



Gordon Parks: Segregation Story

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Gordon Parks: Segregation Story From Steidl Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

After nearly six decades much of the anger in America has dissipated and many wrongs have been righted, but the truth that Parks captured with his camera, his chronicle of suffering and redemption, of courage in the face of appalling injustice, still possesses an unsettling power. (The Editors *The Economist*)

Gordon Parks courageous photography helped awaken America at the dawn of the civil rights era. He was a master of portraying people from every walk of life. (The Editors *CBS*)

The portraits are classic Parks; they are sympathetic but not simpering, and aim to emphasize the subjects' humanity rather than shallowly flatter. (Lilly Lampe *Los Angeles Review of Books*)

Gordon Parks was born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1912. An itinerant labourer, he worked as a brothel pianist and railcar porter, among other jobs, before buying a camera at a pawnshop and teaching himself photography. In 1956, Life magazine published his photo-essay The Restraints: Open and Hidden, which revealed the day to day existence of African American families living in the rural South under Jim Crow segregation. The piece sought to show the magazine's (largely white) audience that black people, even those living under segregation, lived full, rich and ordinary lives. For many years, the full series was thought lost, but in 2011, more than 70 colour transparencies were rediscovered. Many of these beautiful images have been republished by Steidl, in the book Segregation Story. (The Editors *The Telegraph*)

Along with the half-dozen spreads (containing twenty-six images) of the published article, Segregation Story includes sixty photographs Parks made while working on the project. In many ways, they are even more powerful without any text, for words are like a small cup dipped into the deep well of these images, which are so rich in information—and, at times, in mystery. Social issues are only part of the story. Parks had a particular genius for portraying the imaginative worlds of childhood—an image of two boys in overalls fishing, our view of them framed by moss-choked branches, is a masterpiece in itself. (Barry Schwabsky *Bookforum*)

Rare and striking images of everyday life in the Jim Crow South. (The Editors *Garden & Gun*)

The rare transparencies had been rediscovered that year by Peter W. Kunhardt Jr., the executive director of the Gordon Parks Foundation, who found them in an unopened cardboard box in their archives. Although the photo was essentially unknown before then, it recently gained prominence when a cropped version of the image graced the cover of the book "Gordon Parks: Segregation Story," which was published by Steidl as the catalog for the High Museum's current show of the same name in Atlanta. (James Estrin *The New York Times - Lens*)

What's most interesting, then, is how little overt racial strife is depicted in the resulting pictures in Gordon Parks: Segregation Story, at the High Museum through June 7, 2015, and how much more complicated they are than straightforward reportage on segregation. Sure, there's some conventional reporting; several pictures hinge on "whites/blacks only" signs, for example. But most of the pictures are studies of individuals, carefully composed and shot in lush color. (Anderson Scott *artsatl.com*)

Parks, raised in a poor tenant-farming family, became one of the most celebrated photographers of his generation, not only because of his images, which often held a harsh mirror up to American racism, but also

because of his writings ? his memoirs and the semi-autobiographical novel "The Learning Tree" ? and his 1971 action movie, "Shaft," which helped open new avenues for black actors and directors. (Randy Kennedy *The New York Times Arts & Leisure*)

Users Review

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