

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# GORDON PARKS



Gordon Parks (1912-2006) was a multifaceted artist known for his accomplishments as a photographer, author, composer, filmmaker, and painter. He was born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1912. Despite the challenges posed by systemic racism and the circumstances of his time, Parks refused to let them hinder his artistic talents. From the 1940s through the 2000s, he dedicated himself to documenting the lives and culture of African Americans, particularly during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.

Remarkably, Parks never received formal photography training, yet he made history by becoming the first African American staff photographer at Life magazine. Additionally, he authored the best-selling book “The Learning Tree,” which he adapted into a groundbreaking Hollywood film—an unprecedented achievement for an African American artist. Today, Gordon Parks’ work can be found in prestigious institutions such as the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

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*“I suffered first as a child from discrimination, poverty... So I think it was a natural follow from that that I should use my camera to speak for people who are unable to speak for themselves.”*

#### Further References:

- [The Gordon Parks Foundation](#)
- [Gordon Parks Photography](#)

