



**UPLIFTING ENTERTAINMENT**

**For Immediate Release**

**GMC TV PRESENTS THE ORIGINAL WORLD PREMIERE MOVIE**

**'A CROSS TO BEAR'**

**DANIELLE DEADWYLER, KIM FIELDS, MALINDA WILLIAMS  
AND JACKIE LONG STAR IN THE INSPIRATIONAL DRAMA**

**PREMIERING SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> AT 7:00 P.M. ET  
EXCLUSIVELY ON GMC**

**ATLANTA, GA. January 27, 2012** – GMC TV, America's favorite channel for uplifting music and family entertainment, presents the original GMC World Premiere Movie *A Cross to Bear*, starring newcomer Danielle Deadwyler, award-winning veteran actress and director Kim Fields ("Living Single," "The Facts of Life"), NAACP Image Award® nominee Malinda Williams (*Idlewild*, "Soul Food"), and Jackie Long (*Soul Men*, "Love that Girl!"). The inspirational drama about a young girl's long road to redemption makes its world television premiere on **Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM ET, with encore telecasts 9:00 PM and 11:00 PM.**

Based on an original screenplay written by Cas Sigers Beedles and Terri J. Vaughn, *A Cross to Bear* tells the unflinching and inspiring story of Erica (Deadwyler), a would-be dancer with no family connections who finds herself fighting alcoholism and living on the streets with her newborn child after being left by her boyfriend. One ill-fated night, she takes refuge from the cold in an empty building with a handful of other homeless people and her life is shattered. Traumatized and now living at the home of Joan (Fields)—a former nurse who has dedicated her life to helping women like Erica, Tina (Tamika Tanner) and Fae (Williams) get back on their feet, Erica struggles to forge a new path for herself. As the cause of Erica's personal hell is revealed, slowly, with the help of Joan's unique brand of tough love and the friendship of Tina, a former crack baby, and the guidance of other women who have found new beginnings at Joan's House, Erica finds the will to live and learns the redemptive power of forgiveness.

A Nina Holiday Entertainment Production, *A Cross to Bear* also features appearances by Angie Stone (*The Fighting Temptations*, "Lincoln Heights"), Kenny Lattimore ("The Young and the Restless"), Lecrae Moore and Karon Riley ("35 and Ticking"). The film is produced by Sigers Beedles, Terri J. Vaughn ("Meet the Browns," "The Steve Harvey Show") and Tandria Potts ("As Written: Christette Michele"), with Shandra McDonald-Bradford co-producing. Tandria Potts also directed the film.

“One of the things that drew me to this script was that it doesn’t sugar-coat the road to redemption,” says GMC Vice Chairman Brad Siegel. “It doesn’t pull any punches. The main characters, through their own choices, get into some very dark and difficult situations and they’re the ones who have to take a step towards the light. That can be hard and it doesn’t necessarily happen overnight. The script reflects that very honestly. I’m confident this story will resonate with a wide viewership, because each of us has our cross to bear and can empathize with others in difficult situations.”

Producer and screenwriter Cas Sigers Beedles originally penned the script for *A Cross to Bear* with the idea that her producing partner, Terri J. Vaughn would play the lead role of Erica. “When I first read it I just cried, cried, cried,” Vaughn recalls. It took her and Sigers Beedles nearly six years, through various false starts and disappointments, to finally bring the story to the screen. Although Vaughn’s passion for the script never wavered, when the project recently picked up steam again, acting in it was no longer part of the plan so Vaughn stepped behind the scenes in the role of Producer. “Cas and I wanted to develop a powerful story that would give strong actors of color challenging roles to highlight their talent and vast range,” she says. “As for the part of Erica, I wanted to create the opportunity for a young, up-and-coming actress to shine.”

That emerging talent turned out to be newcomer Danielle Deadwyler, whom Vaughn and Sigers Beedles knew from stage productions in Atlanta. “Even without any film or TV experience, I just knew she was an amazing actress,” Sigers Beedles says.

The filmmakers initially envisioned Deadwyler in the role of Tina, a key character who was born of a mother addicted to crack. But all that changed after a table read in which another newcomer, Tamika Tanner, was filling in for an actress who didn’t show up that day. Tanner nailed the role of Tina and was cast on the spot. “When she read it, I fell in love with her as Tina,” Sigers Beedles recalls. “She stole the show right there. We put her on camera, we worked with her and she did me proud. But I still wanted to include Danielle in the project.”

As it turned out, the actress who was to have played Erica ended up not being available, so the filmmakers were able to move Danielle into the lead role. “The role of Erica is the type of role an actor gets well into their career and I feel extremely blessed to be able to represent this character at this time in my career,” says Deadwyler. “It provided me the opportunity as an actress to convey a wide range of emotions onscreen and to really give dimension to a very complicated young woman’s story.”

For the character of Joan, who dispenses tough love to the girls that live in her home in an effort to help them turn their lives around, the filmmakers turned to the award-winning veteran comedic actress-turned-filmmaker Kim Fields, who had not acted for many years choosing roles behind the camera instead of in front of it. Vaughn had

absolute confidence in Fields' ability to pull off the complex and nuanced role of a woman haunted by a deep secret which serves as her motivation for the good that she does in the community.

"Most people just know her as 'Tootie' from 'The Facts of Life' and 'Regine' from 'Living Single,'" Vaughn says. "People want to put you in a box, but I knew that on the other side of those comedy chops was a powerful dramatic actor. She's an amazing actress, period."

"Joan is a very complicated person and represents a type of person I admire greatly; someone who can truly give selflessly for the benefit of others," says Kim Fields. "This story is one that needed to be told and in a way that can serve as a catalyst, not only for young people at risk but, for the rest of us who have something to offer that can make a difference in a person's life."

Vaughn says it was her experience as an actress that allowed her to take calculated risks in the casting process. "I have a different sensitivity than an executive would have," she explains. "I'm able to see and know where we can stretch people, and I'm so happy I trusted my instincts. I'm happy to be able to create a vehicle for all the actors to show themselves in a totally different light than we've seen them before."

"It's not often you find quality figures like the ones representing the women in 'A Cross to Bear'. When I read this script, I was so taken aback. I could feel the strength of Joan as well as the turmoil she and the other characters were experiencing and could really see the need for getting this message out there. This is a project I am extremely proud to be a part of because it allows you to do work that can make a difference," adds Fields.

Actress Malinda Williams echoed the sentiment. "I applaud Cas and Terri for creating this story and GMC for making it," says Williams. "It's a brave film that presents hard realities and reaps great rewards. It's so easy for one to give up when they feel they've lost everything, and that's an everyday reality for so many people. This film reminds us that the road back up is difficult but meaningful and worth the work to reclaim your life."

Leslie Chesloff, GMC's executive vice president of programming, says what grabbed her most about the script was the relationships among the three main characters. "The story turns on the inter-generational relationships between Erica, Joan and Tina. Even though none of them is initially aware of it, they each have endured a deep loss that binds them together. The way their destinies are woven together is very true to life, yet not at all predictable."

Destiny seems to have also played a role in bringing director and producer Tandria Potts to the project. Writer-producer Cas Sigers Beedles was meeting with Potts about another project when she decided to show her the script for *A Cross to Bear*. "When I read it, I was drawn in right away," says Potts. "The story is moving and

extremely well-told, but it's the characters that make it a unique piece. They are each so fully developed and compelling in their own way. And we were extremely fortunate to get such an amazing cast to bring them to life."

Adds GMC's Siegel: "There was definitely an element of serendipity in how this project came together. Terri Vaughn and Tandria Potts each had a prior relationship with GMC, but neither of them was aware of it when they decided to work together on this film. Then, when they brought the script to us, it definitely had that feeling of something that was meant to be."

Chesloff agrees: "We knew we wanted to do something else with Terri but we didn't know what it was going to be. When we met with her and Tandria, there was all this excitement and sense of shared purpose. This project is right in GMC's wheelhouse and we're thrilled with the way it's turned out."

GMC Network Presents a Clean Energy Entertainment and Nina Holiday Entertainment production "A CROSS TO BEAR" starring Danielle Deadwyler, Kim Fields, Malinda Williams, Tamika Tanner, Jackie Long, Angie Stone, Kenny Lattimore, Lecrae Moore and Karon Riley. Original Music by Travon Potts. Scored Music by Kenneth Lampl. Casting by Ann Wittenberg. Editor is Adrian Lovell. Director of photography is Samm Wallace. Producers are Cas Sigers Beedles, Terri J. Vaughn and Tandria Potts, with Shandra McDonald-Bradford co-producing. Screenplay by Cas Sigers Beedles. Directed by Tandria Potts.

### **About GMC**

GMC ([www.watchGMCTV.com](http://www.watchGMCTV.com)) is America's favorite channel for uplifting music and family entertainment. The Parents Television Council™ awarded its Entertainment Seal of Approval™ to GMC for being "an authentic family-friendly cable network." In 2011, GMC was the second fastest growing ad supported cable network in total day households and A18-49. GMC can be seen in over 51 million homes on various cable systems around the country, as well as DISH Network on channel 188, DIRECTV on channel 338 and Verizon FiOS on channel 224. Follow GMC TV on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/gmctv> and on Twitter @gmctv or <http://twitter.com/gmctv>.

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## ABOUT THE CAST

### **Danielle Deadwyler**

Danielle Deadwyler stars as Erica Moses and makes her television debut as Erica in the GMC world premiere original movie, *A Cross to Bear*. Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Danielle's artistry is rooted in dance, creative writing, and theatre. She has played on the Tony Award winning Alliance Theatre's stage as August March in "The Real Tweenagers of Atlanta." Her stage credits include a performance in Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre productions of "*for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough*" and "The Colored Museum," under the direction of Jasmine Guy. Danielle as also appeared in national commercials for AT&T's GoPhone and "The Mo'Nique Show".

### **Kim Fields**

Kim Fields stars as Joan Blackford in *A Cross to Bear*. She is highly regarded as not only a top actresses, but filmmaker and successful director/producer as well.

Known worldwide as an actress, starring in two long running series, "Facts of Life" and "Living Single," both currently in worldwide syndication, she is also an award-winning director. For the past year and a half, with nearly 100 episodes under her belt, Kim has been the lead director this season for Tyler Perry's "Meet the Browns" and "House of Payne." Kim recently directed BET's flagship scripted series, "Let's Stay Together." Additionally, she spent 5 years directing/producing the networks specials, events and documentaries.

Furthermore, she has received high esteem for her directing and producing of the documentary, "Discovering Monk" and "Trane: One Night @ Carnegie Hall." As well, she has written, executive produced and directed the networks first original mini-series "A Royal Birthday." A dedicated jazz fan, she's produced and directed a documentary profile of jazz saxophonist Najee, entitled, "Najee: Sax in South Africa."

Kim has also garnered global recognition as a poet and spoken word artist with her smooth Jazz/Spoken Word CD, "Smooth is Spoken Here" and appearances in several noteworthy music festivals, "HBO's Def Poetry" and "Soul Train."

As an acclaimed actress, Kim has accumulated numerous starring and guest starring roles, theater productions and TV movies including *Hidden Blessings*. Independent feature film credits include *An Uninvited Guest* and the romantic comedy *Me & Mrs. Jones*.

Kim is also a noted and highly sought after keynote speaker, and remains in demand to share her knowledge about women's issues, filmmaking, faith & family.

## **Malinda Williams**

Malinda Williams stars as Fae in *A Cross To Bear*. Armed with a license in cosmetology and a few small acting roles, Malinda left her home state of New Jersey and ambitiously set her sights on Hollywood. Originally intent on servicing the entertainment industry by opening her own hair salon, Malinda quickly found her beauty industry career giving way to her undeniable acting talent.

Twice nominated for an NAACP image award for "Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series", the determined young beauty made a name for herself, grabbing lead roles in films such as *The Wood*, *High School High*, and *An Uninvited Guest*. Malinda also starred in *Dancing in September*, *Sunset Park* and *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*. Her guest-starring television credits include "Law and Order: SVU" and "NYPD BLUE." Having just completed one of four film projects in 2011 which include *Percentage* with Ving Rhames and Macy Gray and Russ Parr's *The Undershepherd*, Malinda will appear next in Julie Delpy's *2 Days in New York*, where she co-stars alongside Chris Rock. This busy mom still finds time to mentor and work with non-profit organizations such as Black Girls Rock!, Take Wings and Chrysalis Foundations.

## **Tamika Tanner**

Tamika plays Tina in *A Cross To Bear*. She was born in Cleveland, Ohio and grew up in Atlanta, where she received most of her education. Tamika has shown interest in television, theatre and film throughout her life. She was ranked one of the top three high school students for video editing her senior year in the state of Georgia. A graduating of Howard University with a degree in Communications, she also attended the 14th Street Studio Theatre.

Throughout her college years Tamika participated in various events, including commercials, print ads and independent films. She toured with award winning playwright Theo London with his play "Loving him is killing me." She's also the proud owner of her own bakery, Gimme Some Suga Bakery Bar.

## **Jackie Long**

Jackie has appeared in numerous movies, television sitcoms, comedy bits and commercials. Jackie is slotted for the leading role in the upcoming feature film *Tomorrow Today* produced by his Billionaire Brotherhood (BBH) comrades, 50 Cent and Floyd "Money" Mayweather.

Jackie Long (actor/comedian) was born to entertain. Growing up in southern California he knew early in life that he wanted to share his comedic gift with the world. "I was the class clown growing up, the one who always made people laugh," says Long. So with that bright sense of humor and boyish smile Long's career started to flourish soon after high school. He paid his dues doing it his way. He often tells the story of how he worked his way through the ranks of the Hollywood matrix. Living by his mantra "Always do what you do best and that stay blessed". Long continues his rise in the entertainment industry with his charismatic persona.

Long has appeared in a number of movies, television sitcoms, comedy bits and commercials including *Hurricane Season* with Forest Whitaker, *Soulmen*, with the late-Bernie Mac, Isaac Hayes and Samuel L. Jackson. Other past films include *Love Wrecked* with Amanda Bynes, *Love for Sale* with Mya, *ATL* with rap artist TI, Evan Ross & Lauren London, which was produced by Will Smith, *The Comebacks* with Nick Searcy, Carl Weathers, Melora Hardin and Mathew Lawrence and *Idlewild* with Big Boi and Andre 3000 of Outkast. Jackie has done a slew of commercials for Toyota, McDonalds, KGB, Nike, US Army, Al Gore's "We" Campaign, Honda, Sprite and Cingular.

Jackie Long's passion for life, laughter and people reflects in his private life as well. "I really enjoy helping others. I've been working with his charitable organization, Think Green Worldwide, where he is an advocate of an "eco-friendly lifestyle." Recently, Jackie has joined forces with the NAACP and The Achievement Academy to encourage the youth to strive for excellence. Jackie reminds you to "LIVE YOUR DREAM".

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Tandria Potts – Director/Producer**

Tandria Potts is a feature film, music video and television producer and director. Her credits include field producing Centric/BET's newest biography series, "As Written," as well as a TV bio show on Cedric the Entertainer, and The Original Seven (the band formerly known as The Time). Potts produced and directed the music video, "His Will" and will next produce and direct *The Schoolhouse Door*, a true story about the life of civil rights activist Vivian Malone Jones produced through her Clean Energy Entertainment (CEE) production company. Potts is on the Board of Director's of Women in Film & Television Atlanta (WIFTA). *A Cross To Bear* is Potts' feature film directorial debut.

### **Cas Sigers Beedles – Producer/Writer**

Cas Sigers Beedles, a native of North Carolina, is a professional writer of nine years, and a highly motivated business mogul. Cas started her career in the business of clothing design. Upon graduation from North Carolina State University, she worked as a children's wear designer for Rumble Tumble Inc. After six years as a designer, she made her transition into the entertainment world, working as a costumer for film and stage.

In 2005, Nina Holiday Entertainment was created, with business partner, actress, Terri J. Vaughn. The entertainment company was created with the purpose of developing feature film and television projects. In 2006, Nina Holiday produced and shot the feature film *Angels Can't Help But Laugh*, a documentary on the lives of 25 black Hollywood actresses. As a producer, Sigers has worked with national shows, *Welcome to Dreamland*, *Platinum House*, and *Tiny & Toya*. and Currently, Sigers is the associate director for the TV-One series Verses & Flow and the supervising producer for BET/Centric's music documentary series As Written.

She is an author with Kensington Press under the imprint Urban Books. Her novels *Pieces of a Man*, *Love is Simple*, *Forever is Tricky*, *The Virgin Widow*, *At Last I Bloom* and *Three Chords & the Truth* are categorized under women's fiction and distributed throughout the world in national bookstore chains, Target and Wal-Mart. She is currently writing a science fiction novel entitled *The Counsel* and a series of faith based books entitled *Saints & Sinners*.

### **Terri J. Vaughn - Producer**

Terri J. Vaughn has entertained us on television for more than ten years. First, she stole America's heart with her lovable portrayal of *Lovita Alizay Jenkins* on "The Steve Harvey Show." Vaughn confesses, "I loved playing a character that grew up in the 'hood and who worked hard to be positive because it was very close to my own life." After that, Vaughn made her way to UPN's "All of Us." With her fun, energetic and wise portrayal of *Jonelle Abrams*, she once again brought life and laughter to the small screen. Now she brings Renee, a sexy, sassy and hilarious nurse, to life on Tyler Perry's "Meet The Browns." But, before Vaughn ever had her first audition, she was growing up in a housing project in Hunter's Point in San Francisco. Today, this woman is hell-bent on creating positive, inspirational experiences for other young women growing up in the projects. Out of her desire to give back to her community, in 1997, Vaughn started Take Wings Foundation. "We motivate, uplift and inspire young girls, 13 to 18 years old, growing up in at risk communities and foster care, in the San Francisco Bay Area, to be positive, productive and successful. It's truly amazing to watch them soar."

From her first professional job in a 20-city tour of "Tellin' it Like it Tiz" to her first sitcom role on the hit show "Living Single," to a memorable turn as a single mother wrongly accused of abusing her child on "ER," this San Francisco native has proven herself to be a talent to be reckoned with. Vaughn has been honored with three Image Awards for Outstanding Supporting Actress for her work on "The Steve Harvey Show," and received a nomination for a 2005 BET Comedy Award for her work on "All of Us." But this multi-faceted thespian doesn't stop there; she was also nominated for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series for her work on "Soulfood," as *Eva Holly*, a lesbian, who shocked Showtime viewers by passionately kissing Byrd (Malinda Williams), during her multi-episode guest arc on the groundbreaking series.

Included on Vaughn's resume is the Tyler Perry film "Daddy's Little Girls," where Vaughn gets to flex her acting chops as the bitchy Brenda, playing opposite Gabrielle Union and Idris Elba. She can also be seen in the independent dramedy, "Dirty Laundry," starring opposite Rockmond Dunbar and Loretta Devine and "3 Can Play That Game," where Vaughn is hilarious. Along with starring in other independent projects and conducting her Atlanta based acting school at Tree Sound Studios, Vaughn adds to her list of can-do's, by producing and starring in the first film, under her and producing partner, Cas Siger's production company, Nina Holiday Entertainment. "Angels Can't Help But Laugh," a documentary on black actresses and the climate of the business today. The

piece has been uplifting and inspiring audiences in and out of the business. Nina Holiday Entertainment is currently in pre-production of their second film and developing their first television series.

### **About Nina Holiday Entertainment**

Nina Holiday Entertainment is an independent production company founded in 2005 by Terri J. Vaughn and writer Cas Sigers Beedles. The company has produced a variety of projects including *Angels Can't Help But Laugh*, a documentary on the lives of 25 black Hollywood actresses, and *Naked*, the company's feature film debut.