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INDEPENDENT LENS RIDES ALONG ON A FATHER AND SON'S 350-MILE CYCLING JOURNEY IN "BIKE VESSEL," PREMIERING FEBRUARY 24 ON PBS

After Several Health Crises, a 70-Year-Old Man Embarks on a Transformative Long-Distance Cycling Trip With His Son, Finding a Deeper Connection and a Renewed Appreciation for Their Health

(San Francisco, CA) December 19, 2024—A heartwarming documentary on kinship, connection, Black health, and deep familial love, "Bike Vessel," premieres February 24, 2025, on INDEPENDENT LENS. "Bike Vessel" tells the story of a 70-year-old defying health statistics and takes a hard look at the health inequities plaguing Black men, all while showcasing a touching father-and-son, 350-mile cycling adventure as they embark on a life-changing health journey together.

The film follows director Eric D. Seals as he proposes an ambitious idea to his father: bike together from St. Louis to Chicago—350 miles in 4 days. Twenty years after Eric's father, Donnie Seals Sr., almost died and had three open-heart surgeries, he makes a miraculous health recovery after discovering his love for bicycling, bringing his son Eric along with him. Eric, approaching the age at which his father first underwent surgery and facing similar health conditions, experiences moments of self-reflection within this period of parent-child intimacy.

"We always intended to make 'Bike Vessel' an easily accessible film, and we know that bringing our story to INDEPENDENT LENS will allow us to reach our main goal for making this film—to educate the Black community on prevalent health issues," said Eric D. Seals. "We hope that after watching the film, the community will have a greater sense of love for their bodies, love for their health, and hopefully, a new curiosity of exercise through cycling or whatever their 'vessel' may be."

Donnie Seals, Sr. enjoyed southern delicacies, drinking, and smoking until 1995, when he almost died. He underwent his first open-heart surgery before age 50 and had three quadruple bypass surgeries over subsequent years,

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leading to his early retirement. At the age of 70, Donnie now bicycles more than 30 miles each day. “Bike Vessel” serves as a meditation on kinship and connection, centered on a father who reclaims his life against all odds. It also examines health disparities among Black men, who statistically have the lowest life expectancy and highest death rate of all racial and ethnic groups. The film sheds light on issues within American medical culture, from complex and unaffordable insurance systems to racism and discrimination in healthcare.

“Bike Vessel” debuts on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on February 24, 2025, at 10 p.m. (check local listings). The film will be available to stream on the [PBS app](#).

“Bike Vessel” is directed and edited by Eric D. Seals and produced by Donnie Seals Jr. and Resita Cox.

Visit the [“Bike Vessel”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Eric D. Seals, Director/Editor

Eric D. Seals is a seasoned director and cinematographer with over 10 years of experience since starting his career at ESPN. He's a Diverse Voices in Docs fellow with Kartemquin and a Netflix directing and producing fellow. Eric teaches production at DePaul University and heads Digifé, a company focusing on documentaries and social impact stories.

Donnie Seals Jr., Producer

Donnie Seals Jr., an editor at Digifé, found his passion for documentary filmmaking after watching “Hoop Dreams.” He was the editor for “Freedom Hill,” which is streaming on World Channel. He's currently directing “The Gospel of Lou Della,” the story of gospel music and one of its prominent change-makers on the South Side of Chicago.

Resita Cox, Producer

Resita Cox is an Emmy® Award-winning director. In 2023, she won a Regional Emmy for directing “Firsthand: Life After Prison.” Her film “Freedom Hill” tackles environmental racism. Resita was a 2021 Hulu/Kartemquin Accelerator Fellow, holds an MFA from Northwestern University, and was named a 2022 Esteemed Artist by the City of Chicago.

Director	Eric D. Seals
Producers	Resita Cox Donnie Seals Jr.
Executive Producers	Lois Vossen

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS app. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens

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

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