



**P.O.V.'s "HARDWOOD"**  
by Hubert Davis

Tuesday, September 5, 2006 on PBS (Check local listings)

**Filmmaker's Statement**

**Hardwood** started out as an idea I had about doing a film about my father. I always felt he was such an interesting character and had led such an incredible life – from growing up in the slums of Chicago raised by a teenage mother who had him when she was 14 years old – to escaping through his love of basketball and traveling the world with the Harlem Globetrotters for 18 years.

Behind that story, I really wanted to explore the idea of a man who while on the road with the Globetrotters still searched for the father who had abandoned his mother and him when he was four years old. I wanted to illustrate the parallel between that void left in my dad's life and his role as a father figure in the communities of Chicago and now Vancouver, working with young people, teaching them basketball.

A huge transition in the story came while still working on the treatment, when the question of why I was telling the story came up. What was my role in the story? Once I decided to put myself into the documentary, it really became a story about my family. In particular, **Hardwood** became a story about my dad's two families – his first family in Chicago with his ex-wife, Mary Etta, and my brother, Mawuli, and his second family with my mom and me in Vancouver.

After speaking with my brother, I really felt that I had made the right choice in telling my family's story from a very personal point of view. Mawuli encouraged me, saying that the personal story was the one that had never really been told, while my father's involvement with the Globetrotters had been well publicized.

One of the gifts I received while working on the project was my dad's trust in letting me delve into his life for better or worse. He really showed courage in giving me complete freedom to make **Hardwood** the way I saw fit.

The hardest part of making such a personal story was putting my family in positions that were uncomfortable, asking questions that sometimes brought up painful memories. Another challenge was finding out new things during the process of shooting: for example, seeing the resentment my brother carried with him about my mom and dad's relationship, realizing the depth of my mom's heartbreak in losing my dad when he went back to Chicago and married his first wife, Mary Etta, and witnessing Mary Etta's pain as she talked about trying to make a rocky marriage work.

In shooting the story I really wanted it to feel intimate; I wanted people watching the doc to feel they were getting a glance into someone else's family album. What came out of shooting was much more raw than what I first anticipated. My family gave so much of themselves. For example, Mary Etta, who was hesitant to come forward originally, participated for the love of her son and for me; she opened herself up for the hope that my brother and I could heal those old wounds and move forward in our lives.

After shooting and editing **Hardwood**, my main concern was that my whole family was happy with it. I really wanted everyone to feel that I told their stories honestly. The hardest part was in the length I was given to tell the story, a half-hour. There was a lot of the story, in particular about my mom and Mary Eтта's experiences, that I could not include. The choice became that this story was really about my father and his two sons. That was the original idea and I just kept coming back to that.

After making **Hardwood** I felt like I had a much better appreciation for my family, for their incredible strength and the complexities in their lives. Ultimately, I feel so much closer to them having gone through this experience, and that is the real blessing.

- Hubert Davis  
Writer/Director/Editor