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**WHEN I RISE PREMIERES ON THE PBS SERIES
INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2011 AT 10 PM**

***Inspiring Story of Singer Barbara Smith Conrad,
Who Overcame Racial Prejudice and Rose To International Fame***

(San Francisco, CA) — *When I Rise* is the uplifting story of Barbara Smith Conrad, a gifted University of Texas music student who finds herself at the epicenter of racial controversy, struggling against the odds and ultimately ascending to the heights of international opera. An object lesson on living life with dignity and grace, *When I Rise* will premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

The film is a production of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History and was directed by Mat Hames, produced by James Moll and Michael Rosen, executive produced by Don Carleton, and made possible in part by AT&T.

In 1957, Barbara Smith Conrad, who was part of the first racially integrated undergraduate class at the University of Texas, became the central figure in a civil rights storm that changed her life forever. Cast in an opera as the romantic lead opposite a white male student, Conrad became embroiled in a bitter controversy that made its way to the halls of the Texas legislature, where segregationist representatives applied pressure on the university. When Conrad was expelled from the opera, the incident escalated to the national stage, prompting singer Harry Belafonte — then at the height of his fame — to offer to underwrite her studies at the institution of her choice.



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Rather than flee, Conrad chose to stay at the University of Texas and complete her degree, graduating in 1959. This small-town girl, whose voice and spirit stem from her roots in East Texas, emerged from the incident to become an internationally celebrated mezzo-soprano and headliner on stages around the world.

To learn more about the film and its subjects, visit the companion website for *When I Rise* at <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/when-i-rise>. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmakers, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

About Barbara Conrad Smith

Barbara Smith Conrad is a mezzo-soprano whose distinguished career has touched the lives of audiences around the world. She is an artist whose musical breadth encompasses a span as great as the distance between the Baptist church of her youth and opera houses around the world.

Conrad earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Texas in 1959. She was one of the early pioneers in the movement to create a more open and diverse university community, and her accomplishments and fortitude as a student represent an important chapter in UT's history. The Texas Ex-Students Association named her a Distinguished Alumnus in 1985, and the University honored her with the founding of the Barbara Smith Conrad Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Fine Arts.

Conrad performed with the Metropolitan Opera for eight years, from 1982 to 1989, and has performed leading operatic roles with the Vienna State Opera, Teatro Nacional in Venezuela, the Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and many other international opera houses throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, and South America. Under the direction of some of the world's leading conductors, including Maazel, Bernstein, and Levine, she has performed much of the mezzo-soprano concert repertoire with the world's greatest orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the London, Boston, Cleveland, and Detroit symphonies.

In 1977, Conrad played renowned contralto Marian Anderson in the three-hour ABC movie *Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years*, and in 1994 followed that performance with a European concert/recital tour commemorating Anderson. In 1987, she was invited by President Reagan to sing at the White House in honor of Lady Bird Johnson's seventy-fifth birthday. A career highlight was an invitation to perform for Pope John Paul II during his 1995 visit to New York City. Among her many other accomplishments is her recording of a collection of Negro spirituals with the choir of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, released on the Naxos label to critical acclaim.

Conrad continues to complement her performing activities with artist residencies and master classes, establishing herself as one of the foremost builders of voice both in the United States and abroad. She is the co-director and co-founder of the Wagner Theater Program at the Manhattan School of Music, and she maintains a private vocal studio in Manhattan.

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About the Filmmakers

Mat Hames (Director), an award-winning filmmaker based in Austin, directed the 2008 documentary *Fighting Goliath*, which was narrated by Robert Redford and was an official selection of 12 film festivals in four countries. The film was awarded the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award for Best Documentary Short at the Red Rock Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, and the Golden Sun at the Barcelona International Film Festival. Both the Sundance Channel and PBS acquired *Fighting Goliath* for national broadcast in 2009.

Hames's directorial credits include *Last Best Hope*, an award-winning documentary film about the Belgian Resistance during WWII. In 2007, His Royal Majesty King Albert II awarded Mat the decoration of Knight of the Order of the Crown in recognition of his contribution to preserving the history of the Belgian Resistance. Before its national broadcast on PBS in 2006, *Last Best Hope* garnered numerous awards and festival accolades, including a Silver Hugo from the Chicago International Film Festival.

Hames also directed and produced the PBS series *State of Tomorrow*, which won five regional Emmy Awards. He is co-founder of Alpheus Media, whose long-standing clients include the Sundance Preserve and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

Don Carleton (Executive Producer) is the executive director of the Briscoe Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Carleton has published and lectured extensively in the fields of historical research methods and sources, urban history, the history of broadcast journalism, and twentieth century U.S. political history. His books include *Red Scare; A Breed So Rare: The Life of J. R. Parten; Being Rapoport: Capitalist with a Conscience; Ross Sterling, Texan: A Memoir by the Founder of Humble Oil and Refining Company; Dolph Briscoe: My Life in Texas Ranching and Politics;* and *Conversations with Cronkite*. Carleton also has published numerous articles in professional journals, magazines, and newspapers, and he serves as editor of the Focus on American History Series of the University of Texas Press. Carleton was a historical advisor to novelist James A. Michener for his novel *Texas*. He was also a researcher and historical advisor for former CBS newsman and anchor Walter Cronkite's best selling memoir *A Reporter's Life*. Listed in Who's Who in America, Carleton has joint senior faculty appointments in The University of Texas at Austin departments of History and Journalism and the School of Information. In addition, he holds the J. R. Parten Chair in the Archives of American History.

James Moll (Producer) is an Oscar® and Emmy®-winning filmmaker who has produced and directed nonfiction films for more than a decade. Moll's feature documentary credits include *Running the Sahara* (with executive producer Matt Damon), a film about three men as they attempt to run across the Sahara Desert; *Inheritance*, a PBS/POV film depicting a woman struggling with the crimes of her Nazi father; *Price for Peace* for NBC and executive producer author/historian Stephen Ambrose, a film focusing on WWII in the Pacific; and *The Last Days* for executive producer Steven Spielberg, a film chronicling the lives of five Hungarian Holocaust survivors. Moll has produced and/or directed many projects for television, including *Broken Silence*, a collection of five foreign-language documentaries that premiered on primetime television in Russia, Poland, Argentina, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

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In addition to his work as a filmmaker, Moll established and operated The Shoah Foundation with Steven Spielberg for the purpose of videotaping Holocaust survivor testimonies around the world. The Foundation videotaped over 50,000 testimonies in 57 countries. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and raised in Los Angeles, Moll earned a degree from USC School of Cinematic Arts. He is co-chair of the Directors Guild of America Documentary Award, and is a member of the Documentary Executive Committee for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

Michael Rosen (Producer) is an award-winning producer and director whose credits include the television special *Beyond the Expedition: Running the Sahara* for National Geographic Channel, about a historic trek across Africa; *Murder By Proxy* for Key Element, which examines how spree killings are affecting American society; and *A Salute to Robert Altman: An American Maverick*, for USA Films which aired on Bravo and the Independent Film Channel. He also executive-produced the television special *Emmy's Greatest Moments* for TV Land. As executive in charge of production at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, Rosen was responsible for overseeing more than 30 projects annually — many for the *Primetime Emmy Awards*. In addition, he is the Founding Executive Producer for the Television Academy Foundation's *Archive of American Television*, the world's largest online portal on the history of television, producing over 2,000 hours of documentary interviews with over 500 television legends and pioneers. Rosen began his career working for producers Lauren Shuler-Donner (*X-Men*, *The Secret Life of Bees*) and Jon Peters (*Superman Returns*, *Rain Man*).

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing 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 unique individuals, communities, and moments 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, 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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