



ESSENCE PARTNERS WITH MUSIC LEGEND CHAKA KHAN TO HONOR WOMEN

ESSENCE, THE CHAKA KHAN FOUNDATION, AND THE INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES GIVE BACK TO THE NEW ORLEANS COMMUNITY

50 DESERVING WOMEN TO EMBARK ON LIFE-CHANGING TRANSFORMATIONS AT 2011 ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL JULY 1-3

(June 2, 2011) NEW YORK, N.Y. – Music legend **Chaka Khan** joins the **2011 ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL**, not only as a main stage performer on Saturday, July 2, but also to significantly impact the lives of 50 women, ages 18-35, from the greater New Orleans area. Chaka Khan's **The Chaka Khan Foundation** in conjunction with the **Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies** along with **Senator Mary Landrieu, Congressman Cedric Richmond, Mayor Mitch Landrieu**, and the **2011 ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL** will begin an in-depth life and community-altering transformation process for 50 women beginning **June 4th**. The results-oriented program will provide a structured way for each woman to reach her goals; carried out with the help of community partners, agencies, and mentors.

The year-long process will commence with one-on-one counseling and mentorships for each woman to map out her goals (e.g. continuing education, job development, securing housing, etc.) followed by a VIP experience at the 17th annual ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL during Fourth of July weekend. The selected women will meet with Chaka Khan, as well as author/inspirational speaker Iyanla Vanzant, at the Festival and then continue on their path to personal and community improvement. Next year, at the 2012 ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL, each woman will return to celebrate her achievements at a special graduation ceremony before embarking on another journey where they will pay forward what they have received and learned for a new group of women.

"As mothers, as life givers and the first teachers of our children, it is important that women are empowered and have the confidence to know that they can change any situation," says Chaka Khan, 10-time Grammy winner and Founder of The Chaka Khan Foundation. "I see this collaboration with ESSENCE and the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies as a powerful means to provide each of these women the resources to live into their God given destiny."

"Improving the lives of women of color and that of their families has long been a driving force behind the ESSENCE brand," says Michelle Ebanks, President of Essence Communications, Inc. "This year's collaboration with The Chaka Khan Foundation and the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies perfectly mirrors this mission and further expands upon our ESSENCE Empowerment Experience theme of 'Transformation' by allowing us to spotlight and honor deserving women, follow their progress and track their results that will change their lives forever."

"It is very important that institutions within a civil society take action to help survivors regain their resiliency and optimism after widespread disasters. Women in particular need such support, for research shows that they are disproportionately traumatized during and after disasters, said Dr. Denese Shervington, Founder & President of the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES). "I applaud ESSENCE and the Chaka Khan Foundation for embracing this role and helping to bring transformative healing to 50 such women from the Greater New Orleans community."

The ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL started in 1995 as a one-time event to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the magazine and has since become a yearly music-focused spectacular, as well as a catalyst for community progression for the city of New Orleans and national empowerment for African-Americans from coast to coast.

For information about ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL ticket sales, accommodations and the latest updates, and to sign up for the ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL newsletter, visit <http://www.essencemusicfestival.com>. Join the Festival community: follow us on Twitter @essencemusic #EMF2011 and become a fan of 2011 Essence Music Festival on Facebook.

The presenting sponsor for the 2011 Essence Music Festival is **Coca-Cola**. Major sponsors include **Coors Light, CoverGirl Queen Collection, Ford, McDonald's, Olay, Pantene, Tide, U.S. Army, Verizon** and **Wal-Mart**; official sponsors include **CNN, My Black is Beautiful, State Farm, TNT** and **Visa Pre-Paid**.

The 2011 ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL is executive produced by Essence Festivals LLC, a division of Essence Communications Inc. (ECI).

ABOUT CHAKA KHAN FOUNDATION:

The Chaka Khan Foundation (CKF) was founded in 1999 by 10 time Grammy® Award winner and legendary entertainer, Chaka Khan. The foundation's mission is to educate, inspire and empower women and children. Chaka and the CKF have received community accolades for their achievements serving women and children with ground-breaking initiatives in education and with health issues.

ABOUT INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES:

Founded in 1993, the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES) is a national nonprofit community-based organization headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana. The organization is dedicated to improving the physical, mental and spiritual health and quality of life for women of color and their families, especially those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

ABOUT ESSENCE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.:

Essence Communications Inc. (ECI) is the number one media and communications company dedicated to African-American women. With a multi-platform presence in publishing, live events, and online, the Essence brand is "Where Black Women Come First". The company's flagship publication, ESSENCE magazine, is the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African-American women; generating brand extensions such as the Essence Music Festival, ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood, Window on Our Women (WOW I & II) and Smart Beauty I, II & III consumer insights, the Essence Book Club, Essence.com, and ventures in digital media (mobile, television and VOD). For more than 40 years, ESSENCE magazine, which has a brand reach of over 8 million, has been the leading source of cutting-edge information relating to every area of African-American women's lives. Additional information about ECI and ESSENCE is available at www.essence.com.

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