



To be written by publisher

”What makes American Pictures so disturbingly powerful is the cumulative effects of Holdt’s photographs combined with his outsider’s analysis of the dynamics of poverty and oppression in the United States.”  
*Los Angeles Times*

”It is a powerful, disturbing look at a whole segment of our population that never has achieved freedom in any meaningful sense.”  
*San Francisco Chronicle*

”One could perhaps label *American Pictures* a ”masterpiece.” But ”masterpiece” is a word which implies four stars in the movie section of daily newspapers. It is a word most applicable to ”great” Hollywood films - those big, stupendous, melodramatic, movie spectacles that so readily satisfy our desires for illusion, passivity, and voyeurism. Such masterpieces are soon forgotten. *American Pictures* expresses a global reality and a responsibility we all share. It will haunt you for days after seeing it. It will possess you emotionally and intellectually as if it were the plague. Though this extraordinary array of American cultures may invite the label ”masterpiece,” such a label would obscure the power and overwhelming grip this production exercises on its viewers. *American Pictures* attains what ”masterpieces” rarely even attempt. *American Pictures* challenges the viewer to act, not merely to react cathartically; to do something about the horrors of the American system. It is this seemingly immense leap from inspirational art to empirical action which *American Pictures* has consciously set as its goal. But what leads Holdt to admit, however, that these empirical results are impossible to measure is his awareness of the American system’s enormous ability to absorb all and ability to create masks which constantly hide its horrors and injustices. Throughout *American Pictures* Jacob Holdt continually questions the validity of his creation, expressing the fear that he is perhaps just another white man exploiting minorities and continuously stating that the mere representation of his experience can never equal the reality of the America he has tried to understand. The same applies here: no mere description or praise can convey the experience of *American Pictures*. *American Pictures* is a presentation that all Americans must experience for themselves.  
*The Chicago Reader*



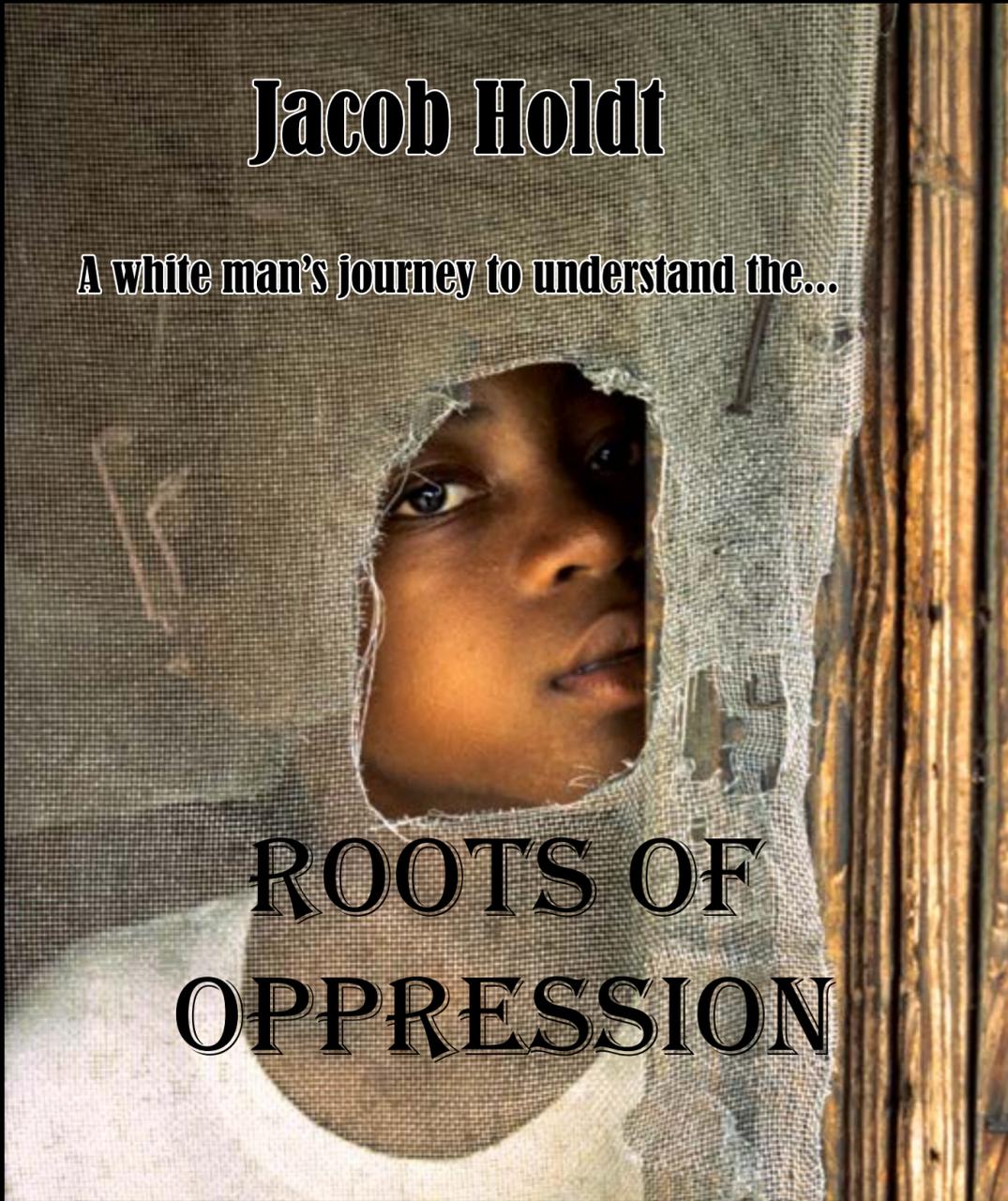
**Jacob Holdt writing about the first ”Black Lives Matter” killing he experienced in his journey:**

.... James and Barbara were a young black couple who lived in the worst neighborhood in the U.S.A. around Fox Street in the South Bronx. One day they heard burglars on the roof and called the police. Two plain-clothes officers arrived at the apartment and kicked in the door without knocking. James thought it was the burglars who were breaking in, and he shot at the door, but was then himself killed by the police. Barbara ran screaming into the neighbor’s apartment. When I went to the 41st Precinct police station they confirmed the



story and admitted that ”there had been a little mistake,” but James of course ”was asking for it, being in possession of an unregistered gun.”..... Then suddenly I heard terrible screams from the front hall of the funeral home and saw three men bringing Barbara in. Her legs were dragging along the floor. She was incapable of walking. I could not see her face, but she was a tall, beautiful, light-skinned young woman. Her screams made me shudder. Never before had I heard such excruciating and pain-filled screams. When she reached the coffin, it became unbearable. It was the first and only time in America I was unable to photograph.....

JACOB HOLDT ROOTS OF OPPRESSION



# Jacob Holdt

## A white man’s journey to understand the...

# ROOTS OF OPPRESSION

EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE COVER



”Not since the publication of Jacob Riis’ book of social criticism, *How the Other Half Lives*, has there been as powerful a record of American living as *American Pictures*. Its presentation at the Cannes Film Festival created a sensation.”  
*The San Francisco Film Festival*

Important!!!  
Different text here to come written by publisher of *Roots of oppression*

Jacob Holdt grew up only 15 miles from Jacob Riis’ hometown in Denmark. Like Riis, whose arrival in America preceded Holdt’s almost to the date by a century, he spent his first six years as a tramp. Yet the similarity between the two goes beyond the circumstances of their birth, upbringing, and travels. Their photography and compassionate, rather unsophisticated writing is also similar. Both urge social reform, insisting that ”the other half of American society is everyone’s responsibility. *American Pictures*, however, is also an investigation of the racism Holdt perceives growing in himself as he becomes increasingly involved in his new society. He insists that his pictures must be seen as a description not of those in a black underclass crushed by the effects of such racism, but of a white social disease so disturbing that it is easier for most to focus (photographically or otherwise) on the symptoms rather than the cause. In its unusual exposure of that disease, *American Pictures* has an urgent message for all whites.