

**The Gordon Parks Museum/Center for Culture and Diversity
Fort Scott Community College
Fort Scott, KS**

News Release

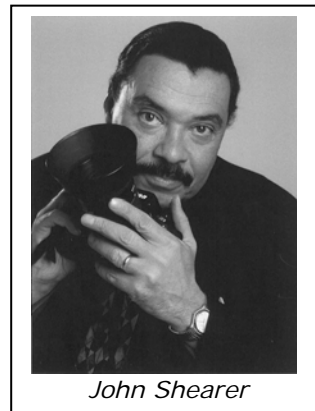
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Contact: Jill Warford at 1-800-874-3722, ext. 515

Email: jillw@fortscott.edu

Photographer JOHN SHEARER to receive “Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award” at 8th annual Gordon Parks Celebration

Fort Scott— John Shearer, award-winning photographer, author, and creative director, will be the recipient of the “Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award” at the eighth annual Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity this October 7-8 in Fort Scott, Kan. The Gordon Parks Celebration, a component of the Gordon Parks Museum/Center, was created in 2004 by Fort Scott Community College to honor Fort Scott native Gordon Parks, noted photographer, writer, musician, and filmmaker.



At the culmination of the first year’s events, the **Choice of Weapons Award** was established in Parks’ honor to be given annually at the Celebration. Named after his autobiography of the same name, the award seeks to honor a recipient who has excelled in the areas that Parks did and who exemplifies the spirit and strength of character of Gordon Parks. Previous honorees include actor and musician Avery Brooks, photographer Howard L. Bingham, Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green, two of the “Little Rock Nine,” Richard Roundtree, star of the Parks-directed film, “Shaft,” Nichelle Nichols of “Star Trek” fame, and acclaimed actress Ruby Dee.

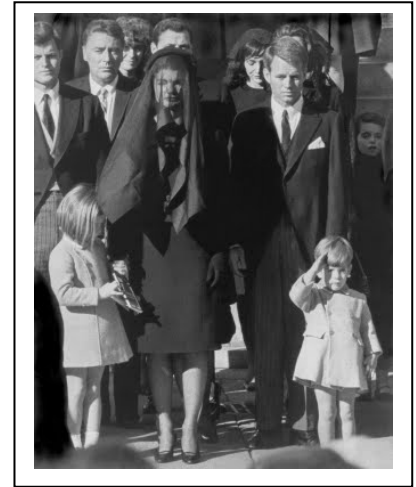
John Shearer is a true renaissance man, fashioned in the mold of Gordon Parks. Like Parks, Shearer has been a photographer, writer, director, lecturer and professor. Gordon Parks was the first African-American staff photographer at LIFE, John the second.

At 17, Shearer was one of the youngest staff photographers ever hired by a major publication when LOOK hired him. On Staff with LOOK 1966-1969, John covered civil rights and the race riots of the 60s. Shearer was hired by LIFE in 1968, where he worked as a staff photographer until the magazine ceased regular weekly publications in 1972.

One of Shearer’s most famous photographs was taken on Monday, November 25, 1963, the day of John F. Kennedy’s funeral. Shearer caught the moment when Jackie Kennedy leaned over to young John-John Kennedy and whispered something in his ear. John-John looked at his father’s coffin and made a crisp salute as the coffin departed.

"It took me awhile to make a good print from the over-exposed negative and as a result my image was not among the first wave of pictures to run. But when it did it became one of the most widely used. The over-exposure gave me a great deal of detail in the dark areas of the picture. Jackie's face was a portrait of stoic grief rendered in a haunting way that captured her sorrow. Luck – and the fearlessness of youth – were on my side that day."

John Shearer



One of Shearer's classic stories for LIFE was his coverage of the first Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier fight, "Fight of the Century." Among Shearer's most important stories was his coverage of the Attica Prison riots in 1972. Shearer was the only photographer allowed inside the prison during the assault by New York law enforcement authorities.

John Shearer has won 175 national photography awards and over 150 national magazine design awards. His work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum. His most recent exhibit was a one-man show at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield Ct. He is the founder and president of Image Partners, a custom publishing company, from 1996 to the present. This company specializes in conceptualizing and creating new publications, or redirecting existing magazines; designing media kits and related materials, newsletters and books.

Previous positions include Creative Director and Director of Photography for IBM/New York Times Custom Publishing; Director of Photography for Agenda Magazine; Picture Editor for the New York Times Magazine Part Two Group; Director of Photography and Design for the Columbia School of Journalism; and Time, Inc. , where he worked with the development group that created People magazine. He has authored several books for young adults and was the creator, writer, and producer of the *Billy Jo Jive Series* for Sesame Street.

Mr. Shearer will be honored at a tribute dinner on Saturday, October 8. The Celebration schedule will soon be available on the Center's website www.gordonparkscenter.org. Tickets for Gordon Parks Celebration events will go on sale mid-September. For more information contact the Center at 223-2700, ext. 515 or see the website.

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