

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Souls of Black Girls NEWS

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St. John's University & GEARUP to host private screening of documentary, *The Souls of Black Girls*

NOTE TO MEDIA: WE INVITE COVERAGE OF THIS EVENT AND WELCOME REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH THE FILMMAKER.

NEW YORK, NY—MAY 28, 2007—*The Souls of Black Girls*, a documentary written, edited and produced by Daphne S. Valerius (BS 03') has been invited for a private screening at St. John's University. Daphne will be meeting with students in the GEAR UP Program. The screening will begin at 10a.m on **Tuesday June 5th** in the **Little Theatre** on the Queens Campus. A self-esteem workshop conducted by Ms. Valerius and GEARUP staff members for 60-80 students will follow the screening.

Valerius produced this documentary as part of the Masters program in Journalism she completed at Emerson College in 2006. Her undergraduate research project as a Ronald McNair Scholar at St. John's University titled *Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence: The Effects of Mass Media on Women of Color...Forgotten* is the foundation of this documentary.

This provocative news documentary features candid interviews with young women discussing their self-image and social commentary from Actresses **Regina King** and **Jada Pinkett Smith**, PBS *Washington Week* Moderator **Gwen Ifill**, Rapper/Political Activist **Chuck D**, and Cultural Critic **Michaela Angela Davis**, among others. The title of the documentary derives from the seminal **W.E.B. Dubois** book *The Souls of Black Folks*.

"I am truly excited that Ms. Valerius will be bringing such a powerful message to our scholars as they begin transition from middle to high school. Our scholars will see first hand what happens when one follows their passion", says Yvette Morgan, Co-Director of the St. John's University GEAR UP Program.

While the film was produced prior to the recent inflammatory on-air remarks made by **Don Imus**, the former talk-jock concerning the **young women of the Rutgers University basketball team**, *The Souls of Black Girls* addresses many issues being raised in the current national discussion on racism and sexism in the media

The Souls of Black Girls takes a critical look at media images—how they are instituted, established and controlled. This documentary also examines the relationship between the historical and existing media images of women of color and raises the question of whether they may be suffering from a self-image disorder as a result of trying to attain the standards of beauty that are celebrated in media images.

"As a young Black girl, I grew up feeling very much like the ugly duckling compared to my peers as a result of not looking a certain way, much like Pecola Breedlove of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. By creating this documentary, it allowed me to uncover and examine why I, along with many other women of color, feel the need to manipulate our physical appearances," says Valerius.

The Souls of Black Girls, has premiered at the **2007 Pan African Film & Arts Festival** in Los Angeles. It was also showcased on **AOL Black Voices** and featured exclusively at the **Apollo Theater's "HealthTime at the Apollo"** event commemorating Women's History Month. In addition, the film has been requested for private screenings at various institutions and organizations including Actress Terri J. Vaughn's **Take Wings Foundation**.

For more information about *The Souls of Black Girls* and screening updates, please visit the official website at www.soulsofblackgirls.com or www.myspace.com/soulsofblackgirls.

About the St. John's University GEAR UP Program

The mission of the St. John's University GEAR UP program is to serve as a vehicle that will enable academically and/or economically disadvantaged students to graduate middle and high school and pursue post secondary education. Through a broad range of academic and social support services, our goal is to provide our students with a solid academic background that will enable them to succeed beyond high school with an emphasis on becoming lifelong learners and productive citizens of society.

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