

### Essay 3 Documentary Photography

Read Martha Rosler's *In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on documentary photography)* and respond to the following:

What historical circumstances and perspectives encouraged the growth of documentary photography? How is documentary a "practice with the past"? How did works by Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, and Dorothea Lange work to "rectify wrongs"? Rosler refers to the "victims" of documentary photography and asks, "Are photographic images, then, like civilization, made on the backs of the exploited?" Consider a photograph discussed in the essay and argue in favor or against this question. Consider the late 20th century theory of Social Darwinism (currently resurgent in popular/political discourse) and relate it to Rosler's point that documentary photography, through its messages of universality and presumed objectivity, enforces institutionalized classicism and racism. According to Rosler, what contradiction exists between radical documentary and fine art photography that prevents "real documentary"? What can we do as photographers and viewers of photographs to create or encourage what Rosler describes as "radical" and "real" documentary photographs?



Jacob Riis, *Street Arabs*, c. 1880s.



Dorothea Lange, *Children in Migrant Camp*, c. 1936.



Lewis Hine, *Newsboy Asleep on Stairs*, c. 1912.