

RHONA HOFFMAN GALLERY

CREATIVE BOOM

Gordon Parks' 'Half and the Whole' is a gentle reminder that the fight for social justice is anything but over

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March 7 marked 15 years since Gordon Parks' passing. The photographer, musician, film director and activist will always be remembered as "one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century". The [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) in New York recently hosted, *Gordon Parks: Half and the Whole* (January 7 – February 20), an exhibition featuring a combination of black and white and colour photographs spanning 1942-1970.

Amongst the array of images were scenes of protests incited by racial injustice in the '60s, accompanied by an essay by the Pulitzer Prize-nominated Jelani Cobb. It's without a doubt that Gordon Parks will be remembered as a visionary that gave his life to righting society's wrongs – albeit a tough task. With a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life, he left behind a body of work that's as impactful today as it was back in the '40s and '50s.



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In collaboration with the Gordon Parks Foundation, the Jack Shainman Gallery curated a two-part exhibition spanning the late legend's oeuvre. The Gordon Parks Foundation permanently preserves the work of photographer Gordon Parks, making it available to the public through exhibitions, books and electronic

media while supporting artistic and educational activities that advance what Gordon described as "the common search for a better life and a better world".

Born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1912, Parks was drawn to photography as a young man when he saw images of migrant workers in a magazine. After buying a camera at a pawnshop, he taught himself how to use it. He once famously said: "I saw that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all sorts of social wrongs. I knew at that point I had to have a camera." One of his many feats included photographing figures like Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael. His most famous images, for instance, American Gothic, and Emerging Man, capture the essence of his activism and humanitarianism and have become iconic and at once defining his generation.



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Now more than ever, with the world's leering eyes on America and the Black experience more generally, Parks' work resonates and provides a glimpse into how much things have changed – if at all. Among the series is Parks' *Invisible Man* and *Segregation Story*. "The earliest photograph in the exhibition, a striking 1948 portrait of Margaret Burroughs—a writer, artist, educator, and activist who transformed the cultural landscape in Chicago—shows how Parks uniquely understood the importance of making visible both the triumphs and struggles of African American life", says The Jack Shainman Gallery.

For those not fortunate enough to see the exhibition in person, the Jack Shainman Gallery has provided a [video](#), allowing you to explore from the comfort of your own home. Even through a screen, the power that flows from each image is still as strong and necessary as ever before. As we remember Parks' influence and passion, 15 years on, it's important to remember that change is still there to be made, and if we ever did need a reminder or some inspiration – well, here it is.



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