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For downloadable images, visit itvs.org/pressroom/

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/banished

**“BANISHED”
REVEALS SHAMEFUL CHAPTER IN U.S. HISTORY:
THE RACIAL CLEANSING OF DOZENS OF TOWNS**

*Film to Premiere on the PBS Series Independent Lens on
Tuesday, February 19, 2008*

(San Francisco, CA)—**BANISHED**, a film revealing a shameful yet little-known chapter in the history of race relations in America will have its television premiere on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, February 19 at 10:00 PM (check local listings). From the 1860s to the 1920s, dozens of towns and counties across America practiced their own form of racial cleansing, violently expelling entire African American communities and forcing thousands of black families to flee their homes. A century later, these towns remain virtually all white. In **BANISHED**, filmmaker Marco Williams travels to three of these communities and asks: what can be done today to repair past injustice?

BANISHED brings to light this hidden chapter of American history, telling these dramatic stories for the first time. Williams (*Two Towns of Jasper*) goes to these communities, following black descendants as they return to learn the shocking history of the towns where their ancestors once lived, and to speak with current white residents struggling to come to terms with their past.

In Forsyth County, Georgia, a family whose ancestors were forced to abandon their 80-acre homestead in 1912 learns that their family land was stolen. In Pierce City, Missouri, which banished its black residents in 1901, two brothers try to persuade the town to disinter their great-grandfather, buried before his family was driven out, and move his remains to lie in peace beside his wife and children. In Harrison, Arkansas, a group of white citizens creates a task force to wrestle with their town's racial legacy.

Williams takes the viewer on his travels to these towns, where his presence as an African American forces white residents to confront—or at least consider—their history. And the film takes on the controversial issue of reparations through the personal stories of families touched and changed by past atrocities, asking us to consider it again in a more human light. Can black and white Americans find common ground, and make reparations a path for healing America's racial divide?

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To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **BANISHED** at *Independent Lens* online. Get detailed information on the film watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions. **BANISHED** companion website launches January 8 at pbs.org/independentlens/banished.

BANISHED is the featured February film for ITVS COMMUNITY CINEMA, the monthly screening series featuring upcoming selections from the *Independent Lens* season. Presented in partnership with local public television stations and leading community organizations, ITVS Community Cinema holds preview screenings in select markets across the country making a real contribution on a range of current social issues by connecting communities with organizations, information, and the opportunity to get involved. For more information, visit pbs.org/independentlens/getinvolved/cinema.

About the Filmmaker

Marco Williams is an award-winning documentary and fiction film director. Williams' directing credits include: *Freedom Summer* (2006); *I Sit Where I Want: The Legacy of Brown V. Board of Education* (2004); *MLK Blvd: The Concrete Dream* (2003); *Two Towns of Jasper* (2002); *Making Peace: Rebuilding Our Communities* (1995), part three of a four-hour series profiling people working to heal the conditions that create violence in their communities; *The Pursuit of Happiness: With Arianna Huffington* (1994), a video essay created for an ITVS project on the Declaration of Independence; *In Search Of Our Fathers* (1991), about Williams' seven-year effort to learn about and meet his father, broadcast on FRONTLINE; and *From Harlem to Harvard* (1982). Williams' groundbreaking film *Two Towns of Jasper*, broadcast on *P.O.V.*, received the 2004 George Foster Peabody Award and the 2004 Alfred I duPont Silver Baton, among many other awards. Williams' dramatic short for Showtime, *Without a Pass* (1992), was nominated for three Cable ACE Awards including Best Director of a Theatrical Special and Best Theatrical Special.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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