

AMERICAN MASTERS



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***American Masters* Premieres *Renegades*, A New Documentary Short Series About Disabled Icons in October on PBS**

*Hosted by award-winning musician **Lachi**, the groundbreaking series is brought to life by the industry's largest disabled filmmaking team*

(NEW YORK, NY) – July 26, 2024 – [One in four](#) American adults have disabilities, yet those with disabilities remain underrepresented in the media. On the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ***American Masters***, ITVS and Inspiration Films have announced the launch of ***Renegades***, a new digital series of five documentary short films showcasing the lives and cultural contributions of little-known historical figures with disabilities. Hosted by award-winning musician and disability rights champion **Lachi**, ***Renegades*** premieres Tuesdays, October 1 – October 29 on the ***American Masters* YouTube channel, [PBS.org](https://pbs.org) and the [PBS App](#)** in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Through authentic portrayals of people with disabilities, ***Renegades*** offers a vibrant and experiential understanding of disability history and encourages exploration of the societal and interpersonal values of both non-disabled people and those with

disabilities. **Renegades** features World War II veteran and **U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye** (1924-2012), the country's highest-ranking Asian American political figure for nearly 50 years; street musician and champion for disabled parents **Celestine Tate Harrington** (1955-1998); civil rights and disability rights champion **Brad Lomax** (1950-1984), a key participant in the historic 504 sit-in of 1977; pianist and composer **Thomas Wiggins** (1849-1908), the first Black musician to perform at the White House; and science fiction and fantasy editor **Judy-Lynn Del Rey** (1943-1986), who published books from sci-fi luminaries such as Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, and even George Lucas' "Star Wars" in novel form. Piloted in 2021, **Renegades** previously featured race car driver and stunt woman [Kitty O'Neil](#) (1946-2018), known in the 1970s as "the fastest woman in the world."

The series is created by acclaimed writer and director Day Al-Mohamed, co-founder of the disabled filmmakers organization FWD-Doc, and producer of *unseen*; the series is produced by Amanda Upson, interim director of FWD-Doc and producer of *A Long March*; and executive produced by Charlotte Mangin, creator of **American Masters' *Unladylike2020*** and [Searching for Augusta Savage](#). Ryan Camarda, director of *Royalty Free: The Music of Kevin MacLeod*, also joins as producer for the series.

"We are excited to bring **Renegades** to audiences nationwide," said Day Al-Mohamed. "This series not only showcases the remarkable stories of disabled cultural icons, but also experiences that are still very much relevant to all Americans – both disabled and non-disabled – today. **Renegades** is a rarity in the industry with its majority-disabled film team, allowing us to tell authentic and nuanced stories about the disabled community."

"**Renegades** focuses on authentic and compelling storytelling, using a talent incubator model of filmmaking," stated Amanda Upson. "Our team boasts the greatest number of disabled directors, producers, screenwriters and field production and postproduction crew working on the same series, underscoring the historical significance of this project. Renegades and Inspiration Films are leading the industry in hiring disabled talent and telling their stories. There is no lack of talent among disabled filmmakers, just lack of access to the industry."

“**Renegades** sets a new standard for representation and accessibility in media. We have spent the past year mentoring filmmakers with disabilities, most of whom are creating work for PBS for the very first time.” said Charlotte Mangin, executive producer. “Each short film will include audio descriptions, extended audio descriptions, open captioning, and onscreen ASL interpretation to enhance the viewing experience.”

“**Renegades** is a crucial part of the cultural movement to reclaim and celebrate disability narratives in media and pop culture. The heroes and histories we uncover in this series have remained hidden for far too long and amplifying these stories to the masses – particularly from the perspective of a majority disabled crew – will change how audiences view the Disability identity. Most importantly, it will be the authentic representation that disabled people like me truly deserve, having rarely or never seen themselves reflected in the mainstream,” shared host and narrator Lachi.

To extend the impact of **Renegades**, the WNET Group’s Kids’ Media and Education team will produce accessible, standards-aligned history and social studies educational resources based on the series for grades 6-12.

The Daniel K. Inouye episode is directed, written, and produced by Tammy “TS” Botkin, and co-written and produced by Angel Williams. The Celestine Tate Harrington episode is directed and produced by Cashmere Jasmine, and written and produced by Marsha Hallager. The Brad Lomax episode is directed and produced by Markus Essien, and written and produced by Cara Reedy. The Thomas Wiggins episode is directed and produced by Marsha Hallager, produced by Tameka Citchen-Spruce and written by Diane J. Wright. The Judy-Lynn Del Rey episode is directed by Jeremy Hsing, produced by Ryan Camarda, and written by Colin Buckingham. The series is edited by Danya Abt, Nancy Chidi and Claudia Ramirez, with animations and motion graphics by Adriano Araújo dos Reis Botega and Amelia Bianchi. Original music by Ethical Music Entertainment/TheRing. The accessibility elements are created by D-PAN (Deaf Professional Artist Network) and Social Audio Description Collective.

Renegades is part of the **American Masters** [Visibility, Inclusion and Accessibility \(VIA\) Initiative](#), which builds upon the series' commitment to presenting programming for, by and about disabled communities. Launched in 2023, the VIA Initiative also includes enhanced accessibility features for all programming distributed by **American Masters**. Beginning with the premiere of *Hopper: An American love story* in January 2024, **American Masters** began creating accessible online versions of each new program and its accompanying trailer, with extended audio description, open captioning and onscreen ASL interpretation.

Now in its 38th season on PBS, **American Masters** illuminates the lives and creative journeys of our nation's most enduring artistic giants – those who have left an indelible impression on our cultural landscape – through compelling, unvarnished stories. Setting the standard for documentary film profiles, the series has earned widespread critical acclaim: 28 Emmy Awards – including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special – two News & Documentary Emmys, 14 Peabodys, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards, an Oscar, and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of more than 250 masters past and present, the [American Masters website](#) offers full episodes, film outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the podcast “American Masters: Creative Spark,” educational resources, digital original series and more. The series is a production of The WNET Group.

American Masters is available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS App](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](#). For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](#) website.

Renegades is a production of Inspiration Films, LLC and ITVS in association with American Masters Pictures. For Inspiration Films Charlotte Mangin is executive producer, Day Al-Mohamed is senior producer, and Amanda Upson is series producer. For ITVS Carrie Lozano is executive producer and Susan Cohen is supervising producer. For **American Masters** Michael Kantor is executive producer, Julie Sacks is series producer, and Joe Skinner is digital lead.

Major funding for **Renegades** is provided by The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with additional support from the Rosalind P. Walter Foundation, Anderson Family Charitable Fund, Philip & Janice Levin Foundation, Ambrose Monell Foundation, Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, The Charina Endowment Fund, Marc Haas Foundation, and Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III.

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Websites:

<http://pbs.org/americanmasters>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/americanmasters>

X: [@PBSAmerMasters](https://twitter.com/PBSAmerMasters)

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/pbsamericanmasters>

TikTok: <https://tiktok.com/@pbsamericanmasters?lang=en>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/americanmasters>

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About Lachi:

[Lachi](#) is an award-winning recording artist and songwriter who advocates for disability inclusion, equity, and accessibility in the music and entertainment industry. Her journey as a born-blind musician has deeply influenced her advocacy work, making her a powerful and relentless voice for change. She is a GRAMMY Board Governor, "USA Today's 2024 Woman of the Year," "Afrotech's Future 50 Changemaker," Founder and President of [RAMPD](#) – a global network of music creators and professionals with disabilities, and host of the YouTube series "Off Beat - Going Blind & Staying Fabulous in NYC." Lachi has collaborated with artists such as Snoop Dogg, Styles P, DJ Maduk, Zafrir Ifrach, and Maxime Karouchi; she has amassed millions of streams on Spotify alone. Hailed a "new champion in advocacy" by Billboard and "a dedicated foot soldier for disability pride" by Forbes, she's held talks with the White House and the U.N. She has been featured in the New York Times, Huffington Post, Essence, Vogue, Hollywood Reporter, and on Good Morning America for celebrating intersectionality through her music, storytelling, and fashion, and for her upbeat and unapologetic brand of disability pride.

About FWD-Doc:

FWD-Doc (Filmmakers with Disabilities, www.fwd-doc.org) is a global, intersectional community of

over 1000 disabled creators and allies working in media to build a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable entertainment industry. We cultivate and champion disabled media-makers, and we elevate stories by, for, and about disabled people. For more information, go to <https://www.fwd-doc.org/>. To download FWD-Doc's Toolkit for Inclusion and Accessibility: <https://www.fwd-doc.org/toolkit>. To download FWD-Doc's Engagement Pack: <https://www.fwd-doc.org/engagement-pack>. To read the Accessibility Scorecard Impact Report or sign up for the Film Event Accessibility Scorecard: <https://www.fwd-doc.org/accessibility-scorecard-impact-report-2023>.

About Inspiration Films:

Created by Charlotte Mangin and Day Al-Mohamed, Inspiration Films develops and produces vibrant, community-focused documentary films with a specific focus on disability culture and history. **Renegades** marks the latest addition to their individual portfolios of work recognized for thoughtful and unique storytelling.

About ITVS:

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, [visit itvs.org](http://visit.itvs.org)

About The WNET Group:

[The WNET Group](#) creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse audiences nationwide. It is the community-supported home of New York's [THIRTEEN](#)—America's flagship PBS station—[WLIW21](#), THIRTEEN PBSKids, WLIW World and Create; [NJ PBS](#), New Jersey's statewide public television network; Long Island's only NPR station WLIW-FM; [ALL ARTS](#), the arts and culture media provider; and newsroom [NJ Spotlight News](#). Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group's award-winning productions include signature PBS series **Nature**, **Great Performances**, **American Masters** and **Amanpour and Company** and trusted local news programs **MetroFocus** and **NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi**. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group's award-winning Kids' Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series **Cyberchase**, interactive **Mission US** history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading nonprofit public media producer for nearly 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including multiplatform initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

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