

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Cara White 843/881-1480 carapub@aol.com
Mary Lugo 770/623-8190 lugo@negia.net
Randall Cole 415/356-8383 x254 randall_cole@itvs.org

*For additional information and/or downloadable images, visit
www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos
Program companion website, visit www.pbs.org/whycantwebeafamilyagain*

**INDEPENDENT LENS'S
"WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?"**

*—Academy Award® Nominated Documentary Follows Family
Struggling With Drug Addiction—*

**Film by Roger Weisberg and Murray Nossel
Airs Nationally on "Independent Lens,"
ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS**

January 27, 2004 at 10 P.M.

(check local listings)

Showing with DOWNPOUR RESURFACING

"A film of searing honesty and power." —THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS



(San Francisco, CA)—Nominated for an Academy Award®, this emotionally-wrenching story reveals how two brothers who were devastated by their mother's addiction and neglect found a way to thrive and redefine what it means to be a family.

Shot over a three-year period, the film follows the lives of teenage Danny and his younger brother Raymond as they cope with their mother's battle with substance abuse. The boys' mother continues to relapse despite several attempts at rehabilitation, and soon her own legal rights as a parent are threatened.

Despite the neglect and disappointment they suffer, these extraordinary boys never give up hope that they will some day live with their mother and be a family again. Fortunately, the boys' grandmother steps into the breach to raise Danny and Raymond. Through it all, the brothers struggle to keep alive their hope for a better future.



There is no Hollywood ending to this story, no easy solutions to a difficult situation. But despite the heartbreaking nature of this scenario, **WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?** isn't just a cautionary tale of the dangers of drug abuse; it's also a source of inspiration, a testament to human determination in the face of impossible odds.

WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? will air nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle, on Tuesday, January 27th at 10 P.M. (check local listings).

Additional information and/or downloadable photographs from **WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?** are available at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos.

The program's interactive companion website at www.pbs.org/whycantwebeafamilyagain features detailed information about the film, including an interview with the filmmakers, cast and crew bios, as well as links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a "talkback" section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

FEATURED APPEARANCES

Erslena Jacob, Daniel and Raymond's grandmother and Kitten's mother. Erslena is also Daniel and Jacob's foster parent.

Daniel Jacob, Raymond's older brother and Kitten's oldest son.

Raymond Jacob, Daniel's younger brother and Kitten's youngest son.

Kitten Jacob, Daniel and Raymond's mother and Erslena's daughter. Kitten has been battling her addiction to drugs for years and frequently lives on the streets.

Florence Jacob, Daniel and Raymond's great-grandmother and Erslena's mother.

Sharoya Llopiz, Center for Family Life after school program director.

Jose Cordero, Daniel's friend and a counselor in training at the Center for Family Life.

Trell Salley, Daniel and Raymond's uncle.

Lolita Jackson-McLeod, Daniel and Raymond's ACS case worker.

Dodd Terry, Daniel and Raymond's Legal Aid Society attorney.

WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? Credits

DIRECTORS

CINEMATOGRAPHY

MUSIC

EDITING

SOUND

PRODUCERS

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Roger Weisberg & Murray Nossel

Edward Marritz

Mark Suozzo

Lisa Shreve

Juan Rodriguez

Roger Weisberg, Murray Nossel & Julie Sacks

Public Policy Productions

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ROGER WEISBERG (Producer / Director) joined Thirteen/WNET in 1977 as a producer of the Emmy®-winning series, *Help Yourself*. He produced dozens of programs on a broad range of subjects including aging, domestic violence, juvenile justice, consumer fraud, health care, the environment, child welfare and urban poverty. Since 1980, he wrote, produced and directed 22 PBS documentaries through his independent production company, Public Policy Productions. These documentaries have won over 80 awards including Peabody, Emmy and duPont-Columbia awards. Some of Weisberg's films are vérité style documentaries with no narration. Others are narrated by prominent actors including Meryl Streep, Helen Hayes and James Earl Jones, as well as distinguished journalists including Marvin Kalb, Jane Pauley and Walter Cronkite. While all of Weisberg's documentaries ultimately were broadcast on national public television, his 1993 documentary, *Road Scholar*, and his 1999 documentary, *Sound And Fury*, had broad theatrical releases before airing on PBS. Weisberg received an Academy Award® nomination in 2001 for *Sound And Fury* and in 2003 for **WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?** His current productions are *Breaking The Cycle*, about the struggles of low-wage workers to lift their families out of poverty, and *Aging Out*, about teens making the transition from foster care to independent living.

MURRAY NOSSEL PH.D (Producer / Director) was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he trained and practiced as a clinical psychologist. He emigrated to the United States in 1990. His foray into ethnographic filmmaking began with a two-year project (1994-96) documenting the stories of persons with AIDS in New York.

Nossel is on the teaching faculty of the Columbia University School of Social Work. In 1996, he embarked on an ethnographic inquiry into the Center for Family Life, a family support program in Brooklyn, New York. This research culminated in his doctoral dissertation about the anthropological implications of time in social work practice. In 1997, Nossel teamed up with Roger Weisberg to make a documentary about the Center for Family Life. This collaboration resulted in two films: *A Brooklyn Family Tale* and the Academy Award® nominated **WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?**

Nossel is also producer/director of *Paternal Instinct*, a vérité documentary which chronicles a gay couple's efforts to have a child with a surrogate mother. It will be aired on BBC and HBO in 2003/2004.



Apart from his role as a documentary filmmaker, Nossel is a founding member of *2 Men Talking*, a storytelling performance which deals with issues of harassment, homophobia, anti-Semitism and AIDS. He has performed *2 Men Talking* in theatrical settings in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Italy. In 2003, *Two Men Talking* will become part of an initiative to address issues of secrecy in South Africa's HIV/ AIDS epidemic.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in *The New Yorker* to write "Watching *Independent Lens* ... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independent-lens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting www.itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

ABOUT PBS

PBS, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is a private, nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 349 public television stations. Serving nearly 90 million people each week, PBS enriches the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services on noncommercial television, the Internet and other media. More information about PBS is available at <http://www.pbs.org>, the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet.



ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.