

Videos about Prisons & the Criminal Justice System

*** **Aimee's Crossing**

Female juvenile offenders have the fastest growing rates of incarceration; yet, media access to their stories is extremely limited because they are minors. However, Governor Rod Blagojevich, of Illinois, has granted Academy Award® nominated and national Emmy award-winning filmmaker Tod Lending (Nomadic Pictures) unprecedented access to a female juvenile detention center (prison) in Illinois in order to tell this story. In this provocative and very personal feature documentary, AIMEE'S CROSSING, Lending will focus on Aimee Myers, and her family, through her first year of incarceration and a year after her release. Lending will film her therapy sessions and examine how the juvenile justice system contends with her history of domestic and sexual abuse, substance abuse, and mental health issues (she is diagnosed as bi-polar). After Aimee's release, the film will examine what support she requires from her family, the justice system, and her community in order to change her negative behaviors and become a productive citizen.

*** **Autumn's Eyes**

A compelling documentary about a 3-year-old girl who tries to navigate through the harsh reality of severe poverty, her teenage mother's incarceration and looming foster care. Charming, obedient, and unable to fully comprehend the severity of her environment, Autumn is shielded from her own reality. Caught between the innocence of childhood and the growing necessity to be an adult, she represents hope to a family of women caught in the cyclical web of abuse, incarceration and poverty. AUTUMN'S EYES captures this impressionable time in this child's life, and ask the greater question: is there truly hope for a child growing up in these circumstances? Through the perspective of a little girl, AUTUMN'S EYES explores this perilous state of hope.

*** **Barred and Gagged**

*** **Borderline**

An 83-minute documentary that tells the story of Eunice Baker, a borderline mentally retarded woman who was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison for murdering a young child, despite evidence that the death was accidental. After nearly five years in prison, The New York State Appellate Court recently reduced Eunice's sentence to criminally negligent homicide, and she was released on time served.

*** **Circle -- directed by Shanti Thakur, produced by Mark Zannis**

The last few generations of Natives living in Canada's Yukon territories have experienced the degradation of their land and the near destruction of their culture. In response to this, rampant alcohol and drug abuse has resulted in a disproportionately high incarceration rate. Prison has only further hurt the community, so its residents develop sentencing circles as an alternative. The circle brings together the perpetrator, victims, peers, and elders to find alternate methods of sentencing that focus on healing everyone rather than punishing the perpetrator. **Circle** is an excellent illustration of the process of community justice.

*** **Corrections -- directed by Ashley Hunt**

Corrections shows us justice turned to profit: a documentary about the Private Prison and the commercialization of the US prison system. After 30 years of a War on Drugs, Tough-on-Crime politics,

and a seven-fold increase in prisoner populations, the US prison system now desires its own growth for reasons "other than justice." Exploring themes of racism and deepening poverty, Corrections travels to the Dixieland music and helium balloons of a prison trade show; to a poor town in Michigan which lobbies for the money they hope a new prison will bring; to Mississippi, where a community besieged by new prisons remembers the State's leasing of convicts for-profit after the Civil War, and to a juvenile prison in Louisiana, where a private corporation profits from the new laws imprisoning younger children for longer.

(For more information, check <http://www.independentfilms.com/corrections/> or email Ashley Hunt (info_corrections@hotmail.com))

*** **Cruel and Unusual** -- the film explores the plight of transgender women who are exposed to gender violence because of their placement in men's prisons despite their gender identification.

*** **Deadline**

Illinois, Fall 2002: Governor George Ryan faces shocking findings about flaws in his state's capital punishment system that call his long-held beliefs into question. Suddenly, he must make one of the most difficult decisions of his life—to ignore this disturbing evidence, or to transform the entire Illinois capital punishment system. The stakes of this decision are the lives of over 170 people, and Ryan's own political career. And he has only until January to issue his final decision. DEADLINE captures the ensuing dramatic series of events as they unfold.

*** **Every Child is Born a Poet**

An incendiary mix of documentary, poetry, storytelling, drama, and performance, Every Child is Born a Poet explores the life and work of Piri Thomas, the 75 year-old Afro-Cuban-Puerto Rican author of the classic autobiographical novel, *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). The film traces Thomas' path from childhood to manhood in New York City's Spanish Harlem, El Barrio, from the 1930's through the 1960's: his parents' immigrant experience, home life during the Great Depression, membership in barrio youth gangs, his struggle to come to terms with his mixed-racial identity, travels as a teen-age merchant marine, his heroin addiction, his notorious armed robbery of a Greenwich Village nightclub, his six years spent in prison, and his emergence as a writer.

*** **The Farm -- directed by Jonathan Stack and Elizabeth Garbus**

The Farm focuses on the lives of six inmates at Angola State Prison. George Crawford, 22, has just arrived with the hope that his family will raise enough money for his appeal, while John Brown has spent the last 12 years living on death row. The lives of these men take place within the context of Angola State Prison, a multimillion dollar enterprise that pays its inmates four cents an hour for fieldwork. While neither condemning nor preaching, the film raises questions about who prisons serve and what their role should be. The Farm does not dismiss the seriousness of the crimes many inmates have committed, but asks the viewer to consider their humanity and the confluence of circumstances that surround their incarceration.

*** **Freedom Road** -- a documentary focusing on three incarcerated women who reclaim their voices and stories through writing their memoirs.

*** **Game Over: Women in Prison** -- produced by inmates at Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI) in partnership between the DOC and the Northeast Wisconsin Northeastern Wisconsin In-School

Telecommunications. This documentary includes first-person accounts from several TCI inmates about the lives they led before entering the correctional system, their initial confinement at TCI and the lives they lead while incarcerated. They also candidly discuss the factors that influenced their criminal behavior, such as histories of drug addiction or sexual violence, and they talk about the impact that their crimes have had on victims, family members and their children.

*** **Getting Out**

Veronica Flournoy, Ray Diaz and Jasper Kelly are three of the 600,000 men and women who are released from prison each year. Each of them is on parole in New York City, and only a missed curfew or a dirty urine test away from landing back in a cell. None of them have lived a tranquil, stable life before prison, and they are not returning to a structured world set to propel them into constructive citizenship. Two of the three are addicted to cocaine. Two of them don't even have homes to return to – and the other only has a home because of his girlfriend. These are once volatile lives interrupted by a bid in prison. Now they are back on the streets, where that volatility is institutionalized through parole and homelessness.

*** **Girl Trouble** -- a film that takes a personal look at the reasons why teenage girls are entering the juvenile justice system in greater numbers and at younger ages, and why current corrections strategies are failing to stop the cycle of incarceration. *Girl Trouble* depicts several bold and articulate young women who must negotiate a system that at the same time seeks to punish and rehabilitate those who come into contact with it.

*** **The Last Graduation --directed by Barbara Zahm**

The Last Graduation frankly explores the issues involved in the federal and state governments' rush to cut off funds for effective college prison programs. Framed within the historical context of the Attica prison riots in 1971, the film explores the development of education programs within the prisons and documents the ultimate closing of the Marist College prison education program in New York. With filmmaker Benay Rubenstein; author Hettie Jones; and former inmates Precious Bedel, a graduating college senior, and Jan Warren, who completed her BA and MA in prison, the film showcases the power of education and the limitless possibilities for change.

*** **Lock Down USA directed by DeeDee Halleck and Cathy Scott, 1997**

Powerful industries now are pushing for increased prison construction, even though the crime rate is relatively stable. Lock Down USA is an emotional view from the communities most effected: the prisoners and the growing community of human rights activists who are involved in trying to change the system. Footage of a vigil outside an execution in Missouri, the closing of the college program in a New York State prison and a protest at a penitentiary in Trenton show the complex interactions between politicians, corporations, media, and community residents. The film includes interviews with Steven Donzinger, the head of a national commission to study crime; Ruth Gilmore, an African American prison activist from New Jersey; Eddie Ellis, a survivor of the Attica prison rebellion; and Janine Jackson, a radio commentator (Pacifica) from FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting).

*** **Lock-Up, The Prisoners of Rikers Island Lock Down -directed by Nina Rosenblum and Jon Alpert** -Rikers Island is the world's largest jail, with 20,000 inmates. Most young men in New York City have a better chance of going to Rikers Island than they do of going to college. Ninety percent of the inhabitants are black or Hispanic, only 10% have graduated from high school, 20% are HIV positive,

and 70% are there for drug-related crimes. It's not cheap. It costs more per night than the Waldorf Astoria. And, it is not effective. Seventy percent of the inmates are back in Rikers within two years of their release. A riveting document of an absurd institution, with its tracts reserved for gays, pregnant women, and the mentally ill. The director flashes his inimitable spotlight on the conditions inside: brutality, crime, tenderness, inquisitions, hopes, drug problems, day-to-day life, and extreme situations.

*** **Omar & Pete**

Academy Award® nominated and national Emmy award-winning filmmaker Tod Lending (Nomadic Pictures) will create a feature documentary that will explore the web of social and economic barriers that low-income African-American men face in the context of incarceration and release; and examine existing support structures, and those that are needed, to help former prisoners successfully re-enter their families and neighborhoods. This compelling and highly personal film will challenge the public's perceptions, and reveal the individual, family, and community pathways that can lead to social change.

*** **OUT: The Making of a Revolutionary** directed by **Sonja de Vries and Rhonda Collins, 2000 -**

In 1985, activist Laura Whitehorn was convicted of bombing the US Capitol building and "conspiring to influence, change and protest policies and practices of the United States government through violent and illegal means." OUT chronicles the life of this courageous woman, who grew up in a liberal Jewish household, became involved with radical left politics in the tumultuous years of the 1960's and was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 1985. Whitehorn has seen the twentieth century evolve, while the injustices surrounding class, race and gender remain the same. OUT is a compelling portrait of a modern American radical. Whether you agree or disagree with radical left politics, this documentary challenges you to think about what you might be willing to risk for your own beliefs.

*** **Maximum Security University** directed by **Tom Quinn**

The film reveals the human rights abuses and mental and physical violence occurring in high-tech maximum security units at California's Corcoran State Prison. Using prison security camera footage, Maximum Security University reveals the gladiator fights that led to the killing of five prisoners at Corcoran between 1988 and 1995.

*** **P4W: PRISON FOR WOMEN** by **Janis Cole & Holly Dale** (Canada 1981 82 min. documentary / women's studies / sociology) Winner of a Genie Award for Best Theatrical Documentary, *P4W* is a shattering look at love and isolation in the most desperate of places. Filmmakers Janis Cole and Holly Dale take us behind the walls of Canada's only all-female federal maximum-security prison, revealing the complex social fabric that exists within. "No ordinary prison film, or women's film, *P4W* is a dramatic, very touching portrait of five women you're not likely to forget" (John Katz). With a companion study guide by Matthew Hayes.

*** **Prison Lullabies**

The remarkable portrait of four women living on the bad side of luck, struggling with drug addiction, arrested for dealing and prostitution, and serving prison time with one common bond – arrested pregnant, Amy, Monique, Joann, and Anne Marie have all given birth behind bars For these women who are intimate terms with sexual abuse, poverty, and addiction, the Taconic Correctional Facility in New York State offers a rare gleam of hope. One of only five prisons in the U.S. to provide a nursery program for inmates, Taconic allows the women to keep their babies for the first 18 months of their lives while insisting that the mothers participate in a rigorous series of classes that range from basic child care

to anger management and drug counseling. Watch@
http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/prison_lullabies/

***** Prisoner of Love** During the 1970s and 1980s, Congress and many state legislatures passed mandatory minimum sentencing laws that force judges to hand out fixed sentences, without parole, to people convicted of certain drug offenses. *Prisoner of Love* exposes the effects of such criminal justice policies through the exploration of specific cases. Amy Pofahl and Kemba Smith were both imprisoned for 24 years after participating in minor ways in their boyfriend's and husband's drug deals. The film includes Interviews with Eric Sterling, a former congressional staffer who helped draft the laws he is now fighting to repeal, Georgia congressman Bob Barr of the House Judiciary Committee, Monica Pratt of Families Against Mandatory Minimums, Elaine Jones of the NAACP, and parents of the victims.

***** Real Justice directed by Ben Gale and Lianne Vinson** -- In a special two-hour report, FRONTLINE explores the daily workings of America's criminal justice system to reveal the offers, counteroffers, deals, and compromises that keep cases moving through Boston Suffolk County's crowded courts. From District Court, where mundane cases are handled swiftly, to the Superior Court, where prosecutors tackle the most difficult murder cases, the program follows the police, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and defendants as they make their way through a court system that handles 50,000 cases each year.

***** Red Hook Justice**

In 2000, an experimental court opened its doors in Red Hook, Brooklyn—a neighborhood plagued by a cycle of unemployment, poverty and crime. The Red Hook court is at the center of a legal revolution—the community justice movement. Instead of jail time, offenders are sentenced to job training, drug counseling, community service. But it's no easy way out. If they fail, they face longer jail time. RED HOOK JUSTICE's film crew was allowed exclusive access at the court for nearly two years, capturing vérité scenes of intake interviews in the Center's holding cells, court proceedings, community meetings, and other day-to-day workings of the Justice Center. Individuals profiled in the film include: Anthony and Michael, orphaned teen brothers who fight to resist the pull of the streets; Letitia, a heroin addict who struggles to kick the habit when she gets pregnant; Leroy, a court officer who grew up in the Red Hook housing projects; Brett, a dedicated Legal Aid attorney who wonders if the new court helps or hurts his clients; and Judge Calabrese, who takes a hands-on approach with defendants. The story of RED HOOK JUSTICE resonates far beyond Brooklyn. When the Red Hook court opened, it was the first and most ambitious of its kind—today there are nearly three dozen courts like it opening around the United States.

***** Released: 5 Short Videos about Women and Prison**

From its opening statements by former inmate *Angela Davis*, to *Scarlot Harlot* and *Duran Ruiz*'s deconstruction of a 20/20 Primetime expose, to a portrait of filmmaker *Cheryl Dunye* directing a feature film about women and prison, RELEASED boldly styles an innovative statement about women, prison, artistic collaboration, and the nature of documentary media.

***** Road to Return**

In a large meeting room in New Orleans, a group of men and women sit in a circle, sharing stories of painful pasts and their dreams of a future that is, at best, a question mark. The faces register a moving range of depth and emotion, from tears to laughter, anguish to hope. They are the faces of society's castaways – men and women who were formerly incarcerated – who are trying to rebuild their lives and succeeding through a simple but staggeringly effective community/self-esteem building resource program called.

***** Road to Success**

provides insight into the challenges faced by offenders who are being released from federal correctional institutions as well as the opportunities available to assist them to return to their families and communities. The video also covers the many programs in which inmates can participate during their incarceration. These programs, designed to assist them find employment once released, include mock job fairs, life skills and resume writing classes, varied apprenticeship programs, and hands-on-training and work experience in Federal Prison Industries (UNICOR). Services available at local ONE STOP CAREER CENTERS and related private and government agencies that provide education and training that target well paying jobs are also presented. ROAD TO SUCCESS was produced for the Inmate Transition Branch of the Federal Bureau of Prisons by D. R. Lynes, Inc. For more information regarding this video, please contact: Sylvia McCollum, Inmate Transition Administrator, Federal Bureau of Prisons, smccollum@bop.gov.

*****Snitch - produced by Ofra Bike**

Snitch investigates how a fundamental shift in the country's anti-drug laws, including federal mandatory minimum sentencing and conspiracy provisions, has bred a culture of snitching that is in many cases rewarding the guiltiest and punishing the less guilty. The film looks at several unsettling cases in which prosecutors go after small fish—drug dealers' mothers, cousins, even lawyers—either to pressure them into testifying or because the big fish snitched first. One young man in Alabama, Clarence Aaron, was sentenced to three consecutive life terms without parole for arranging a meeting between supplier and dealer, while the more culpable parties in the deal—who all decided to snitch on Aaron—served minimal or no sentences.

*****System Failure: Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the California Youth Authority -- produced by WITNESS and Books Not Bars.**

This video offers testimony of the human rights violations taking place at the California Youth Authority (CYA), one of the largest youth correctional agencies in the country. Nationally, California stands in sharp contrast to a number of states who have reformed or are in the process of reforming their juvenile justice systems, replacing punishment for punishment's sake models with rehabilitative, restorative justice models such as Texas, New York, Arizona, Georgia, Massachusetts, and most notably Missouri.

*****Thug Life in DC -- directed by Marc Levin, 1998**

Bruno, one of 24,000 African American men aged 18 to 35 who has found himself in conflict with the city's criminal justice system, is the youngest incarcerated black male in Lorton Prison's maximum security wing. He talks candidly about the lure of thug life and its often sad inevitability. Bruno expresses hope that his younger brother will somehow be able to escape the harsh lifestyle of many inner-city youths, immortalized by gangsta rappers such as the archetypal thug himself, the late Tupac Shakur. In Marc Levin's film, some of the men profiled have come to realize that thug life in DC, or anywhere else, isn't all outlaw glamour and can entail loss of life and liberty.

**** Too Soon for Sorry -- directed by Katharina Weingartner, 2001**

Too Soon for Sorry explores the cultural and economic conditions behind the prison industrial complex through a look at four US Prisons. Desire and fear, adventure and greed, control and revenge have created not only a highly sophisticated form of oppression with 2 million people behind bars but a deadly mix for a whole generation of African Americans and Latinos.

***** Troop 1500: Girl Scouts Beyond Bars**

***** We Are Not Who You Think We Are** -- a quick [13 minute] look into some of the group counseling sessions that female inmates go to where they talk about some of the negative formative experiences that they credit for some of their current situations.

***** What I Want My Words to do to You** -- offers an unprecedented look into the minds and hearts of the women inmates of New York's Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The film goes inside a writing workshop led by playwright and activist Eve Ensler, consisting of 15 women, most of whom were convicted of murder. Through a series of exercises and discussions, the women delve into their pasts and explore the nature of their crimes and the extent of their own culpability. The film culminates in an emotionally charged prison performance of the women's writing by acclaimed actors Mary Alice, Glenn Close, Hazelle Goodman, Rosie Perez and Marisa Tomei.

***** When the Bough Breaks: Children of Women in Prison** -- This sensitive documentary is an up - close look at children coping with their mother's incarcerations.

***** Xiara's Song**

CINEMAX Reel Life documentary, XIARA'S SONG, the touching story of a seven-year-old's relationship with her incarcerated father, aired on HBO LATINO.

***** Yes, In My Backyard -- directed by Tracy Huling, 1998**

During the last two decades, prisons have become a growth industry in rural America. The implications of this trend are profound for individuals, families, and communities in both rural and urban America. Since the 1980s the majority of new prisons have been placed in rural areas and small towns, and today half of all U.S. prisoners are considered residents of rural communities. Through the eyes of one farming-community-turned-prison-town in upstate New York, **Yes, In My Backyard** delves into the reasons why prisons are now sought after as a means of economic development and probes the consequences of this trend for the keepers and the kept.

***** 900 Women** -- a documentary looking at women in prison in Louisiana, especially the lives of mothers behind bars. Chilling footage of a woman having a baby only just after being released from being handcuffed to her hospital bed. The baby is spirited away to live with her family, while she returns to the penitentiary.