



**BLACK HOLLYWOOD EDUCATION AND
RESOURCE CENTER**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Preston L. Holmes, Producer/Director, Lillian Benson, Film Editor, Vanessa Williams, actress
and Darryl McCane, Filmmaker/Youth Film Instructor Honored at the
“A Great Day In Black Hollywood” Opening Gala**

23rd Annual African-American Film Marketplace and S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase -- One of the best short film festivals in Los Angeles -- opens Jan 13 through 15, 2017 celebrating the work of 66 diverse filmmakers.

(Hollywood, CA) - The Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center (BHERC) opens its 23rd Annual African American Film Marketplace (AAFMM) and S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase opens **with a Gala Celebration “A Great Day in Black Hollywood,” Friday, January 13, at the** Harmony Gold Preview House, 7655 W. Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90046. This popular event honors outstanding professionals in film and will premiere over 66 short films during the 2017 S.E. Manly Film Showcase.

The 2017 class of honorees are: Preston L. Holmes, Producer/Director, The Ivan Dixon Award of Achievement; Lillian Benson, Film Editor, Lifetime Achievement Award; Darryl McCane, Filmmaker and Youth Film Instructor, the President’s Award and Vanessa Williams, veteran actress, Community Service Award.

BHERC is pleased to award **Lillian Benson** with the BHERC Lifetime Achievement Award for her groundbreaking film work, longevity and continued contributions to the film industry.

Lillian Benson (Editor) is a native of New York. Her body of work as a television, video and feature film editor spans almost thirty years. Ms. Benson is the first African-American female editor selected to be a member of the American Cinema Editors (ACE), the internationally recognized honorary society of film editors, where she serves as a member of the board of directors. She is also a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the International Documentary Association. Ms. Benson was Nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Individual Achievement in a Craft: Editing - Informational/News for her work on ***Eyes on the Prize***. She is known for her work on ***Life Is Not a Fairytale: The Fantasia Barrino Story***, ***The Revolutionary War*** and ***The Old Settler***. Benson has contributed to films that have garnered five Emmy nominations, four Peabody Awards, and numerous other honors. Recent editorial work includes the documentary ***Get In The Way- The Journey of John Lewis*** and the narrative short ***Progress*** part of the HBO Access series. In 2004, Benson made her directorial debut with ***All Our Sons-Fallen Heroes of 9/11***, a halfhour documentary about the firefighters of color who died at the World Trade Center, broadcast nationally on PBS and recently completed ***AMEN- The Life and Music of Jester Hairston*** an educational film about the internationally-known choral arranger.

The second BHERC awardee is **Preston L. Holmes**. Mr. Holmes is being presented with the Ivan Dixon Award of Achievement for his outstanding film work and production of feature films that addresses the human condition and documentaries brought to the major screen.

Preston L. Holmes, is an industry veteran with 30 years’ experience as a producer, production manager and assistant director on feature films, television movies and documentaries. Mr. Holmes joined Spike Lee’s production team and worked on ***Do the Right Thing***, ***Mo Better Blues***, ***Jungle Fever*** and ***Malcolm X***. He later went on to Produce or Co-Produce films including ***Juice*** with Ernest Dickerson; ***New Jack City***, ***Posse*** and ***Panther*** with Mario Van Peebles. In 1994, Mr. Holmes became President of Def Pictures for Russell Simmons and Stan Lathan where he developed and served as Executive Producer for the films ***Gridlock’d*** and ***Def Jam’s***

How to Be a Player. He produced the award-winning television movie **BOYCOTT** for HBO Films, the Academy Award nominated documentary **Tupac Resurrection** for MTV Films and Amaru Entertainment, as well as, **Sucker Free City**, and **She Hate Me**. He was the Associate Producer of *Hustle and Flow* and served as Executive Producer on *Something New*, *Illegal Tender* and *Waist Deep*. Mr. Holmes was also Executive Producer/Line Producer on the Lionsgate film, **Peeples** and Line Producer on the ESPN documentary, 30 for 30, *One Night in Las Vegas*, about the friendship of Tupac and Mike Tyson, which was written and directed by Reggie Rock-Bythewood. His most recent credits include: Executive Producer – **The Best Man Holiday** written and directed by Malcom Lee for Universal Pictures. Producer – **With This Ring** written and directed by Nzingha Stewart for Lifetime Networks. Mr. Holmes is also a Producer on recent film **The Birth of a Nation**, written and directed by Nate Parker, is an Executive Producer on **Almost Christmas** written and directed by David Talbert, and **Girl Trip** directed by Malcolm Lee for Universal Pictures.

This year's President's Award is being presented to **Darryl McCane**, in recognition of his tremendous work and efforts to teach the next generation of storytellers the craft of filmmaking.

Darryl McCane has been a teacher for 29 years, teaching at Washington prep, for 13 years. Mr. McCain has worked with entertainment business partners, the Black Hollywood and Education and Resource Center as well as the British Academy of film and television arts, to help build his program to allow urban students to have professional mentors as they grow academically. Many of Mr. McCane's students are in foster care, have been incarcerated and are living in single-family homes. Since starting at Washington prep, he has raised over \$1 million in scholarships and paid internships. More notable, he has increased the graduation rate for students who have studied in his class and was awarded by the LAUSD Career Technical Education department for having the highest retention rate in the District for two consecutive years. In a time where there is increased violence all over the country, Mr. McCane, has not escaped from this phenomenon. In the past, dozens of his students have been victims of violent crimes, murdered, and many of them are now affected by gang violence. Last year, Vance Byrd, a four year student of his and a two-year participant in the BHERC African American Short Film Festival, was murdered a month before the showcase. To help began the healing process among the student; BHERC treated a class of almost 100 students with a limo ride to the opening night celebration, and dedicated the 2016 Festival to Vance and his family.

The final honoree is **Vanessa Williams** for the Community Service award for her excellence in the arts, support of the community and humanitarian services.

Vanessa Williams, a native of Brooklyn, New York, made her feature film debut in the urban classic film **New Jack City**. Williams continued with films including **Raising Izzie** (NAACP Image Award nomination), **Imagine That**, **Like Mike**, **Punks**, and **Mother** (opposite Lisa Kudrow). Williams earned an **Emmy Nomination** for the Showtime original movie, **Our America**. She garnered the 2003 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series for the hit Showtime series **Soul Food**. With numerous other Television credits **Ward of the State**, **Lincoln Heights**, **Everybody Hates Chris**, **Cold Case**, **Soul Food** TV series (5 seasons), **Our America**, **Chicago Hope**, **Murder One** and **Law & Order** these are just a few of them. Ms. Williams debuted on Broadway in Lincoln Center Theatre's production of **Sarafina** but has many other to add to her credits including the critically acclaimed production of Lynn Nottage's **Intimate Apparel**. As a writer and director, William's provocative short film **DENSE** took top honors at Martha Vineyard and Pan African Black Film festivals. An excerpt from her book **SHINE**, published in the June 2004 Essence Magazine became the basis for her solo show **FEET ON THE CEILING!** a coming of age story. Williams currently has two television movies in post-production for 2016: **The Secret She Kept** and **Ward of the State** and filming currently the new drama **Famous in Love** for Free Form Television (formerly ABC TV) 2017. Williams joined the cast of NBC's longest running primetime show **Days Of Our Lives** as Dr. Valerie Grant. Serving as Vice Chair on the Executive Board of Directors of The Black Aids Institute, Williams is also Chair of BAI's Hollywood Task Force on Aids. Recruiting and directing her colleagues in a series of Celebrity PSAs on HIV Awareness / AIDS Prevention. Williams is

committed to empowering women and girls and serves as honorary board member of A CALL TO MEN, a national violence prevention organization committed to creating a world where all men and boys are loving and respectful and all females are valued and safe. BHERC is honored to present the Community Service Award to Vanessa Williams for commitment and dedication to the artistic community and her humanitarian involvement at large.

As one of the first Film Festivals to screen diverse short films more than two decades ago, the S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase continues to provide an opportunity for the artistry of emerging African American and diverse Filmmakers by hosting this annual festival. Over 60 Films are screened blocks with a moderated Q & A with directors, cast and crew at the end of each block and provides the audience insight and a chance to engage in the dialogue.

The Festival takes place of the Dr. King, Jr. holiday Friday, January 13 through Sunday, January 15, 2017. Films are screened Saturday and Sunday Noon until 8pm. The BHERC Youth Diversity Short Film Festival, featuring young aspiring filmmakers of tomorrow from local arts organizations and High Schools in the Los Angeles Community as well as communities across the country takes place Saturday morning, 9am to Noon beginning with breakfast. This portion of the Festival is **Free** to the Public. Closing the Festivities on Sunday night includes the classic **Soul Food & Film Reception at 9:00 p.m.**

Founded in 1996 by Sandra Evers-Manly, BHERC is a nonprofit, public benefit organization designed to advocate, educate, research, develop, and preserve the history and future of Blacks in film and television. Celebrate the artistry by supporting our filmmakers, with diverse topics, stories, techniques and broad themes multi-layered with humor, drama and reality.

The costs include: **Opening Night Festivities \$55; a Block of Films is only \$15** for students with ID and **\$20 for the general public; All Day Pass \$50; Closing Night Reception \$25** (Soul Food & Film); and **Weekend Pass** (includes Opening Night, All Day Pass for films, Closing Night Reception, T-Shirt and BHERC Commemorative Bag) \$150.

To purchase tickets and for complete schedule, please visit www.BHERC.org or call (310) 284-3170 John@firstweekendclub.org & Media Contact: Publicity4you 818-749-9695 @ Publicity4you@yahoo.com.

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About the 23rd Annual African-American Film Marketplace and S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase

One of the first Film Festivals to screen short films, each day, the S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase features the artistry of emerging African American Filmmakers by screening blocks of the 66 plus short films selected from 1000 entries from across the world. A moderated Q&A with directors, cast and crew immediately following the last film in the block provides the viewers insight and a chance to engage in the dialogue. A special feature of the festival is the opportunity to view films from our youth -- the filmmakers of tomorrow -- with a FREE two-hour designated block Saturday morning. One of the best opportunities in Los Angeles to view outstanding films from many voices about the diverse and poignant topics today.

The Films - January 14 & 15, 2017 from 12:00 noon until 8:00 p.m. the S.E. Manly Short Film Showcase screens blocks of short films that include a Q&A with directors, cast and crew immediately following. The films run the gamut and include topics on **Social Justice**, *look deeper into social justice issues that will inspire, challenge and entertain*; **Uncommon Women**, *compelling women-centered narratives, with female protagonists designed to appeal to a female and male audience*; **Loving**, *diverse films about the many types and issues of love and relationships of all kind*; **Documentary**, a **"slice of life"** set to real-life storytelling based on the real

world, real people; Comedy, light hearted and written to amuse and heal the soul through laughter and Drama, intrigue, suspense and complicated characters presented in varied stories that portray realistic characters in conflict. **66+ Short Films will be screened at Raleigh Studios, 5300 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038.**

Films With A Purpose – Saturday, January 14, 2017 at 8:00 pm at Harmony Gold Theatre, 7655 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90046. FWAP will Premiere two of its independent films **CHILD SUPPORT** by Alcee Walker and Sir Terrell Wormley's **WILD ROOTS** and will also have a special screening of its film Satie Gossett's **FORGIVENESS**. Actor, William Allen Young will host this special screening starting at 8:00 p.m. with a Reception and Q&A with the cast and crew. Tickets are \$25.

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