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**KERRY WASHINGTON ANNOUNCED AS HONORARY CHAIR OF THE
2015 FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS**

**MICHAEL PEÑA TO HOST THE NOMINEE BRUNCH AND ANNOUNCE GRANT
WINNERS**

**Ceremony to premiere live exclusively on IFC, Saturday, February 21 at 2:00 pm
PT and 5:00 pm ET**

LOS ANGELES (January 6, 2015) – Film Independent President Josh Welsh announced today that Emmy and Golden Globe nominated Kerry Washington will serve as the honorary chairperson for the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards. The nonprofit, that also produces the Los Angeles Film Festival and Film Independent at LACMA Film Series bestows the honorary chairperson honor to an individual who exemplifies outstanding artistic achievement and embodies Film Independent’s mission to nurture and support creative independence in visual storytelling. Past Chairs include Angela Bassett, Jeremy Renner, Salma Hayek, Halle Berry, Tom Cruise, Benecio Del Toro, Robert Duvall, Jodie Foster, Danny Glover, Harvey Keitel, Nicole Kidman, Ang Lee, Julianne Moore, Martin Scorsese and John Travolta.

In addition, Welsh announced that Michael Peña will host the Spirit Awards Nominee Brunch on January 10 at BOA restaurant in West Hollywood where he will announce Film Independent’s grant winners for 2015.

The event precedes the 30th Film Independent Spirit Awards which will take place as a daytime luncheon in a tent on the beach in Santa Monica on Saturday, February 21. This year the show will broadcast live exclusively on IFC at 2:00 PM PT/ 5:00 PM ET.

"It is such an honor to have Kerry Washington as our Spirit Awards Honorary Chair and Michael Peña hosting our nominee brunch," said Film Independent President Josh Welsh. "Ever since she was nominated for a Spirit Award in 2002 we have admired and been inspired by Kerry and her remarkable body of work. Michael is also a past Spirit Award nominee for his performance in *End of Watch*, and is an actor who embodies everything that we strive to recognize at the Spirit Awards."

Film, stage and television star Kerry Washington broke barriers by becoming the first African American woman to headline a network TV drama since 1974. Her portrayal of crisis-manager Olivia Pope on the hit Shonda Rhimes show *Scandal*, currently in its 3rd season, has earned her numerous accolades including Golden Globe, Emmy and SAG Best Actress nominations as well as an NAACP Image Award for Best Actress.

Film credits include *Save the Last Dance*, *Lift* (for which she received a Spirit Award nomination), *The Human Stain*, *Sin*, *Ray*, *Mr & Mrs Smith*, *I Think I Love My Wife*, *Miracle at St. Anna*, *Mother and Child*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *Night Catches Us*, *Lakeview Terrace*, *The Details*, *Django Unchained* and *Peeples*.

An activist, Washington was appointed by President Barack Obama to the President's Committee of the Arts and Humanities in 2009. She also is an active member of the V-Counsel, an esteemed group of advisors to V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls. In 2013, The NAACP also honored Washington with the President's Award, recognizing special achievement in furthering the cause of civil rights and public service. Washington was named to Time 100's Most Influential list in 2014.

Michael Peña has distinguished himself in Hollywood as an actor with a wide range of performances and has worked with an impressive roster of award winning directors. Peña earned notable recognition for his first film performance in Paul Haggis' provocative Oscar® winning film *Crash*. Last year he was seen in the David O'Russell film *American Hustle* which won a Golden Globe, as well as ensemble awards from the Screen Actors Guild and the Broadcast Film Critics. In 2012, Michael was seen in the critically acclaimed movie *End of Watch*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. He was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and the film was recognized by the National Board of Review as one of the Top 10 Independent Films of the year. In 2014 Peña was seen as civil right and labor organizer Cesar Chavez in *Chavez*; the Fox 10 hour mini-series *Gracepoint* and the Sony film *Fury* where he re-teamed with director David Ayer. In 2015 he can be seen on the Marvel film *Ant Man* and is currently shooting the Ridley Scott's *Martian* for 20th Century Fox.

ABOUT THE FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

Now in its 30th year, the Film Independent Spirit Awards is an annual celebration that honors artist-driven films made with an economy of means by filmmakers whose films embody independence and originality. The Spirit Awards recognizes the achievements of American and international independent filmmakers and promotes the finest independent films of the year to a wider audience. The winners of the Spirit Awards are voted upon by Film Independent and IFP Members. Awards are given in the following categories: Best Feature, Best First Feature, Best First Screenplay, Best Director, Best Screenplay, John Cassavetes Award (given to the best feature made for a budget under \$500,000), Best Male Lead, Best Female Lead, Best Supporting Male, Best Supporting Female, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, the Robert Altman Award, Best International Film and Best Documentary. The Filmmaker Grants include the Piaget Producers Award, the Kiehl's Someone to Watch Award and the LensCrafters Truer Than Fiction Award. The Film Independent Spirit Awards are sponsored by Premier Sponsors Piaget, The Lincoln Motor Company, Bank of America, Heineken, American Airlines and IFC. T-Mobile is the Official Arrivals Show Sponsor and FIJI Water is the Official Water of the 2015 Spirit Awards. WireImage is the Official Photographer of Film Independent.

For more information on submission guidelines, voting, media and publicist credentials, and the history of the Spirit Awards, please visit SpiritAwards.com.

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