

# THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

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## The Gordon Parks Foundation Launches Collection-Building Initiative with Celebrated Artists Mikki Ferrill & LeRoy Henderson

**2025 Art & Writing Fellows Announced**  
**Derek Fordjour, Scheherazade Tillet, and Salamishah Tillet**

**Previously Announced:**  
**The Gordon Parks Foundation's Annual Awards Dinner & Auction**  
***Honoring Bethann Hardison, Rashid Johnson, Anna Wintour &***  
***Ambassador Andrew Young***  
**May 20, 2025 at Cipriani 42<sup>nd</sup> Street**



(L to R: Mikki Ferrill, LeRoy Henderson, Derek Fordjour, Scheherazade Tillet & Salamishah Tillet)

NEW YORK, NY – January 15, 2025 – [The Gordon Parks Foundation](#) (GPF) is pleased to announce the formation of **The Gordon Parks Foundation's Legacy Initiative**, a collection-building fund that will focus on mid-and late-career artists whose enduring work is connected to **Parks's** life and legacy. Each year, the Foundation will identify artists and work directly with them to purchase a group of artworks that will be accessioned into **The Gordon Parks Foundation's** permanent collection. These works will be made available for study, research, and exhibitions, and featured in exhibitions at The Gordon Parks Foundation's Gallery. Additionally, the Foundation will make available on its website educational resources about the artists and their life's work.

In the Legacy Initiative's inaugural year, **The Gordon Parks Foundation** will recognize two celebrated artists and members of **Gordon Parks's** circle, **Mikki Ferrill** and **LeRoy Henderson**. Like **Parks**, throughout their careers, **Ferrill** and **Henderson** have demonstrated how photography can be used as a tool for advocacy and human connection, reflecting and expanding on **Parks's** commitment to social justice and community engagement. By launching the **Legacy Acquisition** initiative with **Ferrill's** and **Henderson's** work, **The Gordon Parks Foundation** is honoring their significant contribution to the history of photography.

"Far too often the people who lay the groundwork are overlooked and forgotten," said **Mikki Ferrill**. "The Legacy Fund not only recognizes the foundation that was laid, it also acknowledges the dedication made before photography became as popular as it is now."

"I cannot think of an organization from which I could receive support that would mean more to me," adds **LeRoy Henderson**. "From the earliest days of my interest in photography, **Gordon Parks** has been an inspiration and role model."

Since 2017, the foundation has awarded annual fellowships to artists following in **Gordon Parks's** footsteps working in a variety of fields and mediums. This year's **Gordon Parks Foundation's Art Fellowships** are being awarded to interdisciplinary artist and educator **Derek Fordjour**, photo-based artist and feminist activist **Scheherazade Tillet** and **The Gordon Parks Foundation's Genevieve Young Fellowship in Writing** is awarded to 2022 Pulitzer Prize-winning contributing critic-at-large for the *New York Times*, **Salamishah Tillet**. These fellowships support the development of new or ongoing projects that explore the themes of representation and social justice and are in historical dialogue with **Gordon Parks's** work. The fellows will participate in a wide range of Foundation initiatives and programs throughout the year, culminating in a solo exhibition at **The Gordon Parks Foundation Gallery** in Pleasantville, NY. The Foundation will also acquire work by the art Fellows for its permanent collection.

“**The Gordon Parks Foundation's** grant, prize, and acquisition initiatives are an integral part of our mission, as we strive to support the kind of artistic networks that were vital to Gordon's own career” said **The Gordon Parks Foundation's Executive Director Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.** “Gordon received the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship for photography in 1941 and it's an honor to be able to continue providing the same impactful support to artists who we are inspired by, and who share Gordon Parks's creative goals and the mission of the foundation. Having the work of these artists in our collection, alongside Gordon's own photographic archive, ensures that this work will be made available for future generations of artists and scholars.”

All the above will be recognized at this year's **Annual Awards Dinner & Auction of Gordon Parks's photographs** on **Tuesday, May 20 at Cipriani 42<sup>nd</sup> Street**. Every year, the **gala brings together changemakers across film, music, fashion, art and philanthropy**, and this year's event will honor legendary model and activist **Bethann Hardison**, acclaimed contemporary artist **Rashid Johnson**, **Anna Wintour**, Chief Content Officer, *Condé Nast*, and Global Editorial Director, *Vogue* and politician, minister and civil rights leader **Ambassador Andrew Young**, who was **U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations**, **Mayor of Atlanta** and a **U.S. Congressman**. The evening's special guests will include the son and grandson of **Rev. E.F. Ledbetter**, who **Gordon Parks photographed extensively in Chicago in 1953** for a story on the **Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church**. These photographs will be the subject of an **exhibition at Howard University in early 2025**.

The **co-chairs for the 2025 Gordon Parks Foundation Awards Dinner & Auction** are: **Alicia Keys** and **Kasseem Dean**, **Tonya and Spike Lee**, **Ben Stiller** and **Christine Taylor**, **Anderson Cooper**, **Sarah Arison**, **Kathryn and Ken Chenault**, **Michi Jigarjian**, **Judy and Leonard Lauder**, **Carol Sutton Lewis** and **William M. Lewis, Jr.**, **Crystal McCrary** and **Raymond McGuire**, **Clara Wu Tsai** and **Gail and Jeff Yabuki**. All **proceeds from the evening will support year-round educational programming as well as the fellowships, prizes, and scholarships** provided by **The Gordon Parks Foundation** to the next generation of artists, writers, and students whose work follows in **Parks's** footsteps. **Tickets are available starting at \$2,000** and can be purchased on the [Gordon Parks Foundation website](#) or by contacting **Buckley Hall Events** at [gpgala@buckleyhallevts.com](mailto:gpgala@buckleyhallevts.com) or **914-579-1000**.

In other news: **Ralph Ellison: Photographer** is on view now through **February 7, 2025** at **The Gordon Parks Foundation Gallery** (48 Wheeler Avenue, Pleasantville, NY) and is being held in conjunction with the release of the book **Ralph Ellison: Photographer**, published by **The Gordon Parks Foundation**, **the Ralph and Fanny Ellison Charitable Trust**, and **Steidl**. For more information, please [PRESS HERE](#).

#### **ABOUT THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION**

**The Gordon Parks Foundation** supports and produces artistic and educational initiatives that advance the legacy and vision of **Gordon Parks**—recognized as the **most significant American photographer of the 20th century, as well as a writer, musician, and filmmaker**, who used the arts to further “the common search for a better life and a better world.” Through exhibitions, publications, and public programs organized in collaboration with national and international institutions at its **exhibition space in Pleasantville, New York**, the **Foundation provides access to, and supports understanding of, the work and contributions of Gordon Parks for artists, scholars, students, and the public**. Through its year-round educational programming and annual grant-making initiatives, **the Foundation champions current**

**and future generations of artists and humanitarians whose work carries on Parks's legacy.** For more information, please visit <https://www.gordonparksfoundation.org>.

#### **ABOUT GORDON PARKS**

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, **photographer, filmmaker, musician, and author Gordon Parks** created a groundbreaking body of work that made him **one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century**. Beginning in the 1940s, he documented American life and culture with a focus on social justice, race relations, the civil rights movement, and the Black American experience. Born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, **Parks** was drawn to photography as a young man. Despite his lack of professional training, he **won a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in 1942**; this led to a position with the photography section of the **Farm Security Administration (FSA) in Washington, D.C.**, and later, **the Office of War Information (OWI)**. By the mid-1940s, he was working as a freelance photographer for publications such as *Vogue*, *Glamour* and *Ebony*. **Parks** was hired in 1948 as a staff photographer for *Life Magazine*, where he spent more than two decades creating some of his most notable work. In 1969, he became the **first Black American to write and direct a major feature film, *The Learning Tree***, based on his semi-autobiographical novel. His next directorial endeavor, *Shaft (1971)*, helped **define a genre known as Blaxploitation films**. Parks continued photographing, publishing, and composing until his death in 2006.

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