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## **POV's 'American Promise' Is a Rare and Compelling Exploration of Race, Class and Opportunity in America, Monday, Feb. 3, 2014 on PBS**

Two African-American Boys Enter a Prestigious Private School and Their Families Confront Opportunities and Frustrations Presented by the Changing Face of Success in America

*A Co-production of Rada Film Group with ITVS and POV's Diverse Voices Project, Which Receive Funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; Film Is Part of American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen.  
A Co-presentation with the National Black Programming Consortium.*

### ***MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET***

National Dates: **American Promise** has its national broadcast premiere on **Monday, Feb. 3, 2014** at 10 p.m. on PBS' POV series (check local listings), American television's longest-running independent documentary series. The film will stream in its entirety on POV's website, [www.pbs.org/pov/americanpromise/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/americanpromise/), from Feb. 4-March 6, 2014.

The Film: **American Promise** spans 13 years as Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson, middle-class African-American parents in Brooklyn, N.Y., turn their cameras on their son, Idris, and his best friend, Seun, who make their way through Manhattan's Dalton School, one of the most prestigious private schools in the country. Chronicling the boys' divergent paths from kindergarten through high school graduation, this provocative, intimate documentary presents complicated truths about America's struggle to come of age on issues of race, class and opportunity.

**American Promise** won the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award, 2013 Sundance Film Festival. The film is a co-production of Rada Film Group, ITVS and POV's Diverse Voices Project, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB); it is part of [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), made possible by CPB. Produced in association with American Documentary | POV. A co-presentation with the National Black Programming Consortium.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at [www.pbs.org/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pressroom).

The Book: Spiegel & Grau recently published *PROMISES KEPT: Raising Black Boys to Succeed in School and in Life*, by Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson with Hilary Beard. Where **American Promise** raises provocative questions, *PROMISES KEPT* delivers answers, combining insights Brewster and Stephenson derived from their own experiences with the latest research on closing the black male achievement gap with a toolkit full of practical strategies from infancy through the teenaged years.

Online: To further enhance the broadcast of **American Promise**, POV has produced an interactive website to enable viewers to explore the film in greater depth. The **American Promise** website—<http://www.pbs.org/pov/americanpromise/>—includes an original video series

about black male achievement, an excerpt from the book *PROMISES KEPT: Raising Black Boys to Succeed in School and in Life*, interviews with the filmmakers, graphics to share on social media, guides for bringing the film into the classroom and community, and more.

Station

Activities: American Documentary | POV has awarded grants to PBS stations to support local programming and activities connected with **American Promise**. The grants are part of *American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen*, a public media initiative made possible by CPB to help communities identify and implement solutions to improve high school graduation rates. Stations are planning events to engage their communities in dialogue around key issues and solutions raised in **American Promise**. [Read more](#).

Outreach: POV works with educators, public television stations and national and community groups across the country to present free screenings across the country. In addition, POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides and standards-aligned lesson plans for each of our films. The **American Promise** discussion guide includes background information on the black male achievement gap and the dropout crisis, as well as prompts for dialogue and a list of further educational resources. Working in conjunction with Rada Films, POV is inviting viewers to host *American Promise* Premiere Parties as part of Black Male Achievement Week, February 3-9, 2014, for a chance to win the DVD, book and more. For more information and to enter, visit [www.pov.org/premiereparty](http://www.pov.org/premiereparty). For a list of upcoming screening events, visit [www.pbs.org/pov/outreach](http://www.pbs.org/pov/outreach).

The Filmmakers: Michèle Stephenson, Producer and Director

A graduate of McGill University and Columbia Law School, Michèle Stephenson uses her background in critical studies, race and human rights to inform her documentary work. Her Panamanian and Haitian heritage has also fueled her passion to tackle stories on communities of color and human rights. An early pioneer in the Web 2.0 revolution, Stephenson used video and the Internet to structure human rights campaigns and train people from around the globe in video Internet advocacy. Her work has appeared on PBS, Showtime, MTV and other outlets. Stephenson's honors include the Silverdocs Diversity Award and the Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film and Digital Media.

Joe Brewster, Producer and Director

Joe Brewster and his partner, Michèle Stephenson, have produced and directed award-winning feature documentaries and narrative films. Brewster is a Harvard- and Stanford-educated psychiatrist who specializes in organizational analysis, the use of psychoanalytical principals to understand and improve organizations. He moved to New York City in 1985 to pursue media studies in the service of social change. In 1992, Brewster sold his first screenplay to the Jackson/McHenry group under the Warner Bros. imprint. In 1996, he wrote and directed *The Keeper*, an official selection in the dramatic narrative competition section of the Sundance Film Festival that garnered numerous national and international awards, including an Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Statement: "All American families want to give their children the opportunity to succeed. But the truth is, opportunity is just the first step, particularly for families raising black boys," says Stephenson. "We hope **American Promise** shines a light on these issues."

"Our goal is to empower boys, their parents and educators to pursue educational opportunities, especially to help close the black male achievement gap," adds her husband and filmmaking partner, Joe Brewster.

Related Stories: “How to Raise Black Boys (on Camera)” by Maggie Caldwell, *Mother Jones*, February 2014. <http://bit.ly/19sB3oT>

“The State of the Union and African Americans” by Spencer Overton, The Huffington Post, Jan. 27, 2014. <http://huff.to/Mc0hwn>

“The Failure to Educate Many African American Males” by Charlee Song, WESA Radio, Pittsburgh, Jan. 24, 2014. <http://bit.ly/1mBOcfV>

“Officials in Boston Seeking Black Teachers” by James Vaznis, The Boston Globe, Jan. 20, 2014. <http://b.globe.com/1lkLD6F>

“Twelve Tips All Educators Must Know About Educating African American and Latino Students” by Quassan Castro, The Huffington Post, Jan. 3, 2014. <http://huff.to/1INVWuM>

Credits: Co-directors/Co-producers: Joe Brewster, Michèle Stephenson  
Editors: Erin Casper, Mary Manhardt, Andrew Siwoff  
Directors of Photography: Errol Webber, Jr., Alfredo Alcantara, Margaret Byrne, Jon Stuyvesant  
Original Score: Miriam Cutler  
Co-executive Producer: Dan Cogan  
Running Time: 116:46

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry  
Co-Executive Producer: Cynthia López  
VP, Programming/Production: Chris White  
Series Producer: Andrew Catauro

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

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 26th season on PBS, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 365 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide. POV films have won every major film and broadcasting award, including 32 Emmys, 15 George Foster Peabody Awards, 11 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards® and the Prix Italia. In 2012, POV achieved a new milestone, winning five News & Documentary Emmy® Awards. Since 1988, POV 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. Visit [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

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