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**Documentary about overlooked heroes of the 2014 Ebola outbreak comes to POV on Monday, September 24, 2018.**

Film Explores the Outbreak from the Perspective of Those Who Lived It



The 2014 Ebola outbreak is remembered as one of the most widely feared epidemics in recent memory. As the virus spread through West Africa, hysterical media reports outside the region fanned the flames of anxiety. However, according to Sierra Leonean filmmaker Arthur Pratt, the “role that locals played in combating the outbreak was grossly underreported.” Pratt adds that “preoccupation with the foreign experience” overshadowed the contributions of West Africans.

With the collective efforts of other filmmakers, Pratt created **Survivors**, an emotional and gripping documentary that will have its national broadcast and streaming debut on the PBS documentary series [POV](#) and [pov.org](http://pov.org) on **Monday, September 24, 2018** at 10 p.m. ([check local listings](#)). POV is American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, now in its 31st season.

Pratt brings the viewer to the communities of Sierra Leone to follow a few of the unsung heroes who were first on the scene, before international resources parachuted in. Pratt documents his own experience, along with the experiences of many others who risked death to manage this epidemic, all while holding their families together.

**Survivors** goes beyond the images of bodies being carried in white sheets amid screams and cries of despair. Ebola is seen as an “enemy” that shatters the true foundation of a culture and community. Pratt explains, “[Physical] contact is part of our everyday life. It’s virtually impossible for me to meet someone in the street without having a handshake, or a hug... [so] with the advent of Ebola, it’s like everything that makes me who I am is under attack.”

Those who fall ill are kept in isolation, separated by walls, tents and even protective clothing worn by healthcare workers. However, this does not deter nurse Margaret from hugging a colleague who contracted the disease while treating other patients. It does not stop Mohamed, an ambulance driver, from carrying a man on his back to be treated for Ebola. It also does not discourage nurse Kadija from holding and comforting a sick child who is taken from his mother to seek treatment. These individuals quickly learn that Ebola cannot be managed within the bounds of established protocol and procedures: they take matters into their own hands to help save the lives of others.

Despite their best efforts, they feel overridden by international aid workers who arrive late yet take over. There is anger when these workers make a move to fire Mohamed, considered a hero for the sacrifices he has made. “We have been out in these streets sacrificing our lives, and they use us like a tool,” responds Kadija. “When Ebola started, where were you?”

“The compassion exhibited by West Africans as they worked to combat Ebola, despite living with fear and chaos, is inspiring,” said Chris White, executive producer of *POV*. “As **Survivors** shows, Sierra Leoneans were far from helpless and dependent during the epidemic tragedy. They refused to watch their communities and culture disintegrate in the face of the virus.”

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#### **About the Filmmakers:**

##### **Arthur Pratt, Producer/Director**

Arthur is a Sierra Leonean filmmaker and community leader based in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Pratt is a co-founder of the Sierra Leone Film Council, the country’s first media-makers’ union. He has started and leads multiple community film and theater groups, collaboratively writing and performing films and plays with ex-combatants, former child prostitutes and community members. He is a co-founder and manager of the WeOwnTV Freetown Media Center in Sierra Leone. His numerous film credits include *CHARITY* (writer/director), which received awards at the Pan African Film Festival, Cinema by the Bay and Semana del Cine Experimental de Madrid; *Black Sugar* (director/writer/camera); *They Resisted* (director/writer); *Hustler* (director/writer/camera).

##### **Lansana “Barmmy Boy” Mansaray, Producer/Co-Director/Director of Photography**

Lansana “Barmmy Boy” Mansaray is a multi-talented director of photography, filmmaker and musician who lives in Freetown, Sierra Leone. A founding member and the current production manager of the Freetown Media Center, he has been honored by the British Council on numerous occasions. Film Credits include *YOUTH* (director), *CHARITY* (camera), *They Resisted* (director of photography) and *Disability Is Inability* (director of photography), currently in production. He has worked as a cameraman and fixer on many award-winning international productions, including *Decisions*, *Girl Rising*, *They Are We* and the Emmy-winning *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*.

##### **Banker White, Producer/Co-Director**

Banker White is a multi-disciplinary artist and filmmaker based in San Francisco. He is the director/producer of the award-winning documentary *The Genius of Marian*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was broadcast on POV in September 2014. His work has been supported by the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the MacArthur Foundation, the Tribeca Film Institute, Impact Partners, LEF, Doc Society, SFFILM, the Center for Cultural Innovation, the Catapult Film Fund and the Fledgling Fund. White also directed *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars* (POV 2007). The film was nominated by the International Documentary Association for best feature in 2006; won grand jury awards at AFI Fest, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and Human Rights Watch Film Festival; and earned audience awards at SXSW and the Miami International Film Festival. White also co-founded the WeOwnTV Freetown Media Center, a collaborative filmmaking and storytelling project in Sierra Leone that is supported by Creative Capital, Freedom to Create, the Bertha Foundation and Bay Area Video Coalition.

### **Anna Fitch, Producer/Co-Director**

Anna Fitch is an Emmy award-winning director. Her natural history and science documentaries have aired on the National Geographic channel, Channel 4 and PBS. She won an Emmy for directing *BugWorld: War of Two Worlds*, which also received a Wildscreen award and was a Best Popular Science and Natural History Program finalist at the Banff Television Festival. Fitch co-directed the feature documentary *The Genius of Marian*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was broadcast on POV in September 2014. The film also received support from the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Tribeca Film Institute, Impact Partners, LEF, Britdoc, the Catapult Film Fund and the Fledgling Fund. Her 2010 narrative short, *The Burning Wigs of Sedition*, was in competition at many festivals, including the Seattle International Film Festival, Cinema by the Bay, Revelation Perth International Film Festival and Rooftop Films in New York City. It also won a Best of Festival prize at the Black Maria Film Festival and an audience award at SF IndieFest.

### **Credits:**

Director:	Arthur Pratt
Co-Directors:	Banker White, Anna Fitch, Lansana Mansaray (Barmmy Boy)
Producers:	Anna Fitch, Arthur Pratt, Banker White, Barmmy Boy, Samantha Grant, Sara Dosa
Editors:	Banker White, Don Bernier
Directors of Photography:	Barmmy Boy, MJ Sessy Kamara

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**Survivors** 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](http://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/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/).

**POV Engage** ([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 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/](http://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](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.

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 The John S. and James Knight Foundation, Nancy Blachman and David desJardins, Bertha Foundation, Reva & David Logan Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Chicago Media Project, Sage Foundation, Lefkowsky Family Foundation, The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, 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.

