

A four-hour documentary series exploring our socio-economic and racial inequities in health



Airing four consecutive Thursdays, March 27 to April 17, 2008 (check local listings)

UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?

Hour Two

WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS / BECOMING AMERICAN *Hour Two airs Thursday, April 3, 10pm on PBS (check local listings)*

Hour Two contains two segments. *When the Bough Breaks* examines the enigma of the Black-white infant mortality gap, while *Becoming American* sheds light on the shifting health status of newly arrived Latino immigrants.

WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS (1st Segment)

Why do infant mortality rates among African Americans remain more than twice as high as white Americans? Although birth outcomes are generally better for those with higher education and income, Black women with college degrees are still more likely to give birth prematurely than white women who drop out of high school. Researchers are circling in on a provocative explanation: the chronic stress of racism can become embedded in the body, taking a heavy toll on African American families and their children even before they leave the womb.



VOICES & EXPERTS

- Kim Anderson, a successful Atlanta executive and lawyer, has always maintained a healthy lifestyle, but she gave birth prematurely, presenting a life-threatening challenge for her two pound, 13-ounce newborn daughter.
- Drs. Richard David and James Collins are neonatologists specializing in the care of infants born too early or dangerously underweight. Several of their studies point to racism – not genetics – as a key risk factor.

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- Dr. Michael Lu is a UCLA obstetrician and gynecologist, whose “life-course perspective” suggests that the added stress burden of racism over a lifetime, not just during pregnancy, increases the risk of pre-term labor.
- Dr. Camara P. Jones, research director on Social Determinants of Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), measures racism and investigates the structural causes of health inequities.

When the Bough Breaks Credits:

Produced by Tracy Heather Strain, Randall MacLowry, and Eric Stange

Directed by Tracy Heather Strain

BECOMING AMERICAN (2nd Segment)

Recent Mexican immigrants, although typically poorer, tend to be healthier than the average American. But the longer they live here, the worse their relative health becomes, even as their economic status improves. This “Latino paradox” places their children at high risk for obesity, heart disease, and mental illness. What is it about new immigrant communities that shields people from poor health? How can we all learn and benefit from that knowledge? And what erodes this protective shield over time?



Becoming American Credits:

Produced and Directed by

Patricia Garcia Rios and

Maria Teresa Rodriguez

VOICES & EXPERTS

- Amador Bernal arrived in 1984 from his native Mexico to Kennett, Square, Pennsylvania, where he works for \$9 an hour, seven days a week in a local mushroom farm. After almost 25 years in the U.S., Amador Bernal, like many in his community, has never been to a doctor.
- Dr. Steve Larson, who worked with the Kennett Square Mexican community in the early 1990s, has treated and studied the health status of thousands of Latino immigrants.
- Dr. Tony Iton, director of the Alameda County Public Health Department, conducted surveys confirming the “Latino paradox.”
- Margarita Alegría, director of the Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research at Cambridge Health Alliance, led the groundbreaking National Latino and Asian American Study (NIMH).

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REPORTING TIPS

- The Infant Mortality Commission of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute released a series of reports and recommendations on race-based differences in birth outcomes. http://www.jointcenter.org/publications_recent_publications/health/maternal_nutrition_and_infant_mortality_in_the_context_of_relativity

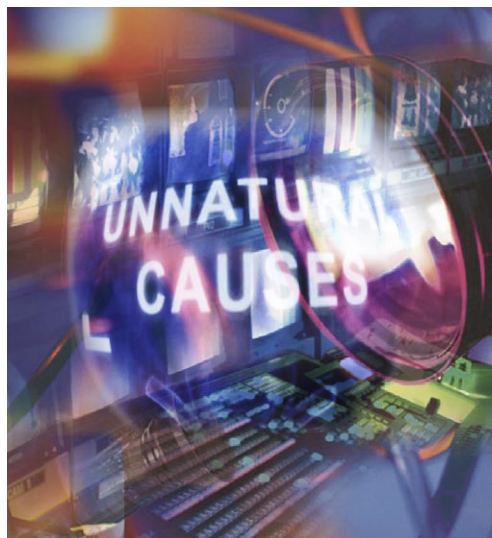


- Richard David and James Collins' research includes their pioneering study comparing African American, African immigrant, and white American birth outcomes.
- Learn more about Dr. Michael Lu's "life-course perspective" in "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes: A Life-Course Perspective", in the *Journal of Maternal Child Health* 2003; 7(1):13-30: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/u818k1g6372g66t7/>
- More on Dr. Iton's research on can be found in *Tackling Health Inequities through Public Health Practice*, a 2005 report compiled by the National Association of County and City Health Officials: http://www.naccho.org/topics/justice/documents/NACCHO_Handbook_hyperlinks_000.pdf
- David Williams, Norman Professor of Public Health at Harvard, is interviewed about racism and health: http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=health_in_black_and_white
- Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, a Quaker town, is one of many communities that is trying to buffer health threats for its growing immigrant population by providing support services and helping residents, new and old, build mutually beneficial networks and ties.

UNNATURAL CAUSES: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?

UNNATURAL CAUSES was produced by the San Francisco-based film production and distribution center California Newsreel, in partnership with Vital Pictures of Boston. It is being presented on PBS by the National Minority Consortia of public television. California Newsreel is the nation's oldest nonprofit documentary production and distribution center, dedicated to disseminating social interest films and videos. Vital Pictures is a documentary company dedicated to social justice issues.

The series has received major funding from the Ford Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting (National Minority Consortia), John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The California Endowment, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute, Kaiser Permanente and Nathan Cummings Foundation. Additional funding provided by Annie E. Casey Foundation, Akonadi Foundation, Falk Foundation, and Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.



Strategic public engagement partners include the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, Opportunity Agenda and the Praxis Project.

Larry Adelman is the series creator and executive producer; Llewellyn M. Smith is co-executive producer and Christine Herbes-Sommers is series senior producer.

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