

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kuumba at Harbourfront Centre

Presented by TD Bank
February 3 – 24, 2018

Annual Black History Month festival takes on vital issues facing Toronto's Black community through dialogue, photography and film, comedy, a spectacular vogue ball and more.

TORONTO, ON (January 29, 2017) -- Each February, communities across the country take part in events to honour and explore the heritage, traditions and culture of Black Canadians. While Black History celebrations may originate in the 1970s, it was not until December 1995 that Canada officially recognized Black History Month. Twenty-three years ago, this first Canada-wide Black History Month was commemorated in Toronto with the inauguration of **Harbourfront Centre's Kuumba Festival**. The longest-running Black History Month celebration in Toronto, the Kuumba Festival takes its name from the Swahili word for "creativity", a component that is central to Harbourfront Centre's long-standing commitment to providing relevant artistic, cultural, educational and recreational experiences.

"The history of the Black community is one of resistance, resilience, social justice, freedom, hope and love, and for some Canadians that history is still a part of their everyday life," explains **Laura McLeod**. "Our goal is that Kuumba 2018 will continue the festival's legacy as a forum for challenging perceptions, shaping conversations and providing learning opportunities designed to strengthen our understanding and appreciation for our fellow Canadians".

Kuumba 2018, which begins on February 3rd and runs throughout the month, will include art and photography exhibitions, a film series, panel discussions and a very special social event entitled **The Black Liberation Ball** (Saturday, Feb. 10). This competitive event pays tribute to the ball culture of New York City and its African-American, Latino, gay and transgender communities that inspired not only Madonna's iconic hit *Vogue*, but also Jennie Livingston's groundbreaking 1990 documentary, *Paris is Burning*.

The Black Liberation Ball is the finale of the two-day **Journey to Black Liberation Symposium** (Friday, Feb. 9 – Saturday, Feb. 10), curated by **Brandon Hay**, founder of the Black Daddies Club. The *Journey to Black Liberation Symposium* is designed to engage the community and offer an opportunity to discuss what we, as Torontonians, can learn about acceptance from the black community.

Kuumba 2018 will also present the North American debut of **I Am For You Can Enjoy** (Friday, Feb. 9 – Saturday, Feb. 10), a video and photo exhibition that challenges definitions of "Blackness" and "sex work(er)" based on the diverse lived experiences, work and perspectives of queer Black men involved in the sex trade. This presentation is part of an ongoing collaboration between cultural activist, writer and sex worker **Khalil West** and acclaimed UK photographer **Ajamu**.

Behind every great laugh, there's an even greater, totally hilarious woman. Stand-up comedian and **The Daily Show** contributor **Gina Yashere** headlines a night of comedy hosted by Toronto's own award-winning playwright, actor and producer **Trey Anthony**. **Dat Gyal Funny!** (Saturday, Feb. 24) brings together top female comedians who are sure to make our sides hurt with their sharp insights and unapologetic perspective on everything from stereotypes, dating and glass ceilings.

Harbourfront Centre gratefully acknowledges the generous funding support for Kuumba by TD Bank, the Government of Canada, City of Toronto, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and the Consulate General of the United States – Toronto, Canada. We are thankful for the financial support received from many national and international cultural organizations, trusts and foundations, corporate partners, and individual supporters.

For event information please visit www.harbourfrontcentre.com/kuumba

About Harbourfront Centre

Harbourfront Centre is a registered, charitable not-for-profit cultural organization operating a 10-acre campus on Toronto's central waterfront. A leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture, and ideas, we inspire audiences and visitors with a breadth of bold, ambitious and engaging experiences.

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