

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

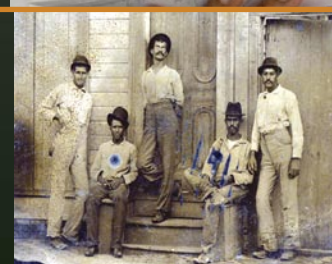
THREE NEW PERSPECTIVES ON FILM



REVOLUTION '67

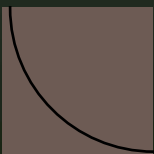


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FAUBOURG TREMÉ

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REVOLUTION '67

Revolution '67 focuses on the explosive urban rebellion in Newark, New Jersey, in July 1967, to reveal the long-standing racial, economic, and political forces which generated inner city poverty and perpetuate it today. Newark residents, police, officials, and urban commentators, including writer/activist Amiri Baraka, journalist Bob Herbert, prominent historians and '60s activist Tom Hayden, recount the vivid, day-to-day details of the uprising. But they also trace those traumatic days back to decades of industrial decline, unemployment, job and housing discrimination, federal programs favoring suburbs over cities, police impunity, political corruption, and a costly, divisive overseas war. Americans should not have been surprised when race wars exploded, turning cities into combat zones, bringing Vietnam back home.

The spark igniting this firestorm of pent-up rage in Newark was, as is so often, an encounter between a black man and the police. On July 12th, 1967, two white officers stopped a black taxi driver for a minor traffic violation, beat him, and dragged him into the local precinct. A rumor spread rapidly through black neighborhoods that the driver had died. Though this proved to be untrue, years of police brutality incited a crowd to rampage through the streets, breaking windows, and looting white-owned businesses reputed to cheat their black customers. The next night, a mass protest meeting erupted into more widespread violence.

Mayor Hugh Addonizio, subsequently imprisoned for graft, panicked and called Governor Richard J. Hughes, who summoned the New Jersey National Guard. Tanks rolled through Newark's streets, black neighborhoods were cordoned off with barbed wire, and check-points set-up. The police and Guard, untrained in crowd control, fired indiscriminately into housing projects, killing innocent bystanders. But the national press, including *The New York Times* and *Life* magazine, blamed the deaths on "black snipers," demonizing young African American men as ruthless guerillas, the domestic equivalent of the Viet Cong. When later examined, 13,000 rounds of ammunition

were fired by law enforcement during the so-called riots, while less than 100 rounds were found which could have come from the alleged snipers; no one was ever charged as a sniper. In all, 26 people died, 24 of them African American, and 725 were wounded during those six days in July.

Revolution '67 connects the Newark tragedy and the racial disturbances in Detroit, Watts, and over 500 other U.S. cities during the '60s to decades of indifference and discrimination. Historian Clement A. Price points out that Newark had always functioned as a launching pad for newly arrived European immigrants, offering poverty wages, back-breaking factory jobs, and run-down housing in exchange for a chance to move on, up, and out. But the "racialization" of American society made it impossible for Southern blacks to follow this classic path to the "American Dream." Job and housing discrimination locked them into inner city ghettos. Starting in the early 1900s, corporate disinvestment from the industrialized North to low wage states, and now "off-shore" to the developing world, left Newark without jobs, manufacturing, a tax base, and a future, walled off from America's unprecedented affluence.

Professor Kenneth T. Jackson explains how federal policies, such as cheap mortgages

and tax deductions for home ownership, encouraged whites to abandon urban centers for the sprawling suburbs. Public and private investment poured into suburban housing, commercial development, and a massive superhighway network, neglecting urban renewal, industrial growth, and efficient public transportation. African Americans were barred from these suburbs by discriminatory lending policies, exclusionary housing covenants, and, of course, lower incomes. "White flight" from Newark became a stampede, accelerating after July '67. Neighborhoods were "red-lined," block-busting was rampant, housing prices plummeted; many owners simply walked away from their homes which sold for as little as \$100 at auction. Newark was discarded to the poor; not a single movie theater or supermarket remained open; once thriving streets became lined with pawnshops and loan sharks.

The 1968 Kerner Commission's definitive report on the urban disturbances of the '60s recommended massive federal investment in inner city jobs, education, housing, and anti-discrimination enforcement. But the film's postscript, "Newark Today," finds that by 2007, the 40th anniversary of the insurrection, little had improved. The population dropped from 450,000 in 1950 to 277,000 in 2006. Unemployment is more



Photo donated by Corbis-Bettmann

than double the national average, as is the poverty rate. While 70% of students nationwide pass the regular high school exit exam, only 20% do in Newark. As in many decaying cities, there is talk of a renaissance, centered on new, publicly-funded arts and sports centers in the downtown area, that serve only to benefit politicians, bankers, and developers, but not the city's neighborhoods. Newark's last three mayors, including Former Mayor Sharpe James, featured in the film, have all been indicted, one convicted. In addition, a steady stream of community leaders, including councilmen, a mayor's chief of staff and a police chief, have also been indicted or convicted. Urban specialists assert that without jobs for the poor and a strong middle class demanding good schools and efficient public services, inter-generational poverty will continue to breed low citizen expectations both for themselves and for their city government. Others, more radical, believe it is time to take to the streets again, time for a real revolution, based on mobilizing and empowering Newark from the grassroots up. **Revolution '67** makes it clear that the underlying causes and consequences of Newark's 1967 rebellion still haunt us.

"Here in Newark, we partnered with Revolution '67 to bring this insightful documentary to our community."
—Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark

"Revolution '67 accurately and effectively captures the mood, the pain, the loss, the ambiguity, the fear and the continuing impact of the violent unrest of the summer of 1967."

—Lonnie G. Bunch, Founding Director Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture

"An outstanding portrait of the 1967 Newark rebellion – the kind of event that certainly could repeat itself in any US city in the coming period."

—Chester Hartman, Director of Research Poverty & Race Research Action Council

"Should be mandatory viewing for anyone affiliated with Urban Studies or working in the field of Planning."

—Brenda Kayzar, Urban Studies Program Department of Geography University of Minnesota

Producer/Director:
Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno
Cinematographer/Editor/Animator:
Jerome Bongiorno
Distributor:
California Newsreel

2007, 90 minute version and 83 minute PBS version on one DVD
DVD sale: \$195

Revolution '67 is a co-production of Bongiorno Productions Inc., the Independent Television Service (ITVS), and P.O.V./American Documentary Inc., in association with WSKG, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

BANISHED



Banished vividly recovers the too-quickly forgotten history of racial cleansing in America when thousands of African Americans were driven from their homes and communities by violent racist mobs. The film places these events in the context of present day race relations by following three concrete cases where black and white citizens warily explore if there is common ground for reconciliation over these expulsions. **Banished** raises this larger question: will the United States ever make meaningful reparations for the human rights abuses suffered, then and now, against its African American citizens? Can reconciliation between the races be possible without them?

Between 1860 and 1920 hundreds of U.S. counties expelled their black residents. The pattern was depressingly similar in almost all cases. The counties tended to have small, defenseless black populations. A black man was rumored to have assaulted a white woman, was lynched and then white rioters attacked black neighborhoods with guns and firebombs. Few black property owners had time to sell their properties nor dared return to repossess them. Whites could then illegally assume ownership of them. African Americans not only lost their hard-won homes, farms and businesses, but saw their communities and families dispersed and their very right to exist violated. The film reveals that even one hundred years later, these racially cleansed communities tend to remain all-white bastions of separatism, sometimes harboring active klaverns of the Ku Klux Klan. Another California Newsreel release, *Trouble Behind* documents the same process in Corbin, Kentucky, home of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Banished presents a fascinating detective story through yellowed newspaper archives, registries of deeds, photos from treasured family albums and dimly recalled stories of grandparents and great-grandparents who lived through these traumatic events to reconstruct a dramatic record of the expulsions. The film features black families determined to go to any length to reconstruct

their families' past and gain some justice for their ancestors and themselves. It interviews dedicated local journalists, who braved community opposition, to research the banishments in-depth and force their readers to confront their towns' past and present. **Banished** was itself co-produced by award-winning documentary filmmaker Marco Williams and the Center for Investigative Reporting, widely respected for its in-depth, uncompromising coverage of social justice issues.

Banished first visits Forsyth County, Georgia, now a prosperous suburban sprawl north of Atlanta. In 1912, African Americans were violently driven out; today there is still a saying among black folk: "Don't let the sun go down on you in Forsyth County." In 1987 a bi-racial Martin Luther King Celebration tour was organized through the all-white county. Buses filled with marchers were met by angry mobs, led by seven white supremacist groups and a melee ensued. The governor set up a commission to investigate the incident and to respond to black calls that the stolen land be returned to them. We meet the Strickland family as they return to the 2000 acres once owned by their great grandfather and they restore the neglected family burial ground as a "monument to the past." Although the commission found no deeds for the passage of land from half of the expelled

black owners to whites, the white members denied that their community was responsible for any recompense and that statute of limitations had run out for any claims against illegal occupation. The Stricklands were denied not only their land but even the closure that the acknowledgement of past injustices might have given them.

The small, peaceful town of Pierce City, Missouri, banished its African American population in 1901; it is still all-white. In 2006, a descendant of one of the expelled families, Charles Brown, decided to exhume the body of his great-grandfather buried in Pierce City and inter it in the family plot in Springfield. He met bureaucratic stone-walling and what emerged as a pattern of denial and avoidance on the part of whites. But the soft-spoken, reasonable Brown persisted and finally convinced the local coroner and a former mayor to help him rebury his ancestor. But when he unexpectedly asked Pierce City to pay the bill as a token of regret for the banishment, the whites felt betrayed, the victims of a "bait and switch." They offered a transparently hypocritical response: the crimes of 1901 were so horrific that no dollar amount could ever compensate, only trivialize them. Sherrilyn Ifill, Professor of Law at the University of Maryland, stresses that reparations are a continuing process, providing recompense whenever and

however it becomes possible.

Finally, **Banished** travels to Harrison, Arkansas, a small city where a faith-based process for "truth and reconciliation" was initiated, perhaps inspired by the South African example. In 1909, a white mob lynched a black man and then expelled the town's black citizens. It is still all-white, a Klan stronghold with the Confederate flag flying over the Chamber of Commerce and a refuge for retirees who "who want to live without black people." A Taskforce for Race Relations was formed to deal with this situation in a "substantive" way. It established two college scholarships for black students to attract them to the local schools, named after Aunt Vine, a maid, who was the only black person allowed to remain in Harrison after 1901. But one of the scholarship recipients observes that Harrison is still a "sundown town," "black people won't spend the night in Harrison." The Taskforce hired a consultant, David Zimmerman, a local historian, who suggested they erect a monument in the city square acknowledging that nearby there once was a flourishing African American community which was destroyed by a white mob. This would provide a public space for acknowledgement, healing and reconciliation but even this modest plan was met with objections.

Banished is as much a film about forgetting

as remembering. In its understated way, it allows its white subjects to reveal a collective repression of their communities' racial history through selective memory, outright denial and rationalization. While African Americans seem compelled to remember, confront and redress the crimes of racism, many whites want to ignore them, not only to reject any responsibility for them but, more importantly, any responsibility for rectifying them. They do not seem to recognize that a free conscience can begin only with remorse. The theft of property, wealth, community and hope must at least be admitted and repaired to whatever extent practical. Racial cleansing is still rampant in the U.S., it just takes more subtle forms: red-lining, redevelopment, gentrification, gated communities, all-white suburbs, the Katrina Diaspora. This powerful but not rhetorical film makes evident that any reconciliation, any honest healing between the races, will only be possible once denial, the willful banishing of our racial past, has itself been banished.

Because it is both a scrupulously researched history film and a probing study of the process of racial reconciliation, **Banished** is a valuable resource for teaching American History, the Jim Crow era, race relations, cultural competency, prejudice reduction, conflict resolution, and restorative justice as well as journalistic ethics.

*"One need not support indiscriminate reparations to appreciate how **Banished** is a powerful, eye-opening film... Like Elliott Jaspin's landmark book, Buried in the Bitter Waters, Marco Williams' film makes a compelling moral case for tangible recompense to the families whose land was stolen as a result of community-wide white mob violence."*

—David Garrow, author, **Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference**

"A wrenching investigation of racism, resentment, and reparations."
—Village Voice

"Remarkable... This crucially important documentary raises some difficult questions about what can be done in the present to make up for the crimes of the past."
—TV Guide

*"**Banished** offers a startling tour into an unforgotten history that remains invisible to most Americans."*
—Slate Magazine

Producers: Two Tone Productions and the Center for Investigative Reporting
Director: Marco Williams
84 minutes, USA, 2007

Banished is a co-production of the Center for Investigative Reporting, Two Tone Productions, the Independent Television Service and the National Black Programming Consortium with major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

FAUBOURG TREMÉ

New Orleans's Faubourg Tremé is arguably the oldest African American neighborhood in the United States, the birthplace of the black civil rights struggle in the South and the home of jazz. Its unique, little known past adds a revealing new dimension to black history from slavery, through Reconstruction and Jim Crow, to the problems of racial inequality today. While the Tremé district was damaged by Hurricane Katrina, this is not another Katrina film. Every poignant frame is much more a tribute to what African American communities have achieved under even the most hostile conditions.



Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans was largely shot before the Katrina tragedy but edited afterward, giving the film both a celebratory and elegiac tone. It is a film of such effortless intimacy, subtle glances and authentic details that only two native New Orleanians could have made it. Our guide through the neighborhood is New Orleans *Time-Picayune* reporter Lolis Eric Elie, who decided that rather than abandon his heritage he would invest in it by rehabilitating an old house in the Tremé district. His 75 year old contractor, Irving Trevigne, becomes a symbol of the neighborhood's continuity and resourcefulness; Irving Trevigne represents a man who, unlike many Americans, is deeply rooted in his community and its traditions. His family, in the construction business there for over 200 years, is part of a community of skilled black artisans which formed an essential element of New Orleans' economy.

Louisiana Poet Laureate Brenda Marie Osbey and noted historians John Hope Franklin and Eric Foner explain what made Tremé different, such a fertile ground for African American civic life. New Orleans was a French and Spanish city before it was incorporated into the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Latin and urban attitudes towards slavery tended to be more relaxed than in the

plantation South; slaves were allowed to walk freely through the city, to work for themselves and hence often to buy their freedom. New Orleans had the largest number of free people of color in the South, a dangerous anomaly in a slave society.

As the city outgrew its walls, a new district, Faubourg (suburb in French) Tremé was constructed, a mixed neighborhood, a majority of whose residents were free people of color. The district developed its own institutions, for example, St. Augustine's Church, the oldest predominantly black Catholic parish in the country. The district grew up around Congo Square, a marketplace where African American commerce flourished and a unique hybrid culture emerged. Even today when Tremé's children go "second lining" behind one of the city's storied brass bands, their dances immediately reveal their rich African origins. **Faubourg Tremé** captures the unique Creole flavor of this quintessential New Orleans neighborhood.

A century before the Harlem Renaissance and the modern Civil Rights Movement, Tremé was a center of black cultural and political ferment. In 1862, after Northern troops captured the city, Paul Trevigne, an ancestor of Irving, published the oldest black-owned daily newspaper in the U.S.,

L'Union (first in French and then in English as well) which became an articulate advocate for African Americans' civil rights. Before the 14th, 15th and 16th Amendments, it demanded the right to enlist in the Union army, to vote and to be subject to equal treatment under the law. During the heady days of Reconstruction, black New Orleanians integrated the streetcars through sit-down strikes and became the only city in the South with desegregated schools. At one point, more than half the state legislators were African Americans as well as the governor.

With the withdrawal of Federal troops in 1877, however, white supremacists rapidly rolled back black gains. Separate and unequal schools were re-established and 99% of black citizens were purged from the voting rolls; anyone who protested was likely to be lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. As a last stand in 1892, a "Citizens Committee" deliberately challenged a law resegregating all public transportation, the infamous *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case. There the Supreme Court upheld the law as constitutional, legalizing 60 years of American-style apartheid.

The black population was devastated but precisely during this dark period, a new kind of music was born in Faubourg Tremé – jazz. Legendary jazz great and New Orleans native, Wynton Marsalis observes that this

music gave African Americans, excluded once again from mainstream American society, a free cultural space to voice their grief and hopes. The film pulsates with the resilient spirit of the residents of Tremé which has swept the world as Americas most lasting contribution to music.

Tremé was a hotbed of New Orleans' civil rights struggles in the '50s and '60s but with its success prosperous residents began to move out. The familiar pattern of inner city urban decay set in – poverty, crime, drugs. Urban re-development rammed an interstate highway through the business center of the neighborhood and historic homes were replaced by demoralizing segregated housing projects. Faubourg Tremé even lost its name; now it was simply known as the Sixth Ward.

Then in late August, 2005, Katrina hit. The filmmakers revisited Tremé to survey the destruction and find out what had happened to the characters they had met during the film. The indifferent, incompetent federal response to the catastrophe left many residents angry and discouraged; once again, as with slavery and Jim Crow, America seemed to have rejected its African American residents. Some like Lolis Eric Elie returned and rebuilt. But Irving Trevigne, his life's work in ruins, moved to Vermont where he died the

next year. St. Augustine's church was given 18 months to recover its congregation or close. There is no question that many Tremé residents have left for good and no one can say what the future of the district will be.

A deeply moved but defiant Brenda Marie Osbey concludes, "This catastrophe is not greater than we as a people... Everywhere we go we must take with us the spirit of this city, the spirit of its heroes and the will to live and fight again." **Faubourg Tremé** does not just commemorate, it reminds us that American society still confronts the same battles that the residents of Tremé have waged through two centuries – demands for economic justice, voting rights, equal education, decent public services, in short, full citizenship for African Americans.

"Flat out brilliant... This new documentary captures the real New Orleans on film. Richer and far more nuanced than Spike Lee's When the Levees Broke."
—*The New Orleans Tribune*

"A powerful reflection of Tremé as a place of creative ferment and political resistance for some 300 years."
—*Salon.com*

Executive Producers:
Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Nelson
Producers:
Lucie Faulknor, Dawn Logsdon and Lolis Eric Elie
Director: Dawn Logsdon
Cinematography:
Keith Smith, Diego Velasco and Bobby Shepard
Editors: Dawn Logsdon, Sam Green and Aljeron Tunsil
Composer: Derrick Hodge

This film is a co-production of Serendipity Films, LLC, Independent Television Service (ITVS), WYES-TV-12 New Orleans, Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) and National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC). Major funding for this program was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, The Ford Foundation, Southern Humanities Media Fund, Open Society Institute, LEH & others. For a complete list please go to www.tremedoc.com.

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Pricing

All titles from the African American Perspectives collection may be purchased for \$195 each or five or more titles for \$99 each (REVOLUTION '67 is excluded from this order, though it may be purchased for \$195 along with four other titles for \$99 each.) Please add \$6 shipping (one DVD) or \$10 shipping (2-5 DVDs.) California residents should also add 7.25% sales tax; Vermont residents 6% sales tax.

Please note that digital rights are available for an additional fee; please call 415-284-7800x302 for details. Preview DVDs are available from the above addresses but are overprinted with prohibitions against screening to students.

The new films in this brochure, by focusing on three largely forgotten but emblematic episodes, provide strikingly original perspectives on African American history. They probe such topics as slavery, free people of color, racial cleansing in America, Katrina, '60s black insurrection, white flight, urban renewal, police abuses and reparations. They join the one hundred other titles in our award-winning African American Perspectives collection, a virtual video encyclopaedia of black history and culture in the United States. For a full description of all these titles please visit our web-site at www.newsreel.org

REVOLUTION '67



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FAUBOURG TREMÉ

