

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**JACKIE ROBINSON FOUNDATION HOSTS ANNUAL AWARDS
DINNER HONORING SEAN “DIDDY” COMBS, JOSEPH R.
PERELLA AND INGRID SAUNDERS JONES, RAISING OVER \$ 1.4
MILLION**

*Entertainment Icon Bill Cosby Hosted Star-Studded Gala for Nation’s Premiere
Minority Scholarship and Mentoring Program, Drawing 1,000 Attendees at the
Waldorf=Astoria*

NEW YORK (March 15, 2011) – The Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF) celebrated its 38th year with a star-studded gala at the Waldorf=Astoria on March 7, 2011. Attracting more than 1,000 supporters and over \$1.4 million in donations, the Annual Awards Dinner paid tribute to those who embody the humanitarian ideals of Jackie Robinson and who helped raise money for the Foundation’s premiere minority scholarship and mentoring program. Once again hosted by legendary entertainer **Bill Cosby**, the gala bestowed its prestigious ROBIE Awards on **Sean “Diddy” Combs** (Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bad Boy Entertainment Group), **Ingrid Saunders Jones** (Senior Vice President, The Coca-Cola Company), and **Joseph R. Perella** (Founding Partner, Chairman and CEO of Perella Weinberg Partners), who were honored for their contributions and innovation in the entertainment and fashion, consumer product and financial arenas, respectively. Grammy Award® winning singer, Chrisette Michele dazzled the audience and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg gave a stirring speech on a new education initiative to support young men in the public school system.

“We were proud to salute three transformational figures whose professional achievements and philanthropic initiatives lend credence to Jackie Robinson’s often quoted dictum, “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives,” said JRF President and CEO Della Britton Baeza.

The evening raised funds for the Foundation, which provides generous four year college scholarships, graduate school grants, extensive mentoring and leadership training to academically distinguished minority students who otherwise would not have the financial resources to attend college. More than 200 of the JRF Scholars were present for the event and in accepting her award, ROBIE Humanitarian Award recipient Ingrid Saunders Jones spoke to them directly, saying, “I want you to know that our expectations of you are very large. I want you to know that my path to this job, to this place, required making choices that were at the time filled with risk...Each of these moves gave me the skills I needed to reach this place so that I could work with purpose.”

Mr. Perella, recipient of the ROBIE Award for Achievement in Industry, said that in preparing remarks for the ceremony, he found a quote from Mrs. Robinson in which she noted Jackie Robinson’s involvement in the Civil Rights movement. This led him to really study the award’s name sake. He concluded that, “Jackie was more than a baseball player.” And that, “It is no wonder to me that Martin Luther King Jr. referred to Jackie as a freedom rider before there were freedom rides.”

“This is the best award I’ve ever gotten in my life,” noted Mr. Combs, who received the Foundation’s Achievement in Industry Award. “What Jackie Robinson has done for culture is more powerful than just changing the face of sports and breaking down the color barrier. He changed all of our lives. To be mentioned in the same sentence as Jackie Robinson, I had to ask myself if I was ready for it and if I was worthy of it.”

Also contributing to the unforgettable evening were **Russell Simmons** (Founder, Def Jam Records), **Reverend Dr. Calvin Butts III** (Pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church), and **Ray McGuire** (Head of Global Investment Banking, Citi) and who presented the ROBIE Awards to Combs, Jones, and Perella, respectively.

The evening also showcased the achievements of Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholars, including four students who recounted their experience of JRF. JRF/Unilever Scholar Ebenezer Asare, a senior at Harvard University and JRF/Sheila C. Johnson Foundation Scholar Pamela Champ, a senior at Hampton University's School of Business served as the events co-hosts with entertainer Bill Cosby.

The Annual Awards Dinner has recognized some of the most decorated names in business, politics, education, media, sports and the arts, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, J. W. Marriott, Jr., Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr., Clive Davis, Spike Lee, Ruth J. Simmons, Allan H. (Bud) Selig, Henry L. "Hank" Aaron, John Welch Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, George Lucas, Marian Wright Edelman, Arthur Ashe, Michael Jordan, Tom Brokaw, Dr. Sheila C. Johnson, Robert Redford, Robin Roberts and Katharine Graham.

Established in 1973, the Jackie Robinson Foundation is the nation's premier education and leadership development program. Transcending financial assistance, the Foundation equips its scholarship recipients with a comprehensive set of support services including mentoring, career guidance and practical life skills, resulting in a nearly 100% graduation rate, more than twice the national average for minority students. The over 1,400 JRF alumni are both leaders in their professional fields and consummate ambassadors of Jackie Robinson's legacy of community service.

This 2010-2011 academic year, JRF provided generous financial aid and program support to 220 Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholars representing 31 states and the District of Columbia and enrolled in 92 different colleges and universities across the country.

For more information about JRF, visit www.jackierobinson.org.

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