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Paul D'Amato

Photographs by Paul D'Amato
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D'Amato's portraits give individual faces to the ongoing crisis in African-American communities

There is nothing particularly unique about the west side of Chicago. It's not the poorest, the oldest, the largest, or the most African-American of African-American communities in the U.S. It is just like every other swath of poverty in and around every single city in the U.S. We are led to believe that the only time these communities are in crisis is when something occurs that lands on a front page. The real crisis, however, is on-going and it's one of acceptance – acceptance of the conditions, day in day out.

Yet, when Paul D'Amato is there, visiting someone he knows, or simply stopping someone he has never met, something besides a concern for poverty takes shape. This is what he photographs. When these subjects agree to be photographed, they stand for the best and only example of who they are. The photographs won't change these neighborhoods. But they remind us that the individuals in the images aren't »they« or »them«, they are »he« and »she« and are as important as any one of us.

Paul D'Amato grew up in Boston during the height of racial unrest, civil rights protest, and bussing. He moved to Oregon to attend Reed College and claims to have learned as much from traveling cross-country four times a year—often by hitch-hiking and hopping freight trains—as he did in class. After receiving an MFA from Yale, he moved to Chicago, where he continues to photograph until this day. He has been awarded numerous grants and fellowships, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Pollock-

Krasner Grant, and a Rockefeller Foundation Grant to Bellagio, Italy. His work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago, among many others. Paul is a professor at Columbia College, Chicago.

Amy M. Mooney is Associate Professor of Art History at Columbia College, Chicago. As an ACLS fellow in 2016–17, she is working on *Portraits of Noteworthy Character: Negotiating a Collective American Identity*, a project that examines the cultural capital of African American and immigrant portraiture.

Camara Dia Holloway is an art historian with expertise in African American art, American art, and the history of photography, who earned her PhD at Yale University.

Dawoud Bey holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Yale University School of Art, and is Professor of Photography and a former Distinguished College Artist at Columbia College, Chicago. His works have been exhibited and collected extensively throughout the United States and abroad.

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