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**CONTACT**

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS	415-356-8383 x 244	voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	lugo@negia.net
Cara White	843-881-1480	cara.white@mac.com

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**AARON MATTHEWS' "THE PAPER"  
TO PREMIERE ON THE EMMY® AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES  
INDEPENDENT LENS ON  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2007 AT 10:00 PM**

**In-Depth Look at Pressures of Modern Journalism Faced by Staff of  
University Newspaper Embroiled in Controversy**

*"This paper's crucible is every paper's."  
—The Boston Globe*

(San Francisco, CA) — From gay rights to racial bias, from plummeting circulation to “infotainment,” from burnt-out reporters to hard-bitten editors, **THE PAPER** goes inside the newsroom to reveal the drama of pressure-cooker journalism. But this is not some big-city major daily. It's *The Daily Collegian*, published by students at Pennsylvania State University who, in the course of one crisis-filled year, face crashing deadlines, ethical dilemmas, doubts and disagreements, all the while shouldering courses, homework and exams. **THE PAPER** will have its national broadcast premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, December 11, 2007 at 10:00 PM (check local listings).

**THE PAPER** is by turns inspiring and astonishing in its exploration of tomorrow's journalists wrestling with today's national media questions. Do you lure readers by entertaining them or offering them hard news? How do you deliver the news when wary public officials and misleading public relations campaigns obstruct you? What is the media's responsibility to serve the public interest in all its diversity? The film addresses these urgent questions in a gripping story that interweaves the drama of deadline journalism with the idealism of youth.

Penn State University, one of the nation's largest public universities, and its award-winning, 20,000-circulation daily newspaper, *The Daily Collegian*, granted Aaron Matthews unprecedented and unfettered access to their 210-person newsroom. Functioning as both training ground and laboratory, the college newspaper is the place where future media makers grapple with the ethical questions of modern-day journalism. Students come face to face with the difficulty of performing investigative work while maintaining “objectivity.” They struggle over how to be fair and truthful, how to get access to information, and how to deliver the facts while respecting their sources and their readers. **THE PAPER** allows audiences to experience the quandaries, dilemmas, triumphs and defeats of a cast of unforgettable editors and writers. Editor-in-Chief James Young frets over the prestigious paper's all-time low circulation, and tries to “sex things up” with a “relationships” page, but his tabloid-like tactics put him at odds with his staff. Managing editor Bridget Smith believes *The Collegian* has a responsibility to deliver hard news, while features writer Laura Baker thinks that coverage of a sexual assault epidemic sweeping campus would win back readers.

*-More-*

Kayur Patel, a rookie reporter who starts out with wide-eyed enthusiasm for getting “the big story,” becomes disheartened as the year wears on. And Jenny Vrentas, the only woman covering the toughest and most coveted beat—Penn State football—competes with ABC and ESPN for access, while the team’s public relations department keeps her at arm’s length. When student groups take *The Daily Collegian* to task for not covering campus-wide concerns, controversy erupts and the paper finds itself at the center of the storm. First, an African American group comes to the offices after a racist event shakes the university, and tries to convince the news staff to cover diversity issues in a more thorough and informed way. Then, *The Collegian* decides to cover a gay-rights kiss-in and publish a homophobic response letter. The controversy that erupts both inside and outside the newsroom has far-reaching social consequences, and the event forces the young editors to reflect on news choices they’ve made over the course of the year.

“The most fascinating thing about making **THE PAPER** was seeing just how much this college newsroom was our media world in miniature. These students struggle to report what’s relevant, all while asking basic questions that newsmakers as well as news consumers seem to have stopped asking,” says filmmaker Aaron Matthews. “The kids in **THE PAPER** aren’t cynical or resigned, and of course just like the professional media they don’t always get it right. But they’re talking about really important issues, and confronting them head on. “Public trust in the news media has steadily declined over the last 20 years,” Matthews continues, “The American media faces a real crisis of coverage and confidence. **THE PAPER** holds up a mirror and offers us a fresh way to scrutinize our media system.”

To learn more about the film and the issues explored, visit **THE PAPER** companion website ([pbs.org/independentlens/paper](http://pbs.org/independentlens/paper)) 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 Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

#### **About the Filmmaker**

For over 12 years, Aaron Matthews has been making award-winning documentary films that have appeared on national and international television and in numerous film festivals around the world. Before **THE PAPER**, Matthews explored the legacy of the 1960s through the eyes of former Black Panther and American exile, Pete O’Neal, in the award-winning *A Panther in Africa*. The film, hailed by critics as “elegant,” “unique,” and “intimate,” screened at over 35 film festivals worldwide and was nationally broadcast on PBS’s *P.O.V.* series in 2004. It received a Cine Golden Eagle Award, and won Best Documentary at the St. Louis International Film Festival. Matthews made his feature documentary debut with the highly acclaimed *My American Girls*, which chronicles one Dominican family’s immigrant experiences in Brooklyn. The film, “packed with uncommon honesty and humor,” according to *The Los Angeles Times*, was also nationally broadcast on *P.O.V.* in 2001 and was selected for an encore *P.O.V.* broadcast in 2002. It won Best Documentary at the San Francisco International Latino Film Festival, aired throughout Europe and Latin America, and is now being broadcast nationwide on the Discovery Times Channel. Matthews began his career making short documentary films. *Taddo*, (about the oldest barber in Brooklyn) and *The Art of the Moment* (an in-depth look at three professional New York City improvisers) played at numerous festivals around the country and were broadcast on The History Channel, as well as public television. Matthews has received grants from The Sundance Institute, The Independent Television Service (ITVS), The Jerome Foundation, The New York State Council on the Arts, Latino Public Broadcasting, and The Brooklyn Arts Council. Born in Venezuela, Aaron Matthews grew up in Brooklyn and graduated from Wesleyan University with a degree in English literature.

#### **About Independent Lens**

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM 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 a unique individual, community or moment in history. Further information about the series is available at [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). The series producer is Lois Vossen.