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***Brains on Trial with Alan Alda* Explores How Neuroscience Could Change the Law**

The two-part program premieres

Wednesday, September 11 and 18, 2013 at 10 p.m. on PBS

As brain scanning techniques advance, their influence in criminal cases is becoming critically important. An innovative two-part series, ***Brains on Trial with Alan Alda***, airing Wednesday, September 11 and 18, 2013, 10-11 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), explores how the growing ability to separate truth from lies, even decode people's thoughts and memories, may radically affect how criminal trials are conducted in the future.

Brains on Trial centers around the trial of a fictional crime: a robbery staged in a convenience store that has been filmed by the store's security cameras. A teenager stands accused of the attempted murder of the store clerk's wife who was shot during the crime. While the crime is fictional, the trial is conducted before a real federal judge and argued by real practicing attorneys. The program is divided into two-parts: the first hour examines the guilt phase of the trial concluding with the jury's verdict; the second hour looks at the sentencing phase, when arguments for and against a severe sentence are heard.

As the trial unfolds, Alda visits with neuroscientists whose research has already influenced some Supreme Court decisions, as well as Duke University law professor Nita Farahany, a member of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. On these visits, neuroscientists show how functional MRIs and other brain scanning techniques are exploring lie detection, facial recognition, memory decoding, racial bias, brain maturity, intention, and even emotions. The research Alda discovers is at the center of a controversy as to how this rapidly expanding ability to peer into people's minds and decode their thoughts and feelings could – or should – affect trials like the one presented in the program. As DNA evidence has played a major role in exonerating innocent prisoners, ***Brains on Trial*** asks if neuroscience can make the criminal justice system more just.

Alda, a seven-time Emmy Award-winner, has a long-time interest in science and in promoting a greater public understanding of science. He hosted the award-winning PBS series *Scientific American Frontiers* for eleven years, on which he interviewed hundreds of scientists from around the world. In 2010, Alda hosted a science series on PBS called *The Human Spark*. In 2006, for his efforts in helping to broaden the public's understanding of science, he was presented with the National Science Board's Public Service Award. He is a Visiting Professor at Stony Brook University's Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, where he is helping develop innovative programs that enable scientists to communicate more effectively with the public.

"I was surprised to see how well brain scientists are beginning to piece together what's going on inside our heads, sometimes before we're even aware of what's going on in there ourselves," commented Alda. "As I talked with scientists and jurists on this show, I became convinced that before this new research makes its way into the courts, we need to think about what it could mean to our system of justice."

"Lawyers and neuroscientists have never had much in common," said Graham Chedd, executive producer and writer of *Brains on Trial*. "As the ability to peer into people's brains is revealing how minds work when entangled with the law, debating whether brain science should enter the courtroom is becoming more urgent."

Brains on Trial is produced for PBS by The Chedd-Angier Production Company. For Chedd-Angier, Executive Producer/Writer/Director is Graham Chedd. Editor is David Berenson. Associate Producer is Alexandra McHale.

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