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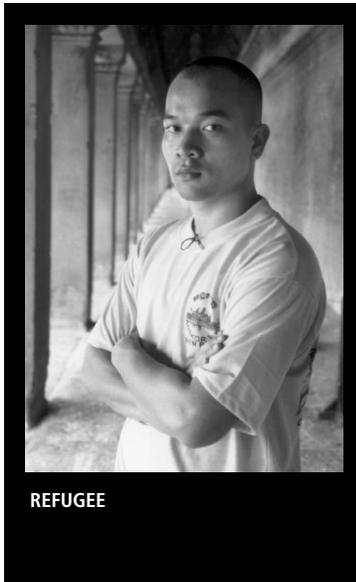
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*Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:*

*www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos*

*Program companion website: www.pbs.org/refugee*



***INDEPENDENT LENS's "REFUGEE"***  
**FOLLOWS THREE YOUNG MEN AS THEY  
TRAVEL TO CAMBODIA TO FIND THEIR  
FAMILIES**

*Film by Emmy® Award-Winning Director Spencer Nakasako  
Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens"*

*ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS*

*Presented in Association with NAATA*

*Tuesday, May 11, 2004 at 10 P.M.*

*(check local listings)*

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(San Francisco, CA) — For Mike Siv, the trip begins innocently enough. "Me and my homies, David and Paul, we're going to Cambodia. We'll see the sights, visit family, have some fun." But after their journey, they will never be the same. These three young refugees, raised on the streets of San Francisco's tough Tenderloin district (a.k.a. the "T.L."), head back to Cambodia for the first time in **REFUGEE**, a new documentary by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, Spencer Nakasako. **REFUGEE** will have its television premiere on *Independent Lens* on Tuesday, June 8 at 10 P.M. (check local listings).

The film revolves around Michael "Adeo" Siv, a gregarious 24-year-old who moves easily between worlds—the street corner and the college campus; Cambodian and American cultures. He and his mother escaped to the U.S. during the 1979 Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. It was a horrific time, with the country still devastated from the Vietnam War and in chaos from the bloody regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. To escape further bloodshed, Mike and his mom fled, leaving his dad and younger brother behind.

In his teenage years Mike flirted with street life in the Tenderloin, where he and his mother settled as refugees. Now enrolled in college, he has decided to return to Cambodia to meet his long-lost father and brother. Accompanied by long-time friends Paul Meas and David Mark, Mike sets off on a journey that takes him to a new Cambodia rising up from the killing fields, and into the blurred entanglements of his family's past.



The trip seems ordinary at first: a whirlwind of vaccines, passports, visas and buying gifts. However, even before the plane takes off, the journey takes an unexpected turn. Right before Mike's departure, his mother reveals some shocking news from Cambodia: his father is remarried, has another

family and his younger brother Nang was raised by an aunt. Mike's vision of his family is shattered. As he puts it, "That's a whole lotta truth. I learned more about my family in that one hour than I heard in my whole life." Shaken up, but still determined to carry on with his original plan, Mike boards the plane.

The reunion turns out to be a happy, yet strange moment. For the first time ever, Mike knows what it feels like to call someone "Dad" and to see the smile of recognition on his younger brother's face.

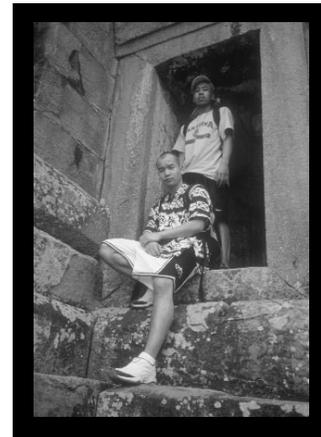
Knowing he only has a few precious days with his father, he tries to live in the moment and enjoy their time together. Yet he is haunted by questions from the past. What was the true reason the family was separated? What really happened at the Thai border the day Mike and his mother escaped? Is there a more painful truth underneath the facade?

Mike Siv and his father live on opposite sides of a chasm wrought by emotion and history. In between lies a quagmire of political upheaval, military invasion, years of being apart and living in different worlds. In

**REFUGEE**, a simple reunion becomes a journey of discovery. It is a film about families, war, separation and ultimately, acceptance.

Additional information and/or downloadable photographs from **REFUGEE** are available at [www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos](http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos).

The program's interactive companion website [www.pbs.org/refugee](http://www.pbs.org/refugee) features detailed information about the film, including an interview with the filmmakers, cast and crew bios, as well as links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a "talkback" section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film and more.



The ITVS Community Connections Project (ITVS-CCP) is partnering with NAATA in undertaking a community engagement campaign *Worlds Apart—Common Voices*, which looks at Asian Pacific American stories that highlight differences and commonalities in cultures and communities. Through compelling personal stories and a broad-based community engagement campaign, *Worlds Apart—Common Voices* is designed to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and encourage long-term partnerships for lasting social and educational impact. More information about the campaign is available at [www.itvs.org/outreach/worldsapartcommon-voices](http://www.itvs.org/outreach/worldsapartcommon-voices).

**REFUGEE** is produced by Spencer Nakasako for the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA) with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

## FEATURED APPEARANCES

**MICHAEL “ADOE” SIV** was born in Phnom Penh and raised in the Tenderloin. Like many of the families in San Francisco’s Tenderloin District, he and his mother fled the chaos and bloodshed of the Khmer Rouge in their native Cambodia. Siv met Nakasako while doing a workshop at the Vietnamese Youth Development Center. Currently, Mike is a recent graduate of San Francisco State University with a BA in Liberal Studies. His first documentary, *Who I Became* (co-directed with Adam Collier) was part of the *Matters of Race* series that premiered on PBS last year. The film follows the life of Ponnloeu Chia, a 21-year old Cambodian refugee on the brink of fatherhood and in the middle of Federal probation. The film premiered at the San Francisco Asian American Film Festival. When not studying or working on film projects, Siv spends his time coaching the Tenderloin youth basketball team The Little Bombers.

**SOPHAL “PAUL” MEAS** was born in a Thailand refugee camp on the border of Cambodia. His family immigrated to the United States when he was two years old. Paul, the middle child in a family of six, never finished high school. Presently, he works in a retail shoe store as a salesperson and is trying to get his GED. Every Wednesday, Meas can be found playing shooting guard on the basketball team The Little Bombers.

**DAVID MARK** was born in New York City. His family came to the Tenderloin in 1984. At 18 years old, he is trying to make it on his own, sharing an apartment with a friend from the T.L. He hopes to get back to school someday to earn his GED. Mark is the small forward for The Little Bombers.

## REFUGEE Credits

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR:

EDITORS:

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:

PRINCIPAL CAMERA:

ADDITIONAL CAMERA:

PRODUCER:

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER:

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT:

**Spencer Nakasako**

**Aram Collier & Mike Siv**

**Louella Lee & Glades Perreras**

**Spencer Nakasako**

**Mike Siv, Sophal Meas, David Mark,**

**Scott Tsuchitani & Michael Chin**

**Jannette Eng**

**Scott Tsuchitani**

**Julie Mackaman & Gail Waldron**

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**SPENCER NAKASAKO** (Director/Producer) won a National Emmy Award for *a.k.a. Don Bonus*, the video diary of a Cambodian refugee teenager that aired on the PBS series *P.O.V.* and screened at the Berlin International Film Festival. *Kelly Loves Tony*, a video diary about an Lu Mien refugee teenage couple growing up too fast in Oakland, California also aired on *P.O.V.* Nakasako wrote the screenplay and co-directed a feature film about Hong Kong, *Life is Cheap...But Toilet Paper is Expensive*, with Wayne Wang, and was one of the producers on *School Colors*, a documentary for *Frontline* about the 1994 graduating class at Berkeley High School. He produced and directed *Monterey's Boat People*, about the conflict between Vietnamese and local fishermen in his hometown of Monterey, California, and *Talking History*, about the history of Asian women in the U.S. Both films received numerous awards and aired nationally on PBS. For the past 15 years, Nakasako has been working in the Southeast Asian communities of San Francisco and Oakland, training at-risk refugee youth to make films about their own lives. In addition to teaching film in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California at Berkeley, he has also had artist-in-residencies at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Toronto.

**JANNETTE ENG** (Producer) has worked as associate producer for several San Francisco-based documentaries, including *Respect for All*, an educational series aimed at teaching school-aged kids tolerance for diversity from the Academy Award-winning Women's Educational Media and *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, a three-part PBS series that challenges commonly held notions about race. She has also served as consultant for various independent productions, including the Oscar-nominated *Daughter from Danang*. Prior to that, Eng was a production manager at the Independent Television Service (ITVS). She is a past recipient of the McKnight Screenwriting Fellowship through the Playwright's Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**ARAM COLLIER** (Co-Editor) first worked with Spencer Nakasako as a high school student in 1996 as part of a youth video workshop in the Tenderloin. The workshop resulted in *Tenderloin Stories*, a program of four short videos that won several youth video awards, was broadcast on public television and played at various festivals, including the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival and Taos Talking Pictures. Collier attended University of California at Santa Cruz where he graduated in 2001 with a B.A. in Film and Digital Media. Collier co-directed *Who I Became* (with Mike Siv) as part of the *Matters of Race* series that premiered on PBS last year.

## ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

*Independent Lens* is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. 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 a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in *The New Yorker* to write "Watching Independent Lens ... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independent-lens](http://www.pbs.org/independent-lens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

## ABOUT NAATA

Since 1980, the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA) has been at the forefront of bringing Asian Pacific American media to the American public. The organization was formed to challenge the historical exclusion of Asian Pacific Americans from the media field and to counteract the distorted portrayals of Asians by mainstream press. NAATA's mission is to present stories that convey the richness and diversity of the Asian Pacific American experience. In addition to national public television broadcasts, NAATA fulfills its mission through educational distribution, presenting the annual San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival, and assistance and funding for media artists.

## ABOUT PBS

PBS, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is a private, nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 349 public television stations. Serving nearly 90 million people each week, PBS enriches the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services on noncommercial television, the Internet and other media. More information about PBS is available at <http://www.pbs.org>, the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet.



ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

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