

Untitled, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Ella Watson Tidying Up, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Untitled, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Ella Watson Sweeping, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Government Charwoman, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

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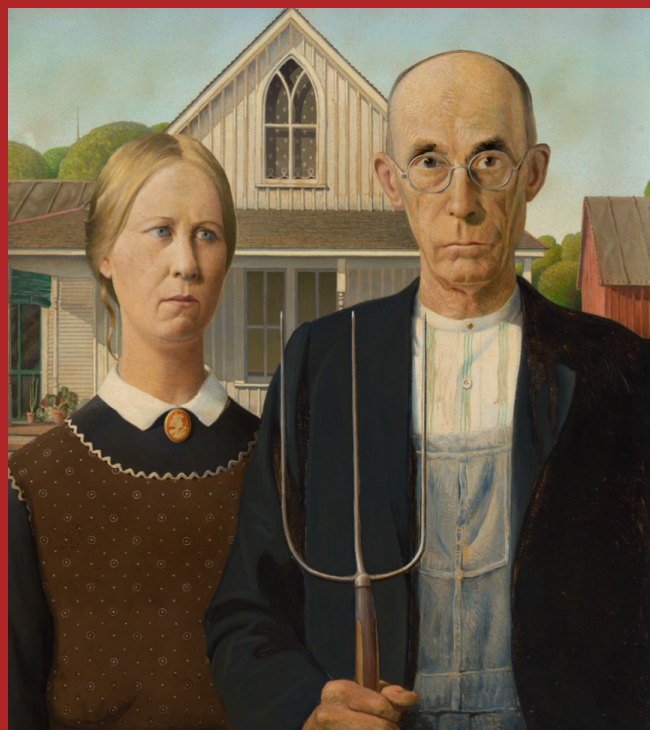
Gordon Parks Foundation

American Gothic, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

On the evening he first met her in 1942, Gordon Parks created the portrait of Ella Watson that he would later title “American Gothic,” an allusion to the 1930 painting of the same name by Grant Wood (1891–1942). Made eight months after the U.S. entry into World War II, this striking photograph places Watson within the racial, professional, and economic hierarchies of the nation’s capital. It also reveals Parks’s reckoning with the realities of Black life in the racially segregated South. *American Gothic* communicates these injustices with the barest of means: a woman, a flag, a broom, and a mop. Its simplicity only strengthens the impact of what Parks described as “an indictment of America.”



Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930, Art Institute of Chicago

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Children with Doll, Washington, D.C., 1942

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Gordon Parks Foundation

Bible Lessons, Washington, D.C., 1942

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**Two Members of St. Martin's Spiritual Church,
Washington, D.C., 1942**

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Joseph's New Tomb, Washington, D.C., 1942

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Gordon Parks Foundation

Prayer, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Receiving Anointment, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Church Line, Washington, D.C., 1942

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Untitled, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

**Street Corner, 7th Street and Florida Avenue,
Washington, D.C., 1942**

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Untitled, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Untitled, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Man with Straw Hat, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

Gordon Parks Foundation

Boy with Crutches, Washington, D.C., 1942

Gelatin silver print

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