



Joshua Parks, *Untitled*, Downtown Charleston, 2023, Digital photography.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joshua Parks is an imagemaker and cultural worker from Jacksonville, Florida. His roots stretch back over seven generations in the Lowcountry of South Carolina and Florida's Gulf Coast. His work analyzes urban and rural Afro-descendant communities in the Black Belt South and the Atlantic world; their relationship to land and water as the basis of subsistence, autonomy, survival, and collective memory; and how these elements influence social and cultural development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Millicent E. Brown is a retired associate professor of history at Claflin University, having taught at several other institutions of higher education as well. She is a lifelong community advocate and spokesperson for improvements in historically and currently exploited neighborhoods and communities of color. She consults with museums, historical sites, and organizations, seeking more accurate analyses of social justice initiatives.

RELATED EVENTS

Events are free and open to the public, unless noted. Check halsey.cofc.edu for up-to-date information.

OPENING RECEPTION

Friday, April 11, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Free for Halsey Institute Members, suggested \$5 donation for not-yet members

WGS INTERSECTIONS PANEL

Tuesday, April 15, 4:00 PM

ARTIST TALK

Saturday, May 17, 2:00 PM

TOUR IN ESPAÑOL

Thursday, June 5, 6:00 PM

CURATOR COFFEE CLUB

Saturday, June 14, 10:00 – 11:00 AM
Open to Halsey Institute Members
Sponsored by blüm in Charleston

HALSEY AFTER HOURS

Friday, June 27, 5:30 – 7:00 PM
Free for Halsey Institute Members, suggested \$10 donation for not-yet members

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY PANEL DISCUSSION

Friday, July 11, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

FAMILY DAY!

Saturday, July 12, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

SALTWATA CINEMA CLUB FILM SCREENING

Tuesday, July 15, *Summer of Soul (2021)* 7:00 PM

THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
at the College of Charleston School of the Arts

LOCATION

The Marion and Wayland H. Cato Jr. Center for the Arts
College of Charleston
161 Calhoun Street,
Charleston, SC 29401
halsey.cofc.edu

GALLERY HOURS

During exhibitions
Monday – Saturday,
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Open until 7:00 PM on Thursdays
FREE FOR ALL

PARKING

Available in the St. Philip St. and George St. garages

CONTACT

(843) 953-4422
halsey@cofc.edu

IMAGE CREDITS:

cover: Joshua Parks, *Mother*, Senegal, 2023, Digital photography

reverse side, left: Joshua Parks, *Untitled*, Centro Habana, Havana, Cuba, 2023, Digital photography

reverse side, center: Joshua Parks, *Untitled*, Dakar, Senegal, 2023, Digital photography.

reverse side, right: Joshua Parks, *Untitled*, Centro Habana, Havana, Cuba, 2023, Digital photography

All works © Joshua Parks

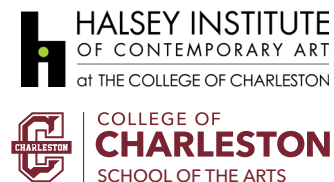
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JOSHUA PARKS

BORN IN WE: AFRICAN DESCENDANTS OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD

APRIL 11 – JULY 26, 2025





Where in the World Am I?

by Dr. Millicent E. Brown, Ph.D.

Joshua Parks speaks passionately about his cross-cultural roots. His mother's Gulf Coast Creole lineage traces through Pensacola, Florida, blending with his father's deep James Island ancestry. Growing up in Jacksonville, Florida, he moved between these places, shaping his understanding of identity and belonging. Regular visits to South Carolina immersed him in the landscapes that crystallized his vision of the Lowcountry—not just as a geographical space but as a cultural inheritance, carried in the voices, movements, and traditions of its people. These influences converge into what is now recognized as Gullah-Geechee heritage.

By the time he arrived in Charleston for college and later settled there permanently in 2019, his perspective had already been shaped by experiences beyond the South. Living in Washington, D.C., he encountered a world far more expansive than he had known. "As you go places, you get to know yourself," he proclaims, acknowledging the process of self-exploration that travel afforded him. His journeys across the African diaspora—to South Africa, Senegal, and Gambia, and throughout the Caribbean, from Haiti to the Bahamas and Cuba—deepened his understanding of the historical and cultural ties that link Black people across continents. In each place, he found something deeply familiar: the cadence of speech, the seasoning of food, the spiritual practices, the communal ways of being that felt like echoes of a home away from home.

Parks became deeply curious about how people sounded, how they carried themselves, how they honored their ancestors, and how their environment shaped their ways of knowing. He recognized that the beauty and nuance of cultural expressions he knew intimately—through family, community partners, neighbors, and friends—were not isolated but instead part of a vast, interconnected lineage that stretched back centuries. The unspoken familiarity he felt in the presence of people across the diaspora was not coincidence but evidence of shared origins.

Yet one thing troubled him: the lack of connection and communication among Africans and African descendants throughout the world. While traditions thrived, they were often practiced without a full awareness of their historical and global significance. The Lowcountry's worship practices, storytelling, music, and food were deeply rooted in African traditions, yet many who carried them forward had little knowledge of their origins. He saw this as both a loss and an opportunity—a call to reconnect the threads of a fractured yet enduring history.

For Parks, this was not merely an academic concern but a personal mission. He saw how survival had been mistaken for pride, how the trauma of history often overshadowed the brilliance of the culture itself. He realized that the answers he sought wouldn't come from merely studying within the academy, but from engaging with the living—documenting the world through photography, oral history, and film. By turning his lens on the landscapes and people that shaped him, he found a way to bridge the past and present, to capture not only what is seen but what is remembered, felt, and carried forward.



By the time he had traveled extensively across the diaspora, his political consciousness had sharpened. He came to understand the weight of global oppression on Black and Brown people and felt a deep responsibility to tell their stories—not just as an act of documentation but as an act of resistance and reclamation. Whether through intimate portraits, landscapes, or family archives, his work connects Africans and African descendants, highlighting where they are, where they came from, and most importantly, where the similarities of mind and heart criss-crossed lands and seas.

Though he respects the academic world and the knowledge it offers, his approach is rooted in something more personal. His photographs reflect a profound recognition of genetic, social, and cultural connections. Time and again, he has found himself looking at someone and thinking, "You look like my aunt, my grandfather, my childhood playmate." Parks found himself repeating time and time again, wondering sometimes, "Where in the world am I?"

This exhibition is an invitation to see—not only with the eyes but with the spirit, as Parks shares with viewers the result of his early fascination with looking through hundreds of family photographs, seeing rather than reading about the past, the present and undoubtedly the future of African people worldwide.