

**FOR RELEASE ON
November 3, 2015:**

MEDIA CONTACT:
Anita Hope
305-638-6771/ ahope@miamidade.gov

**THE AFRICAN HERITAGE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF
EMPOWERING THE LIBERTY CITY COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS**

Award-winning American playwright and actor, Tarell Alvin McCraney, an alumni of the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, returns to the Center joining celebrity host Jawan Strader for a Gala Celebration to commemorate this significant milestone

(Miami, October 29, 2015) – For four decades, the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center (AHCAC) has inspired thousands of youth through quality arts education programs and outstanding cultural events for children and families. On Saturday, November 14th, this longstanding commitment to developing the artistic talents of young people while serving as a cultural hub for the entire community, will be celebrated with the 40th Sankofa Gala at the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, located at 6161 NW 22nd Avenue, in the heart of Liberty City.

One of AHCAC's most renowned alumni, Tarell Alvin McCraney, will return to the Center in honor of the remarkable impact that AHCAC continues to have on the hundreds of children and teens who participate in the Center's programs every year. McCraney attended the New World School of the Arts, receiving the exemplary artist award and the Dean's Award in Theater. He is a graduate from the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago, and the Yale School of Drama where he received the Cole Porter Playwriting Award. His plays have been performed at The Public Theater in New York and Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago as well as the Young Vic in London (Olivier Award nomination) and around the world. McCraney served as the International Playwright in Residence at the Royal Shakespeare Company in England. He is a member of Steppenwolf Theater and Teo Castellanos/ D Projects in Miami, and a resident playwright at New Dramatists. His many accolades include the Outstanding Playwright Award from the New York Times and MacArthur Fellows Program Genius Grant.

Marshall Davis, who has served as Director of the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center for three decades, stated "The Center has produced a wealth of phenomenal talent over the last forty years and we're excited to have Tarell and other distinguished alumni return as master artists to share their expertise with our students. These alumni come back to remind us of the important role of arts and culture in empowering youth and building communities."

The Gala is part of "*Sankofa: Looking Back, Going Forward*," a year-long series of events and performances that bring alumni back to the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center to inspire the next generation of talent, in celebration of the Center's fortieth anniversary with funding support from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, as part of its Knight Arts Challenge. The African Heritage Cultural Arts Center is managed by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, with funding support from the office of the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners.

The Gala evening begins at 6 PM with a cocktail reception, gallery exhibition, silent auction and a dinner featuring other extraordinary AHCAC alum including accomplished saxophonist Melton

Mustafa Jr., as well as brilliantly talented vocalists Zipporah Hayes and Ja'Nia Harden. Local celebrity, Jawan Strader, evening news anchor from WTVJ-Ch. 6, will serve as the Master of Ceremonies. Tickets are \$50 per person; RSVP required. For tickets and table reservations call: (305) 638-6771, ahope@miamidade.gov or visit www.ahcacmiami.org.

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The African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, part of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, was founded in 1975 to serve as the nesting ground for emerging talent in the performing and visual arts in the heart of Liberty City. The Center provides quality instruction, inspiration and encouragement to young people within the community, and creates a means through which youth can discover their artistic talents. For more information about the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, call (305) 638-6771 or email: ahcac@miamidade.gov. You can also visit our website at www.ahcacmiami.org.

It is policy of Miami-Dade County to comply with all of the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act. The facility is accessible. To request materials in accessible format and or/accommodation to attend an event at the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, please contact Gloria Wilkins at 305-638-6771 or ahcac@miamidade.gov, at least five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service)

The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council develop cultural excellence, diversity and participation throughout Miami-Dade County by strategically creating and promoting opportunities for artists and cultural organizations, and our residents and visitors who are their audiences. The Department directs the Art in Public Places program and serves its board, the Art in Public Places Trust, commissioning, curating, maintaining and promoting the County's art collection. The Department also manages, programs and operates the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, a campus of state-of-the-art cultural facilities in Cutler Bay, as well as Miami-Dade County Auditorium, Joseph Caleb Auditorium and the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, all dedicated to presenting and supporting excellence in the arts for the entire community. Through staff, board and programmatic resources, the Department, the Council and the Trust promote, coordinate and support Miami-Dade County's more than 1,000 not-for-profit cultural organizations as well as thousands of resident artists through grants, technical assistance, public information and interactive community planning. The Department receives funding through the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, The Children's Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Florida through the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Other support and services are provided by TicketWeb for the Culture Shock Miami program, the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, the South Florida Cultural Consortium and the Tourist Development Council.