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IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

The official Juneteenth Observance Lakeland Committee presents its' Inaugural Juneteenth Arts and Film Festival Saturday, July 1, 2023, from 11:00 A.M until 7:00 P.M. MINGLE with filmmakers from 7- 8:00 P.M., at Polk State Lakeland Campus, The Technology Building auditorium (LTB 1100), 3425 Winter Lake Rd, Lakeland, FL 33803.

Lakeland - June 25, 2023: The Juneteenth Florida Arts and Film Festival; hereafter referred to as JFAFF. JFAFF offers an exciting platform for emerging filmmakers to premier four documentaries and introduce a distinguished festival. Each documentary/film makes a powerful statement in a condensed format.

JFAFF aims to support aspiring filmmakers in their career development by bringing fresh perspectives to the film industry. The JFAFF provides a platform for filmmakers to stretch their artistic creativity in Central Florida.

JFAFF is supported by the National Juneteenth Films Initiative and is proud to announce the four shortlisted filmmakers who will have the opportunity to showcase their talent at the prestigious JFAFF in Lakeland Florida with sponsors: Polk State College, MidFlorida, Morris & Leah West Foundation, The African American Chamber of Commerce Polk County Inc, and The Bailey Family.

Personally, it has been a rewarding experience and honor to showcase this level of vibrant, intuitive and exceptionalism. Each filmmaker/director shares an enriching experience and passion for the craft.

The Filmmakers film were selected for their unique stories in a 10 minutes to 90 minutes short film or feature documentary adhering to the theme of "Juneteenth Wave of Freedom ". The caliber of shortlisted applicants is a testament to their challenge to

resonate deeply with the current cultural climate to captivate audiences.

The JFAFF judges are Paula Edwards, Florida; Lee Jordan, Minnesota; Barry Martin, Atlanta; Tim Myrick, Michigan; and Ramona Roberts, Florida. The overall winners were announced as part of the FilmFreeWay system on 14 June 2023.

Featured documentary is **African American descendants living in Samana, Dominican Republic** - Runtime 20 Minutes

An important historical film because it discusses the freed blacks living in Philadelphia who fled to the Dominican Republic (what was then Haiti) and their descendants who live there today.

Directed by Stephanie Claytor, who is an author, travel blogger, and an experienced, award-winning bilingual multimedia reporter who is passionate about travel. Stephanie is the creator of the travel blog, www.blacktrekking.com, and the author of “Kyler Treks to Ghana,” and “Blacktrekking: My Journey Living in Latin America.” Stephanie spent the first 10 years of her career as a television reporter, covering the news in Iowa, Missouri, Louisiana, New Mexico and Florida.

The four shortlisted films are:

1. **“AFRIKAN BY WAY OF AMERICA” Runtime: 44:50**

- The Hiztorical Vision Productions (HVP) team, with the assistance of the Africatown community, tells the story of the legacy and future of the Africatown community in Mobile, Alabama. The film highlights many unsung heroes that played a pivotal role and contributed to this unique African settlement. This film has been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Director Theo M. Moore II founded Hiztorical Vision Productions (HVP) in Lee County, Alabama, in 2017. HVP is a 501 c(3) nonprofit organization that educates the public on the untold-but-inspiring history of African Americans in the South. Moore is originally from Anniston, Alabama, but attended Troy University in Troy, Alabama, during his collegiate career. At Troy University, Moore earned a B.S. in History and an M.S. in Post-Secondary Education-History. Currently, Moore is a Collections Manager at Tuskegee University's Legacy Museum and a first-year Ed.D. student. **JFAFF's Best in Theme**

2. **“ALEMANJI ” Runtime 01:41:00** - Alemanji (2023) is the new comedy movie starring Stamaur Mitchell, Dulo Harris and Chinna Palmer. Facing severe consequences of being sent back home to his country, Alemanji Fouka (Stamaur Mitchell) has to decide whether partying with his friends and possibly landing the girl of his dream is worth disobeying his strict parents (Dulo Harris & Nnenna Ngwu).

Directed by Chuckwunonso Dureke. Note: Movie Premiere 50 minutes.

JFAFF's Best Full Feature

3. **“THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST AFRICAN IN ENGLISH AMERICA”**

Runtime 55:24. In 2019, Americans commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of the first documented Africans in English America, who arrived in Virginia from Angola in August 1619. This momentous arrival, an event that inspired new scholarship on the meaning of our nation’s origins and founding principles, as well as fierce controversy over the legacy of slavery. Based on the book *The Arrival of the First Africans in Virginia* (2020). Most of all, the story of these thirty-two Africans, finally returning to them something that history and all its controversies had stolen: their voices.

Director Ric Murphy is an acclaimed historian, educator, lecturer and has received multiple awards for his documentary *Arrival of the First Africans in English America* (Verity Media, 2023), based on his award-winning book *Arrival of the First Africans in Virginia* (History Press, 2020). **JFAFF's Best of Festival, & Best Feature Documentary**

4. **“DESTINY MADE ” Runtime 14:22** - After several stints in jail, Ashenka's re-entry into her children's life was hard after never confronting a loss as *Destiny Made* looks at how her time in jail affected her older children's path. **JFAFF's Best Short Film, & Best Short Documentary.**

Director Joenique Rose - Originally from Central Florida, Joenique C. Rose moved to Los Angeles, CA in 2008 to attend USC where she earned a Master of Education in Post-Secondary Administration and Student Affairs in 2010. She is a recent alum of Film Independent’s Project Involve Fellowship where she produced the short, *EMERGENCY*, Rose is a filmmaker based in LA and the Manager of Inclusion and Diversity at a local film school.

“Cine Poetry” Runtime 10: 46 - A piece that bridges together two artistic worlds of Spoken word and Cinematic Narratives.

Director Lex Lowry (a.k.a Alexander Lambert). A Miami Dade College alumni with a Bachelor’s of Applied Science under the School of Entertainment Design and Technology program. **JFAFF's Honorable Mention.**

The official Juneteenth Observance Lakeland Committee is observing its 31st year in Polk County, Florida, and the second year’s legal holiday. Juneteenth is the 11th federal holiday in the United States, which commemorates the next to the last enslaved ancestors in Texas to receive the news of freedom two and a half years later. See schedule attached.

For additional information, contact Doris Moore Bailey at 863-271-3386.

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