



For Immediate Release

**ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER CUBA GOODING JR.
(*SELMA*, *JERRY MAGUIRE*) STARS IN THE UP PREMIERE MOVIE**

LIFE OF A KING

**BASED ON THE POWERFUL, TRUE STORY OF EUGENE BROWN
AND HIS ACTIVE, INSPIRING
BIG CHAIR CHESS CLUB IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**The NAACP Image Award Nominee for Outstanding Independent Motion Picture
Premieres Exclusively on Sunday, January 18 at 7 p.m. EST / 6 p.m. PST**

**Special Encore on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,
Monday, January 19 at 9 p.m. EST / 8 p.m. PST**

***"Teach the un-teachable, reach the un-reachable,
and always think before you move." - Eugene Brown***

ATLANTA – January 9, 2015 – UP presents the exclusive television premiere of the NAACP Image Award-nominated film *Life of a King*, the inspiring, unlikely true story of Eugene Brown and his one-man mission (bigchairchessclub.org) to give the inner-city kids of Washington D.C. something he never had – a future. During his 18-year incarceration for bank robbery, Eugene discovered a multitude of life lessons through the game of chess. After his release and reentry into the workforce, Eugene developed and founded The Big Chair Chess Club and changed the lives of a group of teens with no endgame. Starring Academy Award® winner Cuba Gooding Jr. (*Selma*, *Jerry Maguire*), UP Premiere Movie *Life of a King* will make its television debut on **Sunday, January 18 at 7:00 p.m. EST / 6:00 p.m. PST**. A special encore of the film will air the following night on **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Monday, January 19 at 9 p.m. EST / 8 p.m. PST**.

Produced by Animus Films & Serena Films production, the film is written and directed by Jake Goldberger (*Don McKay*). Dan Wetzel, a writer and columnist for Yahoo! Sports, co-wrote the script with David Scott and Goldberger. The movie's ensemble cast also includes Malcolm M. Mays (*Glorious, On the Run*), Richard T. Jones (UP's *Lyfe's Journey*, "Judging Amy"), Paula Jai Parker (*Pastor Shirley*, "The Proud Family"), Carlton Byrd (*The Last/First Kiss*, "Castle") with LisaGay Hamilton ("Men of a Certain Age," "The Practice") and Dennis Haysbert ("Backstrom," "24"), newcomer Kevin Hendricks, Pepi Sonuga ("General Hospital"), Jordan Calloway (*Drumline: A New Beat*, "Unfabulous") and Rachae Thomas ("Laps"). The real-life Eugene Brown makes a cameo in the film.

"We are proud to share the powerful, real-life story of Eugene Brown's *Life of a King* with our viewers," said Sophia Kelley, senior vice president of programming, UP. "Eugene's difficult personal journey and generous spirit led him to found The Big Chair Chess Club. His life dramatically illustrates how simple acts of kindness – like teaching someone chess – can change lives and inspire communities."

UP Premiere Movie *Life of a King* is the unlikely true story of Eugene Brown (Cuba Gooding Jr.) and his one-man mission to give inner-city kids of Washington D.C. something he never had – a future. During his 18-year incarceration for bank robbery, Eugene discovered a multitude of life lessons through the game of chess. After his release and reentry into the workforce, Eugene developed and founded the Big Chair Chess Club to get kids off the streets and working towards lives they never believed they were capable of due to circumstances. From his daring introductory chess lessons to a group of unruly high school students in detention to the development of the Club and the teens' first local chess competitions, this movie reveals his difficult, inspirational journey and how he changed the lives of a group of teens with no endgame.

UP presents *Life of a King*, an Animus Films and Serena Films production. Starring Cuba Gooding Jr., Malcolm M. Mays, Richard T. Jones, Paula Jai Parker, Carlton Byrd, LisaGay Hamilton, Dennis Haysbert, Kevin Hendricks, Pepi Sonuga, Jordan Calloway, and Rachae Thomas. Directed by Jake Goldberger. Written by Jake Goldberger and Dan Wetzel & David Scott. Produced by Tatiana Kelly and Jim Young. Co-Produced by Steak House, Valerie Stadler and Mary Vernieu. Casting by Mary Vernieu and Lindsay Graham. Director of Photography was Mark Schwartzbard. Editor was Julie Garces. Music by Eric V. Hachikian.

Follow our cast at:

- www.UPTv.com/LifeOfAKing
- Malcolm M. Mays on Twitter [@iMalcolmMays](https://twitter.com/iMalcolmMays)
- Richard T. Jones on Twitter [@richjonesactor](https://twitter.com/richjonesactor)
- Paula Jai Parker on Twitter [@pjaiparker](https://twitter.com/pjaiparker)
- Carlton Byrd on Twitter [@carltonbyrd](https://twitter.com/carltonbyrd)
- Dennis Haysbert on Twitter [@HaysbertDennis](https://twitter.com/HaysbertDennis)
- Pepi Sonuga on Twitter [@PepiSonuga](https://twitter.com/PepiSonuga)
- Jordan Calloway on Twitter [@JordanCalloway1](https://twitter.com/JordanCalloway1)
- Rachae Thomas online at www.rachaethomas.com

About UP

UP, America's favorite network for uplifting entertainment is a 24-hour television network that provides high-quality, diverse, family-friendly programming, including original and premiere movies, theatricals, drama and comedy series, music and holiday specials. UP can be seen in 67 million homes in high definition (HD) and standard definition (SD) on cable systems including Comcast, Time Warner Cable, Cablevision, Bright House Networks, Charter and Cox Communications as well as DIRECTV (Channel 338), DISH Network (Channel 188) and Verizon FIOS (Channel 224). As part of its mission to entertain and uplift, the network's pro-social initiative "Uplift Someone" reminds and inspires people to do simple acts of kindness. UP is also a service provider to its sister network ASPIRE. Based in Atlanta, UP is a division of UP Entertainment, LLC, which also offers gMovies, the first faith-friendly streaming movie service. Follow UP on the Web at www.UPtv.com, on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/UPtv>, Twitter on [@UPtv](https://twitter.com/UPtv) and Instagram at UP_TV.

About Animus Films

Producer Jim Young started Animus Films eleven years ago. Young's first production was the award-winning documentary *Year of the Bull*, which premiered on Showtime. He next produced the thriller *Homecoming*, directed by Morgan J. Freeman and starring Mischa Barton, Jessica Stroup and Matt Long. Paramount Pictures released the film. Young then produced the dark comedy *Don McKay*, starring Academy Award® nominees Thomas Haden Church and Elisabeth Shue, and Academy Award®-winning Melissa Leo. The film premiered at Tribeca Film Festival and was released theatrically by Image Entertainment. Young's next film *The Words*, starring Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Irons, Dennis Quaid, Olivia Wilde and Zoe Saldana, was the Closing Night Film at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. CBS Films released the film. *Lovelace*, starring Amanda Seyfried, Peter Sarsgaard, Sharon Stone, Sarah Jessica Parker, Hank Azaria and James Franco, premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. Academy Award®-winning filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman directed the drama. *Life of a King* debuted at the 2013 Los Angeles Film Festival and was released by Millennium Entertainment. Animus' most recent production was *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, starring Dev Patel, Jeremy Irons, Toby Jones, and Stephen Fry. Young was a fellow in the Film Independent Producer's Lab and received the prestigious Alfred P. Sloan Producer's Grant. Previously, Young was a Creative Executive at actor Bill Paxton's American Entertainment Company. He is a member of the Producer's Guild of America and attended New York University.

About Serena Films

Serena Films is a production company started by Tatiana Kelly. Kelly's first film, "Wristcutters: A Love Story," starred Patrick Fugit, Shannyn Sossamon, Will Arnett, John Hawkes, Shea Whigham, and Tom Waits. It premiered at Sundance in 2006, was released by Lionsgate, earned two Independent Spirit Award nominations, was screened in over 30 film festivals, and was an eight-time Best Feature festival winner. Subsequent productions were "Happiness Runs" starring Rutger Hauer, Andie MacDowell, Shiloh Fernandez, and Jesse Plemons; "Smother" starring Steven Bauer and Taryn Manning and directed by acclaimed photography/sculpture/film video artist Luis Gispert; and "Dark Yellow," starring Melora Walters and John Hawkes and directed by world-renowned photographer Glen Luchford. Theatrical releases include "The Words," which was the Closing Night film in 2012 at Sundance and starred Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Irons, Dennis Quaid, Zoë Saldana, and Olivia Wilde; and "The Procession," written and directed by Academy Award®-nominated writer Robert Festinger ("In The Bedroom"), starring Lily Tomlin, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, and Lucy Punch, and "Life Of A King" which premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival, starring Cuba Gooding Jr. Other films include "Sunset Stories," which premiered at SXSW and starred Monique Curnen, Sung Kang, Joshua Leonard, Zosia Mamet, with cameos by Jim Parsons and Kevin Bacon; "Amos' Wake," starring Shiloh Fernandez and Keisha Castle-Hughes; and "Perfection," based on the short film "Slice," which

premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. The film was a participant in IFP's Independent Filmmaker Lab, and winner of the Adrienne Shelly Female Directing Grant. In addition, Kelly has shot pilots for Bravo, E! and USA Networks. She is currently packaging "Cut Throat City" to be directed by RZA ("Man With The Iron Fist"). Future productions include "The Catcher Was a Spy," based on the NY Times bestseller, directed by Ben Lewin ("The Sessions") and written by Academy Award®-nominated writer Robert Rodat ("Saving Private Ryan", "The Patriot"); "House of Curl," starring Guy Pearce and Laura Linney; and "Hotel Street," a TV show with Tribeca Productions and written by Stephen Kronish (Emmy® Award winner for "24" and "The Kennedys").

Note to Editor: For additional press materials, high resolution photos and screeners, please visit:

www.UPTV.com/pressroom.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Chelsye J. Burrows

770.692.4559

cburrows@UPTV.com

David Gardner

770.692.9939

dgardner@UPTV.com

"When I teach chess, I always get the kids to identify themselves as the king. One thing about being the king: You are the thinker – male or female...Because when the game was first explained to me, and I really had to accept all of the blame, and I couldn't really blame anybody else. I had kind of ran out of excuses. And when I accepted my kingship for all the moves I made, then my life changed dramatically. Life of a King is the life of a thinker."

- Eugene Brown

EUGENE BROWN (FOUNDER AND CEO OF THE BIG CHAIR CHESS CLUB)

Eugene Brown uses chess to teach inner-city children a lesson of life he learned the hard way: "To Always Think Before You Move." This has become the mantra for Eugene Brown's philosophy, and a way of life. He knows whereof he speaks.

Brown started playing chess while he was incarcerated in federal prison following a botched bank robbery. Chess was a good distraction from the dreary routine and depressing world around him.

Born in Washington, D.C., Brown is 60 years old. He attended the inner city, District of Columbia Public Schools, where he was diagnosed as requiring social adjustment classes. His anti-social behavioral lead to early brushes with Juvenile Justice Law Enforcement, resulting in early incarceration at correctional youth institutions as a teen, and prison time as an adult.

Today, Brown, the Founder and CEO of The Big Chair Chess Club (bigchairchessclub.org) is a father, grandfather, a real estate agent, and mentor to D.C. youths who stop by The Deanwood Chess House (located at 4322 Sheriff Road, NE), as a way to avoid the "Big House" later in life. Brown believes that having 6 and 7 year olds learn to play chess as one way to set them on the right course.

The Big Chair Chess Club, Inc. was founded and formed to reach the un-reachable, teach the un-teachable and instilling the motto, "To Always Think Before You Move." This is the core mission of The Big Chair Chess Club, Inc. at the Deanwood Branch located in the nation's capital. The Organization teaches chess to inner-city children and adults not just as a board game, but also as an application to life skills, such as improving one's concentration and self-discipline.

Members of The Big Chair Chess Club, Inc. team have competed in the National Scholastic Tournament in Nashville, TN and Charlotte, NC, as well as the Super National Tournament in Kansas City, MI and won trophies. The Big Chair Chess Club, Inc. has trained elementary school students at several schools, including the Kimball Elementary School where they trained and coached the students through seven years of city championships.

The Big Chair Chess Club, Inc., is a non-profit 501 © (3) IRS organization. The organization does not receive any support from the government or the U. S. Chess Federation. Funding comes entirely from supporters, sponsors and community who agree efforts without their assistance.

A community activist, Brown is planning to extend and expand services provided by the organization to include job training and placement, apprenticeship programs for the youth and adults, computer literacy skills, life skills, and after school tutoring. He is presently involved with developing and implementing re-entry programs for youths and adults who are poised for release from prison.

The real-life Eugene Brown (with his checkerboard hat) makes a cameo in the film. Brown has appeared on ABC, Up Close, and appeared on radio and other local television programs.