

I first became interested in the work of Gordon Parks several years ago, after watching the PBS documentary *Lost Twin Cities III*, which featured a section on the Frank Murphy Store, where Parks' career began. As I became more familiar with his photography, I was especially struck by Parks' documentation of the segregated south for *Life* Magazine. Until viewing these photos, I had only associated the Civil Rights Movement with black-and-white images, which made the era seem much less recent.

In autumn of 2015, I began to create a website on the Civil Rights photography of Gordon Parks for History Day, a competition I was required to take part in for my US History class at school. At first, the project was only an assignment I completed to get a good grade, but over time I realized that I truly enjoyed researching the life and work of Gordon Parks and designing a website that told his story in relation to this year's History Day theme: *Exploration, Encounter, Exchange in History*.

On May 1, 2016, my website won first in its category at the Minnesota State History Day competition, which meant that I qualified for the national level of the contest in Washington, DC. I was thrilled at the opportunity, but worried about the high costs of airfare, room and board and other associated fees. My mother suggested that I write to the Gordon Parks Foundation to ask for financial assistance, since I had used their online archive of Parks' photos when creating my website. Having nothing to lose, I contacted them and explained my situation. I didn't expect to get a response, so when the Foundation replied and offered me a grant that covered the expenses of my trip, I was ecstatic!

I have gained so much from this project, and being able to connect with the Gordon Parks Foundation is an experience I will remember for the rest of my life. The continuation of my website in the competition would not have been possible without their help and I am so grateful to have received a scholarship from them. Although I did not place at Nationals, I feel as though I have made a difference by helping spread the legacy of Gordon Parks, and this is something that I am proud of.

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