

NEW RELEASE 2023

## Henry Horenstein & Leslie Tucker *WE SORT OF PEOPLE*

Photographs by Henry Horenstein  
 Texts by Henry Horenstein, Leslie Tucker, Shannon Perich  
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### The last descendants of a little-known American clan of multiethnic origin

Henry Horenstein and Leslie Tucker began working together in the summer of 1997, when she invited him to Maryland to shoot the mysterious, little-known Wesort clan. „We sorts are different from you sorts.“

During the mid-twentieth century the Wesorts were a kind of urban myth among black people in Washington, DC. They were known by a single name—Proctors. They looked white but didn't claim any race. They kept to themselves. Many belonged to the Catholic Church. The Wesorts had done something odd in America. They had stepped out of race. They sustained this status with constant intermarriages. Three races—black, white and native american—combined into one family with cousins making dozens for centuries.

They mixed, mated and migrated in between whites and blacks from the earliest documented records of the nation. While the project started as a genealogical search for a family whose roots stretched back to the founding of the first Catholic colony, it grew into a mystery about the origins of race in America, then became a race against time as the Wesorts and their descendants disappeared and died. If race itself is the sorting of humans into shared physical qualities, where did the colorfully eyed, blond, pale-skinned Wesorts fit in America's rigid categories?

While Henry photographed the last generation of Proctors and their disappearing world, Leslie recorded the conversations she had with the wise women of her family. A living archive emerges, with voices that portray the complex realities of their lives in their own words, as seen through their eyes. This family history is elastic, moldable, and often lost. It isn't necessarily permanent or durable or even correct.

Much like the graves of Leslie's ancestors—which have no markers at all—are simply there waiting for someone to find them again. This timeless photography in *We Sort of People* combines Henry's lifelong vision and determination to document the social histories

of those who live in liminal spaces, bridging multiple realities, in marginal communities.

**Henry Horenstein** has been a photographer, filmmaker, teacher, and author since the 1970s. He studied history at the University of Chicago and with legendary British historian E.P. Thompson. He earned his BFA and MFA at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where he studied with legends Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind. Henry's work is collected and exhibited internationally and he has published over 35 books. In recent years, Henry has been making films: *Preacher*, *Murray*, *Spoke*, *Partners*, and *Blitto Underground*. He is in production on *Everyone Is Someone*, a film about Cajun Louisiana. He teaches at RISD and lives in Boston.

*From stock car racing to country music stars, this US photographer is one of the great documenters of Americana* - Guardian (UK)

**Leslie Tucker** worked in book and magazine publishing, children's television, and broadcast journalism. She was a freelance field producer for CNN Manila. After the Soviet Union collapsed, she managed thirty regions in Russia, teaching radio and TV journalists how to produce Western-style economic news. Leslie majored in English literature at Princeton University. She lived in Moscow for nearly two decades and now lives in northern Virginia.

**Shannon Thomas Perich** is curator at Photographic History Collection, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. She has authored books, curated exhibitions, written blogs, and given lectures that cover the earliest of photography to the most current. She is a history of photography adjunct professor at Maryland Institute College of Art. She and Horenstein have worked in collaboration several times across two decades.

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## Press images



01\_August 15th Celebration at Saint Ignatius Church, Port Tobacco, Maryland, 1997  
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02\_Lonie's neighbor with frying pan, Route 301, Bel Alton, Maryland, 2003  
@Henry Horenstein



03\_Crabs for sale, old Route 301, Bel Alton, Maryland, 2006  
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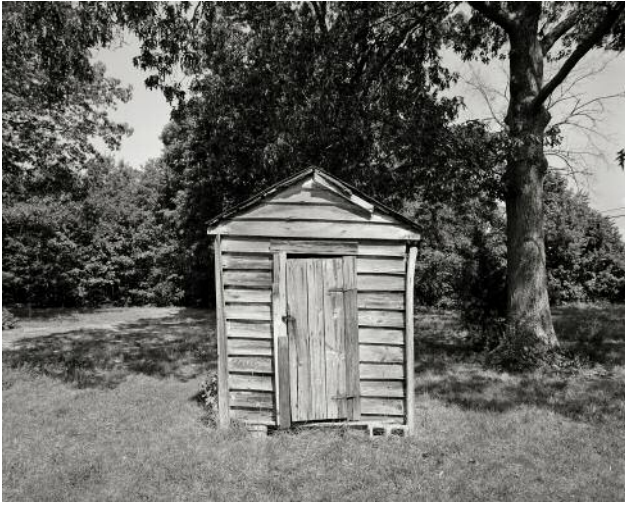
04\_Portrait of Lonie circa 1940s on her mini furnace, Bel Anton, Maryland, 1997  
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05\_Viola and Lonie at the church picnic, Saint Ignatius church, Port Tobacco, Maryland, 1997  
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06\_Leslie, lounging in the baseball field behind Proctor's Inn, Waldorf, Maryland, 1997  
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07\_Abandoned outhouse, behind Lonie's house, Bel Alton, Maryland, 1997  
@Henry Horenstein



08\_Fisherman with his catch, Chapel Point State Park, Maryland, 2006  
@Henry Horenstein



09\_Interior, Wheeler's barbershop and country cafe, Bel Alton, Maryland, 1997  
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10\_Hold on, Proctor's Inn, Waldorf, Maryland, 2003  
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11\_Skye, Bobby, and Vinnie, in Cinderella's backyard, Temple Hills, Maryland, 1997  
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12\_Ruth at home, Northeast D.C., 2003  
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