



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**The National Steinbeck Center Presents International Photo Exhibition**

***ARTISTS IN PARALLEL:***

***Griffith J. Davis & John Steinbeck***

**January 13 – March 24, 2024**

**SALINAS, (CA), USA – January 9, 2024**

The Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives in partnership with The National Steinbeck Center will present a new and unique international exhibition entitled, *Artists in Parallel: Griffith J. Davis & John Steinbeck*, on Saturday, January 13, 2024 starting with an Artist's Reception at 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM (PT). The featured speaker will be Griff Davis' daughter, Dorothy M. Davis, President of Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives. She will give remarks about the historical importance of the photography and legacy of her father Griffith J. Davis (1923-1993), internationally renowned pioneer Black photojournalist, filmmaker, and U.S. Senior Foreign Service Officer, and the impact it had on her family.

The National Steinbeck Center, One Main Street, Salinas, California has curated a four-fold exhibit of the enduring art these men leave behind. The exhibit shows Davis and Steinbeck's artistic depictions of **Celebrities, Political**



Griff Davis reviews the script for Liberia's first promotional film "Pepperbird Land" with its narrator, emerging actor Sidney Poitier (left) in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1952. Photo Credit: Griffith J. Davis. Copyright: Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives. All Rights Reserved.

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**figures, Family life, and Development projects.** This exhibit is a deep dive into the importance of art in the unfolding of world events and explores how the people who document these momentous events leave as much of an enduring legacy as those who author them.

A pioneer international photographer, journalist, U.S. Senior Foreign Service Officer, and photo-documentarian, Mr. Davis' artistic and iconic photographs capture historical moments and figures, lifestyles, personalities, and people across a spectrum of political, socio-economic, and artistic sectors at the vortex of the Civil Rights Movement and the Independence Movement of Africa. His rarely seen 1948 to 1961 era images of his groundbreaking life and photographic practice will be fully placed.

When asked about his guiding life principles, Griff Davis wrote, "My upbringing taught me to be a thinker, to be innovative, to pursue excellence at all times and to always work for the betterment of mankind no matter in what environment I found myself."



Combining his skills as photojournalist and filmmaker into his 35-year career as a diplomat specializing in international development communications for ultimately the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Liberia, Tunisia, Nigeria, and across Africa, Mr. Davis was able to use his art forms to impact emerging and existing legislators and policymakers across continents while nurturing common ground between different cultures and mindsets. An Atlanta, Georgia native during the Jim Crow era when state and local laws enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States, his internal lens informed his external eye



in ways that enabled his perspective to influence the key influencers with whom he regularly rubbed elbows in that era. They included his professor, mentor, landlord, a lifelong friend, Writer and Poet Langston Hughes; friend and first African Nobel Laureate for Literature Wole Soyinka of Nigeria; Jazz Legends Duke Ellington and Bud Powell; Singer and Actress Lena Horne; Academy Award Winner and Civil Rights Activist Sidney Poitier; friend and Nobel Laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Liberia's President William V.S. Tubman; Ethiopia's Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie; Ghana's Founding Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah; Tunisia's Founding President Habib Bourguiba; U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower; then-U.S. Vice President Richard M. Nixon and a host of notable people from across the globe.

This exhibition premiered at the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum entitled as "Still Here: The Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives in Context" from January 22 to March 6, 2021 in Tampa, Florida. Griff Davis' photographs are permanently installed at the **Museum of Broadway** in Times Square, New York City; the **U.S. Supreme Court Archives** at the request of Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer; and the **U.S Embassy/Monrovia** at the request of then-U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Linda Thomas Greenfield. Griff Davis' 1948 photo of legendary painter Hale Woodruff is among **Spike Lee's collection of historical photos** in his current exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum entitled "Spike Lee: Creative Sources". Spike Lee is a Morehouse College Alumnus and recipient of the same Bennie Trailblazer Award from Morehouse College years after Griff Davis received his in February 1993. Exhibitions, Documentaries and Magazine articles include: **The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**, Harlem, New York; the **National Steinbeck Center**, Salinas, California; **PBS-WEDU-**

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**TV Arts Plus** segment “Griffith Davis” in Florida (August 2023); **The Foreign Service Journal** (2014 and 2022); **PBS American Experience** documentary segment on first African American Ambassador Edward R. Dudley in “The American Diplomat” (February 2022); “Jazz Power!” exhibition at **Les Rencontres d’Arles International Photography Festival** in France (Summer 2021) and “Ladies and Gentlemen”: *Dans Les Archives de Jazz Magazine*” at **Radio France** (September 2023) and, currently “Jazz Story 1954-1974-Dans Les Archives to Jazz Magazine” at **Le Kiosque** in Vannes, France; “*Stories from the Picture Press: Black Star Publishing Company and the Canadian Press*” exhibition at **The Image Centre at Toronto Metropolitan University** in Toronto, Canada; auction houses of **Bonham’s** and **Sotheby’s**, **Indiana University Press**; **Our State Magazine** of North Carolina; **University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum** (2021); **Florida Museum of Photographic Arts** (2020); “*Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present*”, Art & Activism Section, **Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture** Travel Exhibition in 10 cities across the U.S. for 3 years, (2000-2003). Curator: Deborah Willis-Kennedy.

Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives has won several awards including: **Best Documentary Short Award**, [Photos by Griff Davis.mp4](#) of **2023 Studio City International Film and Television Festival**, Los Angeles, California [after first premiering at the inaugural **Oak Park Black Film Festival** in Sacramento, California (2022) and **20<sup>th</sup> Martha’s Vineyard African American Film Festival** in Massachusetts (2022)]; **Tampa Bay Businesses for Culture and the Arts (TBBCA) Lifetime Achievement IMPACT Award** to Griffith J. Davis (posthumously), Tampa, Florida, October 2020 and Second Place Winner, **USAID/Frontlines 50th Anniversary People’s Choice Global Photo Contest**, 2011 for his photograph of *Liberian Woman Walks Alongside Iron Ore Train in 1952*.

*Artists in Parallel: Griffith J. Davis & John Steinbeck* is curated by McKenzie Floyd of National Steinbeck Center and Dorothy M. Davis, President of the Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAM**

### **Opening Artist’s Reception with Dorothy M. Davis**

Saturday, January 13, 2024, at 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM (PT). Tickets to the opening reception are available at [www.steinbeck.org](http://www.steinbeck.org). Tickets for the reception *must* be purchased in advance (\$5 for NSC Members, \$10 for General Admission).

## **ABOUT NATIONAL STEINBECK CENTER**

The National Steinbeck Center ([www.steinbeck.org](http://www.steinbeck.org)) is dedicated to educating audiences on the work of John Steinbeck through its permanent exhibit, educational programs, and partnerships with artists all over the world.

## **ABOUT GRIFFITH J. DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARCHIVES**

Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives ([www.griffdavis.com](http://www.griffdavis.com)) is dedicated to preserving, researching, exhibiting and sharing the photographs and stories of Griff Davis’ innovative and sophisticated body of work. He was a pioneer African American photographer, international photojournalist and U.S. Senior Foreign Service Officer at the vortex of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the Independence Movement of Africa with particular focus on Africa, Europe, the U.S.A. and Mexico. It includes 55,000 photographs, films and a complementary explosion of written documentation in the forms of official and unofficial reports leading to policymaking, communications materials and correspondence involving institution building, historic leaders, and a host of notable people from across the globe. ###

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