THE M @ HOME
SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITY

John Snyder, Untitled, 2005
The exhibition *A Choice of Weapons, Honor and Dignity* includes photographs that document expressions of dignity, honor, hope, and love in the African American community by two towering photographers – Gordon Parks and Jamel Shabazz. It features Parks’s astonishing images from the Jim Crow-era through the civil rights movement, and street photography by Shabazz, who has followed in Parks’s footsteps from the 1980s to the present day. Both artists used photography to empower communities and lift up Black voices.

**WATCH:** Tour the exhibition with guest curator Robin Hickman-Winfield on the M’s website: [mmaa.org/the-m-home/](http://mmaa.org/the-m-home/)

**MAKE:** On pages 4-9, use the space provided to respond to the prompts and illustrate ways you demonstrate faith, love, honor, and dignity. You can refer back the photos and text in the exhibition to see how Gordon Parks and Jamel Shabazz documented these expressions. Included are thoughtful and insightful written reflections from student scholars at Gordon Parks High School, in addition to quotes from the artists.
About the Artists

Gordon Parks was one of the greatest photographers of the 20th century. He began his career in St. Paul, MN in the late 1930s and went on to document the horrors of poverty and segregation for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), create moving photo-essays for Life magazine on topics ranging from gangs in Harlem to the civil rights movement, and take fashion photographs for Vogue and Glamour. He was the first African-American staff photographer at Life, the first African-American director at a major Hollywood studio, and the founder and executive director of Essence magazine. A true Renaissance man, Parks was also a noted film director, author, poet, composer, and humanitarian.

Jamel Shabazz began taking pictures in the 1980s and quickly became one of the most dynamic street photographers in New York. Shabazz uses his camera to capture the dignity and inner beauty of the people he photographs and to undermine negative stereotypes about Black and Latinx communities. He has worked with many institutions to inspire young people, teaching them about photography and social responsibility and has been the subject of solo exhibitions throughout the United States, and in Europe, South America, and Asia. Rapper, music producer, and renowned art collector Kasseem “Swizz Beatz” Dean has called Shabazz “the Gordon Parks of this generation.”
FAITH

Gordon Parks
Street Scene, Harlem, New York, 1948

He is thinking about the honor and dignity he had and his future. He will find his way.

—Dominique H., Gordon Parks Scholar

• Close your eyes and take three deep breaths and answer the following: What do you believe in? What does having faith mean to you?
• Draw how you see faith in your life.
“You respect people, you have love for people, and it does something to you. [...] I was overwhelmed with love. I think that’s what made the difference in my life.”


• What brings you joy? How do you express your love for your family, friends, and community?
• Draw how you see love in your life.
• Interview someone in your household, or call a friend or loved one and ask them these questions, too.
HONOR

Jamel Shabazz
*Honor and Dignity, Harlem, New York, 1997*

I see a boy who provides hope for his community and strength for his country.

—Kha’laun Phillips, Gordon Parks Scholar

He shows honor and dignity, saluting Mr. Shabazz and the world.

—Jonathan Voekler, Gordon Parks Scholar

- How are you loyal, trustworthy, and honest?
- When have you been praised for your hard work?
- Draw how you see honor in your life.
I see honor and dignity because a father genuinely cares for his sons, raising them to be respectful young men. He makes sure their appearance is sharp. They look dignified. It’s an honor to be a good father and value your children.

—Miranda O., Gordon Parks Scholar

The word dignity means being worthy of honor or respect.

- How do you respect yourself and others?
- Draw how you see dignity in your life
RESILIENCE

Jamel Shabazz
Looking to the Future, New York City, 2004

He stands for dignity, leading the next generation of those who will stand in dignity. This makes me feel strong and inspired, because this soldier faced difficulty, but made it to the end.

—Jonathan Voekler, Gordon Parks Scholar

The word *resilience* means toughness and strength.
- How have you been resilient in your life?
- Draw it in the space provided below.
HOPE

Jamel Shabazz
The Gathering, Brooklyn, New York, 1997

A group of people celebrating, praying for something greater.

—Amelia Pharmer, Gordon Parks Scholar

- Think of someone who brings you hope and send them a message telling them so!
- How do you keep hope alive? What types of challenges have you faced and how have you become stronger?
- Draw how you see hope in your life.