

(For immediate release)

SIDNEY POITIER TO BE HONOURED WITH BAFTA FELLOWSHIP

London, 12 January 2016: The British Academy of Film and Television Arts will honour Sir Sidney Poitier with the Fellowship at the EE British Academy Film Awards on Sunday 14 February.

Awarded annually, the Fellowship is the highest accolade bestowed by BAFTA upon an individual in recognition of an outstanding and exceptional contribution to film, television or games.

Fellows previously honoured for their work in film include Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, Sean Connery, Elizabeth Taylor, Stanley Kubrick, Anthony Hopkins, Laurence Olivier, Judi Dench, Vanessa Redgrave, Christopher Lee, Martin Scorsese, Alan Parker and Helen Mirren. Mike Leigh received the Fellowship at last year's Film Awards.

Sidney Poitier said: "I am extremely honored to have been chosen to receive the Fellowship and my deep appreciation to the British Academy for the recognition."

Amanda Berry OBE, Chief Executive of BAFTA, said: "I'm absolutely thrilled that Sidney Poitier is to become a Fellow of BAFTA. Sidney is a luminary of film whose outstanding talent in front of the camera, and important work in other fields, has made him one of the most important figures of his generation. His determination to pursue his dreams is an inspirational story for young people starting out in the industry today. By recognising Sidney with the Fellowship at the Film Awards on Sunday 14 February, BAFTA will be honouring one of cinema's true greats."

Sir Sidney Poitier's award-winning career features six BAFTA nominations, including one BAFTA win, and a British Academy Britannia Award for Lifetime Contribution to International Film.

Poitier began his acting career on Broadway in the 1940s before moving to film in 1950, receiving his first credit as Dr Luther Brooks in *No Way Out*. He was the first African-American to play a wide range of leading roles; he was BAFTA-nominated for his performances in *Edge of the City*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Lilles of the Field*, (for which he was the first African-American to win the Oscar for Best Actor in 1964) *A Patch of Blue*, *In the Heat of the Night* and *The Defiant Ones*, for which he won a BAFTA in 1959. His other acting credits include *Blackboard Jungle*, *To Sir With Love*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *Sneakers*, *The Jackal* and *Porgy and Bess*. Poitier was awarded an Honorary Oscar in 2002 "for his extraordinary performances and unique presence on the screen and for representing the industry with dignity, style and intelligence." Poitier has also been nominated for seven Golden Globes, winning once, and was presented with the Cecil B DeMille Award in 1982.

Alongside his illustrious acting career, Poitier has directed nine feature films including the Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder comedy, *Stir Crazy*, as well as *Buck and the Preacher*, *Uptown Saturday Night* and *Fast Forward*.

In television, Poitier's acting credits include *Separate but Equal*, *Children of the Dust* and, portaying Nelson Mandela, *Mandela and de Clerk*.

As well as pushing the boundaries of his craft on screen, Poitier played an active role in the American civil rights campaign and served as Ambassador of the Bahamas to Japan and UNESCO from 1997 to 2007. In 1974, Queen Elizabeth II conferred a knighthood on Poitier, and in 2009 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award of the USA, by President Obama.

The EE British Academy Film Awards take place on Sunday 14 February at the Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden. Stephen Fry will be returning to host this year's ceremony, which will be broadcast exclusively on BBC One in the UK and in all major territories around the world. On the night, www.bafta.org will feature red carpet highlights, photography and winners interviews, as well as dedicated coverage on its social networks including Facebook (/BAFTA), Twitter (@BAFTA / #EEBAFTAs), Tumblr and Instagram.

Notes to editors: Previous BAFTA honours for Sidney Poitier

Competitive award nominations (win in bold)

Year*	Film	Category
1958	<i>Edge of the City</i>	Best Foreign Actor
1959	The Defiant Ones	Best Foreign Actor
1962	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Best Foreign Actor
1965	<i>Lilies of the Field</i>	Best Foreign Actor
1967	<i>A Patch of Blue</i>	Best Foreign Actor
1968	<i>In the Heat of the Night</i>	Best Foreign Actor

Honorary

Year*	Category
2006	Britannia Award for Lifetime Contribution to International Film

*Awards presented in

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About BAFTA

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts is an independent charity that supports, develops and promotes the art forms of the moving image by identifying and rewarding excellence, inspiring practitioners and benefiting the public. In addition to its Awards ceremonies, BAFTA has a year-round programme of learning events and initiatives – featuring workshops, masterclasses, scholarships, lectures and mentoring schemes – in the UK, USA and Asia; it offers unique access to the world's most inspiring talent and connects with a global audience of all ages and backgrounds. BAFTA relies on income from membership subscriptions, individual donations, trusts, foundations and corporate partnerships to support its ongoing outreach work. To access the best creative minds in film, television and games production, visit www.bafta.org/guru. For more, visit www.bafta.org.

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