



# 4th Annual Gordon Parks Celebration

*Photo by Michael Henry*

October 3 - 6, 2007

Fort Scott Community College  
Fort Scott, Kansas



at



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All help to ensure the Celebration's success, both now and in the future.*



Fort Scott Tribune  
The Gordon Parks Foundation, Chappaqua, New York  
Michael Henry

# About Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks was born in Fort Scott, Kansas on November 30, 1912 to Sarah and Andrew Jackson Parks. The youngest of fifteen children, he attended local schools and left Fort Scott at sixteen after his mother died.

For the next twelve years, he lived mainly in Minneapolis and Chicago working odd jobs and honing his skills as a photographer. In 1942, he was awarded the first Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in photography, and chose to work at the Farm Security Administration in Washington, D.C. Parks observed the bigotry and racism that permeated the bureau, and he set about to document the conditions with his camera. He took one particularly memorable photograph of Ella Watson, a poor, black, government charwoman, posed against the U.S. flag with broom and mop in hand.



The Farm Security Administration was later absorbed by the Office of War Information, and Parks was assigned to Selfridge Field in Michigan to cover the newly formed 332nd Fighter Group — a squadron of black pilots.

He was a freelance fashion photographer for *Vogue* and *Glamour* and in 1949, he was the first African American photographer to join the staff of *Life* magazine where he worked as a photojournalist until 1972. During that time he used his art to document poverty in Harlem and Latin America, as well as the 1960s black civil rights movement in the United States. He did articles concerning the Black Panthers, the Ingrid Bergman-Roberto Rosellini love affair, Broadway shows, personalities, fashion, and politics.

Gordon Parks wrote about his hometown of Fort Scott in his autobiographical novel and subsequent film, *The Learning Tree*, which was among the 25 films placed on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 1989. He went on to direct other films, to author several books, and to write original musical compositions, film scores, and a ballet based on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., titled *Martin*.

As a filmmaker, he was the first African-American to direct a major Hollywood production with the poignant memoir of his youth *The Learning Tree*, filmed on location in Fort Scott. He also broke new ground with a hip black hero on the silver screen named *Shaft*.

A major retrospective exhibit of Parks's work, *Half Past Autumn: The Art of Gordon Parks* opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. in 1998 and toured the United States. HBO produced a documentary on Parks, also titled *Half Past Autumn*.

Gordon Parks received many awards for photography, writing, filmmaking and humanitarianism including the National Medal of Art, presented to him by President Ronald Reagan in 1988. He is also the recipient of the NAACP's highest award, The Spingarn Medal, and the Governor's Medal of Merit, struck especially for him to honor his being named 1985 Kansan of the Year. He also received over 50 honorary degrees in literature, fine arts and humanities from colleges and universities across America.

Parks was father to four children: Gordon Jr. (deceased), Toni, David, and Leslie. He lived in New York City most of his life and continued to create up until his death on March 7, 2006. His fifth autobiography, *The Hungry Heart*, and a new book of poetry, *Eyes With Winged Thoughts*, were published in the fall of 2005. Parks is laid to rest near his beloved parents in Evergreen Cemetery in his hometown of Fort Scott, Kansas.

## Books

Arias in Silence, 1994  
Born Black, 1971  
Camera Portraits: Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture, 1948  
A Choice of Weapons, 1966  
Flash Photography, 1947  
Flavio, 1978  
Glimpses Towards Infinity, 1996  
Gordon Parks: In Love, 1971  
Gordon Parks: A Poet and His Camera, 1968  
Gordon Parks Half Past Autumn: A Retrospective, 1997  
Gordon Parks: Whispers of Intimate Things, 1971  
The Learning Tree, 1963  
Moments Without Proper Names, 1975  
Shannon, 1981  
To Smile in Autumn, 1979  
A Star for Noon, 2000  
The Sun Stalker, 2003  
Voices in the Mirror: An Autobiography, 1990  
The Hungry Heart, 2005  
Eyes With Winged Thoughts, 2005

## Films

Flavio, 1964  
Diary of a Harlem Family, 1968  
The World of Piri Thomas, 1968  
The Learning Tree, 1969  
Shaft, 1971  
Shaft's Big Score, 1979  
The Super Cops, 1974  
Leadbelly, 1976  
Solomon Northup's Odyssey, 1984  
Moments Without Proper Names, 1987  
Martin, 1989

# 2007 Choice of Weapons Award Recipient

## Elizabeth Eckford

Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green, two of the “Little Rock Nine” who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957, are the recipients of the 2007 Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award

On September 4, 1957, Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green and seven other African American students attempted to enter Little Rock Central High School, which had previously only accepted white students. They were stopped at the door by Arkansas National Guard troops called up by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus. They tried again without success to attend Central High on September 23, 1957. The next day, September 24, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent U.S. Army troops to accompany the “Little Rock Nine” to school for protection.

After that, the black students thought things “would be relatively quiet,” says Ernest Green, then a senior, who would become Central’s first black graduate the following spring. But when the 101st transferred its duties to federalized Guard troops — many of them locals opposed to integration — a group of about 100 students began what Green calls “a reign of terror.” The black students were cursed at, jostled and spat upon. Their lockers were broken into; glue was put on their chairs. They got threatening phone calls at home and their families’ businesses were boycotted. “It was like going into battle every day,” says Green, an investment banker in Washington.

Elizabeth Eckford is the subject of one of the most pervasive images from that memorable day in 1957, clutching her books as she made her way through the angry crowd. Eckford made her way through the mob and sat on a bus bench at the end of the block. She was eventually able to board a city bus, and went to her mother’s workplace. Because all of the city’s high schools were closed the following year, Eckford did not graduate from Central High School, but she had taken correspondence and night courses and so had enough credits. She later attended Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and has a BA in history. Eckford served in the U.S. Army for five years, as a pay clerk and as an information specialist. Eckford has held various jobs throughout her life. She has been a waitress, history teacher, welfare worker, unemployment and employment interviewer, and a military reporter.



Eckford was awarded the prestigious Spingarn Medal by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as were the rest of the Little Rock Nine in 1958. In 1997, Elizabeth Eckford shared the Father Joseph Biltz Award (presented by the National Conference for

Community and Justice) with Hazel Bryan Massery, a segregationist classmate who appears in the famous Will Counts photograph and during the reconciliation rally of 1997, the two former adversaries made speeches together.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton presented the nation’s highest civilian award, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the members of the Little Rock Nine. Eckford started speaking about her experiences because of her interest in education. She has said that true reconciliation can occur if we honestly look back on our shared history. Eckford is currently a probation officer in Little Rock and is the mother of two sons.

# 2007 Choice of Weapons Award Recipient

## Ernest Green

Ernest G. Green earned his high school diploma from Central High School and received a B.S. in Social Science and a Masters in Sociology from Michigan State University. He also received Honorary Doctorates from Michigan State University, Tougaloo College and Central State University. He is the Managing Director of Public Finance for Lehman Brothers' Washington, D.C. office.

Several books, movies and documentaries have been produced chronicling Mr. Green and his eight classmates historic year at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas — the most recent being the “Ernest Green Story”, produced and distributed by the Walt Disney Corporation. The October 1996 issue of Black Enterprise Magazine featured Mr. Green as one of the top twenty-five African Americans on Wall Street and again in the October 2002 issue as one of the top 50 African Americans on Wall Street and again in 2006 as one of the 75 Most Powerful Blacks on Wall Street..



Prior to joining Lehman Brothers, Mr. Green was president of Ernest Green & Associates, a minority consulting firm that provided technical assistance in marketing, financial management and economic forecasting. Mr. Green served as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training during the Carter Administration. Prior to his appointment as Assistant Secretary, Mr. Green served as Executive Director of the Recruitment and Training Program, Inc. (RTP, Inc.), an organization that recruits minorities for apprenticeship programs in the building trades.

Mr. Green presently serves on the Board of Directors of Fisk University, Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network and Clark Atlanta University Board of Trustees. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Executive Leadership Council, and the National Association of Securities Professionals (NASP) of which he served as Chairman for two consecutive years. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the March of Dimes Foundation and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

Mr. Green is the recipient of numerous awards including the Urban League's Frederick Douglas Freedom Medal, and the John D. Rockefeller Public Service Award. At the age of seventeen, he was the youngest recipient of the NAACP's Spingarn Medal. The Boy Scouts of America honored Mr. Green with their highest rank of Eagle Scout. Mr. Green and his wife Phyllis live in Washington, D. C. and are the parents of three children.

The Gordon Parks Center for Culture and Diversity established the “Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award” in October of 2004. It is awarded at the annual Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity.

Named after his autobiography of the same name, his powerful story tells how he managed to escape poverty and bigotry by choosing the weapons given to him by “a mother who placed love, dignity and hard work over hatred.” His “weapons” were his mind, his persistence, and his quiet strength in the face of injustice. “Learning, I knew, would be the most effective weapon against the coming years,” he writes in *A Choice of Weapons*.

The person who receives this award will have excelled in at least one area that Gordon Parks did, such as Photography, Music, Writing, Filmmaking, Poetry, Ballet, or Championing Human Dignity. The recipient will exemplify the spirit of Gordon Parks such as: leading by example; being passionate in their beliefs, their life, and toward others; showing respect for family and for humanity; exemplifying courage and steadfastness; and living a life that inspires others.

Previous Honorees are Avery Brooks in 2005 and Howard L. Bingham in 2006.

# Friends of the Gordon Parks Celebration

We would like to acknowledge the following friends who made the Gordon Parks Celebration a reality by their generous gifts to the Friends of the Gordon Parks Celebration. Created this year to help provide financial support for this new event and help ensure its financial growth in the future, the Friends of the Gordon Parks Celebration would not exist without the support of our donors. For their commitment we are sincerely grateful.

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# Schedule of Events

## All Four Days:

- 19th Annual Gordon Parks Photography Competition display in the Fort Scott Community College Gordon Parks Center, Academic Building. **Free** 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Wed. & Thurs. / 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Friday / 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Saturday
- Sarah and Andrew Jackson Parks Photography Exhibit at Mercy Health Center open 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. 401 Woodland Hills Blvd. **Free**

## Wednesday 10/03/07

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Screening of *Half-Past Autumn*, HBO documentary about Gordon Parks. FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – **REGISTRATION/BOOK AND SOUVENIR TABLE OPEN** in the FSCC Academic Building, Commons Area.

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - Trolley Tour of Gordon Parks' Fort Scott. Visit Mr. Parks' hometown in detail including Evergreen Cemetery and sites where *The Learning Tree* was filmed. Meet at the Fort Scott Visitor Information Center, 231 E. Wall St. **Fee: \$6.00**

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Screening of *The Learning Tree* by Gordon Parks." FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

7:00 p.m. - "Inspired by Faith." A community interfaith service with guest speaker Reverend Sam Mann and special music. United Missionary Baptist Church, 16 N. Ransom. **Free**

## Thursday 10/04/07

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. — **REGISTRATION/BOOK AND SOUVENIR TABLE OPEN** in the FSCC Academic Building, Commons Area.

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. — Chamber Coffee at the Gordon Parks Center. Join Chamber of Commerce members for coffee and refreshments.

9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. — "The Parks Family History-From Tennessee to Fort Scott, Kansas." Historian Arnold Schofield traces the roots of the Parks family's journey to Kansas. FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Screening of *Half-Past Autumn*, FSCC Academic Building, Round Room A-129. **Free**

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. - "Pizza for Poets" luncheon for grade school poetry contest winners. (Not open to public) FSCC Academic Building, Gordon Parks Center for Culture and Diversity.

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. - Trolley Tour of Gordon Parks' Fort Scott. Meet at the Fort Scott Visitor Information Center, 231 E. Wall. **Fee: \$6.00**

2:00 p.m. – Production of *I RISE: A TESTIMONY OF COMMITMENT AND SACRIFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS*. A Reader's Theatre production compiled and edited by Dr. Richard Emanuel. Directed by Patty LaRoche. Fort Scott Middle School Commons Area, 1105 E. 12<sup>th</sup> St. (Performance only for students). READER'S THEATRE SPONSORED BY THE BOURBON COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL.

3:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. - "Screening of The Ernest Green Story." A movie that puts the story of the Little Rock Nine and the Civil Rights Movement in perspective. (*Ernest Green and Elizabeth Eckford will receive the Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award this year at the Celebration*) FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

7:30 p.m. – *I RISE: A TESTIMONY OF COMMITMENT AND SACRIFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS*. A Reader's Theatre production compiled and edited by Dr. Richard Emanuel. Directed by Patty LaRoche. Refreshments provided after the play. **At 6:45 p.m. there will be a presentation of Gordon Parks Poetry and Essay contest winners.** Fort Scott Middle School Commons Area, 1105 E. 12<sup>th</sup> St. **Fee: \$7.00** POETRY CONTEST AND READER'S THEATRE SPONSORED BY THE BOURBON COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL.

#### **Friday 10/05/07**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. - **REGISTRATION/BOOK AND SOUVENIR TABLE OPEN** in the FSCC Academic Building, Commons Area.

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. – “Words and Images with Toni Parks.” Photographer Toni Parks will present photographs and poetry of Gordon Parks. Academic Building, Round Room. **Free**

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. – “The Gordon Parks I Knew” with Barbara Baker Burrows and Sarah Burrows. Burrows is the picture editor at *LIFE* magazine and longtime friend of Gordon Parks. Her daughter, Sarah, goddaughter of Parks, is now chief archivist of the Gordon Parks Collection at the Gordon Parks Foundation. Academic Building, Round Room. **Free**

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Celebration Luncheon and Groundbreaking for the Danny and Willa Ellis Family Fine Arts Center, Home of the Gordon Parks Center. FSCC Cafeteria. **Fee: \$8. Please reserve by Oct. 1.**

1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – “Richard Fontenelle: Family Portrait.” Richard Fontenelle’s family was the subject of a photo essay for *Life* magazine by Gordon Parks in 1968 entitled “Harlem Family,” Toni and David Parks will introduce the documentary titled “Family Portrait.” Academic Building, Round Room. **Free**

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. - Trolley Tour of Gordon Parks’ Fort Scott. Meet at the Fort Scott Visitor Information Center, 231 E. Wall. **Fee: \$6.00**

7:00 p.m. – “Celebration Tribute Dinner.” Dinner, music and an evening of tribute. Presentation of the 2007 “Gordon Parks Choice of Weapons Award” to Ms. Elizabeth Eckford and Mr. Ernest Green, two of the “Little Rock Nine.” Hosted by Norm Conard. Enjoy the music of blues guitarist Lem Sheppard. *Social hour prior to dinner.* Liberty Theatre, 113 S. Main, Fort Scott. **All seats reserved. Fee: \$25.00.**

#### **Saturday 10/06/07**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. - **REGISTRATION/BOOK AND SOUVENIR TABLE OPEN** in the FSCC Academic Building, Commons Area.

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. - “Inspired by Gordon Parks: Healing Katrina Victims through Photographs.” Danette Vincent, photographer from Little Rock, AR, will share her story of working with young people and developing the exhibit entitled “After the Storm.” FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. – “Civil Rights Experiences” — Panel Discussion with Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green on their personal experiences with the Civil Rights Movement. Moderated by Norm Conard. FSCC Academic Building, GP Center. **Free**

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. - BBQ Lunch in Gunn Park, site of the filming of *The Learning Tree*. Shelter House #1. **Fee: \$7.00. Please Reserve.**

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. - Trolley Tour of Gordon Parks’ Fort Scott. Meet at the Fort Scott Visitor Information Center, 231 E. Wall. **Fee: \$6.00**

3:00 p.m. – Remembrance Service at Gordon Parks’ gravesite in Evergreen Cemetery. Look for Section 7 sign, north end of cemetery.

## Celebration Participants



**BOBBI BAKER BURROWS** is the Director of Photography for LIFE books and has had an association with the magazine for nearly 40 years. During that time, she assigned and coordinated the photography of major events from LIFE's coverage of the Apollo program to John Glenn's return to space, Democratic and Republican National Conventions and the Olympics. Along the way, Burrows worked in Time Inc.'s magazine development group and was part of the team that created People magazine. Among the books she has edited was the New York Times number one bestseller: "One Nation, America Remembers September 11, 2001." She is also a co-author of the new National Geographic book, *The Kennedy Mystique*. Burrows has curated numerous photography exhibits and has judged many national and international photography contests. She is on the board of directors of the

Lennart Nilsson Science Awards and the Eddie Adams Photography Workshop. Bobbi Burrows lives in Manhattan with her husband, Russell and their two children, Sarah and James.

**SARAH BURROWS** grew up in New York City and attended Middlebury College in Vermont. Before beginning Middlebury, Sarah worked on five books for *Life*, including the *New York Times* #1 Bestseller, *One Nation*. During that time, she simultaneously worked on *In Memoriam*, an HBO documentary in association with Kunhardt Productions, a division of the Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation, which now serves as an umbrella network for such organizations as The Gordon Parks Foundation, of which Sarah is the chief archivist. Sarah began developing the foundation after Gordon Parks, her godfather, passed away in March of 2006. Prior to that, Sarah worked on a documentary exploring and exposing the effects of domestic violence on children, with photographer and Domestic Abuse Awareness Project (DAAP) founder Donna Ferrato. Sarah also followed in the footsteps of her grandfather, *Life* Magazine photographer Larry Burrows, when, at the age of 16, she traveled to Vietnam to find and photograph the subject of one of her grandfather's 1968 photo essays. Her photographs were published in *Life*, *Time Asia*, and *Elle*. As for the future, Sarah plans to finish archiving and preserving the rest of Parks's life's work, after which she will remain as a consultant to the foundation.



**NORM CONARD** is the director of the new Lowell Milken Center in Fort Scott, after teaching in the Uniontown School District for over 30 years. A third generation educator, Mr. Conard encouraged his students to develop projects of tolerance and diversity. One of his great sources of pride is having seen over 50 of his students achieve national recognition in the National History Day Competition. Selected 1992 Kansas Teacher of the Year by the Kansas State Board of Education, Mr. Conard was also named National Social Studies Teacher of the Year in 1994, Milken National Educator in 1992, USA Today All-American Teacher First Team in 2001, National Board Certification in 2002, and received the NEA National Civil Rights Award in 2004 and the Governor's Award for Education in Kansas during 2004.

**REV. SAM MANN** has been Pastor Administrator of St. Mark Union Church and Executive Director of United Inner City Services in Kansas City for 33 years. He is a native of Eufaula, Alabama: a graduate of Birmingham Southern College, BA; Duke Divinity School, M. Div., and St. Paul School of Theology, D. Min. He has been a long-time civil rights activist, having marched in numerous demonstrations. Dr. Mann has also been jailed on several occasions for his activity. He served as a key participant along with his friend Dr. Mac Charles Jones, in the national effort to respond to the burning of black churches in America. He has been the recipient of many awards, including the NAACP, Harold Holiday Award, John M. Swomley Human Rights Award and many, many more. He is co-founder of the project "Reframing the Dialogue on Race in America".



**DAVID PARKS** is a filmmaker, director, and writer who lives in Austin, TX. David served in the Army in Vietnam from 1965-67 and wrote a book about the experience titled *GI Diary*. He has written articles for *LOOK* magazine, *Tuesday* magazine, and for *Time/Life* books. He has handled public relations and promotions for the tours of Dizzy Gillespie and Stevie Wonder. He has worked on several films as assistant director and as special photographer including *Superfly*, *Shaft*, and *The Great White Hope*. He has filmed commercials and documentaries for the state of Texas, Toyota, the University of Texas at Austin LBJ School of Public Affairs, and many others. Parks also lectures at several universities.

**TONI PARKS PARSONS** was born in Minneapolis, MN and grew up in White Plains, NY. Parsons is an accomplished photographer and has also worked in television and film. She has exhibited her photography solo and in group shows in galleries at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Columbia University, College of New Rochelle, and at the United Nations. She has had several solo exhibits in galleries in England, including the Atelier Gallery at the University of Exeter in Devon. She has done photography work for magazines such as *American Photo* and *Life* and her work has been featured in several books including *The Dance Theater of Harlem 20th Anniversary*. She has one son, Alain, and lives in Devon, England.



**ARNOLD SCHOFIELD**, Site Administrator of Mine Creek Battlefield in Kansas, is a retired Senior Research Historian at the Fort Scott National Historic Site, where he was employed for twenty years. In addition to his history duties, Schofield also served as a Cultural Resource Specialist and an advanced interpreter with the National Park Service. During his tenure at Fort Scott, he became an expert on the 1st U. S. Dragoons which played an active role in the military presence on the Santa Fe Trail.

**LEMUEL SHEPPARD** is a folk musician with rare abilities. Lemuel carries an appreciation for a wide range of vocal music he refers to as African-American traditional song. Lemuel began playing guitar at the age of nine in Kansas City's rich jazz and blues atmosphere. The self-taught guitarist developed many natural abilities to perform this music. Lemuel is not only an interpreter of African-American folk music, but composes much of his own repertoire. In 1999, Lemuel Shppard was nominated by a congressional committee to represent the state of Kansas in a solo performance at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. He currently serves as a board member on the Kansas Arts Commission.

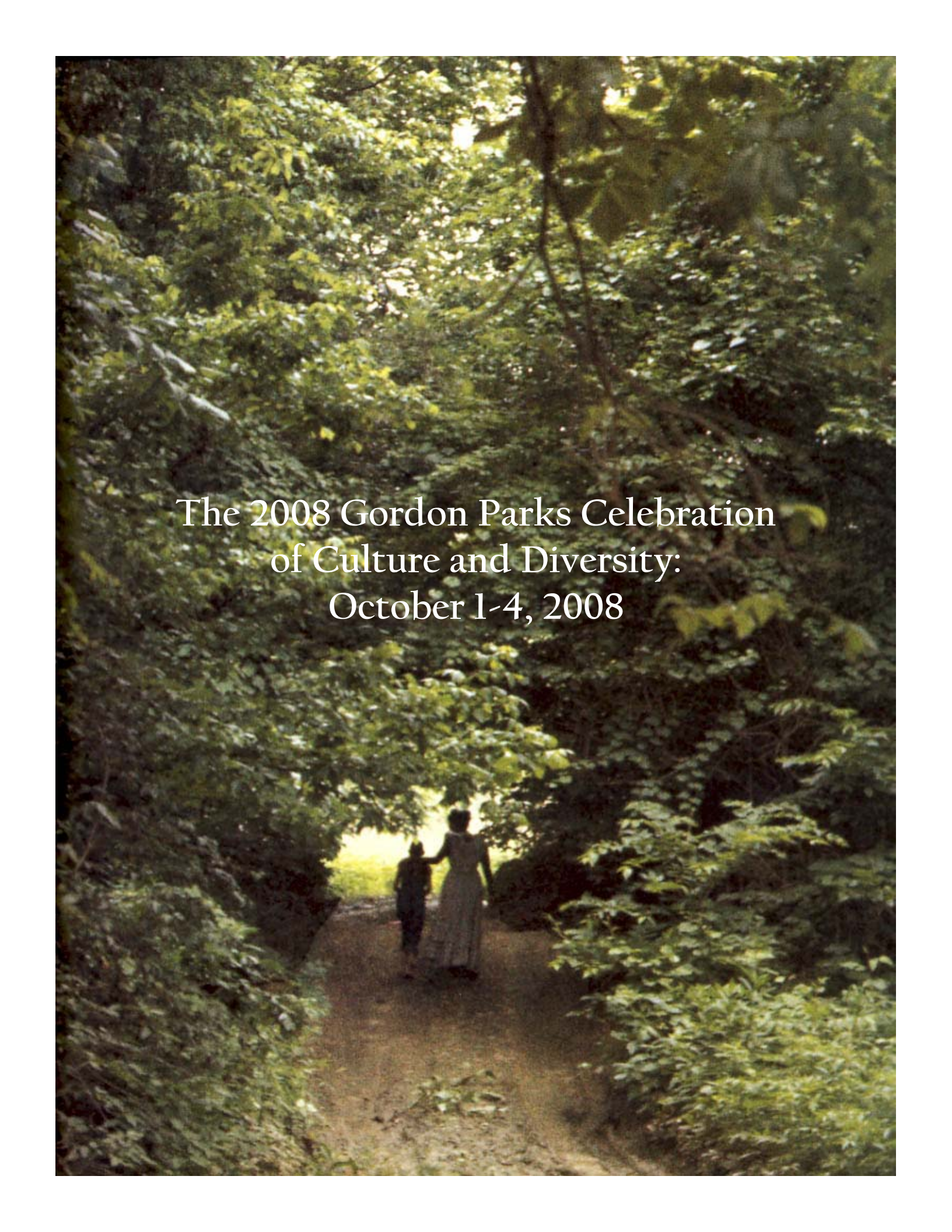


**DANETTE VINCENT'S** hometown is New Orleans, Louisiana and her first love is photography. She spent her formative years creating images of the vivid New Orleans Area. After receiving a degree in Communications from Loyola University in New Orleans, Danette worked in the corporate business world while creating photography in her off time. Her photography has been seen throughout the South, in exhibitions such as Exposition in Black II, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, LA; A.R.T. Station Inc., Stone Mountain, GA, and The Eleventh Atlanta Life African American Exhibit. Since, August 29, 2005 and her Hurricane Katrina forced evacuation, Danette's primary focus has returned to photography and its powerful coping and healing effects on the youth impacted by the hurricane. She and twenty kids across five states formed a group giving its first exhibit; "After the Storm", to commemorate the 2006 anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The exhibit found community support and recognition, which included the Governor of Louisiana and Arkansas and President Clinton. Their second exhibit, "Catch the Spirit" was held in 2007, as part of the Arkansas Heritage Month Celebration. Now living in Little Rock, AR, Danette heads a non-profit organization called Youth Stop Inc., helping at-risk youth transplanted from New Orleans to the Little Rock Area.

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## Photos from the 2006 Gordon Parks Celebration





The 2008 Gordon Parks Celebration  
of Culture and Diversity:  
October 1-4, 2008