



## ***Mysteries of Mental Illness*, Compelling Four-Hour Documentary Series from GBH, Explores Mental Illness Past and Present, Including In the Age of Covid, June 22-23 on PBS**

### **Groundbreaking Multiplatform Initiative Kicks Off with Digital Series that Exposes Disparities in Mental Health**

**BOSTON (June 2021)** – One in four people will suffer from a mental illness during their lives and today, the issue is even more pressing with the Covid-19 pandemic. A new multiplatform initiative from GBH launching this month focused on destigmatizing mental illness, explores issues surrounding mental health in science and society. The centerpiece of the initiative is ***Mysteries of Mental Illness***, a four-episode broadcast series presented in two-hour blocks, premiering June 22-23 from 9-11pm Eastern on PBS (check local listings). A 20-episode short-form digital video series, ***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Decolonizing Mental Health***, which explores inequities in access to mental health resources from communities that have been marginalized, will launch on digital platforms and public media's WORLD Channel in advance of the broadcast series. The ***Mysteries of Mental Illness*** initiative also encompasses outreach collaborations with national organizations and public television stations will offer additional ways for audiences to connect with the stories and support resources.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness*** traces the evolution of this complex topic, presenting cutting-edge science and giving voice to contemporary Americans across a spectrum of experiences. Each of the broadcast hours features up-close portraits of individuals sharing their deeply personal stories, as well as important insight from mental health practitioners, experts and scholars. Jeffrey A. Lieberman's book, *Shrinks: The Untold Story of Psychiatry*, was one of the inspirations for ***Mysteries of Mental Illness*** and his is among many voices featured in the series.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Decolonizing Mental Health***, produced by Rada Studio and WORLD Channel, introduces viewers to patients and healthcare providers from underserved communities who speak about their own needs within the mental healthcare system as well as how they access much-needed resources. The series, which consists of 20 three- to five-minute profiles, discusses what a more responsive mental health care system should look like.

"Throughout history, society has grappled with questions about mental health, and, today, Americans are more likely to need services from a mental health professional than any other medical specialty. Yet, the diagnosis of a mental disorder carries a stigma that a heart condition or other physical ailment doesn't," said Denise Dilanni, Senior Executive in Charge. "Through this sweeping initiative, we hope to unravel the longstanding mysteries of mental illness and give voice to people across a spectrum of experiences."

"WORLD Channel is dedicated to bringing stories from underrepresented voices to the forefront on public media. ***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Decolonizing Mental Health*** is about populations whose mental health issues often goes unreported, untreated, or ignored," said

Chris Hastings, Executive Producer, WORLD Channel. “The digital series introduces viewers to mental health practitioners and everyday people changing the narrative for their communities.”

The four-episode ***Mysteries of Mental Illness*** documentary series includes:

***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Evil or Illness?*** – Premieres Tuesday, June 22, at 9pm

For much of history, people living with schizophrenia, like aspiring astrophysicist turned mental health activist Cecilia McGough, would have been seen as a prophet or devil. Yet today, despite struggling with persistent hallucinations and delusions, Cecilia helps hundreds around the world find support and community through her organization, Students with Psychosis. Other current-day profiles include Virginia Fuchs, an Olympics-bound boxer living with OCD, and Lorina Gutierrez, who was committed to a psychiatric hospital until her psychosis was revealed to be a result of an ovarian tumor. The first hour of the documentary series provides a revealing examination of ancient concepts of mental illness and the establishment of psychiatry with the rise of Sigmund Freud.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Who’s Normal?*** – Premieres Tuesday, June 22, at 10pm

This episode delves into how science and societal factors are deeply entwined with our ever-shifting definitions and diagnoses of mental health and illness. The second half of the 20th century brought a struggle to develop mental illness standards rooted in empirical science rather than dogma, including the evolution of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual), which remains the so-called “Bible of Psychiatry” even today, despite what many acknowledge are its deep and fundamental flaws. Profiles include Ryan Mains, a former firefighter and Iraq veteran struggling with PTSD; Mia Yamamoto, born in a Japanese internment camp, who long resisted being labeled mental ill before she became California’s first openly transgender lawyer; and Michael Walrond, a Harlem-based pastor who lives with his own depressive disorder.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness: Rise and Fall of the Asylum*** – Premieres June 23, at 9pm

Mass confinement in mental asylums (some holding up to 19,000 people) and extreme treatments – from lobotomy to coma therapy – were standard treatment for mental illness in the U.S. until a few decades ago. Today, the nation’s largest de-facto mental health facility is Cook County Jail in Chicago, where more than one third of inmates have a mental health diagnosis. As Sheriff Tom Dart attempts to tackle this crisis head-on through a range of mental health treatments and programs, we’ll meet the detainees whose lives hang in the balance and discover the harsh realities of care both in and out of jail.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness: The New Frontiers*** – Premieres June 23, at 10pm

A look at today’s most groundbreaking treatments, based on the latest scientific understanding of the biological underpinnings of mental illness, with profiles of patients undergoing a variety of vanguard treatments. These include: deep brain stimulation surgery; infusions of ketamine – the first new psychiatric drug in decades; and modern electro-convulsive therapy. Alongside cutting-edge treatments, one of the most urgent fronts in the battle against mental illness is the fight for inclusion – a society more open to all kinds of minds and behavior, free from stigma, based on the understanding that mental health exists on a spectrum, and respect for each individual’s right to choose what’s right for them.

***Mysteries of Mental Illness*** is produced by GBH Boston and Pangloss Films. Senior Executive in Charge: Denise Dilanni; Co-Executive Producer: Laurie Donnelly; Directors, Producers and Writers: Peter Yost & Edna Albuquerque. Funding for *Mysteries of Mental Illness* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Johnson & Johnson, the American Psychiatric Association Foundation and Draper, and through the support of PBS viewers.

## **About GBH**

GBH is the leading multiplatform creator for public media in America. As the largest producer of

content for PBS and partner to NPR and PRX, GBH delivers compelling experiences, stories and information to audiences wherever they are. GBH produces digital and broadcast programming that engages, illuminates and inspires, through drama and science, history, arts, culture and journalism. GBH is the creator of such signature programs as MASTERPIECE, ANTIQUES ROADSHOW, FRONTLINE, NOVA, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE and *Arthur* and *Molly of Denali*, as well as GBH WORLD, a catalog of streaming series, podcasts and on-demand video. With studios and a newsroom headquartered in Boston, GBH reaches across New England with GBH 89.7, Boston's Local NPR®; CRB Classical 99.5; and CAI, the Cape and Islands NPR® station. Dedicated to making media accessible to and representative of our diverse culture, GBH is a pioneer in delivering media to audience members who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired. With PBS LearningMedia, GBH creates curriculum-based digital content for educators nationwide. GBH's local programming includes *Boston Public Radio*, *Greater Boston*, *Stories from the Stage*, *Open Studio with Jared Bowen*, *Basic Black* and *High School Quiz Show*. GBH has been recognized with hundreds of the nation's premier broadcast, digital and journalism awards.

### **About CPB**

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,500 locally managed and operated public television and radio stations nationwide. CPB is also the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services. For more information, visit [cpb.org](http://cpb.org), follow us on Twitter [@CPBmedia](https://twitter.com/CPBmedia), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CPBmedia) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cpb) and [subscribe](#) for other updates.

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