

THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

Gordon Parks Foundation to Host Annual Awards Dinner
Tuesday, May 21 at Cipriani 42nd Street

Evening To Honor:
Alicia Keys and Kasseem Dean as Patrons of the Arts,
Colin Kaepernick, Mickalene Thomas, Myrlie Evers-Williams
+ a Special Tribute to Richard Roundtree and Shaft

Performance By D-Nice
Presenters Include Gayle King, Carrie Mae Weems, Spike Lee & more TBA

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(Photo Credits L to R: Alicia Keys & Kasseem Dean – Ramon Rivas; Colin Kaepernick – Amari Kenoly for Kaepernick Media; Mickalene Thomas – Emil Horowitz; Myrlie Evers-Williams – James Van Evers; Richard Roundtree)

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NEW YORK, NY – March 6, 2024 – [The Gordon Parks Foundation](#) will host its **Annual Awards Dinner & Auction of Gordon Parks’ photographs on **Tuesday, May 21st at Cipriani 42nd Street**. The foundation celebrates the enduring legacy of **Gordon Parks**, a **visionary photographer and multidisciplinary artist**, by supporting and launching artistic and educational projects that amplify his deep commitment to social justice and the transformative power of creativity.**

The gala, which brings together changemakers across film, music, the visual arts, business and philanthropy, will honor athlete and activist **Colin Kaepernick**, acclaimed mixed-media artist **Mickalene Thomas** and civil rights activist and former Chairman of the NAACP **Myrlie Evers-Williams**, widow of civil rights activist Medgar Evers. Sixteen-time GRAMMY® Award-winning singer, songwriter, musician, producer, and actress **Alicia Keys** and GRAMMY® Award-winning producer, rapper, and songwriter **Kasseem Dean (aka Swizz Beatz)** will be recognized as **Patrons of the Arts**.

“Our annual gala is a celebration of **Gordon Parks’** lasting impact on art, film, music, and activism,” said **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation**. “We are proud to honor **Colin, Alicia, Swizz, Richard, Mickalene, and Myrlie** – all visionaries whose brilliant work and deep commitment to advancing social justice span multiple generations over 60 years and continue **Parks’** legacy.”

Along with the honorees, the evening will also acknowledge the 2024 **Gordon Parks Foundation Art Fellows** including Howard University Professor and photographer **Larry W. Cook**, Chicago based activist and artist **Tonika Lewis Johnson**, and the 2024 Genevieve Young Fellow Writing Fellow, Baltimore author **D. Watkins**. This year’s gala will feature a special tribute to **Richard Roundtree**, who starred in **Parks’**

groundbreaking 1971 film *Shaft*, highlighting the enduring cultural influence of the film on both cinema and music. Presenters include cultural luminaries **Gayle King, Carrie Mae Weems, Spike Lee** and legendary DJ **D-Nice** will close out the night.

The **co-chairs for the 2024 Gordon Parks Foundation Awards Dinner & Auction** are: **Kathryn and Kenneth Chenault; Agnes Gund; Judy and Leonard Lauder; Tonya and Spike Lee; Carol Sutton Lewis and William M. Lewis, Jr.; Crystal McCrary and Raymond McGuire; and Clara Wu Tsai and Joseph Tsai.**

“**Gordon Parks** has socially, politically and culturally influenced how we tell our stories,” said **honoree Mickalene Thomas**. “He has taught us that the camera is an empowering tool that cultivates impact. His legacy has changed the game for Black creatives and paved the way for artists like myself. This award exemplifies the ongoing influence and celebrates creative minds and leading voices in visual arts and broader culture.”

“We are deeply honored to be receiving the **Gordon Parks Patrons of the Arts Award** in 2024,” added **Alicia Keys & Kasseem Dean**. “We truly appreciate the Foundation’s work providing scholarships and fellowships to the next generation of students and artists whose creative work reflects and extends **Gordon’s** important legacy.”

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’ 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 or **914-579-1000**.

In the months leading up to the gala, [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) will present an exhibition of **Gordon Parks’ photographs** titled ***Born Black***, curated in collaboration with **The Gordon Parks Foundation**. This presentation is inspired by the 1971 book ***Gordon Parks: Born Black, A Personal Report on the Decade of Black Revolt 1960-1970***, which brought together a collection of essays and photographs by **Parks** that were originally created for ***Life Magazine***. The collection will be **on view March 7-April 13** with an **opening reception slated for Thursday, March 7 from 6-8 p.m.** This spring, Steidl, in partnership with **The Gordon Parks Foundation**, will release an expanded edition of ***Born Black*** that illuminates **Parks’** vision for the book and offers deeper insight into the nine series within it through additional images, related manuscripts and scholarly essays. **For more information, please [PRESS HERE](#) and [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’ 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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