



# Sherrills Ford Pioneer

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## Local artist collaborates with Charlotte photographer for a thought-provoking exhibit

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**Alvin C. Jacobs (left) and Joan E. Gardner (center) discuss their exhibition with a visitor at the YMI Cultural Center.**

by Erica Batten

Sherrills Ford artist Joan E. Gardner came of age during the turbulent, sometimes violent, era of anti-Vietnam war protests, feminist movement marches and civil rights demonstrations. It's no wonder that her art asks tough questions: Who are the real heroes? What's OK and not OK when it comes to human life? What do we value?



Joan E. Gardner's *OK/NOT OK* installation asks viewers to register their opinions on issues affecting—and caused by—humans.



It's also no surprise that when Gardner saw the work of photographer Alvin C. Jacobs, Jr., at the Charlotte's Levine Museum of the New South, she knew they had a lot in common, if not outwardly.

Their new collaborative exhibit, which opened this week at Asheville's YMI Cultural Center in Asheville, displays Gardner's paintings and mixed-media installations, Jacobs's wrenching photography of

Charlottesville violence and Charlotte protests, and some pieces combining their art. The exhibit, on display through June 1, is called "Examine the Past, Create the Future."



Alvin C. Jacobs and Joan E. Gardner, *Not in Service*



Visitors to the meet-the-artists reception at the YMI Cultural Center discuss issues surrounding race and racism.

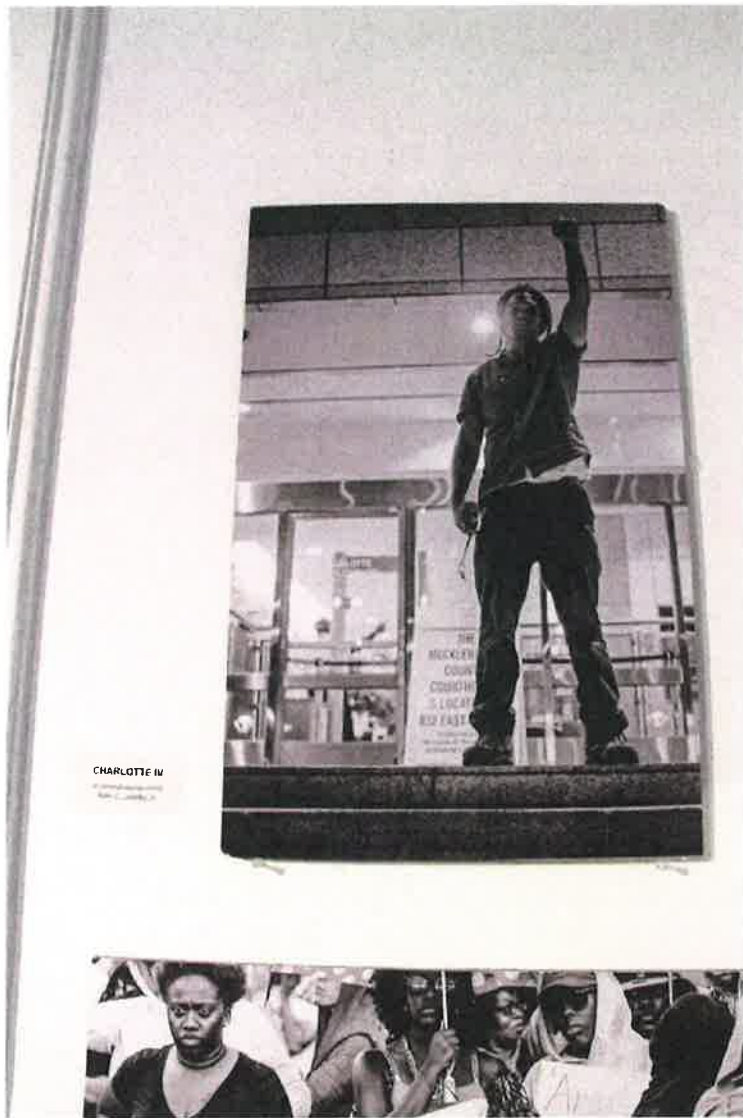
The artists' statement accompanying the exhibit begins:

***These are urgent times. These are times like none other in human history . . . These are times when unsolved problems from the past clash with the unthinkable existential problems caused by humankind.***

Jacobs is too young to remember the sixties, but he's done his homework, reading voluminously to understand how the past shaped current racial tensions in the United States, how political debate has layers of nuance. And he's been on the front lines of Black Lives Matter demonstrations to document what isn't always part of the mainstream narrative.



**"The Charlotte police said they didn't use tear gas," Jacobs said, pointing to his photograph of black marchers in a cloud of smoke, police officers approaching from the rear. "What the f— is this?"**



Charlotte protesters' emotions are captured in the photographs of Alvin C. Jacobs.

Jacobs is not only an artist and professional photographer, but he also calls himself an "image activist." Originally from Rockford, Ill., Jacobs has made a name for himself in the Queen City. He is currently the artist-in-residence at the **Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts and Culture** and is a featured artist at the Levine Museum of the New South's exhibit **K(NO)W Justice, K(NO)W Peace**.

Gardner studied art at Old Dominion University in Virginia and UNC-Greensboro and has displayed her work throughout the Southeast for more than 30 years. Most recently, Gardner's work appeared in the "Homegrown" exhibit at the Cornelius Arts Center.



Artists Jacobs and Gardner will exhibit “Examine the Past, Create the Future” through June 1 at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville.



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**Joan E. Gardner, *Tree of Life***

“We have the technological ability to reduce our damage to Earth, care for our own, and begin to heal,” Gardner and Jacobs said. “We are all one mighty race, the human race. We are all valuable. We are all the same.”



Joan E. Gardner, *Gilded*