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Contacts: Anita DeAngelis, Mary B. Martin School of the Arts director, 423-439-5673, deangeli@etsu.edu
Lise Cutshaw, MBMSOTA marketing coordinator, 423-773-5410, cutshaw@etsu.edu

The New Black
Religion, the African-American Community, and Gay Marriage Intersect

Equality continues to be a weighty issue for the black community in America. A new documentary focuses on one critical aspect of the struggle.

The Mary B. Martin School of the Arts at ETSU will present The New Black with producer Yvonne Welbon as a part of the South Arts Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers on Monday, Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. in the Martha Street Culp Auditorium. Following a screening of the film, Welbon will lead a discussion with the audience about the film and her work as a producer. A reception will follow the Q&A session. Film and reception are free and open to the public.

The New Black captures the complex intersection between faith, racial injustice and LGBT rights. The film tells the story of an African-American community grappling with gay rights in light of the recent gay marriage movement and fights over civil rights. The film documents activists, families and clergy on both sides of the campaigning to legalize gay marriage and examines homophobia in the black community’s institutional pillar – the black church.

“Riveting ... eye-opening stuff,” says Jason Coleman of Starpulse. “Hands down a thought provoking film with equal parts energy and pathos.”

The New Black very candidly tells the story of the historic fight to win marriage equality in Maryland and charts the evolution of this divisive issue within the black community.

This film gives audience members the opportunity to form their own opinions with both sides being shown. The focus is not what is right or wrong, but on shining a light on the issue within a specific group of people.

“The thing that I like about the film is that it really allows us to think about both sides – those that are for it and those that are against it,” DeAngelis says.

The screening is also a part of the “Think. Live. Respect.” series, sponsored by ETSU’s Division of Student Affairs. The series is intended to spark thought and conversation all across campus this spring.
“We have some charged film topics this semester, but I think it’s good we have an opportunity to come together as a community and talk about these issues,” DeAngelis says.

Yvonne Welbon has produced more than 20 films in her career. Her accomplishments include the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Documentary. Welbon’s films have also appeared on networks such as PBS, Starz, Bravo, The Sundance Channel, BET and HBO. She received a B.A. from Vassar College, an M.F.A from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Ph.D from Northwestern University.

Visit www.newblackfilm.com for more information on the film.

The Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers is a program of South Arts. Southern Circuit screenings are funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. South Arts, founded in 1975, is a nonprofit regional arts organization building on the South’s unique heritage and enhancing the public value of the arts. Their work responds to the arts environment and cultural trends with a regional perspective through an annual portfolio of activities designed to address the role of the arts in impacting the issues important to our region, and linking the South with the nation and the world through arts.

For information about the film, film series or the ETSU Mary B. Martin School of the Arts, call 423-439-TKTS (8587) or visit www.etsu.edu/martin. Please “Like” ETSU Mary B. Martin School of the Arts on Facebook and follow it on Twitter and Instagram @ArtsAtETSU

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