



For Immediate Release

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P.O.V.'s "LUMO" Exposes Use of Rape as Terror Tool in Central Africa, And Shows How African Women Are Fighting Back, Tuesday, Sept. 18 on PBS

African-staffed Hospital Carries on Unique Effort to Restore Rape Victims to
Physical and Mental Health. This is One Woman's Story.

*"This film is so provocative, and so brave. It lets us understand what a powerful
tool film is for social change. . . . [It has] moved me."
— Barbara Kopple, director, "Harlan County U.S.A."*

Twenty-year-old Lumo Sinai was engaged to be married and going about her daily chores when she fell victim to an act of brutality of "Africa's First World War" — rape as a tool of political terror. On the road to her village, Lumo and another woman were kidnapped and gang-raped by one of the groups of marauding soldiers vying for control of eastern Congo in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Lumo suffered not only the trauma of rape, but was soon afflicted with a resulting fistula, a chronic condition that leaves women incontinent and typically unable to bear children. Her affliction led to rejection by her fiancé and most of her family and village. Violently robbed of her future, Lumo faced a future of shame, loneliness, ill health, and poverty.

LUMO is an intimate look into a woman's tragedy and healing process, and by extension a look into the scourge of rape that marks the war-torn politics of central Africa. **LUMO** is also the story of a remarkable African hospital, which works tirelessly to restore the physical and mental health of women suffering in an epidemic of fistula caused by rape. The hospital's self-called "Mamas," African women who work tirelessly as healers, even flout traditional prejudice and government policy by leading a march in defense of women's human rights. But **LUMO** remains most of all Lumo Sinai's story, as she struggles through four failed surgeries and searches for strength to face the future — whatever the outcome of one more surgery by the hospital's dedicated doctors.

Bent-Jorgen Perlmutter and Nelson Walker III's **LUMO** premieres on **Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2007** at 10 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 20th anniversary season of public television's groundbreaking **P.O.V.** series. (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.

Rich mineral deposits, competing tribal groups, a brutal colonial legacy, and vast stretches of forest have always made the nation of Congo ripe for foreign intervention and political chaos. Especially in eastern Congo, where uncertain borders are remote from the capital of Kinshasa, the country has served as haven and battleground for



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Congolese insurgents and armed groups spilling over from wars in neighboring countries. The end of the Rwandan genocide sent thousands of Hutu militiamen, the *Interhamwe*, responsible for the mass murder of Tutsis and moderate Hutus, fleeing to the Congolese forests, where they were pursued by the new Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army.

Their struggle became entangled with a long-running insurgency against the crumbling Mobutu regime and cross-border tensions with other nations, helping to fuel the First and Second Congo Wars. The latter, lasting from 1998 to 2003, involved nine African nations and some 20 armed groups, and led to the death of nearly 4 million people, earning it the epithet of “Africa’s First World War.” As in some other African conflicts, child soldiers, drugs, superstition, and a virulent terrorizing of women characterized the fighting.

Lumo Sinai was a victim of this war. About the rape, she puts it simply enough: “They destroyed us.” Forsaken by everyone except her mother, she finds that village healers can do little to relieve the symptoms of her fistula — especially the incontinence that so shames and marks her. But she does learn about “counselors searching for raped women.” They represent a hospital in Goma, supported by HEAL Africa, which offers nothing less than a miracle — reconstructive surgery that has a high success rate of reversing the effects of rape-induced fistula, even allowing women to give birth.

The journey to health for Lumo and other women is not easy. Even the road trip to Goma is troubled by breakdowns, illness, and armed soldiers by the roadside. Once at Goma, however, Lumo and the others meet an indomitable force for good in the persons of Mama Jeanne, Mama Muliri, Mama Chakupewa, Mama Kahindo, Mama Sifa, Mama Sara, and Mama Riziki. These buoyant, inspiring women are administrators, nurses, counselors, social workers, and human-rights activists all at once. They provide the support structure that allows the doctors — and the women — to succeed.

With Lumo, the Goma staff wrestles with a particularly difficult case. After four failed surgeries, she is running out of chances to heal. Lumo’s mood is, by turns, hopeful and bitter, cooperative and contrary, as she struggles with the enormity of what has happened to her. She seems suspended between adolescence and adulthood, one moment dreaming girlishly of marriage and babies, and the next acidly questioning the reality or goodness of a god who allows such atrocities to befall innocent people. Her disruptive behavior and impious remarks raise eyebrows among the patients and test the Mamas. Will Lumo fall into that minority of women who do not respond to the surgical treatment? How does a traumatized and marginalized woman find the strength to resume life even if the surgery is successful?

For all the political complexities and violence of the Congo Wars, their human cost is powerfully and awfully captured in **LUMO** — in the heartbreaking but also heartening battle for health and dignity waged by women who, along with their children, have suffered the worst atrocities, and who face the most enduring social and psychological consequences of central Africa’s descent into chaos.

“Getting a grasp on the Congo — its wars, political machinations, and bewildering ethnic rivalries — is difficult, perhaps contributing to the relative obscurity of the humanitarian disaster on the world stage,” say the directors. “We only began to understand it ourselves when we spent the fall of 2004 in the frontier town of Goma. We were volunteers making medical training videos for HEAL Africa Hospital, an NGO whose directors were our generous hosts.

“Congo’s wealth of beauty and its tragic history could occupy any filmmaker for a thousand years, but our story was the one that we were compelled to choose because of its searing immediacy,” they continue. “We returned in the fall of 2005 eager to put a human face on this situation. Lumo was at the center of a group of girls battling the tedium of waiting for treatment by playing jacks, catching grasshoppers, and singing hymns. When we asked whether anyone would like to share their story with us, it was Lumo who was the first to step forward.”

About the filmmakers:

Bent-Jorgen Perlmutter

Director/Producer/Cinematographer

Bent-Jorgen S. Perlmutter served as the co-producer and additional editor of the documentary "Control Room" (2004), and has directed, edited, shot, and/or produced films for the United Nations Development Fund for Women, The U.S. Department of Education, WGBH Boston, and the Global Leadership Campaign. He has taught documentary filmmaking at Columbia University and served as an instructor in Northern Uganda for WITNESS. He's currently a correspondent for UNICEF and is producing several short films on child soldiers in Congo for them. Perlmutter, who started out studying medicine, holds a bachelors degree with honors in screenwriting from Brown University and a masters in fine arts with honors in film directing at Columbia University. He lives in New York.

Nelson Walker III

Director/Producer/Cinematographer

Nelson Walker III holds a bachelors degree in American civilization from Brown University. He began his career as a writer, penning documentaries for the Discovery Channel, History Channel, and PBS's "NOVA." His directorial debut, "iThemba|Hope," aired on the Sundance Channel in 2005. Walker works regularly as a cinematographer for renowned documentary film company Maysles Films, and is a founding member of the Maysles Films Institute, a non-profit organization committed to using film to empower marginalized individuals and communities. He was the 2005 recipient of the Albert Maysles Award for Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking at the Dallas Video Festival.

Walker has worked extensively in Tibet, as a visiting instructor at Tibet University in Lhasa and contributor the Tibetan & Himalayan Digital Library Project. In 2006, he traveled to the Kham region as a documentarian for the Kham Geotourism Project, an initiative launched by the University of Virginia, Machik, and the Maysles Films Institute. Walker will receive his master of fine arts degree in film directing from Columbia University this fall. He lives in New York

Louis Abelman

Co-Director/Producer

Louis Abelman is a freelance writer living in New York. This is his first film. After attending Brown University, where he majored in African history, he worked for the *International Herald Tribune* in Paris, where he later wrote an op/ed about the war in the Congo. For the past two years while working on **LUMO** he has been an editorial assistant at *The New York Times*, posted variously on the Foreign, Metro, Society, and Editorial desks.

Lynn True

Co-Director/Editor

Lynn True graduated from Brown University with a joint degree in urban studies and architecture. She was an assistant editor for PBS, AMC, and NBC News Productions before moving on to edit documentary and narrative films. Her editing credits include "Chain Times Three" (Museum of Modern Art), "iThemba|Hope" (Sundance Channel), and "Asparagus! A Stalk-umentary" (which won an American Documentary | P.O.V. "Art of the Documentary Pitch" grant at the Museum of Television and Radio's Film Festival in 2005). Past projects have also screened on Current TV, the Museum of Television and Radio, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Anthology Film Archives, IFC Center, as well as at festivals and conferences around the world. Recently, True traveled to the Kham region of Tibet to work on a documentary production of the Maysles Film Institute. She is returning this year to complete a short film about Tibetan nomads. She lives in New York.

Credits:

Directors/Producers:	Bent-Jorgen Perlmutter and Nelson Walker III
Producer/Co-Director:	Louis Abelman
Editor/Co-Director:	Lynn True
Cinematographers:	Nelson Walker III and Bent-Jorgen Perlmutter
Writers:	Bent-Jorgen Perlmutter, Nelson Walker III, Louis Abelman, and Lynn True

Running Time: 56:46

In Swahili, French and English with English subtitles.

Awards & Festivals:

- Student Academy Award, *Best Documentary*, 2007
- Columbia University Film Festival, 2006 – *National Board of Review of Motion Pictures Award*
- Media That Matters Film Festival, 2006 – *Global Health Award*
- Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, Durham, N.C., 2007
- Human Rights Watch Film Festival, New York and London, 2007
- United Nations Film Festival, New York, 2007



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, 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 Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through September, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought nearly 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 P.O.V. films through filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video, and community-based and educational content that involves 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 houses *Talking Back*, where viewers can comment on P.O.V. programs, engage in dialogue and link to further resources. The P.O.V. Web site and P.O.V. archives, including special sites from previous broadcasts, form a unique and extensive online resource for documentary storytelling.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these original materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences. P.O.V. works closely with local PBS stations to partner with museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* expands these efforts by working with youth-service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with additional support from JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the official sponsor of P.O.V.'s 20th Anniversary Campaign. 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.americandocumentary.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.

TAPE 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.

