

GORDON PARKS: WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Curated by Bryan Stevenson

5 March – 11 April 2026

Preview: Wednesday 4 March, 6-8 pm



Bryan Stevenson, 2024

Statement by Bryan Stevenson for ‘Gordon Parks: We Shall Not Be Moved’, at Alison Jacques:

‘Over the course of 246 years, 10 million Black people were enslaved in what would become the United States. Following their emancipation after the Civil War in 1865, four million enslaved people were emancipated and made the remarkable decision to commit to creating a more just America. The formerly enslaved could have chosen retribution and revenge against their enslavers, tormentors, and abusers, but instead, they chose citizenship; they chose to build America. Black Americans created churches, schools, and families and embraced freedom in the United States with extraordinary fortitude. This extraordinary commitment of freed Black people to America, however, was not honored or supported by the powerful. Just over a decade following the war, protections for African Americans were withdrawn. Former enslavers, white supremacists, and those who believed in racial hierarchy took power while Congress and the Supreme Court abandoned constitutional commitments to equal protection and voting rights for emancipated Black people.

Gordon Parks was born in the early 20th century, when most African Americans were marginalized, excluded, and humiliated by racial segregation laws, terrorized by mob violence and lynching, and denied basic rights to vote. Parks witnessed and endured the stress and degradation of racial hierarchy in the United States, but he also understood the strength, resilience, artistry, resolve, and beauty that animated Black life.

ALISON JACQUES

Amid the struggle, Parks picked up a camera as his “weapon of choice.” He documented the story of America, focusing on the lives of Black people. He illuminated the pain and humiliation of segregation, the despair of poverty, the violence of abusive law enforcement officers, and the appalling hypocrisy of an America globally on the rise — preaching democracy and equality abroad while mired in racial bigotry at home.

Parks was energized and excited by resistance to oppression and creativity within the Black community. The civil rights movement, the emergence of “Black power,” the triumph of Black athletes, musicians, and even gang leaders were all counter-narratives to racial discrimination that Parks brilliantly brought to life. His art helped challenge the legitimacy of racial caste and enabled a new generation of Black and white leaders to tear down the architecture of Jim Crow laws. Gordon Parks helped imagine a more hopeful future less burdened by racial bigotry and violence, an artistic narrative to help create in the words of the Black poet Langston Hughes, ‘America be America.’

The art and photography of Gordon Parks is powerful because his work details the reality and history of America that is now being distorted and denied. Today, many in the United States are retreating from a full commitment to equality and justice for all. Powerful people are trying to rewrite history, minimizing the harms of slavery, lynching, segregation and racial bigotry. People of color are being demonized and castigated because of their race, ethnicity or national origin. And once again, many Black Americans are recognizing that their struggle is still unfinished. A reinforced presumption of dangerousness, guilt or incompetence is being assigned to many Americans based simply on their color. Black political power is being sabotaged through a multitude of schemes that the Supreme Court seems ready to legitimate.

As the gains of the civil rights movement are being taken away, as censorship and the whitewashing of history are on the rise and even artistic freedom is being attacked, it’s easy to understand why many people of color might want to escape, retreat and once again become silent. rTo many, silence seems safer.

Gordon Parks is an artist who absolutely rejected silence or retreat. He knew too much about the human spirit to persevere, even in the face of cruel and abusive power, to put down his camera. His art has renewed significance in 2026 because it is a retort to those who want to force Americans back to some earlier era of perceived greatness when racial and gender hierarchy reigned.

This exhibit is history, education and protest.

The art of Gordon Parks makes clear that in this moment we can not turn back, we cannot remain silent and we can not retreat from advancing true justice. The artistry of Gordon Parks makes clear what many of us are prepared to say, and we will say it. We shall not be moved.’

Bryan Stevenson, 2026