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*Thursday, December 19, 2013*

*For Immediate Release*

NETA /PBS Stations Press Release; Song of the Dunes: Search for the Original Gypsies to Premiere on Public Broadcasting Television Stations December 2013/January 2014

Paradise Filmworks International is pleased to announce that *Song of the Dunes: Search for the Original* *Gypsies* will be released for public television broadcast, December 2013. This hour-long documentary is distributed nationally by the National Educational Television Association (NETA) and directed by Academy Award™ nominee William Haugse, and Paula Fouce of Paradise Filmworks International.

Today we celebrate the life of Nelson Mandela. The Untouchables in the film, *Song of the Dunes*, are in the same struggle as the blacks in South Africa during apartheid. The Untouchables need help to address racism, poverty and inequality. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi started the struggle of race relations there. Will the Untouchables or the world see another man willing to take on the fight showing that "... all men (and women) are created equal?" Who will stand up fostering racial reconciliation for the Merasi?

*Song of the Dunes: Search for the Original Gypsies* sheds light on the low caste musicians of Rajasthan, India and the injustices that befall them. In India today, over 160 million people are born “Untouchables”, assumed to be low caste, almost sub-human in the hierarchical Hindu caste system. They suffer human rights abuses including murder, rape, and lynching. Called Dalits, they cannot even drink from certain wells. As recent news stories have reported on rapes and injustices in India against women, the low caste citizens are most commonly taken advantage of.

The caste system was abolished in 1947 In India, yet it still persists. In the Thar Desert on the Pakistan border, low caste Merasi and Kalbeliya musicians have performed in village ceremonies and royal courts for millennia, but they are not allowed to set foot in the traditional rites for which they play. Terrible atrocities are often committed against them due to caste discrimination. They live a very precarious existence.

The Khan family belongs to the Merasi caste in Kanoi village where Chanan Khan donated the land to build a music school. They struggle to keep their musical tradition alive. Nowadays, there is no longer patronage from the Maharajas, so the tribe plays for tourists. Yet the higher caste villagers have harassed them.

The Kalbeliyas of Jodhpur are a caste of snake charmers who exist on the lowliest rung of the caste system. They have squatted on land in Gangana village for fifty years. Now a government program is knocking down their homes to construct a road.

The Kalbeliyas beg the *Song of the Dunes* film crew to take a letter to His Highness Gaj Singh ll, the Maharaja of Jodhpur asking him to intercede on their behalf. Gaj Singh was profiled on June 28, 2013, in the *Wall Street Journal*, in an article entitled, "*The Last Maharaja*." A patron of the arts, his aid to the musicians of Rajasthan is legendary; he works diligently to save their traditions. The Kalbeliyas are poor people, with nowhere to go, and no education. The city of Jodhpur is growing as India's population expands, and millions are moving into the urban centers from the countryside, in search of a better life. The local tribes are being displaced by development.

The Kalbeliyas have finally collected enough money over many years to build their own temple. This is a great achievement, as they are not allowed to enter most temples in the rural areas. They travel to Falna for the dedication of their new temple, for a festival where they dance and sing all night. The Thakore, the regional head announces that the Kalbeliyas finally have made their mark, because Western media has come to see them.

As the Kalbeliyas and Manganiyars battle life's struggles, and try to find equality from severe caste discrimination, their music keeps their indomitable spirit alive.

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*Song of the Dunes* will air on PBS stations in December 2013:

Los Angeles: December 19, 2PM PT: KCET LINK

Denver/CO Area: December 21, 5PM MT:  CO Public TV (Channel 12.1)

Los Angeles: December 28, 2PM PT: KCET LINK

Los Angeles: December 28, 9PM PT: KCET LINK

Orlando, FL: December 29, 10PM ET, WEFS-DT
OH: December 30th, 1 AM CT, Western Reserve Public Media serving Akron, Canton, Cleveland and the Mahoning Valley.

*Song of the Dunes* will air on PBS stations in January 2014:

KENTUCKY : January 2nd, 3AM: KET

Denver/CO Area: January 16th, 7PM MT:  CO Public TV (Channel 12.2)

Denver/CO Area: January 17th, 3AM MT:  CO Public TV (Channel 12.2)
SF/Bay Area: January 22nd, 9 PM PT: KCRB
OREGON: January 26th, 7 PM PT: OPB Plus
OREGON: January 29th, 4 AM PT: OPB Plus

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**About the Directors:** William Haugse has worked with Orson Wells and John Cassavetes, and has been nominated for the Academy Award™ for Editing HOOP DREAMS. He has taught at the USC School of Cinematic Arts and been nominated for an EMMY™. *Song of the Dunes* is Paula Fouce’s fourth film spotlighting India’s faiths and culture. She lived in the region for several years and co-authored SHIVA, a book on religion.

**About NETA:** National Educational Telecommunications Association is a professional association that serves public television licensees and educational entities in all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

**About Paradise Filmworks International:** Paradise Filmworks International produces unique films that explore faiths and cultures from around the world. Our hope is that each film will not only inform, but inspire. Paradise Filmworks is currently producing the film, No Asylum: The Family of Anne Frank.

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[www.SongoftheDunes.com](http://www.SongoftheDunes.com) [www.ParadiseFilmworks.com](http://www.ParadiseFilmworks.com)

For images and additional up-to-date information on this Paradise Filmworks documentary,

visit: songofthedunes.com/press-materials.html