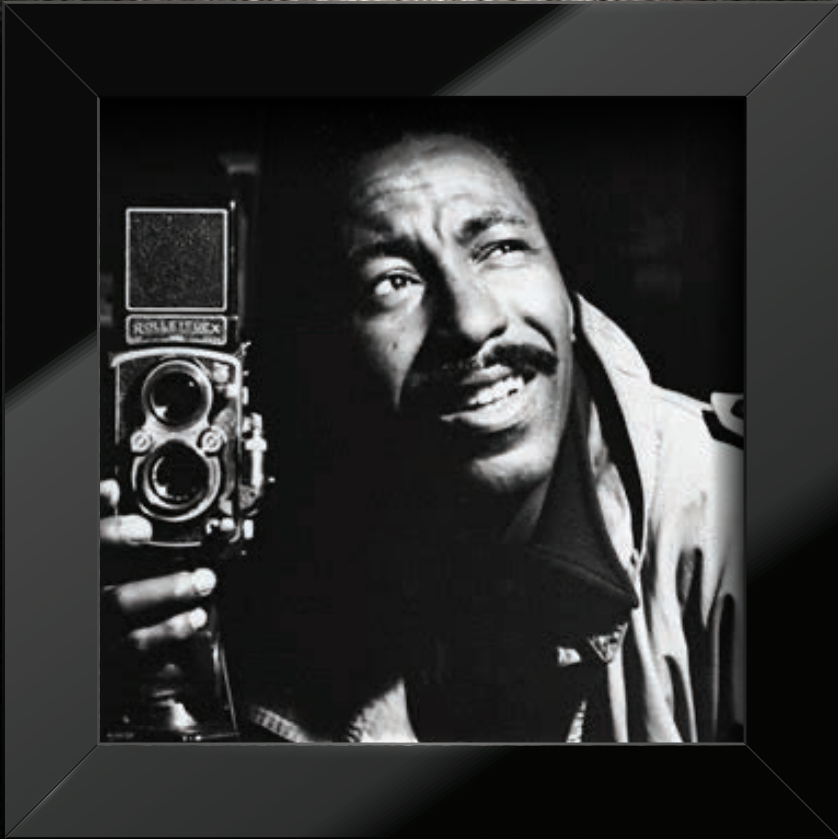


ARTISTS INSPIRE THE CHANGE WE  
WANT TO SEE AND BE IN THE WORLD

**We asked our team to share just one black artist  
we should know about—someone who has inspired  
or informed or taught or mentored them...**



# GORDON PARKS

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"Only one! There are sooooo many! But if only one, I will choose Gordon Parks. There are many black artists that I love, he doesn't encompass all of them. However, what I love about Mr. Parks is he was truly a renaissance man. He was a thoughtful, prolific photographer of black lives along with being the first black staff photographer at a major national magazine, a founder of Essence magazine, the first black person to direct a major motion picture, "Shaft." in addition, he wrote an opera about MLK. He used his gifts to celebrate and document black lives. He was a quintessential and very consequential artist."

— Mia Anderson

# LIZZO

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"My artist is LIZZO!! Her music always puts me in a good mood. She is fearlessly and unapologetically herself - she reminds me to spread joy and kindness to others as well as myself."

— *Maddie Thomas*





# EARL SWEATSHIRT

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"One of my favorite artists of really any discipline. An incredible writer of dark and coded lyricism whose music gets better with every listen. His 2015 album 'I Don't Like Shit, I Don't Go Outside.' remains one of my all-time favorites, and ironically, inspires me all the time."

— *Henry James Eden*

# JAMES BALDWIN

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"They let you get through all that school without ever reading Baldwin?!" My mother's response to my having no exposure to her favorite writer was to pile four of his books in my arm and, pointing to the smallest on top, "The Fire Next Time," instructed me that my education would now begin.

"We never know where we're going to find connection – whose voice is going to resonate and make us feel we're understood on some deep level we cannot articulate, and that's what happened for me as I went through that initial stack and then kept on reading."

— Leah Abrams





# KERRY WASHINGTON

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"I remember when I first started watching Scandal and Kerry Washington in it and I thought, 'that's a superior form of acting which I haven't seen much on American TV.'"

— *Tjaša Ferme*

# LUVVIE AJAYI JONES

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Tjaša, torn in how to choose between them, also loves the activist and writer Luvvie!

<https://luvvie.org/about/>





# DENZEL WASHINGTON

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"My Artist of choice is Denzel Washington. Very inspiring and always giving some words of wisdom. I grew up in a single parent home for some years and I longed for that father figure. As I watched tv, one day I saw this man in the Malcolm X movie. A man who was my complexion and was a leader in the community. I didn't know who he was at that young age,, but in my mind, I equated him to being my father figure throughout the years and he's inspired me ever since."

— *Tarrence J. Taylor*



# BRITTANY FISHER

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"One Black artist I've come to admire in the past year is playwright and poet, Brittany Fisher! She was one of the Juilliard playwrighting fellows and I got to work on a reading of her play *Your Regularly Scheduled Programming* (directed by Melissa Mowry, another exceptional Black artist). Brittany's plays are really distinctive in my mind, and I hope to see many more of them someday."

— *Kirk Baltzell*

<https://www.brittanyfisher.com/>





# IMMANUEL WILKINS

"The artist I chose is Immanuel Wilkins. We attended Juilliard at the same time and I've had the privilege of seeing him perform. He is a profound saxophonist and composer. His 2020 debut album earned him an NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding Jazz Album. His songs "Dreamer" and "Guarded Heart" are testaments to his ability to create an entire world and experience through instrumentation."

— *Anthony Richardson*

# TRACEY BONNER

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"An American actor most known for Raising Dion, Sweet Magnolias, and Black Lightning, the child of two educators, Tracey Bonner grew up in Murfreesboro, TN, very rooted in sports and academia. She found her love of Shakespeare in high school and was cast in a theatre tour... [she runs a] non-profit, DateYourselfGirl, Inc., which empowers women to become the love they seek through healing conversations and philanthropy.

There is truly no one like Tracey B. She is a literal beast! On stage/ in front of the camera/ in life! She is a true example! SHE IS REAL! And that's why I love her! I'm glad our paths crossed, and I thank God for her. If you don't know Tracey Bonner yet, you will soon! I guarantee it!"

— *Trajan Clayton*





# UWADE

"I happened upon Uwade's music during shut-down in 2020. Her gentle lilting voice and story based lyrics spoke to me very singularly during that time, and her music gave me solace and a renewed sense of hope when I looked at the uncertainty of the future and my place in the world. I wish more folks knew about her because I believe her music gives so much. My favorite song is called Nostalgia. I'm looking forward to what her future releases hold."

— *Emma Nadine Onasch*

<https://www.uwade.com/index.html>

[https://open.spotify.com/  
artist/57qPRqUfnRY0KJtO5lrjWL](https://open.spotify.com/artist/57qPRqUfnRY0KJtO5lrjWL)