FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Nate Parker and The Birth of a Nation Team Announce New Fellowship for Young Filmmakers at Sundance Institute Benefit

Parker Unveils Grant in Vanguard Award Acceptance Speech

Event Precedes Sundance NEXT FEST at The Theatre at Ace Hotel Downtown LA

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Los Angeles, CA — Nate Parker and the cast, Producers, and Executive Producers of The Birth of a Nation are investing in the next generation of diverse independent creativity with the Sundance Institute | The Birth of a Nation Fellowship for 18-to-24-year-old filmmakers participating in the Institute’s Ignite program. Parker shared details at Sundance Institute’s NIGHT BEFORE NEXT benefit at The Theatre at Ace Hotel in downtown Los Angeles this evening, where he also received the Institute’s annual Vanguard Award presented to him by actor and Sundance alum Michael B. Jordan. Parker’s The Birth of a Nation was supported by the Institute’s renowned Feature Film
Program for three years before its premiere, and won both the Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

The Sundance Institute | The Birth of a Nation Fellowship will support a filmmaker of color each year for the next five years in the Sundance Ignite program, which was established in 2015 to provide year-round mentorship and industry experiences for talented young artists. The program aims to increase access to authentic, independent storytelling, developing a new audience base and providing a pipeline of support for emerging artists. The first Sundance Institute | The Birth of a Nation Fellow will be named in the Fall. Nate Parker and producer Jason Michael Berman were inspired by the program after meeting with the Ignite Fellows at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. There, they spoke about their film’s production process and gave each Ignite Fellow personal feedback and advice on pitching and developing film projects.

Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute, said “We’re deeply moved and grateful that Nate, Jason and the entire team behind The Birth of a Nation chose to commemorate their project by supporting the Institute. Their gift embodies the generosity of spirit and mentorship at the core of our initiatives. They know our programs intimately, and know exactly how this gift will enable our work in honing and amplifying the next generation of artistic talent.”

“The support I received from the Institute in developing The Birth of a Nation echoed the critical importance of mentoring independent storytellers,” said Parker. “I am honored to sow back into the Institute in alignment with their mission to support talented young artists with stories to tell.”

The Sundance Institute | The Birth of a Nation Fellowship was made possible by contributions from Nate Parker, Armie Hammer, Kevin Turen, Jason Michael Berman, Aaron L. Gilbert, Preston L. Holmes, Davis S. Goyer, Michael Novogratz, Michael Finley, Tony Parker, Jason Cloth, Andy Pollack, Allan J. Stitt, Jane Oster, Barb Lee and Alston Gardner, Carl H. Lindner III, Matthew Lindner, Derrick Brooks, Jill and Ryan Ahrens, Armin Tehrany, Brenda Gilbert, Mark Moran, Henry Jackman, Steven Rosenblum, Mark Boone Jr., Colman Domingo, Aunjanue Ellis, Dwight Henry, Aja Naomi King, Esther Scott, Roger Guenveur Smith, Gabrielle Union, Penelope Ann Miller and Jackie Earle Haley.

Berman, a producer on The Birth of a Nation, said, “As we brought The Birth of a Nation to life with Sundance Institute and to audiences at the Festival, Nate, Kevin, Aaron, Preston and I, along with our cast and team of Executive Producers were inspired to find a way to fortify our longstanding relationship and the project’s legacy. It’s our team’s hope that this Fellowship underlines the importance of giving back, and that we inspire other successful filmmakers to contribute to the cultivation of young artists.”

Set against the antebellum South, The Birth of a Nation follows Nat Turner (Nate Parker), a literate slave and preacher, whose financially strained owner, Samuel Turner (Armie Hammer), accepts an offer to use Nat’s preaching to subdue unruly slaves. As he witnesses countless atrocities – against himself and his fellow slaves – Nat orchestrates an uprising in the hopes of leading his people to freedom. The film opens in theatres October 7, 2016.

NIGHT BEFORE NEXT raised crucial funds to offset the non-profit Institute’s year-round programs for artists, including Labs, grants and the Sundance Film Festival. The evening included an outdoor party with a live musical performance by White Sea, the solo project of Morgan Kibby of M83. The outdoor party featured specialty drinks, desserts and interactive games under the stars on a summer night.
In attendance were Amy Redford, Armie Hammer, Bryce Dallas Howard, Charmaine Bailey, Clea Duvall, Elizabeth Chambers, Harley Quinn Smith, Jason Ritter, Jason Stuart, Jay Duplass, J.K. Simmons, Katie Aselton, Kevin Smith, K’Naan, Lake Bell, Lyn Lear, Mark Duplass, Melanie Lynskey, Noël Wells, Norman Lear, Pat Mitchell, RJ Cutler, Sean Bailey and Stephanie Allain.

The evening was supported by supported by two Host Committees. The dinner and cocktails Host Committee comprised: Charmaine Bailey & Sean Bailey; Ryan Coogler; Lyn Lear & Norman Lear; Ava DuVernay; Cindy Harrell Horn & Alan Horn; Pat Mitchell & Scott Seydel; Amy Redford; and Nadine Schiff-Rosen & Frederic D. Rosen. The outdoor party Host Committee comprised: Katie Aselton, Lake Bell, Damien Chazelle, Lena Dunham, Jay Duplass, Mark Duplass, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Marielle Heller, Bryce Dallas Howard, Rashida Jones, Franklin Leonard, Justin Lin, Melanie Lynskey and Kevin Smith.

NIGHT BEFORE NEXT was presented by Acura.

Sundance Institute
Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and new media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as Beasts of the Southern Wild, Fruitvale Station, Sin Nombre, The Invisible War, The Square, Dirty Wars, Spring Awakening, A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder and Fun Home. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

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