

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:

<http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/>

Program companion website: <http://www.pbs.org/blackgold>

Independent Lens: **BLACK GOLD**
TO HAVE ITS TELEVISION PREMIERE ON PBS,
TUESDAY, APRIL 10 AT 10 PM (Check Local Listings)

**Eye-Opening Exposé of the Multi-Billion Dollar Coffee Industry
Traces One Ethiopian's Fight for Fair Trade,
As Millions Revel in Designer Lattes and Growers Suffer**

(San Francisco, CA)— Ever wonder who grows the beans in your morning jolt of java? In their riveting, critically acclaimed **BLACK GOLD**, filmmaking brothers Nick and Marc Francis explore the complexities of the international coffee trade and introduce viewers to Tadesse Meskela, the General Manager of the Oromo Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union, and a tireless advocate for fair trade for Ethiopian farmers. **BLACK GOLD** will have its television premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, April 10, 2007, at 10 PM (check local listings).

Multinational coffee companies now rule our strip malls, supermarkets and urban corners and dominate an industry worth over \$80 billion, making coffee the most valuable trading commodity in the world after oil. But while we pay high prices for our lattes and cappuccinos, the price paid to coffee farmers remains so low that many have been forced to abandon their fields. No where is this paradox more evident than in Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee. Here we meet Tadesse Meskela, a man on a mission to save his 75,000 struggling coffee farmers from bankruptcy. As his farmers strive to harvest some of the highest quality beans on the international market, Tadesse travels the world in an attempt to find buyers willing to pay a fair price.

From the farms of Ethiopia where workers earn less than 50 cents a day, the film travels to Seattle for a tour through the history of Starbucks, and to a World Trade Organization summit where angry African trade representatives complain about being excluded from negotiations and flatly reject the agreements imposed on them. When the filmmakers return to Ethiopia, they find the country in the grips of a famine. Coffee farmers, facing bankruptcy, have begun to replace their coffee fields with *chat*, a more profitable narcotic.

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The answer is seemingly simple: if Africa's share of world trade increased by only one percentage point, it would generate \$70 billion a year, five times what the continent receives in aid. But it will take the education and concern of coffee's consumers to force any change in the system.

Interactive Companion Website

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the **BLACK GOLD** interactive companion website (pbs.org/blackgold) 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 Talk-back section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

Outreach Campaign

BLACK GOLD will be the featured April 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 over 30 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 itvs.org/outreach/blackgold/.

Alphabetical listing of On-Air Participants

Burte Arba, Coffee Farmer, Bule Hora, Southern Ethiopia

Alemayehu Abraham, School Principal, Bule Hora, Southern Ethiopia

Jack Bigirwa, Ugandan delegate to WTO talks in Cancun

Barry Coates, World Development Movement (World Development Movement campaigns on international trade issues. Barry is now the Executive Director of Oxfam New Zealand.)

Tamrat Giorgis, Editor of Ethiopian weekly business newspaper based in Addis Ababa

Jacques Habib, Aide Transparence; part of Senegalese delegation to WTO

Getachew Haile, Aid worker and agricultural expert working with the WFP in South and East Ethiopia

Dr. Ernesto Illy, Honorary Chairman, IllyCafe

Dr. Ahmed Mahamadi, Minister for Trade and Industry, Chad

Hon. Sam Mpasu MP, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Malawi

Tadesse Meskela, Manager of the Oromia Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union which represents over 74,000 coffee farmers

Joe O'Neill, Vice President, New York Board of Trade

Hon. Irene Ovonji-Odida MP, East African Legislative Assembly

Salvatore Piccolo, Vancouver Barista and competitor in World Barista Championship

Fabiana Pozar, Head coffee taster, Illycafe

Simon Wakefield, Wakefield and Company, Independent Coffee Importer, London

Robert Zoellick, Former US Trade Representative. Represented the U.S. at the WTO talks in Cancun

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Marc Francis and Nick Francis are independent documentary filmmakers based in London, as well as brothers. They began their career making short documentaries about social, global, and human rights issues before developing feature-length productions for international audiences. Their work has been supported by the Sundance Institute, the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation, and the UK Film Council. Their films include *NUKE UK*; **BLACK GOLD** premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

ABOUT *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. Hosted this season by Terrence Howard, 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.

ABOUT ITVS

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 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. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting **itvs.org**. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

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 website, PBS KIDS Online (**pbskids.org**), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at **pbs.org**, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet.

