

National Black Church Initiative

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The National Black Church Initiative Strongly Endorses *The Mountaintop* on Broadway *This Signals NBCI's New Art Initiative*

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. The Black Church has for over 250 years supported the Arts due to Jim Crow laws in America. The Black Church continues to use its facilities to stage plays, musicals, recitals, and other artistic expressions. *The Mountaintop*, which is a play that characterizes one of America's greatest churchmen, Martin Luther King Jr., is a clear illustration that the Black Church has an intimate relationship with the theatre and the Arts. This play represents to us a reflection of the rich and complicated history of the Black Church and the man.

NBCI recently launched, as a part of its core programming, an art initiative to dramatize the variety of artistic expressions within Black congregational life. There is not a major star, either present or past, who cannot trace their artistic beginnings from the Black Church. The Black Church has always been the one constant stage for the Black actor, singer, musician, and performer. Our current initiative, the Black Art Initiative, serves only to underscore the value and the necessity of the Black Church in launching and sustaining a career in the arts.

Rev Anthony Evans, President of NBCI says, "We have been searching for some time for an artistic expression such as *the Mountaintop* play that the Black Church can put its arm around because it would reflect the rich historic that the Black Church has played in the world of the arts. *The Mountaintop* is a natural beginning for us. That is why we are encouraging all of our members to go see it."

The Mountaintop in some respects is controversial, but many would say that about the activism of the Black Church. As such, this play merely mirrors the struggle, the activism and the genius of the actors, namely Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett. Both of these actors represent the finest tradition of not only the Black Theatre, but the also the Black Church.

The Black Church is the impetus that has encouraged performances such as Jackson and Bassett, to only be good and acceptable, but to strive for greatness and to create a new level of artistic expression that will clearly dramatize the heroic and the classical cultural history of the African American experience in America.

Recently, we dedicated the MLK Memorial in Washington DC (both Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett were founding members of the ‘Dream Team’ – a group of celebrities who donated their resources to support the Memorial). The Memorial is an expression of a grateful nation who rose above the petty differences of the human experience and sought to identify and acknowledge the deep humanity of people, regardless of race, creed, religion, or any other barriers that keep one human being from acknowledging another. *The Mountaintop* is where the church wants everyone to reach to. NBCI urges everyone to go attend the play.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.

About *The Mountaintop*

The Broadway premiere of the 2010 Olivier Award® winning Best Play, *The Mountaintop*, by Katori Hall, is now in performance at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre (242 West 45th Street) on Broadway. The play’s official opening night is October 13.

The Mountaintop stars Samuel L. Jackson as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Angela Bassett, and is directed by Tony Award® nominee Kenny Leon (*Fences*, *A Raisin in the Sun*). The play features original music by Grammy Award®-winner and Tony Award® nominee Branford Marsalis.

Taking place on April 3, 1968, *The Mountaintop* is a gripping reimagining of events the night before the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. After delivering one of his most memorable speeches, an exhausted Dr. King (Samuel L. Jackson) retires to his room at the Lorraine Motel while a storm rages outside. When a mysterious stranger (Angela Bassett) arrives with some surprising news, King is forced to confront his destiny and his legacy to his people.

Tickets for the Broadway premiere of the 2010 Olivier Award® winning Best Play are available at Telecharge.com or by calling (212) 239-6200, or at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre box office (242 West 45th Street).

Prime tickets to *The Mountaintop* will be reserved for each and every performance, even in cases when the show is otherwise sold-out, for the low price of \$34.50. Twenty Same-Day Reserve

tickets will be available each day when the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre box office opens at 10:00 a.m. (Noon on Sundays) for that day's performance(s). They can be purchased with cash or a credit card on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a limit of two Same-Day Reserve tickets per person.

The Mountaintop producers include Jean Doumanian, Sonia Friedman Productions, and Ambassador Theatre Group.