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THE ARC OF BALTIMORE PROTESTS FILM “TROPIC THUNDER” FOR ITS PORTRAYAL OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

BALTIMORE, MD (8/13/08) --- The Arc of Baltimore is joining with self-advocates and other members of the disability community nationwide to protest Paramount Pictures’ new comedy “Tropic Thunder.”

The movie, scheduled for release August 13, contains images and language that are extremely offensive in its portrayal of the fictional character “Simple Jack,” a person with an intellectual disability who is an object of derision throughout the film. The movie contains frequent use of the word “retard” and other insulting terms used to describe this character.

“Use of terms such as ‘retard,’ ‘imbecile,’ and ‘moron’ and the use of caricature in the depiction of an individual with intellectual disabilities is simply unacceptable,” says Stephen Morgan, Executive Director of The Arc of Baltimore.

“The movie’s irresponsible portrayal of individuals with intellectual disabilities does great harm,” Morgan continues. “The portrayal of ‘Simple Jack’ is serving to perpetuate stereotypes and further stigmatize people with intellectual disabilities. It will make it even more difficult for them to secure housing, employment and the other fundamentals they need to live life to the fullest of their ability.”

There are more than 200 million individuals with intellectual disabilities worldwide, and more than 6 million individuals with intellectual disabilities in the United States. Many of these individuals have suffered severe consequences including institutionalization, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, denial of education, employment, and healthcare, segregation, and targeted hate crimes.

Several staff members of The Arc of the United States, along with self-advocates and other representatives of the disability community, saw an advance screening of the movie. They reported that the film’s depiction of people with intellectual disabilities was “derogatory and demeaning.” As a result, The Arc of the United States, in coalition with other disability groups across the nation, has called for a national dialogue on the language and treatment of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Arc has called for a boycott of the film. It has also requested that Congress investigate and conduct oversight of how Hollywood portrays individuals with intellectual disabilities and the effect these portrayals have on our nation and around the world.

“Whether under the guise of parody, whether intentional or not, ‘Tropic Thunder’ demeans, insults, and harms individuals with intellectual disabilities,” says Morgan. “The

movie perpetuates derogatory images and stereotypes of individuals with intellectual disabilities by mocking their physical appearance and speech, supporting inappropriate myths and misperceptions, and legitimizing painful discrimination, exclusion, and bullying. In short, 'Tropic Thunder' is a blockbuster cheap thrill at the expense of human beings who are the most isolated, victimized, and least able to defend themselves."

About The Arc of Baltimore

Dedicated to helping individuals with developmental disabilities achieve their greatest potential since 1949, The Arc of Baltimore serves more than 3,000 Baltimore City and Baltimore County residents with developmental disabilities and their families.

As one of the nation's largest and most respected organizations of its kind, The Arc of Baltimore is an indispensable resource, providing vocational training, residential services, supported employment, and other programs and services. For more information, visit website at www.arcofbaltimore.org or call 410-296-2272.