

Archive footage is a staple for History Channel and Discovery Channel productions, which specialize in expositions of historical and scientific matter. Edited creatively and juxtaposed with revised statements of fact, opinion, and emotion, archive footage doesn't just illustrate, it evokes. Ava Duvernay's *13th* (USA, 2016, Figure 3-30) uses testimony from politicians, activists, historians, and incarcerated people and combines it with animated graphics, music by black artists, and archive stills and footage from both the more distant and recent past. The goal is to draw a line from slavery in America, to the U.S. constitution's 13th Amendment, then to the modern-day criminalization and mass incarceration of black people. A particularly heartbreaking sequence juxtaposes an audio recording of Martin Luther King Jr. with a short montage of civil rights era footage showing the mistreatment of black demonstrators. We hear King's address, marked by his



**FIGURE 3-30**

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Drawing connections between slavery and today's criminalization of black people in Ava Duvernay's *13th*. Frame from film.

signature earnestness, resolve, and authenticity—made poignant by our knowledge of his impending assassination:

And I think we should start now preparing for the inevitable and let us, when that moment comes, go into the situations that we confront with a great deal of dignity, sanity, and reasonableness.

Edited atop this statement is archive footage of an older black man dressed smartly in a suit, tie, and hat. As he moves through a residential neighborhood he is kicked, pushed repeatedly, pursued, and punched in the head by a group of white men. Maintaining a semblance of calm, he turns his back to walk away from the mob but begins to show alarm as they press in on him. He tries to keep his fedora hat on as he is jostled. It falls and he picks it up. Then, he is shoved and falls too. We root for him to make it out of there with body, soul, and dignity intact. He picks himself up off the ground. Finally, one of the mob endeavors to strike him in the head and makes awkward but hard contact. The editor cuts immediately away—leaving us with the impact of the blow and no resolution to this distinguished man's struggle to escape. This same piece of archive footage is used once again toward the end of the film—only this time against an audio montage of clips of Donald Trump inciting his supporters to violence against black protestors at Trump rallies:

Knock the crap out of her, would you? Seriously. Get him out—get him out of here. In the good old days, this doesn't happen because they used to treat them very, very rough. And when they protested once, they would not do it again so easily. I love the old days—you know what they used to do with a guy like that when they were in a place like this? They'd be carried out on a stretcher, folks.

Trump's crowd cheers, the outcome for the distinguished black man in the suit remains the same, and Duvernay's point is made—the sins of the past are linked in an unbroken chain to the injustices of the present.