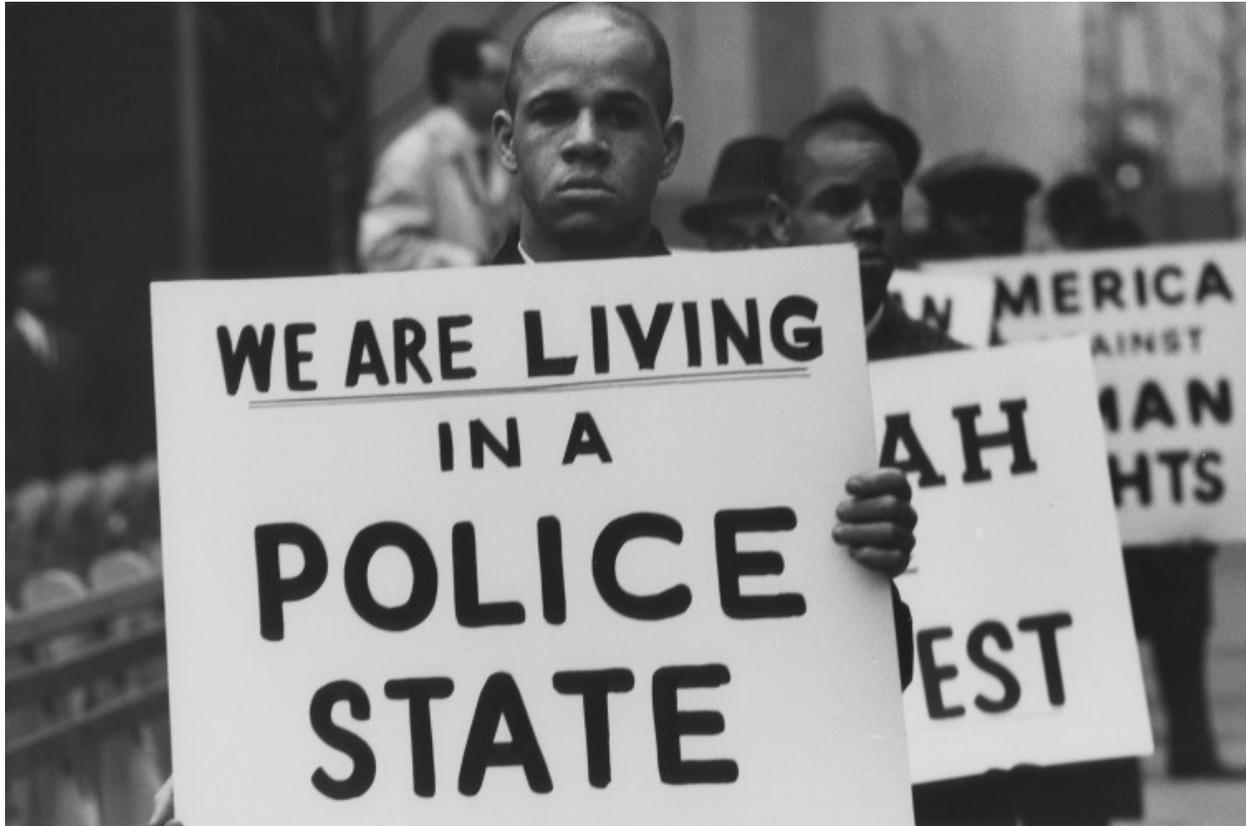


Gordon Parks in Retrospect:

Photographer, Writer, Filmmaker, Composer



Harlem, NY 1948 (photo by Gordon Parks).

Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks (1912-2006) was one of the seminal figures of twentieth century photography. A humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, he left behind a body of work that documents many of the most important aspects of culture in America from the early 1940s up until his death in 2006, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. In addition, Parks was also a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the most prominent people of his era - from politicians and artists to celebrities and athletes.

Gordon Parks Collection at Wichita State University

In 2014 the Ulrich Museum at Wichita State University in Kansas acquired a collection of fine art photographs taken by Kansas-born artist Gordon Parks (Wichita State University earlier obtained a large collection of papers, letters, documents, and manuscripts that belong to Parks). A native of Fort Scott, Kansas, Parks, the youngest of 15 children, spent his formative years in the Minneapolis area. As a young teen he left home and got a job playing piano at a brothel. He later worked as a waiter and a Pullman porter. On one train trip he bought a small camera for \$12.50 and soon began doing fashion photography shoots for a chic Minneapolis boutique. After World War II, he moved to New York and he began a long career as a magazine photographer. His first assignments were for *Vogue* and then he became the first African American staff photographer for *Life* magazine where he took on many assignments dealing with the civil rights movement.

In a 2016 exhibition (Visual Justice: The Gordon Parks Photography Collection at WSU) works from his best-known photo essays for *Life* magazine, including *Harlem Gang Leader*, 1948, *Freedom's Fearful Foe: Poverty*, 1961; *The Restraints: Open and Hidden* (1956), *The White Devil's Day is Almost Over* (1963), and *A Harlem Family* (1968) was presented as a celebration of Parks' work as an artist and humanitarian.

Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution holds folder(s) that may include exhibition announcements, newspaper and/or magazine clippings, press releases, brochures, reviews, invitations, illustrations, resumes, artist's statements, exhibition catalogs. The folder(s) do not circulate. Folder(s) available for use only at the holding library at the Anacostia Community Museum Library (<http://library.si.edu/libraries/anacostia/>) and the Smithsonian American Art Museum/ National Portrait Gallery Library (<http://library.si.edu/libraries/american-art-portrait-gallery/>).

The Library of Congress

The Library of Congress "Gordon Parks Papers, 1946-1991" in the Manuscript Division in Washington, D.C. (7,900 items, 39 containers plus 4 oversize, 15.6 linear feet) consists of correspondence, speeches, writings, film scripts, notes, project proposals, contracts, production material, financial records, and other papers documenting Parks's career as a writer, photographer, and producer and director of films. Includes drafts of *The Learning Tree* (1963) and *Flavio* (1978) as well as film scripts and production materials for *The Learning Tree* (1969) and Parks's ballet, *Martin*, about the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., filmed in 1989 for public television.



Malcolm X at rally in Chicago, Illinois, 1963 (photo by Gordon Parks, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches).

Gordon Parks Museum for Culture and Diversity

The mission of the Gordon Parks Museum for Culture and Diversity in Fort Scott, KS (gordonparkscenter@fortscott.edu; <http://www.gordonparkscenter.org/>) is to celebrate the life and work of Gordon Parks, internationally-known photographer, filmmaker, writer, and musician; and to use his remarkable life story to teach about artistic creativity, cultural awareness, and the role of diversity in our lives.

After Gordon Parks attended the first ever Gordon Parks Celebration in 2004, he gifted the Gordon Parks Center with 30 of his photographs. This spectacular group includes many of his iconic works such as *American Gothic*, *Tuskegee Airmen*, *Flavio*, *Ali Sweating*, *Ingrid Bergman on Stromboli* and many others. In 2006, after his death, his personal effects and other memorabilia, per Gordon's wishes, were given to the Museum which included many of his awards and medals, personal photos, paintings and drawings of Gordon, plaques, certificates, diplomas and honorary doctorates, selected books and articles, clothing, record player, tennis racquet, magazine articles, his collection of *Life* magazines and much more. At that time, the Gordon Parks Center was fortunate to acquire his writing desk from a donation given by Bill and Camille Cosby. Since that time, more gifts have been given by his family and friends such as his camera, gifted by his daughter Toni Parks; his film camera and tripod, donated by his son David Parks; a collection of photographs of Gordon donated by Patricia DuBose Duncan, and much more. These gifts have made the collection substantive and significant.

The Gordon Parks Foundation

The Gordon Parks Foundation's mission (www.gordonparksfoundation.org) is to permanently preserve the work of Gordon Parks, make it available to the public through exhibitions, books, and electronic media, and support artistic and educational activities that advance what Parks described as "the common search for a better life and a better world." Hence, the primary purpose of The Gordon Parks Foundation's exhibition space is to present focused exhibits of Parks' photography, as part of the Foundation's commitment to educating the public and preserving his work.

The Gordon Parks Foundation group exhibition, *Fifty Years After: Gordon Parks, Mickalene Thomas, LaToya Ruby Frazier*, will display from October 22, 2016 through January 28, 2017 curated by James Barron Art in Kent, Connecticut where it also included work by Carrie Mae Weems to mark fifty years since the Civil Rights movement and since Gordon Parks' photographs opened the door for successive generations of Black photographers. This exhibition honors the achievements of these photographers.



American Gothic, Washington, D.C., 1942 (photo by Gordon Parks, gelatin silver print, 20 x 16 inches).

Parks' iconic photographs tell the story of the postwar American experience, focusing on civil rights, poverty, and race relations from the early 1940s until his death in 2006. The exhibition highlights photographs from Parks' documentation of life in mid-twentieth century Harlem. Mickalene Thomas and LaToya Ruby Frazier use photography to document Black life in America and move Parks' idiom further by inserting family members, friends, lovers and themselves into the work, creating images that speak to both personal experience and more broadly to relationships, class, and equality.



Ethel Sharrieff, Chicago, Illinois, 1963 (photo by Gordon Parks).