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**“ADJUST YOUR COLOR: The Truth of Petey Greene”
to Premiere on February 3, 2009
on the Emmy® Award–Winning PBS Series *Independent Lens***

***Film Captures Extraordinary Life of African American Media Personality
Who Was America’s First “Shock Jock”***

“So grab your head and make a fist. Listen to me and remember this. That I’ll tell it to the hot, tell it to the cold, tell it to the young and tell it to the old. I don’t want no laughing; I don’t want no crying and most of all, no signifying.”

—Petey Greene

(San Francisco, USA)—Between 1967 and 1983, an unvarnished media voice roared through the airwaves of our nation’s capital. First on radio, then on television, Petey Greene spoke to and for people who had often been voiceless. A two-time Emmy® Award winner, Greene overcame drug addiction and a sentence for armed robbery to become one of Washington, D.C.’s most prominent media figures. Speaking truth to power on his raw, uncensored radio and television shows, Greene talked about racism, poverty, religion, politics, sexuality and drug abuse. His guests ranged from office holders like Midge Costanza, a special assistant to President Jimmy Carter, to political consultant Donna Brazile to up-and-coming radio host Howard Stern, who appeared in black face. Greene was an icon in the community, and it was his presence that calmed rioters in the streets after Martin Luther King’s assassination. Narrated by Don Cheadle—who portrayed Greene in the feature film *Talk to Me*—**ADJUST YOUR COLOR: The Truth of Petey Greene** will have its television premiere on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 10 PM (check local listings).

For two decades, Ralph Waldo “Petey” Greene Jr. was a beacon for truth for the black community of Washington, D.C. Unafraid to “tell it like it is,” he spoke out about social injustices and championed racial pride during a volatile time of upheaval in America. Born and raised in Washington, D.C., in an era of depression and poverty, Greene dropped out of high school in the 11th grade and enlisted in the U.S. Army. He fought in the Korean War before being discharged in 1953 for drug abuse. In 1960, he was convicted of armed robbery of a small grocery store and was imprisoned at Lorton Reformatory with a 10-year sentence.

While in prison, Greene began to hone his skills as a disc jockey in Lorton’s work program. Using the P.A. system, he was allowed 20 minutes each morning and evening to address his fellow inmates. His garrulous delivery, infused with the flavor of the streets, resonated with inmates, and Greene grew increasingly popular. He eventually persuaded a fellow inmate to climb to the top of a water tower to threaten suicide so that Greene would be able to “save his life” by talking him down. This staged act of heroism, combined with his generally good behavior, allowed for his early release in 1965.

Soon after, Greene was hired by Dewey Hughes, the program director for the radio station WOL-AM, who had become aware of Greene’s talent when he was visiting his brother, also a Lorton prisoner. Hughes believed in Greene’s voice and, risking his own career, decided to put him on the air. *Rapping with Petey Greene* was an immediate hit with the urban community and eventually became a daily staple on the station.

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Greene's audience rapidly grew, and he was soon hosting his own television show, *Petey Greene's Washington*, on WDCA-TV. The series aired in the city for many years, providing an expanded forum for his community outreach, commentary and street-flavored humor and was one of the first shows to air on BET (Black Entertainment Television) in 1980. "Adjust the color of your television" was his intro to the program. He also co-hosted *Where It's At*, a local show that addressed employment issues and opportunities for the African American community.

In 1978, he was invited by President Carter to attend a dinner at the White House, after which he told *The Washington Post* he had stolen a spoon. In addition to his radio and television shows, Greene served as a community activist, working for the nonprofit United Planning Organization, which provided human services to the people of D.C. He railed against poverty and racism on his shows and on the streets. After his death from cancer in 1984, 10,000 mourners lined the streets in freezing weather outside Washington's Union Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church to pay their last respects. It was the largest memorial service gathering for a nongovernment official in D.C.'s history.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **ADJUST YOUR COLOR: The Truth of Petey Greene** at pbs.org/independentlens/adjustyourcolor. 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 for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

On-Screen Participants (in alphabetical order)

Virginia Ali is the owner of Ben's Chili Bowl.

Ernie Barnes is an artist best known for Sugar Shack Sport Art and African American Football Art.

Marion Barry served as the second elected mayor of the District of Columbia from 1979 to 1991 and as its fourth mayor from 1995 to 1999. He was the target of a high-profile 1990 arrest on drug charges, which precluded him from seeking reelection that year.

Donna Brazile is an American author, educator, and political activist and strategist affiliated with the Democratic Party. She was the first African American to direct a major presidential campaign.

Chuck Brown is an African American jazz guitarist and singer who is affectionately called "the Godfather of Go-Go," a subgenre of funk music developed in and around Washington, D.C., in the 1970s. He served time with Petey Greene at Lorton.

James Brown, commonly called "J.B.," is an American sports announcer known for hosting *The NFL Today on CBS* and co-hosting the *Saturday Early Show* and also for play-by-play coverage of NCAA basketball on CBS. Petey Greene got J.B. his first job in broadcasting.

Roach Brown is an ex-con and former prison mate of Petey Greene at Lorton. He is now a playwright.

Sandra Butler, one of Petey Greene's original co-workers at United Planning Organization, is now a retired television executive.

Don Cheadle is an Academy Award-nominated (*Hotel Rwanda*) and Golden Globe Award-winning actor, film producer, philanthropist and author. Cheadle rose to prominence after playing supporting roles in such films as *Out of Sight*, *Traffic* and the *Ocean's Eleven* films. He played the role of Petey Greene in the feature film *Talk to Me*.

Midge Costanza was a special assistant to President Jimmy Carter.

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Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis was a political activist and is currently president of Southeastern University in Washington, D.C.

Clarence Green is Petey Greene's brother.

Petra Greene is Petey Greene's daughter.

Pine Greene is Petey Greene's son.

Terence Greene is Petey Greene's nephew.

Dana Jones is director of the United Planning Organization, a nonprofit group dedicated to working with the underprivileged.

Dewey Hughes, a native of Washington, D.C., was an African America radio personality and Petey Greene's manager. Hughes's older brother, Milo, introduced Hughes to Petey Greene when Milo was at Lorton Reformatory. Hughes subsequently hired Greene to work as a disc jockey at WOL. Hughes also worked as co-producer and director of Greene's television talk show *Petey Greene's Washington* from 1976 to 1982. Hughes purchased the Washington, D.C.-based WOL-AM, which became the cornerstone of the Radio One Network. He went on to win 10 Emmy® Awards as a producer/director for an NBC affiliate.

Robert Hooks is an African American actor of film, television and stage.

Sugar Ray Leonard is a retired professional boxer.

Alfred Liggins is chairman of the Radio One Network.

Sister Claudette Muhammad was a political activist and is now chief of protocol for the Nation of Islam.

Madeline Petty was the Deputy Director of Housing for Washington, D.C.

Carol Schwartz is an at-large council member on the Council of the District of Columbia.

Frank Smith is a former D.C. councilman and early political ally of Petey Greene.

Howard Stern is a radio host and television personality. He credits Petey Greene as being the greatest radio personality of all time.

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About the Filmmakers

Loren Mendell (director, producer, writer) is an award-winning filmmaker who has directed, produced and shot projects for the PBS series *Frontline/World*, ABC, CBS, Showtime, Discovery, A&E, Bravo and the History Channel. Previously, Mendell produced the Academy Award–nominated short film *Our Time Is Up*. He co-founded the independent documentary production company Angry Young Ranch, whose slate of films include the International Documentary Association Award nominee *Cockfight* (PBS), *Change Up* (Discovery), *One Strong Arm* (A&E Indie) and the feature documentary *Bad Boys of Summer*.

Bob DeMars (producer) earned his degree in 2002 from the University of Southern California on a football scholarship. He was awarded the prestigious John Wayne Memorial Award, given for his academic record as student athlete studying both film and business. After directing a commercial and creating several successful business entities, he partnered with Pelagius Films in 2004. Since joining the company, DeMars has spearheaded many projects and was instrumental in guiding *Talk to Me*, starring Don Cheadle, to the big screen. **ADJUST YOUR COLOR: The Truth of Petey Greene** is his first documentary.

Terence R. Greene (producer) is a self-proclaimed serial entrepreneur and artist. He is a native of Yonkers, New York, with family roots in Washington, D.C. At the forefront of the hip-hop movement, he worked as an independent record promoter, promoting artists such as LL Cool J, Allison Williams, Doug E. Fresh and others. His work as an independent promoter greatly contributed to the early success of Def Jam Records. Greene currently resides in Washington, D.C., with his wife of 11 years. He continues his entrepreneurial work as a realtor, storyteller, artist, arts manager, and HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness advocate. Terence Greene is also the nephew of Petey Greene.

Joe Fries (executive producer) began his media career as an account executive in the local television market of Washington, D.C. After many successful years, he left the comfort of broadcast television and joined an upstart group of ex-government politicians to form the ACSN cable network, which later became The Learning Channel (TLC). Heavily involved in the formation of TLC's branding and programming, Fries gravitated to the creative side of the business. After forming Powerhouse, a major post-production facility that provided services to many news outlets and networks, he came to see the drama in the stories of real life. Recognizing the importance of high-quality, well-structured stories, Fries set his focus on acquiring true stories that had a wide market and significant artistic appeal. He joined forces with his partners to form Pelagius Films Inc. in January 2004 for the express purpose of realizing this vision.

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. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens.

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