

RACE IN AMERICA: A PBS documentary series for 2017

For the last half century, black Americans have held the same lawful rights as whites. But events of the past year demonstrate that equality cannot be legislated and that prejudices going back hundreds of years remain with us. Although the protests in Ferguson, Cleveland, New York, Baltimore and elsewhere were ignited by police actions, they were fueled by the realization that in today's ostensibly equal, post-racial society, black lives still don't matter.

America's racial divide is not just a story of prejudice; it is a story of economic hardship. A recent AARP study demonstrates that black families are suffering significantly more than whites in every aspect of life: making mortgage payments, borrowing money, cutting back on medication, having utilities cut off, helping a child pay bills. The severe and growing wealth gap between white and black families, currently a 16 to 1 disparity, shows how economics reinforce and determine racial inequality.

Enter RACE IN AMERICA, four hour-long documentaries about people caught in the vortex of America's racial divide: absorbing characters with powerful stories to tell.

In **Detroit**, we focus on three black citizens who lie in the morgue forgotten by society, until we investigate what brought them there and reconstruct their lives.

In **New Orleans**, we enter the world of public defenders and their black clients, who must navigate a criminal justice system that is skewed against them.

In **Chicago**, we meet two African Americans who used education to escape its mean streets and lead distinguished lives. We also meet some of their neighborhood friends whose lives took a different path.

In **New York**, we go inside the NYPD, tracking one black and one white recruit during their first year on the force to examine the largely white police culture through two sets of experiences.

For the racial divide to be bridged, white America needs to see it through a different lens. This series is the start of a national campaign to dismantle the structure of racism.

DETROIT: THE FORGOTTEN Produced by June Cross

They say the dead tell no stories, but this film will argue that indeed, they do.

In the refrigerated morgue of the Wayne County Coroner's office lie nearly two hundred bodies. The coroner knows them well: knows their names, their dates of birth and the day they died. He even knows their addresses. But to society, they're the forgotten. Forgotten even before they died, alone, on a street corner, or in a dilapidated house, or baby's crib. They're unclaimed. Some have been there since 2010. Shot or bludgeoned, strangled or stabbed – some simply died in their sleep. Some could have been saved if only the city's decrepit ambulance system had been more responsive. Together, their stories form a silent testament to societal apathy and indifference that are a telling part of the racial divide.

During the early fifties Detroit led the nation in median income and home ownership. Two million people – 83 per cent of them white – lived in the Motor City. But by the end of the decade, as the automobile industry began to move overseas, one-fifth of its citizens were jobless. By the sixties, as school integration drove whites out and federal housing projects kept blacks in, the city had “flipped,” and now illiteracy, child poverty, and unemployment all hover around fifty per cent. And 45 per cent of the houses are abandoned.

But those statistics alone don't tell the story.

We will visit the Detroit morgue, which just two years ago outsourced its autopsies to the University of Michigan because of budget cuts, to tell a story about a city which was once America's greatest but is now one of America's poorest. We will carefully reconstruct the lives of three of its unclaimed black citizens, to understand the circumstances that resulted in their being left there. Through the artifacts – social and institutional - of the lives they left behind, as well as the words from their friends and families, we will shed light on that individual's life. It's a story about a place so divided by race that ambulances triage patients by zip code and newspapers don't even bother covering the city whose name appears on their mastheads.

NEW ORLEANS: THE HOLDING TANK Produced by Allan Maraynes

What's it like to be black and under arrest?

We'll spend several months with the New Orleans Public Defenders and their clients, witnessing in highly cinematic verite style, the perfect storm, a whole other kind of Katrina that batters both defendants and their defenders. It's a scathing racial divide that questions whether "equal justice" in America is in fact, a cruel myth.

In 1963, the Supreme Court promised that no one would be forced to face a loss of liberty without a skilled advocate at his side. For poor African-Americans, the reality is that loss of liberty is a foregone conclusion...even BEFORE conviction.

Consider these statistics.

80 percent of individuals who end up in the court system are indigent and black and must rely on court appointed counsel. Of those individuals, 90 percent end up pleading guilty. Despite making up only 13 percent of the population, the incarceration rate of African Americans compared to their white counterparts is six to one.

According to the advocacy group "Gideon's Promise," nowhere is the problem of inadequate representation more broken than in the south. And they point to a dedicated Public Defender, Derwyn Bunton of New Orleans, to help us tell the story. But the battle Bunton and his defenders fight each day is staggering - both in defending major cases, and also minor ones. Take a 19 year-old, locked up for 29 days for a misdemeanor charge; possession of a marijuana "roach." He's been behind bars only because he didn't have the \$50 necessary to make bond. (He can be held up to 45 days while the District Attorney's office decides whether or not to formally charge him. If they do, he can spend two or more years in jail awaiting trial.)

Meanwhile, his lawyer has another 134 clients to deal with.

Bunton says it's not just about the numbers, not just about the case overload, or the fact that the budget for the District Attorney's office is many times more than his. He says sometimes it's just about cruelty and disrespect.

Bunton recalls a black mother watching her son as he's sentenced to hard time. She'll likely be dead when he gets out of jail. She begins to cry and the judge orders her from the court

room. As she leaves, the judge admonishes her by saying if she'd done her job as a mother, her son wouldn't be in this fix. Really?

CHICAGO: UNTAPPED TALENT, WASTED LIVES Produced by Amani Martin

In the early '80s, I was an eighth-grader at IS 181 in the Bronx. One day, my principal called me to his office to notify me of my selection for a program called A Better Chance, or ABC. The program identified high-performing African-American students and placed them in elite boarding schools. Months after filling out the application, a thick manila envelope appeared in my mailbox at home. The sender: The Taft School, a highly selective Connecticut prep school. That letter would alter the trajectory of my life. It's unlikely I would've ended up an Emmy Award winning filmmaker without the fateful intervention of ABC.

On my first day at Taft, I met my roommate Derek Mitchell, another ABC kid, and a former gang member from Chicago's rough south side. Derek had grown up in far bleaker circumstances than I, and seemed a long shot to make it through Taft. But Derek survived, and ultimately thrived. Now based in San Francisco, Derek Mitchell is the CEO of Partners in School Innovation, a successful non-profit that supports education in some of the lowest performing schools nationwide.

I'll take Derek Mitchell back to his old neighborhood, talking to old friends, neighbors and teachers, and illustrating the challenging the circumstances he left. I'll also follow Deval Patrick, the first African-American Managing Director at Bain Capital and two-term governor of Massachusetts. It's hard to imagine the polished and erudite Deval Patrick coming from an indigent background, but he and Derek Mitchell share near identical childhood profiles. They're both natives of Chicago's south side raised by single mothers on welfare. ABC took them both out of Chicago to prep schools that were initially massive culture shocks. Patrick's said of his 1970 arrival at Milton Academy: "I thought I'd landed on a different planet." But that different planet provided Patrick and Mitchell with boundless opportunity, and socialization with the children of the nation's elite. And their successes are impossible to imagine without ABC. That'll raise the stakes for another key character in the film, a south side Chicago eighth-grader applying to ABC.

By digging into the stories of some of Patrick and Mitchell's old friends and family who never left their south side neighborhoods, the film will depict the stark contrast in life outcomes. By illustrating the difference ABC can make for the select few, I'll tell a tale documenting the abundant untapped talent and wasted lives of young, black children who never got a ticket out of the neighborhood.

NEW YORK: INSIDE THE NYPD Produced by Harry Moses

What is today's police culture like?

How large a role did it play in the killings in Ferguson, in Cleveland, in New York, in Baltimore and other cities during the past year?

Have the values and beliefs of police departments become so entrenched over the years that they are incapable of change?

We will find out by going inside the NYPD and following two rookie police officers - one black, one white - through their training cycle and onto the streets of New York City. We'll see what they're taught, how they respond, and what they tell their friends and family, wives and kids, when they're off duty.

Most importantly, we'll contrast the attitudes, behavior and experiences of a black officer with his white counterpart as both go through their first year on the force.

Helping us is Detective Yuseff Hamm, a former elementary school teacher who joined the NYPD 14 years ago and is now president of the Guardian's Association, the fraternal order that represents black police officers in New York City. One of Hamm's primary duties is to speak to black communities and persuade African-Americans to join the force, not so easy after Eric Garner, Michael Brown, et al. But he is determined to change the face of the police department by adding more officers of color. "Change the image and you change the outcome," he says. This documentary will find out if he's right.

RACE IN AMERICA: THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Our goal is to alter the unconscious prejudices and steadfast convictions that allow racism to flourish. We will do this through story-telling that is character driven, truthful and emotionally compelling. To publicize the series we are in conversation with Starbucks to have portions of it streamed to every store in America and their nine million daily customers. Starbucks also can make these selects directly available to mobile phones via the widely used Starbucks app. Once the series is aired, (an estimated 2,000,000 viewers per episode), PBS will distribute a community outreach plan to each one of its 350 affiliates with specific ways of involving both adults and children. We are also approaching several high profile educators who will help develop a curriculum based on the series to be placed in middle schools across the country. The New York Times has just announced a major digital commitment to race and we plan to work with them to develop webisodes targeting a young audience using material from the series. In addition, a partnership with Aware Cinema will distribute the series to more than 19,000 churches, community centers and police departments. Another partnership with Journeys In Film, a distributor that has a proven outreach to more than three million students, will help us reach the educational market.

Tearing down the building blocks of racism starts with changing hearts and reaching minds...especially the young. RACE IN AMERICA is a beginning.

Following are bios of the production team and a letter of support from PBS.

HARRY MOSES (Series executive producer; producer, “Inside the NYPD”)

Harry Moses has spent his career in television and film production, most of it for his company The Mosaic Group, Inc. He produced, wrote and directed the two hour NBC News special *Where Were You?* for the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination, with Tom Brokaw as correspondent. His feature-length documentary *Who the %\$#& is Jackson Pollock?* was released in movie theaters by New Line Cinema.

Moses spent the first part of his career with CBS News. In addition to producing, writing and directing almost 100 stories for *60 Minutes*, he was the executive producer of series featuring

Mike Wallace and Bill Moyers and headed an investigative unit for the CBS Evening News. His award winning PBS series, *Children's Express News Magazine*, gave children below the poverty line the chance to be reporters, empowering them to ask tough questions of adults in positions of authority.

Among Moses's movies for television are *Assault at West Point* with Samuel L. Jackson and Sam Waterston, the true story of the court-martial of black cadet Johnson Whitaker at the U.S. Military Academy in 1881. President Clinton cited the SHOWTIME film in a White House ceremony, when he granted a posthumous officer's commission to Whitaker's granddaughter. Another docudrama, *Thornwell*, told the story of James Thornwell, an African American private in the military who was given LSD without his knowledge and consent. The film, and Moses's *60 Minutes* segment on which it was based, resulted in an unprecedented Act of Congress that condemned the military for its actions and gave Thornwell a cash settlement.

Harry Moses is the recipient of Emmy, Peabody and Directors Guild of America Awards. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Citation from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for "vital contributions to television journalism" for his work on *60 Minutes*.

JUNE CROSS (Producer, "Detroit: The Forgotten")

June Cross is a tenured professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and specializes in covering stories at the intersection of race and public policy. She is a former Senior Producer at PBS' *Frontline*, and a former producer for CBS News' *West 57th* and *The CBS Evening News*. She is a two-time Emmy winner and has won two DuPont-Columbia Journalism Awards. In 2006, she published a memoir, *Secret Daughter: the Mixed-Race Daughter and the Mother Who Gave Her Away*.

ALLAN MARAYNES (Producer, "New Orleans: The Holding Tank")

Maraynes began his career at *60 Minutes*, where he produced nearly thirty segments. He then spent several years with ABC News' *20/20*, where he served as both producer and senior investigative producer.

In 1996 he joined Dateline NBC as a Senior Investigative Producer. Among the stories he originated and/or supervised a hidden camera investigation into official corruption in the ranks of Louisiana police officers, a report on dangerous, sudden acceleration in Ford automobiles, and investigations into child labor in American agriculture. Recently, he originated and supervised a Peabody award -winning hour exposing the national epidemic of childhood asthma and its link to poverty. He is the winner of two additional Peabodys, three DuPonts and 16 Emmys.

AMANI MARTIN (Producer, “Chicago: Untapped Talent, Wasted Lives”)

Amani Martin is a multiple Emmy-Award-winning executive producer and director. For ESPN and Spike Lee (as Executive Producer) he directed and produced *The Icebreaker*, the story of Willie O’Ree, the NHL’s first black player. He also produced and directed ESPN’s *Ali: The Mission*, which explored Muhammad Ali’s little-known 1990 mission to Baghdad to secure the release of US hostages held by Saddam Hussein. In 2012, Martin was producer and writer for *Benji*, which explored the tragic 1984 shooting of Ben Wilson, an iconic Chicago high school basketball star. He was also creator and executive producer of *What Matters?*, an award-winning 12-spot campaign for ESPN’s 2011 Black History Month commemoration.



November 12, 2015

Mr. Harry Moses
The Mosaic Group, Inc.
48 Gramercy Park N.
New York, NY 10010

Dear Harry:

We are happy to register PBS' s enthusiastic support for your work on *RACE*, a 4 part 60-minute documentary series on race relations in the U.S. The series will explore the impact economic hardship has on racial inequality. Presenting the racial divide through a different lens, each episode of the series will focus on individual stories within a

community. We expect the show will have wide general audience appeal and a long-term multi-platform life.

You have proven your ability to create informative documentaries as well as feature films. With multiple awards in production – including your Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences we have great confidence in your skills and those of your production team. We wish you every success in securing the resources you need to bring the project into production. We look forward to working with you throughout the project.

Please keep us apprised of your progress and let us know if we might assist in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marie Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "N".

Marie Nelson
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