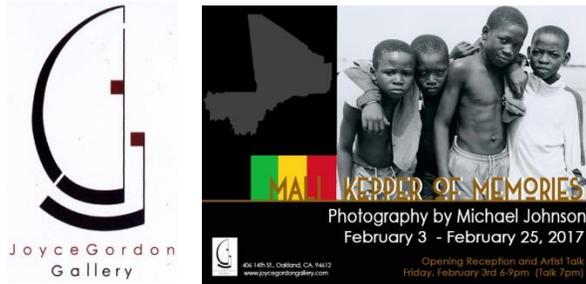


## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Who:** Photography by Michael Johnson

**What:** “Mali: Keeper of Memories”

**Exhibit dates:** February 3 – February 25, 2017

**Opening Reception:** Friday, February 3rd 6-9pm

**Artist Talk:** Friday, February 3rd 7pm

**Where: Joyce Gordon Gallery**

406 14<sup>th</sup> Street Oakland, CA. 94612 (12<sup>th</sup> St. Bart)

[www.joycegordongallery.com](http://www.joycegordongallery.com)

For more information please contact:

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Joyce Gordon Gallery presents, “**Mali: Keeper of Memories,**” a recent photographic look at life in the Republic of Mali, the 8<sup>th</sup> largest country in Africa by photographer, Michael Johnson.

To portray Mali solely in accordance with it’s place as on of the poorest countries in the world would do it an injustice. The people though reserved were warm, welcoming generous, and curious about those from outside Mali, especially a Black American. They have a long and storied history that is carried from generation to generation through their music. Their roots as an Islamic republic carry over into contemporary life with consistency. Historically and culturally it was very deep. It was a very enlightening trip on many levels.

As a traveler/artist this trip confirmed for me my acculturation as an “American as opposed to an “African-American”. My interaction with Africans in Africa made my status as a product of American history and culture quite clear, while allowing me to embrace them even more. All of the black and white photographic images were shot on medium format film stock processed and printed by the artist in the darkroom. The color images were shot on film and professionally processed and printed as photographic prints.

**Michael Johnson** was born in Harlem, New York City and heard his calling to the fine arts at an early age. As a youth he spent many hours in the public libraries and museums studying the works of the great masters of art motivated by his love of their work. Among his favorites were

the painters of the Renaissance, while he also spent abundant amounts of time studying the Flemish masters and Art Nouveau.

But his odyssey as a visual artist didn't begin until his late twenties when he decided on a whim to enroll in a community college video production class. It was while attending this class that his earlier studies came to the fore, and he realized that he had some "natural" talent for composition and camera work. He prevailed on his father to lend him three hundred and fifty dollars to buy his first camera. Shortly afterward he moved to Martha's Vineyard Island where he taught himself the art of photography. He has traveled and photographed many American states, the Caribbean, Europe, Cuba and, Thailand. Michael has been a full time artist since 2001.

He now lives 5 months of the year on Martha's Vineyard and runs his own gallery. He endeavors to keep the traditional techniques of hand crafted black and white photography alive with his work. Michael says of his creative process: "All of my work is informed by my deep belief in God. I try to tell the truth with my images, but it must be told from the view point of dignity and beauty. Whether it is nature, architecture, or people, God creates the forms and the moments and I draw on my talent and spirit to capture them. My job is infinitely simple, but infinitely rewarding."

**Joyce Gordon Gallery** is a commercial fine art gallery located in the downtown district of Oakland, California. It exhibits art that reflects the social and cultural diversity of the Bay Area and international artists. The aim of the gallery is to respect the creative pursuits of the individual and seeks to make such work accessible to a broad audience.