

# UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?

For Immediate release

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## TOP BROADCAST JOURNALISM HONOR GOES TO DOCUMENTARY ON HEALTH INEQUITIES

**San Francisco, January 15, 2009** - An Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award for excellence in broadcast journalism will be given to *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, the groundbreaking documentary series exploring the root causes of America's alarming class and racial inequities in health. The duPont-Columbia Awards are considered the most prestigious in broadcast journalism, the equivalent of the Pulitzer Prizes.

*Unnatural Causes* crisscrosses the country exploring how the social conditions in which we are born, live and work can get under the skin and profoundly shape health and longevity, even more than behaviors, genes or medical care. The four-hour series challenges many fundamental beliefs about what makes Americans healthy – or sick – and suggests new remedies for an ailing society that ranks 29<sup>th</sup> in the world in life expectancy and 30<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality. Unlike Michael Moore's *SICKO*, *Unnatural Causes* is not about health *care* but rather why so many of us get sick in the first place.

*Unnatural Causes* was broadcast by PBS in the spring of 2008, presented by the National Minority Consortia of public television. Since then, more than 12,000 community dialogues, policy forums, trainings, town hall meetings and other events built around the series have been convened around the country, expanding the nation's dialogue over health and what we can and should do to tackle health inequities. 300 California state legislators, officials and others, for example, participated in a screening and forum in the State Capitol this Wednesday, January 14.

"We are thrilled by this honor," said Larry Adelman, the series creator and executive producer and co-director of California Newsreel. "It reflects a growing recognition that meaningful jobs that pay a living wage, affordable housing, quality schools, racial justice, safe and supportive communities, even tax policy, are health issues every bit as important as diet, smoking and exercise."

"As the recession deepens, *Unnatural Causes* reminds us that the Depression also brought some of the most far-reaching health programs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: social security, collective bargaining and the regulation of banking and business," added Christine Herbes-Sommers, series senior producer, of Vital Pictures.

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Katie Couric will host this year's duPont-Columbia Award ceremony which will take place in New York on Thursday, January 22. Among the other 12 winners are Christiane Annapour and CNN's series on the global rise of religious fundamentalism, *God's Warriors*, ABC News' combat reporting in eastern Afghanistan, and This American Life's prescient story, *The Giant Pool of Money*, unraveling the subprime mortgage crisis. WFAA-TV Houston will be awarded the Gold Baton for its outstanding investigative reporting.

A documentary on the award winners called *Telling the Truth: The Best in Broadcast Journalism*, hosted by ABC News' Bob Woodruff, will be broadcast by many PBS stations beginning January 15 (check local listings).

*Unnatural Causes* was produced by San Francisco's **California Newsreel** ([www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)), the country's oldest non-profit documentary production and distribution center, now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year, in association with **Vital Pictures** of Boston ([www.vitalpix.com](http://www.vitalpix.com)).

"Thanks to our incredible team of producers, the stories and people captured on camera were stunning, remarkable, moving. It's a much more emotional series than I thought we'd create," said series co-executive producer Llew Smith of Vital Pictures.

DVDs of *Unnatural Causes* can be ordered from California Newsreel at [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org) while video clips, backgrounders, fact sheets and other health equity resources are available from the series' companion web site: [www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org).

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**For more information** on *Unnatural Causes*, visit [www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org) .

**For more information** on the duPont-Columbia Awards and the 2009 winners, visit:  
[www.dupont.org](http://www.dupont.org) .

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**CREDITS:** *Larry Adelman, series creator and executive producer; Llewellyn Smith, co-executive producer; Christine Herbes-Sommers, series senior producer; Kimberlee Bassford, Franziska Blome, Julie Crawford, James M. Fortier, Sativa January, Ellie Lee, Randall MacLowry, Patricia Garcia-Rios, María Teresa Rodríguez, James Rutenbeck, Eric Stange, Tracy Heather Strain, producers; Chuck Scott, Andrea Williams, William Anderson, Bernice Schneider, editors; Claudio Ragazzi, music; Jean Cheng, web site producer; Rachel Poulain, director of outreach; McKinney & Associates, publicity (for complete credits: [www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org)).*

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