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## **“Traces of the Trade” Opens P.O.V.’s 2008 Season With Unique Story of Family Confronting Its Slave-trading Past, Tuesday, June 24 on PBS**

Filmmaker and Relatives Retrace Global Trade Conducted by New England Ancestors

*“Powerful is an inadequate word. . . . Browne’s clear-headed film represents an intense and searing call for national dialogue.” – Kirk Honeycutt, The Hollywood Reporter*

### **MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET**

**Summary:** The **P.O.V.** series (a cinema term for “point of view”) begins its 21st year on PBS on **Tuesday, June 24, 2008** at 10 p.m. (Check local listings.) American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television’s premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films. **Traces of the Trade: A Story From the Deep North** by Katrina Browne kicks off the season.

P.O.V. is broadcast **Tuesdays at 10 p.m.** June through October on PBS, with primetime specials in the fall and winter. P.O.V. works with PBS stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in our films. Find events at: [www.pbs.org/pov/utills/povnews.html#events](http://www.pbs.org/pov/utills/povnews.html#events).

**Description:** First-time filmmaker Katrina Browne makes a troubling discovery—her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. She and nine fellow descendants set off to retrace the Triangle Trade: from their old hometown in Rhode Island to slave forts in Ghana to sugar plantation ruins in Cuba. Step by step, they uncover the vast extent of Northern complicity in slavery while also stumbling through the minefield of contemporary race relations. In this bicentennial year of the U.S. abolition of the slave trade, **Traces of the Trade** offers powerful new perspectives on the black/white divide. *An Official Selection of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.*

The DeWolfs, whose name adorns the stained glass windows they donated to Bristol’s St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, brought over 10,000 African slaves to the Americas. Up to half a million of these Africans’ descendants are alive today. Moreover, the DeWolfs conducted the trade over three generations, beginning in 1769, and well after it had been banned in the United States in 1808.

**Book:** Katrina Browne’s cousin (and participant in the journey) Thomas Norman DeWolf has written a powerful memoir of his experiences in the making of the film and what comes after. *Inheriting the Trade* was recently published by Beacon Press. For more information, visit [www.inheritingthetrade.com](http://www.inheritingthetrade.com).

**Filmmaker’s Statement:**

“In **Traces of the Trade**, we wanted to ask this question: What is our responsibility?” says Browne. “I’m less concerned with understanding the extreme inhumanity of my ancestors than with understanding the mundane, ordinary complicity of the majority of New Englanders who participated in a slave-based economy. That had more parallels to me and my family today: well-intentioned white folks who are still part of systems that do

harm. It's important to roll up our sleeves to deal with what we all inherited from our country's history.

"I hope that the film invites Americans into heartfelt and honest dialogue on these core questions: What, concretely, is the legacy of slavery—for diverse whites, for diverse blacks, for diverse others? Who owes who what for the sins of the fathers of this country? What would repair—spiritual and material—look like, and what would it take?"

Bios:

[Katrina Browne, Director/Producer/Writer](#)

**Traces of the Trade** is Katrina Browne's first film. Previously, she served as outreach planning coordinator for the film adaptation of Anna Deavere Smith's play about the Los Angeles riots, "Twilight: Los Angeles." Browne consulted with race relations and media experts to build a national campaign using the PBS broadcast of "Twilight" to promote community dialogue. Earlier, she worked as a senior staff person at Public Allies, an AmeriCorps program now operating in 15 cities, which she co-founded in 1991 in Washington. The program recruits young people and people of color for nonprofit careers. She holds a master's degree in theology from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., and a bachelor's from Princeton. Browne is a seventh-generation descendant of Mark Anthony DeWolf, the first slave trader in the DeWolf family.

[Thomas Norman DeWolf, Author, \*Inheriting the Trade\*](#)

Thomas Norman DeWolf has written a book about his experiences during the family's journey, *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History*, published in January 2008 on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the abolition of the U.S. slave trade. DeWolf was born and raised in Pomona, Calif., and graduated with degrees from Northwest Christian College and the University of Oregon. He served on the Oregon Arts Commission for nine years and as a local elected official for 11. His years of public service focused on the arts, literacy, children's issues and restorative justice. He and his wife, Lindi, live in Oregon.

U.S. Abolition

Of Slave Trade: On March 2, 1807, the U.S. Congress approved an [act to abolish the importation of slaves effective January 1, 1808](#). The abolition of the slave trade by the United States (1808) and by Great Britain (1807) led to the decline of the trade and, in time, contributed to the abolition of slavery itself in the British Empire (1834) and the U.S. (1865). For years after 1808, free black communities in the ante-bellum North celebrated January 1, the anniversary of the abolition of the trade, as a black Fourth of July.

January 1, 2008 marks the official Bicentennial of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. On January 10, the National Archives hosted a day-long public symposium featuring notable historians, journalists and academics to mark the 200th anniversary of the Slave Trade Act of 1808. Other events can be found at <http://www.state.gov/p/io/unesco/c22787.htm>.

Related News: In March 2008, Florida became the sixth state to adopt a resolution expressing "profound regret for the shameful chapter" in the state's history and promoting "healing and reconciliation among all Floridians." Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey and Virginia had previously done so, and Missouri is considering similar resolutions this year. State lawmakers in Nebraska will consider a resolution that expresses regret for slavery, but doesn't issue an apology, the Associated Press has reported.

Congressman Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) has sponsored a resolution to apologize for the enslavement and racial segregation of African-Americans through so-called Jim Crow laws (H. Res. 194). The bill has garnered 120 co-sponsors and is awaiting action in the House Judiciary Committee.

In January of 1989, Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) first introduced the bill H.R. 40, [Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act](#). He has re-introduced HR 40 every Congress since 1989, and says he "will continue to do so until it's passed into law. One of the biggest challenges in discussing the issue of reparations

in a political context is deciding how to have a national discussion without allowing the issue to polarize our party or our nation.”

[http://www.house.gov/conyers/news\\_reparations.shtml](http://www.house.gov/conyers/news_reparations.shtml)

Length: 86:46

Festivals: World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival, Documentary Competition, January 2008  
New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival, April 2008  
New York Human Rights Watch Film Festival, June 2008

Credits: Director/Producer/Writer: Katrina Browne  
Co-Director/Editor/Writer: Alla Kovgan  
Co-Director/Executive Producer: Jude Ray  
Co-Producer/Executive Producer: Elizabeth Delude-Dix  
Co-Producer: Juanita Brown  
Director of Photography: Liz Dory  
Original Music: Roger C. Miller

**Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North** was produced in association with WGBH Boston. Major funding provided by: The Akonadi Foundation, the Animating Democracy Initiative (a project of Americans for the Arts funded by the Ford Foundation), the Threshold Foundation, Trinity Grants Program, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund. For a full list of funders please visit [www.tracesofthetrade.org](http://www.tracesofthetrade.org).

P.O.V. Web: The **Traces of the Trade** companion website, ([www.pbs.org/pov/tracesofthetrade](http://www.pbs.org/pov/tracesofthetrade)) offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with filmmaker Katrina Browne (video, podcast and text); a list of related websites, organizations and books; a downloadable discussion guide and classroom activity; and special features including:

- Excerpt from *Inheriting the Trade* by Tom DeWolf: Read a deeply personal memoir by a family member who went on the journey. DeWolf struggles with issues of white privilege, and questions the legacy of slavery that pervades American society today. In addition, a conversation with DeWolf will be featured on the *P.O.V. Blog*;
- Film update: Find out what the family members who went on the journey have been up to since filming ended;
- Ask the filmmaker: Katrina Browne will respond to viewer questions on the blog for a few days around broadcast.

Outreach: P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in **Traces of the Trade**. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events, go to: [http://www.amdoc.org/outreach\\_news.php](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php)

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. The American Library Association and P.O.V. have created a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: [www.amdoc.org/outreach](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach).

Pressroom: Visit P.O.V.'s pressroom, [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom), for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide,

and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

***DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.***

**Media Sponsor:**

