# Dorothea Lange Seeing People

merican photographer Dorothea Lange (1895–1965) created some of the most groundbreaking portraits of the 20th century. Through pictures of laborers, demonstrators, refugees, migrant farmers, the unjustly incarcerated, and others, Lange captured the spirit of human endurance while recording some of the profound social inequities of the period. Her work expanded the boundaries of portraiture and helped spark the development of modern documentary photography.

Dorothea Lange: Seeing People reframes Lange's art through the lens of portraiture and highlights her capacity to spotlight the humanity and resilience of those she photographed. She began her career as a studio portrait photographer, and even as she ventured far outside her studio people remained key to her mission. Focusing on Lange's abiding concern for those in need, this exhibition reveals her lifelong investigation into how photography — and portraits in particular — could help bring about collective change.

One of the most important documentary photographers of her time, Lange sought to transform how we see and understand one another. Motivated by an ever-growing interest in social justice, she was also an intrepid reporter who traveled extensively in the United States and around the world to create indelible and influential

photographs. This exhibition illuminates the centrality of portraiture in Lange's career and its role in exposing the impacts of economic disparity, climate change, migration, and war — issues that remain equally urgent today.

This exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington

The exhibition is made possible through the leadership support of the Trellis Fund

Unless otherwise noted, all works of art are collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington

## The portrait is made more meaningful by intimacy – an intimacy shared not only by the photographer with his subject but by the audience.

## Five years earlier I would have thought it enough

to take a picture of a man, no more. But now, I wanted

to take a picture of a man as he stood in his world.

A single photographic print may be "news," a "portrait," "art," or "documentary" – any of these, all of them, or none.



## To walk through the streets,

as though down a museum corridor...

To step into a supermarket as though

setting forth in the National Gallery –

is an experience and an exercise in vision.

### Early Portraits

1913 - 1915

Lange learns photography in New York portrait studios and Clarence H. White's photography course at Columbia University

1914 - 1918

B orn in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1895, Dorothea Lange learned photography in New York City before embarking in 1918 on a round-the-world trip. When forced to cut her journey short and find employment in San Francisco, she secured a position at the photo-finishing counter of a variety store. She soon opened her own portrait studio and worked among a cohort of bohemian artists and intellectuals including Imogen Cunningham, Consuelo Kanaga, Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and the painter Maynard Dixon, who would become her first husband.

World War I

### 1918

Lange arrives in San Francisco and soon opens her own portrait studio

### 1920

Lange marries painter Maynard Dixon

Bay Area high-society and cultural figures became Lange's clients and the subjects of her studio portraits. These early pictures combine elements of the pictorial style in which she was trained, such as soft focus and diffused light, with an emerging modernist aesthetic that included dramatic cropping and unusual angles. She used light, shadow, and carefully constructed poses to articulate the character, attitude, and individuality of her models: "I really and seriously tried, with every person I

### photographed, to reveal them as closely as I could."

### Poverty and Activism

#### 1929

Stock market crash precipitates the Great Depression, which continues in the US through 1939

A lthough she had a highly successful studio practice, Lange in 1933 was compelled by the nation's worsening economic conditions to rethink her occupation and carry her cameras into the city. "There in my studio I was surrounded by evidence of the

1933

Franklin Delano Roosevelt becomes president of the United States and initiates the New Deal to encourage economic recovery

### 1934

Lange exhibits photographs of May Day protests in Oakland; Paul Taylor sees her work and asks to publish one in an essay about the labor strikes

Depression," she said. "I remember well standing at that one window and just watching the flow of life.... I was driven by the fact that I was under personal turmoil to do something."

Out in the streets during the early years of the Great Depression, Lange saw poverty, breadlines, strikes, and labor demonstrations. Her photographs from this period portray the unemployment and unrest that plagued San Francisco, and also document the activism of workers who organized to change their conditions. In 1934, Lange met the agricultural economist Paul Taylor. The two formed an important professional and personal partnership (they married the following year). Lange soon

### shifted her attention to the plight of migrant farmers, who were moving to California to seek work.

### The Great Depression

### April 1935

Resettlement Administration established; later becomes the Farm Security Administration

### December 1935 Lange and Paul Taylor

s the Great Depression deepened, Dorothea Lange focused her lens on the families who had fled westward in the face of economic hardship caused by depleted land and failed farm tenancy in the South and Midwest. When she was working for government agencies, she documented the success of rural cooperatives and the unsanitary conditions in California migrant camps while striving to humanize the large numbers of people seeking shelter and employment. For Lange, portraiture offered a way to visualize the impacts of migration, racism, and environmental change, as well as the legacy of slavery, to gain public support for government aid programs.

marry after divorcing their respective spouses

### 1940

Lange works for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics

> During this period Lange cemented her style of documenting people. Her empathetic, highly detailed, and sharply focused depictions show laborers within their living and working environments. Some subjects are alone, but many are seen with family and other members of their communities. These photographs provided evidence of economic disaster and bore witness

to the resulting human tragedy while underscoring her subjects' strength and resilience. This powerful merging of portraiture and documentary photography expanded the boundaries of both traditions, transforming them in ways that resonate deeply today.

### World War IT

### June 1941

President Franklin D. Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination in federal government employment and in unions and companies working in the defense D uring World War II, Dorothea Lange focused on the impact of the war on Americans at home as well as the nation's complicated racial dynamics. Nowhere is this seen more acutely than in her portraits of individuals of Japanese ancestry who were forced to abandon their homes in response to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive order (see nearby panel).

### industries

### December 7, 1941

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, leading the United States to enter World War II

### 1942 - 1943

Lange works for the War Relocation Authority and Office of War Information

### February 19, 1942

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 leading to the removal of more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent from

Lange also recorded the epochal shifts in California's social fabric sparked by the growing defense industries, which helped rebuild the economy. Hired by Fortune magazine, she documented the Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, California, where well-paid jobs attracted African Americans, Native Americans, and women into what had previously been a white male-dominated workforce. Yet as the population of Richmond quickly swelled, and as these newly empowered groups began to assert themselves, the changes also provoked housing shortages and social unrest.

### their homes to detention

#### centers

### Postwar America

1952

Begins collaboration with *Life* magazine

Helps found Aperture magazine with Ansel Adams, Minor White, and others to "communicate with serious photographers and creative people everywhere" Despite frequent health struggles, in the 1950s Dorothea Lange pursued photographic stories about a variety of American communities in the western United States. These include a project about urban life, for which she roamed the Bay Area; *Three Mormon Towns*, a collaboration made with Ansel Adams and Paul Taylor in Utah for *Life* magazine; and an environmental critique produced with photographer Pirkle Jones about the flooding of a Northern California town to create a reservoir. Wide-ranging in subject matter, Lange's photographs reveal an extraordinary ability to portray the continued transformation of the American West and shine a light on the environmental and human consequences of the postwar economic boom.

### 1954

Assists photographer and curator Edward Steichen with *The Family of Man*, a landmark photography exhibition that opens at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955

### World View

1950 - 1953

Cold War tensions rise during the Korean War, as the US sends troops to a divided Korea to support the anti-Communist southern military against Chinesebacked northern forces

orothea Lange began working globally in 1954. Her first trip overseas was to Ireland, where she documented the kinship and community of country villages for Life magazine. Her husband, Paul Taylor, began consulting on international economic development for the US State Department and, in 1958, they traveled abroad for eight months, visiting Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other countries; in the early 1960s, the couple traveled to Venezuela and Egypt. Continuing to concentrate on portraiture, Lange found a new sort of beauty and serenity in these foreign environments as well as ties to the economic and social disparities she had photographed in the United States. While photographs taken during these trips confirm her ongoing creativity in the face of declining health, profound cultural differences made it more difficult for Lange to connect with people.

October 11, 1965

Lange passes away after a years-long battle with cancer

### January 1966

Lange's retrospective exhibition opens at New York's Museum of Modern Art

> Lange devoted the last years of her life to her family and to organizing a retrospective exhibition of her photographs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She passed away in late 1965, but her legacy continues in the enduring resonance of her photographs and the new generations of photographers who use portraiture and documentary styles to prompt social change.

### Travel

B eginning in 1922, Lange traveled with her first husband, artist Maynard Dixon, to Arizona and New Mexico, where she produced portraits of Indigenous Americans. The few photographs that remain from these excursions show Lange testing new strategies. She started to experiment with portraits that featured just a fragment of a person — their hands or face, for example — perhaps inspired by the modernist work of photographer Alfred Stieglitz, whom she had met in 1923. She also shed the soft-focus pictorial style of her earlier studio portraits in favor of a more direct approach. Although Lange interacted only briefly with the Indigenous people she photographed, she witnessed some of the "harsh and unjust treatment" they faced. The sensitivity and experimentation seen in these early photographs helped establish Lange's expansive concept of portraiture, which impacted her later work.

### The Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration

**P** rom mid-1935, Dorothea Lange worked for the federal government's Resettlement Administration (RA), reorganized as the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1937. Created to revitalize the country's faltering agricultural economy, the RA helped farmers acquire land through lowinterest loans, administered projects on soil conservation and reforestation, and supported resettlement for those who could no longer work their land.

To document and report on its efforts, the RA established a historical division. Led by economist Roy Emerson Stryker, it enlisted some of America's finest documentary photographers, including Walker Evans, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, Arthur Rothstein, and Ben Shahn. Stryker hired Lange on the strength of her earlier photographs documenting agricultural conditions for the state of California. In pictures of migrant laborers in California, tenant farmers in Alabama, drought refugees from Oklahoma, and others, Lange recorded the work and aspirations of the agencies. She covered a wide range of socially engaged stories that highlighted themes of human struggle and resilience, but the federal agencies eager to garner widespread public and congressional support — discouraged depictions of racial oppression.

### Migrant Mother March 1936

Human Erosion in California depicts a mother and three children at a migrant labor camp. Lange carefully composed the portrait to capture the woman's face — prematurely etched by years of labor and worry and her daughters embracing her. *Migrant Mother*, as the photograph is commonly known, has been compared to a Renaissance-era Madonna and child and described as an icon of 20th-century art, revered for its empathetic portrayal.

Lange did not record the mother's name. Only in 1978 was

she finally identified as Florence Owens Thompson, a woman of Cherokee descent from Oklahoma. At the time of the photograph, Owens Thompson and her family were driving back home from California, where her husband had been working in a sawmill. When their car broke down, they were stranded at a nearby pea pickers' camp.

First published in a newspaper editorial urging government aid for migrant laborers, *Migrant Mother* prompted support from the state and the picture become an emblem of the power of photography to bring about social change. It also raises questions about the ethics of documentary photography and the dynamics between photographer and subject. Lange recalled that Owens Thompson "seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it." Owens Thompson, however, received little benefit and was never given a copy of the photograph.

### **Executive Order 9066**

I n February 1942, months after the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. The order paved the way for the removal of more than 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry — the majority of whom were American citizens from the West Coast to inland incarceration camps. Denying individuals their civil liberties, the government registered and tagged people before loading them onto buses and transporting them to rudimentary "assembly centers" and, eventually, one of 10 detention camps spread across seven states. The last camp closed four years after Roosevelt

issued the order.

Soon after the initial order, the government's War Relocation Administration (WRA) hired Lange to document this process. Opposed to the government's actions, Lange believed it was important to record for history "what we did." Through poignant portraits, she also depicted the resilience of Japanese Americans forced to abandon the lives and businesses they had built and face incarceration. Fearing that Lange's portraits would elicit too much sympathy, the WRA did not release the photographs during the war.

### Documentary Portraiture

I ange's work during the 1930s synthesized her ideas about portraiture and documentary photography. With new purpose, she used the techniques, compositional strategies, and social skills she had cultivated in her portrait studio to frame the people and events she recorded. By 1940 she had distilled her understanding of documentary photography as an art form that "records the social scene of our time. It mirrors the present and documents for the future."

Yet these photographs were also documents that followed the government's New Deal economic doctrine — they emphasized getting the country back on its feet through perseverance, hard work, regulatory reforms, and government relief. This mix of presumed objectivity, propaganda, and documentary storytelling in service of a critical national agenda proved to be particularly powerful. As photography historian Beaumont Newhall later wrote, Lange was "resolved to photograph the now, rather than the timeless; to capture somehow the effects on people of the calamity which overwhelmed America."

### Lange's Titles

You will notice Lange's varied approach to titles across her career. Sometimes she simply used someone's name or the location where a picture was made. Other titles describe or poetically evoke what she saw. Lange also created elaborate captions, often taken from interviews or conversations with those whom she photographed. This was an experimental documentary technique, which relied on Lange's memory and prolific notetaking. These long captions are seen especially in work she made for government agencies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Lange and her editors frequently retitled photographs when exhibiting or publishing them. For this exhibition, we have used Lange's original titles when known. In a few instances we have updated language in original titles to reflect contemporary usage. intro caption

Dorothea Lange, Children of the Weill Public School Shown in a Flag Pledge Ceremony, San Francisco, California, April 1942, gelatin silver print, Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser [section 1] [DEX 86]

#### Portrait of Adele Raas, San Francisco

1927

gelatin silver print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of the Raas Family [DEX 83]

### **Anita Reiners Bohling**

1921

gelatin silver print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Anita R. Bohling [DEX 112]

### Maynard Dixon

c. 1930

gelatin silver print

Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

[DEX 85]

### Maynard Dixon and Son Daniel

1925

gelatin silver print

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2000.50.1

### **Clausen Child and Mother**

с. 1930

gelatin silver print

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Henri Cartier-Bresson, by exchange

Lange frequently photographed the subject of mother and child, a long-standing Western art historical tradition rooted in depictions of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus and modernized and secularized in high-end portrait studios. Here Frances Clausen stares directly at the camera while her mother, Gertrude, sits in shadow, looking away. Lange focuses on the child's inquisitive gaze, as well as her affectionate bond to and emerging independence from her mother. Lange's expertise photographing children acquired from her early studio work — led to some of her most important photographs made during the Great Depression, displayed in the next galleries.



### Untitled (Portrait of William)

1929

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

[DEX 111]

### Maynard Dixon (Smoking Cigarette)

c. 1930

gelatin silver print

Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund



### Untitled (La Estrellita, "Spanish" Dancer), San Francisco, California

1919

gelatin silver print

Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Estrellita Jones

Stella Hurtig Jones was a famous American vaudeville performer who traveled the world as a flamenco and tango dancer during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of Lange's earliest professional portraits, the composition uses the soft focus and diffused light that characterizes pictorial photography, popular among celebrities. Lange photographed Hurtig Jones as herself, rather than as her stage persona La Estrellita (The Little Star), perhaps in recognition of her recent retirement. As European travel waned during World War I and movies replaced vaudeville as mass entertainment, the allure of traditional Spanish dance diminished. La Estrellita married, started a perfume business, and moved from Hollywood to the Bay Area. [DEX 82]

### Untitled (Fleishhacker Portrait)

1920

gelatin silver print

Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Paul S. Taylor

### Maynard and Dan Dixon

1930, printed c. 1960s

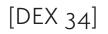
gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

In fall 1919 Lange met Maynard Dixon, a painter and illustrator of western subjects and one of the best-known artists in California. Early the following year, Lange and Dixon were married. Their first son, Daniel, was born in 1925 and their second, John, in 1928. This intimate portrait presents a close-up view of Dixon's hands holding Dan in a gentle embrace, with the boy's tiny fingers quietly resting on top of his father's. Here Lange directed their pose to express both character and personal narrative, which recalls her training in New York portrait studios, as well as Alfred Stieglitz's "portraits" of Georgia O'Keeffe that focused on her hands to convey her personality.



Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe – Hands, 1917, silver-platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection



#### Mexican American Child, San Francisco

1928

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

### Hopi Man, Arizona

1923, printed 1926

gelatin silver print

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 84.XP.912.4

Lange embraced the chance to experiment outside her studio. In August 1923, she visited Walpi Village of the Hopi Nation with her then-husband Maynard Dixon, an avid outdoor painter. She had begun to crop some of her portraits to accentuate a gaze, hand, touch, or torso — a way of capturing the essence of a person, paradoxically showing less to reveal more.

When printing *Hopi Man*, Lange focused so closely on the subject's face that his features resemble a map of his experience. She undercut her own effort to reach meaningfully across the cultural divide, however, because she did not record the man's name or any other information about him. As a portrait, *Hopi Man* risks picturing a type or class of person rather than this individual's character.

### Dorothy Brett, Painter, Taos, New Mexico

1931

gelatin silver print

Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

Lange met Dorothy Brett in 1931 when the photographer and her family spent several months in Taos. Born into an aristocratic British family, Brett rebelled against their expectations, attending art school and becoming a painter. In London she befriended writers associated with the Bloomsbury group, including D. H. Lawrence, who was recruiting people to go to New Mexico to form a utopian society. Brett was the only person who followed him, but she was so enchanted with the area that she lived there for the rest of her life.

### Native American Girl, Taos, New Mexico

1931

gelatin silver prints

Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

In summer 1931, escaping the Depression-era turmoil of San Francisco, Lange and Dixon bought their first car and drove to New Mexico with their children. Her few surviving photographs from this trip reveal significant steps in her transition away from studio portraiture and toward a more straightforward approach to photographing people. A series of pictures portrays this unidentified Indigenous girl in a direct documentary style. Although her expression reveals few emotions, she looks squarely at the lens in one photograph and seems comfortable in front of the camera.

### White Angel Breadline, San Francisco, California

1933

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

A growing desire to capture the Depression's impact drew Lange to the White Angel Jungle, a San Francisco soup kitchen run by Lois Jordan, the "White Angel." There Lange photographed this downtrodden man leaning on a barricade, his jaw clenched, shoulders hunched, back to the crowd, and eyes covered by the brim of his hat. Though anonymous, he drew Lange's sympathetic eye and became a symbol of the nameless masses who faced economic hardship as the United States plunged deep into financial crisis. [DEX 33]

### San Francisco Waterfront

1934

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

[DEX 64]

### Unemployed Man, San Francisco, California

1934, printed before 1950

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

### Street Demonstration, San Francisco

1934

gelatin silver print

Diana and Mallory Walker Fund and Robert Menschel and the Vital Projects Fund, in Honor of the 25th Anniversary of Photography at the National Gallery of Art

In spring and summer 1934, a longshoremen's strike gripped San Francisco and demonstrations took place throughout the city. Protesters also advocated for Japanese unions, which were being threatened by anti-labor forces in Japan. Lange wrote in her notes, "This was just before the New Deal during a time when Communists were very active. A few blocks away...soup was being distributed daily to the unemployed."

Lange focused on a lone policeman standing before a crowd of protesters holding placards in English and Japanese. The policeman projects authority through his firm stance, crisp uniform, and shiny badge, creating a barrier between the photographer and the crowd.

### Man at Microphone, May Day Demonstration, San Francisco, California

1934

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Lange's photographs of May Day demonstrations at San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza document union organizers and protesters rallying for more secure jobs, including fair hiring practices and equitable pay and hours. This tightly focused picture of an impassioned activist mid-speech conveys the fervor of these demonstrations.

Lange's May Day photographs were exhibited at the Oakland studio of photographer Willard Van Dyke. After seeing the show, agricultural economist Paul Taylor asked to feature one of Lange's photographs in an essay he wrote about the General Strike — the beginning of a partnership that would continue until Lange's death in 1965. [DEX 36]

### May Day, San Francisco, California

1934, printed c. 1960s

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

### Demonstration, San Francisco

1934

gelatin silver print

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Purchase, Joseph M. Cohen Gift, 2005.100.309

In 1934, as Lange began to forge a new documentary practice, she sought "to take a picture of a man as he stood in his world." With no clients to please, she drew on insights she had learned from modernism, especially its celebration of close-up studies and dramatic angles. Like other artists, she also found that signs — such as the protest poster declaring "... FEED US!" could root a photograph in a specific time and place and give agency to those she depicted, allowing them to speak. With carefully composed pictures like this one, Lange was acknowledging the power of modernist photography to tell stories in simple, dynamic ways. [DEX 58]

### Street Meeting, San Francisco

1934

gelatin silver print

### Stenographer with Mended Stockings, San Francisco, California

1934, printed 1950s

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Lange's portrait of a Depression-era stenographer omits her face to focus on her dark, creased dress, tattered hosiery, and woven shoes. Her stockings are stitched up the front, mended to keep them — and her — going for another day or two. They reveal the grit and fortitude of San Francisco's working women during a time when jobs were scarce and people had to conserve all their resources in the face of financial insecurity.

## Andrew Furuseth

1934

gelatin silver print

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Andrew Furuseth was an American labor leader known for organizing seamen during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He helped create the Sailors' Union of the Pacific and the International Seamen's Union, heading both as their president. Lange met 80-year-old Furuseth around the time of the San Francisco waterfront strikes of 1934. She had been photographing labor organizers and protesters at May Day events around the city while Furuseth was working to help moderate the seamen's anger to avoid a damaging strike. Her portrayal of Furuseth in profile against a dark background — eyes closed, deep in thought — emphasizes his years of experience and a weary strength.

## Mexican Workers Leaving for Melon Fields, Imperial Valley, California

June 1935, printed 1940s

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

In the summer of 1935, Lange traveled with Paul Taylor, working with his research team on a study of migrant laborers funded by California's State Emergency Relief Administration. Mexican farm laborers, like this trio of cantaloupe harvesters, saw wages plummet during the Depression as thousands of westbound American migrants flooded the labor market. Angling her camera upward, Lange silhouetted the workers against a hazy sky, producing a striking group portrait. Working together solidified Lange and Taylor's professional relationship, which developed into a romantic partnership and marriage later that same year.

### Drought Refugees from Oklahoma Camping by the Roadside, Blythe, California

August 17, 1936

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

As a result of droughts and erosion that destroyed tillable land and crops in Oklahoma and Arkansas, thousands of farmers moved west with their families to start their lives over in places such as Blythe. Zella, Jess, and Jesse Power were among these families. It is not clear when the Powers began their move to California, but Jesse was born in Blythe, so Zella may have been pregnant during their journey. Lange's field notes indicate that the Powers were a family of seven; an older sibling's foot may be glimpsed in the lower right. With her furrowed brow and slumped posture, Zella exemplifies the difficulties faced by migrant mothers seeking better lives for themselves and their families in places that did not promise immediate relief. [DEX 62]

# Wandering Boy, Camp Carlton, California

1935

gelatin silver print



This man is a labor contractor in the pea fields of California. "One-Eye" Charlie gives his views. "I'm making my living off of these people (migrant laborers) so I know the conditions," San Luis Obispo County, California February 1936

gelatin silver print



Dispossessed Arkansas farmers. These people are resettling themselves on the dump outside of Bakersfield, California, from An American Exodus

1935

gelatin silver print

### Formerly Enslaved Woman, Alabama, from The American Country Woman

1938, printed 1950s

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

This formerly enslaved woman, whom Lange does not name, would have witnessed several events that transformed the nation. She would have experienced the tragedy of chattel slavery in the United States and the victory for enslaved people in the South through Emancipation, as well as the ups and downs of Reconstruction, the passage of Jim Crow laws that permitted segregation, and the Great Depression. The dilapidated home, falling and standing simultaneously, suggests her own perseverance amid a lifetime of racial, gender, and class oppression.

### Formerly Enslaved Woman, Alabama, from The American Country Woman

1938, printed c. 1955

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Lange's portraits of Depression-era people have inspired other artists, such as Elizabeth Catlett, to remember that time. In *Survivor*, Catlett translated the power of Lange's photograph of a formerly enslaved woman into a linocut, an image cut into a linoleum block, inked, and then pressed onto paper, which prints it in reverse from the original.



Elizabeth Catlett, *Survivor*, 1983, linocut, National Gallery of Art, Purchased as the Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in



# Alabama Plow Girl, near Eutaw, Alabama

1936

gelatin silver print

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, 2001.390

Lange traveled to the American South in 1936 while employed by the Resettlement Administration. Near Eutaw, Alabama, she photographed Black tenant farmers like this shoeless girl plowing a field in the punishing summer heat. In the South, Lange witnessed the oppressive working conditions endured by Black tenants, who farmed land predominantly held by white owners and often struggled to access New Deal resources. Southern Black farmers faced undue difficulty during the Depression as economic disaster exacerbated the oppression and poverty produced by the region's racist agricultural system.



# Child of Impoverished Black Tenant Family Working on Farm, Alabama

July 1936

gelatin silver print

[DEX 31]

# Black Woman Working in Field near Eutaw, Alabama

1936

gelatin silver print

Country store on dirt road. Sunday afternoon. Note the kerosene pump on the right and the gasoline pump on the left. Rough, unfinished timber posts have been used as supports for porch roof. Black men are sitting on the porch. Brother of store owner stands in doorway, Gordonton, North Carolina

July 1939, printed later

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Rainey Curry Baynes II, the store owner's brother, leans in the doorway conversing with five Black men. On the far right is Arthur Thorpe, and the man wearing overalls is Joe Carrington. The men appear relaxed in Baynes's presence, but it is unclear whether their demeanor is genuine or for the benefit of Lange's camera. They may have been sharecroppers or tenant farmers indebted to the Baynes brothers, or simply customers of the store.

# Plantation Owner, Mississippi Delta, near Clarksdale, Mississippi

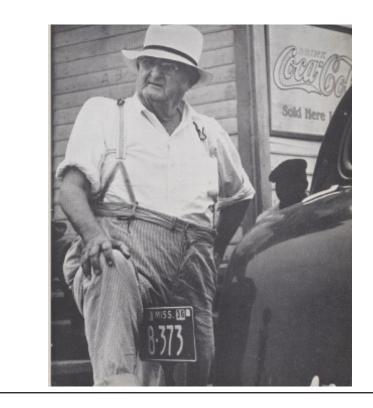
June 1936

gelatin silver print

The Art Institute of Chicago, Purchased with funds provided by Vicki and Thomas Horwich, 2016.341

In 1938, a cropped version of this photograph was featured in the publication of Archibald MacLeish's book-length poem *Land of the Free*. The cropped photograph focused attention on the "plantation owner" and erased four of the Black men, leaving just one silhouetted in the background.

MacLeish's poem proclaims, "All you needed for freedom was being American" — yet Lange's original picture, and the subsequent cropped version, reveals the fallacy of this sentiment. Both point to how African Americans were barred from achieving the freedom that MacLeish claims was available to all Americans. Paul Taylor appears at the far left edge interviewing the owner.



Cropped detail of Plantation Owner, Mississippi Delta, near Clarksdale, Mississippi, in Archibald MacLeish (with United States Resettlement Administration), Land of the Free, 1938, National Gallery of Art Library, David K.E. Bruce Fund [caption for large graphic mural of Lange sitting on car (not connected to DEX 68]

> MURAL AT LEFT (?DIRECTIONAL?) Unknown photographer, Dorothea Lange, Resettlement Administration photographer, in California, February 1936, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC

[DEX 68]

### Migratory Workers Harvesting Peas near Nipomo, California

spring 1937

gelatin silver print

#### Nettie Featherston, Wife of a Migratory Laborer with Three Children, near Childress, Texas, from The American Country Woman June 1938

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

When Lange photographed her on a North Texas farm, 40-year-old Nettie Featherston was accustomed to a life of hard labor and poverty. She and her family had left Oklahoma seeking work in California when they ran out of money in Texas and found work picking cotton. Lange's portrait reveals a gaunt survivor of the Dust Bowl, her right arm echoing the shape of the storm cloud behind her — a symbol of the difficult road ahead for migrant families looking for work. Reflecting on the photograph of herself years later, Featherston said, "It seems like...I have too much on my mind. I can just be burdened so bad, awful burdens they'll be."



Bill Ganzel, Nettie Featherston in the fourroom house she shares with her son, Lubbock, Texas, August 1979, from Dust Bowl Descent. Courtesy Bill Ganzel



Eighty-year-old woman living in squatters' camp on the outskirts of Bakersfield, California. "If you lose your pluck you lose the most there is in you — all you've got to live with."

November 1936

gelatin silver print

[DEX 66]

# Migratory Pea Pickers, Nipomo, California

March 1936

gelatin silver print

### Once a Missouri Farmer, now a Migratory Farm Laborer. San Joaquin Valley, California

February 1936, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Although this farm laborer from Missouri seems to be alone behind the wheel of his car, he is actually seated beside his wife, in the passenger seat. Her overcoat and right arm are easily overlooked at the bottom left. By focusing only on the driver, with his gaunt features and intense gaze, Lange heightens our sense of his isolation to create an evocative portrait of a man grappling with the consequences of dislocation. The photograph also calls attention to the automobile as a means of transport and escape for some Depression-era migrants.

# Migratory Field Worker Picking Cotton in San Joaquin Valley, California, from An American Exodus

November 1938, printed later

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

This photograph of hard stoop labor appeared in Lange and Paul Taylor's 1939 book *An American Exodus*. According to Taylor's field notes, "These pickers are paid seventy-five cents per hundred pounds of picked cotton. Strikers organizing under CIO union (Congress of Industrial Organizations) are demanding one dollar. A good male picker, in good cotton, under favorable weather conditions, can pick about two hundred pounds in a day's work." [DEX 14]

# Migrant Agricultural Worker's Family, Nipomo, California

March 1936

gelatin silver print

# Human Erosion in California (Migrant Mother)

March 1936

gelatin silver print

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 98.XM.162

### Post Office and Postmistress, Widtsoe, Utah

April 1936

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

When Lange photographed Widtsoe, Utah, for the Resettlement Administration, the town's population had dwindled to 17 families. Cycles of drought devastated the region's agricultural economy and the RA stepped in to buy out landowners and relocate them. Signs of desolation are evident in this portrait of the town's postmistress at the post office. Perched on cinder blocks, surrounded by dusty earth, the building appears to teeter — an effect intensified by Lange's skewed composition. The stoic presence of the postmistress, who is posed neatly within the doorframe, hints at the stabilizing role women often play in Lange's compositions. [DEX 94]

## Young Cotton Picker, San Joaquin Valley, California

November 1936

gelatin silver print

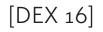
Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Paul S. Taylor



Calipatria (vicinity), California. Native of Indiana in a migratory labor contractor's camp. "It's root hog or die for us folks."

February 1937

gelatin silver print



Edison, Kern County, California. Young migratory mother, originally from Texas. On the day before the photograph was made, she and her husband traveled 35 miles each way to pick peas. They worked 5 hours each and together earned \$2.25. They have two young children... Live in auto camp. April 11, 1940, printed 1950s

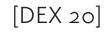
gelatin silver print

[DEX 53]

### Edison, Kern County, California. Young girl looks up from her work. She picks and sacks potatoes on large-scale ranch.

April 11, 1940

gelatin silver print



Arkansas mother come to California for a new start, with husband and eleven children. Now a rural rehabilitation client. Tulare County, California, from The American Country Woman November 1938, printed 1965

gelatin silver print

[Documentary Portraiture subsection][DEX 9]

## Displaced Tenant Farmers, Goodlett, Hardeman County, Texas

July 1937, printed 1950s

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

During the 1930s, machines began to replace people in some cotton-growing regions like Hardeman County in Northeast Texas; consequently, many tenant farmers were evicted from their land. Already reckoning with severe drought and economic depression, these "tractored out" farmers were forced to seek work as day laborers, a precarious livelihood offering little security.

In this picture, five displaced tenant farmers congregate outside the screened porch of a small house. Although they are united by a common plight, each man seems utterly alone, unable to find solace or support within an eroding agricultural system.



### On the Plains a Hat Is More Than a Covering

1938, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Lange wrote in her field notes that a "hat is more than a covering against sun and wind...it is a badge of service... linking past and present." This artfully cropped photograph of James Abner Turpen, a 70-year-old Texas tenant farmer, focuses on Turpen's hand as his fingers curl around the brim of a hat. Both hand and hat are weathered, aged by time and work, and portray Turpen without showing his face.



#### Funeral Cortege, San Joaquin Valley, California

1938, printed early 1950s

gelatin silver print

[DEX 30]

Line of men inside a division office of the State Employment Service office at San Francisco, California, waiting to register for unemployment benefits

January 1938, printed c. 1960s

gelatin silver print

[DEX 13]

### **Eighteen-Year-Old Mother from Oklahoma**, **now a California Migrant** March 1937

gelatin silver print

# Child Living in Oklahoma City Shacktown

August 1936

gelatin silver print

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

This photograph of a bruised girl with a hollow gaze is one of many Lange made depicting the exploitation of migrant children during the Great Depression. The portrait suggests the range of emotional and physical harm children experienced as they, too, struggled to survive economic hardship.

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#### Washington, Yakima Valley, near Wapato. One of Chris Adolph's younger children. Farm Security Administration Rehabilitation Clients.

August 1939

gelatin silver print

Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Paul S. Taylor



#### Black sharecropper with twenty acres. He receives eight cents a day for hoeing cotton. Brazos river bottoms, near Bryan, Texas

June 1938, printed c. 1950

gelatin silver print

[DEX 22]

#### Yazoo Delta, Mississippi, from An American Exodus

1938, printed 1965

gelatin silver print

[DEX 23]

# Former Tenant Farmer on Relief Grant in the Imperial Valley, California

March 1937

gelatin silver print

[DEX 54]

# Scandinavian Homesteader, Great Plains, South Dakota, from The American Country Woman

1939, printed 1950s

gelatin silver print



#### Hitch-hiking from Joplin, Missouri, to a sawmill job in Arizona. On U.S. 66 near Weatherford, western Oklahoma

August 12, 1938, printed c. 1960s

gelatin silver print



#### Near Coolidge, Arizona. Migratory cotton picker with his cotton sack slung over his shoulder rests at the scales before returning to work in the field.

November 1940, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

[DEX 15]

#### Cotton Pickers and Farm Owners, Bakersfield, California

1938, printed c. 1950s

gelatin silver print

Member of the congregation of Wheeley's church who is called "Queen." She is wearing the old-fashioned type of sunbonnet. Her dress and apron were made at home. Near Gordonton, North Carolina, from The American Country Woman July 1939, printed no later than 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Wheeley's Church was a congregation of Primitive Baptists, conservative practitioners located primarily in the South. Lange had a knack for building rapport with people from various religious communities and worked to gain their trust and respect to make photographs. This portrait features one church member, "Queen" Bowes, a devout widow shaded by her elaborate sunbonnet. Lange captured her stern expression, with piercing eyes and a tightly closed mouth that hid her false teeth.

# End of Shift, Richmond, California

1942, printed 1965

gelatin silver print

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

Fortune magazine commissioned Lange to document the bustling shipyards in Richmond, north of Oakland, where newly desegregated defense firms were rapidly constructing transport, cargo, and warships for the United States Navy. With its tight cropping and dynamic configuration, *End of Shift* focuses on the rushing legs and torsos of shipbuilders leaving a wartime facility. Lange expressed the urgency of their work in defense production without showing their individual features. The angled composition and complex interplay of light and shadow demonstrate Lange's understanding of how modern design techniques could convey the force and energy of a group working together on a project critical to the nation's defense.



# End of Shift, 3:30, Shipyard Construction Workers, Richmond, California

September 1943

gelatin silver print

#### Street Encounter, Richmond, California

c. 1943

gelatin silver print

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (Gift of Hallmark Cards, Inc.), 2005.27.4297

Dressed for work as a welder, this woman was one of thousands who moved to Richmond, California, during the early 1940s to seek employment in the expanding wartime shipbuilding yards. On assignment for *Fortune* magazine, Lange documented the upheaval wrought by Richmond's rapidly growing population and diversifying workforce. Lange's field notes described this picture as an "Item on race relations. Scene on main street. The girl was a taxi driver in New Orleans. She came to Richmond with her husband two years ago." Recognizing the power of words in her pictures, Lange included a sign that could be read as "Serve You" or "Serve Your Country," but which actually says "Serve Yourself" — a wry comment on the national unity promoted by the era's patriotic propaganda.

Lange.labels.12.indd 70

#### War Babies, Richmond, California

1944, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

While in Richmond, Lange photographed not only shipyard workers but also local people on the street, such as this pair of young mothers. Cradling swaddled infants, with a kneehigh toddler between them, the two women personify the prosperity and growth generated by the wartime boom, which brought renewed economic stability to many Californians. Lange's pictures from Richmond capitalize on the symbolism presented by the backdrop of expanding production. In this photograph, for example, cruciform utility poles seem to watch over the women and children like industrial guards, symbolically guiding them away from the poverty of the Depression years. [DEX 79]

# Richmond, California

1944, printed 1950s

gelatin silver print

[DEX	10]
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Lyde Wall, friend and neighbor, who makes "the world's best apple pie," and knows everything going on for miles around, Berkeley, California, from The American Country Woman

1944

gelatin silver print

#### Grandfather and Grandson of Japanese Ancestry at a War Relocation Authority Center, Manzanar, California

July 1942

gelatin silver print

#### Grandfather and Grandchildren Awaiting Evacuation Bus, Hayward, California

1942

gelatin silver print

The Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri (Gift of Hallmark Cards, Inc.), 2005.27.4215

Lange's photograph depicts a stoic, elegantly dressed man with his grandchildren. Kneeling so that she was on an equal level with the family, Lange captured their dignity and showed how they retained their humanity in a process designed to strip them of it.

#### Japanese American–Owned Grocery Store, Oakland, California

March 1942

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

On December 8, 1941, a day after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Tatsuro Masuda, the 25-year-old American-born owner of the Wanto Company store in Oakland, posted a sign on his building: "I AM AN AMERICAN." Masuda's bold assertion of his national identity did little good. In March 1942, Masuda, a University of California graduate, closed the store that his father had founded 26 years earlier. In August 1942, he and his family were incarcerated at the Gila River War Relocation Center in Arizona. They were not released until October 1944. They never returned to Oakland.



#### Children of the Weill Public School Shown in a Flag Pledge Ceremony, San Francisco, California

April 1942, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

[DEX 118]

#### Pledge to the Flag, San Francisco

1942, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

[section 5][DEX 67]

#### **Richmond, California,** from **City Life**

1952

gelatin silver print

[DEX 65]

#### Anne Carter Johnson, Saint George, Utah

1953

gelatin silver print

### Mary Ann Savage, a Faithful Mormon All Her Life, Toquerville, Utah

1931, printed c. 1950

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Mary Ann Savage was a faithful Mormon all her life. She was a plural wife. She was a pioneer. She crossed the plains in 1856 with her family when she was six years old. Her mother pushed her little children across plain and desert in a hand-cart. A sister died along the way. "My mother wrapped her in a blanket and put her to one side."

From Dorothea Lange Looks at the American Country Woman



#### Riley Savage, Toquerville, Utah

1953, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Riley Savage, son of Mary Ann Savage (pictured in the photograph nearby), was a third-generation Mormon settler whose grandmother had crossed the plains to the Utah Territory in 1856. [DEX 76]

# Jake Jones's Hands, Gunlock County, Utah

1953

gelatin silver print

#### Self-Portrait in Window, Saint George, Utah

1953

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Among the places Lange visited for the *Life* magazine photoessay *Three Mormon Towns* (produced with Ansel Adams and Paul Taylor) was Saint George, Utah. A formerly secluded pastoral community, the area had grown into a town with gas stations and motels to accommodate visitors to nearby Zion National Park. The town's modernization infringed upon the community's prior isolation from mainstream American culture, and Lange feared that some of its early pioneer principles might be lost. Perhaps equating her own fragile health with the town's vulnerability, Lange photographed her face and camera reflected in the window of a dilapidated building, calling the picture a self-portrait.

#### **Family Portrait**, from **Death of a Valley** 1956

gelatin silver print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of an anonymous donor in memory of Merrily Page

These family portraits were abandoned in a home in Monticello, California, when residents were forced to relocate. The Napa County town was destroyed and flooded in 1957 after the creation of Lake Berryessa, a reservoir formed by the new Monticello Dam. Lange made this photograph for the series *Death of a Valley*, a collaboration with photographer Pirkle Jones, reproduced in a 1960 edition of *Aperture* magazine. Lange's "portrait" of forsaken family photographs communicates a sense of lost memories and the human costs of development. It demonstrates not only Lange's prescient environmentalism but also her long-standing concern for the disintegration of families and communities.

# Hand of Dancer, Java, Indonesia

1958

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

During a 1958 trip to Indonesia with Paul Taylor, Lange observed a practice session of traditional gamelan music and Javanese dance. In this photograph, she focused on a gesture known as *Ngrayung/Nangreu*. Although such gestures can carry different meanings depending on the choreography, each highly controlled movement is believed to embody an expression of the soul and requires deep concentration. [DEX 100]

# Patrick Flanagan on Tubber Green, County Galway, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954, printed no later than 1965

gelatin silver print



# Man Walking Down a Country Road from the Kenneally Family Farm, County Clare, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954

gelatin silver print

[DEX 74]

# Annie Halloran's Hands

1954

gelatin silver print

# Irish Child, County Clare, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

On assignment for *Life* magazine in 1954, Lange spent six weeks in Ireland with her son, Dan Dixon — her first time overseas. They stayed in Ennis, a small town in County Clare, and traveled extensively; Lange took some 2,400 photographs. Twenty-two of these were featured in *Life* the following year. Lange enjoyed working in Ireland and was particularly fond of this portrait of a smiling girl in a rain bonnet, which she pinned to a corkboard in her home kitchen. "Isn't that a beautiful face?" she declared. "That's pure Ireland."



## A Young Girl in Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954, printed c. 1965

gelatin silver print

[DEX 43]

# Nora Kenneally, Widow, County Clare, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954

gelatin silver print



# Man Walking Down a Country Road from the Kenneally Family Farm, County Clare, Ireland, from The Irish Countryman

1954

gelatin silver print

[DEX 46]

#### Venezuela

1960

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Lange joined Taylor on a trip to Venezuela, where he was consulting on agrarian reform. Here, she captured a man holding an axe in one hand and a machete in the other blades used to clear corn stalks in the field. The presence of these sharp tools, along with the man's torn clothing and bare feet, hint at the physical and economic vulnerability of farm laborers working on the land. [DEX 60]

# Campesino, Venezuela

1960

gelatin silver print

[DEX 49]

# **Egypt** 1963

gelatin silver print

# Egypt

1963

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Working in Egypt proved both stimulating and challenging for Lange, as she periodically experienced hostility from locals who found her cameras intrusive. "You can imagine my difficulties with the little black box which is especially unwelcome," Lange wrote of her camera. "Nevertheless, I have done what I could....Egypt has been to me a living museum in which I circulate, peering into every situation."

Lange focused on women and was interested in the social and religious practices that required Muslim women to cover their bodies. Describing this double portrait, Lange wrote: "Dark eyes, dimly seen through the veil...the hand that holds the veil down." [DEX 55]

#### Vietnam

1958

gelatin silver print

[DEX 57]

# Indonesian Woman

1958

gelatin silver print

#### Korean Child

1958

gelatin silver print

Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

Lange and Taylor traveled to South Korea in 1958 and encountered people still reeling from a divisive war. When visiting a classroom, Lange focused on a group of excited students. But when she printed *Korean Child* for her 1966 retrospective exhibition, she radically cropped her negative to concentrate on one boy's serene features. Since her early portraits of the 1920s, Lange had used dramatic cropping to shape the meaning of her photographs. Here, by isolating the boy's calm face from the chaos surrounding him, she created a more universal exploration of the innocence of childhood in a nation then torn by war and poverty.

To the right is a different cropping of the negative. On the wall to the left, an enlargement of Lange's contact sheet shows at the top the whole negative for *Korean Child*.

[caption for large photo reproduction nearby (not on label)]

Contact sheet with negative of Dorothea Lange, *Korean Child*, 1958, gelatin silver print, Oakland Museum of California. © The Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California, Gift of Paul S. Taylor

#### Bad Trouble over the Weekend, Steep Ravine, California

1964

gelatin silver print

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

For years, Lange and Taylor spent many weekends with their children and grandchildren at a rented cabin on Steep Ravine above Stinson Beach, just north of San Francisco. *Bad Trouble over the Weekend* was made during one such stay near the end of Lange's life — she had already been diagnosed with terminal cancer. She cropped the photograph to focus on her daughter-in-law Mia Dixon's hands, which cradle her unseen face. The gesture and the caption suggest the emotional weight of Lange's flagging health, although she provided few narrative details. The photograph communicates both a personal and a universal connotation of "trouble," telling an ambiguous story for viewers to imagine and, perhaps, identify with. [DEX 42]

### **Rebecca Dixon Chambers, Sausalito, California,** from **The American Country Woman** 1954

gelatin silver print