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A LOOK AT THE HEART-WRENCHING MOMENTS FROM EQUAL RIGHTS BATTLES

By Evelyn Nieves, December 14, 2017



The 54-mile march for voting rights from Selma to Alabama's state capital, Montgomery, took more than good legs and sturdy shoes. It took defying the police, who ambushed hundreds of men, women and children — on a bridge named for a Klu Klux Klan leader — and beat them bloody. It took a court order and it took journalists covering the struggles to tell and shock the world.

If one photo captured that moment of resilience and determination, it might be James Karales's image for *Look* magazine of marchers in their Sunday best striding against an open sky on a wind-swept day. The photo, which captures a mood as much as a march, earns a prominent place in "The Good Fight: America's Ongoing Struggle for Justice," an ambitious anthology from Against All Odds Productions that brims with enormous moments. The project was made possible by a grant from the Anti-Defamation League.

The book, a glossy coffee-table production (with an app for videos that further illuminate the stories illustrated in 63 images), spans more than a century of struggles for social justice in the United States, or as long as photography has served as history's record and photographers as our de facto social historians.

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

At this unique moment in the United States — only last week President Trump mocked “resist-ors” and stumped for a candidate who said America was greatest during slavery — seeing the history of activism is illuminating, and inspiring, in a way. The nation, after all, has weathered divisions, racial and ethnic strife, and, despite the rising visibility of hate groups, has found its way out of the maelstrom, usually the wiser.

“The Good Fight” — the expression, which comes from the Bible, is the term activists have long used to describe the struggle against systematic oppression — includes the resistance in Indian Country going back to Wounded Knee; the Black Lives Matter movement; Stonewall; and the Women’s March on Washington, with pink pussycat hats as far as the eye can see, on Jan. 21, 2017.

The paradox of “The Good Fight” is that while no one book could hope to capture the social justice movements that have defined and transformed the United States, individual images do speak volumes about the period they freeze for all time.

Consider Gordon Parks’s 1956 color photo of a finely dressed young black woman and her daughter, under a business sign reading “Colored Entrance.” Or the elegant young woman in a flowing, gown-like dress facing down riot officers in Jonathan Bachman’s image of a protest against police killings in Baton Rouge, La., in 2017 — an image that has come to define the Black Lives Matter movement.

“The Good Fight” is the latest work from Jennifer Erwitte and Rick Smolan. He is the former Time, Life and National Geographic photographer best known as the creator of the “Day in the Life” photo books that captured life in the United States, Japan, Australia and other countries, as well as the best-selling “America 24/7.”

Its timing is perfect. “The Good Fight” is already an Amazon best seller in its second printing. Marches on Washington to mark President Trump’s fractious year in office are already planned for January, and the outrage and resistance — as the defeat of Mr. Trump’s party’s candidate in Alabama, Roy Moore suggests — may only grow stronger.