



AMERICAN MASTERS



Press Contacts:

Gabrielle Torello, Grand Communications for WNET, 917-312-2832, gab@grandcommunications.com

Ava Tews, WNET, 212-560-8153, tewsa@wnet.org

Press Materials: <http://pbs.org/pressroom> or <http://thirteen.org/pressroom>

***American Masters* Presents**
U.S. Broadcast Premiere of Documentary
Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am
by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, June 23 on PBS

Features Hilton Als, Angela Davis, Fran Lebowitz, Walter Mosley,

Sonia Sanchez, Oprah Winfrey and others

Premiere Date: Tuesday, June 23 at 8 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), pbs.org/tonimorrison and the PBS Video app as part of PBS' summer-long celebration of women trailblazers.

Synopsis:

American Masters* – *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am is an artful and intimate meditation on the legendary Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author that examines her life, her works and the powerful themes she has confronted throughout her literary career. From her childhood in the steel town of Lorain, Ohio, to '70s-era book tours with Muhammad Ali, from the front lines with Angela Davis to her own riverfront writing room, Toni Morrison leads an assembly of her peers, critics and colleagues on an exploration of race, America, history and the human condition as seen through the prism of her own literature. Inspired to write because no one took a "little black girl" seriously, Morrison reflects on her lifelong deconstruction of the master narrative. Woven together with a rich collection of art, history, literature and personality,

the film includes discussions about her many critically acclaimed works, including novels “Beloved,” “The Bluest Eye,” “Sula” and “Song of Solomon,” her role as an editor of iconic African American literature and her time teaching at Princeton University.

In addition to Morrison, the film features new interviews with Hilton Als, Angela Davis, Fran Lebowitz, Walter Mosley, Sonia Sanchez and Oprah Winfrey, who turned “Beloved” into a feature film. Using director Timothy Greenfield-Sanders’ elegant portrait-style interviews, ***American Masters – Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*** includes original music by Kathryn Bostic, a specially created opening sequence by artist Mickalene Thomas and evocative works by other contemporary African American artists including Kara Walker, Rashid Johnson and Kerry James Marshall.

Film Interviewees:

- Toni Morrison
- Angela Davis
- Fran Lebowitz
- Oprah Winfrey
- Hilton Als
- Walter Mosley
- Sonia Sanchez
- Robert Gottlieb
- Farah Griffin
- Russell Banks
- David Carrasco
- Paula Giddings
- Richard Danielpour

Voice Cameos:

- Kim Cattrall
- Bryan Terrell Clark
- Nancy Giles
- Whoopi Goldberg
- Joel Grey
- Rhonda Hamilton
- LaTanya Richardson Jackson
- S. Epatha Merkerson
- Steven Williams

Contributing Artists:

- Romare Beardon
- Elizabeth Catlett
- Leo and Diane Dillon
- Aaron Douglas
- David Hammons
- Rashid Johnson

- Lois Mailou Jones
- Titus Kaphar
- Jacob Lawrence
- Kerry James Marshall
- Joe Morse
- Martin Puryear
- Faith Ringgold
- Lorna Simpson
- Hank Willis Thomas
- Mickalene Thomas
- Stephen Towns
- Kara Walker
- Mel Waters
- Charles White
- Jack Whitten

Short TV Listing:

An artful and intimate meditation on the legendary storyteller that examines her life and works.

Long TV Listing:

Toni Morrison leads an assembly of her peers and critics on an exploration of the powerful themes she confronted throughout her literary career in this artful and intimate meditation that examines the life and work of the legendary storyteller.

Series Overview:

Launched in 1986 on PBS, *American Masters* set the standard for documentary film profiles, accruing widespread critical acclaim and earning 28 Emmy Awards — including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special — 14 Peabodys, an Oscar, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of masters past and present, the *American Masters* website offers streaming video of select films, outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the American Masters Podcast, educational resources and more. The series is available for streaming simultaneously on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and the PBS Video app, which is available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast. PBS station members can view episodes via Passport (contact your local PBS station for details). *American Masters* is a production of THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET.

Production Credits:

American Masters – Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am is a production of Perfect Day Films Inc. in association with American Masters Pictures. Directed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders (American Masters: The Women’s List, American Masters: The Boomer List, American

Masters – Lou Reed: Rock and Roll Heart). Produced by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Johanna Giebelhaus, Chad Thompson and Tommy Walker. Michael Kantor is executive producer.

Underwriters:

Major funding for *American Masters – Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am* is provided by AARP and JustFilms / Ford Foundation. Major support for *American Masters* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Rosalind P. Walter, Judith and Burton Resnick, Cheryl & Philip Milstein Family Foundation, The Vital Projects Fund, Lillian Goldman Programming Endowment, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Seton J. Melvin, Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, Ellen and James S. Marcus, and The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation.

Websites:

pbs.org/tonimorrison, <http://facebook.com/americanmasters>, [@PBSAmerMasters](https://twitter.com/PBSAmerMasters), <http://youtube.com/AmericanMastersPBS>, <http://instagram.com/pbsamericanmasters>,

Hashtags:

#ToniMorrisonPBS

#TrailblazersPBS

About PBS Trailblazers

In the summer of 2020, PBS is celebrating the women’s vote centennial with a slate of multiplatform content honoring and commemorating U.S. women’s suffrage, the feminist movement and modern-day changemakers. **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE “The Vote”** tells the story of the campaign to grant women the right to vote, a transformative cultural and political movement that resulted in the largest expansion of voting rights in U.S. history. **AMERICAN MASTERS “Unladylike2020”** is a multimedia series featuring courageous, little-known and diverse female trailblazers from the turn of the 20th century. **“And She Could Be Next” (w.t.)**, a **POV** miniseries, follows women of color as political candidates and organizers who seek to expand the electorate, asking whether democracy itself can be preserved — and made stronger — by those most marginalized. And a two-part **FIRING LINE WITH MARGARET HOOVER** special documents what motivated several conservative women to run for office. Two fan-favorite PBS series will salute female changemakers: **AMERICAN MASTERS** with **“Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am”** and **“Mae West: Dirty Blonde;”** and **GREAT PERFORMANCES** with **“Gloria: A Life,”** about Gloria Steinem, and **“Ann,”** about Texas governor Ann Richards. **ANTIQUES ROADSHOW** spotlights outstanding contributions from female athletes, artists, activists and more in the all-new special **“Women’s Work.”** The lineup also features two new miniseries: **PREHISTORIC ROAD TRIP**, hosted by the Field Museum’s Emily Graslie, who embarks on an epic adventure through America’s fossil country; and BBC co-production **ROYAL HISTORY’S MYTHS AND SECRETS WITH LUCY WORSLEY**, who investigates notable women and their roles in historical events. In addition, PBS will encore the critically acclaimed and award-winning **FRONTLINE** documentary **“For Sama,”** an intimate yet epic journey of one woman’s experience of the Syrian war.

About WNET

WNET is America’s flagship PBS station: parent company of New York’s [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its new [ALL ARTS](#) multi-platform initiative, its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBS Kids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each month. WNET produces and presents a wide range of acclaimed PBS series, including *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*,

PBS NewsHour Weekend, and the nightly interview program ***Amanpour and Company***. In addition, WNET produces numerous documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings, as well as multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty and climate. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.

###