

Armon Means  
Artist  
Statement

## **“Black Bikers: The End of Danny Lyons and Cultural Refuge”**

***The image of the “biker” as established by Danny Lyon’s 1967 series, The Bikeriders has marked a moment in American history and helped create a common identity for the stereotype. This persona has since lost its foothold in the mass culture of motorcyclists leaving those involved to constantly combat the ideals put forth by such images. The black biker is a figure that stands contrary to Lyon’s work and marks a decidedly significant shift in the contemporary context of society and an end to Lyon’s vision.***

Based on media, varied history and even the perceived apocalyptic image of their dress, there is a stigma that follows bikers. So prevalent that often when present the perception was that the community is threatened or facing cultural / economic demise. That is far from the case as they often do much to uplift their communities, yet this has become such a concern that law enforcement has severely cracked down on clubs and are sufficiently trying to push them out of cities regardless of their status but purely based on stereotype. Supported in today's society, this image of the biker is increasingly popular as mediated through television and film (seen in productions like Sons of Anarchy, Easy Rider, Wild Angels, Satan’s Sadists) it more than often presents the role as outsider, violent, dangerous, above the law and more times than not, Caucasian.

The goals of these images are to showcase the men and women of primarily black motorcycle clubs. Photographed as groups or individuals they represent a shift in the culture of not only motorcyclists but also a biker persona. As they no longer are quantified through the lens of Danny Lyon, the Hells Angels or mass media they have assumed a new identity as fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, mothers and daughters, teachers and students all veiled in the garb of the “biker” without the attaching stigma. The goal of the work is to expose the image so heavily perpetrated by mass culture and help put an end to the vision of The Bikeriders as it is now represented in new faces. Utilizing much of the same mode of Lyon, by becoming part of the culture I seek to gain understanding and the potential for realistic portrayal and representation.