POV Delivers a Revolutionary Approach to Storytelling with Six New Interactive Documentary Shorts

Viewers can interact and engage online with compelling short films dealing with timely social issues

New York, Sept. 15, 2014 - POV, American television’s longest-running showcase for independent nonfiction films, is taking a bold leap into new forms of storytelling with the launch of six new interactive shorts at pbs.org/pov/digital. Delving into topics about contemporary social issues, these web-native documentaries allow audiences to engage with documentaries on a deeper level using new technologies and new paradigms in storytelling.

• Audiences will experience Marta Avilés’ Brooklyn neighborhood and climb the 89 steps to her apartment as she walks them through her 30-year story, a personal account of a rapidly gentrifying community.
• Award-winning director Whitney Dow investigates ethnicity and what it means to be white through candid perspectives on the polarizing subject of race in America.
• Photographer Jake Price’s exploration of post-nuclear disaster Japan weaves together art, artifacts and data to highlight the resilience of one survivor who has remained in Fukushima.
• A global examination of the unintended consequences of Dutch colonialism pushes the boundary of what’s possible online with web video that flips, spins, fragments and reconnects stories.
• America’s story is the story of its people, of its immigrants, now told in a new crowdsourced platform from Student Academy Award®-winning documentary filmmaker Theo Rigby.
• In Greenland, a community is uprooted, but this interactive documentary asks viewers to look into the sights and sounds of the town and then ask themselves what happened.

Four of the six projects—89 Steps: A Chapter of Living Los Sures; Empire; Fukushima: The Eternal Season; and Whiteness Project: Inside the White Caucasian Box—were created by alumni of POV Hackathon, pov.org/hackathon, POV’s weekend laboratory series that since 2012 has provided matchmaking and mentorship for inventive nonfiction media makers and technologists. In addition to premiering the projects online, POV will also present three of the projects at the New York Film Festival’s Convergence program (Sept. 27-28, 2014), a premier showcase for new
storytelling. The release of POV’s interactive films concludes a summer of independent short films distributed online and supported by the National Endowment for the Arts under the “PBS Indies” banner.

“Documentaries are no longer confined by conventional linear narratives,” said Adnaan Wasey, executive producer of POV Digital. “By leveraging digital technology, we are able to elevate nonfiction content into a creative art form to connect with more audiences and tell stories on an entirely new level. And the short interactive documentary format gives creators more room for experimentation as this nascent field develops.”

Five films premiere today, and Whiteness Project: Inside the White Caucasian Box premieres Sept. 29:

“89 Steps: A Chapter of Living Los Sures”
The 1984 documentary Los Sures featured Marta Avilés, a single mother of five struggling to make ends meet. 89 Steps is a chapter from Living Los Sures, a mixed-media documentary project from alumni of POV Hackathon about the south side of the Williamsburg, Brooklyn neighborhood, known as “Los Sures,” and its Latino community.

In the late 1950s, Marta’s mother found refuge for her family in Williamsburg after leaving her village in Puerto Rico and enduring homelessness and hunger elsewhere in New York. When Marta became a single mother, she fought hard to stay in Los Sures. Now struggling to afford the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, Marta must decide whether to stay or go. 89 Steps is an interactive experience that visits Los Sures. As the viewer explores, Marta’s voiceover reacts, providing guidance, descriptions and anecdotes. The project offers a deeper understanding of the pressures and incentives that force individuals to give up their homes and longstanding communities.
#LivingLosSures @povdocs

“Empire”
An investigation into the aftershocks of the first global capitalist endeavor, Dutch colonialism, shot in 10 countries over four years.

Eline Jongsma and Kel O’Neill’s acclaimed documentary project Empire is an investigation into the aftershocks of the first global capitalist endeavor. In the 17th century, the colonists and mercenaries of the Dutch East and West India Companies laid claim to lands stretching from the Cape of Good Hope to the Indonesian archipelago, and from New York to South America’s Wild Coast. The impact of their actions can still be seen in the cultures—and bloodlines—of people and communities in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Empire tells the stories of individuals and communities whose lives are still in some way defined by Dutch colonialism. It is now available online as a series of four interactive experiences: Cradle, Legacy, Migrants and Periphery. #Empire @povdocs

“Fukushima: The Eternal Season”
Chronicling the ongoing recovery of the Tohoku region of Japan after the devastating earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown in 2011.

Set three years after the calamitous meltdown, **Fukushima: The Eternal Season**, creates an impassioned portrait of a resident as she strives to hold on to her identity and ancestral heritage while the specter of nuclear fallout looms over her. By showing the beauty and loss in Fukushima, the short film brings into focus the potentially destructive power of nuclear energy and the choices people are forced to make. **Fukushima: The Eternal Season** is one chapter in a four-part feature-length documentary project with the working title “Unknown Spring Year 3.” #fukushima @povdocs

**“Immigrant Nation”**
A storytelling platform to watch, share and connect our personal stories of immigration. Theo Rigby won a Student Academy Award® for the short film **Sin Pais (Without Country)**, which premiered on POV in 2012.

Immigrant Nation is a new interactive storytelling project designed to document the United States’ diverse immigrant narratives and experiences and share them with the world. Through short documentary films, live events and an online Story Hub, the project aspires to shift and deepen the way that Americans understand themselves—and one another—one story at a time. These short films have screened at Cannes and other film festivals, appeared in the *New York Times* Op-Docs series and been featured on POV Digital. Nearly 500 powerful stories of immigration have been created and shared by users of the online Story Hub at www.immigrant-nation.com. #ination @povdocs

**“The Most Northern Place”**
A simple but powerful web documentary about a small town in Northern Greenland.

The Most Northern Place tells of a clash of cultures and a conflict about territory during the run-up to the Cold War, which led to the forced relocation of the Inuit population native to the town of Thule by the U.S. Army, circa 1953. Visitors to the website take small steps to explore an empty village and its surrounding landscape; it is a place that is devoid of people, a beautiful but unforgiving environment. The viewer discovers what happened in Thule step-by-step through the memories of the people who lived there, all those years ago. #themostnorthernplace @povdocs

**“Whiteness Project: Inside the White Caucasian Box”** (Online: Monday, Sept. 29, 2014)
A cross-platform exploration of how white Americans experience their ethnicity. POV Hackathon alum Whitney Dow is the co-director of **Two Towns of Jasper**, a landmark 2003 POV documentary that examined race in the aftermath of the shocking murder of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas.

We take for granted that there is a “white” race in America, but rarely is the concept of whiteness itself investigated. What does it mean to be white? Can it be genetically
defined? Is it a cultural construct? A state of mind? What privileges are exclusive to Caucasians? This last question is the subject of *Whiteness Project: Inside the White Caucasian Box*, an interactive look at how white people process their perceived advantages or disadvantages. The project is created from interviews shot in Buffalo, N.Y. that represent a cross-section of the city’s white population. An interactive graphic component uses demographic information to reveal how participants’ perceptions line up with the realities of their community. #whitenessproject @povdocs

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Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 27th season on PBS, 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 365 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide. *POV* films have won every major film and broadcasting award, including 32 Emmys, 17 George Foster Peabody Awards, 10 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards® and the Prix Italia. 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](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

**POV Community Engagement and Education** ([www.pbs.org/pov/engage](http://www.pbs.org/pov/engage))

*POV*’s Community Engagement and Education team works with educators, community organizations and PBS stations to present more than 650 free screenings every year. In addition, we distribute free discussion guides and standards-aligned lesson plans for each of our films. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues of our time.

**POV Digital** ([www.pbs.org/pov/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/))

Since 1994, *POV Digital* has driven new storytelling initiatives and interactive production for *POV*. The department created PBS’s first program website and its first web-based documentary (*POV’s Borders*) and has won major awards, including a Webby Award (and six nominations) and an Online News Association Award. *POV Digital* continues to explore the future of independent nonfiction media through its digital productions and the *POV* Hackathon lab, where media makers and technologists collaborate to reinvent storytelling forms. @povdocs on Twitter.

**American Documentary, Inc.** ([www.amdoc.org/](http://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.

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