



**‘POV’ Goes Behind the Closed Doors of the Chinese Birth Tourism Industry in the U.S. in Director Leslie Tai’s *How to Have an American Baby***

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*The Documentary Reveals the Human Dimension of the Chinese “Maternity Hotel” Industry in the U.S.*

**Debuts on PBS Television Nationwide Monday, December 11, 2023 and Streaming on PBS.org and the PBS App Until March 10, 2024**

**Brooklyn, N.Y. – October 12, 2023** – Multi Emmy® Award and Peabody Award winning series POV explores the unsettling commercialization of birth and citizenship and its human cost in the brave and nuanced documentary, [How to Have an American Baby](#). Directed by Leslie Tai (*My American Surrogate*, *The Private Life of Fenfen*) and produced by Jillian Schultz, the film is a kaleidoscopic voyage into the shadow economy catering to Chinese tourists who travel to the U.S. to give birth in order to have babies who will be born as American citizens. With unprecedented access, the documentary, Tai’s directorial feature debut, deftly recounts all sides of this often sensationalized issue—while capturing the fortunes and tragedies of the people caught in a global economic system that exploits and capitalizes on their desire for an American passport.

***How to Have an American Baby***, makes its national broadcast premiere on **POV, Monday, December 11, 2023 at 10pm** (check local listings) and available to **stream without PBS Passport membership until March 10, 2024** at [pbs.org](https://www.pbs.org), and the [PBS App](#).

In addition to closed captioning for all films, POV, in partnership with audio description service [DiCapta](#), provides real time audio interpretations for audiences with sensory disabilities. POV, currently in its [36th season](#), is America's longest running non-fiction television series.



In 2015, dramatic headlines ushered Chinese “birth tourism” into the American imagination, after FBI and Homeland Security agents stormed dozens of “maternity hotels” suspected of operating illegally across Southern California, inflaming xenophobia and anti-China sentiment already on the rise. ***How to Have an American Baby*** goes beyond these headlines and provides a refined, never-before-seen insider’s look at this phenomenon.

Weaving together a series of observational vignettes, ***How to Have an American Baby*** outlines the invisible contours of the underground birth tourism industry and its unexpected actors. From Los Angeles to Beijing, the film introduces viewers to expectant mothers, maternity hotel operators, sales agents in China, cash-happy doctors and angry neighbors in the U.S.—as well as the invisible army of nannies, cooks, and drivers that fuel the industry. Director Tai brings viewers inside bedrooms, delivery rooms, and private family meetings, to chronicle the dreams and anxieties of ordinary Chinese in pursuit of their version of the American Dream.

“This film is a counter narrative to the mainstream media portrayal of China as a threat to U.S. hegemony and the American way of life. It's easy to think that these women are taking advantage of the system. It's harder to walk a mile in their shoes and consider the complexity of their socioeconomic and political realities,” said director Leslie Tai. “***How to Have an American Baby*** doesn't take sides. It lets you think for yourself. Who is really benefiting from this? It might not be who you think.”

“Leslie Tai’s nuanced film provides us with a truthful, detailed and intimate look at the lives of people seeking U.S. citizenship for their children, often by unconventional means,” said Chris White, executive producer, POV. “Tai’s film is one of unforgettable encounters, experiences and candid conversations illustrating the joys and sorrows of motherhood within a complex web of transnationalism.”



***How to Have an American Baby***, made its world premiere at the 2023 True/False Film Festival. It will make its New York Premiere at DOC NYC on November 14, 2023 at Village East by Angelika at 6:45pm ET.

***How to Have an American Baby***, is a Big Belly Woman production, a co-production of American Documentary | POV, and made in association with Field of Vision, Fork Films, and Two Tigers Productions. Leslie Tai is the director, producer, cinematographer and editor. Jillian Schultz is the producer. The executive producers are Esther Robinson, Laura Poitras, Charlotte Cook, and Erika Dilday and Chris White for American Documentary | POV.

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### Credits

***How to Have an American Baby***

**Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Editor:** Leslie Tai

**Producer:** Jillian Schultz

**Executive Producers:** Esther Robinson, Laura Poitras, Charlotte Cook, Erika Dilday and Chris White for American Documentary | POV

**Co-Producers:** Chocho Tang, Xinyi Leila Lin, Yan Cong, Elivia Shaw

**Running Time:** 112 min

**Country:** USA

**Language:** Mandarin and English with English subtitles

**Year:** 2023

## About the Filmmakers

Leslie Tai, Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Editor, ***How to Have an American Baby***



Leslie Tai is an award-winning, Chinese-American filmmaker from San Francisco, CA. Her shorts have premiered at Tribeca Film Festival, MoMA's Doc Fortnight, IDFA, and Visions du Réel. From 2006-2011, Tai studied under Wu Wenguang, a founding figure of the New Independent Chinese Documentary Movement, at his Beijing-based studio Caochangdi Workstation. Her short film *The Private Life of Fenfen* (2013), a multi-layered representation of a Chinese migrant worker's video diaries, won "Best Film" awards at Kasseler Dokfest and Images Festival. In 2013, Tai received the "Emerging Filmmaker Award" from San Diego Asian Film Festival for her two shorts *Grave*

*Goods* (2013), about the sublime objects of her deceased grandmother, and *Superior Life Classroom* (2012), about the Taiwanese immigrant housewives of Silicon Valley who sell Amway products. Her recent short *My American Surrogate* (2019), about Chinese elite hiring American surrogates to carry their babies for them, was commissioned by *The New York Times* Op-Docs series and Pulitzer Center and won Best Short Documentary at San Diego Asian Film Festival. Her work is supported by organizations such as Creative Capital, Field of Vision, Fork Films, SFFILM, California Humanities, Firelight Media, and fellowships and residencies from MacDowell, Yaddo, Bogliasco, Wexner Center for the Arts, NYFF's Artist Academy, and Berlinale Talents. Tai is a Fulbright Scholar to China and holds a BA in Design|Media Arts from UCLA and an MFA in Documentary Film/Video from Stanford University. *How to Have an American Baby* is Tai's feature debut.

Jillian Schultz, Producer, ***How to Have an American Baby***



Jillian Schultz is a producer, cultural organizer, and creative consultant with twenty years of experience using art as a catalyst for cultural exchange between the U.S. and China. She has expertise in lens-based media, artist development, exhibitions, and educational programming. She is the co-principal of Two Tigers Productions in East Hollywood, CA. She co-produced the 2019 *New York Times* Op-Doc *My American Surrogate*, directed by Leslie Tai. She is producing Tai's feature documentary debut, *How to Have an American Baby* (True/False 2023) and *You Should Never Blink*, a forthcoming feature documentary on the

"Pop Art Nun" Corita Kent, directed by Leah Thompson and supported by the NEH. She has curated exhibitions and produced public programs around the world and continues to collaborate with artists in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

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## About POV

Produced by American Documentary, POV is the longest-running independent documentary showcase on American television. Since 1988, POV has presented films on PBS that capture the full spectrum of the human experience, with a long commitment to centering women and people of color in front of, and behind, the camera. The series is known for introducing generations of viewers to groundbreaking works like *Tongues Untied*, *American Promise* and *Minding The Gap* and innovative filmmakers including Jonathan Demme, Laura Poitras and Nanfu Wang. In 2018, POV Shorts launched as one of the first PBS series dedicated to bold and timely short-form documentaries. All POV programs are available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS Video app](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](#) website.

POV goes “beyond the broadcast” to bring powerful nonfiction storytelling to viewers wherever they are. Free educational resources accompany every film and a community network of thousands of partners nationwide work with POV to spark dialogue around today’s most pressing issues. POV continues to explore the future of documentary through innovative productions with partners such as *The New York Times* and The National Film Board of Canada and on platforms including Snapchat and Instagram.

POV films and projects have won 47 Emmy Awards, 27 George Foster Peabody Awards, 15 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards and the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award. Learn more at [pbs.org/pov](https://pbs.org/pov) and follow @povdocs on social media.

## About American Documentary, Inc.

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia organization 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 Open Society Foundations, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Wyncote Foundation, Reva & David Logan Foundation, Park Foundation, and Perspective Fund. Additional funding comes from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, Sage Foundation, Chris and Nancy Plaut, 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.

## About PBS

[PBS](#), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS's broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirm that PBS's premier children's media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV – including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org), via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or by following [PBS Communications on Twitter](#).

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