

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT**

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS 415-356-8383 x 244  
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190  
Cara White 843-881-1480

[voleine\\_amilcar@itvs.org](mailto:voleine_amilcar@itvs.org)  
[lugo@negia.net](mailto:lugo@negia.net)  
[cara.white@mac.com](mailto:cara.white@mac.com)

For downloadable images, visit [pbs.org/pressroom/](http://pbs.org/pressroom/)  
For the program's companion website, visit <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/pushing-the-elephant>

***PUSHING THE ELEPHANT, THE INSPIRATIONAL STORY OF ROSE MAPENDO,  
ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE CONGO***

***"One person alone cannot push the elephant, but many people together can."  
– Rose Mapendo***

(San Francisco, CA) — Rose Mapendo lost her husband and her home during the ethnic violence that engulfed the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 1990s, yet she emerged from the suffering advocating for forgiveness and reconciliation. But, after helping numerous victims recover and rebuild their lives, there is one person Rose must still teach to forgive: her daughter Nangabire. *Pushing the Elephant* captures one of the most important stories of our age, in which genocidal violence is challenged by the moral fortitude and grace of one woman's mission for peace. *Pushing the Elephant*, directed and produced by Beth Davenport and Elizabeth Mandel, premieres on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

When war came to Rose's village, she was separated from her five-year-old daughter, Nangabire. Rose managed to escape with nine of her ten children, and was eventually resettled in Phoenix, Arizona. Over a decade later, mother and daughter are reunited in the U.S., where they must face the past and build a new future.

We follow Rose and Nangabire over the course of two years as they make up for lost time. Rose struggles to find balance in her life as a mother of ten and a full-time advocate for



--More--

refugees. Her speaking engagements have her traveling around the world, from the White House to the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) in Geneva to grassroots meetings with survivors like herself in Congo. Meanwhile Nangabire, now 17, must adapt to America and discover how she fits into the sprawling Mapendo family. As mother and daughter get to know one another, they must come to terms with a painful past, and define what it means to be a survivor, a woman, a refugee, and an American.

Through this intimate family portrait unfolding against the wider drama of war, the film explores the long term and often hidden effects of conflict on women and families, particularly those in traditional societies: financial despair, increased susceptibility to rape, and social ostracism.

### **About the Filmmakers**

**Beth Davenport (Director/Producer)** has worked at Arts Engine, Inc. /Big Mouth Films in various capacities since 2003. Her positions have included production and outreach in television, commercials, and award-winning documentaries for P.O.V., Sundance Channel, BBC, and Arte France, as well as directing advocacy videos and short films. Her credits include the Emmy®-nominated film *Deadline, Wrongful Death, and Election Day*. Davenport is currently a producer at Arts Engine, Inc./Big Mouth Films and is producing *Asexuality: The Making of a Movement*, directed by Angela Tucker. Davenport was a mentor for the IFP Documentary Rough Cut Lab for three years and is a NYFA and a Jerome Fellow. She graduated with a degree in sociology and in peace and conflict resolution from Wayne State University.

**Elizabeth Mandel (Director/Producer)** produced the film *Arctic Son* with Dallas Brennan Rexer. She was a co-producer on Jennifer Fox's *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*. She recently created a series of five educational and organizational videos for Jewish Women International, designed to heighten awareness around the issue of gender-based violence in the Jewish community. She is a 2008 NYFA Fellow and Jerome Fellow. Prior to joining Big Mouth in 2001, Mandel worked for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Mumbai, India, and for the United Nations and the Asia Foundation. She has also worked in Cambodia, Nepal, and Japan on a variety of women's security and empowerment projects. She holds a master's degree from Columbia University in International Affairs and graduated from Columbia University with a B.A. in religion and East Asian languages and cultures.

**Katy Chevigny (Producer)**, Arts Engine's co-founder and senior director, is a documentary filmmaker, entrepreneur, and nonprofit manager. For fifteen years, Chevigny has advocated for a diverse media culture, one that illuminates important stories and amplifies voices not often heard in the mainstream media. Chevigny founded Arts Engine and its predecessor Big Mouth Productions. As a film director, Chevigny most recently directed the film *Election Day*, which premiered at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival in March 2007 and was broadcast on public television by *POV* in 2008. Chevigny also co-directed *Deadline* (2004), an Emmy®-nominated documentary about the dramatic events that took place in Illinois in 2003 concerning capital punishment. The film aired on

--More--

NBC in July 2004, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and won a CINE Golden Eagle Grand Jury Award and the Thurgood Marshall Journalism Award. Chevigny has produced many award-winning documentaries at Arts Engine, including: *Arctic Son*, *Journey to the West: Chinese Medicine Today*, *Nuyorican Dream*, *Innocent Until Proven Guilty*, and *Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America*.

**Angela Tucker (Producer/Sound)** has worked at Big Mouth Films for the past seven years and is currently the Director of Production. She is directing the film *Asexuality: The Making of a Movement* and producing the film *Dreaming Nicaragua*. She was the associate producer, sound recordist, and outreach director for the Emmy®-nominated film, *Deadline* (shown on NBC's *Dateline*). She was a consulting producer and field producer for *Election Day* (PBS's *POV*) and a line producer for *Beyond the Steps: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* (PBS's *Great Performances*). She directs and produces educational videos for nonprofit organizations such as ACORN Housing and GLSEN, in addition to producing spots for broadcasters such as Nickelodeon. She directed two shorts for The National Black Programming Consortium and ITVS' Initiative, *The Masculinity Project*, entitled *Invisible Men*. She received an MFA in Film from Columbia University where she was awarded a grant from The Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Dean's Fellowship and a Milos Forman Finishing Fund Award. Tucker received her B.A. with honors from Wesleyan University in Theater and African-American Studies. She is a member of New York Women in Film and Television.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

###