



Press Contact:

Joe Zefran, (773) 954 – 6522; [jzefran@tavistalks.com](mailto:jzefran@tavistalks.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **It's official! "Smiley & West" becomes public radio's newest weekly program**

LOS ANGELES - "*Smiley & West*" is ready for takeoff. After a four-month pilot process in more than 60 markets across the country, listeners and stations said "We want more!"

That's why broadcasting icon Tavis Smiley, Smiley Radio Properties and Public Radio International are pleased to announce that "*Smiley & West*" is now officially a weekly program.

Alisa Miller, President and CEO of Public Radio International says, "Tavis Smiley and Cornel West bring a rare dynamism and authenticity to conversation, and a heart-felt dedication to invite listeners to take part in the exchange of ideas and bring wisdom to thought-provoking topics. *Smiley and West* underscores PRI's commitment to offer new places to discover our diverse, interconnected world, and to stimulate important conversations in American society, and we are excited to distribute it to audiences nationwide."

What started as an experiment on October 1, 2010 has become an online and offline phenomenon. Co-hosted by Tavis' longtime friend and collaborator, Princeton professor Cornel West, "*Smiley & West*" is not just a radio program. It's a seven-day-a-week conversation on the Speak Out Network via the website [www.smileyandwest.com](http://www.smileyandwest.com), social media like Twitter and Facebook, and an "old-fashioned" Speak Out Network hotline.

Each week *Smiley & West* engage in deep dialogue in the "Hot Stuff" as they dissect the hottest news of the moment. Listeners get to turn the tables in the "Take 'Em To Task" segment and challenge *Smiley & West* on something they said. The second half of the show features "icons and issues", in-depth, 30-minute conversations with legendary leaders, artists and thinkers - and folks on the front lines of issues close to the hearts of *Smiley & West*.

In just the first four months, *Smiley & West* spoke with comedian Garry Shandling, bluesman Buddy Guy, Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, funkmaster George Clinton and playwright Suzan-Lori Parks. They also tackled issues like mass incarceration with law professor Michelle Alexander, education reform with Teach for America founder Wendy Kopp, the Great Recession with former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, healthcare reform with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Haiti with author Edwidge Danticat and the mid-term elections with *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich.

In celebration of Tavis Smiley's 20 years in broadcasting, "*Smiley & West*" is the latest innovation in a long, distinguished career in television, radio, publishing and new media.

A common theme to emerge during the pilot process was the need for a movement. A movement built on the ideas, morality, and spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., bending in the direction of social justice. "*Smiley & West*" is a virtual meeting place for that movement, putting the "public" back in public radio. The program's listeners reflect the multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic audience of the 21st Century.

“*Smiley & West*” can already be heard in more than 80 communities across the country including major markets like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philly and San Francisco. An aggressive carriage strategy for 2011 will build on the energy created by the 20th anniversary celebrations for Tavis Smiley and public events with *Smiley & West*.

*Smiley & West* also have more than 200,000 Twitter followers and more than 150,000 Facebook fans which allows this program to bring together its radio and new media audiences in a unique and engaging way.

Join the ongoing conversation known as “*Smiley & West*” and help write America’s next chapter. Each Friday afternoon, a new program is available to stream at [www.smileyandwest.com](http://www.smileyandwest.com) or download as a podcast at <http://goo.gl/JlqvI>. Or click <http://goo.gl/4PAvz> for a map and calendar of stations that carry the one-hour program.

###

### **About Tavis Smiley**

Tavis Smiley is host of the nightly talk show TAVIS SMILEY on PBS and “The Tavis Smiley Show” from PRI. Smiley launched America I AM: *The African American Imprint*, a world-class exhibition celebrating the extraordinary impact of African American contributions to our nation and the world in early 2009. The exhibit is on a four-year, 10-city tour. Smiley is also the author or editor of 14 books, including *The New York Times* best-sellers *Covenant with Black America* and *What I Know for Sure: My Story of Growing Up in America*, and his most recent, *Accountable: Making America As Good As Its Promise*. In 2009, Tavis Smiley was named to *TIME*’s list of 100 “Most Influential People in the World.” For more information, visit [www.tavistalks.com](http://www.tavistalks.com).

### **About Cornel West**

One of America's most provocative public intellectuals, Cornel West has been a champion for racial justice since childhood. His writing, speaking, and teaching weave together the traditions of the black Baptist Church, progressive politics, and jazz. The *New York Times* has praised his "ferocious moral vision." Currently the Class of 1943 Professor at Princeton University, Dr. West burst onto the national scene in 1993 with his bestselling book, *Race Matters*, a searing analysis of racism in American democracy. *Race Matters* has become a contemporary classic, selling more than half a million copies to date. In West’s long awaited life story, *BROTHER WEST: Living and Loving Out Loud*, he offers a compelling exploration of his heart behind the human mind. Themes include Faith, Family, Philosophy, Love and Service. Cornel West has published 19 other books and has edited 13 texts. Dr. West graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard University and has a Ph.D. from Princeton.

### **About Public Radio International®**

Celebrated as a driver of innovation in public media, PRI was founded in 1983 to diversify and expand the content available on public platforms, enabling U.S. listeners to "hear a different voice™" and to connect with one another and the larger world. PRI leads by identifying critical but unmet content needs and partnering with producers, stations, digital networks and funders to develop multi-platform resources to meet those needs. By creating an environment in which innovation can thrive, PRI supports the creation and distribution of content that would otherwise be unavailable and that brings new voices, global journalism and cultural perspectives to the American public. PRI content is available on [pri.org](http://pri.org) and via podcasts, and is broadcast on 837 public radio stations. More than 13 million people access PRI content each week through these sources.

PRI's newest production is "The Takeaway," a groundbreaking morning-drive news show co-produced with WNYC Radio. Its best known programming includes "This American Life," produced by Chicago Public Radio; PRI's "The World," a co-production of BBC World Service, PRI and WGBH Radio Boston;

"Living on Earth," produced by World Media Foundation Inc.; "Michael Feldman's Whad'Ya Know?," produced by Wisconsin Public Radio; "The Tavis Smiley Show," produced by Smiley Radio Properties Inc.; and "Studio 360 from PRI and WNYC®," produced by PRI and WNYC; as well as 24-hour program services — "Classical 24®," produced by American Public Media; and BBC World Service, produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation. For more information, visit [www.pri.org](http://www.pri.org).