

THE NEW BLACK

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A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY YORUBA RICHEN

Yoruba Richen

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

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SYNOPSIS

The New Black is a documentary that tells the story of how the African-American community is grappling with the gay rights issue in light of the recent gay marriage movement and the fight over civil rights. The film documents activists, families and clergy on both sides of the campaign to legalize gay marriage and examines homophobia in the black community's institutional pillar—the black church and reveals the Christian right wing's strategy of exploiting this phenomenon in order to pursue an anti-gay political agenda.

The New Black takes viewers into the pews and onto the streets and provides a seat at the kitchen table as it tells the story of the historic fight to win marriage equality in Maryland and charts the evolution of this divisive issue within the black community.



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I began conceiving of *The New Black* in November of 2008. It was the night of the presidential election and I was in San Francisco.

The months leading up to the election were intensely emotional for many Americans, especially African-Americans. The idea of a black president was something that we had routinely dismissed as something that would not happen in our lifetime. At the same time, marriage equality was on the ballot in California and as the night progressed it became clear that the right for same-sex couples to marry—which had recently been granted by the California courts—was going to be taken away. The euphoria that the city felt about Barack Obama's election was countered by spontaneous protests and visible outrage at the loss of marriage equality. Almost immediately, it was reported that African-Americans voted for Proposition 8 by 70%. That these reports later proved false was not enough to counter the narrative that blacks were to blame for loss of marriage equality while gays had helped elect Obama. Many of us who were members of both communities watched horrified as latent resentments, outright racism and homophobia bubbled to the top of the national political scene.

For over three years I followed how this issue was being debated and understood in the African-American American community. In the course of production, I realized 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. So 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 and our neighborhoods—and ultimately at the ballot box.

I hope that the film will contribute to the important conversation about race, sexuality and political rights and the intersection of the three. And that it will reach diverse audiences within heterogeneous contexts and communities—from the black, to the gay, to the faith community and the general public as well.



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CREW

Yoruba Richen

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / WRITER

Yoruba Richen is documentary filmmaker who has directed and produced films in the United States, Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. Yoruba'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.

Yoruba has produced for the investigative unit of ABC News and the independent news program Democracy Now. In 2007, Yoruba 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, Yoruba won the Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award and became a Guggenheim fellow. She is a graduate of Brown University and teaches Documentary film at CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism.

Yvonne Welbon

PRODUCER

Yvonne Welbon has produced and distributed over 20 films including *Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis@ 100*, winner of ten best documentary awards—including the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Documentary, and *Sisters in Cinema*, a documentary on the history of black women feature film directors. Her films have screened on PBS, Starz/Encore, TV-ONE, IFC, Bravo, the Sundance Channel, BET, HBO and in over one hundred film festivals around the world. She is currently developing a documentary about black artists in China and producing *Sisters in the Life: 25 Years of Out African American Lesbian Media-making*—a web based online community building project that includes a book of essays, a documentary, an archive and a mobile app. Originally from Chicago, Welbon received a B.A. from Vassar College, an M.F.A from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. She is also a graduate of the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women. Welbon is an assistant professor in the journalism and media studies department at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, NC.

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CREW CONTINUED

Angela Tucker

CO-PRODUCER

Angela is a writer, director and producer. Her directorial work includes *(A)sexual*, a feature length documentary about people who experience no sexual attraction available on iTunes and VOD and *Black Folk Don't*, a satirical documentary web series in its third season featured in Time Magazine's "10 Ideas That Are Changing Your Life." Angela is also the Series Producer for the PBS documentary series, AfroPop. She was the Director of Production at Big Mouth Films, a social issue documentary production company that was a project of Arts Engine, Inc. There she produced several award winning documentaries including *Pushing the Elephant* (PBS' Independent Lens) about a Congolese mother and daughter separated over 12 years. She received her MFA in Film from Columbia University where she was awarded a Dean's Fellowship. Angela is based in Brooklyn, NY and can be followed on Twitter @tuckergurl.

Ali Munev

EDITOR

Ali Munev is a New York based editor. She has edited two feature documentaries for ITVS and several short films shown worldwide at Cannes, Tribeca Film Festival, Palm Springs ShortFest, Mill Valley, Woodstock and Frameline film festivals. Ali began her career as an assistant editor for narrative films helmed by directors such as George C. Wolfe, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Tamara Jenkins.

Erin Casper

EDITOR / WRITER

Erin Casper's editing credits include *American Promise* (POV 2014), which won the Special Jury Prize for Achievement in Filmmaking at the Sundance Film Festival and won the Grand Jury Prize at the Full Frame Film Festival. Her other credits include Sundance Editing Award winner *Detropia* (as Associate Editor), and *Our School*, which was nominated for a Gopo Award for Best Documentary in Romania's top film awards and has been shown and honored at festivals and institutions around the world, including Tribeca, Visions du Réel, and Silverdocs for which it won the top festival Sterling Award prize in 2011. Erin was the inaugural recipient for the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellowship in 2011 and an editing fellow at the Sundance Institute Documentary Edit Lab in 2009.

Nadia Hallgren

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Nadia Hallgren is a filmmaker and cinematographer from the Bronx, NY. Her camera credits include Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the Academy Award nominated *Trouble The Water*, And HBO's *War Don Don*. As director, Nadia is a Cinereach fellow whose most recent film *Love Lockdown* premiered at the SXSW film festival, and won best short film at HBO's Urbanworld film festival. Her other film *Sanza Hanza*, a documentary about teenage train surfers in Soweto, South Africa was acquired by PBS.



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CREW CONTINUED

Garland McLaurin

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Garland has worked in television and film in the United States and abroad for over ten years. He recently Co-Directed/Produced on *180 Days: A Year Inside An American School* which aired on PBS. Prior to this he Field Produced on *Black in America 4*, for CNN. Other professional credits include Producer/Shooter on the BET's Special *Homecoming: The Killing of DJ Henry*, Videographer for *One Day, One Destiny* a production of National Black Programming Consortium's broadcast series *AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange* and Field Producing on the TV One series *Murder In Black and White*.

He holds a BA in Radio-TV-Film from Howard University and an MFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts graduate film school.

Veena Rao

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Veena Rao is a New York based documentary filmmaker and producer. Her short documentaries have screened at festivals worldwide and have aired on Current TV and the Documentary Channel. She has also produced content for various publications and organizations including The New Yorker and the Guggenheim Museum. She holds a BFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is a member of New York Women in Film and Television (NYWIFT) and Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective (BFC).

Samantha Stark

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Samantha Stark is a video journalist whose work regularly appears on nytimes.com. Her videos have screened on Afropop, NPR.org, JetBlue airlines and at The Hong Kong International AIDS Film Festival. She received an Emmy-nomination for her contribution to *The New York Times'* multimedia series "Coming Out," about LGBT high school students. She has a M.A. from CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism.

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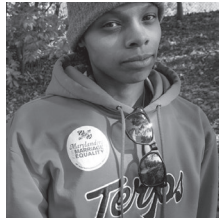


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CHARACTER BIOS



Sharon Lettman-Hicks is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Founded in 2003, NBJC has provided leadership at the intersection of national civil rights groups and LGBT organizations, advocating for the unique challenges and needs of the African-American LGBT community that are often relegated to the sidelines. NBJC envisions a world where all people are fully-empowered to participate safely, openly and honestly in family, faith and community, regardless of race, class, gender identity or sexual orientation. In concert with NBJC's mission to eradicate racism and homophobia, her personal goals are: to make the Black family the focal point of NBJC; to tell compelling stories about the Black LGBT community; and to see Black LGBT people understood, embraced and respected for their valuable contributions to society.



Karess Taylor-Hughes is originally from Long Island New York. At the age of 24 she already has years of experience working in political campaigns. She was a field organizer for Equality Maryland and The Human Rights Campaign. Karess currently attends Columbia University, where she is pursuing her Masters degree in Sports Management. She will continue to make progress as she pushes to increase more advocacy work for underrepresented communities.



Samantha Master is a 25 year old student at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD. Samantha currently serves as the Youth and Campus Outreach Intern for the Human Rights Campaign and aspires to one day serve as the Vice President of Student Affairs at Howard University. She originally began working on the marriage equality campaign in Maryland in 2007 as a volunteer with Equality Maryland because Black LGBT people— especially Black LGBT people in the South— are deeply important to her, and she wanted people to see people who looked like her —when they thought about LGBT people. She also got involved because she believes this battle is only the first step in the fight for LGBT-liberation.



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CHARACTER BIOS CONTINUED



Pastor Derek McCoy serves as President of the Maryland Family Alliance and Maryland Family Council which are organizations dedicated to seeing strong families, educated children, and responsible government in society. Derek has served as an Associate Pastor of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Maryland for the past 18 years. In addition, he formerly served as Sr. Vice President of The High Impact Leadership Coalition.



Rev. Delman Coates is a Pastor at Mount Ennon Baptist Church, located in Clinton, Maryland. He is a graduate of Morehouse College and Columbia University (Ph.D. in New Testament & Early Christianity, 2006). He has been happily married to Yolanda Walsh Coates for 17 years. and they are the proud parents of two sons, Nathaniel and Joshua, and twin daughters Ava Marie and Leah Blair.



Anthony Charles Williams II, formerly known under the gospel moniker Tonéx, is an American singer, songwriter, actor, multi-instrumentalist, rapper, dancer and producer from San Diego, CA. Williams has released several hundred songs on dozens of albums over the span of his career, while producing several others for both gospel and secular artists. He has won six Stellar Awards, a GMA Award, and received 2 Grammy nominations: one for Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album for his 2004 gold album, *Out The Box* and another in 2009 for Best Urban/Soul Alternative Performance for his single, *Blend*, from his 2009 album, *Unspoken*. His music blends a smorgasbord of styles, including pop, r&b, jazz, soul, funk, hip hop, rock, latin, electro, punk and trance. His new stage name is B.Slade.

SUPPORTERS

Independent Television Service (ITVS)

Robeson Fund for Independent Media

Hartley Film Fund

Chicken & Egg

Robert Giard Foundation

Sundance Institute

Pare Lorentz

Tribeca Institute

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