

MARIA'S STORY

A Documentary Portrait of Love and Survival in El Salvador's Civil War

Pamela Cohen, Monona Wali and Catherine M. Ryan

It is El Salvador, 1989, three years before the end of a brutal civil war that took 75,000 lives. Maria Serrano, wife, mother, and guerrilla leader is on the frontlines of the battle for her people and her country. With unprecedented access to FMLN guerrilla camps, the filmmakers dramatically chronicle Maria's daily life in the war as she travels from village to village organizing the peasant population, and helps plan a major nationwide offensive that led the FMLN into the historic peace pact of 1992. Skirting bullets and mortar attacks, recounting a childhood of poverty and abuse by government troops, suffering the tragic loss of her daughter to enemy fire, and spending precious moments with her husband and surviving daughters, Maria brings viewers to the heart of the fight for a more just society.

This critically acclaimed and award-winning film first aired on the PBS Documentary Series, *P.O.V.* in 1991. Revolutionary in its making, *Maria's Story* broke ground as one of the first documentaries to use small format video. Traveling with only backpacks and solar powered batteries and living on the run with the guerrillas for two months, the filmmakers were able to capture otherwise unattainable footage. The resulting intimate portrait of Maria and her compatriots reveals a universal tale of love and survival in times of war.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the film is available for the first time on DVD. Included is an update of Maria Serrano and her family twenty years after the end of the civil war.

DVD contains both English and Spanish versions

ABOUT THE FILM MAKERS

Pamela Cohen has been producing social issue and educational documentaries for the past 25 years. Other films include *In the Name of Democracy* and *Hope Street*. She currently teaches media arts and visual arts in Los Angeles.

Monona Wali is a writer and teacher living in Los Angeles.

San Francisco based Catherine Ryan has been producing, directing and editing award-winning documentaries for over 20 years. In addition to *Maria's Story* her other films include: *Soldiers of Conscience* and *The Double Life of Ernesto Gómez Gómez*. Ryan has also produced and directed documentaries for primetime network TV, including *The Story of Mothers & Daughters* (ABC), *The Story of Fathers & Sons* (ABC) and *Teens* (WB).

ACCOLADES

"Documentary at its most illuminating and succinct"
—*Los Angeles Times*

"As the camera jiggles and the bullets fly one comes as close to combat as one will ever get in the movie theater."
—*San Francisco Examiner*



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