



# ENTERTAINMENT



## 'Curse of War' explores mental health issues associated with war trauma

SynerFilms Company completes the short film project entitled "Curse of War", with two-time Grammy Award nominated producer Phillipa Davis and actor/writer Ronald Graham serving as producers/exec producers. The 17-minute drama, which focuses on the mental health issues associated with war trauma, was written, directed and edited by filmmaker Abdul Malik Abbott, who was raised in Harlem and graduated from the School of Visual Arts as a filmmaker. Abdul gained notoriety by directing numerous popular music videos including, Jay-Z's "Streets is Watching" (long-form video) as well as the hip-hop/gangster feature film "State Property" (Lionsgate).

### SYNOPSIS

Brooklyn native, Sergeant James Powell (Ronald Graham) is a discharged U.S. Marine suffering from symptoms of PTSD and struggling with his demons spawned from the gruesome atrocities he experienced during the war conflict in the Middle East. James seeks the professional psychological help of Dr. Dent (Sally

Stewart), who does her best to help the psychologically devastated James during their frequent sessions as he continually recalls his war experiences in painful systematic detail. During this particular visit, James reveals a very tragic and disturbing detail about his experience in the war he's never mentioned before to anyone, including Dr. Dent.

Frequently self-medicated with alcohol and prescription drugs, James lives alone, alienated from his family while utilizing voice recordings of his children as a source of comfort. During a cold winter's day, James reminisces about his tumultuous relationship with his wife Sherri Powell (Famecia Ward) and their children David Powell (Omar Vincent) and Ali Powell (Kaya Slawecka). As James falls deeper into depression, he makes a decision to let it all go.

"Curse of War" was filmed on location in Brooklyn, NY and Simi Valley, CA.

For more information please visit the official website [www.CurseofWar-Movie.com](http://www.CurseofWar-Movie.com).



The Powell Family: Actors Ronald Graham, Omar Dellimore, Kaya Slawecka and Famecia Ward



Filming on location in Brooklyn: Ronnie Graham as "James Powell" in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, with camera assist George Cayea, DP Ari Rothschild and director Abdul Malik Abbott.



Actors Jaimes Timas (left) and Ronnie Graham (right) flank director Abdul Malik Abbott.

## Director Spike Lee not calling for Oscars boycott

Director Spike Lee on Wednesday backed away from calls to boycott the Academy Awards ceremony amid controversy about a lack of diversity among this year's nominees and said a plan is needed to ensure racial equity in Hollywood.

"I have never used the word boycott," Lee said in an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America" program. "All I said was ... my beautiful wife Tonya, we're not coming. That's it, and I gave the reasons. I never used the word boycott."

The comments by the two-time Academy Award nominee and honorary Oscar recipient came amid concerns about a lack of racial minorities in the movie industry and at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, whose members for the second consecutive year nominated

no actors of color.

Lee said Hollywood needs to widen its diversity with a program similar to one in the National Football League that requires teams to interview Black candidates for head coaching jobs.

"That has increased the number of minority coaches and executives in the NFL and that should be used ... because we can't go to that old tired realm, 'Well, we can't find any qualified candidates,'" Lee said.

Lee, a noted basketball fan, said he planned to attend the New York Knicks game when the Oscars are presented on Feb. 28.

The controversy has put pressure on the academy, whose top leader said this week it would review membership recruitment and pledged to make "big changes."

Lee first announced on Monday that he would not attend the ceremony in California, timing his action with the national holiday commemorating slain civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

A day later he echoed those comments, pushing for affirmative action to address racial disparity in Hollywood as a number of celebrities also called for changes industry-wide, with some pledging to skip the ceremony in protest.

Civil rights leader Al Sharpton urged Americans to "tune out" the ceremony while documentary-maker Michael Moore and actress Jada Pinkett-Smith said they would boycott it. Other directors and actors rejected such action.

The race issue has put a spotlight on Oscars host Chris Rock and



whether the comedian should drop out in solidarity with those rejecting the ceremony.

"Chris Rock is a grown ... man," Lee told ABC. "He's just going to do what he's wants to do and I support him either way."