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## THE AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL AND LIGHTBOX ANNOUNCE WINNER OF THE 2017 DOCUMENTARY FILM INITIATIVE

**Director Muta'Ali's Documentary *Storm Over Brooklyn* to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Racially Motivated Killing of 16-Year-Old Yusuf Hawkins**

**Inaugural Competition Sponsored by 21st Century Fox and National Geographic**

**New York, New York (Nov. 16, 2017)** – The American Black Film Festival (ABFF) and Lightbox, the award-winning U.S. and U.K. production company, today announced that director Muta'Ali is the recipient of their first annual documentary film development fund. Muta'Ali will work with Lightbox and ABFF to develop his feature documentary **Storm Over Brooklyn**.

The ABFF Lightbox Documentary Initiative was launched earlier this year to support and foster documentary filmmakers with diverse voices and perspectives and is sponsored by 21st Century Fox and National Geographic.

Muta'Ali's **Storm Over Brooklyn**, was selected from over 200 submissions for documentary films that covered a wide range of topics that reflect the experiences of people of color today. ABFF and Lightbox hope to get the film funded and finished in time to have its world premiere at the 23rd annual American Black Film Festival in Miami in June 2019.

**Storm Over Brooklyn** will revisit the story of Yusuf Hawkins, a black American teenager who was shot to death after being trapped by a group of white youths in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, on the evening of August 23, 1989. Hawkins had come to Bensonhurst with three friends that day to look at a used car when they were attacked by the hostile mob, whose members mistakenly believed that Hawkins was dating a neighborhood girl who was white. The incident shocked New York and the nation, and unleashed a torrent of racial tension in an already divided city and led to nationally televised protests and marches led by the Rev. Al Sharpton. The growing unrest indubitably contributed to the ousting of New York City Mayor Ed Koch in favor of David Dinkins, who became the city's first — and as of now, only — African-American mayor. Hawkins was just 16 years old at the time of his death.

"2019 will mark the 30th anniversary of Yusuf Hawkins' death and all these years later, it is fair to say, we are still living in very precarious times," said Jeff Friday, founder and CEO, ABFF Ventures. "We were incredibly moved by the relevance and power of this story and Muta'Ali's vision for the film. The ABFF Lightbox Documentary Film Initiative is an extension of what I started with the American Black Film Festival, and I am delighted to be able to provide this new platform in partnership with Lightbox, and we are deeply grateful to National Geographic and 21st Century Fox for standing behind this meaningful initiative."

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Lightbox's Jonathan Chinn added, "I was immediately impressed with Muta'Ali's passion and creative ambition for the film. The fact that he has already secured Yusuf's family's blessing and their active participation in the film along with the participation of many of the key players in the story points to a film that cannot only enter the ongoing conversation we are still having about racial discrimination in America, but that can do justice to the memory and legacy of Yusuf Hawkins. Lightbox and ABFF are thrilled to be collaborating with Muta'Ali on this important and timely film."

Lightbox and initiative sponsor National Geographic recently collaborated on the Emmy Award-winning feature documentary **LA 92**, which used only archival footage to tell the story of the lead-up and conflagration of the civil unrest in Los Angeles in 1992 that followed the acquittal of four white LAPD officers accused of beating Rodney King. **LA 92** has recently been nominated for a Cinema Eye Award and two International Documentary Association Awards, including the award for Best Feature.

"National Geographic is thrilled to be part of this year's inaugural competition, and the selection of Muta'Ali as this year's winner is a perfect choice," said Tim Pastore, president of original programming and production for National Geographic Channel. "Nurturing up-and-coming talent is incredibly important to us at National Geographic, and working with Lightbox and ABFF on this initiative and discovering filmmakers like Muta'Ali is really exciting."

Muta'Ali hails from Westchester County, New York. His debut film, "Life's Essentials With Ruby Dee," a documentary about his late grandmother, featured notable subjects including Harry Belafonte, Alan Alda, Phylicia Rashad and Spike Lee. His goal is to have his artistic body of work be wholly focused on what he calls "Love, Art & Activism." In response to winning the ABFF Lightbox Documentary Film Initiative, Muta'Ali stated, "I am thrilled to have been selected as the first beneficiary of this important initiative. Jeff and Jonathan are the ideal partners to help me take the complex story of Yusuf Hawkins and his killing out of my head and onto screens. I have the utmost respect and appreciation for this opportunity and I look forward to creating a film that is true to who Yusuf was and true to all the people who have fought for equality in his name."

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### **About Lightbox**

Headquartered in London and Los Angeles, Lightbox is a multinational media company focused on creating high-quality nonfiction programming for film, television and digital platforms. It was founded in 2014 by Academy Award- and Emmy-winning producers and cousins Simon Chinn and Jonathan Chinn. Simon and Jonathan's partnership represents a seamless melding of two distinct but compatible backgrounds and a strongly shared creative sensibility. Since its founding in 2014, Lightbox has produced many notable projects, including documentary films "Atari: Game Over" and "The Thread" for Xbox Entertainment Studios; an ESPN 30 for 30 film about the 2006 Duke Lacrosse scandal titled "Fantastic Lies"; and several series for both the U.K. and U.S. markets, such as "The Traffickers" for Fusion, "Inside British Vogue" for BBC, "The Runner-Up" for Esquire, "War Child" for Channel 4 and the groundbreaking "Captive" for Netflix. Lightbox recently released its first theatrical feature documentary, **LA 92**, about the 1992 LA riots for National Geographic's Documentary Films Division, and is currently

in production on the first and only authorized documentary about legendary pop icon Whitney Houston, which is slated to hit theaters in 2018. Prior to co-founding Lightbox, Simon Chinn became one of the world's most successful feature documentary producers with two Academy Award-winning documentaries, "Man on Wire" and "Searching for Sugar Man," to his credit. His other prior producing credits include "Project Nim," "The Imposter," "The Green Prince" and "My Scientology Movie." Jonathan Chinn co-founded Lightbox on the heels of a successful career as one of the most respected nonfiction television showrunners in the U.S., winning an Emmy for "American High" (Fox/PBS) as well as the Television Academy's prestigious Honors Award for "30 Days" (FX), which went on to become FX's highest-rated unscripted series. Other producing credits include "Kid Nation" (CBS), "Push Girls" (Sundance) and "Hotel Hell" (Fox).

### **About ABFF**

The American Black Film Festival is an annual event dedicated to showcasing quality film and television content by and about people of African descent. It supports emerging artists to foster a wider range of images, stories and storytellers represented in the entertainment industry. The festival is committed to the belief that black artists and content creators deserve the same opportunities as their mainstream counterparts. ABFF founder Jeff Friday conceived the festival in 1997 as a vehicle to promote diversity in the motion picture industry and strengthen the black filmmaking community through resource sharing, education, artistic collaboration and career development. Today, ABFF is recognized as the preeminent pipeline to new black talent, both in front of and behind the camera, and is regarded as one of the leading film festivals in the world. ABFF is a property of ABFF Ventures, a multifaceted entertainment company specializing in the production of live events, film, television and digital content targeted to upscale African-American audiences.

### **About National Geographic Partners LLC**

National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between National Geographic and 21st Century Fox, is committed to bringing the world premium science, adventure and exploration content across an unrivaled portfolio of media assets. NGP combines the global National Geographic television channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO, Nat Geo PEOPLE) with National Geographic's media and consumer-oriented assets, including National Geographic magazines; National Geographic studios; related digital and social media platforms; books; maps; children's media; and ancillary activities that include travel, global experiences and events, archival sales, licensing and e-commerce businesses. Furthering knowledge and understanding of our world has been the core purpose of National Geographic for 129 years, and now we are committed to going deeper, pushing boundaries, going further for our consumers ... and reaching over 760 million people around the world in 172 countries and 43 languages every month as we do it. NGP returns 27 percent of our proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education. For more information visit [natgeotv.com](http://natgeotv.com) or [nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com), or find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

### **About 21ST CENTURY FOX**

21st Century Fox is the world's premier portfolio of cable, broadcast, film, pay TV and satellite assets spanning six continents across the globe. Reaching more than 1.8 billion subscribers in approximately 50 local languages every day, 21st Century Fox is home to a global portfolio of cable and broadcasting networks and properties, including FOX, FX, FXX, FXM, FS1, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, FOX Sports, Fox Sports Network, National Geographic, STAR India, 28 local television stations in the U.S. and more than 350 international channels; film studio Twentieth Century Fox Film; and television production studios Twentieth Century Fox Television and a 50% ownership interest in Endemol Shine Group. The Company also holds a 39.1% ownership interest in Sky, Europe's leading

entertainment company, which serves 22 million customers across five countries. For more information about 21st Century Fox, please visit [www.21CF.com](http://www.21CF.com).

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