

# Statement from AAFCA On the Passing of John Singleton



John Singleton at the 2017 AAFCA Awards in Hollywood, CA (credit: AAFCA)

“John Singleton” was, without question, one of the most important filmmakers of our generation. With his groundbreaking 1991 debut film, *Boyz n the Hood*, he brought a sensitivity to urban Black life that was unprecedented for the time. With that film – which he wrote and directed – he painted the challenges as well as joys of growing up Black in Los Angeles during one of its most tumultuous times. That film earned him a Best Director Oscar nomination, making him the youngest and first-ever Black nominee, as well as one for Best Screenplay.



John Singleton, Gil Robertson, Ava DuVernay, Robert "RZA" Diggs in 2015 in Hollywood, CA

John would continue to flex his versatility throughout his career, helming *2 Fast 2 Furious*, the second installment of the big-budget franchise and the biggest grossing film of his career in 2003. However, Singleton was most passionate about films about his community, particularly his native South Central Los Angeles. He immediately followed *Boyz n the Hood* with two other films set primarily in Los Angeles: *Poetic Justice* (1993), *Higher Learning* (1995) and *Baby Boy* (2001) gave a refreshing and personal lens to the identity of urban Black males that was multi-dimensional and spanned a wide variety of viewpoints.

John was a great friend to the Black press and to AAFCA in particular. To me, he was not only an advocate and treasured ally, but also a personal friend. I began covering his work with his second film, *Poetic Justice*, and feel privileged to have had a front row seat to his amazing journey. Just last year, AAFCA had the tremendous honor of celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that very film with him as part of our annual Summer Screening Series.

Over the years, John never shunned the Black press and personally made sure that African American journalists always got ample opportunity to cover his work. When we started the AAFCA Awards a decade ago, John was one of our first presenters. Filmmaking, they say, is very personal and communal and John embodied that. There are countless members

of this community that he helped. He championed Craig Brewer in his debut film *Hustle & Flow* and introduced such actors as Morris Chestnut, Ice Cube, Cuba Gooding Jr., Tyrese, Taraji P. Henson and Angela Bassett to the big screen in leading roles.

Even though he ventured out to do the historic drama *Rosewood*, telling the hidden story of an all-Black town in Florida that was massacred in 1923, Los Angeles was forever his muse. His most recent co-creation *Snowfall*, the FX show chronicling the advent of crack to the city, will premiere its third season in July.



Ryan Coogler and John Singleton in 2016

I and AAFCA are not alone in saying that, while our dear friend will be missed, his legacy as a visionary filmmaker and unapologetically Black storyteller will live on forever. We send prayers and continued strength to his mother, his five children and the rest of his family, biological and cinematic, who loved and cherished him. Although we are heartbroken, we are beyond grateful for all that he has given us and the legacy with which he leaves us.

“Dear friend, we salute you and we love you.”

- Gil Robertson IV, President/CoFounder, African American Film Critics Association