



I describe myself as a very nice and respectful young man to all. I'm an encourager to my friends, and family, even to my teachers. Often I find it fun to visit the nursing home to keep the old ones company. I love to help and encourage people.

**ARTIST**

Dawoud Bey

**TITLE**

Jason

**DATE**

2003

**DIMENSIONS**

10 in H x 10 in W

**MEDIUM**

Inkjet Prints

**IMAGE NOTES**

sheet 12 x 11 1/2"

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

2004.029

**CURRENT LOCATION**

1620-3D

**DESCRIPTION**

I describe myself as a very nice and respectful young man to all. I'm an encourager to my friends and family, even to my teachers. Often I find it fun to visit the nursing home to keep the old ones company. I love to help and encourage people.—*Jason*

This is one of a limited edition of signed and numbered prints made by the artist for Light Work's Fine Print Program. Since 1991 Light Work has sold limited edition prints to benefit all of our activities. The generosity of our former artists and friends makes it possible for us to continue our support of emerging and under recognized artists working in photography and related media.

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**DAWOUD BEY**

**BORN**

1953

## BIRTHPLACE

Queens, NY

## GENDER

Male

## CITIZENSHIP

United States

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

African-American

## LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1985

Light Work Gallery, 1986

Fine Print Program, 1997

Main Gallery, 2003

Group Exhibition - Embracing Eatonville

## LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Dawoud Bey** (born 1953) is an [American photographer](#) and educator renowned for his large-scale color portraits of adolescents and other often marginalized subjects. In 2017, Bey was the recipient of a "Genius Grant" from the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#).

Born **David Edward Smikle** in [New York City's Jamaica, Queens](#) neighborhood, he changed his name to Dawoud Bey in the early 1970s. He studied at the [School of Visual Arts](#) in New York from 1977–78, graduated with a [BFA](#) in [Photography](#) from [Empire State College](#) in 1990, and received his MFA from [Yale University School of Art](#) in 1993. Over the course of his career, Bey has participated in more than 20 [artist residencies](#), which have allowed him to work directly with the adolescent subjects of his most recent work.<sup>[2]</sup>

A product of the 1960s, Dawoud Bey said both he and his work are products of the attitude, "if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. This philosophy significantly influenced his artistic practice and resulted in a way of working that is both community-focused and collaborative in nature. Bey's earliest photographs, in the style of [street photography](#), evolved into a seminal five-year project documenting the everyday life and people of [Harlem](#) in *Harlem USA* (1975–1979) that was exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1979. In 2012, the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) mounted the first complete showing of the "Harlem, USA" photographs since that original exhibition, adding several never before printed photographs to the original group of twenty-five vintage prints. The complete group of photographs were acquired at that time by the AIC.

Of his work with teenagers Bey has said, "My interest in young people has to do with the fact that they are the arbiters of style in the community; their appearance speaks most strongly of how a community of people defines themselves at a particular historical moment."<sup>[4]</sup> During a residency at the [Addison Gallery of American Art](#) in 1992, Bey began photographing students from a variety of high schools both public and private, in an effort to "reach across lines of presumed differences" among the students and communities.<sup>[5]</sup> This new direction in his work guided Bey for the next fifteen years, including two additional residencies at the Addison, an ample number of similar projects across the country, and culminated in a major 2007 exhibition and publication of portraits of teenagers organized by [Aperture](#) and entitled *Class Pictures*. Alongside each of the photographs in *Class Pictures*, is a personal statement written by each subject. This rich combination of image and text expands the notion of the photographic portrait, and further creates portraits that are each incredibly powerful in its amalgamation, at times surprising, disturbing, and heart-wrenching.

Currently living in [Chicago, Illinois](#) Bey is a professor of art and Distinguished College Artist at [Columbia College Chicago](#), and is represented by Mary Boone Gallery (NYC), Rena Bransten Gallery (San Francisco), and Stephen Daiter Gallery (Chicago).

## ESSAYS

Everything that passes in front of my camera is raw material that can be used in the making of a photograph.' This quote by Dawoud Bey is a helpful point of departure to begin viewing the artist's work. Bey makes photographs in the street amid the noise and confusion of everyday activity as it passes by at a furious rate into the next instant, using the light and life of that environment as his raw materials. Photographers fascination with the street is a well-worn tradition within the medium, and to make new or original statements within this tradition is a difficult task. Bey has accepted and met that challenge by conveying his keen sense for the quality of light on the street combined with his ability to capture the casual event without disturbing the intimate quality of the scene. In a way, his presence becomes invisible and the scene is recorded as a careful interpretation of the passing moment. In this regard, Bey is able to show us the respectful contemplation embodied in the quiet celebrations and triumphs encountered in everyday life, in a way that is refreshing and honest. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1985Un/Common Threds In organizing the exhibition "Un/Common Threads:

Selections from the Light Work Collection," curator Kaylen Williams went beyond a superficial perception of diversity that has become pervasive in the United States. As a 2007 study by the sociology department at University of Minnesota revealed, many Americans happily endorse diversity as a nebulous concept; however, many are still at a loss to discuss the specifics of diversity and its related sub-topics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, and sexual orientation. (1) "Un/Common Threads" harnessed the power of photographs, using a visual language to voice these all-important specifics of diversity. Williams used the visual language that coalesced among the various images to stimulate dialogue about the complex challenges of a pluralist culture in ways that addressed both broad and personal implications. Exhibiting together the work of artists such as Myra Greene, Dawoud Bey, Clarissa Sligh, Yuri Marder, Hank Willis Thomas, and Binh Danh, among others, certainly highlighted the individuality of their concerns and aesthetic choices. Yet this varied grouping also served a common goal by giving voice to specific, possibly contentious topics surrounding diversity. To emphasize this unity of purpose, Williams combined the "Un/" in the exhibition title with "Common Threads," acknowledging the connections that can occur between diverse artists and the viewers of their work. Many of the photographs in "Un/Common Threads" manage to evoke the idea of connections and also simultaneously turn it on its head by asking viewers to re-examine preconceptions that they may bring with them into the gallery. Ellen M. Blalock's photograph, "Jermane," a portrait of a black teenage father pictured full-frame in an intimate embrace with his baby daughter, may provide a good example of this phenomenon. Those who find themselves jarred by the tender presence of emotion displayed by the young African American father must question and explore the sources of any biases regarding age, race, and gender. This is the inherent power of such photographs—when a viewer accepts involvement in questioning such preconceived connections, he or she is more inclined to get involved in talk of answers that can lead to a deeper understanding of identity and diversity. Many of the artists whose work curator Kaylen Williams, a graduate student of Museum Studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University, selected for "Un/Common Threads" engaged the topic of diversity from a personal perspective. Regarding her impetus for organizing the exhibition, Williams explains, "This project was of particular interest to me because of my own ethnic background of Japanese and Western European ancestors. Many students on campus are, like me, a mix of diverse cultural backgrounds. My Japanese mother was adopted by Americans and never had an opportunity or the encouragement to explore her racial identity." In culling this selection of images from the Light Work Collection, Williams invited viewers of Un/Common Threads to explore the diversity of identity and to participate in the critical mass that follows an expansion of consciousness. Laura A. Guth (c)2008 1. Joyce M. Bell and Douglas Hartmann, "Diversity in Everyday Discourse: The Cultural Ambiguities and Consequences of 'Happy Talk.'" American Sociological Association: American Sociological Review 72, no. 6 (December 2007): 895–914. The exhibition was on view in the Robert B. Menschel Photography Gallery from January 16 to April 19, 2007. It was curated by Kaylen Williams. The exhibition included work by the following artists: Don Gregorio Antón, Dawoud Bey, Ellen M. Blalock, Binh Dahn, Sylvia de Swaan, Lonnie Graham, Myra Greene, Saiman Li, Yuri Marder, Nzingah Muhammad, Osamu James Nakagawa, Suzanne Opton, Kanako Sasaki, Clarissa Sligh, Tone Stockenström, Lida Suchý, Hank Willis Thomas, Linn Underhill, and Carrie Mae Weems. When she curated the exhibition, Kaylen Williams was a graduate student of Museum Studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University. She graduated in 2007. Laura A. Guth is an artist and educator. She lives in Manlius, NY.