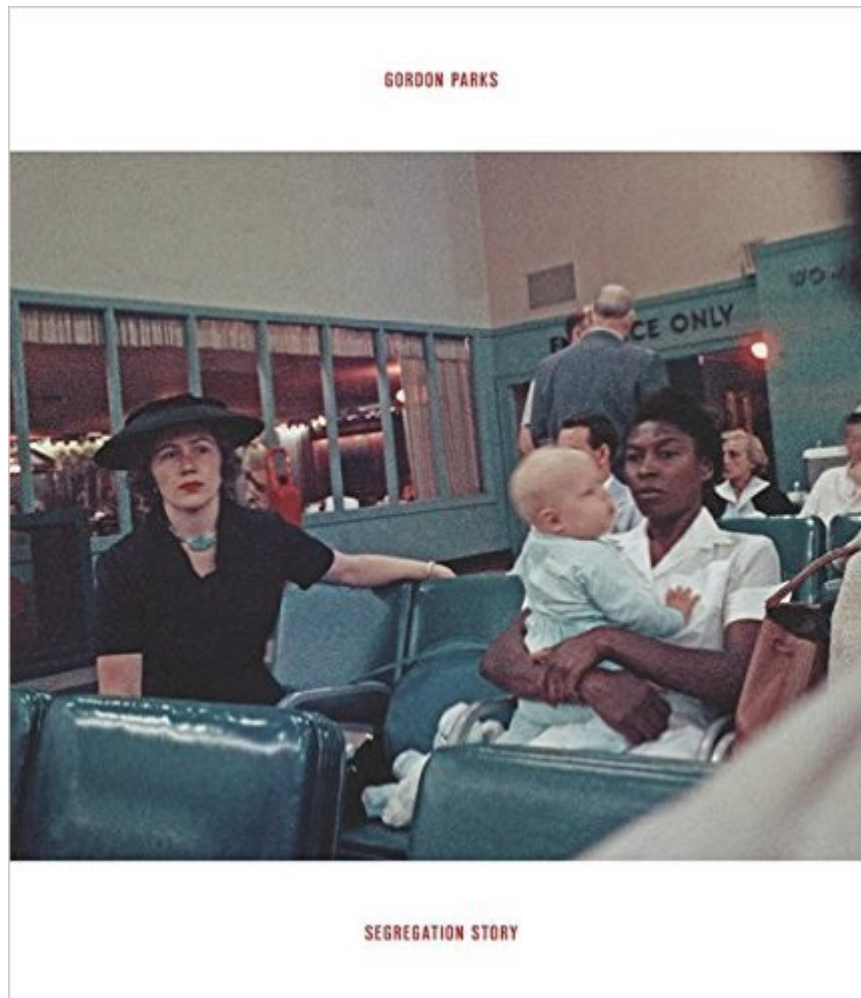


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# Gordon Parks: Segregation Story



## Synopsis

In September 1956, Life magazine published a photo-essay by Gordon Parks entitled "The Restraints: Open and Hidden," which documented the everyday activities and rituals of one extended African American family living in the rural South under Jim Crow segregation. One of the most powerful photographs depicts Joanne Thornton Wilson and her niece, Shirley Anne Kirksey, standing in front of a theater in Mobile, Alabama, an image which became a forceful "weapon of choice," as Parks would say, in the struggle against racism and segregation. While 26 photographs were eventually published in Life and some were exhibited in his lifetime, the bulk of Parks' assignment was thought to be lost. In 2011, five years after Parks' death, The Gordon Parks Foundation discovered more than 70 color transparencies at the bottom of an old storage bin marked "Segregation Series" that are now published for the first time in Segregation Story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Life Magazine, 1956; Gordon Parks was sent down south to document the lives of segregated communities. The text, by Robert Wallace, mentions the most poignant disadvantage of segregation, and that was the lack of mobility. The states with segregation had as many poor whites as poor blacks, because poverty can ruin all colors the same way. The whites, however, were free to move anywhere they wanted, but the blacks could only live where they were allowed. If the only area open to them was near the town dump, then that was where they had to live. If it was on a street that flooded when it rained, that was that. One of the people in this photo essay was a

woodcutter, financially sound enough to eat well, but he had to be wary of outdoing white competitors. He was not allowed to vote, because the county had a literacy requirement that he couldn't pass. Illiterate white voters were probably overlooked, but the average black man in the south wasn't dumb enough to complain. If the whites attacked, the police would probably look on, and the courts would take the side of the whites. On a positive note, the community were mostly self-supporting. They did their own repair work, mended their own clothes. The school for black children was cramped and Spartan, but it was maintained. The children, however, were not getting a good education, and even the teacher's kids could not read well. There was one teacher for 120 kids, and she had to use the old-style method where one group reads, while the teacher listens to the other group recite. On top of that she would've had to handle all the discipline and custodial chores. Economically, the community was in a bind, because most stores would not sell to them, and they were at the mercy of the stores that did.

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