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## **Gina Prince-Bythewood Selected Woman of the Year**

Film director and producer Gina Prince-Bythewood received the Woman of the Year Award for her work as an artist, mentor and role model in a ceremony at the Los Angeles Music Center Monday.

Prince-Bythewood, selected by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas for the honor, grew up in Los Angeles and attended UCLA where she studied at the film school and also ran competitive track. At UCLA, she received the Gene Reynolds Scholarship for Directing and the Ray Stark Memorial Scholarship for Outstanding Undergraduates.

Her first film, *Love & Basketball*, now on 15 years, is a date night favorite that has been lauded for its honesty about love and relationships. Her other films include *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Disappearing Acts* and most recently, *Beyond the Lights*.

The Women of the Year luncheon, sponsored by the Los Angeles County Commission for Women, honors the work of women throughout Los Angeles County in a variety of professions. This year's honorees also included Jessica Midkiff, a survivor of child sex trafficking who is now working at the Probation Department as a mentor and counselor to young victims.

At the ceremony, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas applauded Prince-Bythewood's career and her unwavering spirit to make films that are diverse and feature prominent female roles.

"Her films show the goodness in people, the complexity of humanity and the ability to overcome," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "She has also made it her mission to introduce young people into the industry, to open doors and to allow others the same opportunities she has been fortunate to enjoy."

Prince-Bythewood said she was "humbled by her fellow honorees" and that her fight to bring diversity and strong story-telling to Hollywood would continue. "Thank you for this honor," she told the audience.

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