

**The Gordon Parks Center for Culture and Diversity
Fort Scott Community College**

News Release

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RICHARD ROUNDTREE to receive “Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award” at 5th annual Gordon Parks Celebration

Fort Scott– Noted actor and activist Richard Roundtree, star of the Gordon Parks’ film **Shaft**, will be the recipient of the Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award at the fifth annual Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity this October 1-4 in Fort Scott, Kan. The Gordon Parks Celebration, a component of the Gordon Parks Center for Culture and Diversity, was created in 2004 by Fort Scott Community College to honor Fort Scott native 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, and Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green, two of the “Little Rock Nine.”

“We are very pleased that Richard Roundtree accepted our invitation to receive this award,” Jill Warford, the Center’s Executive Director, said. “He was the star of the three **Shaft** films directed by Gordon Parks, has worked on stage and in film consistently, and has done much to promote male breast cancer awareness. Most importantly, he had a long and close relationship with Gordon.”

With consistency being the benchmark for stardom in Hollywood, Richard Roundtree has proven his star power in every sense of the word. As a leading actor for over the last thirty years, he has established himself as a constant force in the entertainment industry.

Discovering that he enjoyed the spotlight while on a football scholarship at Southern Illinois University, Richard signed with Johnson Publications to model in their annual Ebony Fashion Fair, touring 79 cities in 90 days. Roundtree then returned to New York, his home state, began acting lessons and later became a member of New York’s acclaimed Negro Ensemble Company. A succession of Off-Broadway roles resulted in his starring role as Jack Johnson in “**The Great White Hope**”.

Richard initially received international fame when Gordon Parks chose him to star as John Shaft, private detective and super cop hero in the feature film “**Shaft**”. That role catapulted Roundtree into the world arena as one of the hottest new actors on the scene. He continued the franchise with “**Shaft’s Big Score**”, “**Shaft in Africa**”, and the television series, “**Shaft**”.

But Roundtree was just beginning to stretch his talents as a movie star. He quickly moved on to star with some of Hollywood’s most well-known actors, including Clint Eastwood, Robert Shaw, Peter O’Toole, Richard Harris, David Niven, Tony Curtis and Laurence Olivier, naming just a few.

Richard recently completed the Warner Bros. film **"Speed Racer"** with John Goodman and Susan Sarandon. Among his more than 70 other feature films is the smash hit **"Seven"**, the critically acclaimed **"Once Upon A Time...When We Were Colored"**, the remake of **"Shaft"** reprising the role that made him famous, **"Steel"** with basketball superstar Shaquille O'Neal , and **"George of the Jungle"** for Disney Pictures.

Richard's television credits have included series regular roles on **"413 Hope Street"** where he garnered an NAACP Image Award nomination for Best Leading Actor in a Series, and **"Buddies"** with Dave Chappel for ABC. He just completed the movies **"Final Approach"** and **"Point of Entry"** for the Hallmark Channel. Others include the top rated **"Having Our Say"** portraying Booker T. Washington, **"Christmas in Connecticut"** directed for Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the Starz production of **"Joe and Max"**. He has recurred on the ABC smash hit series' **"Desperate Housewives"** and **"Heroes"**. Richard is the recipient of a Peabody Award for his narration on the PBS documentary **"The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow"**.

An advocate for the fight against breast cancer, Richard is on the lecture circuit and takes part in events to help raise awareness and funds towards finding a cure for this disease. Roundtree was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1993 and underwent a mastectomy.

Roundtree will be honored at a tribute dinner on Friday, October 3. 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 September 15 and will be available at the Gordon Parks Center at FSCC and at The Country Cupboard, 12 N. Main, in downtown Fort Scott. For more information contact Warford at 223-2700, ext. 515 or see the website at gordonparkscenter.org.

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