

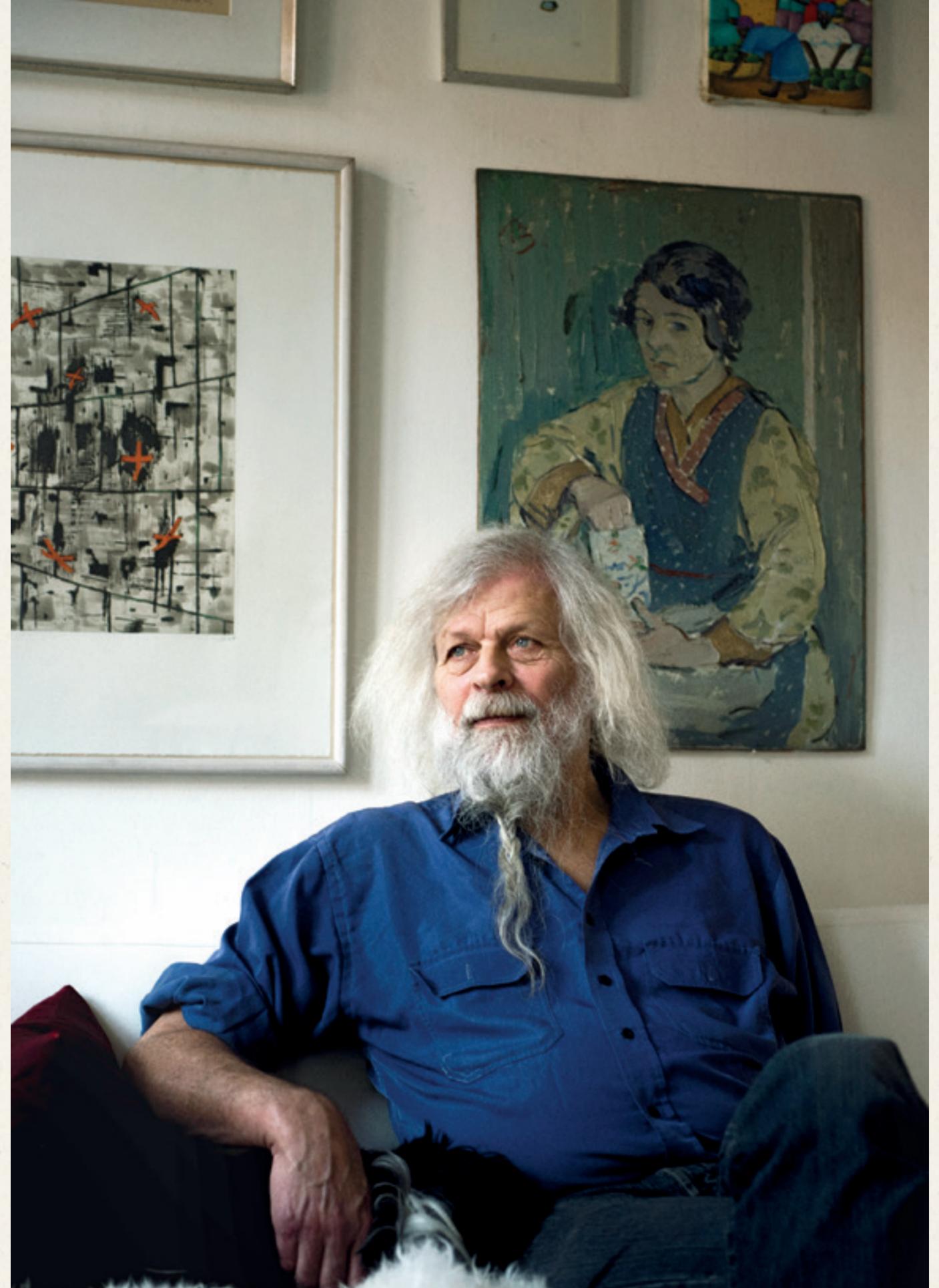
Jacob Holdt

A ONE MAN REVOLUTION

Words by Miguel Costa

Photography by Sebastian T. Thorsted

Jacob Holdt's memories have filled thousands of pages with graphic images from his vagabond lifestyle in the United States. But, perhaps the most long-lasting memory will always be the mental picture of his father gazing upon him with pride as he stood on the heels of two consecutive sold-out shows at Williams College in one night. For Jacob, that was the full-circle moment when his heartfelt ambition finally surpassed his youthful intentions. Because, long before the Danish photographer ever crossed the Atlantic, he was kicked out of his father's church for vandalising the property in an effort to bring more awareness to the Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War).



As a teenager, Jacob's imagination had long since romanticised stories about counterculture and the Civil Rights movement in the US. So, in 1967, when he was expelled from the Royal Guard for refusing to shoot a gun, a door actually opened for him to make of political activism a full-time lifestyle. Three years later, he left his native country of Denmark for North America. And that's when his backpack adventure began: "While in Canada, I wanted to go to Guatemala to join the freedom fighters because [President] Eisenhower and [Vice President] Nixon had overthrown the only democratically elected government Guatemala had ever had and started a bloody repression. However, on September 4, 1970, Salvador Allende was the first leftist to win a free election in Chile. Therefore, I was also thinking of going down there to support his revolution and income redistribution in favour of the poor," says Holdt. "I had no clear idea about my goal but in 1971, I got sidetracked while going through the USA."

That was nearly 50 years ago. What began as a rebellious departure from his father's pastoral legacy inevitably evolved into an advocacy for humanitarianism all over the world. Jacob Holdt never found the guerillas in the mountains of Guatemala. And if he did, he says that he likely would have been killed. Instead, Jacob found another way to fight. Upon Jacob's arrival to the US, his preconceived notion of the Free Speech Movement was shattered by the harsh reality of the oppressed. He quickly learned that the social infrastructure in the US was deeply rooted in the blurry lines of hatred and misunderstanding.

So, what did he do? Naturally, he threw conventional wisdom to the wind, hitchhiked through a whole bunch of crime-ridden neighbourhoods and snapped countless photos of his interactions with political activists, criminals, murderers, Ku Klux Klan members, Black Panther Party members, and all of the beautiful everyday people in between. The images that he captured would go on to impact the world in a way that very few have since. But the stories that accompanied them were so captivating to the strangers he would often share them with, which eventually led to the making of his first slideshow and book, *American Pictures*. The publication made him a breakout star in the world of photography and the college lecture circuit in the US. The book became so influential that it landed him a place on the KGB's radar before Jacob tried to use the content to counter the actions of his political nemesis, Ronald Regan, in 1984.

American Pictures provided Jacob's students, critics and supporters with a colourful illustration of his philosophy on how to break prejudicial barriers with love, empathy and an open dialogue. According to Jacob himself, the best way to overcome racism is to "simply move in with those you fear." Over the course of the last half century, the world has been able to live vividly through the legendary activist with long hair and his trademark, a braided beard. Since Holdt has dared to

venture into places that most people could only dream or have nightmares of. In fact, he would often seek out cities with the highest murder rate in order to find people to befriend and learn from. Instead of looking for people to fight, he brought them together. His stories are almost too extravagant to be true. And his photographic evidence is almost too true to process.

Jacob Holdt isn't done leaving his mark on the world just yet. His upcoming book, *Roots of Oppression*, is another compelling piece of work that documents his experience with some of the most polarizing figures in America's ongoing culture war. For this issue, we caught up with the photographer and discussed a wide variety of topics – from his hopes for the Biden Administration to the story behind the making of his very own KBG museum in Denmark. Holdt also opens up about his strong support for the LGBTQ+ community and the connection between #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate.

Miguel Costa: What events in your early life set you on the path towards being an advocate for anti-hate?

Jacob Holdt: For me, it was the Vietnam War that woke me up and made me critical of society. I came to the United States because I was an activist in Denmark. But suddenly I had to flee. I wanted to go to Latin America to become a guerilla fighter – I was so radical at the time. First I moved to Canada to work on a farm for a year. I had no interest in the United States at the time.

First, I tried to hitchhike from Canada through the South, but I got so scared. I met the wonderful American youth at the time and they said: "You can't hitchhike through Mississippi, they kill long-haired people like you." So, therefore, I went back to Canada, hitched across North America and took the safe route through California. I ended up in San Francisco and on my first day I was raped by a Black man; three days later, I was assaulted by three Black gunmen who robbed me at gun point. They all had so much anger. This is something I had never experienced before. That got me interested in Black America, and I never ended up in Latin America (laughs).

MC: Being attacked and raped by people from any ethnic group is something that would provoke anger, fear and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in most people. So why did those attacks increase your interest in the African American community?

JH: I was curious. I thought, where is all the hatred coming from? And little by little, that led me into the Black world. During that time, I also had the luck of being invited into Angela Davis' Che-Lumumba club, which was romanticised in Europe. So, in my experience, I was both met with anger and the constructive struggle against oppression. That was the salvation for me. In my first couple of years in the USA I was attacked constantly by criminals – robbed, beaten up, and so on. So it took me a

while to get over my fear. But when I learned to no longer fear people, I realised that this was the same as sending messages of love to people who had never met love before. From then on, Black people opened up to me. Even the worst criminals and murderers took me by the hand to show me around in their world of pain. When I learned positive thinking and non-violent communication skills instead of running away, they never attacked me again. Crime got ten times worse over the years, but I was never since physically attacked. You have to learn to listen to where the pain is coming from. If people can feel that you have compassion for them, they melt. That is the best way of taking the gun away from people. It's my own self-defence.

MC: Let's fast forward to about a decade and a half later. One of the first American lectures that you gave was in Jane Fonda's house in Santa Monica in 1978 for her invited Hollywood promoters. Can you tell us how you went from being expelled from high school in Denmark to filling out lecture halls at some of the most prestigious universities in the United States?

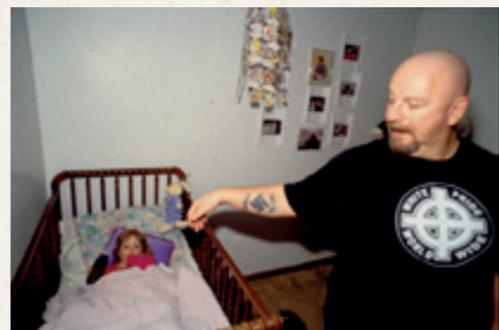
JH: Kicked out of school? Yeah. But there is very little connection... I realised years later that the reason I'd been kicked out was that I suffered from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. My ex-girlfriend, Marly Sockol, diagnosed me in the 1990s. She also said an interesting thing: ADHD is characterised with excessive risk-taking. That's why so many people in prison are ADHD victims. She once said to me, "You've never had any fear of approaching all kinds of people." To which I replied, "Well, I always thought that having faith in people is what makes you that way. But now you're telling me that I made my book because I was sick in my head?" And she said yes! (Laughs). But there's some truth in that. I had romanticised the mantra "You must have faith in the best of people and distrust the worst, otherwise, the worst will prevail." But she saw it in a different way. I couldn't foresee the consequences of my actions. I didn't fear walking into different situations, but I learned that the less fear I had, the less negative thinking I would project to traumatized people. By seeing them as victims – as 'good' – instead of 'bad people', the more I would disarm them and win them over since all people have a need to feel loved rather than feared and despised. So, it all ties together. Without my ADHD, thanks to which I had the luck of being kicked out of high school, I would have never become a vagabond. I would have been studying theology to become a minister like five generations of my ancestors. So with my handicap I was lucky to end up on this road and learn anti-hate in the process.

MC: You've travelled the world in an endless quest to educate, combat racism, end war and provide resources to the less fortunate. How has working with CARE

(Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) enhanced your ability to help people living in developing nations?

JH: That was another way of working against racism. It came very late, in 1991. By that time, *American Pictures* had become such a success that money from my books and slide shows was going to different countries in Africa – especially to support the struggle against Apartheid. When I tried to hitchhike around Africa trying to find different projects we could support, I realised by staying with several Danish aid workers that there was a lot of racism involved in aid work and development aid. In many instances, they were highly educated and fenced off from the general population in places like Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya. Some would even give the guards orders to shoot to kill in case somebody tried to break in. I saw a tremendous amount of racism down there, because the aid workers lived in luxury compared to the people they were down there to help. They developed racism by being separated from the people they were serving. So, I felt that if I continued to do that kind of aid work in Africa, I would develop the same racist mentality. I've always said that if you're prejudiced against anybody, you should just move in with them, and they did the exact opposite. So, I gave up development work for about ten years.

Then one day, I got an invitation from Dr. Charles Godfrey (from CARE Canada). He had a meeting in Copenhagen and invited me. In some way he started *American Pictures* by inviting me to work on his farm in Canada 20 years earlier. When I visited the CARE office, they asked me if I would like to do some information work for them. I said: "You can send me down there to look at your projects, but I felt there is so much racism in development aid that I will not promise to work for you." So they sent me to Bolivia, and it was there that I learned that CARE had a different approach. They don't send highly educated white people out among the natives. No. Usually, the director of the CARE programme comes from another developing nation. Their way of working involves listening to the villages' needs, and after endless discussions with their people, they develop the appropriate projects. But they have to do it themselves. The projects are not over their heads by international corporations, so to me, that took racism out of the equation. That is why I started working with CARE. Another reason was that, by that time, I had been standing onstage in front of thousands of people every day as a big hero at universities across the US. And it isn't safe for your own mind's sake to be cultivated into someone who feels that they can walk on water. I needed to just be anonymous, and I felt that way working for CARE. Among the poor peasants nobody knew me, and that is the best way to get your feet on the ground and get away from a kind of fame, which is not good for your own head. I needed that, mentally. I never got paid by CARE, and I'm still an ambassador 30 years later.



MC: Your adult children seem to share your fondness for humanitarianism and travelling. But were there ever times during their adolescence that you had to teach them important lessons about anti-hate?

JH: Well, I tried to bring them up in a non-judgmental way. I hitchhiked with my son when he was two years old through most major Black ghettos in the United States. At that time, I had already learned that racism in American white kids starts very early, and then it stays with them forever. They sit with their parents in the car, and when they drive close to a Black neighbourhood they hear the door locks. That's the first time their parents give them the message "Stay away from those people" without ever saying a negative word about Black people. Those are messages that white children receive so early, which scars them for life with fear patterns. Since I knew that lasting messages come real early – before you're three – I tried to give my son a reverse oppression by living with people in the ghettos, and he loved it. They had never seen a white child in their neighbourhoods and spoiled him with cookies, ice cream, love and affection. Somehow, ever since, he has always associated Black people with love and affection. That has lasted with him for years and years. He's travelled all over the world. Through all of Africa, and some of the most violent places in the world, because he was prepared since childhood for a life with adventures like this. My daughter, who is a psychologist, travelled alone to the most dangerous parts of Africa, for example, helping former child soldiers in Somalia with their deep traumas. She had to have a bulletproof jacket and twelve machine gun armed soldiers with her everywhere, because the Al Shabaab (a jihadist fundamentalist group from East Africa) constantly tried to kidnap her.

MC: How does your theory on raising children not to be racist apply to prejudiced adults who were never raised this way? Does this mean that they cannot be changed?

JH: No! We must never give up on anybody. I would love to try it out on Trump (laughs) just as I have brought countless of my students with me to my ghetto friends. We must never give up on anybody.

MC: Do you think you could change someone as powerful as a former US President like Donald Trump?

JH: When it comes to people in power, who knows that their power comes from dehumanizing others, I of course can't take that power away. But it's easy to deal with people like members of the Ku Klux Klan because they are totally powerless and they had nothing to begin with, so they are the easiest people to change – far easier than American students.

MC: What about someone who had power within the KKK, like Jeff Berry, the former leader of the American

Knights of the KKK? You talk about your experience in filming a documentary with him in your upcoming book, *Roots of Oppression*, right?

JH: Yeah, he definitely changed. He didn't have power, he just had futile power amongst his small group of powerless 'poor white trash' followers. That's why people should read the stories I wrote about him, because he definitely changed. I took him around to meet my Black friends, and they were forgiving and loving, saying things like "It doesn't matter if you bring a Ku Klux Klan leader here, we believe in Christian love." And they changed him. Black people changed him, not me.

MC: As someone who was raised in the church, what's your take on the social tension amongst the Christians and Muslims in various parts of the world where you have travelled to?

JH: When I hitchhiked around Africa, I saw no problems between Muslims and Christians. Even in most of the Arab countries, they had lived peacefully for generations. And in Syria and Egypt, I photographed how churches and mosques were standing right next to each other. It had always been like this. Even the synagogues were still there. All of this tension has nothing to do with Muslims or Christians. It has to do with a deeper insecurity and fear all over the world which local power-hungry demagogues has blown up into hatred against other groups. Even in Indonesia, where the Christians and Muslims have always lived next to each other. This is a worldwide pattern right now. The world is changing very fast and some politicians use that to stir up hatred, as if to say, "If you can't figure out what is painful in your life... then take it out on your neighbour." So, it's very important not to see it as Muslims vs Christians. It's every religion and ethnic tribes against each other. I saw them live so peacefully together in Uganda back in 2006. The same with homosexuals! Until the American Christian fundamentalists brought their hatred over to Africa and stirred up hatred against homosexuals. Now the indigenous are ready to kill them, but before the arrival of American fundamentalists that sentiment didn't exist. A lot of that comes from the United States, I will say.

MC: Speaking of fundamentalism and the US, after Donald Trump lost the presidential election, he accused the Democrats of fraud. Since then, the tension between Democrats and Republicans has practically turned into hatred. Do you think the country is about to endure a vicious cycle of one-upmanship and political gamesmanship between the Democrats and Republicans for many years to come?

JH: No, I think it will die out again all of a sudden. We saw something similar in the 1930s here in Europe with the Nazis and fascism. It died out after their defeat.

Hopefully, it will not get to that this time... I'm amazed by the hatred between Democrats and Republicans. When I made *American Pictures*, I actually portrayed the country during its best and most equal years ever. Even among Black people and whites there was greater equality then. Then President Reagan came, with his use of coded racism and tax relief for the rich and so on. Since then, the gap between the rich and poor has widened tremendously. It started with Reagan, mostly. At that time, the entire congress wanted to boycott South Africa because of Apartheid, but Reagan didn't want to. Democrats and Republicans joined forces against their Republican president. They could work together. Similar to the way they joined forces to investigate Nixon during Watergate. And that way, they would reach consensus. I read in The New York Times that the Democrats and Republicans now live more segregated from one another than ever before. I have for years seen Republicans suppress the Black people vote in so many ways, like by denying it to prisoners and ex-convicts. My Black partner Tony Harris whom I stood on stage with for years at universities, and who was cultivated and a hero everywhere, voted for the first time in Atlanta, Georgia, this past year, 72 years old. That was the first time he cast a ballot in his life because he lost his vote due to some small crime during his youth. In Florida, one and a half million Democratic votes are lost because of voter suppression. I've seen it since the 1990s and the Reagan administration: Republicans constantly trying to take the vote away from Blacks and poor people. So, it's ironic that now they're convinced that their vote is being taken away, when they have stolen the vote from Black people for years. It looks like Jim Crow laws are back today.

MC: Let's talk about the social impact of the new presidential term. Kamala Harris, who is a person of Asian and African American descent, recently became the country's first female Vice President. Do you think that the Biden-Harris administration will bring about more gender and racial equality throughout the world?

JH: Just like Obama, it's a very powerful message to send to the world. That we stand for a multi-cultural America when the rest of the world is going the opposite way. But Kamala Harris comes after an incredible amount of hatred from Trump. So, this time, it's much more difficult to convince the world that the US is on a better track. I really love Biden for doing all of this, and I also want him to give more money to poor communities and improve the infrastructure in the areas that the Democrats have lost – places like West Virginia and Ohio. Due to globalisation, their work has gone to countries overseas. Yes, I want to see him invest in white workers, because the irony is that Republicans have today become the labour party, which also means that they have to diversify. They can't just offer tax relief for the rich because that would cause anger from the rest of their voters.

MC: When it comes to your career, instead of activism and philanthropy, did you ever consider running for a political position?

JH: No, I don't have the ability for that.

MC: Why not?

JH: There was a Danish newspaper that came up with that idea one time, and my children laughed (laughs). They said, "Jacob in politics? No way!" I know I've influenced many people with my slide shows and workshops at universities, and those people sit in power today. Many of them still contact me. These are people in high government positions and even Wall Street. But I don't want to give up the ideals that I learned during the making of *American Pictures*. How can I work for the Blacks community, the poor, etc.? Because that was my idea at the time, especially working a lot with the Ivy League schools, where many of the presidents come from. That has been my job over the years. Showing a way for people help them to become more responsible without hurting others. We need more responsible politicians that don't sell out the beliefs they had in their youth.

MC: Let's shift gears for a minute here and talk about your work as a writer. At what point during your journey throughout the United States did you know you were creating a book called *American Pictures*?

JH: When I hitchhiked all around, I made these little picture books to show the drivers what I had seen, and I could see how strongly they reacted to them. A lot of people suggested the idea that I should write a book, so that's how I got the idea. But I wanted to make a slide show first because I had thousands of pictures. So, during the last two years of my six-year travel, I knew I was working on some kind of a project. I just didn't know where it would take itself. I made a slide show when I came home. It was such a success all over Denmark and many other countries in Europe that a few months later, a Danish publishing house came to me saying that they wanted to turn the slide show into a book. But I was so busy doing lectures that I didn't have the time to write a book. I didn't even know how to write a book! So, what I did was to use the text to my slide shows and called that a book. The publishing house designed it and set it up. I never made a book, they did. I've never made a book in my life. I wouldn't know how to do it. The museums exhibiting my photos have also made some catalogues.

MC: What was your relationship like with your publisher at time?

JH: The Danish one? Fantastic, until a week after they published *American Pictures*, because I learned that the KGB wanted to use the book to counter President



Carter's human rights policy. The communist countries felt my book was the best tool to show the youth in the West that human rights were just as bad in the United States as in the USSR. That was their idea. The day I learned that the KGB wanted to use *American Pictures*, its rights had already been sold at the Frankfurt Book Fair to six other countries. So I started a lawsuit against my publisher and stopped the book from being sold all over the world. So, it has never been a worldwide success. I couldn't prevent it from coming out in these six countries, but I stopped it in the rest of the world. I didn't want to destroy President Carter's human rights policies because he was the first president in American history to emphasize human rights. All the previous presidents had overthrown democratically-elected governments in developing nations, supported military dictatorships in a lot of countries, and even killed millions of people in Vietnam and Indonesia. Suddenly, for the first time in American history, we had a decent president. I didn't want to risk destroying his work, so I stopped my own book. Therefore, a lot of people never knew about it. So my publisher hated me because I was his biggest success apart from Alex Haley (the author of *Roots*). We ended up writing a contract so that they could continue to publish the book in the countries they had already published it in. Why? Well, I wanted to meet Alex Haley, so we had to make up (laughs).

MC: Did you ever get to meet Alex Haley?

JH: He came to my house on the day I settled the lawsuit to stop my book worldwide. But he fell asleep after fifty minutes because he was jetlagged, and he had not slept (laughs). The show was five or six hours long. But it was a big thrill to have him sit there.

MC: Let's circle back around to *American Pictures*. What made you change your mind and publish it again years after you stopped it?

JH: In 1984, Ronald Reagan had been elected and he started supporting dictatorships all over the world. So I thought, damn, I'm publishing my book again! I started a worldwide edition and even proposed to CARE to give all the proceeds to their projects in Africa. But it was too late. Society had changed. Now, we were moving into the conservative, neoliberal era of Reagan and Thatcher, so my book had no interest anymore. That's also when racism started growing again in Europe. So I went back to the United States and started the lecture circuit there where *American Pictures* belonged. And for the next thirty years, I was standing onstage. I went back to America to fight the monster from within. But times had changed; my book wasn't a best-seller anymore. I killed a best-seller but I had to do that. I told President Carter's daughter, Amy, that I had stopped my book from being published all over the world because I didn't want to hurt her father's efforts

towards human rights. I was staying with her in the Waterman House in Brown University, where she saw my show. She invited me to a dinner with her father, but I couldn't attend since I had another show in Princeton University that night. Amy Carter was a rebel and had been arrested for protesting against the CIA while I had been rebelling against the KGB. When the Soviet Union fell in 1992, it was revealed that a manuscript of my show had been given to the KGB (after it had been approved by President Carter's personal human rights envoy to South Africa, Charles Pinderhughes). Yuri Andropov, the 6th paramount leader of the Soviet Union, as the chief of the KGB, was made to believe that I was his most important agent in the West against Carter – even though I secretly undermined his policy behind his back by stopping my book worldwide.

MC: When the KBG got wind of your book, were you ever in fear for your life?

JH: No, I immediately sensed that the KGB was powerless. But remember, I didn't know it was the KGB (which I associated with internal Soviet terror or high-level espionage in the West). They always introduced themselves as people from the Soviet Embassy, as diplomats. I never thought of these nice, polished people from the embassy as members of the KGB. I didn't know until the news came out in the media after the fall of Communism New Year 1991. Then I thought, wow, had I known that they were in the KGB, I would've been much more interested in them. For years, I had dinner with them. It didn't hurt me back then when it came out in the media, but it has more since. Now, right-wing folks who hate me because I defend immigrants, Muslims, and so on, use this story against me and accuse me of being a KGB agent (laughs). I lost my book and all of my money because of the KGB, so how can they accuse me of that when I worked against the interests of the KGB? Now I even have my own KGB museum in Denmark. It's underground, in an old fort from the time of the Cold War. I got invited to make my own KGB museum! (Laughs). So, I've always said that I'm a proud KGB agent, a proud Ku Klux Klan member, and a proud Black Panther. Why not integrate with all the funny people God has sent us on Earth? We are all people, some just more trapped by oppression than others. What matters is that we have a dialogue, and that's why I have turned my old headquarters in Copenhagen into a dialogue centre (the Ubuntu House) for young people. It's for everyone – Brown, white and Black. It's so that people from all over the world can meet each other. I even made the first Danish female mosque in my old office. That's on Fridays. On Saturdays, the Jewish community is here. All of this makes for such a wonderful dialogue. Now when I'm getting too old. I'm basically using the knowledge that I've gained through my work at universities and workshops and providing the framework so that young people today can continue that work, and

it's wonderful. I get such high hopes when I walk in there and see see refugee transgenders from Uganda sitting there using the female mosque. All of us are together there. For me, bringing people together has been what my whole life is all about.

MC: You've been very active in the LGBTQ+ community for many years. Can you tell our readers how your work with it began? Also, how do you feel about how far their movement has advanced since the AIDS epidemic reached a boiling point during the late 1980s and early 1990s?

JH: I've been very active in the LGBTQ+ community for many years. I never thought their movement would reach this level. As a hitchhiker, on my first day in the US, I was raped by a gay man. I never dared to talk about it while my father was alive. But that made me really get into supporting the gay movement. Because when you hitchhike across the US for five years, you are picked up by one gay guy after another. I could see how much pain was in them. From there, my dialogue with them started. They had a lot of self-hatred and lived closeted lives. They just learned to hate themselves because many of them were Christians as well. Even though it was fairly advanced in San Francisco, I never thought that movement would succeed to such a level as it has today. I started my show there eleven years after I was sexually assaulted. We had our first-ever opening of a theatre for *American Pictures* in the US in 1982. There was a big opening party, and there was a Black guy who came up to me and asked, "Do you remember me?" I didn't. I could tell he was very nervous. He then said, "You stayed with me once." I couldn't remember him because I had stayed with tons of Black people since I had met him. He then described the circumstances, and I realized that he was the guy who raped me on my first day in America. I gave him a big hug and said, "Thank you for *American Pictures*; without you, all this wouldn't have happened." Because I realized that he in his guilt the next day had led me to a church (The Glide Church in San Francisco) that I started working with and which changed me into a more inclusive thinking of others. Had he not abused me and brought me into a new life-giving of thinking, I would have continued on my way down to Latin America to become a guerilla soldier, and I would have been dead by now. Instead, I now had my own theatre showing for *American Pictures*.

MC: Did he apologise to you before you embraced him?

JH: No, he just needed that hug from me. Then he disappeared. He had felt bad about it ever since he did it. I could tell. That's why he took me to that church the next day, which really changed my life. It was the only Black and white church in America that I saw at the time. There were gays and all kinds of people there. So, it was a relief for him that I gave him this embrace and

reconciliation. That's where the gay movement started in my life.

MC: Speaking of which, one of the most influential movements currently in the United States is centred around an effort to combat the rising hate crimes against people from the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. The #StopAsianHate movement has gained traction globally because of the recent shootings in Atlanta. What's your take on that?

JH: This is what I'm a little afraid of because I've seen movements change so fast. When I went to the US, travelling around and showing these photobooks to people, they would say, "Racism? That's what we dealt with in the 1960s during the Civil Rights movement. Now it's pollution." Because Nixon had got them to work on pollution. The American mindset can be short-sighted. Asian Lives Matter should be linked together with Black Lives Matter, because this is what it's all about. Not separate groups. Anyways, I just think this is a reaction to Donald Trump's derogatory rhetoric as far as I can see.

MC: Were you surprised at all by the shootings in Atlanta?

JH: Nothing really surprises me. There are so many insane shootings there, you know? And Trump has stirred up so much of it. That attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh (a mass shooting that took place on October 18, 2018), I remember living next to it once. But it was forgotten so soon... Can you even remember it? This was a clear result of Trump's rhetoric.

MC: When your parents first saw the pictures from your travels for the first time, what was their response?

JH: I started the first slide show in my father's church, and it was so powerful. Up until then, I was the loser and so-called black sheep of the family. My parents had no hope for me. I was thrown out of the Royal Guard and everything. And then, suddenly, I had success. What really impressed my father was when I took him on tour with me three times in America. When he saw me standing there in front of thousands of people night after night, he said, "This is more than the thirty people I have in my church at home" (laughs). I'll never forget when we were at one of the shows at Williams College in Massachusetts. When the first show started at 7 pm, there was such a long line of people outside unable to get in. The organisers told them to come back for another show at midnight. I thought nobody would show up. Then, at midnight, the line was just as long, so I ended up doing a second show until five o'clock in the morning. And then I had to give an all-day workshop three hours later, at eight. When my father saw that, he was proud.