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***THE ISLAND PRESIDENT* PREMIERES ON *INDEPENDENT LENS*  
 ON MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2013**

**One Man's Heroic Struggle to Save His Island Nation**

(San Francisco, CA) – Jon Shenk's *The Island President* is the story of Mohamed Nasheed, the former president of the Maldives, a tropical Shangri-La of breathtakingly beautiful turquoise reefs, beaches, and palm trees. But, despite its idyllic appearance, the country is threatened by an implacable and unrelenting adversary: the rising ocean. Considered the lowest lying country in the world, the Maldives would be rendered virtually uninhabitable by a sea level rise of a mere three meters. Unless dramatic changes are made by the larger countries of the world, the 1200 islands of the Maldives will disappear under the waves like a modern day Atlantis. Can one courageous leader stand up to the rest of the world and make a difference on climate change? *The Island President* premieres on *Independent Lens*, hosted by Stanley Tucci, on Monday, April 22 at 10 PM ET on PBS (check local listings).

*The Island President* captures the popular and charismatic Nasheed's first year in office, a time when he influences the direction of international events in a way few leaders have ever done, even in countries many times the size of the Maldives. Educated in Sri Lanka and England, Nasheed proved to be an unusually shrewd and sophisticated politician who grasped that the only way he could stand up to the catastrophic issues of climate change facing the Maldives would be to take his cause to the world stage.

The film culminates in Nasheed's trip to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where the film provides a rare glimpse of the political horse-trading that goes on at such a top-level global assembly. Nasheed is unusually candid about revealing his strategies—leveraging the Maldives' underdog position, harnessing the power of media, and overcoming deadlocks through an appeal to unity with other developing



nations. Despite his country's dire situation, Nasheed remains cool, pragmatic, and flexible, willing to compromise and try again another day. When all hope fades for any kind of written accord to be signed, he makes a stirring speech that salvages an agreement. While Copenhagen is judged by many as a failure, it marked the first time in history that China, India, and the United States agreed to reduce carbon emissions.

Following the completion of the film, Mohamed Nasheed resigned the presidency in February 2012, under the threat of violence in a coup d'état perpetrated by security forces loyal to the former dictator Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and minority Islamist activists.

To learn more about the film, visit the interactive companion website <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/island-president>, which features detailed information about 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 where viewers can share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

### **About the Filmmakers**

**Jon Shenk (Director/Cinematographer)** is a documentary filmmaker, cinematographer, and founder of Actual Films in San Francisco. He was the director of photography for the Academy Award®-winning *Smile Pinki* (2009). He was awarded an Emmy® for "Blame Somebody Else" (2007), a feature story he wrote, produced, and photographed for the PBS series, *Exposé*. Shenk directed and photographed the Emmy®-nominated *Lost Boys of Sudan* (2004), which was released theatrically, received the Independent Spirit Award, and aired on the PBS documentary series *POV*. He co-directed and photographed *Democracy Afghan Style* (2004), a PBS/ITVS/Arte film about the post-war constitutional process in Afghanistan. In 2005, he directed and photographed segments for *The New Heroes*, a PBS series about social entrepreneurs. He directed and photographed *The Beginning* (1999), an observational chronicle of George Lucas's complex creative process during the making of *Star Wars: Episode I*, which some reviewers consider to be "the best DVD behind-the-scenes documentary ever made." Shenk has produced and photographed dozens of documentaries for PBS, the BBC, A&E, Bravo, CBS, NBC, and National Geographic. He has been nominated twice for Emmys for his cinematography. He earned his master's degree in documentary filmmaking from Stanford University in 1995 and his B.A. from Yale in 1991.

**Bonni Cohen (Producer)** founded Actual Films with Jon Shenk in 1998. She produced and directed *Inside Guantanamo* (2009) for National Geographic Television, and was a writer, producer, and director of *The Rape of Europa* (2006), the documentary film adaptation of Lynn Nicholas's landmark history of the fate of art during the Third Reich and Second World War. The NEH-supported film was broadcast by PBS as a primetime special in November 2008, and it was nominated for two Emmy® Awards and for Best Documentary Screenplay by the Writers Guild of America. With director Jon Else, she produced *Wonders Are Many* (2006), about the making of the John Adams and Peter Sellars opera, *Doctor Atomic*. Cohen co-produced *Democracy Afghan Style* (2004) about Afghanistan's constitutional process for PBS in the United States and for Arté in France and Germany. In 2003, she produced and directed the PBS series *The New Heroes*, hosted by Robert Redford, about social entrepreneurs around the world.

In 2001, Cohen produced and directed *The Nobel: Visions of Our Century* (2001), a chronicle of 100 years of the Nobel Prize told from the perspectives of 11 Nobel laureates that was broadcast on PBS. For the BBC, she directed and produced *Eye of the Storm* (1999), an intimate, observational portrait of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, which follows his diplomatic efforts from Baghdad to Nigeria to New York. For PBS, she co-produced *They Drew Fire* (1998), a portrait of the combat artists of World War II. Her other works include *The Human Sexes with Desmond Morris*, a six-part, Emmy®-nominated series about gender differences around the world and two episodes of the Emmy® award-winning *Eyewitness* series for PBS. She was the producer of Jon Else's film, *Open Outcry* (2000), about the open trading pits at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Before coming to documentary film, Cohen worked as a journalist for Reuters Television and NBC, based in London and Jerusalem. Cohen earned a master's degree in documentary film from Stanford University in 1994 and bachelor's degree in international Relations from Tufts University in 1987.

**Richard Berge (Producer)** was a writer, producer, and director of *The Rape of Europa* (2006), the documentary film adaptation of Lynn Nicholas's landmark history of the fate of art during the Third Reich and Second World War. The NEH-supported film was broadcast by PBS as a primetime special in November 2008, and was nominated for two Emmy® Awards and for Best Documentary Screenplay by the Writers Guild of America. With director Barry Levinson, he wrote and produced *Yesterday's Tomorrows* (1999), about the human obsession with predicting the future. Berge wrote and produced profiles of visual and performing artists for *Make: Television* (2008, Twin Cities Public Television) and *SPARK!* (2003-04, KQED), two weekly series for public television. He was line producer for Jon Else's *Sing Faster: The Stagehands' Ring Cycle* (1999), a feature documentary that received the Filmmakers Trophy at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival and aired on PBS's *Independent Lens*. He was production manager for *In Search Of Law And Order* (1998), a series about the American juvenile justice system produced for PBS and Channel 4, and production coordinator for *Cadillac Desert* (1997), the landmark series produced for PBS by Jon Else. Before completing the master's program in Documentary Filmmaking at Stanford University in 1994, Richard worked at the Santa Fe Opera in New Mexico and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He received his bachelor's degree in history from Stanford University in 1984. Berge is a member of the Writers Guild of America.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the MacArthur Foundation. The senior series producer is Lois Vossen. More information at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens). Join *Independent Lens* on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/independentlens](http://www.facebook.com/independentlens).

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