FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

USC Black Alumni Association to Honor Academy Award-Nominated Filmmaker John Singleton, California State Assemblymember Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer Sr. and Four Other Prominent Trojans at 40th Anniversary and Scholarship Benefit

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Los Angeles – The University of Southern California Black Alumni Association (USC BAA) will honor six outstanding alumni at the organization’s 40th Anniversary and Scholarship Benefit on March 10, 2016, at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Marina Del Rey, California.

Academy Award-nominated filmmaker John Singleton ’90 (USC School of Cinematic Arts) will receive the Legacy Award, acknowledging his groundbreaking narratives and innovative achievements in film, built upon an enriching foundation as a former USC BAA Scholar.

Author, educator and activist Maulana Karenga PhD ’94 (USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences), the creator of the Pan-African holiday of Kwanzaa, will receive the Emé Award in recognition of his historic work, including his association with USC BAA founder Rev. Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr. in organizing the “Black Agenda,” a group focused on economic empowerment in Los Angeles.

Wilson Global Communications Founder and CEO Julia Wilson ’91 (USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism) will receive the Outstanding Alumna Award, honoring her accomplishments as a creative leader of cross-cultural economic and educational exchanges in international markets. California State Assemblymember Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr. ’87 (USC Price School of Public Policy Outstanding Alumna Award), who represents the 59th District, will receive the Outstanding Alumnus Award, commending his work as co-chair of the State Assembly’s Select Committee on Boys and Men of Color.

Deara Okonkwo ’08, MAT ’09, EdD ’14 (USC Dornsife and USC Rossier School of Education), who received her doctorate at the age of 23, will receive the Outstanding Young Alumna award, and Neftalie Williams ’12, MPD ’14 (USC Annenberg), an originator of “Skateboard Diplomacy,” will receive the Outstanding Young Alumnus award.

USC President C. L. Max Nikias will provide remarks and pay special tribute to Verna Dauterive ME ’49, EdD ’66 (USC Rossier), USC BAA co-founder and university trustee. Sandra Evers-Manly ’81 (USC Price), vice president, corporate responsibility, Northrop Grumman, will deliver the evening keynote. USC Trojan Legend couple Holly Robinson Peete and Rodney Peete ’89 (USC Annenberg), successful media personalities and co-founders of the Hollyrod Foundation, a
nonprofit providing medical, physical and emotional support to individuals living with autism and Parkinson’s disease, will host this year’s benefit.

“The theme of our 40th year celebration, “Legacy 360°,” celebrates past, present and future leadership and achievement of black alumni at USC, laying a foundation for the narratives of our next 40 years,” said USC BAA Executive Director Michèle G. Turner ’81, EdD ’14. Please join us on March 10th!”

The USC BAA 40th Anniversary and Scholarship Benefit seeks to raise funds for critically needed tuition grants for USC black students. Since 1976, the USC BAA has awarded over $6 million in financial assistance grants to nearly 2,600 students. With a 100% graduation rate of its BAA Scholars since 2008, the USC BAA is an important resource for undergraduate and graduate student support. For additional information, including tickets and sponsor packages, please contact the USC BAA office at (213) 740-8342 or visit http://www.usc.edu/baa.

ABOUT THE USC BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1976 by Rev. Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr., the USC Black Alumni Association is a leadership network established to strengthen the legacy of educational attainment and excellence of USC black students. The USC BAA provides scholarship assistance, career mentoring and cultural advocacy through alumni networking, volunteer involvement, philanthropy and social enterprise.

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