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NEWS

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**DIRECTOR GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD
AND ACTRESS GUGU MBATHA-RAW TO BE HONOURED AT
18TH ANNUAL BLACK PERSPECTIVES TRIBUTE AND GALA**

**Prince-Bythewood to Receive The Chicago International Film Festival's Artistic
Achievement Award and Mbatha-Raw the Emerging Talent Award**

CHICAGO, IL (October 6, 2014) – The 50th Chicago International Film Festival will honor **director Gina Prince-Bythewood** and **actress Gugu Mbatha-Raw** at the **18th Annual Black Perspectives Tribute and Gala, Friday, October 10**. The red carpet event starts at 6.30 p.m. at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St.), followed by a special presentation of Prince-Bythewood's latest film **"Beyond the Lights."** Mbatha-Raw and Prince-Bythewood are scheduled to appear on the red carpet and at the Gala.

"Both honorees are great inspirations for women in the film industry and are making tremendous contributions to American cinema," said **Founder and Artistic Director of the Chicago International Film Festival, Michael Kutza**. "It is a great pleasure to be honoring these two extraordinary artists in celebration and showcasing their work in 'Beyond the Lights' at this year's Festival."

In addition to showcasing and celebrating the depth and diversity of black cultures and filmmakers from around the world, the Black Perspectives program pays tribute to emerging and established film artists. **Gina Prince-Bythewood, recipient of this year's Artistic Achievement Award**, boldly forged her own career path, breaking out in 2000 with her widely lauded film, "Love & Basketball," which won an Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay. She followed that success with HBO's "Disappearing Acts." Prince-Bythewood's adaptation and directing skills shone through again in "The Secret Life of Bees." As her latest film, "Beyond the Lights" reveals, she continues to grow and shine as a formidable talent.

British-South African actress **Gugu Mbatha-Raw** will receive this year's **Emerging Talent Award** in celebration of her tremendous talents and contributions to the art of acting. Mbatha-Raw first received acclaim on the English stage and has since received plaudits for a series of outstanding screen performances, on British television ("Doctor Who," "Fallout"), for her

Hollywood debut “Larry Crowne” (2011), and most impressively, her starring, breakthrough role in the independent film “Belle” (2013).

In **“Beyond the Lights,”** Prince-Bythewood spins an inspirational story about a young woman learning to find her own voice. Noni (Mbatha-Raw), the music world’s latest superstar, is feeling the pressures of fame, until she meets Kaz Nicol (Nate Parker), a young cop and aspiring politician, who’s been assigned to her detail. Drawn to each other, Noni and Kaz fall fast and hard, despite the objections of those around them.

“Beyond The Lights” opens in theaters nationwide on November 14th.

Black Perspectives Program

The films in this year’s Black Perspective program represent a variety of styles and genres from around the world. In the New Directors competition, Jeffrey Wray’s **“The Evolution of Bert”** employs a free essayistic style to create a witty and poignant meditation on the cultural factors that shape African-American identity. Darius Clark Monroe’s **“Evolution of a Criminal,”** exploring the causes and repercussions of the bank robbery he committed at age 16, is part of this year’s **Docufest** program and **Education Outreach** programs. As part of the Education Outreach program, **Monroe will be in attendance** at the Festival to engage in discussion with students after screenings of the film. **Spike Lee**, cofounder of the **Black Perspectives program**, is one of the producers of the film.

Two of the most-lauded films in the program, **“Dear White People”** and **“CRU,”** are also part of this year’s **World Cinema** program and **both were produced by Chicago natives.** “Dear White People,” directed by Justin Simien, won this year’s Sundance Film Festival Breakthrough Talent Award, and **co-producer Columbia College Chicago graduate Lena Waithe was named one of the “75 Most Powerful Black Women in Hollywood”** by *Essence Magazine* (February, 2014) alongside honorees Prince-Bythewood and Mbatha-Raw. **“CRU,”** directed by Alton Glass, won five awards at this year’s American Black Film Festival, including Best Film. The film’s producer, **Chicagoan Danny Green**, is returning to the festival for his third year of powerful films in the Black Perspectives program. **Both Glass and Green will be in attendance.**

The Chicago International Film Festival Black Perspectives program was founded in 1997 in collaboration with legendary filmmaker Spike Lee, to showcase the talent of black filmmakers and present films that break barriers and shatter stereotypes. The Festival has consistently honored actors and directors of the highest caliber, such as Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Lee Daniels, Spike Lee, Forest Whitaker, Viola Davis, Morgan Freeman, and Halle Berry. Over the past 17 years, the program has featured films by luminaries such as Maya Angelou and Laurence Fishburne, as well as the most recent works of masters Djibril Diop Mambéty and Ousmane Sembene and brilliant British filmmaker Steve McQueen. Select screenings and panel discussions program create a unique learning environment in which participants can gain valuable insights into the issues, challenges, and triumphs of black film artists.

The Black Perspectives Program Partners are AARP and Allstate.

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival runs October 9-23, 2014.

Black Perspectives Films

"Afronauts" USA (Director: Frances Bodomo)--July 1969: It's the night of the moon landing and a group of Zambian exiles are trying to beat America to the moon. "Afronauts" plays in the Shorts 7 Program: Waking Dreams. 13 min.

"August Winds" (Ventos De Agosto) Brazil (Director: Gabriel Mascaro)—Shirley and Jeison are young lovers in an isolated seaside community. After severe thunderstorms, a meteorologist arrives to record the sound of the wind. When his corpse washes up a few days later, Jeison becomes obsessed with giving the body a proper burial. Recalling the work of filmmakers as strikingly different as Vittorio De Sica, Alain Resnais and Terrence Malick, Gabriel Mascaro's narrative debut beautifully captures the essence of a particular place out of time. *Portuguese with subtitles.* 77 min. Chicago Premiere

"CRU" USA (Director: Alton Glass)—Winner of five awards at this year's American Black Film Festival, including Best Film, CRU follows a group of four formerly tight-knit high school athletes meeting up 15 years after graduation. The reunion opens up old wounds and long hidden secrets, including the lingering effects of a car crash they experienced on the way back from winning a state championship. CRU is a nuanced portrait of friendship, forgiveness and redemption. 85 min. Chicago Premiere

"Dear White People" USA (Director: Justin Simien)—"Dear White People" follows the stories of four black students at Winchester University, where a riot breaks out over a popular 'African American' themed party thrown by a white fraternity. With tongue planted firmly in cheek, the film explores racial identity in 'post-racial' America while weaving a universal story of forging one's unique path in the world. Winner of the Sundance Film Festival's Breakthrough Talent Award. 108 min. Chicago Premiere

"Evolution of a Criminal" USA (Director: Darius Clark Monroe)—When he was 16, Darius Clark Monroe and two friends robbed a Texas bank. Seventeen years later, and seven years in the making, Evolution of a Criminal Through vivid reenactments of the heist, home videos, and interviews with friends, family, and witnesses, Monroe weaves an uncommonly perceptive piece of autobiographical cinema. 83 min. Chicago Premiere

"The Evolution of Bert" USA (Director: Jeffrey Wray)—Bert, an African-American first-generation college student, struggles to define himself. Diving headfirst into a world of campus poetry readings, jazzy beats, and unavailable women, Bert tries to avoid the stereotyped social roles that so often pigeonhole black men. Employing a free essayistic style, bold new director Jeffrey Wray offers a witty and poignant meditation on the cultural factors that shape African-American identity. 77 min. World Premiere

"Full-Windsor" USA (Director: Faraday Okoro)--A 10-year-old boy battles his mother in order to wear his father's tie to school. "Full-Windsor" plays in the Shorts 5 Program: Thicker Than Water. 6 min.

"Jaspa' Jenkins" USA (Director: Robert Carnilius)—In this provocative short film, Jasper Jenkins wants to be an All-American, civilized member of society. The only problem is that he's Black. This experimental piece critiques racist messages in the media. "Jaspa' Jenkins" plays in the Shorts 1 Program: City & State - Locally Sourced. 4 min. Chicago Premiere

"Parietal Guidance" USA (Director: Lonnie Edwards)—Narrated through sparse dialogue and sound-bites, we follow 10-year-old Alinah for the duration of a day. *Parietal Guidance* allows the

viewer a sensory opportunity to capture and process information through the mind of a child as she encounters the realities of the adult world. "Parietal Guidance" plays in the Shorts 1 Program: City & State - Locally Sourced. 13 min. Winner of the Illinois Film Office 2014 Shortcuts Competition.

"Timbuktu" Mauritania, France (Director: Abderrahmane Sissako)—A beautifully crafted and devastating account of the takeover of Northern Mali by Islamic militants two years ago, Timbuktu tells a deeply humanist tale about a diverse group of citizens' struggles in the face of adversity and intolerance. Like his previous cinematic gem Bamako, veteran filmmaker Sissako focuses on the inner fortitude of his characters, particularly the steadfast women, who, despite abuse and oppression, still sing in defiance. *Arabic, Bambara, French, English, Songhay, Tamasheq with subtitles.* 97 min. Chicago Premiere

Festival Passes, Ticketing and Theater Information

Black Perspectives Gala Ticket Information

Tickets for the Black Perspectives Gala can be purchased online at the Festival Store: www.chicagofilmfestival.com, by calling the Festival Hotline (312-332-3456), or in-person at the Festival Office (30 E. Adams, Suite 800). Tickets for the Gala and Film are \$50. Film-only tickets are \$16 for Cinema/Chicago members and \$20 for non-members per ticket.

Festival Passes and Tickets are on sale now. Pass options include:

Moviegoer (10 regular admissions): \$100 for Cinema/Chicago members, \$130 for non-members
Passport (20 regular admissions): \$190 for Cinema/Chicago members, \$240 for non-members

Individual ticket prices:

Regular films: \$11/members, students*, and seniors*; \$14/non-members (*with valid ID)
Weekday matinees (films only): \$7 tickets, Monday-Friday through 5:00pm
10 after 10: \$10 tickets, every day after 10:00pm
Special Presentations: \$16/members, \$20/non-members

Tickets and passes can be purchased online at www.chicagofilmfestival.com, by calling 312-332-FILM (3456), or in person at the Festival Box Office at AMC River East 21 (until October 9: 7 days a week, noon – 8:00pm; October 10-23: tickets will be on sale one hour before the start of the first show until the start of the last show).

Festival screenings will be held at the AMC River East 21 Theater (322 E. Illinois St.).

For the full schedule and ticketing information, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com

FESTIVAL SPONSORS

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ABOUT CINEMA/CHICAGO

Cinema/Chicago is a not-for-profit arts and education organization dedicated to encouraging better understanding between cultures and to making a positive contribution to the art form of the moving image. The Chicago International Film Festival is one of the year-round programs presented by Cinema/Chicago, which also include the Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards, CineYouth Festival, INTERCOM Competition, International Screenings Program, and Education Outreach Program. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

The Festival and its parent organization, Cinema/Chicago, were founded in 1964 by filmmaker and graphic artist Michael Kutza to showcase great international film, which was conspicuously absent from the city's theaters, and to bring celebrated filmmakers from around the globe to Chicago. Over the past half century, as we have grown to become a world-renowned event and evolved to reflect the changing times, the Festival has remained dedicated to its founding vision: to discover new and rising talents in filmmaking and to bring the best in international cinema and the artists behind the work to Chicago audiences. This year's 50th anniversary Festival will feature a selection of "50th anniversary screenings," featuring the work of returning filmmakers presenting past Festival films and/or personal favorites and important repertory films as well as new films by emerging and celebrated filmmakers alike.

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