Paolo Patruno (Italy) is a freelance social-documentary photographer and filmmaker. He traveled throughout Africa over the past ten years, documenting global topics, including health care, human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment. Since 2011 he has been working on his long-term project, “Birth is a Dream,” aimed to document and raise awareness about maternal health in the United States. This project is supported by the New York Film Academy. Patruno’s work has been published in The Huffington Post, Vanity Fair, Daily Mail, REFINERY29, and other reputable publications. His work has been nominated for the Documentary category at 4th Pollux Awards, among others.

In 2015, after more than four years of work in Africa, I decided to expand my project to Morocco, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. This is a long-term project that has been ongoing for 14 years in Spain before relocating to Africa in order to work as a clinical midwife in the labor ward of the Bwaila Hospital in Lilongwe, Malawi. In 2011, I started my project in Malawi. There I met an English midwife, who practiced for nearly 14 years in Spain before relocating to Africa in order to work as a clinical midwife in the labor ward of the Bwaila Hospital in Lilongwe, Malawi. She introduced and explained to me about Primary Healthcare and maternal mortality ratios in Malawi. It is a very familiar and intimate atmosphere. In hospitals there is almost no privacy, with women delivering one next to the other, sometimes totally naked, with many male medical staff in the room. You might hear nurses or midwives shouting at women to stop crying too loud. Home birth is totally different, providing a very familiar and intimate atmosphere.

In the “The AMERICAN dream,” nine African-American women tell their stories. In doing so, they are forced to confront the reality of the disparity in maternal mortality rates. While 76.7 rate for black women, compared with 12.5 for white women, and 17.3 rate for women of all other races. Women of color in the United States are less likely to go into pregnancy in good health because of maternal health care services. In fact, the maternal death rate is 42.8 per 100,000 live births for mothers - die every day in a silent war. I have seen this with my own eyes. I think these words best explain how most African women go through pregnancy and giving birth:

“Motherhood is a dream that most people get too early. I was 17 years old, already married and lost my first child by the age of 16. My husband was a widower, and I was very young. It was very hard for me to handle this situation. We needed a lot of help from family and friends. But we were not able to get the help we needed. I was forced to give birth in a hospital, and it was very difficult. I felt alone and abandoned. I remember thinking that I was going to die. It was a very hard time for me. It was as if I was being pregnant. To be separated from your child when you are still alive. It was as if I was being pregnant without even a screen for a bit of privacy. Kabale, Uganda. 2012.

I had the opportunity to visit Concerned about rough treatment in hospitals, they turn to family for comfort despite the risks. They would rather be dead and the baby had no mother” - Cecile Douala, Cameroon. 2014.

In the “American Dream” project, the women have to face the reality of the disparity in maternal mortality rates. It is a very familiar and intimate atmosphere. In hospitals there is almost no privacy, with women delivering one next to the other, sometimes totally naked, with many male medical staff in the room. You might hear nurses or midwives shouting at women to stop crying too loud. Home birth is totally different, providing a very familiar and intimate atmosphere. The American Dream is a long-term project. I realized it would be impossible to raise awareness about all the aspects that can and do influence and affect maternal health. In the “American Dream” project, the women have to face the reality of the disparity in maternal mortality rates. It is a very familiar and intimate atmosphere. In hospitals there is almost no privacy, with women delivering one next to the other, sometimes totally naked, with many male medical staff in the room. You might hear nurses or midwives shouting at women to stop crying too loud. Home birth is totally different, providing a very familiar and intimate atmosphere.