**THE INVISIBLE SHIELD Premieres Tuesday, March 26, 2024 on PBS and Streaming on PBS.org and the PBS App**

**Four-Part Series from Award-Winning RadicalMedia Explores the Hidden Public Health Infrastructure in America That Saves Lives Every Day**

ARLINGTON, VA; Feb. XX, 2024 – **THE INVISIBLE SHIELD**, a new four-part documentary series from RadicalMedia made possible by Bloomberg Philanthropies, reveals how the field of public health has saved countless lives in the U.S., protecting people from the constant threat of disease and increasing lifespans. The series explores the hidden public health infrastructure that makes modern life possible. It highlights the thousands of unsung heroes — physicians, nurses, scientists, activists, reformers, engineers, and government officials — who work together to improve health outcomes, from the days of cholera and smallpox through the most recent battle with COVID-19. **THE INVISIBLE SHIELD** premieres Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 10-11 p.m. ET ([check local listings](http://www.pbs.org/tv_schedules/)) on PBS, with all four episodes available for streaming on [PBS.org](http://www.pbs.org/) and the [PBS App.](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/)

“The complexity of continued human existence on this planet could never be more challenging. Producing THE INVISIBLE SHIELD series allowed us to appreciate how much we have to thank the dedicated public health sector for tirelessly saving us from ourselves,” **said Jon Kamen, Chairman and CEO, RadicalMedia.** “The series unpacks just the tip of the iceberg, both historically and to this day, of the importance the role of public health has played in protecting society from the inevitable impact of a constantly increasing population. Producing this series during an unprecedented pandemic, we ourselves discovered and appreciated more than ever, the constant application of science and discipline that this community of individuals and organizations have orchestrated to continue to expand and practice this lifesaving work.”

“Anyone who buckles a seatbelt, eats a meal without trans fats, or works in a smoke-free workplace benefits from public health, even if they don’t realize it,” **said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies, WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and Injuries, and 108th mayor of New York City.** “Public health policies save and improve millions of lives, but too often, their power is undervalued and misunderstood. This new series shines a much-needed spotlight on public health’s extraordinary successes – and the heroes who make them possible, every day.”

“On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, this series presents a candid and pragmatic look at public health, including the challenges and issues of the past that are still relevant and how far we’ve come,” **said Sylvia Bugg, Chief Programming Executive and General Manager, General Audience Programming at PBS.** “We hope that, as healing is taking place post-pandemic, our audiences will walk away with an even deeper awareness of the function of public health and have greater hope for the future.”

Today most Americans live in a place where the water is safe to drink, and the food is safe to eat. Americans survive many childhood diseases that used to be fatal, and their immune systems are well prepared from a lifetime of standard inoculations. Much of this is taken for granted, but it wasn’t always so.

“Imagine a world where no vaccines existed, where a third of your children died before reaching adulthood. This was the reality of all human life until just about a hundred years ago,” **said Steven Johnson, author of *Extra Life* and *The Ghost Map*.** “I’ve come to think of public health as a kind of invisible shield that has been quietly protecting us, extending our lives, keeping our children safe.”

Using vivid character portraits, interviews, and archival elements, **THE INVISIBLE SHIELD** shows that public health is a progressive and revolutionary movement, whose successes have traditionally come from a diverse, cross-disciplinary coalition of dedicated public servants, all working together to improve the conditions of society.

Offering insights from previous pandemics and public health crises — cholera, smallpox, HIV/AIDS, the opioid overdose crisis, and more — the series looks to history to show how public health practices have emerged over centuries as humanity confronted problems arising from urbanization, industrialization, and globalization. It examines public health’s major achievements — including the more than 30-year increase in life expectancy between 1900 and 2000 and the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s. Public health challenges are also explored, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlights how misunderstood, undervalued, and underfunded public health is.

Anchored by interviews with impressive frontline leaders and global experts, including those from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and other leading public health authorities and institutions, **THE INVISIBLE SHIELD** documents the field’s dedication and commitment in times of crisis, as well as the preparations needed for future health challenges. It offers expert-backed solutions and makes the case for more data-driven policy and support for the hidden but vital global health infrastructure that works to keep humanity alive every day.

**Episode 1: “The Old Playbook” – Tuesday, March 26, 10-11 p.m. ET (and streaming)**

Public health has transformed human life, silently protecting us from disease and fatalities. Interventions large and small — from quarantines to crosswalks, vaccines to modern sanitation — have allowed American society to flourish and keep illness, injury, and death at bay. When the global pandemic emerges in 2020, the once-invisible shield of public health is quickly overburdened and at the center of a heated debate about its purpose and role in society. Public health officials work against a ticking clock to implement a playbook that has been adapted and refined since the 14th century.

**Episode 2: “Follow the Data” – Tuesday, April 9, 10-11 p.m. ET (and streaming)**

Data has been an essential public health tool since at least the 17th century, when cities began regularly recording mortality statistics. Data science has guided public health policy since the earliest practices of data collection in the 1800s to identify the spread of disease. It continues to be critical to public health workers as they fight the COVID-19 pandemic. But with public health authority delegated to the 50 states, forming a national response to the virus proves difficult.

**Episode 3: “Inoculation & Inequity” – Streaming as of March 26**

U.S. public health officials face the headwinds of disinformation, science skepticism, and government distrust as they begin the monumental task of vaccinating the public against COVID-19. These obstacles, coupled with historical injustices and inequities in communities of color, lead to significant public apprehension, forcing public health officials to refine their approach. From the early days of inoculation in the late 1700s through the rapid development of the COVID-19 vaccine, scientists have achieved extraordinary feats to combat, contain, and eradicate disease — but solutions only work if people trust the science.

**Episode 4: “The New Playbook” – Streaming as of March 26**

In 2019, the U.S. was ranked by the Global Health Security Index as the country best positioned to manage an infectious disease outbreak. Less than a year later, the U.S. proved uniquely vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality, structural racism, inadequate health care access, insufficient job protections, and a badly neglected public health system all contributed to catastrophic systemic failures. Excess mortality, on the rise before 2020, surged during the pandemic. These “deaths of despair” — often associated with suicide, drug use, and alcohol misuse — represent a social fracturing and a loss of hope across communities.

All four episodes of **THE INVISIBLE SHIELD** will be available to stream on March 26, 2024, on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the PBS App, available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

**THE INVISIBLE SHIELD** is a RadicalMedia production.

**About RadicalMedia**

RadicalMedia is one of the world’s leading producers of premium content. The company develops, creates & produces film, television, advertising, design, digital and immersive experiences. Most recently, the company is celebrating their fourth overall Academy Award nomination and second win with Summer of Soul on Disney+ & Hulu, which has been recognized as one of the most awarded documentaries in history. RadicalMedia’s other Academy Award for Fog of War and two other nominations for Paradise Lost on HBO; What Happened, Miss Simone? on Netflix; and the Emmy-winning film of Hamilton on Broadway on Disney+; are amongst many other successful projects they’ve produced and continue to produce for companies such as AppleTV, Netflix, HBO, Disney+, Showtime, History, National Geographic, Peacock, and Hulu. Fluent in every discipline of storytelling across all media platforms, RadicalMedia has attained industry-wide recognition beyond the Academy Awards and Emmy® wins with multiple Golden Globes, BAFTAs, Independent Spirit Awards, Peabodys, Grammys®, The Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award for Communication Design, Cannes Lion Palme d’Or and just about every accolade associated with the advertising, marketing, and entertainment industry. [www.radicalmedia.com](http://www.radicalmedia.com)

**About Bloomberg Philanthropies**

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on creating lasting change in five key areas: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg’s giving, including his foundation, corporate, and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a philanthropic consultancy that advises cities around the world. In 2023, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed $3 billion. For more information, please visit [bloomberg.org,](https://www.bloomberg.org/) sign up for our [newsletter,](https://www.bloomberg.org/sign-up/) or follow us on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bloombergdotorg/), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bloomberg-philanthropies), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@bloombergdotorg), [Threads](https://www.threads.net/@bloombergdotorg), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bloombergdotorg/), and [X](https://twitter.com/bloombergdotorg).

**About PBS**

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 42 million adults on linear primetime television, more than 15 million users on PBS-owned streaming platforms, and 56 million people view PBS content on social media, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’s broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to[PBS LearningMedia](http://pbslearningmedia.org/) for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. As the number one educational media brand,[PBS KIDS](http://pbskids.org/) helps children 2-8 build critical skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality content on TV — including a PBS KIDS channel — and streaming free on[pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/) and the[PBS KIDS Video app](https://pbskids.org/apps/pbs-kids-video.html), games on the[PBS KIDS Games app](https://pbskids.org/apps/pbs-kids-games.html), and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at[PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs),[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/pbs/?hl=en), or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or by following [PBS Communications on X](https://twitter.com/PBS_PR) (formerly Twitter).

– PBS –

CONTACTS:

**Cara White / Mary Lugo, CaraMar, Inc.**

[cara.white@mac.com](mailto:cara.white@mac.com); [lugo@negia.net](mailto:lugo@negia.net)

**Chelsie Pope, PBS**  
[cepope@pbs.org](mailto:cepope@pbs.org)

**Veronica Lewin, Bloomberg Philanthropies**

[veronical@bloomberg.org](mailto:veronical@bloomberg.org)

*For images and additional up-to-date information on this and other PBS programs, visit PBS PressRoom at* [*pbs.org/pressroom*](http://pressroom.pbs.org/)*.*