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Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North
on Rhode Island PBS
Followed by Second Local Production, *Telling Stories*

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND (July 7, 2008) – More than a decade ago, first-time filmmaker Katrina Browne made a troubling discovery — her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. In her film, ***Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North***, she and nine fellow descendants of the DeWolf family set off to retrace the trade triangle: from their ancestors' old homestead Linden Place in Bristol, Rhode Island, to slave forts in Ghana to sugar plantation ruins in Cuba.

Ten years from inception to debut, the film is part of the PBS series P.O.V., and airs on Rhode Island PBS on Thursday, July 3 at 9 PM (channel 36 / digital 36.1 / RI cable 8 / DirecTV 36 / Dish Network 7776); Cox and Comcast cable subscribers can watch a rebroadcast on July 5 at 1:30 AM.

As the film recounts, the DeWolf name has been honored through generations, both in the Bristol and on the national stage. Family members have been prominent citizens: professors, writers, legislators, philanthropists, Episcopal priests and bishops. If the DeWolfs' slave trading was mentioned at all, it was in an offhand way, with reference to scoundrels and rascallions.

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Then Browne's grandmother opened the door a crack. She wrote a DeWolf history booklet with a brief but pointed reference to the slave trade, which caused Browne to look deeper. What Browne learned in her research, coupled with the journey she undertook with other DeWolf descendants to retrace early New England's infamous trade in rum, slaves and sugar, revealed secrets hidden in plain sight. Archival documents — from logs and diaries to detailed business correspondence, cancelled checks and sales records detailing a global economy — unsettle not just a family, but also a nation's assumptions about its not-so-distant history.

Technically, this film is a well-structured, nicely photographed, and finely edited cinema verité documentary. Browne is looking for the truth about her family, and she goes about trying to keep her filming of it candid and truthful.

Whether the conclusions reached in this personal family story can be successfully applied to a broad audience will be a controversy best left to the viewers to debate. Either way, it's a thoughtful and provocative look at an aspect of Rhode Island history not widely known.

For film information, visit <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2008/tracesofthetrade/about.html>

Following *P.O.V.* at 10:30 PM (and 3 AM on July 5), Rhode Island PBS presents another local production with its own traces of the trade. ***Telling Stories*** is a documentary about unearthing history in Rhode Island. The video chronicles an archaeological dig at a John Brown family farm. By questioning and examining the archaeological process, the film discusses the painstaking re-creation of history – one fragment at a time – including the heritage of slavery in New England, and the politics of the historical narrative.

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