**American Experience *The American Diplomat***

**Premieres Tuesday, February 15, 2022 on PBS and PBS.org**

**Discover How Three Pioneering Black Diplomats Broke**

**Racial Barriers at the U.S. State Department**

A person in a suit and tie

Description automatically generated with medium confidence(Boston, MA) — ***The American Diplomat*** explores the lives and legacies of three African-American ambassadors — Edward R. Dudley, Terence Todman and Carl Rowan — who pushed past historical and institutional racial barriers to reach high-ranking appointments in the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. At the height of the civil rights movement in the United States, they were asked to represent the best of American ideals abroad while facing discrimination at home. Colloquially referred to as “pale, male, and Yale,” the U.S. State Department fiercely maintained and cultivated the Foreign Service’s elitist character and was one of the last federal agencies to desegregate. Through rare archival footage, in-depth oral histories, and interviews with family members, colleagues and diplomats, the film paints a portrait of three men who created a lasting impact on the content and character of the Foreign Service and changed American diplomacy forever. Directed by Leola Calzolai-Stewart, narrated by Andre Braugher, and executive produced by Cameo George, ***The American Diplomat*** premieres Tuesday, February 15, 2022, 9:00-10:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](http://www.pbs.org/tv_schedules/)) on American Experience on PBS, [PBS.org](http://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS Video App.](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/)

On March 12, 1947, President Harry Truman declared in a speech to Congress that the United States would protect democracy and freedom around the world. At the same time, Americans grappled with widespread racial violence and segregation at home. As the Cold War escalated, so did the Soviet Union’s use of racially violent imagery and propaganda to turn the world’s non-aligned (and largely non-white) nations against the U.S. The appointment of Black ambassadors to the historically white and historically elitist State Department would be an important step in changing America’s face to the world. Each ambassador — Dudley, Todman and Rowan — would harness the opportunity to serve at the highest levels of U.S. diplomacy to bring America closer to its own ideals.

“At American Experience, we like to tell stories of people who have impacted history but may not be well-known,” said Cameo George, executive producer of American Experience. “As diplomats, Edward R. Dudley, Terence Todman and Carl Rowan were tasked with spreading democracy around the world, yet they were unable to enjoy its full benefits back home. Each man found his own way to work from inside the State Department to make fundamental changes in the Foreign Service, leaving a lasting legacy on the agency.”

**About the Subjects**

**Edward R. Dudley** (March 11, 1911–February 8, 2005) was the first African-American to hold the rank of Ambassador of the United States. A prominent civil rights lawyer working with Thurgood Marshall at the NAACP, he was appointed by President Truman to represent the U.S. in Liberia in 1949. Rare photos take viewers inside the embassy run by Black Foreign Service Ofﬁcers (FSOs), overseen by Dudley. Despite the appearance of freedom and autonomy, these talented FSOs were professionally trapped, locked into a collection of only ﬁve posts the State Department deemed “appropriate” for Black diplomats — the “Negro Circuit.” Dudley applied his adept legal skills to challenge this insidious system, citing the Department’s own policies that made this practice illegal.

**Terence Todman** (March 13, 1926–August 13, 2014) was born in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where the motto is “Black and free.” He entered the U.S. Army and was stationed in Japan, a critical turning point for his career. Possessing an innate skill in mastering languages, Todman saw how his role as a linguist could help bridge cultural divides. That led to a position in the Foreign Service. Not long after he started at the State Department, he fought to desegregate the Foreign Service Institute’s dining facilities in Virginia — and won. Todman was named Ambassador to Chad in 1969 and would go on to serve in Guinea, Costa Rica, Spain, Denmark and Argentina, becoming the first African American to achieve the rank of Career Ambassador.

**Carl Rowan** (August 11, 1925–September 23, 2000), a celebrated journalist known for his work chronicling America’s race relations, was appointed by President Kennedy to be Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs in 1961. His job was to help sell Kennedy’s foreign policy to journalists both at home and abroad. Although Rowan came to regard the State Department as a “virtual plantation” and considered leaving, he accepted the ambassadorship to Finland in 1963, an integral post at a time of intense posturing by the Soviet Union on Finland’s border. Rowan would achieve diplomatic success in Finland, but when Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson called Rowan home to lead the United States Information Agency. The USIA was responsible for ﬁghting Russia in the global war of ideas. Rowan’s job was to protect America’s image. He described his task this way: “My task is difﬁcult. On the one hand, I am a Negro with a ﬁerce determination to see that my children escape the degrading shackles of racism. On the other hand, I am a public ofﬁcial, whose job it is to help protect this country’s reputation abroad.”

American Experience ***The American Diplomat*** will stream simultaneously with broadcast and be available on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](http://pbs.org) and the [PBS Video app](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/), available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. All titles will also be available for streaming with closed captioning in English and Spanish. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](https://www.pbs.org/passport/videos/). For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](https://help.pbs.org/support/solutions/5000121793) website.

**About the Participants**

**Carol Anderson** is the Charles Howard Candler Professor and chair of African American Studies at Emory University. She is the author of *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African-American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* and *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960.*

**Ambassador Aurelia (Rea) Brazeal** retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2008, with the rank of Career Minister, after a distinguished 40-year career. She is the first African American woman career Foreign Service officer to be promoted into the Senior Foreign Service and the first to be nominated as an Ambassador. She served as Ambassador to Ethiopia, Kenya and The Federated States of Micronesia, and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific with policy responsibility for 22 countries.

**Nicholas J. Cull** is Professor of Public Diplomacy in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. He is the author of *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age.*

**James Dandridge II** is a retired career senior Foreign Service officer with the rank of minister counselor. His diplomatic assignments included director of the USIA Office of Policy Guidance and senior advisor for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the US Department of State. His assignments abroad included India, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile. He was also a close friend of Ambassador Todman.

**Edward Dudley, Jr**. is the son of Edward R. Dudley. Dudley spent his early childhood in Liberia while his father served as Ambassador.

**Mary L. Dudziak** is the Asa Griggs Professor of Law at Emory University and the author of *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, among others.

**Taj Frazier** is Associate Professor of Communication and Director of the Institute for Diversity and Empowerment at Annenberg (IDEA) at the University of Southern California.

**Irvin Hicks**, a Senior Foreign Service Officer, currently serves as a Senior Advisor with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

**Michael Krenn** is a Professor of History at Appalachian State University and the author of *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969,* the book that inspired *The American Diplomat*.

**Adriane Lentz-Smith** is Associate Professor and Associate Chair in Duke University’s Department of History. She is a scholar of African American history as well as the histories of the twentieth-century United States and the US & the World.

**Brenda Gayle Plummer** is Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and the author of *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960.*

**Jeffrey Rowan** is Carl Rowan’s son and spent time in Finland while his father served as Ambassador.

**Doris Todman** was married to Terence Todman for 62 years until his death in 2014.

**American Experience**

***The American Diplomat***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Directed by**  **Produced by**  **Edited by**  **Written by**  **Narrated by** | LEOLA CALZOLAI-STEWART  KILEY KRASKOUSKAS  RACHELL SHAPIRO  SANDRA CHRISTIE, ACE  KEN CHOWDER  ANDRE BRAUGHER |

**American Experience** is a production of **GBH Boston**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Executive Producer** | CAMEO GEORGE |

A FLOWSTATE Films Production for American Experience

**About the Filmmakers**

**Leola Calzolai-Stewart (Director)** is co-founder of the Virginia-based production company, FLOWSTATE Films. She led the creative team on *The American Diplomat* and has also lived in the diplomatic world for 18 years, an experience that enriches her approach to the storytelling in this film. Leola co-produced and edited the feature documentary, *The Last Song Before the War*, distributed by Kino Smith, and also edited the feature documentary *Dear Walmart*, which premiered in May 2019. *The American Diplomat* is Leola’s directorial debut and was awarded two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a development grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Leola is a Firelight Doc Lab Fellow for 2019-2021. The project was also selected as part of Black Public Media’s 2019 360 Incubator+ program.

**Cameo George (American Experience Executive Producer)** is an Emmy Award-winning producer, writer and journalist with more than 20 years of experience in documentary, broadcast television and digital content production. George has produced, developed and commissioned innovative programming at CNN, NBC News, ABC News and more. She was the senior producer of CNN’s groundbreaking series *Black in America* and *Latino in America* and the executive producer of the eight-hour PBS documentary series *16 for '16: The Contenders*, which was also broadcast on the BBC. George joined American Experience from ABC News, where she was Head of Development for Longform projects, responsible for creating a pipeline of docuseries and feature documentary films across Walt Disney Television platforms including ABC News, Hulu, National Geographic, and Disney+.

**About American Experience**

For more than 30 years, American Experience has been television’s most-watched history series, bringing to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America’s past and present. American Experience documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including 30 Emmy Awards, five duPont-Columbia Awards and 19 George Foster Peabody Awards. PBS’s signature history series also creates original digital content that innovates new forms of storytelling to connect our collective past with the present. Cameo George is the series executive producer. American Experience is produced for PBS by GBH Boston. Visit [pbs.org/americanexperience](http://pbs.org/americanexperience) and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanExperiencePBS/), [Twitter](http://twitter.com/amexperiencepbs), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/americanexperiencepbs/) and  [YouTube](http://youtube.com/americanexperience) to learn more.

Major funding for American Experience provided by Liberty Mutual Insurance and by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Major funding for *The American Diplomat* provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy Demands Wisdom, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by the estate of Marsha Feinhandler through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional funding for the film provided by Firelight Media, Black Public Media, and Virginia Humanities. Additional funding for American Experience provided by the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, the Documentary Investment Group and public television viewers.

\* \* \*

**Press Contacts:**

CaraMar Publicity

Mary Lugo 770-851-8190 [lugo@negia.net](mailto:lugo@negia.net)

Cara White 843-881-1480 [cara.white@mac.com](mailto:cara.white@mac.com)

Abbe Harris 908-244-5516 [abbe.harris@caramar.net](mailto:abbe.harris@caramar.net)

For further information and photos visit <http://www.pbs.org/pressroom>