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A Rare Genetic Disorder Is Stalking the Children of the Navajo Nation In POV's 'Sun Kissed,' Premiering Thursday, Oct. 18, 2012, on PBS

One Couple's Heartrending Struggle to Understand the Cause Leads Them
To a Nearly Forgotten Episode in the American "Winning of the West"

A Co-production of ITVS; A Co-presentation with Native American Public Telecommunications, Inc.

"Sun Kissed is compelling, and the feelings and issues it raises last long after watching the film."

—Deborah Stambler, The Huffington Post

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Dates: Maya Stark and Adi Lavy's **Sun Kissed** has its national broadcast premiere on **Thursday, Oct. 18, 2012**, at 10 p.m. during the 25th anniversary season of the award-winning PBS series **POV (Point of View)**. (Check local listings.) The film streams on POV's website, www.pbs.org/pov from **Oct. 19 - Nov. 17, 2012**.

POV continues on Thursdays at 10 p.m. through Oct. 25 and concludes the season with fall and winter specials. American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the winner of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking and two International Documentary Association Awards for Continuing Series.

The Film: When a Navajo couple discovers their children have a disorder that makes exposure to sunlight fatal, they also learn their reservation is a hotbed for this rare genetic disease. Why? **Sun Kissed** follows Dorey and Yolanda Nez as they confront cultural taboos, tribal history and their own unconventional choices to learn the shocking truth: The consequences of the Navajos' Long Walk—their forced relocation by the U.S. military in 1864—are far from over.

Sun Kissed frames its story in the rhythms of reservation life and the stark beauty of the land surrounding the relative poverty of the homes. The brightness of the New Mexico sun stands in heartbreaking counterpoint to the most striking effect of XP (Xeroderma Pigmentosum)—making any exposure to sunlight potentially fatal to children. **Sun Kissed** is the story of the love and fortitude Dorey and Yolanda bring to confronting the extraordinary fate of having two children with XP. Yolanda says she believes that "the kids were sent for a reason . . . to teach us something, and that's for us to figure out."

The film provides a rare look inside Navajo society, a world divided between traditional ways and the ways of modern American life. The parents find themselves at the crux of these contradictions as they search for answers.

Sun Kissed is a production of Sun Kissed Productions LLC. Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

Online: POV's Webby Award-winning website offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the broadcast of **Sun Kissed**. Watch the full film online for free for a limited time following the broadcast (Oct. 19 – Nov. 17, 2012), download a discussion guide and other viewing resources, view photos and stream additional video from the film, and interact with the filmmaker through video interviews and an live Q&A soon after the broadcast.

Outreach: POV works with educators, public television stations and national and community groups across the country to foster dialogue around the issues presented in our films. For a list of upcoming screening events, go to www.pbs.org/pov/outreach. POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides with background information to help event organizers facilitate conversations. The **Sun Kissed** guide features discussion prompts, a list of resources and background information on XP and the Long Walk. Cari Ladd, M.Ed. has developed a lesson plan exploring genetic bottlenecks. Event organizers may email events@pov.org to request a free loaned DVD to screen at their event.

Filmmakers' Statement: "We met the Nez family in 2007 at a summer camp in upstate New York for children with XP," say filmmakers Maya Stark and Adi Lavy. "When they mentioned that they were exploring a possible link between XP and a hidden event in Navajo history, we understood that their story was part of a larger historical narrative with the potential to expose the long-lasting effects of American colonialism.

"Over four years of filming, Dorey and Yolanda opened a door for us into the Navajo community, which is otherwise suspicious of outsiders. As the story unfolded and led us to unexpected places, we were constantly inspired by their honesty and strength—as well as their ability to remain positive in the face of adversity."

Filmmaker Bios: [Maya Stark \(Co-director, Co-producer\)](#)

Maya Stark has directed and edited both fiction and nonfiction films. Born and raised in Israel, she moved to New York to pursue a career in filmmaking. A graduate of the School of Visual Arts, Stark has directed numerous short films, including *Sweet Lonely* and *Before Chaos*. She has edited several feature narrative and documentary films and television projects for BBC, Sundance Channel, AZN Television, here! and Logo. Recently, Stark edited the award-winning documentary *Wings of Defeat*. In 2007, the film had a successful theatrical run in Japan and was broadcast by ARTE in Europe. **Sun Kissed** is Stark's first feature documentary.

[Adi Lavy \(Co-director, Co-producer\)](#)

Adi Lavy is an internationally recognized documentary photographer who has worked with publications such as *Newsweek*, *SZ Wissen* (Germany) and *La Repubblica* (Italy). In April 2008, she was a finalist at the prestigious Hyères International Fashion and Photography Festival, where she showcased her project *Camp Sundown*, which addresses the inner world of children who suffer from XP, the genetic disorder featured in **Sun Kissed**. An Israeli native, Lavy began her career as a journalist working for various publications in Israel before turning to photography and attending Columbia University School of the Arts and the School of Visual Arts. She resides in New York City. **Sun Kissed** is Lavy's first feature documentary.

Related Stories: "For Children with XP Gene, Sunlight Can Kill," by Stephanie Sy, *EverydayHealth.com*, Oct. 16, 2012. www.tinyurl.com/8wdcezk

"Film chronicles impact of genetic disease in Native children," by Staci Matlock, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Oct. 15, 2012.

<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/Local%20News/101612cancer#.UH8VixiMj6x>

“Real-time observation of single DNA molecule repair,” HealthCanal.com, Sept. 11, 2012. <http://www.healthcanal.com/medical-breakthroughs/32096-Real-time-observation-single-DNA-molecule-repair.html>

“Descendants honor Treaty of 1868,” by Noel Lyn Smith and Lemanuel Loley, *Navajo Times*, June 7, 2012. <http://navajotimes.com/news/2012/0612/060712tre.php>

“Proving Native American Ancestry Can Be Tricky” by Neal Conan, *NPR Talk of the Nation*, June 7, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/2012/06/07/154519834/proving-native-american-ancestry-can-be-tricky>

“Navajos resisted assimilation to Christianity,” by Marc Simmons, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Oct. 14, 2011. <http://www.santafenewmexican.com/localnews/Navajos-resisted-assimilation—to Christianity#.UHRG9i7A8bQ>

“The Navajo Nation’s Own Trail of Tears,” by John Burnett, *All Things Considered*, June 14, 2005. <http://www.npr.org/2005/06/15/4703136/the-navajo-nation-s-own-trail-of-tears>

Credits: Co-directors/Co-producers: Maya Stark, Adi Lavy
Producer: Jocelyn Glatzer, Maya Stark, Adi Lavy
Cinematographers: Avi Kastoriano, Vincent Venturella, Maya Stark
Editor: Ron Goldman
Original Music: Karni Postel, Tom Darom
Running Time: 56:46

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry
Co-Executive Producer: Cynthia López
VP, Programming and Production: Chris White
Series Producer: Yance Ford
Coordinating Producer: Andrew Catauro

Festivals: Los Angeles Film Festival, 2012
AFI-Discovery Channel Silverdocs, 2012

Pressroom: Visit POV’s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 25th season on PBS in 2012, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 325 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV’s Borders*. Since 1988, POV 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. Visit www.pbs.org/pov.

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