



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL HONORS TO RECOGNIZE
ACHIEVEMENTS OF HOLLYWOOD TRAILBLAZERS
LOUIS GOSSETT, JR., LENA WAITHE**

*Louis Gossett, Jr. to Receive Hollywood Legacy Award,
Lena Waithe to Receive Industry Renaissance Award*

LOS ANGELES, CA, January 7, 2020 – The **American Black Film Festival (ABFF) Honors** announced today the recipients of two of their most prominent awards - **Hollywood Legacy Award** and **Industry Renaissance Award** - which each honor outstanding accomplishments in film and television. Academy Award® winner **Louis Gossett, Jr.** (“Watchmen,” “An Officer and a Gentleman”) will be honored with the **Hollywood Legacy Award** for his contributions to the entertainment industry. The Hollywood Legacy Award honors a legendary artist whose trailblazing work has inspired generations and made an enduring contribution to film and television. Additionally, Emmy® Award winning producer, writer, and actress, **Lena Waithe** (“The Chi,” “Boomerang,” “Queen & Slim”) will receive the prestigious **Industry Renaissance Award**, which recognizes content creators whose exemplary work in film and television contributes to changing perceptions of people of color in the entertainment industry.

“We’re honored to celebrate these two extraordinary talents,” said ABFF Ventures CEO, Jeff Friday. “These awards not only recognize how Mr. Gossett’s contributions have propelled the industry forward but also acknowledge a new generation of trailblazers in people like Ms. Waithe, who will continue to create change and new opportunities in film and television for people of color.”

Louis Gossett Jr. has been disrupting Hollywood for over 40 years making his film debut alongside Sidney Poitier in the 1961 classic “A Raisin in the Sun.” Gossett Jr. was the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his unforgettable performance as drill Sergeant Emil Foley in “An Officer and a Gentleman.” Additionally, he has been nominated for seven Primetime Emmy Awards, three Golden Globe® Awards, five NAACP Images Awards, two Daytime Emmy Awards and in 1992 he received a star on the Hollywood

Walk of Fame. Other notable film and television credits include “The Deep,” “Blue Chips,” “Daddy’s Little Girls,” Tyler Perry’s “Why Did I Get Married Too?,” “Firewalker,” “Jaws-3D,” “Enemy Mine,” “Iron Eagle,” “Extant,” “Madam Secretary,” “Boardwalk Empire,” “Family Guy,” and “ER,” among others. Gossett Jr. is the founder of The Eracism Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating racism.

A triple-threat in the entertainment industry, Lena Waithe expertly taps into emerging cultural sensibilities with a sharp wit, speaking to a myriad of experiences from her unique perspective and challenging audiences to think outside of conventional norms. She has become a champion for underserved voices in the industry, creating writing and development opportunities for people of color as well as promoting diversity and representation on the screen. Currently, she serves as a writer and executive producer of BET’s “Boomerang” revival, alongside Halle Berry and has received critical acclaim for Showtime’s “The Chi,” which will debut its third season this year. Waithe has proven herself a talent to be reckoned with, continuing to grow her body of work which includes, an overall deal to create and produce original series for Amazon Prime Video; Showtime’s “How To Make Love to a Black Woman,” which she will executive produce; the groundbreaking film, “The 40-Year-Old Version,” which is premiering at Sundance 2020; the horror anthology series “Them” for Amazon; and Sundance darling “Dear White People,” among others. Waithe first made headlines in front of the camera as Denise, in the critically acclaimed Netflix series “Master of None.” In a role that was originally intended for a straight, Caucasian female, Waithe has made Denise’s experience as a queer black woman uniquely her own. Waithe’s feature screenwriting debut, “Queen & Slim,” is also nominated for ABFF Honors “Movie of the Year” Award.

ABFF Honors recently announced their nominees for “Movie of the Year,” a competitive award presented to the best feature length film of the year directed by and/or starring a lead actor or actress of African descent. Voting is now open to the public at www.ABFFHonors.com/vote. And for the second year, American Airlines will sponsor the ABFF Honors “VIP Fan Experience,” which is an opportunity for one consumer to attend this exclusive event and celebrate Black excellence among the most influential artists, executives, and stakeholders in the entertainment industry. One fan will be randomly selected by the ABFF organization from the pool of individuals who vote for the “Movie of the Year”, and receive two (2) tickets for the ceremony, two (2) round trip domestic economy-class tickets on American Airlines, hotel accommodations and a chance to walk the “red carpet” on the night of the ceremony. The announcement will be made on or about January 20, 2020.

Presented by **ABFF Ventures**, the 2020 ABFF Honors, hosted by Emmy-nominated comedian and actor Deon Cole (*Black-ish*), will take place February 23 in Los Angeles. Previously announced honorees include Cynthia Erivo with the Rising Star Award and “The Wire” with the Classic Television Award. Sponsors to date include American Airlines, Cadillac and Hilton (Red Carpet), and Accenture, Prudential Financial and Sony Pictures Entertainment (Supporting).

ABOUT ABFF HONORS:

ABFF Honors is an annual awards season gala dedicated to saluting excellence in the motion picture and television industry. The ceremony celebrates Black culture by recognizing artists who have made distinguished contributions to American entertainment through their work, as well as those who champion diversity and inclusion. Individual recognition awards include Hollywood Legacy, Excellence in the Arts, Rising Star, Industry Renaissance and Pro Hollywood. Recognition of outstanding content awards include Movie of the Year and Classic Television Award. Previous honorees and presenters include Denzel Washington, Don Cheadle, Robert Downey, Jr. Regina King, Will Packer, Ryan Coogler, Ava DuVernay, Tiffany Haddish, Issa Rae, Viola Davis, Cicely Tyson, Octavia Spencer, Armie Hammer, the late Diahann Carroll and more. To learn more about ABFF Honors and to stay up-to-date on upcoming announcements for the 2020 ceremony, visit www.ABFFHonors.com

ABOUT ABFF VENTURES:

ABFF Ventures LLC (ABFFV) is a Los Angeles-based entertainment company founded by its CEO Jeff Friday as a platform to produce live events, television and film focused on African American culture. Its mission is to entertain and inspire communities of color while promoting diversity and inclusion in Hollywood. Its tent-pole properties are the American Black Film Festival (ABFF), cited by MovieMaker magazine as “One of the Coolest Festivals in the World,” and “ABFF Honors,” an annual awards ceremony saluting career achievement in film and television.

In creating ABFF Ventures, Friday channeled his passion for entertainment, as well as his discomfort with the under representation of people of color in Hollywood, into an organization with the ultimate goal of advocating for diversity within the industry. Through his vision and perseverance, ABFFV has become a highly respected enterprise, generating goodwill throughout the entertainment and corporate communities.

ABFF’s momentum continues to build. In 2019, the company expanded its international footprint with the highly successful launch of the *ABFF London* as part of its Global Film Series. In addition, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C., acquired ABFF photographs and other archival materials to be included in its permanent collection.

At the heart of the ABFF organization is its commitment to community – unifying artists in appreciation of one another’s work, to encourage, uplift and come together. With the support of the world’s leading entertainment, media and consumer product companies, the ABFF continues to lead the way promoting diversity and inclusion in the motion picture and television industries.

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