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For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP NAMES THREE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
FOR 2017 AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION NATIONAL FINALS**

**12 Students Participated in the Los Angeles Regional Finals at Mark Taper Forum on February 27
The National Finals Will Take Place on Broadway on May 1**

Center Theatre Group has named **Aryana Williams, Alexander Villaseñor** and **Elija Hall** as the top performers of the August Wilson Monologue Competition (AWMC) Regional Finals held at the Mark Taper Forum on February 27, 2017. Williams and Villaseñor will go on to represent Los Angeles in the national finals on May 1.

Aryana Williams of Carson has placed first in the competition, earning a \$500 scholarship; Alexander Villaseñor of Los Angeles took second place with a \$400 scholarship; and Elija Hall of Los Angeles took third place and a \$300 scholarship. Both Williams and Villaseñor will also receive a paid trip to New York City to compete in the national finals held at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway. Hall will serve as alternate.

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 "The American Century Cycle," a 10-play dramatization of the African American experience in the 20th century.

Williams, Villaseñor and Hall were selected from a pool of 12 regional finalists. The 12 students represented seven local high schools within Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties. As preparation for the national component of the competition, the three national finalists will receive master classes to workshop their monologues.

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 of 2016 where 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 classes selected for the in-school residency also attended the AWMC Los Angeles Regional Finals as part of their residency experience, witnessing the power of theatre as their peers brought 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, but 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 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 was 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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March 1, 2017