

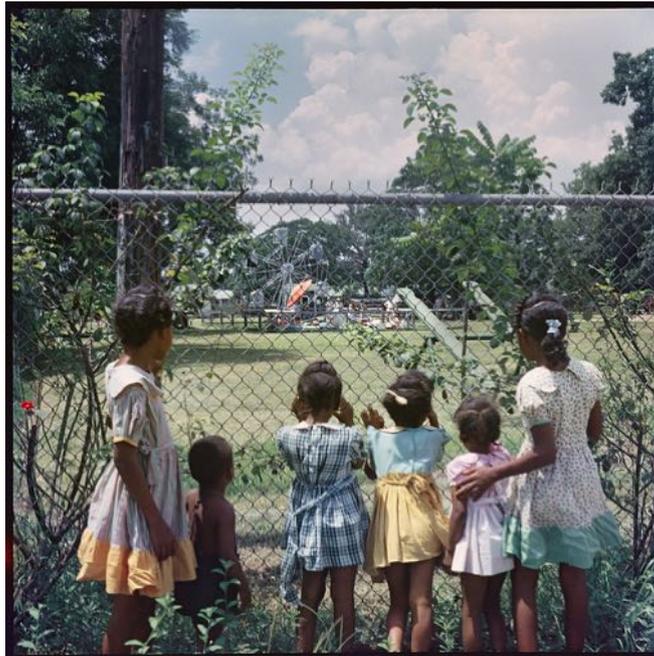
Press Release

GORDON PARKS: WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Curated by Bryan Stevenson

5 March – 11 April 2026

Preview: Wednesday 4 March, 6-8 pm



Gordon Parks, *Outside Looking In, Mobile, Alabama, 1956* © The Gordon Parks Foundation

I picked up a camera because it was my choice of weapon against what I hated most about the universe: racism, intolerance, poverty. I could have just as easily picked up a knife or gun, like many of my childhood friends did.

Gordon Parks, 1967

Alison Jacques, in partnership with The Gordon Parks Foundation and on the occasion of the Foundation's 20th Anniversary, presents 'Gordon Parks: We Shall Not Be Moved', a solo exhibition by pioneering American artist Gordon Parks (b.1912, Fort Scott, US; d.2006, New York), curated by renowned social justice activist, Attorney Bryan Stevenson (b.1959, Delaware), founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama.

Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation remarks: 'We are pleased to celebrate The Gordon Parks Foundation's twentieth anniversary with an exhibition at Alison Jacques in London. We are equally fortunate to view Gordon's vast achievements through the critical lens of guest curator Bryan Stevenson. Bryan's selection demonstrates the struggles and joys of

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African American life that Gordon captured, and reveals how he powerfully shaped the way America saw itself.'

Stevenson was named in the Time100: World's Most Influential People (2015), and has received the Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize (2018). He is the author of the critically-acclaimed New York Times bestseller *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (2015), which was awarded the Carnegie Medal by the American Library Association, and was made into a major HBO film starring Michael B. Jordan (2019).

Speaking about his curation of the exhibition, Stevenson says: 'the scope of the images from Parks represents the struggle, resilience and constant striving of Black Americans.' Stevenson's selection spans 25 years of Parks' practice (1942-1967) and focuses on Gordon Parks as a humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice. Stevenson comments: 'as an African American survivor of racial injustice, Parks was keenly aware of race and class in America, and this palpably informed his work.'

The exhibition title references the protest anthem, 'We Shall Not Be Moved', evolving from the African American spiritual song 'I Shall Not Be Moved', which signifies unwavering resolve, and has become a cultural touchstone for movements seeking justice. The exhibition presents a timely parallel between Parks' photographs and the current crisis in America. Stevenson articulates how we are living in 'a moment when there is an intense and active effort of erasure, retreat from civil rights and silencing of Black voices and history in the United States', and goes on to say how Parks' images 'provide insight and relevance to our current discourse. His work absolutely suggests resistance to bigotry and oppression.'

Parks is one of the most groundbreaking figures in twentieth century photography. Born into poverty and segregation, he had no professional training and was self-taught. In 1937, aged 25, Parks purchased a Voigtländer Brilliant camera from a Pawn shop in Seattle for less than \$12. He was first inspired by photographs of migrant workers which he saw in a magazine, and famously referred to his camera as a 'weapon' against poverty and social wrongs. Speaking to Eldridge Cleaver, an early leader of the revolutionary Black power organisation The Black Panther Party, Parks explained: 'you have a 45mm automatic pistol on your lap, and I have a 35mm camera on my lap, and my weapon is just as powerful as yours' (1970).

Stevenson's curation includes some of Parks' most well known works, including *American Gothic, Washington, D.C.* (1942) and photographs of the 1963 March on Washington, including his portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. making his canonical speech 'I Have a Dream'. The show includes iconic works *Outside Looking In, Department Store* and *Mr and Mrs Albert Thornton*, from Parks' 'Segregation in the South' series, commissioned by *Life Magazine* published under the title 'The Restraints: Open and Hidden' (1956). Hired in 1948, Parks broke racial barriers as the first Black staff member of America's leading photo magazine. Unusually for a photographer, Parks often wrote his own articles, allowing him to inject his personal perspective and challenge stereotypes. His 'Segregation in the South' series humanised the effects of Jim Crow segregation by following the daily lives of Black families in Alabama, creating narratives that consistently expressed the dignity and complex humanity of his subjects, starkly contrasting with mainstream representations.

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Stevenson's essay, 'The Lens of Gordon Parks: A Different Picture of Crime in America', published by Steidl (2020) focused on Parks' series the 'Atmosphere of Crime' (1967). A number of images from this body work are shown in the exhibition, including *Untitled, Chicago* (1957) in which Parks photographed a prison inmate's hand protruding from the bars of his cell, holding a lit cigarette. In his essay, Stevenson analyses how Parks' photography, rooted in his own experience with racism and poverty, offered a deeper, compassionate look at crime, revealing systemic issues and human suffering rather than just sensationalism. In doing so, Parks' images shift the narrative from blaming individuals to understanding societal causes, and Stevenson highlights the artist's unique ability to see shared humanity, connecting his work to the broader fight for racial justice and dignity, challenging simplistic views of crime in America.

Gordon Parks' work is held in major museums including: The Art Institute of Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC; The Met, New York; MFA Boston and Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Other major acquisitions include over 200 works at Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University, and in 2019, MoMA, New York acquired 56 works.

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