

For Immediate Release

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NYC Mental Health Film Festival Fights Stigma, Challenges Audiences to Rethink Stereotypes

(New York, NY, 9/15/16) – On October 1, 2016, the 12th annual NYC Mental Health Film Festival (#MHFF2016) will present a day of inspiring films about life with mental health concerns, including the NYC and East Coast premiere of the feature film *Boxed In*, the directorial debut of actress Tasha Smith, and the Manhattan debut of *Mind/Game*, which chronicles WNBA star Chamique Holdsclaw’s battle with bipolar disorder. Filmmakers and cast members will be in attendance for an audience Q&A.

As the oldest and largest mental health film festival in the United States, #MHFF2016 takes a bold stand in fighting the stigma people with mental illness often face. The festival has screened more than 50 films, attracted over 5,000 audience members, and served as a positive voice promoting social justice and human rights for people with mental health concerns.

Says **Carla Rabinowitz, festival organizer at Community Access**, “One in five people in the United States lives with mental illness, yet society continues to stigmatize mental health recipients as violent, weak or incapable, and in need of constant medication. This film festival shines a light on how mental health consumers and their families employ humor, courage, and their natural gifts to make positive contributions, earn respect, and counter preconceived ideas about mental illness.”

Mind/Game is among this year’s official selections. The film’s subject, former **WNBA star Chamique Holdsclaw**, says: “I am so proud to show this film and share my story in my home state of New York at the NYC Mental Health Film Festival. I am thrilled to be part of such an amazing event and to contribute to the important conversation surrounding mental health and stigma.”

FESTIVAL INFO:

WHEN: Saturday, October 1, 2016
10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
VIP Reception at 5 p.m.

WHERE: Village East Cinema
181-189 2nd Avenue & 12th Street
Manhattan

TICKETS: \$25 to \$60 (A limited number of \$100 VIP passes are available, and include a private reception with cast and producers of *Boxed In* & *Mind/Game*).

WEBSITE: www.mentalhealthfilmfest.nyc

SCHEDULE:

NYC/East Coast Premiere: *Boxed In*

Marking the directorial debut of multifaceted actress Tasha Smith, *Boxed In* tells the story of a young black man in Brooklyn, and the efforts of his mother and girlfriend to pull him back to reality when he experiences a terrifying manic episode. Secrets unfold as his mother reveals the truth about his lifelong struggles with bipolar disorder. This powerful film aims to prompt honest conversations about the stigma of mental illness in urban communities. Tasha Smith will be in attendance for audience Q&A and VIP reception.

Tasha Smith currently stars in the hit Fox series, *Empire*, and in the Tyler Perry series, *For Better or Worse*, on OWN for which she earned an NAACP Image Award nomination as “Outstanding Actress in a Comedy Series.” On and off the big and small screen, Tasha Smith seems to naturally command attention. She takes time to share her inspirational life story through motivational speaking, as well as mentoring emerging actors through the Tasha Smith Actors Workshop (TSAW).

Manhattan Debut: *Mind/Game*

She was the greatest women’s basketball player the world had ever seen—the “female Michael Jordan.” But six years into her career with the Washington Mystics, Chamique Holdsclaw left the team under a cloud. She was, it turns out, suffering from clinical depression and the shame of her illness, hidden by a mask she had worn for years. Later she would be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Narrated by Glenn Close, this VOICE Award-winning documentary takes an intimate look at Holdsclaw’s personal struggles and journey toward self-understanding, acceptance and recovery—providing for a gripping and inspiring tale. Chamique Holdsclaw will be in attendance for audience Q&A and VIP reception.

#IAmHannah (Kenya)

In Kenya, mental illness is considered a taboo, and people who suffer from it are subjected to harassment as a result. This short documentary was made by Kenyan director Marianne Maasai about her mother’s experience of depression in Kenya.

Crack Up (Australia)

Mental illness is no laughing matter. Then again, sometimes it can be. *Crack Up* follows three Aussie hopefuls as they embark on a unique stand-up comedy training program, in which they seek to transform their experiences of mental illness into comedy gold.

Ezra Dowery: *Life on Broadway* (USA)

Meet Ezra Dowery, a hustler, a singer-songwriter, an amazing storyteller, and a survivor of psychiatric incarceration, who just happens to have mental illness. This documentary challenges

stigma and conveys the message that people with mental illness are human beings with challenges, talents, hopes and dreams just like everyone else.

La Clave (USA)

This film, set in Southern California, is based on the fictional story of Adriana, a young mother who, in the aftermath of her divorce, begins to develop symptoms of serious mental illness. The film is designed to generate conversations in the Latino community as part of a broader project to help raise awareness of mental health concerns.

Mental Illness Can Happen to Anyone (Australia)

This short animated film is about a single mother of two kids with autism. On the verge of a breakdown, Super Mom hides her emotional distress. The film hinges on the question of how we can remove stigma and allow Super Mom get the help she needs.

Past Imperfect (Australia)

This is the story of an estranged brother and sister whose worlds collide one morning their ill mother's bedside. It is a story of love, forgiveness, and hope.

The Importance of Consulting with Consumers (Australia)

This one-minute animated film describes the vital importance of consulting with mental health consumers in genuine ways when designing projects and programs in the mental health field.

The Love Effect (USA)

In *The Love Effect*, two men on different yet parallel paths are shown a way through together, sharing simple experiences like fishing, surfing, and camping. An emotional story that sensitively addresses depression, suicide, and love, this film reminds audiences of life's greatest gift.

Why We're Vocal for Mental Health

The Be Vocal Initiative is a partnership between Demi Lovato, a singer/songwriter living with bipolar, five leading mental health groups, and Sunovion. This video, created by weaving together submissions from across the nation, unites the unique perspectives of more than 150 individuals into one single message: be vocal.

About Community Access:

Community Access' mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

www.communityaccess.org

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