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For Black History Month, Wal-Mart® Voices of Color™ spoke with two people who have made history; Jeff Friday, founder and CEO of Film Life, Inc., which produced the first televised Black Movie Awards, and Shola (pronounced Shau-lah) Lynch, the director of the acclaimed documentary, *Chisholm '72 - Unbought & Unbossed*, the story of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for president.

**VOC:** Jeff, what do you think are breakthrough moments in the history of Black filmmaking?

**JEFF:** Blacks have made phenomenal breakthroughs in the realm of art and business. Denzel and Halle winning best actor and actress Oscars® was a breakthrough. The ability of John Singleton and Spike Lee to go from "independents" to successful, commercial directors is a breakthrough. But we can't always judge our accomplishments based on the standards of the mainstream. We have to think about what the next breakthrough will be for us. We have to own the rights to our movies.

# BLACK MOVIE

This is why I salute the Wal-Mart Voices of Color Film Series. I've been supporting filmmakers who work outside and inside the Hollywood system every day for the last 10 years of my life. Voices of Color is the broadest... most innovative platform I've seen that supports Black cinema. Many corporations have jumped on the music bandwagon. But Wal-Mart is the first to support Black cinema at this magnitude, with sponsorships of the American Black Film Festival and the first televised Black Movie Awards.

**VOC:** What created this dedication you have?

**JEFF:** I've always been captivated by visual images. As a kid, I wanted to know why there weren't many Black people in the movies and TV shows I watched. That started my desire to change those stereotypical images and stories of Black people in Hollywood. I wanted to create opportunities and ensure that African-American filmmakers would have the opportunity to showcase more diverse work.

**VOC:** Jeff, you're already doing a tremendous job with Film Life. What do you want to contribute to the history of Black filmmaking?

**JEFF:** I want to help more sisters get into the industry. I want people to see more of their stories... see more of their talents in front of and behind the camera. I think that the next big breakthrough in the history of Black filmmakers will live in their stories.

Conversations with producer, Jeff Friday and director, Shola Lynch about groundbreaking strides in the history of Black filmmakers.