



# MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

## PBS Honors Extraordinary Achievements and Explores Important Conversations as Part of Black History Month Programming

PBS Offers More Than 30 Documentaries and Specials for Viewers to Stream Online Through the PBS Black Culture Connection (BCC)



L: Dr. Maya Angelou. Credit: Courtesy of Getty R: Smokey Robinson, the 2016 recipient of The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song. Credit: Courtesy of Nick Spanos

KANSAS CITY, MO; January 30, 2017 – To honor Black History Month, and as part of its commitment to celebrate the diversity of America year-round, KCPT and PBS kick off a new year with documentaries and specials that highlight the African-American experience through content on-air on KCPT and KCPT2 and online through the PBS Black Culture Connection. New offerings include programs that reflect on the contributions of icons like the late Maya Angelou, applaud beloved artists like Smokey Robinson and showcase independent documentaries about the valiant efforts of those pushing for change through thoughtful dialogue.

“Audiences turn to PBS year-round to find thoughtful programs about topics and issues that are top of mind in our nation and inclusive of a diverse America,” said Beth Hoppe, Chief Programming Executive and General Manager of General Audience Programming at PBS. “Black History Month provides a special opportunity to highlight the contributions of African Americans to our history and culture. Whether on-air or online, viewers can watch programs that honor the triumphs and achievements of many great Americans anytime and anywhere.”

On Monday, February 6 at 9pm, Emmy-winning documentary series [INDEPENDENT LENS](#) presents “**Birth of a Movement**,” based on the book *The Birth of a Movement: How Birth of a Nation Ignited the Battle for Civil Rights* by Dick Lehr. The documentary tells the little-known story of William Trotter, an

African-American journalist who launched a protest against the 1915 release of D. W. Griffith’s controversial epic, which laid the groundwork for the civil rights movement to come. Featuring interviews with historians and filmmakers such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Spike Lee, “Birth of a Movement” also explores how Griffith’s film continues to motivate African-American filmmakers and the artists as they work to reclaim their history and their onscreen image. Also from **INDEPENDENT LENS**, airing Monday, February 13 at 9pm, is “**Accidental Courtesy**,” featuring Daryl Davis, an African-American musician who meets and befriends members of the Ku Klux Klan in an attempt to change

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their minds and forge racial conciliation, one racist at a time.

On Friday, February 10 at 8pm, airing as part of PBS Arts programming, **SMOKEY ROBINSON: THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GERSHWIN PRIZE FOR POPULAR SONG** honors singer-songwriter Smokey Robinson during this star-studded music special, hosted by Samuel L. Jackson, with a special appearance by Motown founder Berry Gordy and featuring performances by BeBe Winans, Ledisi and CeeLo Green, to name a few. Robinson, a rhythm and blues icon nicknamed the “King of Motown,” has enjoyed a career spanning more than half a century. The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song is awarded annually to a composer or performer whose lifetime achievements exemplify the standard of excellence associated with the Gershwins.

**THE TALK – RACE IN AMERICA**, premiering Monday, February 20 at 8pm, is a two-hour documentary about “the talk,” the conversation parents of color have with their children about how to behave if stopped by the police. The film illustrates the issue from multiple points of view: parent, child, the police and the community. The film, airing in the wake of shootings of unarmed men of color such as Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin and more, features interviews with Kenya Barris, creator/writer of Peabody Award-winning ABC series *black\*ish*, musician/activist Nas, actor/director/activist Rosie Perez, director/screenwriter/producer John Singleton, *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, and Samaria Rice, mother of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy killed by the Cleveland police in a local park.

On Tuesday, February 21 at 7pm, [AMERICAN MASTERS](#) presents “**Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise**,” the first documentary feature about the incomparable author and activist Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2014), best known for her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The film weaves her words with rare and intimate archival photographs and videos that paint hidden facets of her exuberant life during some of America’s most defining moments. From her upbringing in the Depression-era South to her work with Malcolm X in Ghana, to her inauguration poem for President Bill Clinton, the film takes a journey through the life of a true American icon. The documentary features exclusive interviews with Dr. Angelou, her friends and family, including Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Common, Alfre Woodard, Cicely Tyson, Quincy Jones, Hillary Clinton, Louis Gossett, Jr., John Singleton and Dr. Angelou’s son, Guy Johnson.

Also airing throughout February is the second season of the PBS original series [MERCY STREET](#) (Sundays at 7pm, beginning January 22), a Civil War-era drama about the chaotic world of Union-occupied Alexandria, Virginia, and the Mansion House Hospital in the early years of the Civil War. The original PBS drama explores, among other topics, the role that African Americans — including slaves, free blacks and contraband (African Americans who fled slavery in the hope of securing their freedom behind Union lines) — played in the hospital and the city. This season introduces newcomer Charlotte Jenkins (played by Tony Award-winning actress Patina Miller), a runaway slave turned abolitionist who goes to Alexandria to help the contraband population adapt to freedom.

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New on February 27 – March 1 at 8pm, from Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is an epic new documentary series, **AFRICA'S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS**, that brings to life stories of both little-known and celebrated African kingdoms and cultures, and includes a historical reflection on the slave trade to the Americas.

In addition to on-air programs, the [PBS Black Culture Connection \(BCC\)](#), an extension of PBS.org, features black films, stories and discussion across PBS, and provides audiences with a [catalogue of more than 30 programs](#) available for streaming. Most PBS programs are available for streaming following their broadcast via the PBS apps for iOS and Android devices and via station-branded digital platforms including Roku, AppleTV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast.

A complete preview of programs related to the African-American experience includes:

## **MERCY STREET, Season 2**

*Sundays, February 5-19, 2017, 7pm*

Alliances blur and loyalties shift as the war pushes the drama beyond the hospital. Follow the growing chaos at Alexandria's Mansion House, the precarious position of the Green family and the changing situation of the burgeoning black population.

## **INDEPENDENT LENS "Birth of a Movement"**

*Monday, February 6, 9pm*

Learn how D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* unleashed a battle still being waged today over race relations and representation, and the power and influence of Hollywood. Featuring Spike Lee, Reginald Hudlin, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and others.

## **SMOKEY ROBINSON: THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GERSHWIN PRIZE FOR POPULAR SONG**

*Friday, February 10, 8pm*

Join host Samuel L. Jackson for an all-star tribute to singer and songwriter Smokey Robinson, the 2016 recipient of the Gershwin Prize, with a special appearance by Berry Gordy, founder of Motown.

## **GET IN THE WAY: THE JOURNEY OF JOHN LEWIS**

*Friday, February 10, 9:30pm*

Watch the first documentary biography of John Lewis, civil rights hero, congressional leader and human rights champion whose unwavering fight for justice spans the past fifty years.

## **INDEPENDENT LENS "Accidental Courtesy"**

*Monday, February 13, 9pm*

Meet African-American musician Daryl Davis, who has a peculiar passion — meeting and befriending members of the Ku Klux Klan in an attempt to change their minds and forge racial conciliation.

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## **THE TALK – RACE IN AMERICA**

*Monday, February 20, 8pm*

In the wake of recent tragic and fatal events between men of color and law enforcement, learn how black and Hispanic families counsel their kids to stay safe if they are stopped by the police.

## **AMERICAN MASTERS “Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise”**

*Tuesday, February 21, 7pm*

Journey through the prolific life of the *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* author and activist who inspired generations with lyrical modern African-American thought. Features new interviews with Oprah Winfrey, Common, the Clintons and others.

## **THE OPENING OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM**

*Thursday, February 23, 9pm*

Explore the details, ingenuity and history surrounding the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

## **AFRICA’S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS**

*Monday-Wednesday, February 27-March 1, 8pm*

Beginning with Africa’s ancient history as the cradle of mankind, this documentary series with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. brings to life the epic stories of both little-known and celebrated African kingdoms and cultures.

## **Additional Programs**

### **AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

*Tuesdays at 10pm beginning February 2 on KCPT2*

Celebrate the cultural and historical growth that has occurred in Africa during the last generation using films tailored to a world audience from insightful, artful and often unique local perspectives.

### **AUSTIN CITY LIMITS “CeCe Winans/St. Paul & The Broken Bones”**

*February 4, 2017, 11pm*

Thrill to an hour of soul and gospel. Grammy-winning legend CeCe Winans sings new songs and classics from her catalog, while breakout sensations St. Paul & the Broken Bones support their acclaimed album *Sea of Noise*.

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## **OVERHEARD WITH EVAN SMITH “Henry Louis Gates Jr.”**

*February 5 at 10am*

In addition to being a Harvard professor and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, Dr. Gates is also an author, historian, cultural critic, and filmmaker.

## **THE BLACK PANTHERS: VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION**

*February 5, 7pm on KCPT2*

Revisit the turbulent 1960s, when a revolutionary culture emerged with the Black Panther Party at its vanguard. Stanley Nelson tells the vibrant story of a pivotal movement that feels timely all over again.

## **AMERICAN MASTERS “Jimi Hendrix”**

*February 11 at 10pm on KCPT2*

Explore new insight into the musician's personality and genius with previously unseen performance footage, interviews with Hendrix himself, and commentary from well-known friends and musicians.

## **INDEPENDENT LENS “The Trials of Muhammad Ali”**

*February 12 at 7pm on KCPT2*

This film covers Muhammad Ali's toughest bout: his battle to overturn the five-year prison sentence he received for refusing U.S. military service.

## **AMERICAN MASTERS “August Wilson”**

*February 12 at 8:30pm on KCPT2*

From his roots as an activist and poet to his indelible mark on Broadway, this program captures the legacy of the man some call America's Shakespeare.

## **AUSTIN CITY LIMITS “Kendrick Lamar”**

*February 25, 11pm*

Experience an hour of contemporary hip-hop from Grammy-nominated superstar Kendrick Lamar. The Compton rapper plays songs from his acclaimed LP, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, alongside his hits.

## **FINDING YOUR ROOTS, Season 3**

*Tuesdays at 7pm*

Join Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as he delves into the genealogy of 27 guests. Each story illuminates the vast patchwork of ethnicity, race and experience that makes up the fabric of America.

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## Classroom Resources Celebrating Black History

[PBS LearningMedia](#) – PBS’ online destination for educators and students – offers a range of curriculum-targeted resources that support lessons on black history and spotlight the leaders, thinkers, and innovators that helped shape our nation’s history. Through discussion questions, worksheets, videos, and digitized primary sources, PBS LearningMedia helps teachers to promote curiosity in their classrooms and strengthen students’ personal connection to black history and culture. Featured resources illuminate the life of figures like Harriet Tubman, Jesse Owens, and Rosa Parks and delve into key themes relevant to the Civil Rights Movement. PBS LearningMedia also offers related resources from recent PBS programs like [SOUNDBREAKING](#), [BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK: AND STILL I RISE](#), [MERCY STREET](#) and will soon offer content from AFRICA’S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS.

For more information on the latest digital resources for classroom instruction, please visit [pbslearningmedia.org](https://pbslearningmedia.org).

## Free Streaming on the [PBS Black Culture Connection \(BCC\)](#)

The following is a sample of the more than 30 programs available for online streaming on the BCC in February. Some of these encore programs will also feed on-air on local PBS stations (check local listings).

- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre
- Freedom Riders (American Experience)
- Freedom Summer (American Experience)
- Jimi Hendrix — Hear My Train A-Comin’ (American Masters)
- The March @50
- Underground Railroad: The William Still Story

Other PBS series that routinely offer programming to commemorate Black History Month include [FRONTLINE](#), [GREAT PERFORMANCES](#), [POV](#), [PBS NEWSHOUR](#) and [TAVIS SMILEY](#). Find more information and high-resolution images from these programs on [PBS PressRoom](#).

## About PBS Black Culture Connection (BCC)

The PBS Black Culture Connection, featuring video from films, award-winning documentaries and popular series like [AMERICAN EXPERIENCE](#) and [FRONTLINE](#), links the diverse national content found on PBS with local programs, interviews and discussions from PBS member stations and from around the web. In addition to aggregating more than 100 digital resources about black history and culture in one place within PBS.org, the **PBS Black Culture Connection** features thematic film collections, biographies and profiles, original productions made just for the web and local station spotlights. After exploring the site, users are encouraged to connect with others through online discussion and to

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challenge themselves with a suite of quizzes. The **PBS Black Culture Connection** is made available through partnerships with member stations, including WNET and WGBH, and public media partners like the National Black Programming Consortium. It will also feature the works of producers like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stanley Nelson and Tavis Smiley.

## About PBS

[PBS](#), with nearly 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches nearly 100 million people through television and nearly 33 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its website, [pbskids.org](#), are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](#), one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](#) or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

For more information contact Angee Simmons, KCPT Vice President - TV Production and Creative Services, [asimmons@kcpt.org](mailto:asimmons@kcpt.org)

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