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THE NEW BLACK
PREMIERES ON *INDEPENDENT LENS*
SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 2014 AT 10:30 PM ON PBS

Race and Religion Intersect in the Battle for Same-Sex Marriage

“This is the unfinished business of black people being free.”
— Sharon Lettman-Hicks, National Black Justice Coalition

(San Francisco, CA) — From church pews to the streets to kitchen tables, *The New Black* follows the African-American community as it grapples with the gay rights issue in light of the recent same-sex marriage movement. The film follows the struggle over marriage equality in the state of Maryland, where the battle for the hearts and minds of black voters — almost a third of the electorate — is fought from the pulpit. Through the stories of activists, families, and clergy on both sides of the debate, the film charts the evolution of this divisive issue within the black community. Directed by Yoruba Richen, *The New Black* premieres on *Independent Lens*, hosted by Stanley Tucci, on Sunday, June 15, 2014, 10:30-11:30 PM ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)).

In February 2012, after much discussion, the Maryland legislature passed a law allowing same-sex marriage. Immediately, opponents of the law geared up to put the issue before the voters through a ballot referendum — a strategy that had defeated same-sex marriage in other states. On one side, supporters of same-sex marriage included a number of black ministers who were challenging homophobia in the black church. Opposing them were other ministers who believed that gay marriage violated religious principles and who disagreed with placing the issue in the context of civil rights. Against this backdrop the film traces the historical importance of the church to the black community, and explores the personal stories of African-Americans who, although raised in the church, felt unwelcome when they identified themselves as gay.

“For over three years I followed how this issue was being debated and understood in the African-American community,” said director Yoruba Richen. “I came to realize that the issue of gay rights in the black community is in many ways a fight over the African-American family, which has been a contested space since the time of slavery. Marriage is

not just about marriage for black people — it's also about how blacks have become accepted as legitimate participants in American society. The gay marriage question has forced a conversation in the black community, which is taking place in our churches, our houses, our neighborhoods, and at the ballot box.”

Visit *The New Black* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/new-black/>) which features 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 for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

Featured Participants (in order of appearance)

Sharon Lettman-Hicks, Executive Director & CEO, National Black Justice Coalition, Maryland

Bishop Yvette Flunder, City of Refuge, United Church of Christ, San Francisco

Rev. Eric P. Lee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Los Angeles

Irene Huskens, Captain, Prince George's County Police Department, MD

Pastor Derek McCoy, President of the Maryland Marriage Alliance and Maryland Family Council

Phil Burress, Citizens for Community Values, Cincinnati

Rev. Carlton Pearson, former fundamentalist minister

Bishop Harry Jackson, Hope Christian Church, Maryland

Karess Taylor-Hughes, field organizer for Equality Maryland and the Human Rights Campaign

Samantha Master, Student Activist for the Human Rights Campaign

Ben Jealous, President and CEO, NAACP

Rev. Delman Coates, Mt. Ennon Baptist Church, Clinton, MD

Julian Bond, Former Chairman, NAACP

Anthony Charles Williams II, singer-songwriter who, as a gospel performer, was known as Tonéx. His stage name is now B.Slade.

About the Filmmaker

Yoruba Richen (Director/Producer Writer) has directed and produced films in the U.S., Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. Richen's award-winning film, *Promised Land*, premiered at the Full Frame Documentary Festival and has screened at numerous festivals around the world. It received a Diverse Voices Co-Production fund award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and won the Fledgling Fund Award for Social Issue Documentary.

Richen has produced for the investigative unit of ABC News and the independent news program *Democracy Now!* In 2007, she won a Fulbright Award in filmmaking and traveled to Salvador, Brazil, where she began production on *Sisters of the Good Death*, a documentary about the oldest African women's association in the Americas and the annual festival they hold celebrating the end of slavery. In 2012, Richen won the Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award and became a Guggenheim fellow. She is a graduate of Brown University and the University of California, Berkeley. Richen currently teaches documentary film at CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism.

CREDITS

Directed and Written by	Yoruba Richen
Edited by	Ali Muney Erin Casper
Producers	Yoruba Richen and Yvonne Welbon
Co-Producer	Angela Tucker
Executive Producer for National Black Programming Consortium	Jacque Jones
Executive Producer for ITVS	Sally Jo Fifer

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 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 from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The senior series producer is Lois Vossen. More information at www.pbs.org/independentlens. Join Independent Lens on Facebook at www.facebook.com/independentlens.

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