

But the book deserves a wider audience for its sobering message about the vulnerability of the systems—train lines, water-treatment plants, electricity grids—that make modern life possible. These industrial control systems are increasingly hooked up to the internet, allowing remote access. Passwords are seldom changed from the systems' defaults. Security updates are rare. Firewalls and network logs are inconsistent. Warnings are ignored. Little surprise, then, that researchers have been able to simulate shutting down energy grids, infiltrating water plants and destroying generators. A 14-year-old in Poland derailed four trams in 2008. Another teenager took down communications at a Mas-

sachusetts airport. Utilities today encourage the use of internet-connected "smart meters" in homes. The attackers of tomorrow could very well use them to black out entire cities.

Despite the opportunity, the world has yet to see a sequel to Stuxnet. But "given the varied and extensive possibilities for conducting such attacks," Ms Zetter writes, "...it is only a matter of time until the lure of the digital assault becomes too irresistible for someone to pass up." Containing this new proliferation will be even harder. It takes money, raw materials and large facilities to develop nuclear weapons. A cyberwarrior needs only a computer and an internet connection to wreak havoc. ■

## American photography

# Past prints

ATLANTA

A showing of press images is a reminder of America's troubled racial history

IN 1956 a photographer named Gordon Parks travelled to Alabama to document the lives of one extended black family. The Thorntons lived under Jim Crow, the oppressive body of laws and customs in the states of the old Confederacy that enforced the separation of the races and denied full citizenship to the descendants of slaves. As the first African-American staff photographer for *Life* magazine, Parks felt strongly about the assignment, and the images he captured are marked as much by human warmth as by smouldering moral outrage.

The resulting 12-page spread appeared in 1956 under the title "The Restraints: Open and Hidden", with a text by a journalist, Robert Wallace, based on Parks's own notes. Published just as the nation was starting its long, tortured struggle to redress centuries of racial inequity, it exposed the broader American public to a discriminatory system, revealing its cruelty but also the resilience of those who struggled to rise above circumstances.

"Segregation Story" at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta allows audiences to revisit this fraught chapter in American history, and to measure how far the nation has come, but also to consider how that bitter legacy still shapes racial perspectives on everything from police brutality to affirmative action. The exhibition includes copies of that issue of *Life* preserved in glass cases like archaeological specimens; the stars of the show are the haunting images from Parks's origi-

nal slides; most never made it into print.

For all its good intentions, the magazine's photo essay feels like a period piece. The printing is grainy and the essay's social critique is delivered in the soothing tones of a bygone era. Mr Wallace's editorial voice is reassuring, acknowledging the unfairness of the system while being careful not to stir up explosive passions that might prove explosive. Of the 82-year-old patriarch, Albert Thornton—seated stiffly next to his wife in the essay's opening image—Wallace notes (with apparent approval) that, despite his frustrations, "he has no violence in him."



Dressing up didn't make it any better

Shorn of their mediating text, the photographs are more evocative, laying bare the human cost of an inhumane regime. Parks's keen eye for picturesque decay cannot disguise the poverty that characterises so much of this family's material life, a shabbiness most seek to overcome by carrying themselves in public with superhuman dignity. In one of the most poignant images, a gorgeously attired Joanne Wilton, daughter of the elder Thorntons, and her young niece stand outside the door to a cinema that is marked with a neon sign that says "Coloured entrance". How much it costs her to keep up appearances is suggested by the tiniest of details, the strap of her slip that has fallen off her shoulder, the one blemish on the otherwise impeccable façade she presents to the world. In the unguarded moment caught by Parks's camera, the burden seems almost too much.

Unlike many memorable images from the civil-rights era, Parks's photographs are, for the most part, non-confrontational, a cry for justice rather than a call to arms. Only occasionally can the visitor make out the rumble of distant thunder. A photograph of Willie Causey junior, Albert Thornton's 16-year-old grandson, shows him cleaning his shotgun while his young siblings read a book in the background. Violence is implied, but it is offstage.

The threat to the status quo posed by Parks and his camera is not immediately apparent in the photographs themselves. To appreciate the insurrectionary nature of this historic project, one must turn to the written testimony of the participants. Parks recalls the ominous atmosphere of rural Alabama in the pages of his diary: "Just a few miles down the road Klansmen are burning and shooting blacks and bombing their churches...[L]ying here in the dark, hunted, I feel death crawling the dusty roads."

Whereas Parks was able to return to friendlier climes, the Thornton clan paid heavily for their courage. Allie Lee Causey, a teacher in an all-black school, was fired, and her husband forced out of business, his life threatened. In the end, the magazine gave the Causey family \$25,000 so they could make new lives elsewhere. "Here is a mean place," Allie wrote to her brother. "The story they did on us is true...The work is true, the home is true. But these people are very, very mad." After nearly six decades much of the anger in America has dissipated and many wrongs have been righted, but the truth that Parks captured with his camera, his chronicle of suffering and redemption, of courage in the face of appalling injustice, still possesses an unsettling power. ■