Contradictions of Love and Freedom in ‘Voices of the Sea,’ Premiering Monday, September 3, 2018 on PBS

Examining the vast disparities between husband and wife—one content to stay, the other desperate to go

Torn between finally fulfilling her dreams and caring for her husband and children, a young mother weighs the hope and promise of leaving Cuba against the heartbreaking pain of separation. Ostensibly, this film is a love story about the love between husband and wife and the love of a man for his country. **Voices of the Sea**, a lyrical portrait of contemporary Cuban realities, gives an intimate, meditative glimpse of a family’s dynamic way of life.

Directed by Kim Hopkins, **Voices of the Sea** has its national broadcast and streaming debut on the PBS documentary series POV and pov.org on Monday, September 3, 2018 at 10 p.m. (check local listings). POV is American television’s longest-running independent documentary series now in its 31st season. **Voices of the Sea** is a co-presentation with Latino Public Broadcasting.

The documentary artistically illustrates the many facets of family life in a rural, remote fishing village on the southern side of the island of Cuba. Orlando (also known as Pita) is an aging fisherman with a passion for his craft. He loves his country and, determined to stay in Cuba, he ekes out a living and provides for his family. He understands and accepts his mortality and his place in this world with grace, wisdom and wit. His craft, and the characteristics that come with it, are integral to who he is: a patient, caring and determined man. His love for his wife, Mariela, and for Cuba infuses this emotional tale with longing.

Mariela loves her husband, too, but yearns for the opportunities emigration has to offer. She hears about the promise of life elsewhere firsthand from her brother Roilan. After attempting the exhausting journey to the United States 21 times, Roilan finally makes it on a homemade boat. Mariela’s face lights up with excitement for him and his new life. We later find out that Mariela’s first husband drowned while trying to escape Cuba on a raft. This kind of cautionary tale affects not just this particular family, but the entire
population of the island. Mariela’s love for Orlando and their family keeps her from attempting the journey herself; her desire to go is outweighed by the connection she and Orlando share.

Mariela is a compassionate mother who is constantly thinking of her children’s future. That thought is the driving force behind her desire to emigrate: “A better future for my kids… ‘What do you want to be?’ ‘Fisherman.’ They don’t know any different. They have no hopes for anything else.”

Orlando, however, is suspicious of the American dream and calls it “illusionary.” He is content with things the way they are, even though all around them family members and neighbors are fleeing.

Mesmerizing scenes of the nearby beachfront and the unhurried pace of life in town create a layered picturesque backdrop to the family drama and are juxtaposed with harrowing on-board raft footage.

“Voices of the Sea is a moving narrative of family life just 90 miles from American soil,” said Chris White, executive producer of POV. “It engages us with an empathetic portrait of the challenges facing everyday Cubans, while complicating the narrative that everyone wants to leave. We see this dichotomy in Mariela and Orlando, and Kim Gracefully teases out the tension between them.”

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About the Filmmaker:
Kim Hopkins, Director
Kim Hopkins is a graduate of the National Film and Television School in the United Kingdom. In 1999, she directed the feature documentary Man in the Sand (BBC2), which recounts the story of singer/songwriter Billy Bragg’s search for the legend Woody Guthrie. In 2002, Hopkins directed Wanted, a feature documentary funded by UK Film Council, A&E, WDR and Soros Documentary Fund. Wanted premiered at the Locarno International Film Festival, the London Film Festival and the Viennale and told the story behind a suspected Native American serial killer. Hopkins spent a decade making television for the BBC, C4 and Discovery. In 2012, she produced, filmed and directed Hotel Folly—Folie à Deux (which screened at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, the Cambridge Film Festival and the Vilnius International Film Festival) for BBC’s Storyville; it focused on the human cost of the banking crisis. Hopkins was instrumental in the formation of the documentary department at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in Cuba.

Credits:
Director: Kim Hopkins
Producers: Margareta Szabo, Kim Hopkins, Capella Fahoome
Editor: Leah Marino, Kim Hopkins
Executive Producer for ITVS: Sally Jo Fifer
Executive Producers for POV: Justine Nagan, Chris White

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Voices of the Sea is a co-production of ITVS, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on public television through weekly series and stand-alone specials and through its digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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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 37 Emmy® Awards, 21 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 Engage (www.pbs.org/pov/engage/)
POV’s Community Engagement and Education team works with educators, community organizations and PBS stations to present more than 800 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 Spark (www.pbs.org/pov)
Since 1994, POV Spark has driven new storytelling initiatives and interactive production for POV. The department has continually experimented with web-based documentaries, producing PBS’ first program website and the first Snapchat-native documentary. It has won major awards for its work, including a Webby Award and over 19 nominations. Now with a singular focus on incubating and distributing interactive productions, POV Spark continues to explore the future of independent nonfiction media through its co-productions, acquisitions and the POV Labs, where media makers and technologists collaborate to reinvent storytelling forms.

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.

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