



For Immediate Release

Contacts:

P.O.V. Communications: 212-989-7425. Emergency contact: 646-729-4748

Cynthia López, clopez@pov.org, Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org

P.O.V. online pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

New Knowledge Brings Agonizing Choices to Women Facing Breast and Ovarian Cancer in P.O.V.'s "In the Family," Wednesday, Oct. 1 on PBS

Medical Breakthrough in 'Cancer Gene' Diagnosis Offers Survival — But at What Cost?
Asks Young Filmmaker with the Gene

A Co-production of Kartemquin Films and Independent Television Service

"Joanna Rudnick's 'In the Family' bravely explores the emotional implications of predictive genetic testing for breast and ovarian cancer. It challenges the stigma and secrecy associated with familial disease, while defending the rights of all populations to access genetic information and receive equitable health care. It is a sensitive, provocative and important film." — Elizabeth Edwards

Joanna Rudnick's story, as told in her unblinking new documentary, **In the Family**, is an intensely personal one. As the Chicago filmmaker found in making her film, it is a story shared — in their own individual ways — by thousands of other women and even a few men. Joanna, whose family has a history of breast and ovarian cancer, took advantage of breakthroughs in genetic research and tested for the recently isolated BRCA genetic mutation. Those with BRCA mutations have up to an 85-90 percent lifetime chance of developing breast cancer, and up to a 50-60 percent lifetime chance of developing ovarian cancer. At age 27, Joanna tested positive.

Such knowledge would be simply devastating if it did not also offer treatment and hope. But the only true preventative treatments are devastating in their own right — radical mastectomy (total removal and reconstruction of both breasts) and oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries, ending the chance of becoming pregnant), preferably by age 35, and certainly by age 40. Such a course would be a blow to any woman, whatever her age or circumstances. But for a young woman like Joanna, still searching for love and looking forward to marriage and children, the cure seems nearly as daunting as the looming disease.

Joanna Rudnick's **In the Family** has its broadcast premiere on **Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2008** at 10 p.m., on PBS, part of the 21st season of P.O.V. (Check local listings.) American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films, and is a 2007 recipient of a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking.

When Joanna tested positive for the BRCA mutation, she set out to make a film about the science behind BRCA but even more about the impact of this new medical knowledge on women's lives. At first, shying away from putting her own life and emotions at the film's center, she searched for a young, unmarried woman like herself to be the film's primary subject. But having the BRCA

mutation, especially for younger women, has become something hidden because of the negative impact it can have on women's prospects for love, marriage and children. Unable to find a suitable subject, Joanna bravely stepped into the role.

The BRCA mutation runs in Joanna's family. Two great-grandmothers died from ovarian and breast cancers. Joanna's grandmother Ethel developed breast cancer at age 56; her mother, Cookie, was diagnosed with fallopian tube cancer at 44. Joanna's older sister, Lisa, a radiologist who diagnoses breast cancer and drove the process to get tested, turned up negative for the mutation. Inheritance of the genetic mutation is not certain, but there was no doubt that Joanna was a candidate for the test.

But once you know, what do you do with the information? Despite the assurances of doctors and researchers, who see the life-saving potential in genetic testing, Joanna knows her future has been turned on its head. Still in the spring of her life, she must face life-and-death choices generally reserved for old age. She must ask herself the searing question, "How much do I sacrifice to survive?"

In the Family follows Joanna's journey to learn from the experiences of other women confronting BRCA. Poet Martha Haley of Chicago is three-time breast cancer survivor and founder of the African American breast cancer support group Celebrating Life. She confronts head-on the fact that black women are much less likely to get genetic testing for BRCA, not only because of disparities in wealth and health care, but also because of the distrust many African Americans feel toward the medical establishment. Martha speaks out, urging women to get tested. "When you get diagnosed with breast cancer and you are part of a poverty-stricken community, it can be like 'Why should I even bother?' I want to address that," she says.

Linda Pedraza of Boston was 10 when her mother died of ovarian cancer. Seven years later, her brother Gary fought bladder cancer. As Linda and her siblings started having families, they hoped cancer was in the past. Unfortunately, it is very much in the family's present. Linda was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at age 42, and she and her siblings all tested positive for BRCA. **In the Family** finds Linda enduring another round of treatment, this time for metastatic breast cancer. She tells Joanna, "In spite of how awful it is to feel less than female, being alive is what matters. In retrospect . . . I would have had all those surgeries. It may not be the ideal life that you want, but it's life." Now, Linda's greatest concern is for her 16-year-old daughter Nicole, still too young to be tested for BRCA.

Thirty-two year-old Olga Flores is a professional singer and single mother who knows that BRCA runs in her family — both her mother and grandmother battled cancers caused by the mutation. Though at first paralyzed by the thought of testing for the "breast cancer gene," Olga finally decides to do it. She says: "My grandmother died at age 39 of ovarian cancer; I'm her namesake. When my mom got breast cancer, it ripped me apart. And so if I were to have this gene, I would just be 'no wonder.'" Medical professionals, including Dr. Mary-Claire King of the University of Washington, whose determination to fight breast cancer in women led to the discovery of the BRCA mutation, lend context to these women's stories.

Through it all, **In the Family** documents Joanna's own struggles — including her up-and-down relationship with her boyfriend, Jimmy, who accepts and supports her and yet resists letting cancer — and the film itself — dominate their lives. The course of their relationship raises a host of dilemmas presented by testing positive for BRCA — especially for the young. When in the course of a relationship do you reveal the truth? How do you deal with the time pressures to settle down and have children? How does a prospective spouse deal with knowing that his wife will eventually either have cancer or be physically altered? What is the responsibility for passing the mutation onto

another generation? And, while wrestling with these questions, Joanna must keep asking just how long she dares to wait before taking action.

In the Family is a timely inside look at the human impact of new genetic research, where science's ability to diagnose and even predict disease sometimes outruns its ability to offer cures or even less-than-draconian therapies, as in the case of BRCA. **In the Family** is also a poignant account of one young woman's striving to live fully in the shadow of the cancers that afflict women's lives.

"I had no intention of 'starring' in my own movie," says director Joanna Rudnick. "Actually, I was as reluctant as anyone to 'come out' on camera because I was afraid it would make falling in love and having a relationship too difficult. But I realized this story had to be told not only factually and objectively, but in the most personal way, and that I could do that best by using my own story."

In the Family is a co-production of Joanna Rudnick, Kartemquin Films and Independent Television Service (ITVS).

About the filmmaker:

Joanna Rudnick

Director

In the Family is Joanna Rudnick's directorial debut. Other credits include co-producing "Robert Capa: In Love and War" for PBS's *American Masters* series and the BBC. She had earlier worked for *American Masters* on the films "Julliard," "Ella Fitzgerald: Something to Live For" and "Joe Papp: In Six Acts." She is the director of development for Kartemquin Films in Chicago and is currently producing "Prisoner of Her Past," the story of one woman's late-life reliving of her Holocaust childhood. Joanna received a master's degree in science and environmental journalism from New York University and a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University.

Credits:

Director/Producer: Joanna Rudnick
Executive Producer: Gordon Quinn
Co-producer: Beth Iams
Editor: Leslie Simmer
Cinematographers: Dana Kupper, Gordon Quinn, Ines Sommer, Cynthia Wade
Original Music: Erin O'Hara

Running Time: 86:46

Festivals:

- World Premiere, US Feature Competition. SILVERDOCS AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival, June 2008
- Official Selection, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, August 2008



The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces special features for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of our films with filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video and community-based and educational content to involve viewers in activities and feedback. P.O.V. Interactive produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov has launched the *P.O.V. Blog*, a gathering place for documentary fans and filmmakers to discuss and debate their favorite films, get the latest news and link to further resources. The P.O.V. website, blog and film archives form a unique and extensive online resource for documentary storytelling.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

American Documentary | P.O.V. works with local PBS stations, educators and community organizations to present free screenings and discussion events to inspire and engage communities in vital conversations about our world. As a leading provider of quality nonfiction programming for use in public life, P.O.V. offers an extensive menu of resources, including free discussion guides and curriculum-based lesson plans. In addition, P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* works with youth organizers and students to provide them with resources and training so they may use independent documentaries as a catalyst for social change.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Diverse Voices Project is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

American Documentary, Inc. (www.amdoc.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.



Media Sponsor: *Hear It Now*