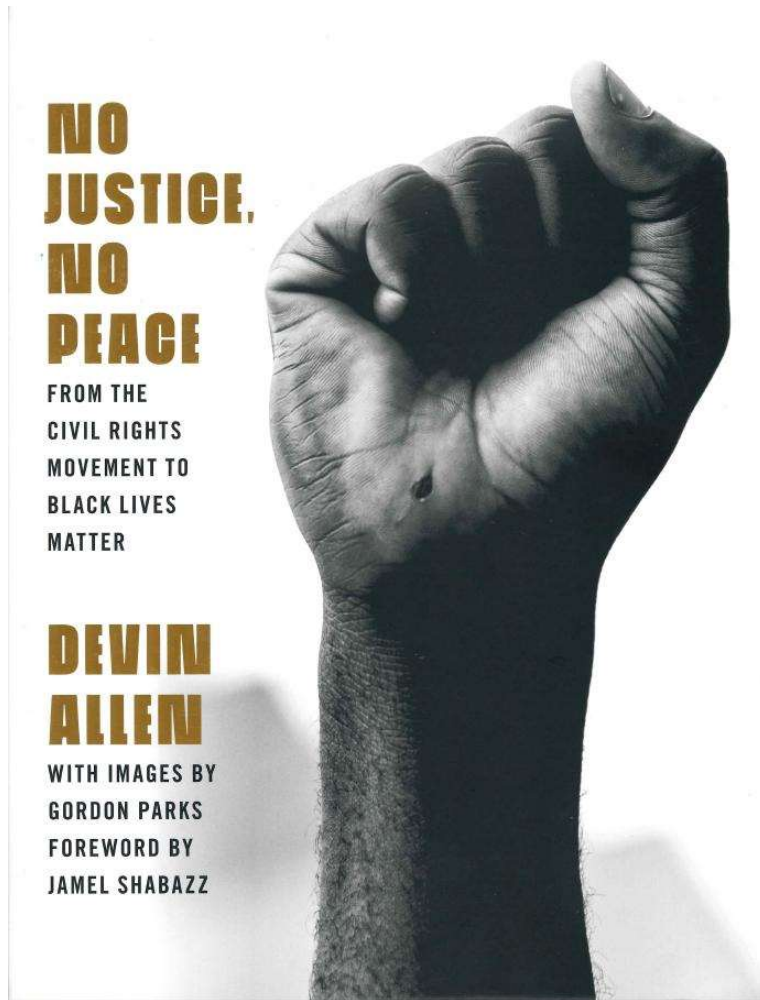


‘No Justice, No Peace’ an eye-opener

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“No Justice, No Peace: From the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter” by Devin Allen. New York, NY: Legacy Lit (an imprint of Grand Central Publishing), 2022, 192 pages, \$30.00 (hardcover).



“While completing this book, I thought about my experience growing up in Baltimore, surrounded by my family’s love, which carefully shielded me from what went on beyond my porch,” Devin Allen explains near the beginning of “No Justice, No Peace: From the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter,” a vivid and detailed journey through some of this country’s most turbulent episodes. “I eventually would find out what was on the other side of that shield. After losing one friend to the system and one to gun violence, I gained an intimate understanding of what the streets of Baltimore held in store for me.”

“In 2013, I got my first camera because of her {his grandmother},” he continues a little later. “Grandma recognized my growing passion and bought me a camera with her Best Buy credit on the line. I knew from her selfless investment that I had to take photography seriously. I spent hours on YouTube and in bookstores, flipping through {Gordon} Park’s

photos and obsessively reading everything about his life. He once said ‘I picked up a camera because it was my choice of weapon against what I hated most about the universe: racism, intolerance, poverty.’ I didn’t know it at the time, but the camera would also be my choice of weapon.”

So began a truly transformative experience. It’s one thing to read and form the internal mental pictures that inevitably flow from that cognitive process; it’s quite another to bear witness when images are unfolding before your eyes in such a dramatic and empathetic way. Make no mistake, this is one of the most compelling artistic accomplishments you will ever have occasion to dissect; the words of these celebrated contributors are some of the most potent you will ever encounter. When combined with their visual counterparts, they are often overwhelming.

“No Justice, No Peace” consists of an introduction followed by 25 chapters authored by 26 contributors who articulate a comprehensive overview of the ongoing struggle for equality that has unfortunately characterized our country since before it was founded. Each installment is comprised of a scripted component (typically a brief narrative or poem) followed by a series of photographs

designed to bring the words to life in a visceral and powerful manner. Honestly, I spent more time reflecting on the various images and depictions than I did pondering what was being communicated in written form.

It is important to note that, in addition to the work of Allen, historical images from the early 1940s through the 2000s are included, primarily by Gordon Parks, one of the greatest photographers of the Twentieth Century. His work documenting race relations, poverty, civil rights and urban life is widely acclaimed. Additional images by Jamal Shabazz are also featured in “No Justice, No Peace.” Shabazz, a member of the photo collective Kamoinge, is best known for his photographs of New York during the 1980s.

One chapter I found personally enlightening was “Interdependence and Chicana Feminism,” by Carmen Perez. Her prose was perhaps the best description of this distinctive brand of activism - and the important role it plays in the overall struggle for full membership in society - I have yet to run across:

“Chicana feminism, which I first encountered in college, added ‘leader’ to my tool kit. My mentor and professor Aida Hurtado taught me that Chicanas like us – women of indigenous and Mexican American heritage – are able to access our own unique voices through the foundation laid by Black radical feminists. She emphasized seeing ourselves as active members of the liberation struggles of others and showing up in solidarity, especially for Black people, who are targeted for so much oppression and violence.”

The founder of Through Their Eyes, a youth photography educational program, Allen won the 2017 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship, the same year he was nominated for an NAACP Image Award for his book “A Beautiful Ghetto.” He gained national attention when his photograph of the Baltimore Uprising was published on the cover of Time magazine in May 2015; five years later, after the deaths of George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor, his photograph from a Black Trans Lives Matter protest again made the cover of Time. Allen’s photographs have been published in New York Magazine, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and Aperture, and are also in the permanent collections of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore, and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Another chapter I found particularly inspiring was “Self-Care: A New Revolution,” by Tiffany Loftin. Her discussion of the need for constant engagement left me with a greater appreciation of the toll this relentless and all-consuming activity inevitably takes its participants mentally, emotionally and physically, as she duly notes:

“The pursuit of justice for Black people, victims of police brutality, those in need of safe abortions, those lost to COVID-19, those with mountains of student loan debt due to the high cost of education, and those experiencing voter suppression is one that leaves us with a deficit of time, energy, and spirit... Modeling my strength doesn’t just happen when I am in the streets of DC demanding voting rights, in the sands of Palestine demanding freedom, or in the streets of Louisville saying Breonna Taylor’s name. My strength shows when I post an early morning workout with my friends on Instagram, when I am skydiving through open air over Dubai, and when my toes are deep in the sands of Miami beaches. Strength is both resisting injustice and indulging in the magic of the world.”

As you may have surmised, “No Justice, No Peace” was a real eye-opener for me. My sense is that it would have a similar effect on many readers. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.