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Four Young African-American Women, Sexually Harassed on a New York Street, Fight Back in ‘Out in the Night,’ Kicking Off POV’s 28th Season on PBS On Monday, June 22, 2015

Labeled a Gang of “Killer Lesbians,” Renata, Patreese, Venice and Terrain Tell Their Story for the First Time, Recalling Their Uphill Battle in the Courts of Law and Public Opinion

A co-production of ITVS. A co-presentation with the National Black Programming Consortium.

“This film could help influence the ongoing LGBT civil rights struggle. Everyone should see it.”

—Steven Boone, RogerEbert.com

MEDIA ALERT—FACT SHEET

National Dates: **Out in the Night** by blair dorosh-walther has its national broadcast premiere on **Monday, June 22, 2015** at 10 p.m. (check local listings) on **POV (Point of View)**, kicking off the series’ 28th season on PBS. POV is American television’s longest-running independent documentary series and the recipient of a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions. The film will stream on POV’s website, www.pbs.org/pov/outinthenight, from **June 23-July 23, 2015**.

POV’s regular season continues on Mondays at 10 p.m. through Aug. 31, 2015, with specials in the fall. American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, POV was honored with a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

The Film: In 2006, under the neon lights of a gay-friendly neighborhood in New York City, a group of African-American lesbians were violently threatened by a man on the street. The women fought back and were later charged with gang assault and attempted murder. The tabloids quickly dubbed them a gang of “Killer Lesbians” and a “Wolf Pack.” Three pleaded guilty to avoid a trial, but the remaining four—Renata Hill, Patreese Johnson, Venice Brown and Terrain Dandridge—maintained their innocence. In the award-winning **Out in the Night**, the women tell their side of the story for the first time. The film examines the sensational case and the women’s uphill battle, revealing the role that race, gender identity and sexuality play in our criminal justice system.

Out in the Night is a co-production of The Fire This Time The Film, LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Produced in association with American Documentary | POV.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

New Jersey 4: As seen in the film, the exact details of the night of Aug. 18, 2006 in New York’s West Village—who started the fight, how it escalated, how threatened each party felt—are disputed.

The seven friends from Newark, N.J. were confronted by a 28-year-old man who was selling DVDs. He propositioned Patreese. When she told him she was gay, he threatened to force the women “straight.” A fight started and he threw a lit cigarette, yanked out a handful of Venice’s hair and began to choke Renata. Thinking one of her friends was “about to die,” Patreese pulled a knife from her purse and stabbed him. Strangers jumped in to defend the women and the fight escalated. The entire incident, captured by security cameras, lasted four minutes.

The man involved claims he made an admiring remark to the women and was subsequently attacked. He called the incident “a hate crime against a straight man.”

The seven women say they stood up against verbal and physical harassment, and acted in self-defense when they felt their lives, and the lives of their friends, were threatened.

All seven women were arrested. To avoid trial, three pleaded guilty to a violent felony and served six months in prison. The other four, Renata, Patreese, Venice and Terrain pleaded not guilty and received a range of charges, including “gang assault in the second degree.” Despite its name, the charge does not necessitate any actual gang affiliation; it only requires that three or more people were involved in an assault that caused serious physical injury. The women pleaded self-defense and went to trial.

Online: POV’s Webby Award-winning website offers a broad range of exclusive content to enhance our broadcasts. Visit POV’s website for **Out in the Night** at www.pbs.org/pov/outinthenight to watch the full film online for free following the broadcast (June 23-July 23, 2015), hear from the filmmaker in an extended video interview, view photos from the film and download a discussion guide, lesson plan and other viewing resources.

Filmmaker’s Statement:

“Immediately following the arrest of seven young African American women on Aug. 18, 2006, I became interested in their case. I read the many salacious headlines like ‘Attack of the Killer Lesbians,’ ‘Lesbian Gang,’ ‘I’m a Man, Lesbian Growled’ and on and on,” says Blair Dorosh-Walther. “However, it was the first of many *New York Times* articles that really gave me pause. The headline read: ‘Man is stabbed after admiring a stranger.’ An *admirer*?? A man does not ‘admire’ young women on the street at midnight. That is harassment. I have never met a woman who hasn’t been harassed on the street at some point in her life, and in New York City harassment is especially commonplace.

“I believe this story would have unfolded differently had the women and gender non-conforming youth involved been white. Race and class, as well as gender and sexuality, were and remain critical issues in this case. These young friends, being black, conjured up stereotypes of what a ‘gang’ looks like.

“I think one of the reasons this story feels so important to me is all the gray areas that it covers. This case is not cut-and-dried; it is messy and complicated. As we move beyond marriage equality as the central LGBT issue, the women’s experiences reveal so many more that need to be addressed: feeling safe on the street. The right to defend yourself without fear of imprisonment. Addressing police brutality. And representations of spectrums of gender that aren’t neatly ‘male’ or ‘female.’”

Filmmaker Bio: [blair dorsh-walther \(Director and Producer\)](#)

Director and producer blair dorosh-walther, who identifies as gender non-conforming and uses both male and female pronouns, is a social-issue documentary director, production designer and artist. The holder of a bachelor of fine arts degree in film from New York University cum laude, blair was awarded the Adam Balsano Award for social significance in documentary filmmaking and has worked in direct care with adults living with developmental disabilities, mental illness, addiction, homelessness and HIV/AIDS for the past 12 years. **Out in the Night** is blair's first feature documentary.

Engagement: POV works with public television stations, national organizations, community groups and educators to present more than 650 free screenings across the county. POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop accompanying discussion guides to foster education, dialogue and action around the issues raised the films. The **Out in the Night** discussion guide includes information on the New Jersey Four Case, the right to self-defense, violence against LGBTQ and LGBTQ people of color, media reporting, prompts for dialogue and a list of action steps and resources. POV and Dr. Rogow also produced a standards-aligned lesson plan, "Facts, Filmmaking and Feelings: The Role of Storytelling in the Justice System" with free streaming clips for use in high school classrooms. In partnership with the Princeton Public Library, POV has compiled a reading list of fiction and nonfiction books that further explore the issues. Visit the [Out in the Night Partner Toolkit](#) to download these materials and find everything you need to get involved with the film. Join POV's [Community Network](#) to borrow **Out in the Night** from our DVD Lending Library. For a list of upcoming screening events, visit www.pbs.org/pov/engage/.

In the News: "How Do You Define a Gang Member?" by Danel Alercon, *The New York Times Magazine*, May 27, 2015. <http://nyti.ms/1RvXgnW>

"Silence on Black Female Victims Weakens Fight Against Police Brutality," by Kali Nicole Gross, *Huffington Post*, April 19, 2015. <http://huff.to/1JBJN5>

"'Killer Lesbians' or Victims?" The Brian Lehrer Show, WNYC, June 16, 2014. <http://www.wnyc.org/story/killer-lesbians-or-victims/#commentlist>

"*Out in the Night* and the Conviction of the 'Killer Lesbian' Gang," by Nina Stochlic, *The Daily Beast*, June 21, 2014. <http://bit.ly/1CODnhg>

"Two Convictions Overturned in Attack on Man in Village," by John Eligon, *The New York Times*. June 20, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/20/nyregion/20appeal.html>

Credits:	Director/Producer:	blair dorosh-walther
	Executive Producer:	Abigail E. Disney
	Executive Producer for ITVS:	Sally Jo Fifer
	Producers:	Giovanna Chesler, Mridu Chandra, Yoruba Richen
	Director of Photography:	Daniel Patterson
	Editors:	Kristen Huntley, Sarah Devorkin
	Original Score:	Mario Grigorov
	Running Time:	56:46
	<u>POV Series Credits:</u>	
	Executive Producers:	Chris White, Simon Kilmurry
	Associate Producer:	Nicole Tsien
	Coordinating Producer:	Nikki Heyman

Awards: Joyce Warshow Award, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice Special Documentary Jury Prize for Courage in Storytelling and Best Documentary Audience Award, ImageOut: The Rochester LGBT Film and Video Festival Jury Award and Audience Award, Best Documentary, Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Jury Award, ARC Queer People of Color Film Festival Favorite Documentary, ReelQ Pittsburgh LGBT Film Festival Audience Award, Best Documentary Feature, New Orleans Film Festival Audience Award, Documentary, Image + Nation Festival Cinéma in Montreal Audience Award, Baltimore International Black Film Festival *Film Independent*, Fast Track Fellowship, 2013 Selection, Sundance Producer's Summit in 2012.

Visit www.outinthenight.com/ for a complete list of current screenings and events.

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

About POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc., POV is public television's premier showcase for nonfiction films. The series airs Mondays at 10 p.m. on PBS from June to September, with primetime specials during the year. Since 1988, POV has been the home for the world's boldest contemporary filmmakers, celebrating intriguing personal stories that spark conversation and inspire action. With our documentary broadcasts, original online programming and dynamic community engagement campaigns, we are committed to supporting films that capture the imagination and present diverse perspectives.

POV films have won 32 Emmy® Awards, 18 George Foster Peabody Awards, 12 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards®, the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award and the Prix Italia. The POV series has been honored with a MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, two IDA Awards for Best Continuing Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

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