

For Immediate Release

**BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL:  
\*THE\* MARCHING BAND TO WATCH AT THE UPCOMING  
Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade  
New York, NY – NOVEMBER 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

*BALLOU*, a documentary film has brought music and arts back into the entire DC Public School System and changes the way we look at music and arts education.

The band's story garnered the attention of politicians, educators, and entertainers nationwide, and is like no other marching at this year's parade celebration!

Washington D.C. -- **Ballou High School's** marching band members, the **Majestic Marching Knights**, led by Darrell Watson have overcome tremendous odds and are now one of the nation's most recognized marching bands. This is due in part to their life story being told in ***BALLOU, a documentary film*** which captures the daily struggles of living and growing up in one of the most neglected neighborhoods in the country, Southeast Washington, DC.

**The DVD has been released nationwide and is now a special feature educational film on BET NETWORKS 2009/2010.**

Their encouraging story has been celebrated by political, entertainment and news leaders and they were selected out of hundreds of applicants to perform with 11 other marching bands at the annual **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade** on Thursday, November 26<sup>th</sup> 2009. Millions of spectators from around the world will celebrate Thanksgiving morning in New York City and watch the Ballou Marching Band.

This amazing high school band and its tireless, all volunteer staff have had quite a year gaining the respect, admiration and appreciation from the entire D.C. community. As coverage expanded from local news to national media attention, they caught the eye of First Lady Laura Bush who asked that the film be presented at the White House. Band Leader Darrell Watson and band members shared their joy on ***Good Morning America*** and ***The Ellen DeGeneres Show***. ***ABC World News*** honored them as the *Persons of the Year* (2007) and the Mayor of Washington, DC Adrian Fenty, declared June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 as *Ballou Band Day* in the District of Columbia. The film includes special appearances by Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gen (ret.) Colin Powell, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty, and Congressman John Lewis, all talking about the band and the positive affect their music has on the DC community.

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The story of the Ballou band that unfolds in the documentary has been the catalyst for incredible change in the District of Columbia. After the theatrical release of the film, District leaders sent new band instruments to every school. Additionally, DC Public Schools Chancellor, Michelle Rhee, re-established music and arts at every school at every level.

"One of the best ways to increase student achievement is through delivering a broad based curriculum - and music education is a critical piece to that process," said Chancellor Rhee. "Last year DC public schools received \$1.4 million dollars in band and orchestra instruments along with 130 pianos and for the first time nearly 100 percent of our schools now have music teachers. As we continue this massive reform effort it's clear that music education will play a vital role."

Ballou High School is in a neighborhood rocked by crime, poverty, drugs and despair. Ballou High School has the highest crime and poverty rates in the country with an over 50% drop-out rate.

Darrell Watson, who is an alumnus of Ballou High School, decided to return to his alma mater to attempt to repay the music program for saving his own life. After becoming the leader of the Ballou marching band, he was able to eradicate the negativity from the students' hearts - - negativity wrought through a public image of Southeast DC as a dangerous, uncivilized, forgotten place – through his dedication and compassion. Together they have brought a positive change to their school and their community with music, dedication, hard work, discipline and a bit of pride – and it changed their lives as well.

"We have come a long way and we struggled and struggled...I am so happy to have our story told in this documentary so it can help motivate teachers, educators and volunteers nationwide to believe that they can make dreams happen with nothing more than belief and dedication!" --*Darrell Watson, Ballou Marching Band Director*

Within the last three years, the ***Majestic Marching Knights*** have competed throughout the nation and have placed in the top 5. All 14 senior band members from the film ***BALLOU*** graduated and went on to college

The DVD is available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Borders and iTunes. You can also rent the DVD on Netflix or order it online at [www.balloumovie.com](http://www.balloumovie.com).

To book the band leader, band or filmmakers on your show, please contact Garden Thieves Pictures, Casey Callister 202-253-4949  
[casey@gardenthieves.com](mailto:casey@gardenthieves.com)

Photos, film footage and press kits are also available

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