



TRACES OF THE TRADE: A STORY FROM THE DEEP NORTH

A film by Katrina Browne with Co-Directors Alla Kovgan & Jude Ray, and Co-Producers Juanita Brown & Elizabeth Delude-Dix

First-time filmmaker Katrina Browne discovers that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Nine fellow descendants journey with Browne to retrace the steps of the Triangle Trade. They gather in their old hometown of Bristol, Rhode Island; disturbing historic documents require a rethinking of American history as the 4th of July parade rolls by. They quickly learn that slavery was business for more than the DeWolff family—it was a cornerstone, not just of Southern, but of Northern commercial life. They then travel to the slave forts in Ghana, where emotional encounters take place with African-Americans on their own homecoming pilgrimages. They journey to Cuba, discovering the ruins of a DeWolff sugar plantation. At each stop, family members grapple with the contemporary legacy of slavery, not only for black Americans, but for themselves as white Americans. They face their love/hate relationship to Yankee culture and privilege, and wrestle with how to take public action given all that they now know. The issues they are confronted with dramatize questions that apply to the nation as a whole: How do we truly come to terms with the history of slavery and all the harms that remain? How does Northern complicity change the equation? What would repair – spiritual and material – really look like and what would it take?

“A far-reaching personal documentary exploration of the slave trade... The implications of the film are devastating.” – The N.Y. Times

Traces of the Trade had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008 and then aired on PBS's premiere showcase of independent film, P.O.V., reaching over 1.4 million viewers. It has received numerous awards, extensive press coverage and critical acclaim (Tavis Smiley, Bill Moyers, Michele Martin, CBS' *The Early Show*), and was nominated for a 2009 Emmy® for Research. The film contributed to the Episcopal Church and the Unitarian Universalist Association apologizing for their historic complicity in slavery and initiating repair processes. *Traces* is used for education and dialogue throughout the U.S. and overseas, and many family members, spouses and colleagues remain active with the film. Countless screenings have taken place at conferences, schools, universities, historic sites, religious institutions, and workplaces, including: the U.S. Constitution Center, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, the United Nations, Council on Foundations (moderators: Judy Woodruff and Charles Ogletree), Bank of America, Rhode Island Department of Education, the Episcopal Church House of Bishops, the National Park Service, and the Connecticut State Legislature. We formed the Tracing Center on Histories and Legacies of Slavery to offer programs such as trainings for teachers on teaching slavery and for museum professionals on interpreting slavery. The film has contributed significantly to the growing public awareness in the last 10-15 years about the role of the North in slavery. *Traces* has also screened in over a dozen Caribbean, African and European countries, and has aired in Canada, Cuba, and Bermuda. In 2010, the Dominican Republic's President, Leonel Fernandez, seeing the film, called for similar soul-searching in his country. Major funders include the Kellogg Foundation, Ford Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation.

"Traces of the Trade will help those of us who are custodians of history, translators of history, to bring a central, but buried chapter in our American story powerfully to the fore—all while penetrating right to the heart. I can't recommend the film enough."

- Lonnie Bunch, Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution