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## **Michigan-based, African American-Owned Branch Out Productions Comes Out Swinging with First Film Acquired by Paramount Pictures**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH – June 29, 2020 – Branch Out Productions launched with the goal to make Michigan a hub for diverse actors, producers and filmmakers and its first film is already proof of concept. *Mighty Oak*, a feature-length film, was acquired by Paramount Pictures May 2020.

The African American, woman-owned Branch Out Productions was launched in 2019 and is led by Lisa King and Andola Mathis, along with president of production Lisa Mathis, with the mission of seeding and developing a slate of films and television projects that focus on inclusive “four quadrant” stories. A year later, their first produced film, *Mighty Oak*, was acquired by Paramount Studios, shown on drive-in screens across the country in June, and will be released July 7, 2020 on VOD. It features a star-studded female-centric cast that includes Raven Symone, Janel Parrish, Alexa PenaVega, Carlos PenaVega, Rodney Hicks, Nana Ghana, among others.

Soon after Branch Out Productions was created, their president of production, Lisa Mathis, found the opportunity to invest in and executive produce “Mighty Oak.” Not only does the film feature a strong female lead, and a diverse cast, but it has a hopeful message, making it an ideal fit for this Michigan upstart’s first official project. [Mighty Oak Movie](#)

“Because our director, Sean McNamara, as well as the other producers, shared our commitment to diversity, we knew the collaboration represented a great way to get our feet wet. The fact that it is also an entertaining movie with an uplifting message, made it all the more appealing,” said EP Lisa Mathis.

The film tells the story of a band manager, Gina Jackson (Janel Parrish), who struggles with losing her lead singer/brother Vaughn (Levi Dylan) in a fatal car accident on the way to a gig. A decade later, Gina meets a 10- year-old music prodigy named Oak (Tommy Ragen) who seems to possess the same qualities as her brother, Vaughn. But her friends become concerned when Gina starts to insist that Oak is really the reincarnation of Vaughn. The film is described as a music infused drama in the vein of “Wonder” and “A Dog’s Purpose.”

Branch Out Productions is currently co-developing a historical action film entitled, “The Black Joke” with *Fast & Furious* franchise producer Chris Morgan Productions. In addition to films and various television projects, Branch Out is also developing “Xavier

Jordan,” an action movie about the exploits of an international salvage diver and treasure hunter. Branch Out sees “Xavier Jordan” as their answer to James Bond. They even have plans for an “Xavier Jordan” book series and graphic novel. Going forward, Branch Out Productions plans to shoot its next film, a comedy entitled “*Block Party*,” completely in Michigan with a primarily African American cast and crew. The plot is being kept under wraps, but is described as a day-in-the-life comedy set at the most celebrated and storied block party in Michigan. Branch Out is planning to shoot the movie in the spring of 2021.

#### About Branch Out Productions

Inspired by the need to increase black and diverse talent in filmmaking and the goal to create a hub that attracts, nurtures and grows content production and actors in their home state of Michigan, Branch Out Productions launched as an African American woman-owned production company with its inaugural project, a feature length film, *Mighty Oak*, to its credit. Branch Out [www.branchoutfilms.com](http://www.branchoutfilms.com) has four additional movies and TV show pilots in development and is recruiting talent for the projects.

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