POV Acquires *After Sherman* and *Murders That Matter*,
Two Documentaries That Examine Race as Central to Identity and Connectivity for Many Black Americans

New York, N.Y. – February 16, 2023 – POV announced today the acquisition of two documentaries by POV alumni filmmakers: *After Sherman*, directed by Jon-Sesrie Goff (*Out in the Night*), produced by Blair Dorosh-Walther, and *Murders That Matter* directed and produced by Peabody Award-winner Marco Williams (*Two Towns of Jasper*).

*After Sherman*, Goff's directorial feature debut, is a story about inheritance and the tension that defines our collective American history. The film explores coastal South Carolina as a site of pride and racial trauma through Gullah cultural retention and land preservation. *Murders That Matter* documents an African American, Muslim mother named Movita Johnson-Harrell, over the course of five years as she transitions from being a victim of trauma and violence into a fierce advocate against gun violence in African American communities of Philadelphia. The films showcase local stories that ultimately impact Black and other communities of color across the nation and around the globe. *After Sherman* and *Murders That Matter*, co-productions with ITVS, will make their national broadcast premieres as part of POV's upcoming 36th season launching in summer 2023.
“At American Documentary, we are always eager to amplify independent artists who care deeply and take creative risks,” said Erika Dilday, executive director, American Documentary. “Working with bold filmmakers Jon-Sesrie Goff and Marco Williams, who use their gifts of storytelling to share personal accounts that offer unique insights into American culture, not only validates their experiences as valuable, it also might open the minds and hearts of others to points of views they never considered.”

“The documentary form allows for nuanced storytelling around issues of race in America,” said Director Jon-Sesrie Goff. “We cannot make a spectacle of the trauma that has besieged many communities to the point of excluding the joy and beauty in the mundane, despite systemic oppression and the reverberations of centuries-long racial violence in this country. After Sherman is my love letter to my parents, my family, community, and all the uncelebrated heroes who preserve the practice of hope and abundance as the cancers of white supremacy and anti-blackness flourish. I’m grateful for POV’s support of ambitious innovative documentaries, which allowed me to tell my story without compromise.”

“This story is of immense importance to me,” said Director Marco Williams. “I know first-hand the pain and invisibility of murder in the African American community. Two members of my family were murdered in the Philadelphia neighborhood where Murders That Matter takes place. Tragically, a story of violence in the family is probably not uncommon for many African American families. Someone murdered, almost always at the hands of another Black person. Yet how often is this fact spoken about within families, in the black community, and/or in society at large? If we are not willing to confront the conditions that yield cycles of violence in African American communities, there cannot be any healing from the trauma.”

The After Sherman deal was negotiated by Chris White and Erika Dilday for American Documentary | POV and David Eisenberg, Tamara Gould and Kevin Wong for ITVS.

The Murders That Matter deal was negotiated by Chris White and Erika Dilday for American Documentary | POV and David Eisenberg, Tamara Gould, and Erica Dixon for ITVS.

After Sherman tells a story of legacy in the context of Black history and the unrelenting unease that looms when this history is placed within the aggregate American experience. Georgetown, South Carolina is a community deeply rooted in Gullah culture, from coastal Southern recipes to incantations for survival. Filmmaker Jon-Sesrie Goff spent childhood summers there soaking up stories told on his grandmother’s porch. He grew up determined to explore his relationship with his father and the history of African people on the land, to investigate the cultural and spiritual rituals that banded people together. On June 17th, 2015, Jon spoke to his parents as they were on their way to lead a quarterly meeting at Mother Emanuel church. Within several hours, nine parishioners had been shot dead including Reverend Pinckney. His parents unharmed, Jon’s father was appointed interim pastor of Emanuel AME Church in the aftermath of the shooting. In a state of shock, Goff began to create After Sherman, a film about his community’s collective American inheritance. The film comprises intimate accounts of the lives of the Black community in the filmmaker’s Black Belt hometown, on land that has been in his family for 150 years, where they were once enslaved. Now transformed, primarily on the backs and resourcefulness of Black people, and thriving as a wedding destination, it stands as a
reminder of the painful, cross-generational consequences of racism, and a validation of life's beauty.

*After Sherman* won 2022 Best Documentary awards at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Atlanta Film Festival, Tacoma Film Festival, and Fists Up! Film Festival. The film was nominated for a 2023 Cinema Eye Honors, and was a recipient of the 2022 Gordon Parks Award for Black Excellence at the Tallgrass Film Festival.

Set in Philadelphia, *Murders That Matter* asks: what would you do if a major part of your life’s narrative was the murder of people you love—a father, a brother, a cousin, a son? How would you respond? How would you manage the trauma?

When her 18-year-old son Charles is murdered in 2011, Movita Johnson-Harrell considers revenge, but then vows to make it her life’s mission to stop the devastation on Black families on both sides of the gun. She creates the Charles Foundation which gives herself a platform to speak out on gun violence in the local Black community. Her voice resonates within the community, and the positive reception to her activism encourages her to run for state representative. Her neophyte campaign, driven by passion for one issue—gun control and stopping the killing of Black and brown men—is not enough to topple the incumbent, and in 2016, she loses. Undeterred, she goes to work at the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office, but a year into the job, the Philadelphia Democratic Party leadership asks her to run in a special election for the state representative seat that she lost in 2016. This time Movita wins and becomes the first woman representative to wear a hijab in the Philadelphia State House.

Filmed over five years from 2016 to 2021, Williams captures Movita Johnson-Harrell as she transitions from victim of violent trauma into a fierce advocate against it.

**Credits**

*After Sherman*

Director: Jon-Sesrie Goff  
Producer: blair dorosh-walther, Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich, Jon-Sesrie Goff  
Composer: Tamar-kali  
Editor: Blair Seab McClendon  
Associate Producer: Lauren Waring Douglas  
Consulting Producer: Elijah Heyward III  
Cinematographers: Jon-Sesrie Goff, Eric Branco, Jerry Henry, Arshley Emile  
Language: English, Gullah  
Country: USA  
Year: 2022

*Murders That Matter*

Director/Producer: Marco Williams  
Composer: Branford Marsalis  
Editor: Ken Schneider  
Additional Editing: Kris Liem  
Cinematographer and Sound: Marco Williams  
Executive Producers: Erika Dilday, Chris White  
Language: English  
Country: USA  
Year: 2023
About the Filmmakers

Jon-Sesrie Goff, Director & Producer, *After Sherman*

Jon-Sesrie Goff is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, and arts administrator. With extensive experience in media and film production, Jon has offered his lens to a variety of projects spanning many genres including the recently released and award-winning documentaries, including *Out in the Night* (POV, Logo 2015), *Evolution of a Criminal* (Independent Lens 2015) and *Spit on the Broom* (2019), among several other projects. He is in production for his feature-length documentary, *After Sherman.*

He studied sociology, economics, and theater at Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA), completed his BA at The New School (New York, NY), along with an MFA from Duke University (Durham, NC) in Experimental and Documentary Arts. Jon's work as an educator includes Duke University, Villanova University, and Westchester University.

Jon-Sesrie is a Program Officer with Ford Foundation’s Creativity and Free Expression team. Previously, he was the Executive Director of the Flaherty Film Seminar and worked in the Office of Curatorial Affairs at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture as the Museum Specialist for Film. His personal practice has involved extensive institutional, community, and personal archival research, visual documentation, and oral history interviews in the coastal South on the legacy of Black land ownership and Gullah Geechee heritage preservation. Jon engages with his work from the paradigm of a social change instigator.

blair dorosh-walter, Producer, *After Sherman*

blair dorosh-walther is an award-winning documentary director, activist, and artist with a passion for inspiring action for social justice through media. Their first feature-length documentary, *Out in the Night* had its international premiere at the 2014 Los Angeles Film Festival and has screened in over 100 festivals around the world, winning a dozen awards. blair partnered with the United Nations’ and kicked off the 2015 POV season with an unprecedented simultaneous broadcast on the Logo Network. blair is a Guggenheim Fellow and social worker, deeply engaged in economic justice in New York City.

Madeleine Hunt Ehrlich, Producer, *After Sherman*

Madeleine Hunt Ehrlich is a filmmaker and artist who has completed projects in Kingston, Jamaica, Miami, Florida and extensively in the five boroughs of New York City. Her work has screened all over the world including at the 2022 La Biennale di Venezia, the Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of Art in New York. Her films have been awarded special jury prizes for Best Experimental Film at the 2022 Blackstar Film Festival and the 2019 New Orleans Film Festival. She was named on *Filmmaker Magazine’s* 2020 "25 New Faces of Independent Cinema List" and is the recipient of a 2022 Creative Capitol Award, a 2020 San Francisco Film Society Rainin Grant, a 2019 Rema Hort Mann Award, a 2019 UNDO fellowship and grant, and a 2014 Princess Grace Award in film.

Marco Williams, Director/Producer, *Murders That Matter*

Marco Williams is an award-winning filmmaker. He has been nominated three times for the Sundance Film Festival grand jury prize. He has spent his entire film career exploring the question of injustice, worldwide. He is a filmmaker whose films unmask the complexities of
the human condition. A reviewer of his films opined: “you make films about the stories we prefer to keep hidden.”


Williams’ films have screened at festivals worldwide, including, Sundance, Berlin, Hot Docs, Toronto, and numerous other festivals around the world. His films have been broadcast in the United States on PBS, History Channel, Nat Geo, and Discovery. Internationally they have screened on the BBC, The CBC, ABC, and more.

His film awards include Guggenheim Fellowship, a George Foster Peabody Award, the Beacon Award, the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Silver Baton, the Pan African Film Festival Outstanding Documentary Award, the Full Frame Documentary Festival Spectrum Award, and the National Association of Black Journalists First Place Salute to Excellence Award, as well as an Emmy nominations for Tell Them We Are Rising and Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre.

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**About POV**
Produced by American Documentary, POV is the longest-running independent documentary showcase on American television. Since 1988, POV has presented films on PBS that capture the full spectrum of the human experience, with a long commitment to centering women and people of color in front of, and behind, the camera. The series is known for introducing generations of viewers to groundbreaking works like Tongues Untied, American Promise and Minding The Gap and innovative filmmakers including Jonathan Demme, Laura Poitras and Nanfu Wang. In 2018, POV Shorts launched as one of the first PBS series dedicated to bold and timely short-form documentaries. All POV programs are available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and the PBS Video app, available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. For more information about PBS Passport, visit the PBS Passport FAQ website.

POV goes “beyond the broadcast” to bring powerful nonfiction storytelling to viewers wherever they are. Free educational resources accompany every film and a community network of thousands of partners nationwide work with POV to spark dialogue around today’s most pressing issues. POV continues to explore the future of documentary through
innovative productions with partners such as The New York Times and The National Film Board of Canada and on platforms including Snapchat and Instagram.

POV films and projects have won 46 Emmy Awards, 27 George Foster Peabody Awards, 15 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards and the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award. Learn more at pbs.org/pov and follow @povdocs on social media.

About American Documentary, Inc.
American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

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About PBS
PBS, with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’s broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS’s premier children’s media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV — including a 24/7 channel — online at pbskids.org, via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following PBS on Twitter, Facebook or through our apps for mobile and connected devices. Specific program
information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following PBS Communications on Twitter.