rosen *The American Interest*)

"An admirable study."

(John Corner *European Journal of Cultural Studies*)

"What especially distinguishes this work is the authors' discussion of the myriad ways iconographic photographs are used, transformed, and appropriated, thereby creating a dynamic rhetorical presence that continues to influence memory, thought, and behavior."

(Michael Carlebach *Photography and Culture*)

"Historians of photography will want to read *No Caption Needed* not only for its insightful examination of individual photographs but also for its sophisticated analysis of the role of photography in a democratic society."

(Bruce Bustard *Journal of American History*)

"[The authors] make an eloquent and compelling case, in print, for the centrality of the photographic icon to

American cultural debate."

(Sylvia Cook *Studies in American Culture*)

James A. Winans-Herbert A. Wichelns Memorial Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address

(National Communication Association *James A. Winans-Herbert A. Wichelns Memorial Award*)

"[The book] provides a dynamic and much-needed contribution to debates concerning the value of visual representation and its relationship to implicit tensions within liberal democracy. The book arrives on the heels of current efforts within an expanding field of visual studies to push for full understanding of the technological and cultural (and not strictly textual) processes through which meanings are made for images."

(Dorothy Barenscott *IVC*)

About the Author

**Robert Hariman** is professor of communication at Northwestern University and the author of *Political Style: The Artistry of Power*. **John Louis Lucaites** is professor of communication and culture at Indiana University. He is coauthor of *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African World*.

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**Floretta Simmons:**

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