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For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP SELECTS 12 STUDENTS FOR
AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION REGIONAL FINALS
TO BE HELD AT THE MARK TAPER FORUM ON FEB. 27**

Top Two Students Will Participate in National Finals on Broadway on May 1, 2017

Center Theatre Group has selected 12 local high school students to participate in the regional finals for the 2017 August Wilson Monologue Competition (AWMC) to be held at the Mark Taper Forum on Monday, February 27.

This is the sixth consecutive year Center Theatre Group is hosting the Southern California component of the national monologue competition. The program is designed to inspire and educate Los Angeles youth using monologues from August Wilson's "American Century Cycle," a 10-play dramatization of the African American experience in the 20th century.

Those selected to participate in the regional finals are **Joey Aquino** (Los Angeles), **Luke Baxter** (Moreno Valley), **Kelly Bouslaiby** (Fontana), **Hollis Dohr** (Sherman Oaks), **Asa Ferguson** (Los Angeles), **Hannah Franklin** (Long Beach), **Elija Hall** (Los Angeles), **Habin Lee** (Los Angeles), **Arjang Mahdavi** (Granada Hills), **Ehvinny Mora** (Rowland Heights), **Alexander Villaseñor** (Los Angeles) and **Aryana Williams** (Carson). The students represent seven local high schools within Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties.

Aquino and Williams both participated in the 2016 competition where Williams took third place.

The students selected will receive training and rehearsal sessions provided by Center Theatre Group throughout January and February. The sessions will allow the students to refine their performances while gaining valuable acting techniques.

On February 27, the 12 regional finalists will perform their monologues in front of a panel of judges at the Mark Taper Forum. The two top-performing students will move forward to the 10th annual AWMC national finals; the third place student will serve as alternate. The first and second place students will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to New York City for the finals, which will take place on May 1 at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway. As preparation for the national component of the competition, all three students will receive master classes to workshop their monologues, as well as scholarship awards.

The program kicked off this season with a preliminary audition that featured 133 students in 10th, 11th or 12th-grade from 34 different high schools in Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Fifty-three of those students advanced to a semi-final round held at the Music

Center Annex in December where the aforementioned 12 regional finalists were selected to move forward.

Center Theatre Group also offers an in-school residency as part of the larger August Wilson Program. The August Wilson In-School Residency is a semester-long program that provides Title 1 students with an in-depth study of the work of August Wilson. The four classrooms selected for the in-school residency will attend the AWMC Los Angeles Regional Finals as part of their residency experience, witnessing the power of theatre as their peers bring August Wilson's characters to life.

"These programs are part of our tradition of nurturing new voices in the American theatre," said Director of Social Strategy, Innovation and Impact Leslie K. Johnson. "They enable students from all walks of life to discover August Wilson's profound and deeply relevant works of art, explore their own creative voices and learn more about our shared history and themselves."

AWMC is a national program presented by Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company and Jujamcyn Theaters and hosted in cities throughout the country, including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Dallas and Greensboro, North Carolina. Each city runs its program differently and each experience is designed to provide intensive learning opportunities for high school students to study and practice the craft of acting through the work of August Wilson.

The Southern California component of the August Wilson Monologue Competition is led by the Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships Department. Currently one of the most active theatre education programs in the country, Education and Community Partnerships has reached more than 18,000 students, teachers and community members throughout Southern California in the 2015-2016 season.

Regional funding for the August Wilson Monologue Competition is provided by the Center Theatre Group Affiliates and the Wells Fargo Foundation. The AWMC also receives generous support from the Center Theatre Group Corporate Circle and The Rosenthal Family Foundation.

Center Theatre Group honors its long-standing relationship with August Wilson through its August Wilson Program, as well as through its continued production of Wilson's work. Center Theatre Group has presented nine of Wilson's plays, including two world premiere productions of his work. Most recently, in September/October 2016, Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" had a successful run at the Mark Taper Forum.

More information on Center Theatre Group's August Wilson Monologue Competition can be found at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/AugustWilson.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation's leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

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January 19, 2017