

# BORN FREE

BIRTH IN AMERICA







# BORN FREE: BIRTH IN AMERICA

[*Documentary Feature*]

*Running Time:*

**95 minutes**

*Directed By:*

**Paula James-Martinez**

*Written By:*

**Paula James- Martinez**

**Steph Zenee Perez**

*Produced By:*

**Paula James-Martinez**

**Rebecca Dayan**

**Steph Zenee Perez**

**Lianne Turner**

**Moon Cookie Media**

*Production Company:*

**Steph Zenee Perez**

*Edited By:*

**Seannie Bryan**

*Cinematographer:*

**Johanna Cranitch**

*Composer:*

**Margot**

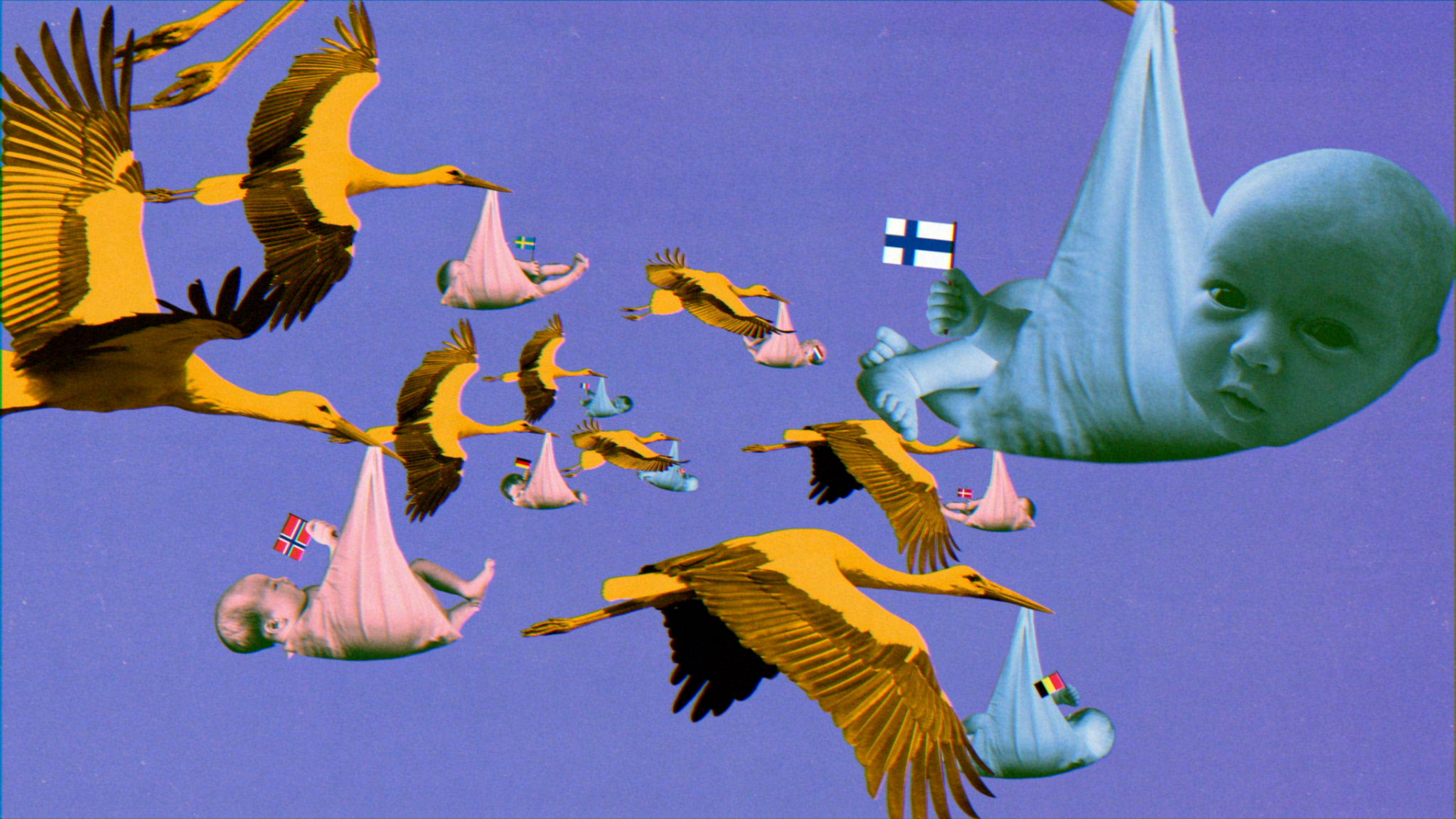
*Country of Production:*

**United States of America**

*Language:*

**English**









## SHORT SYNOPSIS

[75 Words]

Filmmaker Paula James Martinez travels across the United States to understand what makes it the most dangerous and expensive nation to give birth in. From heartbreaking personal stories and harrowing facts to perspectives of experts both in the medical and legal fields, *BORN FREE* shines a light on the true cost of giving birth in the US.

The film is an invitation for every American to start a conversation about the state of maternal health.

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## FULL SYNOPSIS

[208 Words]

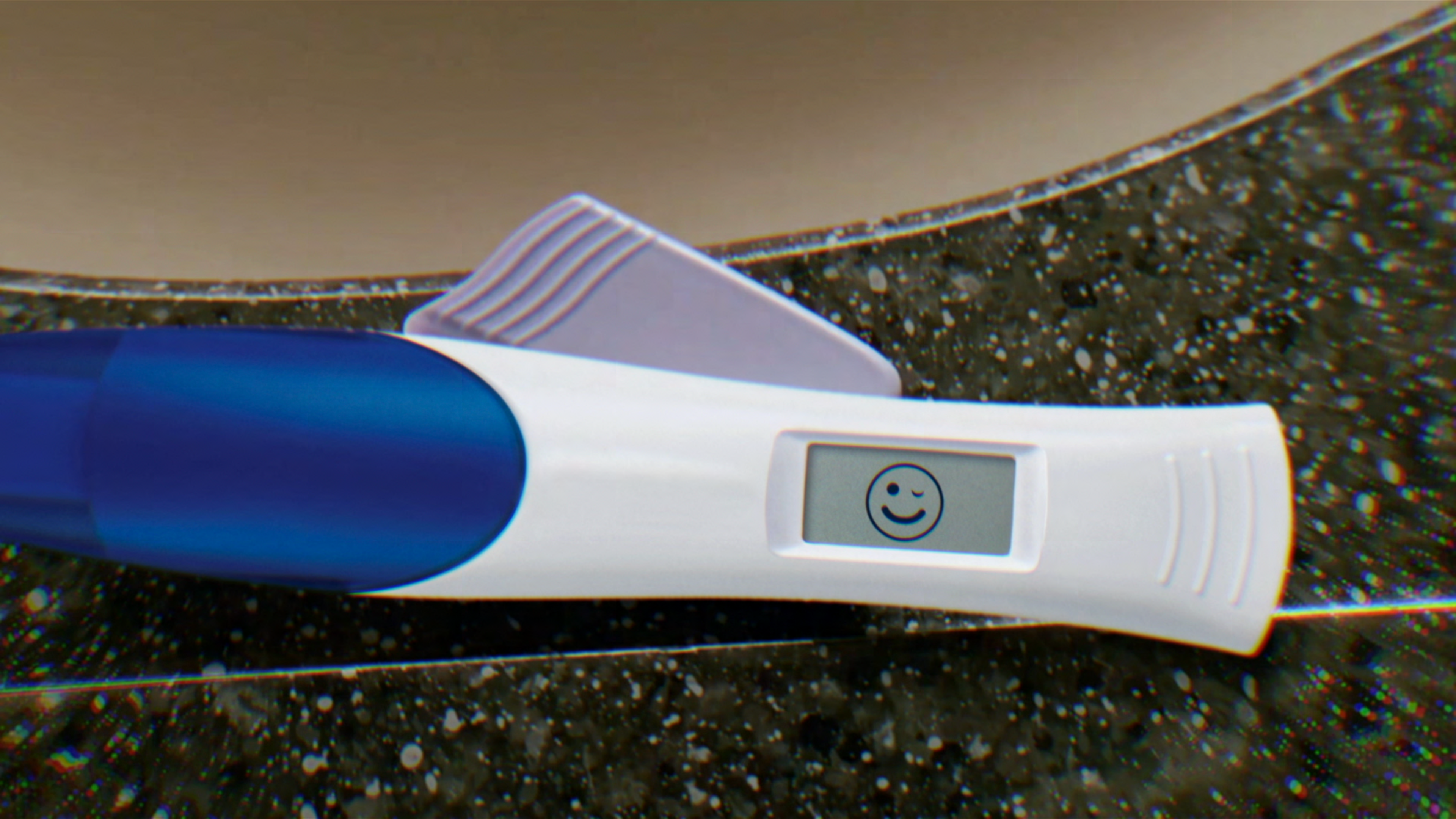
**In *BORN FREE*, filmmaker Paula James-Martinez investigates the real cost of birth in the United States. Why is it the only nation in the developed world with a rising maternal mortality rate?**

*BORN FREE* is a deep dive into what it is like to have a baby in modern day America. Asking questions like; why do so many women experience PTSD after birth? Why do so many women have anxiety issues as a result? And why do so many women face bankruptcy, just from getting pregnant in America?

If birth and pregnancy are a lens on how a society values its women; Why is it a fight that women in the US are losing more and more often? A fight birthing people have to undertake when feeling their most vulnerable. A fight that has statistically awful outcomes for people of color. A fight against a lack of informed choice, against medical overreach and abuse. A fight for bodily autonomy. A fight against systemic racism, sexism, poverty, and big medical, pharmaceutical, and healthcare providers. It is a fight for our lives.

An unexpected journey of discovery, created with an all female crew, *Born Free* wants to provide women the tools to finally be able to roar for themselves.









## BACKGROUND

### [THE FACTS]

The United States is the only nation in the developed world with a rising maternal mortality rate. From 2019 to 2023, The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 births in the United States of America has increased by 40%. Today the U.S. has a maternal mortality rate of 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest level since 1965.

Of all affected, Black birthing people are the most impacted by these statistics. In the U.S., Black birthing people are four times more likely to die from childbirth complications than white birthing people. In studies of maternal deaths in the U.S., more than 4 in 5 are preventable.

The rise in maternal deaths has multiple contributing factors, but one significant cause is access to care. More than 2.2 million women of childbearing age live in maternity care deserts, and 4.7 million women live in counties with limited access to maternity care.

Furthermore, the United States is the most expensive nation in the world to have a baby, which factors into thousands of bankruptcies each year.

In the face of these statistics and the United States' overall failure to provide safe, accessible, and affordable maternal healthcare, the nation is also one of seven countries in the world that does not mandate paid time off for new parents.

**This is not a women's issue, this is a family issue, and it impacts everyone.**









## **PRODUCTION**

[THE FILM & TEAM]

*BORN FREE* was shot at locations across the United States, including California, Washington, Georgia, Tennessee, and New York. It was made with an all female shoot crew.



**Charles Johnson** *Interviewee & Founder of 4Kira4moms*

Charles Johnson has dedicated his life to the equitable maternal health outcomes in America. His passion for systemic change is driven by his love for his wife, Kira, who passed away following the birth of their second child. In April 2016, Kira underwent a routine c-section following an uncomplicated pregnancy. Hours later, she died from internal hemorrhaging despite adamant pleas for help from medical professionals by her husband and loved ones. Her story exemplifies the current crises happening in America: rising rates of maternal mortality and the silencing of Black voices.



**Chanel Porchia-Albert** *Interviewee, Associate Producer & Founder of Ancient Song*

Chanel L. Porchia Albert CD, CPD, CLC, CHHC is the founder and Executive Director of Ancient Song Doula Services a reproductive health organization focused on providing resources and full spectrum doula services to women of color and marginalized communities. Her work within infant and maternal health has led her across the globe to Uganda where she has served as a maternal health strategist in rural war torn areas to address the lack of resources to birthing mothers, she is a certified lactation counselor, midwifery assistant and vegan chef and has served on various advisory boards throughout the country.





## Director *Paula James-Martinez*

With a background in fashion publishing and experience as an editor for some of Europe's most respected luxury style magazines, Paula quickly established herself as a prominent figure in the fashion world. Her talents and expertise led to her appointment as Fashion Director of Refinery 29, the world's largest online women's publication with over 25 million unique monthly users.

Driven by a passion for women's health, Paula produced and directed her first feature documentary, "Born Free," which sheds light on the maternal health crises facing America. Her film led to the founding of the non-profit organization "Mother Lovers," which focuses on educating people to achieve healthier and safer birthing outcomes. She also proudly serves on the board of 4Kira4moms.

Paula is currently in development with a major network on a scripted project centered on women in media. And she provides her voice and expertise to publications such as Instyle, Purple, Self, and Playgirl as well as creating editorial video content with Condé Nast Entertainment. Alongside this Paula also works as a sought-after consultant for fashion and women's health brands: She serves as an advisor in the Femtech space, where she is helping to drive innovation and progress in the field.





## **Producer *Rebecca Dayan***

Rebecca Dayan is a French born, New York based, actress, artist and producer. Since 2012, Dayan has starred in critically acclaimed movies such as *Celeste & Jesse Forever* (Sundance 2012) *H.* (2014 Venice International Film Festival), *Novitiate*, (2017 Sundance Film Festival and 2017 TIFF.) *Tesla* (Sundance 2020) She rose to prominence playing Elsa Peretti in a breakout performance alongside Ewan McGregor in the Mini Series *Halston* for Netflix. And has since been a recurring member of Ryan Murphy's *American Horror Story* series.



## **Producer, Writer & Editor *Steph Zeneé Perez***

Steph Zeneé Perez is a queer Latina editor, writer, poet, and emerging film director. She is a first generation Mexican-American who is interested in compelling stories that explore human complexities, diverse cultures, and underrepresented communities. Steph began her professional career editing the fully improvised independent feature film, *THE FEELS*, directed by Jenée LaMarque, starring Angela Trimbur and Constance Wu. She then accepted a position as an assistant in the Feature Post Production department at Lionsgate. Steph left the studio side to get back into the editing room as an assistant editor on docu-series *LORENA* (Amazon) and joined the Motion Picture Editors Guild while working on *VIDA* (Starz). She was bumped up to edit several episodes of TV series *BRAND NEW CHERRY FLAVOR* (Netflix) and has recently finished editing on climate change TV series, *EXTRAPOLATIONS* (Apple TV +), helmed by the acclaimed Scott Z. Burns. Steph worked as an editor, writer, and producer on, *BORN FREE*, a documentary about the maternal mortality crisis in the United States.





## **Producer *Vanessa Hope***

Vanessa's film career began in China while teaching a graduate course on "Law and Society" at People's University on a grant from the Ford Foundation and completing her PhD at Columbia University. But her film love began at home. As the granddaughter of Hollywood golden era film producer, Walter Wanger, and movie star, Joan Bennett, she had a lot of film family history to analyze which she does in her podcast "Love is a Crime" (Vanity Fair, 2021) co-written and co-created with Karina Longworth. Fluent in Chinese, Vanessa produced multiple award-winning films in China: Wang Quanan's "The Story Of Ermei" (Berlin Film Festival, 2004); Chantal Akerman's "Tombee De Nuit Sur Shanghai" part of an omnibus of films, "The State Of The World" (Berlin Film Festival, 2007); and her own short films, including "China In Three Words" (Palm Springs, Doc NYC 2013). Her U.S. producing credits focus on female directors and include Zeina Durra's "The Imperialists Are Still Alive!" (Sundance, 2010), the Academy award shortlisted feature documentary, "William Kunstler: Disturbing The Universe," directed by Sarah and Emily Kunstler (Sundance, 2010) and the sisters' new award winning film "Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America" (SXSW, 2021).





## **Executive Producer *Sara Ojeh***

Sara Ojeh is a dedicated philanthropist with special interests in international development, global health and education. She is a trained birth doula and strong advocate for maternal health and birth rights. Along with her siblings, she has worked for over 15 years providing grants in the areas of education, women's and human rights and health. A mother of four boys, she has focused her work on ensuring that birthing persons have access to full spectrum care and education, locally and globally. Sara is the founder of Ethos Philanthropies Consulting, working with family offices and their next-gen members on their philanthropic impact, and Co-Chair of the Board of Mother Lovers.



## **Executive Producer *Claire D. Olshan***

Claire has been a born and bred New Yorker her entire life. Claire got her bachelors degree at NYU in fine arts and her master degree in contemporary art at Sotheny's contemporary institute. Claire then went on to assist the curators at the new museum of contemporary art and directed the art gallery rental in New York's Chinatown alongside renowned artist Joel Mesler. In 2012, Claire then went on to found her first company, Fivestory, a luxury multi-label boutique on the upper east side of Manhattan. She subsequently sold it in 2019. While art and design had been Claire's focus for most of her life, she has always had a passion for creating healthy lifestyles, decadent entertaining and bringing unique surrealist experiences to the world around her.





## **Executive Producer *Rob C. Profusek***

Rob Profusek is Founder of Digital Harvest Media (DHM), a unique development stage media incubator that partners with a diverse cross-section of creative entrepreneurs. Profusek began his career as a financial analyst at Lazard Frères & Company before transitioning to passion work in the entertainment and lifestyle space, where his roles have included independent film production and business development and corporate strategy for companies including Condé Nast Entertainment, YouTube, and BellRock Brands. Profusek received a BA with distinction from Cornell University and earned his MBA from Columbia Business School. He is a member of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS), Producers Guild of America (PGA) as well as the International Academy of Web Television. Rob Profusek and DHM are based in New York City.





## **Cinematographer *Seannie Bryan***

Seannie Bryan is a Cinematographer currently based in Los Angeles who began shooting documentary and human interest pieces in her hometown of Carlsbad, CA. After graduating Chapman University with a BFA in Film Production she attended the Camerimage Festival in Poland with her senior thesis film in the Student Etudes competition. She has since collaborated as DP on multiple narrative short films and the documentary feature, "Born Free". Seannie currently works predominantly in the music video and documentary space, as well as starting production on her first narrative feature project, "The Doctrine of Discontent" in Spring 2023.



## **Art Director & Visual Effects *Iskra Tirado Karadzhova***

Iskra Karadzhova Tirado has an extensive background in audio-visual production. As a former co-owner of Cinetica Productions SL (Spain), she worked as a post-production supervisor and documentary filmmaker, producing a diverse range of content including TV series, short films, music videos, and promotional spots for Spanish TV Networks and private institutions. Since 2015, Iskra has been based in Los Angeles, where she works as a creative art director, video editor, and motion graphics artist for high-profile clients such as UNESCO's storytelling platform: Mosaic of Change, Salesforce, Cisco, and Condé Nast. Throughout her career, Iskra's projects have taken her around the globe, where she has worked and collaborated with teams in different countries, immersing herself in diverse cultures. These experiences have influenced her creative approach, incorporating a fresh and unique perspective into her work that reflects her versatility as a visual artist.





## **Music Supervisor & Composer *Johanna Cranitch***

Johanna Cranitch was born in Australia, and grew up with a healthy diet of classical music and jazz (with a touch of Kate Bush and Phil Collins thrown in). After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Jazz Music, she moved to NYC, where she cut her teeth as an Assistant Recording Engineer and Studio Manager for NOLA recording studios. From there, Johanna released two records, toured as a keyboardist/vocalist with bands such as the Cranberries and Nina Persson (The Cardigans) and sang/produced for artists such as Ziggy Marley and Louis Post (Veruca Salt). She has been on production teams for Squeak-E-Clean studios, Barking Owl, South Music and enjoyed commercial and film success with composing work for big brands (Macy's, Toyota and Vogue) and bands (White Prism, Royal Cinema). She has been busy scoring films and documentaries and works as Creative Director at MassiveMusic, where she takes care of all things creative from the inception of the job to the finish line, helping clients hone in on their creative vision.



## **Composer *Margot***

Violinist and composer Margot spent over a decade contributing to the pop world - from recording strings on records like Beyonce, Lady Gaga & St Vincent, performing with Katy Perry at Carnegie Hall and at the Harper's Bazaar Icons party, to opening for the likes of Janet Jackson, Diana Ross, Eve & Stevie Wonder with her band The Dolls (with DJ Mia Moretti) at venues like The Louvre and The Guggenheim Museum. However, after all that, she is finally returning to her roots and her first love: classical music. Margot's debut record, *The Apartment on Third Street*, released with Amazon Music July of 2021, has amassed over 12 million streams. Her cinematic sophomore album is set for release October of 2023. Margot recently scored her first feature documentary film, *Born Free*, which investigates the rising maternal mortality rate in the US, and her first short animation film, *AIR*, which was accepted to many US festivals this year. Her work also includes scoring compositions for Nike Women, the Whitney Museum, American Express, Barneys NY, Elle, and film trailers such as *The Homesman* (featuring Tommy Lee Jones & Meryl Streep).







## CREDITS

Directed By:

**Paula James-Martinez**

Written By:

**Paula James- Martinez**

**Steph Zeneé Perez**

Produced By:

**Paula James-Martinez**

**Rebecca Dayan**

**Steph Zeneé Perez**

**Lianne Turner**

**Sara Ojje**

Executive Producers:

**Anthony James-Martinez**

**Vanessa Hope**

**Robert C. Profusek**

**Claire Olshan**

**Maritza Cayo**

Co- Produced By:

**Steph Zeneé Perez**

Edited By:

**Iskra Tirado Karadzova**

Art Director & Visual Effects:

**Seannie Bryan**

Director of Photography:

**Johanna Cranitch**

Composer:

**Margot**



# CAST

Opening Women

**Alexandra Lenihan**  
**Shante Jackson**  
**Gia Rigoli**  
**Dauida Koren**

**Rep. Joe Kennedy III**  
**Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler**  
**Rep. Tammy Duckworth**  
**Lynn M. Paltrow, JD**  
**Karla Mileski**

Interview Subjects

**Christy Turlington**  
**Barbara Verneus**  
**Kimberly Turbin**  
**Dawn Thompson**  
**Chanel Porchia-Albert**  
**Pamela Hunt**  
**Joanne Santana**  
**Carol Nelson**  
**Monica Simpson**  
**Dr. Gae Rodke, M.D.**  
**Jen Sinconis**  
**Amy Richards**  
**Dr. Emiliano Chavira, M.D**  
**Amber Price, DNP. CNM**  
**Danika Charity**  
**Charles Johnson**

**Danielle Horanieh**  
**Camila Calde**

Choreographer  
Dancer

**Sarah C Prinz**  
**Jazz "The Snowman" Washington**

Stedicam Operator (Dance Scene)  
Assistant Camera  
Assistant Camera

**Alex flannery**  
**Lance Williams**  
**Arielle Pomeranz**

Production Sound Mixer & Boom Operators

**Kat Jirles**  
**Marianna La Follette**  
**Patrick Southern**



Legal Services Provided by  
Clearance Counsel

**Carra Greenbreg  
Donaldson Callif Perez  
Christopher L. Perez  
Herlinda Castagnoli**

Production Assistant

**Joanna Feinman**

Assistant Editor

**Jaclyn Rogers  
Sunghwan Moon  
Benjamin Gonzales Tolentino**

Color Services provided by  
Colorist

**Arsenal Creative  
Zack Hetlage**

Executive Producer

**Evan Astrowsky**

Producer, Color

**Jessica Amburgey**

Sound Design and Mix

**Hansdale Hsu**

Key Art

**BLT Helps**

Marketing

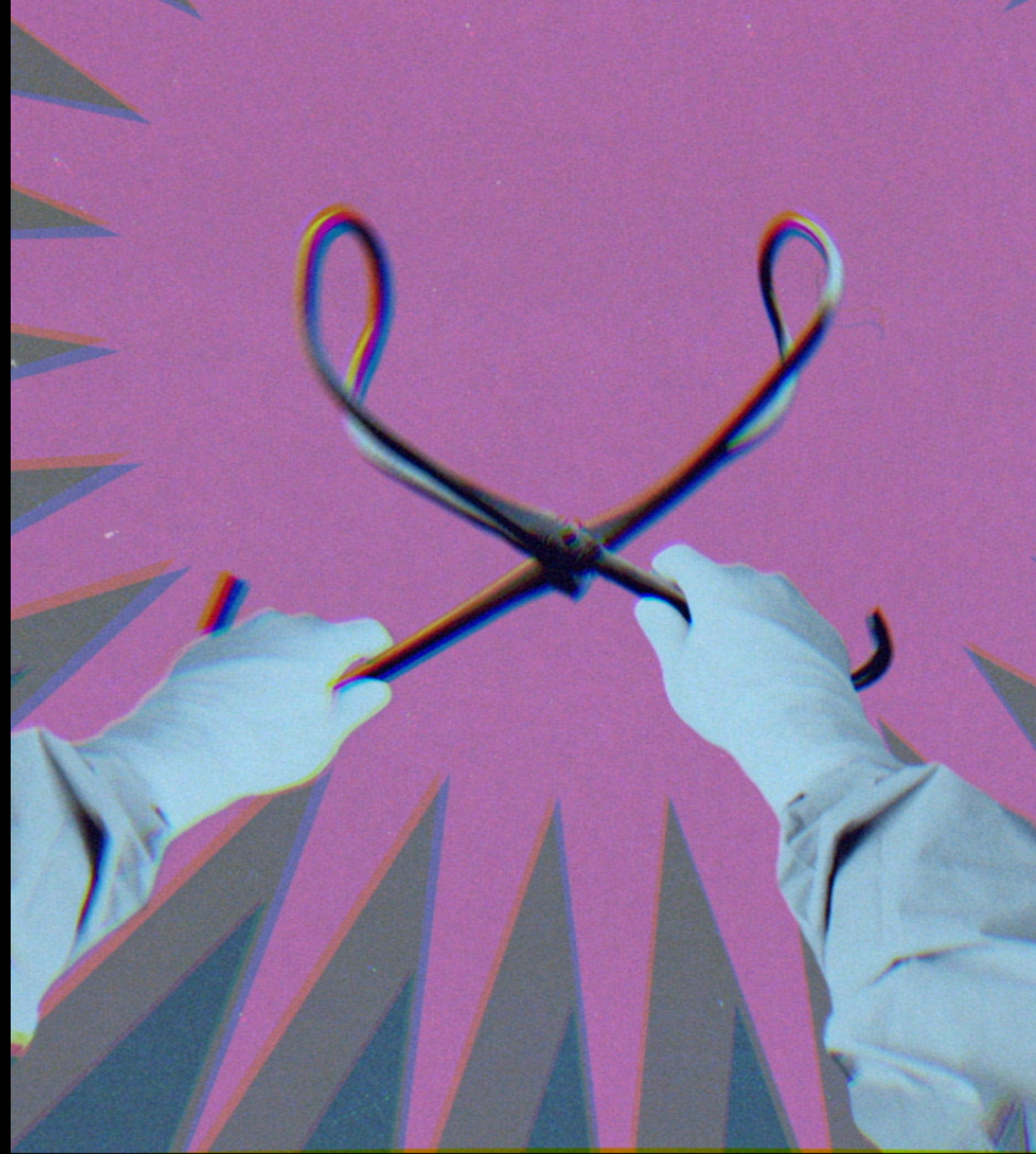
**Anthony James-Martinez**

Publicity

**Victoria Lampley**

Quality Control

**Deluxe Digita Media**





**MOTHER  
LOVERS**

**BORN FREE was created with support from The  
Mother Lovers**

**For more information about the issues covered in this  
film please visit [themotherlovers.com](https://themotherlovers.com)**



The Statue of Liberty is shown in a dark, monochromatic style against a background that transitions from a deep red at the top to a bright yellow at the bottom. The statue is positioned on the left side of the frame, holding a torch aloft in her right hand and a tablet in her left. The title 'BORN FREE' is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the middle of the image, with the words 'BORN' and 'FREE' separated by the statue's figure. Below the main title, the subtitle 'BIRTH IN AMERICA' is written in smaller, white capital letters.

# BORN FREE

BIRTH IN AMERICA

## CONTACT

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