

## Pass It On®...

### Photographs that Changed the World.

*How the searing photographs of Walker Evans' America during the Depression created a national change in attitude toward the poor.*

Walker Evans was born into an affluent family. His father made sure he had access to the best schools, even paying for him to study in Paris. Walker was a curious and artistically minded young man. At first, his sensitive nature led him to be a writer, but he struggled to find words to describe what he saw, recalling, "I wanted so much to write that I couldn't write a word."

So he went to New York City and took a job as a stock clerk. And in his spare time, he resurrected his childhood hobby: photography. He had no ambition to create high art; rather, he wanted to explore the essence of humanity. At the time, this was a peculiar ambition. Victorian notions of class distinction were still rigid. The upper classes were considered entitled to their social stations, and the poor were mostly ignored.

Walker Evans didn't see it that way. And as the Depression ground down the masses, he set off to document more than their condition. He went searching for their dignity.

He captured the stern resolve of sharecroppers in the Dust Bowl, moving in with one family in Alabama for several weeks. His photographs shed light on the blight of poverty in America, on racism and classism. They forced a nation to confront the obligation of those it was dismissing.

At first, the photographs were considered too honest, and the collection sold only 600 copies when it was first published in 1936. But 30 years later, the world began to wake up to social injustice. In the 1960s, the work of Walker Evans was rediscovered, and with it arose a new ideal, one that sank deep into the hearts of all people. Each of us has an obligation to see to the needs of those less fortunate.

Old attitudes began to disappear, replaced by a new wave of altruism. Nonprofits sprang up that focused on making education more accessible, and new community centers and job training programs blossomed. Although the '60s were a tumultuous

time, some socioeconomic barriers began to come down.

Each of us has our talents, our circle of influence and that same pull to recognize the dignity of those around us. We can be a part of the solution, using what resources we have. A visit to one lonely neighbor, one struggling student, one family stretched thin financially can change their world.

### Use Your Talents to Make a Difference...[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

<https://www.artnet.com/artists/walker-evans/>

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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