

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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For downloadable images, visit [itvs.org/pressroom/photos/](http://itvs.org/pressroom/photos/)

For the program companion website, visit [pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme](http://pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme)

**PLEASE VOTE FOR ME,  
TO AIR ON THE PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS***

***A Disarming And Insightful Look At Modern China Through The Lens  
Of A Third Grade Class Election***

(San Francisco, CA)— **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** will have its television premiere as part of the sixth season of the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard. Winner of the Silverdocs Film Festival Award for Best Feature Documentary, the film premieres Tuesday, October 23 at 10:00 PM (check local listings).

What would happen if free elections came to China? Is democracy a universal value? Director Weijun Chen decided to find out by conducting his own experiment in giving the power to the people. In **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME**, a third-grade class at Evergreen Primary experiences the voting process first-hand by holding an election for Class Monitor, an important, authoritarian position that had previously always been appointed by the teacher. As the film unfolds, we watch three 8-year-olds—two boys and a girl, all products of China’s one-child policy—wage a no-holds-barred campaign for the coveted position. The young candidates are egged on by their overeager parents, who encourage their children to use whatever it takes, including strong-arming, bribery, back room bargaining and personal attacks. What ensues is a campaign that rivals any American election in its lack of gentility.

Charming, surprising, and enlightening, the film reveals the details of daily life in Wuhan, a city in middle China about the size of London, where the family homes and modern schools are not so different from our own. Nor are the hopes and dreams of the children and parents, which proves that—at least during election season—human nature is universal.

**PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** is part of an unprecedented international documentary series entitled “Why Democracy?” commissioned by Steps International to explore emerging and diverging notions of democracy. The film’s October broadcast on *Independent Lens* is timed to coincide with broadcasts in more than 60 countries around the world—Denmark, South Africa, Germany, France, U.K., The Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Poland, Australia, Sweden, and Greece among others.

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An estimated audience of a 150 million viewers will watch the broadcasts, creating a unique global viewing experience that will engage audiences worldwide on issues of democracy. Another film from the “Why Democracy?” project, **IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA**, will air on *Independent Lens* later in the season.

**PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** also launches a yearlong public education campaign on democracy that will accompany the *Independent Lens* season. Leveraging the timely content of programs like **AN UNREASONABLE MAN** and **IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA**, the ITVS-led national community engagement campaign will seek to promote voter registration and stimulate discussion around ideas of democracy throughout the season.

**PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** will be further supported through the ITVS Community Cinema program—the monthly screening series featuring nine upcoming selections from *Independent Lens*. Launching in September, Community Cinema’s third season brings together local public television stations and leading community organizations to hold monthly screenings in more than 45 markets across the country connecting communities with organizations, information and the opportunity to get involved around the topics presented in the films. More than 400 events are planned for the coming season nationwide. For more information visit, [itvs.org/outreach/](http://itvs.org/outreach/).

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** companion website ([pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme/](http://pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme/)) which features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, and links and resources pertaining to the film’s subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film and more.

### **About the Filmmakers**

Weijun Chen (Director) is a documentary director and producer living in Wuhan, central China. After graduating with a degree in Journalism from the Sichuan University in 1992, he joined the documentary production department of the Wuhan regional TV station. His first film, *My Life Is My Philosophy*, was nominated for Best Documentary of the year by the Chinese National Association of Broadcasters. In 2003 he completed *To Live Is Better Than To Die*, which was awarded a Peabody and John Grierson award, as well as the Rudolf Vrba Award from the One World Festival.

South African **Don Edkins** (Executive Producer) is a documentary film director and producer. He was born in Cape Town in 1953 and left South Africa in 1976 for political reasons. In 1994 he returned to South Africa to vote in the first democratic elections. With an academic background in Development studies and African languages, he has extensive work experience in the field of media and development. In Lesotho he published a popular educational magazine and founded a mobile video cinema that distributes and screens films at the community level. He has directed and produced a number of documentary films, most recently the award-winning *Steps for the Future*, a collection of 38 films from Southern Africa about life in the time of HIV/AIDS. *Steps for the Future* was the first project of the STEPS group of commissioning editors and producers and was broadcast around the world and screened at 150 film festivals. With eighteen different local language versions, the series continues to be used as a major outreach program in the Southern African region to reduce stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS. Currently he is an executive producer for the STEPS global documentary project on Democracy.

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**Mette Heide** (Denmark) is executive producer for STEPS International. She is also CEO and executive producer for Team Production ApS, a Danish production house that specializes in international documentaries. She recently produced documentaries on the trials of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. Her latest released documentary *Liberace of Baghdad* won the Jury Special Prize at Sundance Film Festival. She has also executive produced fiction films, including the Oscar nominated short *Wolfgang*. Heide has a Masters degree in Political Science specializing in UN and human rights issues.

### **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. *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.

### **About the Independent Television Service (ITVS)**

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, the Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. For more information, visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org).

### **About PBS**

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online ([pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org)), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at [pbs.org](http://pbs.org), one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

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