

THE **GORDON PARKS** **FOUNDATION**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION HOSTS ITS ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER & AUCTION CELEBRATING THE ARTS & HUMANITARIANISM

2017 Celebration to Honor Congressman John Lewis, Mavis Staples, Alexander Soros, Jon Batiste and Kathryn & Kenneth Chenault

Evening to Feature Appearances by Martin Scorsese, Stephen Colbert, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Usher Raymond IV, Valerie Jarrett, Congressman Keith Ellison and more

Special Performance by Grammy and Academy-Award Winning Recording Artist Common

NEW YORK, NY – On Tuesday, June 6, at Cipriani 42nd Street, **The Gordon Parks Foundation** will host its Annual Awards Dinner and Auction celebrating Parks’ rich legacy and honoring those that continue to make an impact in the performing and visual arts and humanitarianism. Honorees for the 2017 Awards include: **The Honorable Congressman John Lewis**, philanthropist **Alexander Soros**, singer and activist **Mavis Staples**, musician **Jon Batiste**, American Express Chairman and CEO, **Kenneth Chenault** and his wife, philanthropist **Kathryn Chenault**. The evening will also feature performances by Grammy and Academy Award-winning recording artist, **Common**. In addition, an auction featuring seven lots of Gordon Parks works will be led by Sotheby’s Americas Vice Chairman, Hugh Hildesley. All proceeds from the evening will support the Foundation’s ongoing artistic and educational programs and initiatives.

Guest presenters for the evening include: director, producer and screenwriter **Martin Scorsese**; *Late Night with Stephen Colbert* host, **Stephen Colbert**; historian and Harvard University professor, **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**; and singer, **Usher Raymond IV** (additional presenters to be announced at a later date). Additional special guests include **Valerie Jarrett**, civic leader and Former Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama, and **Congressman Keith Ellison**. **Alicia Keys & Kasseem “Swizz Beatz” Dean**, **Karl Lagerfeld**, **Leonard Lauder & Judy Glickman Lauder**, **Janelle Monáe** and **Grace Raymond & Usher Raymond IV** will serve as Co-Chairs, and Dinner Chairs include **Ronald O. Perelman**, **Russell Simmons**, **Richard & Lisa Plepler**, **Gloria Vanderbilt** and **Sheila Nevins**.

In addition to recognizing this year’s distinguished honorees, the Foundation will also highlight the first two recipients of the Inaugural Gordon Parks Fellowship—Baltimore-based photographer **Devin Allen** and New York-based British journalist, photographer, and filmmaker **Harriet Dedman**. The fellowship was established to support photographers, artists, filmmakers, and musicians working within the theme of social justice.

“Each year we come together to celebrate the incredible and lasting legacy of Gordon Parks and to honor the artists, humanitarians, and philanthropists who are making a meaningful impact in the arts and across humanity,” says **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.**, Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation. “We are so incredibly proud to recognize this year’s group of honorees, and to introduce our inaugural class of fellows who

are exploring themes of social justice in their work—an issue that is becoming more and more urgent with each passing day in our current political climate.”

For the past decade, The Gordon Parks Foundation has provided scholarships to help further the exploration of visual and performing arts to students across the country whose artistic talent reflect the passion, vision and humanity of Gordon Parks. The Foundation’s longtime partner institutions include: the Fashion Institute of Technology, Ghetto Film School, Harlem School of the Arts, New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, Purchase College (SUNY), Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, and YoungArts National Arts Foundation. This year, the Foundation is proud to add the Pratt Institute to its list of partners, and that three of the twenty-four young scholarship recipients will have an opportunity to participate in programs on their Brooklyn campus.

For more information about The Gordon Parks Foundation, please visit: gordonparksfoundation.org. To purchase tickets for the 2017 Gordon Parks Foundation Awards & Auction, please contact Buckley Hall Events at 914-579-1000 or GPFGala@buckleyhallevts.com.

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ABOUT THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

Gordon Parks believed that the power of transforming lives was through self-expression – through art. He used his camera, his words, and his music to tell stories to give a voice to the voiceless. Widely known as the most important African-American photographer of the twentieth century, Parks exposed the face of American poverty with sympathy and dignity, using his artistic skill to champion social change. Today the Gordon Parks Foundation provides scholarships to students whose creative work reflects the mission and vision of Gordon Parks and continues to preserve Parks’ vast archive, publish books, and work with museums and schools throughout the world.