

Contacts

POV Communications
Adam Segal
POV Pressroom

212-989-7425, communications@pov.org
adam@the2050group.com
pbs.org/pov/pressroom

‘Motherland’ Follows a Group of New Mothers, Their Families and Healthcare Professionals in the Philippines, Airing Monday, October 16, 2017 on POV

Ramona S. Diaz’s study of the maternity ward at a Filipino public hospital tells a broader story of reproductive health and making ends meet in the midst of rapid population growth.



CREDIT: CINEDIAZ

Childbirth is often a communal process, with a team of nurses, doctors and loved ones simultaneously witnessing the miracle of life. In one Philippines hospital, “communal” is an understatement.

Ramona S. Diaz’s latest film, **Motherland**, takes us into one of the busiest maternity wards on Earth. The Sundance Special Jury Award winner premieres on Monday, October 16, 2017 at 10 p.m. (check local listings), on PBS’ POV series. POV is American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, now in its 30th season.

Filled with warmth, humor and heartache, **Motherland** is a vérité portrait of childbirth—with all its joys and challenges depicted on screen. It is also a fascinating study of a country where conservative Catholic ideas about childbirth and contraception prevail, making the film an ideal starting point for conversations about reproductive healthcare policy.

Overcrowding is the default state of the maternity ward at Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital. The Philippines, one of the world’s most populous countries, also has one of the highest birthrates. As a chart on screen indicates, 151 mothers and 115 babies occupy the hospital when the film begins. Patients share not only a large, cavernous room, but beds as well. In the operating rooms, surgeons often attend to four or more women in labor at once. In one nerve-wracking scene, a mother becomes separated from

her baby girl while socializing with other mothers and has some difficulty retrieving her child due to a lost tag.

As chaotic as the hospital seems, Diaz finds an attentive group of nurses, caseworkers and doctors who come up with solutions to problems of scarcity. For example, a doctor explains, “If the baby is really small they should be in an incubator. But since we lack incubators in public hospitals, they came up with this alternative program. Here, mothers constantly hold the baby to their chest for warmth. This innovative practice allows mothers to act as a human incubator.”

Motherland also discovers a sense of community among the mothers. There are no title cards, and we only learn the names and life stories of the women through the camera’s eavesdropping. One woman, Lea Lumanog, didn’t even know she was pregnant with twins until she visited the hospital. Another, Lerma Coronel, one of the older patients in the ward, dispenses advice. Having just given birth to her seventh child while her unemployed husband cares for the others at home, she cautions the younger mothers to avoid having too many children with too little money.

Some mothers stay longer than medically necessary. A nurse explains, “There are so many that can go home, but they don’t have money.” Visits from family members reveal that even the cost of transportation to and from the hospital can be burdensome.

Bills for some patients amount to more than 200 dollars. In a meeting with a social worker, the father of Lumanog’s child explains that he makes about five dollars per day and can only find work two days a week. He is told they qualify for assistance through a program called the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. However, the support does not cover the full hospital bill, so they are left to rely on a loan from his sister.

Motherland also illuminates the country’s policies regarding birth control and the ambiguous role such birth control plays for a deeply traditional and religious population. Ligation, or elective sterilization surgery, is offered to young mothers who have already had six children, although none of the film’s subjects opt for it. During a session with a family planning counselor, one woman is told, “You can’t get a ligation because you only have one baby.” The hospital offers new mothers with fewer children free intrauterine devices (IUDs). These, too, are usually refused, as the women follow their families’ insistence that they not undergo any procedures during their hospital stays.

The end of the film briefly cuts to a press conference the hospital is holding to mark the birth of the 100 millionth Filipino. A doctor expounds on this baby boy’s significance: “Over time, we will look at the situation of this baby... in terms of health services, education, employment opportunities. What we’re after is the development of the population... Inclusive growth, that’s what we want to achieve.”

Filmmaker Diaz said, “The joy felt at Fabella is no different from the joy experienced by mothers and fathers worldwide. But because the film takes place in the Philippines, I invite audiences to witness similar situations from the starkly different perspective of a poor, densely populated, Catholic country. I hope that in viewing this film, audiences will discover the connective tissue that binds us all as members of the global community of caregivers.”

“**Motherland** is a unique study of the miracle of childbirth,” said Justine Nagan, executive producer/executive director of POV/American Documentary. “Though the birthing experience at Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital is different from the one many Americans have, the film reveals the things shared at this time of life—love, fear and the indescribable joy and apprehensions that hit us when holding a newborn for the first time. Diaz also offers a compelling comparative study of reproductive health policies. When balancing a country’s ambitions against a family’s resources, how do we make sure no one is left behind?”

Motherland will stream online on pov.org in concurrence with its broadcast.

About the Filmmakers:

Ramona S. Diaz, Director

Ramona S. Diaz is an award-winning Asian-American filmmaker best known for compelling character-driven documentaries that combine a profound appreciation for cinematic aesthetics and potent storytelling. Her films have demonstrated her ability to gain intimate access to the people she films, resulting in keenly observed moments and nuanced narratives. While she has focused exclusively on stories of Filipinos and Filipino Americans, the themes of her stories are universal. Her films have screened and won awards at Sundance Film Festival, Berlinale International Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival and many other top-tier film festivals. She has received funding from ITVS, Center for Asian American Media, Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, MacArthur Foundation, Tribeca Film Institute, Catapult Film Fund and Chicken & Egg Pictures. All of her feature-length films—*Imelda*, *The Learning*, *Don't Stop Believin': Everyman's Journey* and ***Motherland***—have broadcast on either *POV* or *Independent Lens* on PBS. She has also served on numerous film festival juries and funding panels and served as a film envoy for the American Film Showcase, a joint program of the U.S. Department of State and University of Southern California that brings American films to audiences worldwide. She has conducted master classes and workshops all over the world and throughout the United States. In 2016, Ramona was awarded a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship and was inducted into the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Credits:

Director: Ramona S. Diaz
Producer: Ramona S. Diaz, Rey Cuerdo
Co-Producer: Leah Marino
Executive Producers for POV: Justine Nagan, Chris White

* * * *



Produced by American Documentary, Inc., POV is public television's premier showcase for nonfiction films. Since 1988, POV has been the home for the world's boldest contemporary filmmakers, celebrating intriguing personal stories that spark conversation and inspire action. Always an innovator, POV discovers fresh new voices and creates interactive experiences that shine a light on social issues and elevate the art of storytelling. With our documentary broadcasts, original online programming and dynamic community engagement campaigns, we are committed to supporting films that capture the imagination and present diverse perspectives.

POV films have won 36 Emmy® Awards, 19 George Foster Peabody Awards, 12 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards®, the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award and the Prix Italia. The POV series has been honored with a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, three IDA Awards for Best Curated Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity. Learn more at www.pbs.org/pov/.

POV Community Engagement and Education (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/)

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)

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.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Endowment for the Arts and the Wyncote Foundation. Additional funding comes from Nancy Blachman and David desJardins, Bertha Foundation, The Fledgling Fund, Reva & David Logan Foundation, Open Society Foundations, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee and public television viewers. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KQED San Francisco, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.

