LOGLINE: Chocolate Milk examines how the socioeconomic factors of race and sex influence breastfeeding rates for black mothers in America through the stories of three women.

SYNOPSIS: From sexual objectification of women's breasts to insufficient maternity leave, there are many reasons why mothers in the U.S. struggle with the decision to breastfeed. Yet advocates argue the long-term health benefits to infants - reduced risk of chronic disease, cancer, asthma and obesity - far outweigh the challenges. Add to this the racial, economic and social disparities that plague the African American community, and it’s no wonder African American women breastfeed at significantly lower rates. Chocolate Milk examines how the socioeconomic factors of race and sex influence breastfeeding rates for black mothers in America through the stories of three women.

TAMI is a first time mother who wants to breastfeed. We follow Tami during her prenatal visits with an obstetrician as she makes plans for a hospital delivery. She has no family history of breastfeeding and only a basic knowledge of what to expect with giving birth and initiating breastfeeding. She develops pre-eclampsia a few weeks before her due date, forcing her to undergo an emergency cesarean section. The surgery increases the risk that Tami will have difficulty initiating breastfeeding. We witness the challenges she faces, from weaning her child off infant formula and postpartum depression to establishing a bond before returning to work. Chocolate Milk shows how Tami navigates the health system, single motherhood, and inadequate maternity leave to reach her breastfeeding goals.

RACHA is a third generation midwife. She supports breastfeeding and natural birth, encouraging women to trust their bodies and themselves. A divorcee with three children, Rachael started The Community Birthing Center with a sliding scale for low income families. Rachael recalls the derogatory names people gave to the first black birthing center in Los Angeles, with many calling it the “hood” birthing center. Racial discrimination, grueling hours and client abuse of the sliding scale put Rachael out of business. We meet Rachael as she faces the decision on whether to rebuild her midwifery practice. Chocolate Milk follows Rachael to show how closely breastfeeding success is linked to a woman's birthing experience and to illustrate the importance of self-care in a country where burnout is all too common for health providers.

LYDIA is a lactation educator. She provides breastfeeding support as an employee at the WIC (Women Infant and Children) center in Watts, a federally-funded program that ensures proper nutrition for low-income mothers and their children. Inspired by her own challenges with nursing her son and the misinformation she received after giving birth, Lydia dreams of becoming an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). But without a college education the road to certification is long and expensive. New exam prerequisites make access to the profession difficult, leaving many African American women unable to provide the advanced levels of lactation counseling and care so desperately needed by their communities. Chocolate Milk follows Lydia as she balances her clients at work and college courses at night to achieve her dream of becoming an IBCLC.

Chocolate Milk examines the influence of race and sex on breastfeeding rates for African American mothers through these women's stories to explore breastfeeding's decline, the undue health burden this places on black infants, and the struggle to bring it back as a cultural norm.