

S. Epatha Merkerson



S. Epatha Merkerson is most often recognized for her role as Lieutenant Anita Van Buren on NBC's hit drama "Law & Order," where she is working on her eleventh season. Her talent has won her critical acclaim for her work in theater, television, and film.

Prior to joining the show, Merkerson performed on and off Broadway in a number of productions. Her accomplishments include a Tony and Drama Desk nomination for Best Actress for her performance in the 1990 Pulitzer Prize-winning play "The Piano Lesson," a 1991 Obie Award for work in the Young Playwrights Festivals' production of "I'm Not Stupid," and a 1999 Helen Hayes Award for her role in "The Old Settler."

Merkerson's feature film credits include roles in "Random Hearts" with Harrison Ford, "Terminator II: Judgment Day," "Jacob's Ladder," "Navy Seals," and "Loose Cannons" with Gene Hackman. She also has co-starred in numerous television movies.

In addition to her work on stage and in the movies, Merkerson has appeared as a series regular on "Peewee's Playhouse," where she played 'Reba The Mail Lady'; Dick Wolf's "Mann and Machine;" and the Cosby spin-off "Here and Now" with Malcolm Jamal Warner. She also has made guest appearances on "The Cosby Show," "Equal Justice," and most recently on NBC's acclaimed comedy, "Frasier."

Now, Merkerson is taking on a new role -- that of an advocate and spokesperson for *Lung Cancer Awareness Week 2003*. Raising awareness of lung cancer is a personal issue for Merkerson. Not only a smoker for 23 years, her two best friends died of lung cancer. Through caring for her friends throughout their diagnosis and treatment, Merkerson learned the difficulties facing those with lung cancer. She aims to empower those at risk by encouraging early detection and screening and promote supporting, not blaming, those with lung cancer.

Merkerson graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. A native of Detroit, she currently resides in New York and Maryland with her husband.

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