

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**RARE PHOTOS BY GORDON PARKS PREMIERE
AT HIGH MUSEUM OF ART**

*Featuring works created for Parks' powerful 1956 Life magazine photo essay
that have never been publicly exhibited*

*Acquisition of 12 Parks prints bolsters the High's extensive
Civil Rights photography collection*

ATLANTA, Nov. 5, 2014 – The High Museum of Art presents rarely seen photographs by trailblazing African American artist and filmmaker Gordon Parks in “Gordon Parks: Segregation Story,” on view Nov. 15, 2014 through June 7, 2015.

The exhibition, presented in collaboration with The Gordon Parks Foundation, features more than 40 of Parks' color prints – most on view for the first time – created for a powerful and influential 1950s *Life* magazine article documenting the lives of an extended African-American family in segregated Alabama. The series represents one of Parks' earliest social documentary studies on color film.

The High will acquire 12 of the color prints featured in the exhibition, supplementing the two Parks works – both gelatin silver prints – already owned by the High. These works augment the Museum's extensive collection of Civil Rights era photography, one of the most significant in the nation.

Following the publication of the *Life* article, many of the photos Parks shot for the essay were stored away and presumed lost for more than 50 years until they were rediscovered in 2012 (six years after Parks' death). Though a small selection of these images has been previously exhibited, the High's presentation brings to light a significant number that have never before been displayed publicly.

As the first African-American photographer for *Life* magazine, Parks published some of the 20th century's most iconic social justice-themed photo essays and became widely celebrated for his black-and-white photography, the dominant medium of his era. The photographs that Parks created for *Life*'s 1956 photo essay “The Restraints: Open and Hidden” are remarkable for their vibrant color and their intimate exploration of shared human experience.

The images provide a unique perspective on one of America's most controversial periods. Rather than capturing momentous scenes of the struggle for civil rights, Parks portrayed a family going about daily life in unjust circumstances. Parks believed empathy to be vital to the undoing of racial prejudice. His corresponding approach to the *Life* project eschewed the journalistic norms of the day and represented an important chapter in Parks' career-long endeavor to use the camera as his “weapon of choice” for social change. “The Restraints: Open and Hidden” gave Parks his

first national platform to challenge segregation. The images he created offered a deeper look at life in the Jim Crow South, transcending stereotypes to reveal a common humanity.

“Parks’ images brought the segregated South to the public consciousness in a very poignant way – not only in color, but also through the eyes of one of the century’s most influential documentarians,” said Brett Abbott, exhibition curator and Keough Family curator of photography and head of collections at the High. “To present these works in Atlanta, one of the centers of the Civil Rights Movement, is a rare and exciting opportunity for the High. It is also a privilege to add Parks’ images to our collection, which will allow the High to share his unique perspective with generations of visitors to come.”

A Day in the *Life*

For “The Restraints: Open and Hidden,” Parks focused on the everyday activities of the related Thornton, Causey and Tanner families in and near Mobile, Ala. The images present scenes of Sunday church services, family gatherings, farm work, domestic duties, child’s play, window shopping and at-home haircuts—all in the context of the restraints of the Jim Crow South.

Key images in the exhibition include:

- “Mr. and Mrs. Albert Thornton, Mobile Alabama” (1956)
- “Outside Looking In, Mobile, Alabama” (1956)
- “Department Store, Mobile Alabama” (1956)
- “Airline Terminal, Atlanta, Georgia” (1956)
- “Willie Causey, Jr., with Gun During Violence in Alabama, Shady Grove, Alabama” (1956)

About Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks was born in Fort Scott, Kansas. He grew up poor and faced racial discrimination. Parks was initially drawn to photography as a young man after seeing images of migrant workers published in a magazine, which made him realize photography’s potential to alter perspective. Parks became a self-taught photographer after purchasing his first camera at a pawnshop, and he honed his skills during a stint as a society and fashion photographer in Chicago. After earning a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship for his gritty photographs of that city’s South Side, the Farm Security Administration hired Parks in the early 1940s to document the current social conditions of the nation.

By 1944, Parks was the only black photographer working for *Vogue*, and he joined *Life* magazine in 1948 as the first African-American staff photographer. In 1970, Parks co-founded *Essence* magazine and served as the editorial director for the first three years of its publication. Parks later became Hollywood’s first major black director when he released the film adaptation of his autobiographical novel “The Learning Tree,” for which he also composed the musical score, however he is best known as the director of the 1971 hit movie “Shaft.” Parks received the National Medal of Arts in 1988 and received more than 50 honorary doctorates over the course of his career. He died in 2006.

Also on view:

“Leonard Freed: Black in White America”

Nov. 15, 2014 through June 7, 2015

Alongside the works on view in “Gordon Parks: Segregation Story,” the High will present selected prints from celebrated photographer Leonard Freed’s multi-year documentary project and 1968 book “Black in White America.” From 1963 through 1966, Freed traveled across the U.S. capturing images of the Civil Rights era, from rural scenes in the South to daily life on New York City streets and political protests in Washington, D.C. This journey culminated in Freed’s landmark photo essay, which offered a look into African-American life across the nation during the struggle for racial equality. “Leonard Freed: Black in White America” will feature 41 black-and-white images by Freed that complement the rarely seen color prints from Parks’ 1956 *Life* magazine photo essay “The Restraints: Open and Hidden.”

Exhibition Catalogue

“Gordon Parks: Segregation Story” is accompanied by a 112-page catalogue produced by The Gordon Parks Foundation in association with the High and Steidl. The catalogue features a reprint of the original *Life* magazine article and an introductory essay by Maurice Berger, research professor and chief curator at the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and consulting curator at the Jewish Museum in New York. The catalogue also includes a foreword by Charlayne Hunter-Gault, American journalist and former correspondent for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service.

Exhibition Support

Support for this exhibition is provided by The Coca-Cola Company.

About The Gordon Parks Foundation

The Gordon Parks Foundation permanently preserves the work of Gordon Parks, makes it available to the public through exhibitions, books, and electronic media and supports artistic and educational activities that advance what Gordon described as “the common search for a better life and a better world.” The Foundation is a division of The Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation.

About the High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the Southeastern U.S. With more than 14,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk art and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

About The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance

Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Arts for Learning. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, visit www.woodruffcenter.org.

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