



THE DOLPH BRISCOE CENTER FOR AMERICAN HISTORY  
presents an  
ALPHEUS MEDIA production  
in association with  
ALLENTOWN PRODUCTIONS

**“WHEN I RISE”**

Directed by .....MAT HAMES  
Produced by .....JAMES MOLL  
.....MICHAEL ROSEN  
Executive Producer .....DON CARLETON  
Co-Producers .....RAMONA KELLY  
.....ALISON BECK  
Director of Photography .....WILSON WAGGONER  
Edited by .....MAT HAMES  
.....SANDRA GUARDADO  
Original Music by .....DAVID HAMBURGER

[www.WhenIRiseFilm.com](http://www.WhenIRiseFilm.com); TRT 73:57 minutes

*When I Rise* premiered on the acclaimed PBS series *Independent Lens* on February 8, 2011. The film is an official selection of the 2010 South By Southwest Film Festival (Austin), the 2010 Dallas International Film Festival, the 2010 Hot Docs Festival (Toronto), the 2010 New York City International Film Festival, the 2010 New Orleans Film Festival, the 2010 Starz Denver Film Festival, the 2010 Santa Barbara International Film Festival (winner of the Social Justice Award), the 2010 Indianapolis International Film Festival (winner of the Audience Choice Award and the Black Expressions Award).

“When I Rise” was made possible in part by AT&T.



**Press Inquiries**

Erin Purdy  
(512) 495-4692  
[erin.purdy@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:erin.purdy@austin.utexas.edu)

## **Distribution Inquiries**

Michael Rosen  
(818) 733-1002  
michael@allentownproductions.com

## **Logline**

When I Rise is a feature-length documentary about Barbara Smith Conrad, a gifted University of Texas music student who finds herself at the epicenter of racial controversy, struggling against the odds and ultimately ascending to the heights of international opera.

## **Synopsis**

A gifted black music student at the University of Texas is thrust into a civil rights storm that changes her life forever. Barbara Smith Conrad is cast in an opera to co-star with a white male classmate, fueling a racist backlash from members of the Texas legislature. When Barbara is expelled from the cast, the incident escalates to national news, prompting unexpected support from a pop superstar.

This small-town girl, whose voice and spirit stem from her roots in East Texas, emerges as an internationally celebrated mezzo-soprano and headlines on stages around the world.

When I Rise is an inspirational journey toward finding forgiveness within oneself.

## **ABOUT BARBARA SMITH CONRAD**

Barbara Smith Conrad is a mezzo-soprano whose distinguished career has touched the lives of audiences around the world. She is an artist whose musical breadth encompasses a span as great as the distance between the Baptist church of her youth and opera houses around the world.

Barbara traces her musical roots to her family's home in the tiny east Texas community of Center Point, where she and her siblings explored a variety of musical genres on the family piano and in their local Baptist church. It was in this community, to which she still maintains ties, that her love of the spiritual first developed.

Barbara earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Texas in 1959. She entered UT in 1956, the first year in which African American students were admitted to the University as undergraduates. With her natural talents and stage presence, Barbara was encouraged to audition for a role in the University's 1957 production of *Dido and*

*Aeneas*. She was awarded the leading role of Dido, the Queen of Carthage, opposite a white male classmate as Aeneas, her lover. Soon after the start of rehearsals, Barbara's trouble began. The bi-racial casting controversy ultimately escalated to the Texas Legislature, and the president of the University had Barbara removed from the cast. Barbara's story was covered by national news media, prompting a carte blanche offer from Harry Belafonte to underwrite her studies at the institution of her choice. Barbara, however, chose to remain at the University. She was one of the early pioneers in the movement to create a more open and diverse university community, and her accomplishments and fortitude as a student represent an important chapter in UT's history. The Texas Ex-Students Association named her a Distinguished Alumnus in 1985, and the University honored her with the founding of the Barbara Smith Conrad Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Fine Arts.

Barbara performed with the Metropolitan Opera for eight years, from 1982 to 1989, and has performed leading operatic roles with the Vienna State Opera, Teatro Nacional in Venezuela, the Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and many other international opera houses throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, and South America. Under the direction of some of the world's leading conductors, including Maazel, Bernstein, and Levine, she has performed much of the mezzo-soprano concert repertoire with the world's greatest orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the London, Boston, Cleveland, and Detroit Symphonies.

In 1977 Barbara played renowned contralto Marian Anderson in the three-hour ABC movie *Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years*, and in 1994 followed that performance with a European concert/recital tour commemorating Anderson. In 1987, she was invited by President Reagan to sing at the White House in honor of Lady Bird Johnson's seventy-fifth birthday. A career highlight for her was an invitation to perform for Pope John Paul II during his 1995 visit to New York City. Among her many other accomplishments is her recording of a collection of Negro spirituals with the choir of the Convent Avenue Baptist Church, released on the Naxos label to critical acclaim.

Barbara continues to complement her performing activities with artist residencies and master classes, establishing herself as one of the foremost builders of voice both in the United States and abroad. She is the co-director and co-founder of the Wagner Theater Program at the Manhattan School of Music, and she maintains a private vocal studio in Manhattan.

### **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

#### **MAT HAMES (Director)**

Mat Hames is an award-winning filmmaker based in Austin. He directed the 2008 documentary *Fighting Goliath*, which was narrated by Robert Redford and was an official selection of 12 film festivals in four countries. The film was awarded the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award for Best Documentary Short at the Red Rock Film

Festival, the Jury Prize at the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, and the Golden Sun at the Barcelona International Film Festival. Both the Sundance Channel and PBS acquired *Fighting Goliath* for national broadcast in 2009.

Mat's directorial credits include *Last Best Hope*, an award-winning documentary film about the Belgian Resistance during WWII. In 2007, His Royal Majesty King Albert II awarded Mat the decoration of Knight of the Order of the Crown in recognition of his contribution to preserving the history of the Belgian Resistance. Before its national broadcast on PBS in 2006, *Last Best Hope* garnered numerous awards and festival accolades, including a Silver Hugo from the Chicago International Film Festival.

Mat also directed and produced the PBS series *State of Tomorrow*, which won five regional Emmy Awards. He is co-founder of Alpheus Media, whose long-standing clients include the Sundance Preserve and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

### **JAMES MOLL (Producer)**

Oscar® and Emmy winning filmmaker James Moll produces and directs non-fiction film. Moll's feature documentary directing credits include *Foo Fighters: Back and Forth*, profiling the history of the rock band Foo Fighters, *Running the Sahara* for Executive Producer Matt Damon, about three men as they attempt to run across the Sahara Desert; *Inheritance*, a PBS/POV film depicting a woman struggling with the crimes of her Nazi father; *Price for Peace* for NBC and Executive Producer author/historian Stephen Ambrose, focusing on WWII in the Pacific; and *The Last Days* for Executive Producer Steven Spielberg, chronicling the lives of five Hungarian Holocaust survivors. Moll has produced and/or directed many projects for television, including *Broken Silence*, a collection of five foreign-language documentaries that premiered on primetime television in Russia, Poland, Argentina, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

In addition to his work as a filmmaker, Moll established and operated The Shoah Foundation with Steven Spielberg for the purpose of videotaping Holocaust survivor testimonies around the world. The Foundation videotaped over 50,000 testimonies in 57 countries.

Born in Allentown and raised in Los Angeles, Moll earned a degree from USC School of Cinematic Arts. He is co-chair of the Directors Guild of America Documentary Award, and is a member of the Documentary Executive Committee for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

### **MICHAEL ROSEN (Producer)**

Michael Rosen is an award-winning producer and director whose credits include the television special *Beyond the Expedition: Running the Sahara* for National Geographic Channel, about a historic trek across Africa; *Murder By Proxy* for Key Element, which examines how spree killings are affecting American society; and *A Salute to Robert Altman: An American Maverick*, for USA Films which aired on Bravo and the

Independent Film Channel. He also executive produced the television special *Emmy's Greatest Moments* for TV Land.

As executive in charge of production at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, Rosen was responsible for overseeing more than 30 projects annually – many for the *Primetime Emmy Awards*. In addition, he is the Founding Executive Producer for the Television Academy Foundation's *Archive of American Television*, the world's largest online portal on the history of television, producing over 2,000 hours of documentary interviews with over 500 television legends and pioneers.

Rosen began his career working for producers Lauren Shuler-Donner (*X-Men*, *The Secret Life of Bees*) and Jon Peters (*Superman Returns*, *Rain Man*).

### **DON CARLETON (Executive Producer)**

Dr. Don Carleton is the executive director of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin. Carleton has published and lectured extensively in the fields of historical research methods and sources, urban history, the history of broadcast journalism, and twentieth century U.S. political history. His books include *Red Scare* (winner of the Texas State Historical Association's Coral Tullis Award); *A Breed So Rare: The Life of J. R. Parten* (winner of the Texas Institute of Letters award for the book written by a Texan in 1998 that has made the greatest contribution to knowledge); *Being Rapoport: Capitalist with a Conscience*; *Ross Sterling, Texan: A Memoir by the Founder of Humble Oil and Refining Company*, and *Dolph Briscoe: My Life in Texas Ranching and Politics*; *Conversations with Cronkite*; and *Big Red: Memoirs of a Texas Entrepreneur and Philanthropist*. Carleton also has published numerous articles in professional journals, magazines, and newspapers, and he serves as editor of the Focus on American History Series of the University of Texas Press. Carleton was an historical advisor to novelist James A. Michener for his novel *Texas* (Random House, 1986). He was also a researcher and historical advisor for former CBS newsman and anchor Walter Cronkite's best selling memoir *A Reporter's Life* (Knopf, 1996). His current projects include authoring an as-told-to memoir of famed heart surgeon Dr. Denton Cooley and managing the writing and publication of the history of the Exxon Corporation between 1975 and 2000. Listed in *Who's Who in America*, Carleton has joint senior faculty appointments in the UT departments of History and Journalism and the School of Information. In addition, he holds the J. R. Parten Chair in the Archives of American History.

### **ABOUT THE DOPLH BRISCOE CENTER FOR AMERICAN HISTORY**

Through stewardship, scholarship, and outreach, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History increases knowledge and fosters exploration of our nation's past.

As a leading history research center, the Briscoe Center collects, preserves, and make available documentary and material culture evidence encompassing key themes in Texas and U.S. history. Researchers, students, and the public mine the Briscoe Center's

"When I Rise" Press Kit

April 5, 2011

Page 5 of 6

collections for a wide range of academic, professional, and personal uses. The Center's collections also inspire its own projects, including books, exhibits, programs, films, and educational materials. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History is an organized research unit and public service component of The University of Texas at Austin. [www.cah.utexas.edu](http://www.cah.utexas.edu).

### **ABOUT ALPHEUS MEDIA**

Established in Austin, Texas, in 1999, Alpheus Media is a documentary film production company and creative agency with a passion for telling stories. Stories that engage viewers and inspire interest in complex issues. Stories told in more than a dozen languages across six continents and across virtually every medium, from film and television to print and podcasts. Recent projects include *Fighting Goliath*, a film featured on the Sundance Channel and narrated by Robert Redford, exploring the battle in Texas over 19 proposed coal plants; *Last Best Hope*, a feature-length, nationally broadcast PBS documentary about the Belgian Resistance during World War II; and *State of Tomorrow*, an Emmy-winning 13-episode PBS documentary series. Alpheus Media also creates award-winning content for clients including the Lance Armstrong Foundation and its LIVESTRONG Global Cancer Campaign; the Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve; Healthy Child Healthy World; and Discovery Networks. [www.alpheusmedia.com](http://www.alpheusmedia.com)

### **ABOUT ALLENTOWN PRODUCTIONS**

Based at Universal Studios in Los Angeles since 1993, Allentown Productions is headed by Oscar® and Emmy-winning filmmaker James Moll (*Inheritance*, *Running the Sahara*), who was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Building on its extensive roots in documentary, Allentown Productions is developing feature and television projects as part of its broadening focus to include scripted material. Some of Allentown's recently announced feature film projects include *The Untitled Knott's Ghost Town Project*, a family adventure film based on the rides and attractions at the Knott's Berry Farm theme park; and *31 Stadiums*, based on the true story of three young men who embark on an NFL road trip to honor a friend killed in Kuwait. [www.AllentownProductions.com](http://www.AllentownProductions.com)