



## For Immediate Release

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## **P.O.V.'s "Revolution '67" Is Riveting Account of 'Black Urban Rebellion' In Newark, N.J., Airing Tuesday, July 10 on PBS**

Activists Amiri Baraka, Tom Hayden, George Richardson and Carol Glassman, Former Governor Brendan T. Byrne, Former Mayor Sharpe James, Journalist Bob Herbert Recall Pivotal 1967 Uprising on 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*A Co-production of the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and American Documentary | P.O.V. in association with WSKG.*

*"Revolution '67' accurately and effectively captures the mood, the pain, the loss, the ambiguity, the fear and the continuing impact of the violent unrest of the summer of 1967." – Lonnie G. Bunch, founding director, Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture*

The 1960s were in full heat. The Vietnam War, campus unrest, political assassinations and a defiant counter-culture were remaking the country. For African Americans, nonviolent protest was giving way to "black power" as the traditional Civil Rights Movement was seen as failing the aspirations of poor blacks in decaying urban centers. There had been deadly "race riots" in Jersey City (1964), Harlem (1964) and Watts (1965). So when black Newark, N.J., taxi driver John Smith was stopped for a traffic violation on July 12, 1967, the rumor that he had been not only beaten, but had died, spread like a force of nature through Newark's impoverished black neighborhoods.

As meticulously reconstructed in **Revolution '67**, a new documentary on public television's **P.O.V.** series, the response of Newark's black citizens to Smith's beating and purported death was a long time in the making. And the heavy-handed response of the police and city leaders — also long in the making — turned a spontaneous protest against police actions into a full-scale revolt. After six days, 26 people lay dead, 725 people were injured, and close to 1,500 people had been arrested. **Revolution '67** marshals chilling archival footage and the vivid memories of a remarkable number of key players on the scene — citizens, community activists, police, National Guardsmen and the state's future governor — to render an insider's account of racial and economic division in an American city.

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Newark rebellion, Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno's **Revolution '67** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, July 10, 2007** at 10 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 20th anniversary season of public television's groundbreaking P.O.V. series. (Check local listings.)

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American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

To tell its tale, **Revolution '67** makes use of archival news footage from an era when portable cameras and television were making such footage more plentiful and more candid, punctuated by filmmaker Jerome Bongiorno's bold animation to illustrate the film's events and statistics. A musical score comprised of more than 60 jazz pieces by international artists sets the mood for Newark in the late '60s. Most dramatically, **Revolution '67** offers an unprecedented array of eyewitness accounts of an emblematic American tragedy. The passion over events that summer in Newark remains strong among those who were on the scene.

Activist George Richardson recounts the challenges faced by black community activists in Newark prior to the riots. Controversial poet and Newark native Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones) recalls the temper of the community and recounts being arrested for no more reason than venturing outside. Journalist Bob Herbert, now of *The New York Times*, remembers the shooting death of his friend Billy Furr on July 15 — for taking beer from an already-looted store to give to thirsty newsmen.

Other witnesses include then-Essex County Prosecutor Brendan T. Byrne, who later became New Jersey governor; then-UCC Area Board President Sharpe James, later Newark's mayor; then-National Guardsman Paul Zigo; photographer Bud Lee; activists Carol Glassman and Richard Cammarieri; then-Police Officer Armando B. Fontoura, later Essex County Sheriff; journalist Ronald Smothers; and Harold Lucas, former head of the Newark Housing Authority. Historical commentary is provided by preeminent historians Kenneth T. Jackson, Clement A. Price, Nell Irvin Painter and Charles F. Cummings.

Well-known '60s activist Tom Hayden and other community organizers living in Newark were some people's candidates for "outside agitators" behind the disturbances, but the activists were experiencing quite a different reality. In Newark in 1967, Hayden says he realized that the day of the white Civil Rights worker was over. In fact powerless to influence the black community, Hayden gave a frustrated Governor Richard Hughes the key to ending the tumult — remove the troops. When the governor did so, the disorder subsided. Historians agree that, contrary to news reports of the day, the reaction by city, state and national forces caused most, if not all, of the deaths.

The Newark riots were among the deadliest racial disturbances per capita, in recent U.S. history. The outbreak, as told by **Revolution '67**, offers a "textbook" case of how endemic conditions — poverty, racial injustice, police reaction and a corrupt power structure alienated the neediest citizens and fed a cycle of resistance and destruction in poor black neighborhoods. The film is also a disturbing demonstration of how neither facts nor cool heads can stand in the way of explosive social forces once they have been set in motion.

The Newark rebellion, as many observers prefer to call it, could be seen as both predictable and predicted — despite what had happened to Smith. In fact, the taxi driver, alleged to have sideswiped a double-parked police car, had been beaten by white police and taken to the Fourth Precinct, across the street from a large public-housing project. An angry crowd gathered, believing Smith was still being abused. But Smith, accompanied by black community leaders, had left via a side door for the hospital, even as word spread out front that he had died. Community leaders could not persuade the angry crowd that Smith was alive. Nor could the crowd be stopped from assaulting the police with empty bottles and at least one Molotov cocktail — provoking an "overwhelming" response from the police.

Soon unverified alarms over black "snipers" had first police, then state troopers and National Guard troops firing into the upper stories of tenements at any real or imagined activity on rooftops. It was this type of indiscriminate gunfire that accounted for many, if not all, of the riot's most tragic fatalities — people sitting in their own homes. **Revolution '67** makes use of news footage, juxtaposed with the recollections of those who still argue for the existence of snipers, to discredit those arguments. Later investigation found that out of some 13,000 rounds of ammunition fired, only 100 of them were

even alleged to have come from rioters rather than law enforcement, and not one of those cases was proved. Of all those arrested, not one was charged with being a sniper.

**Revolution '67** documents the social forces at work — a city government and police force that didn't sufficiently analyze the demographic change that had made Newark a black city, and the fears of suburban and rural State Police and National Guardsmen sent into an urban civil war for which they were ill-prepared. **Revolution '67** also captures the anger and desperation of a community bitterly disappointed in continued police actions and economic injustice after years of civil rights progress.

**Revolution '67** is an illuminating account of important events too often relegated to footnotes in U.S. history and not explored in-depth in school textbooks — the black urban rebellions of the 1960s. The days of the Newark rebellion formed a fateful milestone in America's continuing struggles over race, economic justice and corruption, and recall lessons as hard-earned then as they are dangerous to forget today.

"I'm a native daughter and resident of Newark," says director Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, "and for as long as I can remember, Newark has been stigmatized by the riots of 1967. The questions remain: What really happened, who's to blame, and why hasn't the city recovered? Are the problems Newark faced in the '60s the same that plague it today? That's why my husband and I made this film — to get those answers."

### **Musical Soundtrack**

In place of a traditional musical score, **Revolution '67** features more than 60 contemporary jazz tunes by 20 artists from the United States, Japan, Israel and the former Soviet Union.

Jerome Bongiorno, the film's editor, says, "Because of Newark's preeminent place in jazz history, one of the first decisions we made when we began editing was to use jazz music." With recommendations from industry professionals and New York's famed Blue Note jazz club and Berklee College of Music, Bongiorno collected material from an impressive group of talented musicians he describes as "fearless in their craft."

"In many parts of the film, the compositions dictated the pacing of the edit," he explains. "If I was stuck for an idea, I turned to the music as a source of inspiration." The filmmakers anticipate Newark reclaiming its rightful spot as a jazz capital.

**Revolution '67** is a co-production of the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and American Documentary | P.O.V. in association with WSKG.

### **About the filmmakers:**

#### **Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, Producer/Director, Jerome Bongiorno, Cinematographer/Editor/Animator**

Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno are award-winning husband-and-wife filmmakers who formed their own production company, Bongiorno Productions, in Newark, N.J. Marylou is a producer and director; Jerome is a cinematographer, editor and animator. Marylou is a graduate of New York University's Graduate Film Program, where she received the \$75,000 Richard Vague Film Production Fund award for the feature film "Little Kings," based on her multi-award winning short.

The Bongiorno's documentary "Mother-Tongue: Italian American Sons & Mothers," featuring Martin Scorsese, earned an Emmy nomination and screened at the 2006 Venice Film Festival. Their global warming-themed screenplay, "Watermark," was featured at Sundance's *Investing in Media That Matters*, the Tribeca Film Festival/Sloan Summit, and was the centerpiece of a Johnson Foundation Wingspread Conference on Global Warming and Film in 2005.

Marylou and Jerome are in preproduction for the fictional version of **Revolution '67**, executive produced by Spike Lee. They are currently completing a series of short films on post-Katrina New Orleans and flood-plagued Venice, Italy, screening on PBS' *Natural Heroes* series and at film

festivals. The Bongiornoes are the recipients of a Film Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. They are long-time residents of Newark, N.J., where Marylou has lived all her life.

**Credits:**

Producer/director:	Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno
Cinematographer/editor/ animator:	Jerome Bongiorno
Executive Producer for P.O.V.:	Cara Mertes
Executive Producer for ITVS:	Sally Jo Fifer
Executive Producer for WSKG	Brian Frey
<b>Running Time:</b>	86:46

**Awards & Festivals:**

- Newark Black Film Festival, 2006; screened as a work-in-progress – *Paul Robeson Award, Best Documentary Film*
- Florida Film Festival, 2006; screened as a work-in-progress
- World Premiere, 2007 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival
- Sarasota Film Festival, 2007
- Atlanta Film Festival, 2007



ITVS funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the PBS series *Independent Lens*. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences.

Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. For more information, please visit [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org).



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through September, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. 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. More information is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

***P.O.V. Interactive*** ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov))

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces special features for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video, and community-based and educational content that involves viewers in activities and feedback. P.O.V. Interactive produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. In addition, [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) houses *Talking Back*, where viewers can comment on P.O.V. programs, engage in dialogue and link to further resources..

***P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education***

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these original materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences. P.O.V. works closely with local PBS stations to partner with museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* expands these efforts by working with youth-service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York.

***TAPE REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.***