

## **Prisoners**

During the realization of "The Frontier", my extensive photographic monograph designed to interpret through photographic images the key values and norms of the American culture and civilization exemplified in New York City, I chose one of the functions of Bronx Zoo as an example of scientific research. My study on human curiosity – being the basis of science – was completed and developed through various photographic research and subsequent editions, transforming its documentary objective into a "philosophical" essay: human behavior.

In recent years, I have had many opportunities to observe the life of wild animals in different African countries, especially in Congo, homeland of various species of monkeys. Their difficult life in nature is usually much shorter than in a zoo. Nevertheless, they live "in the wild" that means freely. At the Bronx Zoo I saw – and was very moved by it – many great apes, especially gorillas expressing their "disagreement" to their imprisonment through their behavior and gaze. Using their own language they "told" me about their suffering in confinement. This is how the "Prisoners" was born, my long series of photographs that I carried out there.

We humans argue that there are many reasons to keep animals in captivity: for scientific purposes, to protect their lives, and to provide entertainment and education to people. However, the fact is that these living beings are prisoners. Similarly – despite significant differences – people were prisoners in the camps of various totalitarian systems or in the detention centers of modern Western countries: penal and medical. And similarly, as in the case of animals, the imprisonment of humans by humans is also justified, morally and scientifically and more or less approved by those who are not prisoners, notably by the intellectual elites of all political systems.

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