



**CLASS OF '27 Premieres on AMERICA REFRAMED  
Tuesday, September 13, 2016, at 8 p.m. on WORLD Channel**

**Part of the Public Media Initiative  
*American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen***

NEW YORK, N.Y. (June 27, 2016) – CLASS OF '27, a thought-provoking documentary about how families, educators and leaders in diverse rural communities are working to get their youngest children on track toward graduating from high school, will premiere **Tuesday, September 13, 2016, at 8 p.m.** on WORLD Channel ([check local listings](#)). The documentary, comprising three short films by teams led by James Rutenbeck, Dustinn Craig and Nina Alvarez, will air as part of the fourth season of **AMERICA REFRAMED**, public media's newest documentary series hosted by Natasha Del Toro.

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Filmed in the hollows of Appalachia, on native lands of the Upper Midwest and in West Coast migrant camps, **CLASS OF '27** is a co-production of Lost Nation Pictures, LTD and Independent Television Service (ITVS). The film is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). **CLASS OF '27** is presented as part of American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen, a public media initiative made possible by CPB to help local communities across America keep more students on the path to graduation. The film will be part of public media's weeklong focus on education programming, starting September 12, 2016 and building toward the American Graduate Day live broadcast on PBS September 17, 2016.

**"CLASS OF '27** is an important and largely untold story about families struggling to provide educational opportunities for their preschool age children, and the committed teachers working tirelessly on their behalf," said Joseph Tovares, CPB senior vice president and chief content officer.

The national broadcast of **CLASS OF '27** is accompanied by an engagement campaign led by ITVS featuring community screening events, national conferences, NGO partnerships and online events designed to promote greater awareness and dialogue in support of quality early childhood education across the country. The broadcast will be followed by free streaming for audiences across the U.S. at [www.worldchannel.org/americareframed](http://www.worldchannel.org/americareframed) and [www.pbs.org/video/](http://www.pbs.org/video/) starting September 14, with additional exclusive digital content.



**CLASS OF '27** presents distinct yet complementary personal stories from places too often ignored in America. Each of the three portraits demonstrates that children from distressed communities, despite their circumstances, are more likely to grow into productive and civically engaged adults if they receive support in their earliest years. Committed to supporting the children's potential, each community is a place of hope, inspiration and resilience.

The first portrait, **CLASS OF '27**, follows preschoolers in Booneville, Ky. With local employment largely limited to the school system, these children have caring and competent adults preparing them for better futures. "I'm getting them ready for kindergarten," says Betsy Coomer, a tireless early-education teacher with decades of experience. At the same time, Cleda Turner of Owsley County Outreach, organizes food packets for hungry children to take home for the weekend on Fridays after school.

The second portrait entitled **LITTLE DREAM CATCHERS** introduces audiences to White Earth Nation in Minnesota. Preschoolers learn school readiness while engaging in tribal rituals, such as pow-wows, to prepare for kindergarten with a sense of identity. Former Tribal Chairwoman Erma Vizenor, herself an educator with graduate degrees, sums up the mission of White Earth early education as "a lifetime of choices instead of a lifetime of circumstances." She notes: "Education is our ticket out of poverty here; it was my ticket."

The third portrait, **FIELDS OF PROMISE**, follows Mireya and her parents from Fresno, Calif., to Oregon's Willamette Valley for berry season. Mireya's parents, who are migrant workers and speak Spanish and Mixteco at home, face work days as long as 12 hours. They enroll her in Migrant Head Start where bilingual teacher, Aimee Brown, makes it a warm and engaging academic experience that includes meals and outdoor play.

Each short film in **CLASS OF '27** opens with a reflection by award-winning writers Silas House, Gyasi Ross and Sandra Cisneros, who frame each story with authenticity and insight.

#### **National Engagement Campaign**

Public television stations and community organizations across the country will host screening activities to inspire dialogue about challenges and opportunities facing children, parents and teachers in rural communities. Educational modules and a comprehensive discussion guide will be available in early August to support engagement activities and professional development around the film. If you are



interested in hosting a screening or activity using Class of '27 engagement resources, please visit <http://worldchannel.org/programs/america-reframed/>. For more information, contact [campaigns@itvs.org](mailto:campaigns@itvs.org).

### **Film Credits**

CLASS OF '27 is a co-production of Lost Nation Pictures, LTD (founded by James Rutenbeck) and Independent Television Service, with funding provided by Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

CLASS of '27 Director:	James Rutenbeck
LITTLE DREAM CATCHERS Director:	Dustinn Craig
FIELDS OF PROMISE Director:	Nina Alvarez

### **Media Contact**

Journalists and reviewers may contact Neyda Martinez at 917-656-7846 or via email at [neyda@amdoc.org](mailto:neyda@amdoc.org) for interviews and special requests.

### **About AMERICA REFRAMED**

AMERICA REFRAMED is a co-production of American Documentary, Inc. and the WORLD Channel and is hosted by journalist Natasha Del Toro.

AMERICA REFRAMED curates a diverse selection of films highlighting innovative and artistic approaches to storytelling from emerging and veteran filmmakers alike. Viewers will be immersed in personal stories from the streets of towns big and small to the exurbs and country roads that span the spectrum of American life. The documentaries invite audiences to reflect on topics as varied as culture, healthcare, politics, gun violence, religion and more. Several episodes feature a roundtable discussion moderated by host Natasha Del Toro with special guest commentators and filmmakers.

In 2015, AMERICA REFRAMED won a GRACIE Outstanding Series award, and was nominated for an EMMY award as well as an Independent Documentary Association award for best curated series. In its first season, AMERICA REFRAMED received five 2013 CINE Golden Eagle Awards, and one Imagen Awards nomination.

#### **AMERICA REFRAMED Series Credits**

Executive Producers: Justine Nagan, Chris Hastings, Chris White



Series Producer: Carmen L. Vicencio  
Host: Natasha Del Toro

AMERICA REFRAMED can be accessed online via  
<http://worldchannel.org/programs/america-reframed/>  
and,  
<https://www.facebook.com/WorldChannel>  
<https://www.facebook.com/AmericaReFramed>

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#### **AMERICA REFRAMED Co-Producers**

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia arts organization 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. AmDoc is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. For more information, visit: [www.amdoc.org](http://www.amdoc.org)

The WORLD Channel delivers the best of public television's nonfiction, news and documentary programming, including original content by and about diverse communities, to U.S. audiences through local public television stations and streaming online at [worldchannel.org](http://worldchannel.org). WORLD reached 35.8 million unique viewers 18+ last year (55% adults 18-49) and over-indexes in key diversity demographics. Online, the WORLD Channel expands on broadcast topics and fuels dialogue across social media, providing opportunities for broad and diverse audience interaction.

WORLD is programmed by WGBH/Boston, in partnership with American Public Television and WNET/New York, and in association with PBS and National Educational Telecommunications Association. Funding for the WORLD Channel is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Ford Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Kendeda Fund. For more information about The WORLD Channel, visit [www.worldchannel.org](http://www.worldchannel.org)



### **About American Graduate**

[American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen](#) was launched in 2011 with 25 public media stations in high need communities to spotlight the high school dropout crisis and focus on middle and high school student interventions. Today, more than 100 public radio and television stations in 48 states have partnered with over 1,700 community organizations and schools, as well as Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, Alliance for Excellent Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Newman's Own Foundation to help the nation achieve a 90% graduation rate by 2020. With primetime and children's programming that educates, informs, and inspires public radio and television stations — locally owned and operated — are important resources in helping to address critical issues facing today's communities. According to a report from the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, American Graduate stations have told the story about the dropout crisis in a way that empowered citizens to get involved, and helped community organizations break down silos to work more effectively together. Visit [AmericanGraduate.org](http://AmericanGraduate.org).

### **About CPB**

The [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of nearly 1,500 locally-owned and -operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services. For more information, visit [www.cpb.org](http://www.cpb.org) and follow us on Twitter [@CPBmedia](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

### **ABOUT ITVS**

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning documentaries on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. on PBS. Mandated by Congress in 1988 and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS has brought thousands of independently produced programs to American audiences. For more information, visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org).



**AMERICA  
REFRAMED**