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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***The Jackie Robinson Foundation to Salute  
Trailblazers Don Newcombe and Suzanne de Passe at Celebrating Excellence Gala***  
Event Slated for May 11<sup>th</sup> at Beverly Hilton Featuring Live Performance by Brian McKnight

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April 13, 2006, Los Angeles, CA – The Jackie Robinson Foundation will host its second annual **Celebrating Excellence Gala** at **The Beverly Hilton** on **Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>** at 6:30pm. The event is being co-chaired by acclaimed actress **Jasmine Guy** and NASDAQ executive **John Vitale**.

The evening will pay tribute to **Don Newcombe** and **Suzanne de Passe**, whose dynamic and enthusiastic commitment to improving the human condition mirror the spirit of Jackie Robinson, while raising funds for The Jackie Robinson Foundation's Education and Leadership Development Program . Adding to the pulse of the historic night will be a special performance by **Brian McKnight**, who recently released his eighth studio album *Gemini* on the Motown Label.

The event will also serve as the kick-off for the second round of the Foundation's *Stars Pitch for Education* auction live at [www.ebay.com/jackierobinson](http://www.ebay.com/jackierobinson) from May 8<sup>th</sup> to May 28<sup>th</sup>. Prizes include separate Spike Lee and Sean "Diddy" Combs signed replica Mitchell & Ness Jackie Robinson jerseys and a stunning museum quality ring from Bvlgari.

"It is fitting that as we return to the city where Jackie's trailblazing crusades began while he was a student-athlete at UCLA, we recognize the tremendous achievements of Don Newcombe and Suzanne de Passe," said Della Britton Baeza, President and CEO of The Jackie Robinson Foundation.

From his playing days, when he would travel the country advocating on behalf of the civil rights agenda to his current work dedicated to expanding opportunities for young people as Director of Community Relations for the Dodgers, Don Newcombe epitomizes Jackie Robinson's guiding tenet, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." Jackie Robinson and Don Newcombe became teammates in 1949 after Newcombe spent three seasons in the Dodgers minor league system. In his first year in the big leagues, Don Newcombe posted an 18-7 record, en route to winning the "Rookie of the Year Award." He went on to guide the team to a 1955 World Series Championship. One of the most beloved players in Dodgers history, Newcombe is the only pitcher to ever win the Rookie of the Year Award, Cy Young Award, and MVP Award.

Like Jackie Robinson, Suzanne de Passe altered the landscape of the country, changing the face of corporate America. Having assembled one of the most successful careers of any executive in the music and entertainment business, de Passe opened the door for generations of talented minority leaders to assume senior roles in the industry. She earned two Emmy and NAACP Image Awards for her work as executive producer of *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today and Forever* and *Motown Returns to the Apollo*. de Passe also served as executive producer of "*Lonesome Dove: The Outlaw Years*." In 2002, she was

named Time Warner Visiting Professor to the Department of Radio, Television and Film at Howard University's John H. Johnson School of Communications, a post she held for three years.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation, with national headquarters in New York, opened a Los Angeles office in 2004 to expand its presence and programmatic offerings. Tickets to the *Celebrating Excellence Gala* are available for \$500, with table prices ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. To purchase a ticket or a table, please contact Blue Room Events at (310) 491-1401 or email amy@blueroomevents.com.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF) is a public, not-for-profit national organization founded by Rachel Robinson in 1973 as a vehicle to perpetuate the memory of Jackie Robinson and his achievements. It provides four year college scholarships as well as educational and leadership development opportunities for students of color with strong capabilities, but limited financial resources. The Foundation strives to assure that the legacy of Jackie Robinson's activism and commitment to social justice will be carried forth in the personal, community and institutional lives of these individuals as they assume leadership roles throughout society.

Each year, the Foundation receives more than 3,500 applications from students across the country. This academic year, JRF is awarding \$1.8 million to 266 young men and women, attending 93 different colleges and universities. Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholars maintain a 97 percent graduation rate, more than twice the national average graduation rate for minority students.

The Foundation currently has 22 scholars attending UCLA. Since 1983, the beginning of the Foundation's relationship with UCLA, JRF scholars have had a 100% graduation rate. Across the state of California, The Jackie Robinson Foundation is supporting 41 scholars at schools including Stanford, UC Berkeley, Claremont McKenna, UC Davis and UC Riverside.

For additional information on The Jackie Robinson Foundation, its programs and events, please visit [www.jackierobinson.org](http://www.jackierobinson.org) or call (213) 330-7726.

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